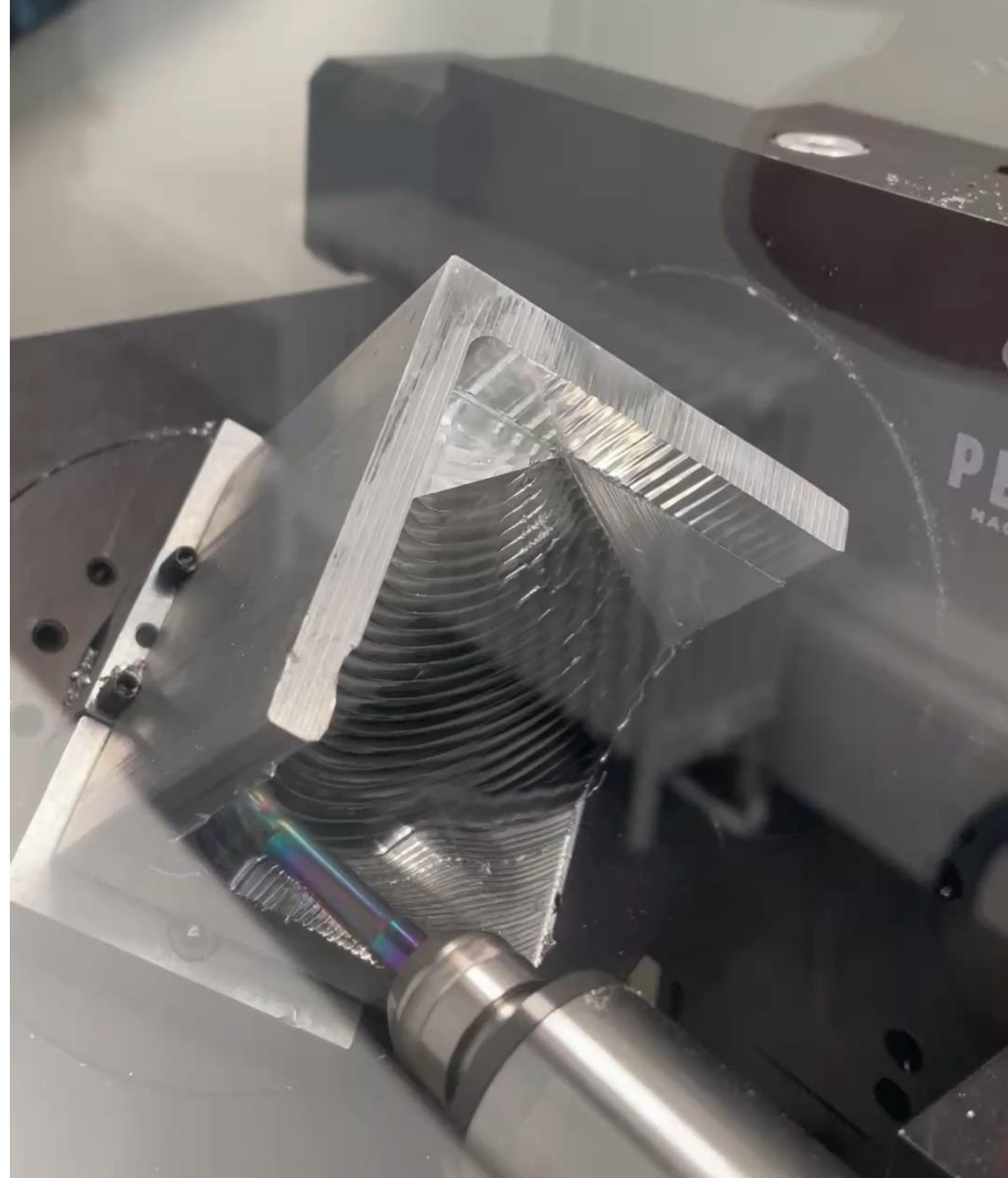


# Defamiliarizing literary spatiality

The plot-space as provocation

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ACH Annual Conference  
12 June 2025





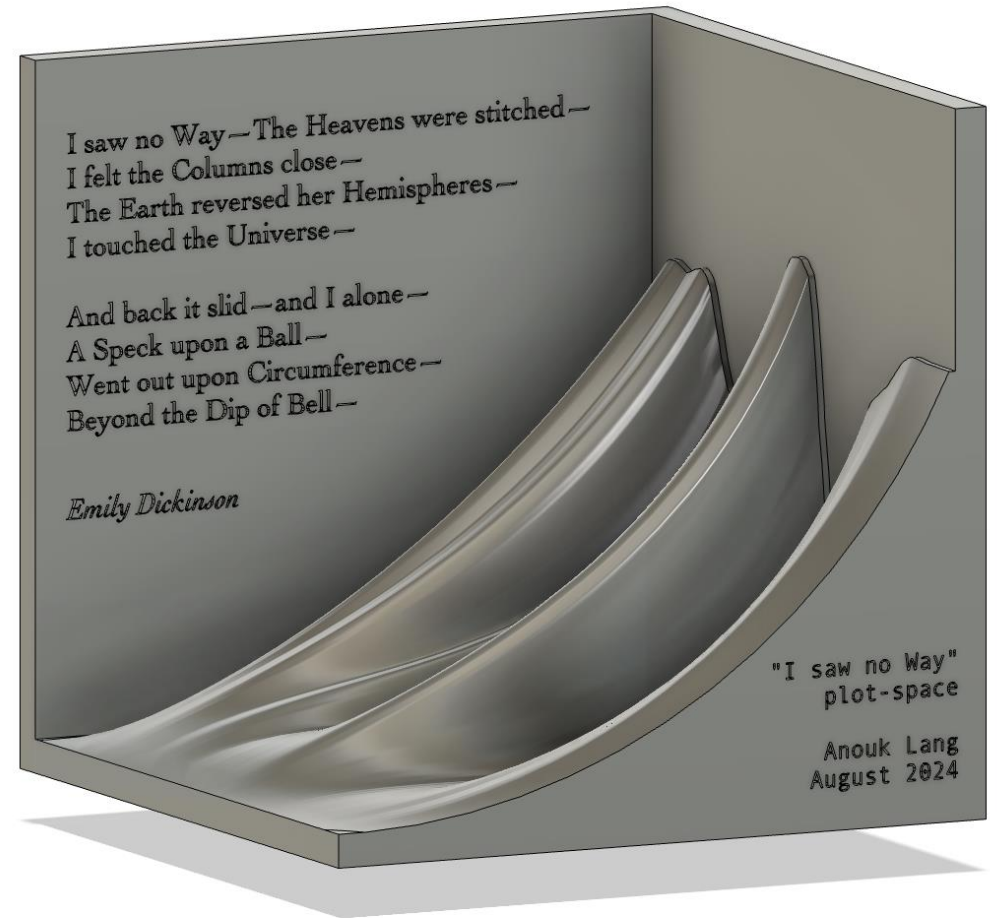
“What will humanities research and pedagogy do with consumer-accessible 3D fabrication? ... What will we do with locative and augmented reality technologies that can bring our content off the screen and into our embodied, place-based, mobile lives? ... I believe that scholarly editors, paleographers, archivists, and book historians will be the next avid explorers of new digital materialities. But what might other literary scholars do? What new, interpretive research avenues will open up for you, in places of interesting friction and resistance, when you gain access to the fresh, full circuit of humanities computing—that is, the loop from the physical to the digital to the material text and artifact again?

**Bethany Nowviskie, “Resistance in the Materials”, *Debates in the Digital Humanities 2016*, edited by Matthew K. Gold and Lauren F. Klein, U Minnesota P, 2016, pp. 179–80.**

# A plot-space:

a 3D-printable object  
representing some quality in a  
text that changes as that text  
progresses (eg. size and scale)

cf. Bahktin's chronotope:  
the inseparability of  
temporality and spatiality



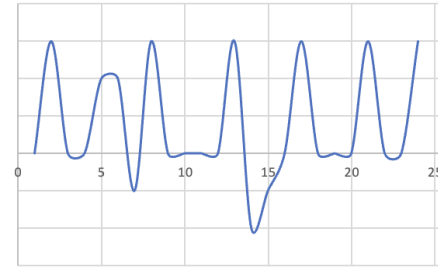
**plot (noun)** = storyline, *syuzhet*  
**plot (verb)** = to make a graph



**space** = the physical  
space of the three-  
dimensional object

**space** = the spatial  
imaginary of a text

# Plotting space and scale



I started Early – Took my Dog –  
And visited the Sea –  
The Mermaids in the Basement  
Came out to look at me –

And Frigates – in the Upper Floor  
Extended Hempen Hands –  
Presuming Me to be a Mouse –  
Aground – upon the Sands –

But no Man moved Me – till the Tide  
Went past my simple Shoe –  
And past my Apron – and my Belt  
And past my Boddice – too –

And made as He would eat me up –  
As wholly as a Dew  
Upon a Dandelion's Sleeve –  
And then – I started – too –

And He – He followed – close behind –  
I felt His Silver Heel  
Upon my Ankle – Then My Shoes  
Would overflow with Pearl –

Until We met the Solid Town –  
No One He seemed to know –  
And bowing – with a Mighty look –  
At me – The Sea withdrew –



I started Early – Took my Dog –  
And visited the Sea –  
The Mermaids in the Basement  
Came out to look at me –

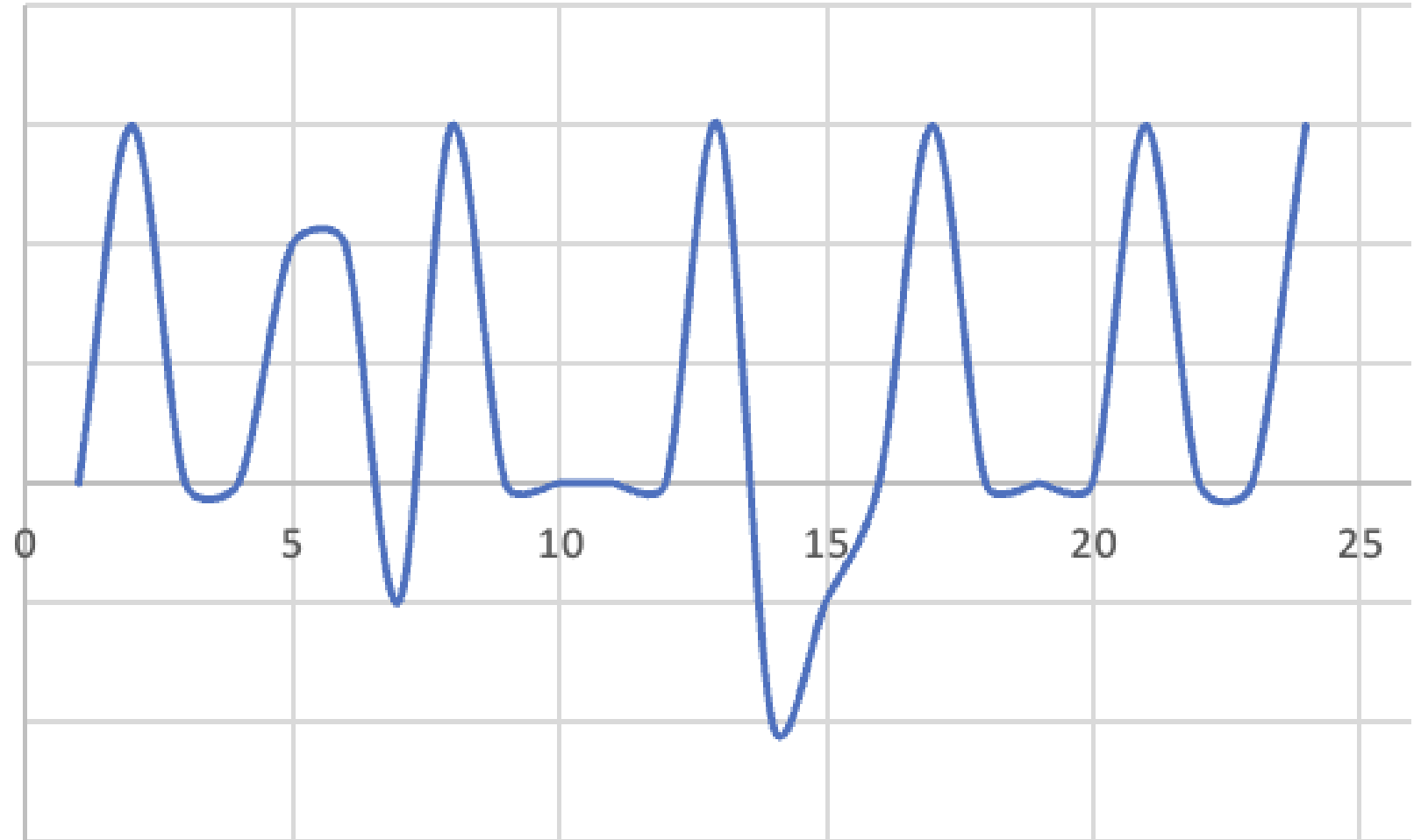
And Frigates – in the Upper Floor  
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Aground – upon the Sands –

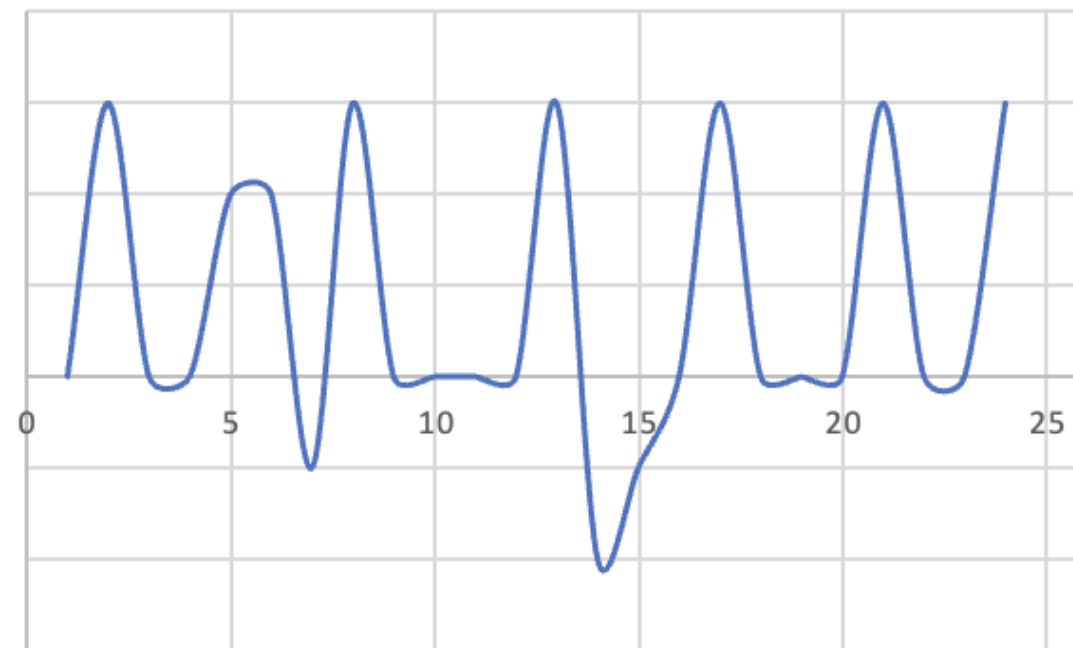
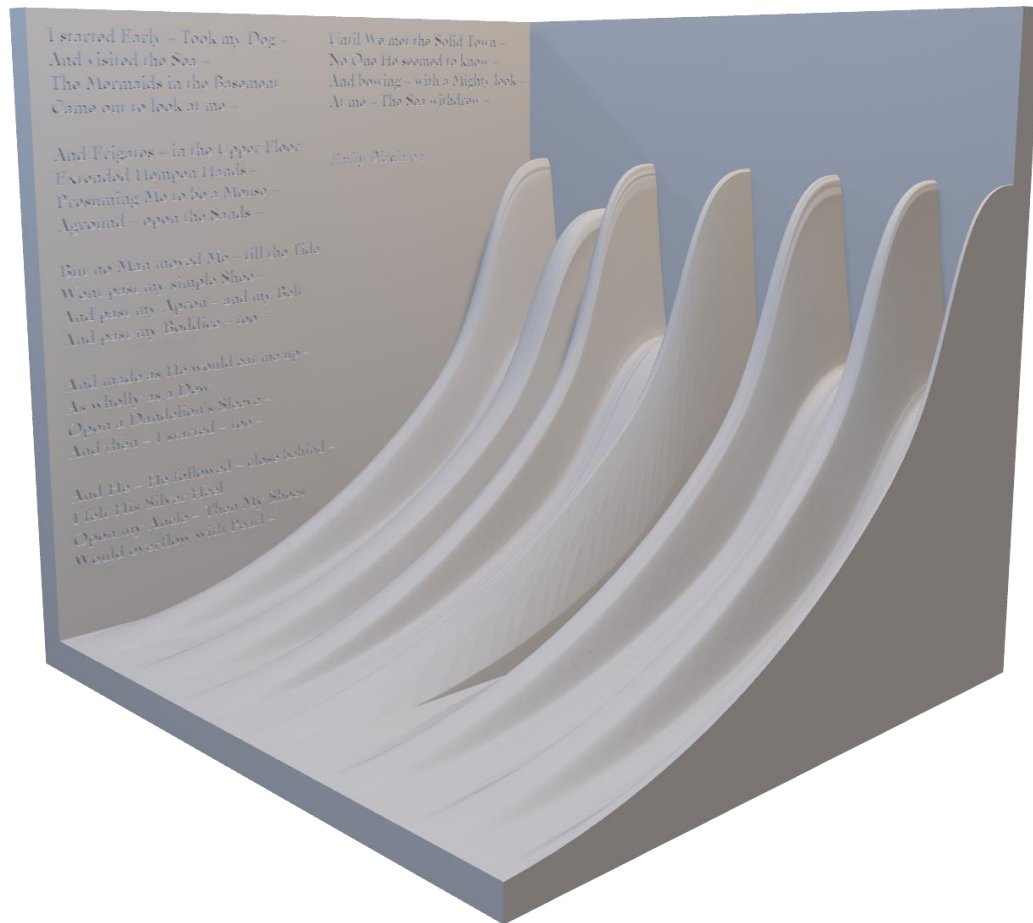
But no Man moved Me – till the Tide  
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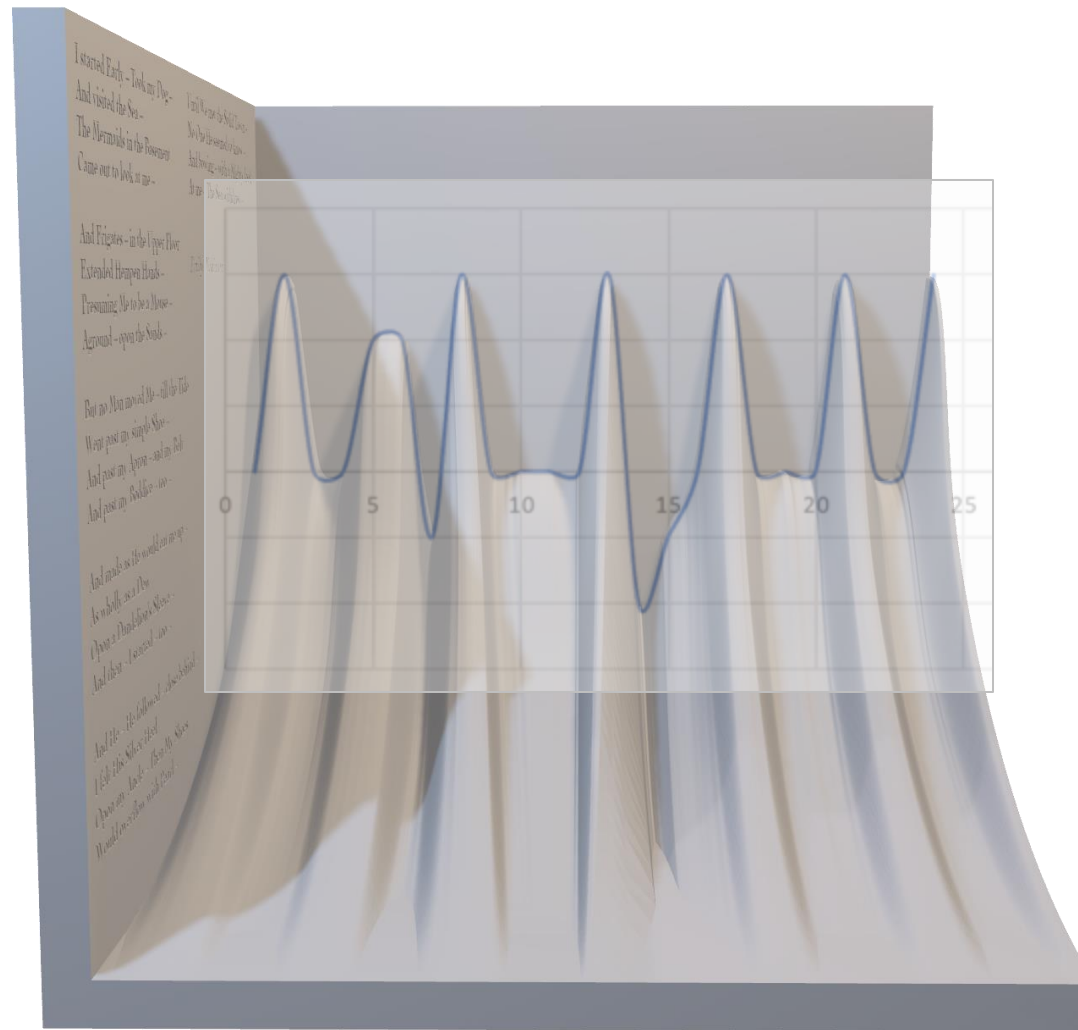
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Upon my Ankle – Then My Shoes  
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Until We met the Solid Town –  
No One He seemed to know –  
And bowing – with a Mighty look –  
At me – The Sea withdrew –









# An example reading: I started Early



“Anticipating some of the foundational claims of feminist theory, Peabody’s schema insists upon a multiplicity of meanings, and locates knowledge in the interplay between viewer, image, and text. Hers is a belief in visualization, not as clarifying or illuminating in its own right, not as evidence or proof of results, but as a tool in the process of knowledge production.”

“... for Peabody, the creation of knowledge took place through a second mode: through the act of creating the images themselves.”

Lauren Klein, “Feminist Data Visualization; Or, the Shape of History”, blog post, *Lauren F. Klein*, 24 Jan. 2017, <https://lklein.com/conference-papers/feminist-data-visualization-or-the-shape-of-history/>.

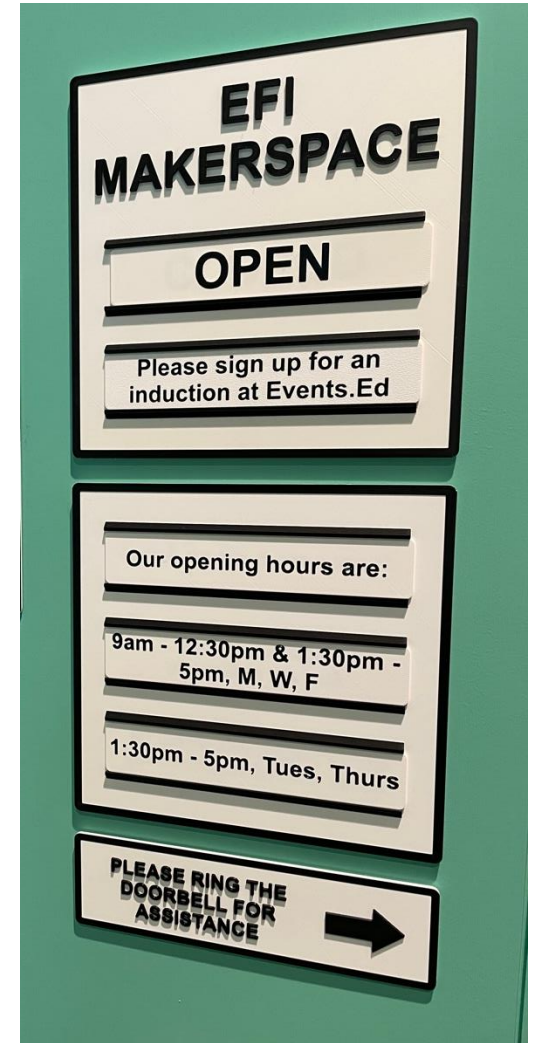
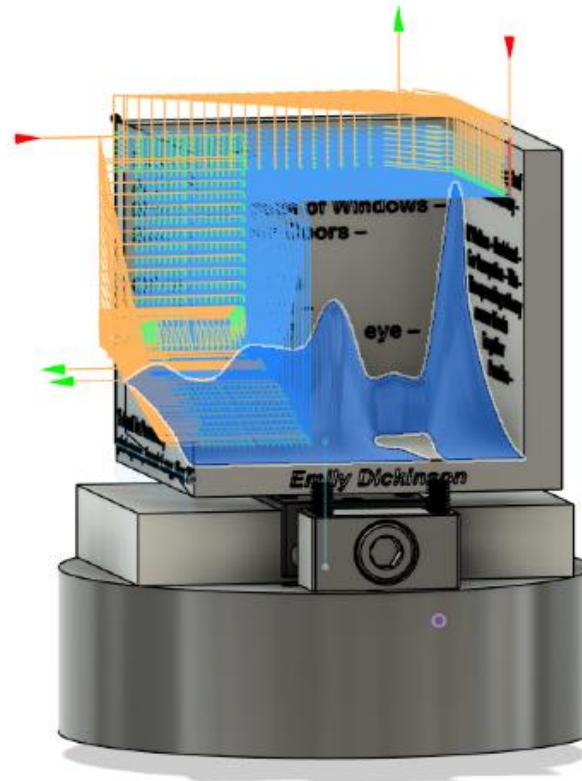
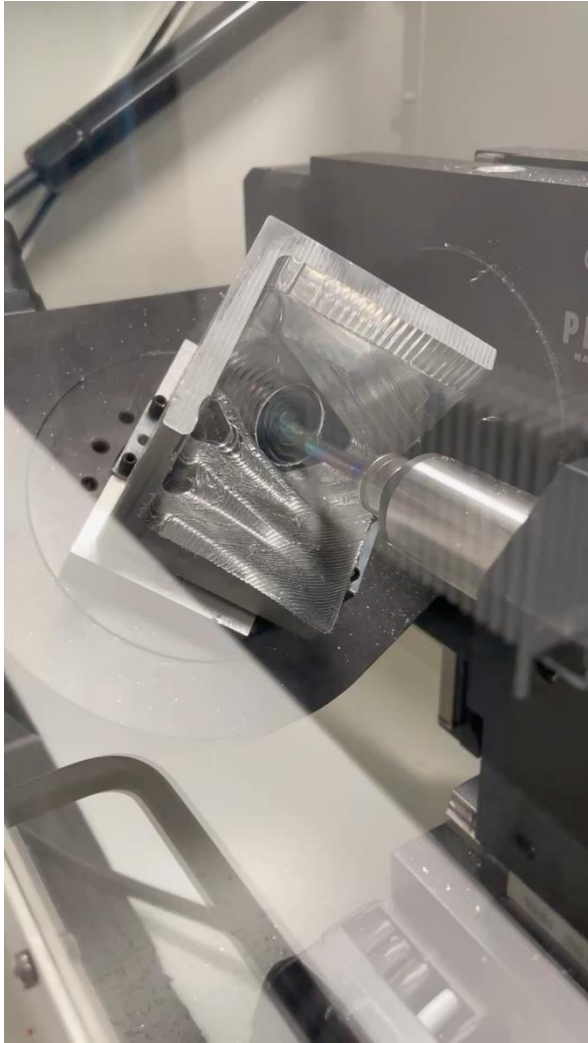
“(Another) way to think of digital artifacts as theories would be to think of them as hermeneutical instruments through which we can interpret other phenomena. Digital artifacts like tools could then be considered as ‘telescopes for the mind’ that show us something in a new light. We might ... consider digital artifacts as ‘theory frameworks’ for interpreting, in the same way that Jonathan Culler views Foucault’s theoretical interventions. ... digital artifacts like text analysis and visualization tools are theories in the very highest tradition of what it is to theorize in the humanities, because they show us the world differently.”

Stephen Ramsay and Geoffrey Rockwell, “Developing Things: Notes toward an Epistemology of Building in the Digital Humanities”, *Debates in the Digital Humanities*, ed. Matthew K. Gold, U Minnesota P, 2012, 79.

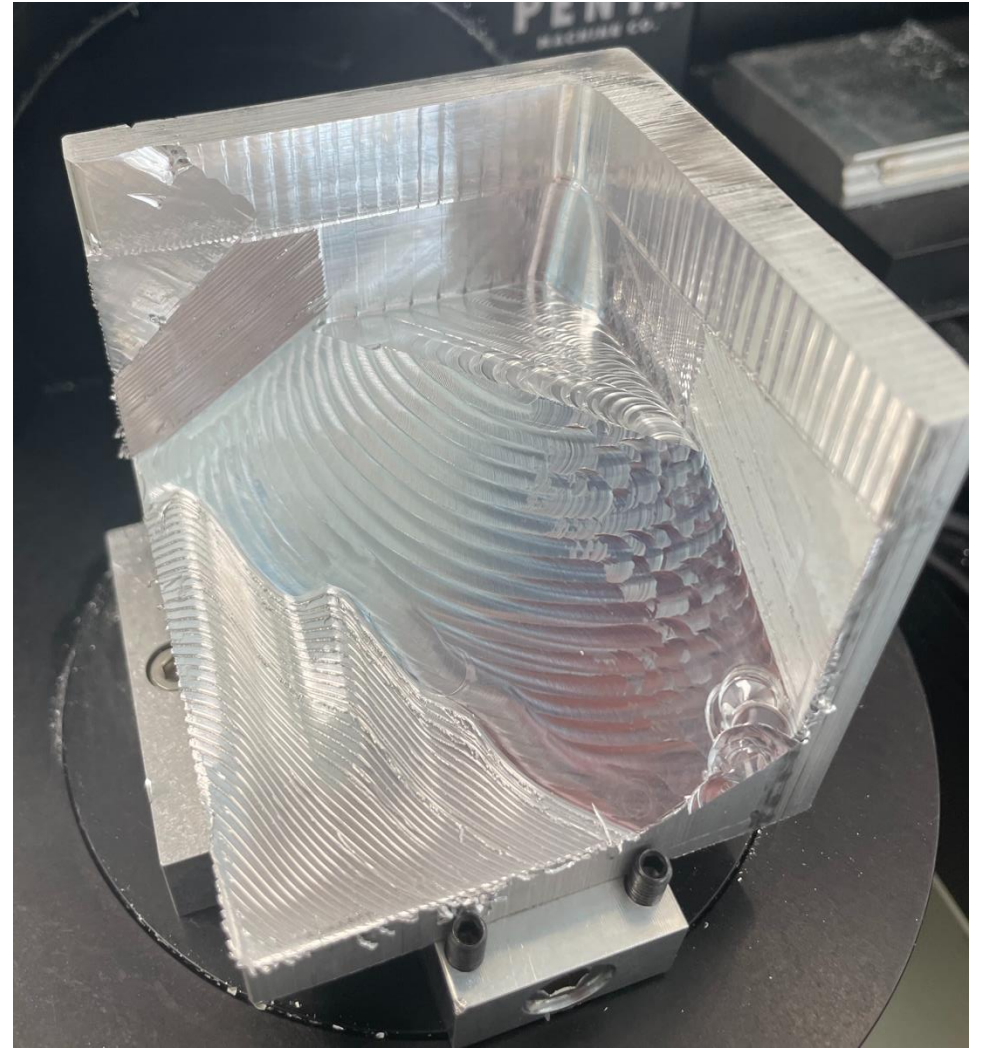
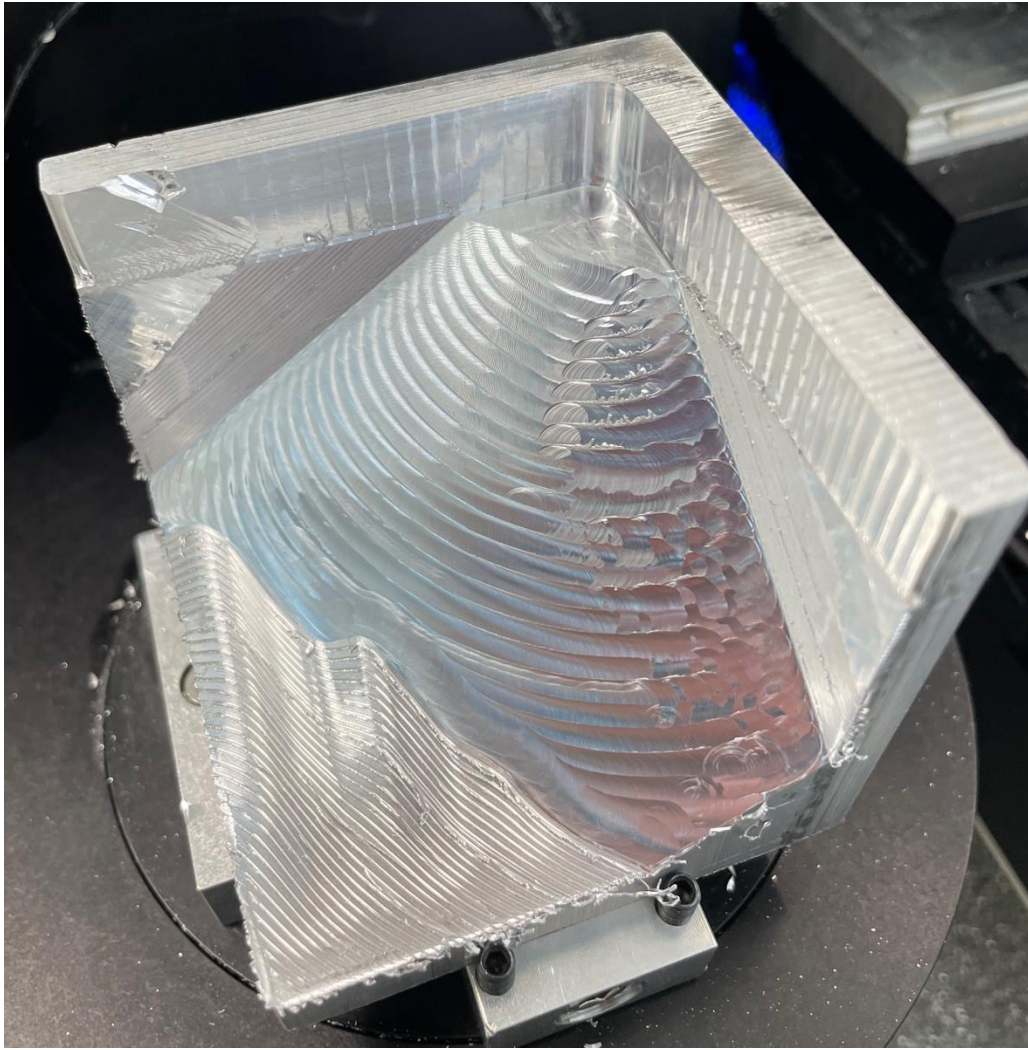
“Modeling encompasses the worldview of the model designer, her context, and her subjective decisions. Data models are anything but neutral – on the contrary, they are a purposefully specific selection of semantic categories and properties. ... Moreover, the reciprocal shaping of the hermeneutics of digital humanities by the methods of computer science extends beyond software design. The choices made in the analytical conception of any given digital humanities project affect its hermeneutic makeup. The choices of what properties to quantify, what probability distribution functions are chosen, which statistical tests are used, are in essence hermeneutically informed.”

Joris J. van Zundert, “Screwmenetics and Hermenumericals: The Computability of Hermeneutics”, *A New Companion to Digital Humanities*, edited by Susan Schriebman et al., John Wiley, 2016, 343-4.

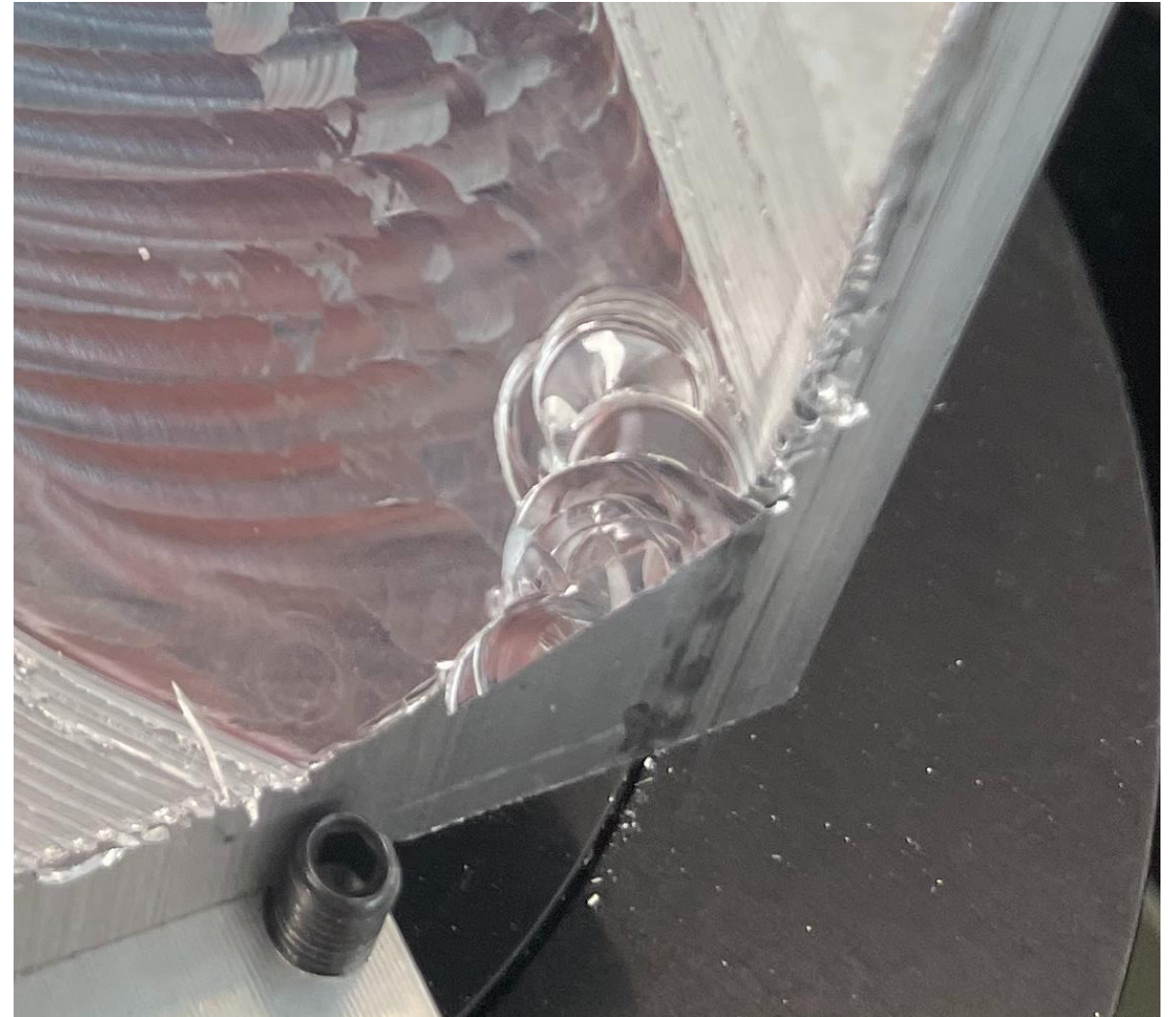
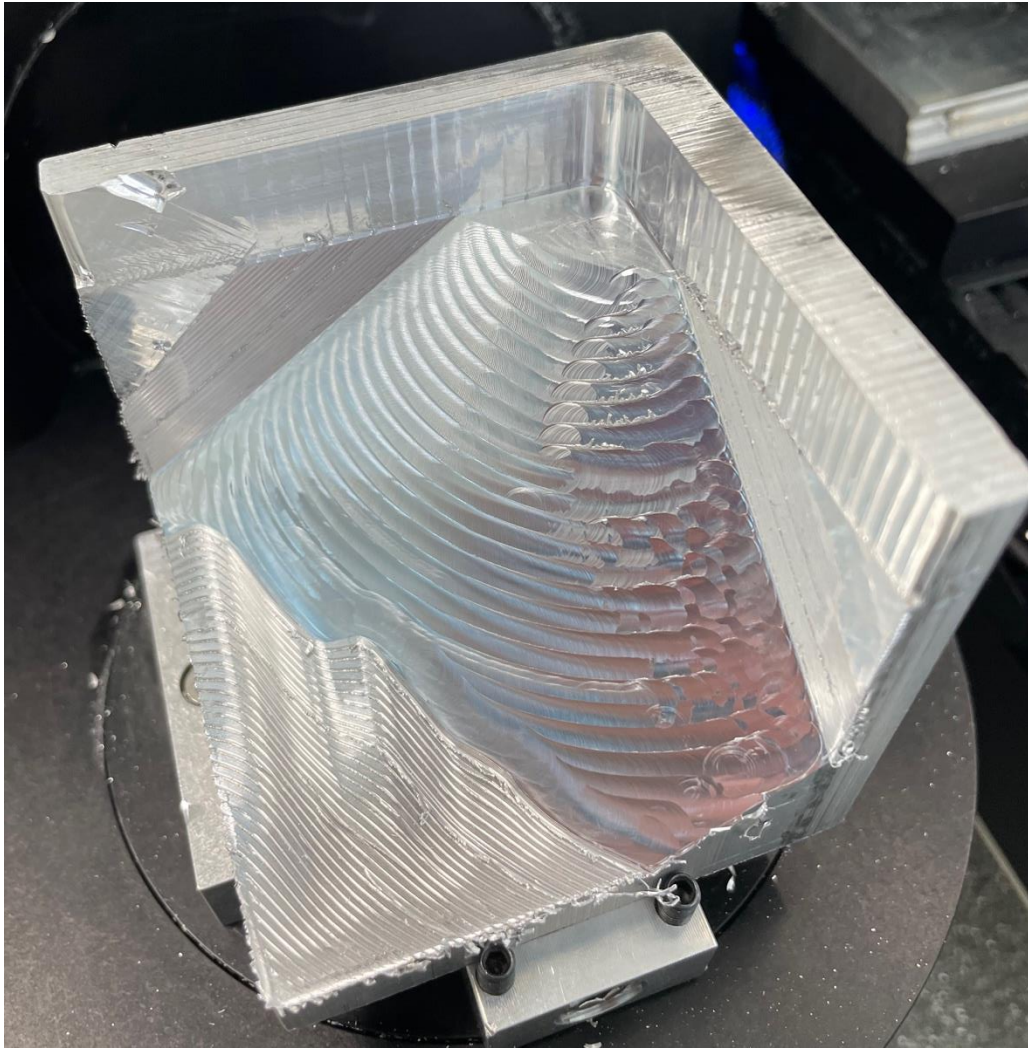
# Resistance in the materials



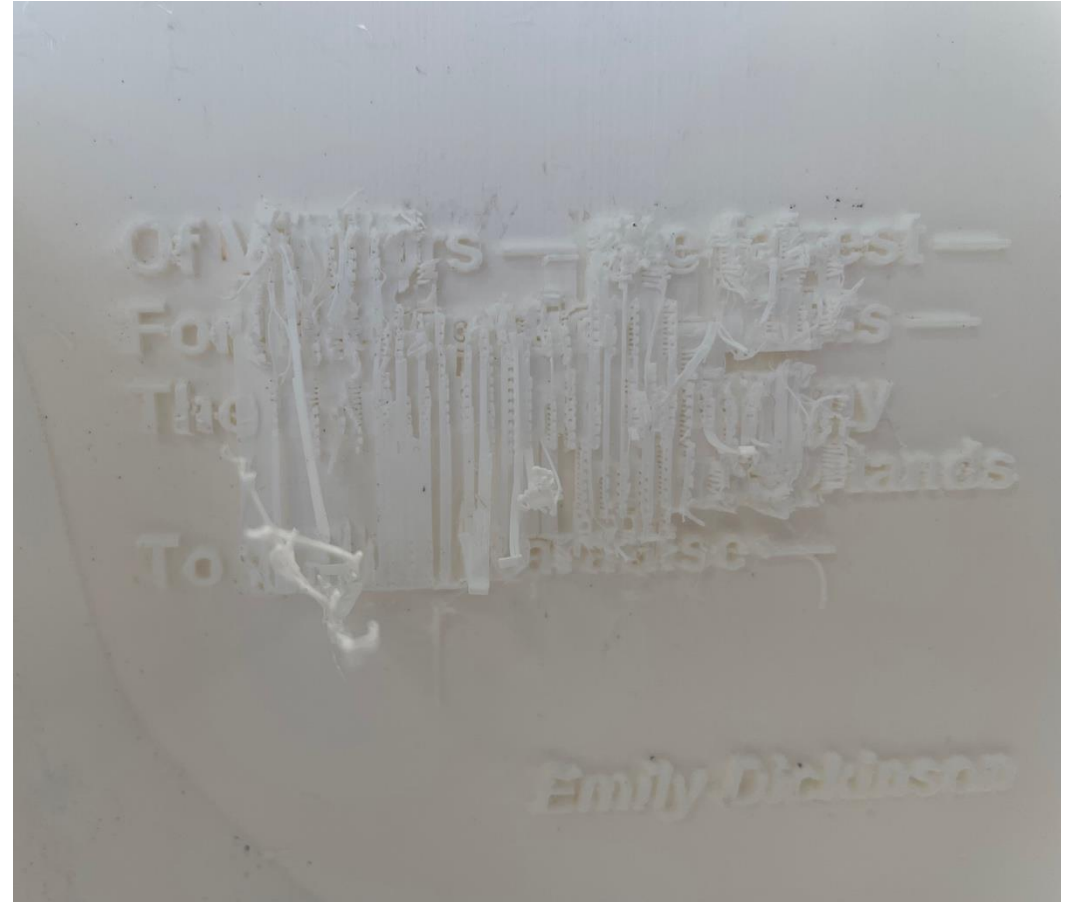








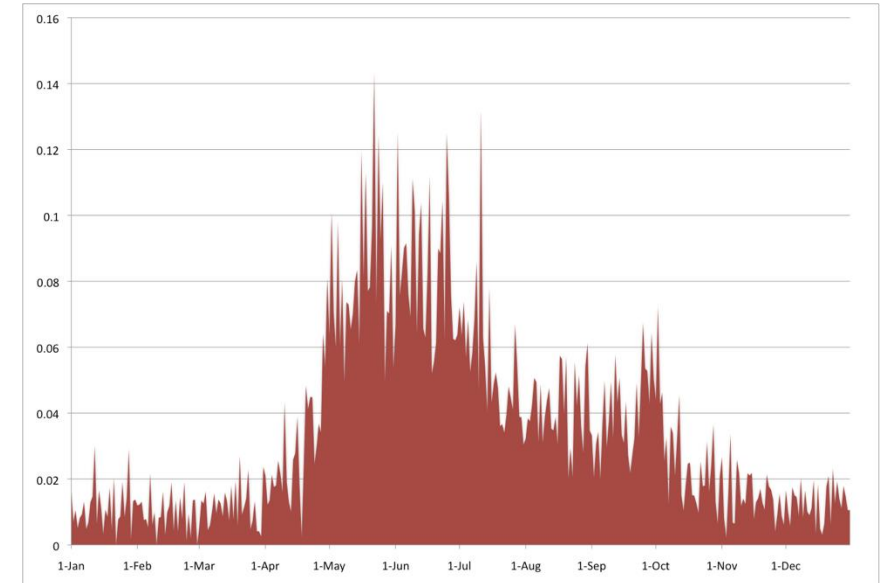
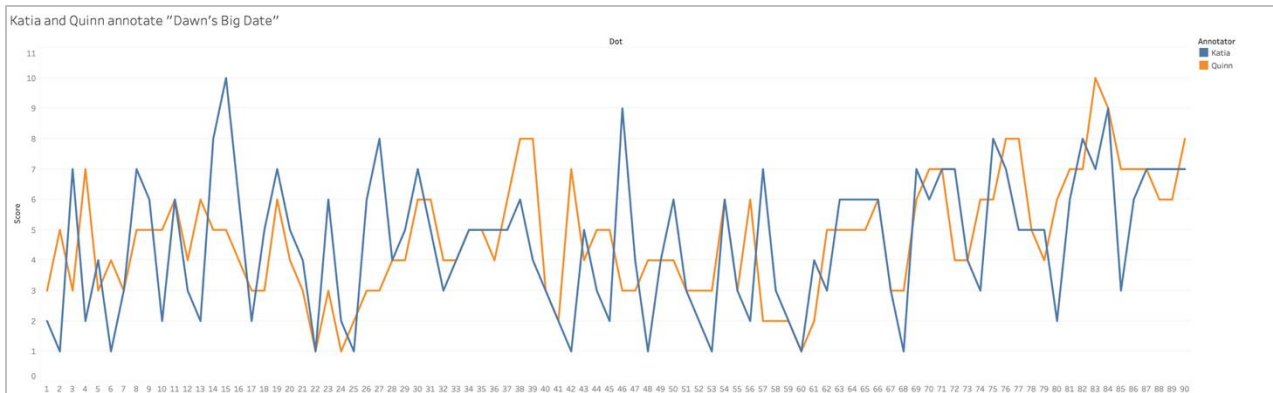
# Glitches are generative





# Other uses: topic modelling, sentiment analysis ratings, more ...

Katherine Bowers and Quinn Dombrowski, "Katia and the Sentiment Snobs", blog post, *The Data-Sitters Club*, October 25, 2021, <https://datasittersclub.github.io/site/dsc11.html>.



Cameron Blevins, "Topic Modeling Martha Ballard's Diary", blog post, *Cameron Blevins*, April 1, 2010, <https://cblevins.github.io/posts/topic-modeling-martha-ballards-diary/>



“(W)hat if we understood the purpose of visualization differently? What if we were supposed to stop and think hard about what we were seeing, and what it meant? ... (Peabody’s mural charts on the floor) demand a different mode of sensory engagement altogether. They replace the decorative and utilitarian function of a rug with an experience designed to generate knowledge, and in so doing, they require viewers to reconsider the actual position of their bodies in relation to their objects of knowledge.”

**Klein, “Feminist Data Visualization”**

Thanks to:

**Peter Bentley**, Makerspace,  
Edinburgh Futures Institute

**All the staff** at the uCreate Makerspace,  
University of Edinburgh Library

**Catriona Gilbert**, Edinburgh College of Art

Tutorial for making your own plot-space:

<https://aelang.github.io/research/plot-spaces/>

