

**WRITING COASTLINES:  
LOCATING NARRATIVE RESONANCE  
IN TRANSATLANTIC COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS**

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## ABSTRACT

The term 'writing coastlines' implies a double meaning. The word 'writing' refers both to the act of writing and to that which is written. The act of writing translates aural, physical, mental and digital processes into marks, actions, utterances, and speech-acts. The intelligibility of that which is written is intertwined with both the context of its production and of its consumption. The term 'writing coastlines' may refer to writing about coastlines, but the coastlines themselves are also writing in so far as they are translating physical processes into marks and actions. Coastlines are the shifting terrains where land and water meet, always neither land nor water and always both. The physical processes enacted by waves and winds may result in marks and actions associated with both erosion and accretion. Writing coastlines are edges, ledges, legible lines caught in the double bind of simultaneously writing and erasing. These in-between places are liminal spaces – points of both departure and arrival, and sites of exchange.

One coastline implies another, implores a far shore. The dialogue implied by this entreaty intrigues me. The coastlines of the United Kingdom and those of Atlantic Canada are separated by three and a half thousand kilometres of ocean. Yet for centuries, fishers, sailors, explorers, migrants, emigrants, merchants, messengers, messages, packets, ships, submarine cables, aeroplanes, satellite signals and wireless radio waves have attempted to bridge this distance. These comings and goings have left traces. Generations of transatlantic migrations have engendered networks of communications. As narratives of place and displacement travel across, beyond, and through these networks, they become informed by the networks' structures and inflected with the syntax and grammar of the networks' code languages.

*Writing coastlines* interrogates this in-between space with a series of questions: When does leaving end and arriving begin? When does the emigrant

become the immigrant? What happens between call and response? What narratives resonate in the spaces between places separated by time, distance, and ocean yet inextricably linked by generations of immigration? This thesis takes an overtly interdisciplinary approach to answering these questions. This practice-led research refers to and infers from the corpora and associated histories, institutions, theoretical frameworks, modes of production, venues, and audiences of the visual, media, performance, and literary arts, as well as from the traditionally more scientific realms of cartography, navigation, network archaeology, and creative computing. *Writing Coastlines* navigates the emerging and occasionally diverging theoretical terrains of electronic literature, locative narrative, media archaeology, and networked art through the methodology of performance writing pioneered at Dartington College of Art (Bergvall 1996, Hall 2008). Central to this methodology is an iterative approach to writing, which interrogates the performance of writing in and across contexts toward an extended compositional process.

*Writing Coastlines* will contribute to a theoretical framework and methodology for the creation and dissemination of networked narrative structures for stories of place and displacement that resonate between sites, confusing and confounding boundaries between physical and digital, code and narrative, past and future, home and away.

*Writing Coastlines* will contribute to the creation of a new narrative context from which to examine a multi-site-specific place-based identity by extending the performance writing methodology to incorporate digital literature and locative narrative practices, by producing and publicly presenting a significant body of creative and critical work, and by developing a mode of critical writing which intertwines practice with theory.

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## A NOTE ABOUT LINKS

“The text is meant to perform its own object status as linked to and separate from the live performance of its language...”

Carla Harryman (2012)

The practice-led research outcomes presented in this thesis are web-based. They must be viewed online. They have been optimised for viewing on a desktop or laptop computer through a web browser, preferably Firefox, Safari, or Chrome. Viewing these works on an iPad or through the Internet Explorer browser is not recommended.

This thesis is written to be read in conjunction with these web-based practice-led research outcomes. Links to these works are provided within the body of this text. Please open these links in a web browser as they come along. A list of links to all of the web-based practice-led research outcomes presented in this thesis has also been provided in Appendix A.

A web page containing all of these links as well as links to additional web-based references to these works has been provided at: <http://writingcoastlines.net>

Backup: <http://luckysoap.com/writingcoastlines>



## **INTRODUCTION**

This introduction will define the research question, outline the aim and objectives of the research, situate the research within a critical context, and establish the methodological approach the research will take. It will include a note about the corpus and a chapter outline.

### **0.1. Research Question**

Can a juxtaposition of coastlines create a new narrative context from which to examine a multi-site-specific place-based identity?

In order to address this question it is necessary to understand two things:

- 1) What narratives resonate in the spaces between places separated by time, distance and ocean yet inextricably linked by generations of immigration?
- 2) Can digital networks serve as narrative structures for writing resonating between locations, beyond nations?

## 0.2. Aim and Objectives

*Writing Coastlines* aims to build new networked narrative structures for stories of place and displacement that resonate between sites, confusing and confounding boundaries between physical and digital, code and narrative, past and future, home and away.

The objectives of this research are:

1) to create a theoretical framework by identifying and incorporating strategies from performance writing, literary fiction, digital literature, locative narrative, networked art practises, and media archaeology.

2) to utilise that framework to undertake a formal investigation of:

- a) networks as places, placeholders, sites of exchange and narrative structures;
- b) forms of very short fiction capable of travelling through networks intact as narrative units; and
- c) ways in which the syntax and grammar of code languages inflect born-digital literary texts.

### 0.3. Context

Traditionally, the visual, media, performing, and literary arts have each referred to separate corpora, histories, institutions, theoretical frameworks, modes of production, venues, and audiences. This persistent and institutionally perpetuated separation is highly problematic for creating, disseminating, experiencing, and theorising multi-modal work which draws equally upon multiple artistic traditions. For example, Jason E. Lewis and Bruno Nadeau's interactive installation *Still Standing* (2005) invites participants to contemplate the textual poetic content of the work. I use the term 'participant' here because it not clear whether to participate in this work is to view it or read it or both. The textual content of the work can only be read in its entirety if the participant stands still in front of the work long enough for the letters of the poem to accrue in a silhouette of their body created by a combination of back projection and motion detection. When this work is presented in the context of a new media art gallery attended primarily by new media artists informed by visual and media art histories, works, theories, and practices, can the textual content of the work be read as literature? When *Still Standing* is read by Roberto Simanowski, a professor of media studies at the University of Basel, its textual content is considered in terms of new media art concerns: interface, interaction, and remediation (2011: 50-52). In what context might the work be considered in terms of performance? How would the textual content which accrues in the silhouette of the viewer/reader/participant be read in the context of the slush pile of a student-run print journal published under the auspices of an academic English Literature department? How might notions of

reading, writing, and performance be expanded to consider how the textual content we see is formed, informed, and performed by a vast and largely invisible text based on the NextText Java Library, written by Lewis, Nadeau, and others at Obx Labs in Montreal? These are the sorts of questions I will be asking of the practice-led research outcomes presented in this thesis.

*Writing Coastlines* is informed by and refers to the artistic traditions of drawing, collage, installation, mail art, new media art, net.art, digital literature, locative media, performance art, dramaturgy, spoken word, poetry, short fiction, the essay, and the novel. *Writing Coastlines* is also informed by and refers to the scientific traditions of cartography, geology, navigation, shipping, telegraphy, telephony, wireless transmission, network theory, mainframe computing, and computer programming. My bibliography reflects the diversity of source materials consulted in the course of this research. Appendix B reflects the diversity of public presentation contexts for the critical and creative practice-led research outcomes produced in the course of this research, ranging from new media art galleries to live performance venues, from academic conferences to artist's talks and workshops, from print and online journals to archives and libraries.

What, then, is the critical context for this thesis?

The practice-led research presented in *Writing Coastlines* has been undertaken within the following critical contexts: Digital Literature, Section 0.3.1.; Locative Narrative, Section 0.3.2.; Media Archaeology, Section 0.3.3.; and Performance Writing, Section 0.3.5. These emerging fields have been identified as contextually, conceptually, and methodologically critical to this research specifically for their capacity to draw together elements from diverse discourses, sources

materials, research practices, and modes of presentation. In the remainder of this section I will elaborate upon certain points of contention within these fields, identify areas of overlap between these fields, and clarify which aspects of these fields will be incorporated into my own research.

### **0.3.1. Digital Literature**

Not surprisingly, given the wide range of works, media, and modes of presentation encompassed by digital literature, nomenclature poses a significant problem. The word 'electronic' is referred to in the title of the two largest, oldest organisations in the field: E-Poetry, and the Electronic Literature Organization (ELO). E-Poetry is based at the Electronic Poetry Centre, SUNY Buffalo, NY, USA. An unattributed quotation which appeared on the index page of the Kingston University - London E-Poetry Festival 2013 portal states: "The 'poetry' in 'E-Poetry' does not signal a genre preference but an origin. That is, making as a means of realising art, a delight in digital literary invention..." This statement seems to suggest that the terms 'electronic' and 'digital' are interchangeable, and that poetry is somehow synonymous with 'making' and 'literary invention'. But what of narrative? As the presence of the word 'narrative' in the title of this thesis intends to suggest, the practice-led research outcomes presented herein originate from and are realised through a narrative impetus. Certain influential writers in the field of digital literature have chosen to focus entirely on poetry, to the exclusion of narrative forms. For 500 consecutive days Leonardo Flores posted short reviews of works of

digital literature to a blog called I ♥ E-Poetry. On more than one occasion he reviewed all the works in an exhibition except those which he deems narrative, thus creating a resource which is at once invaluable to the field and full of holes.

Christopher Funkhouser has used the term 'digital poetry' in the titles of both his books (2007, 2012) and, like Flores, has limited his discussion to works he deems poetry. As discussed in relation to critical writing on early computer-generated texts in Chapter 2. Section 2.3., this choice of terminology has had critical ramifications for the field.

The Electronic Literature Organization (ELO) does not overtly distinguish between poetry and narrative forms. According to their website, the ELO was founded in Chicago in 1999 "to foster and promote the reading, writing, teaching, and understanding of literature as it develops and persists in a changing digital environment." Electronic literature scholar and curator Lori Emerson has observed that the collecting, codifying and conference-making initiatives of the Electronic Literature Organization have helped coalesce a divergent set of practices into a brand of sorts (Emerson 2011). The term 'electronic literature' was adopted by Electronic Literature as a Model for Creativity and Innovation in Practice (ELMCIP), a collaborative research project funded by Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA) from 2011-2013. Yet the term is not without its opponents.

In "Weapons Of The Deconstructive Masses: Whatever the *Electronic* in *Electronic Literature* may or may not mean," John Cayley argues against the term 'electronic literature,' advocating instead for 'writing in networked and programmable media' (2009). In addition to being a somewhat unwieldy term, the

word 'writing' becomes problematic in cases of work which also draw heavily on audio visual elements in their production and in their presentation.

Increasingly, in traditional literary contexts such as the annual Modern Languages Association (MLA) conference, digital literary works are being presented in exhibitions, a mode of dissemination more commonly associated with visual and media arts. An exhibition called "Electronic Literature" was presented at MLA 2012, which featured "over 160 works by artists who create literary works involving various forms and combinations of digital media, such as video, animation, sound, virtual environments, and multimedia installations, for desktop computers, mobile devices, and live performance" (Berens et. al. 2012). Note the use of the term 'artists' rather than 'authors'. Similarly, although the following tweet announces an exhibition called "Electrifying Literature," the participants are referred to as artists rather than writers and the exhibition itself is referred to as a media art show:

@dgrigar Here's the list of artists exhibiting at the upcoming "Electrifying Literature" media art show @ ELO 2012:  
<http://hastac.org/blogs/dgrigar/2012/03/05/electrifying-literature-affordances-and-constraints-elo-2012-conference>  
Monday 17:03 05 March 2012

In *Digital Art and Meaning: Reading Kinetic Poetry, Text Machines, Mapping Art, and Interactive Installations*, Roberto Simanowski favours the term 'digital literature' because it:

seems to offer the least occasion for misunderstandings. It does not refer to concrete individual characteristics such as interactivity, networking, or nonsequentiality as do terms such as *interactive literature*, *Net literature*, or *hypertext*, which are better qualified to describe genres of digital literature. Instead, it designates a certain technology, something the term *electronic* would not guarantee, given the existence of other arguably electronic media such as cinema, radio, or television (2011: 32) (the emphasis is the author's).

In Chapter 2. the telegraph and the wireless are discussed at length. These media are literally electronic. They are also electronic in a literary sense insofar as they are closely associated with the transmission of written, alphabetic language. I have opted to use the term 'digital literature' throughout this thesis as the practice-led research outcomes I present herein are distributed through a digital network - the internet. Wherever possible I endeavour to apply more specific terms to individual works, such as: computer-generated narrative dialogue, or web-based work, or poly-vocal performance.

Whatever their specific form and/or content, all internet-based writing and art works emerge from, refer to, and thus must be understood within the complex context of the internet itself, which is in fact a conglomeration of contexts. For their function and for their intelligibility internet-based works are dependant upon the internet and all its vagaries, from the constraints of its physical infrastructure to the menace of its many viruses, government spies, commercial trackers, cookies, and crawling bots, from the Babel babble of its multiple code languages to the competing visual and textual messages of its surface contents. How can works created for and within this highly provisional, seemingly immaterial, endlessly recombinatory context be read, watched, interacted with, participated in, understood, or indeed commented upon in any other?

The Electronic Literature Organization distinguishes what it terms 'born-digital' literary texts from texts of traditional print literature. It is not enough for a print text - such as a poem, short story, or novel - to be published digitally - on a web page, in a PDF, or e-book, for example. The text must also exhibit "important literary aspects that take advantage of the capabilities and contexts provided by the



stand-alone or networked computer” (ELO website). The stated goal of the ELO is “[t]o bring born-digital literature to the attention of authors, scholars, developers, and the current generation of readers for whom the printed book is no longer an exclusive medium of education or aesthetic practice” (ELO website). The framing of this statement of intent in terms directly oppositional to the printed book belies the degree to which scholarship in the field of electronic literature emerges from and still refers heavily to a generally unresponsive academic literary tradition defined by the fixity of texts.

For centuries the printed book operated as a closed system, invested in concealing the structural processes of writing from the reader. In his now infamous New York Times article, “The End of Books,” Robert Coover observed, “much of the novel's alleged power is embedded in the line, that compulsory author-directed movement from the beginning of a sentence to its period, from the top of the page to the bottom, from the first page to the last” (1992). And yet, as Vannevar Bush astutely noted nearly fifty years earlier, “the human mind does not work that way. It operates by association. With one item in its grasp, it snaps instantly to the next ... in accordance with some intricate web of trails carried by the cells of the brain” (1945). In *Hyper/Text/Theory*, George P. Landow suggested that “the very idea of hypertextuality seems to have taken form at approximately the same time that poststructuralism developed... both grow out of a dissatisfaction with the related phenomena of the printed book and hierarchical thought” (1994). For three decades Jacques Derrida insisted, “only in the book ... could we indefinitely designate the writing beyond the book” (1978). By the time of his last book, *Paper Machine*, Derrida was writing of the World Wide Web as the ubiquitous book finally

reconstituted, as “electronic writing, traveling at top speed from one spot on the globe to another, and linking together, beyond frontiers” (2001).

Given how large the book looms in the field of literature it is hardly surprising that certain print-biased critical tendencies persist in digital literary scholarship. For example, at each of the ELO, E-Poetry, and ELMCIP conferences I have attended over the course of this research, academic papers have been presented offering ‘close readings’ of the screenic surfaces of born-digital texts, texts which will never appear on screen in the same way again. Scholarly writing in the field tends to focus either on the technical aspects of the work, with little regard for the literary aspects of the work, or exclusively on the literary aspect of the work to the exclusion of other more technical elements. For example, in writing about my web-based work *Entre Ville* (Carpenter 2006), the central image of which is a spiral-bound note book, Jessica Pressman identifies “a tendency to re-evaluate and remediate the appearance and aptitudes of paper and print-based literary practices” (2009b). Pressman’s literary reading eclipses the visual art, media art, mapping, psychogeography, and performance practices informing the work. The marks inscribed on the image of the spiral-bound notebook are drawn, not written. Although I would argue that there is a close relationship between drawing and writing, in this case, this particular drawing was made in the context of my study of drawing in art school, and as such, is informed by the study of the history of drawing and printmaking, and a classical training and studio practice in line, gesture, and figure drawing. *Entre Ville* was initially commissioned, created, funded, produced and presented within visual and new media art institutions. These must be considered part of the critical context of the work. In *Writing at the Limit: The*

*Novel in the New Media Ecology*, Daniel Punday observes, “many new media theorists have noted that it is a particular weakness of literary critics to emphasise those elements of new media that are the most similar to print narrative” (2012, 201). Punday situates *Entre Ville* within a broader media ecology than Pressman:

This work embraces the multiplicity of media that make up the work - text, drawn image, photograph, video sound - and emphasises the tensions and contradictions between their understanding of space... Carpenter’s poem embraces the tensions and limits of its constituent media (Pundy 201).

In *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*, N. Katherine Hayles (2008) makes a critical distinction between ‘literature’ and ‘the literary,’ pointing to ‘the literary’ as having a much broader conceptual framework than ‘literature,’ within which certain literary hybrids may bridge physical and digital modes of creation and dissemination through a process Hayles terms intermediation (45). Examples of intermediation include: Nick Montfort and Scott Rettberg’s *Implementation* (2006) a collaborative serial sticker novel; Jason Camlot’s, *Tickertext* (2010), a multi-authored Twitter feed displayed on a public stock ticker; and Daniel Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves* (2000), a hypermedia print novel parts of which were first published online. These literary hybrids are also prime examples of what Derrida terms “writing beyond the book” (1978). In “End of Books” Coover asserts that, “hypertext does not translate into print” (1992), yet increasingly, hypertextual processes are employed in print works. In Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*, every time the word ‘house’ appears in the body of text it is printed in a dark ashy grey. These visual referents to hypertext hotspots, or links, trigger mental associations which operate just as Bush suggested, “in accordance with some intricate web of trails carried by the cells of the brain” (1945).

There are certainly areas of convergence between new media and narrative which do not rely upon or refer specifically to print forms of literary narrative. Of particular relevance to *Writing Coastlines* are works which combine new media and/or networked art practices, cartography, visual images, and narrative text to articulate speculative and/or contested spaces. For example, Roderick Coover's *Unknown Territories: Voyage into the Unknown* (2008) merges a multiple-point-of-view historical quotidian narrative of John Wesley Powell's 1869 expedition up the then uncharted Colorado river with mapping, illustration, panoramic photography, cinematography, and Flash programming in a series of Interactive Panoramic Environments which can be presented both in art museums and online. And Paula Levine's *shadows from another place* (2004) uses Flash programming, the web, cartography, and GPS data to transpose the co-ordinates of American bombs dropped on Baghdad onto corresponding locations in the city of San Francisco, thereby re-framing ties between local and global territories and events.

### 0.3.2. Locative Narrative

The combination of new media, narrative, networked, and cartographic concerns identified in the example of Paula Levine's work cited above may be termed 'locative media'. "What, though, are locative media?" asks Rita Raley in an essay "On Locative Narrative" (2008). Raley situates the practice of locative media in linguistic and artistic terms:

The name [locative media] comes from a workshop hosted by a Latvian media arts center (2002) and is said to derive from the locative noun case indicating position in Balto-Slavic languages (akin to English pronouns 'in', 'by' and 'on'). The practice, on the other hand, emerges from the convergence between site-specific, conceptual, participatory, and land art practises and the widespread use of functional global location data (Raley 2008: 125).

In this same essay Raley cites my web-based work *in absentia* (Carpenter 2008) and Hight, Knowlton, and Spellman's *34 North by 118 West: An Interactive Site Specific Narrative* (2002) as examples of 'locative narrative', which she identifies as a specifically literary approach to locative media. Both these examples merge new media technologies with layers of visual and cartographic data ranging from old maps and aerial photographs to digital resources such as the Google Maps API, and both employ a diverse set of research and creation strategies ranging from psychogeography, *dérive*, walking, and performance. In addition to the above cited set of influences, locative narrative is indebted to literary narrative archaeologies of site such as Walter Benjamin's *The Arcades Project* (2002), and W. G. Sebald's *Rings of Saturn* (1999). In contrast to locative media projects such as *[murmur]* (2003) and *Urban Tapestries* (Proboscis: 2004), which have invited members of the public to contribute narrative content, locative narrative "allows for the authorial

implementation of the conventional control structures of narrative” (Raley 2008: 130). There was no ‘user-generated content’ in *in absentia*, for example; all the text was written by me or by authors I commissioned. Like most locative works, *in absentia* is set in an urban context, that of the Mile End neighbourhood of Montreal. In “Narrative Archaeology,” Jeremy Hight suggests “city patterns can be equated to the patterns within literature: repetition, sub-text shift, metaphor, cumulative resonances, emergence of layers, decay and growth” (2013). In “Data and Narrative: Location Aware fiction,” Kate Armstrong argues that “transposing narrative into the large scale physical setting of the city has the consequence of pushing the limits of narrative form in the same kinds of ways hypertext does in relation to linear fiction” (2003). In the “Walking in the City” chapter of *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau categorised pedestrians as “walkers... whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban “text” they write without being able to read... ” (de Certeau 1984: 93). Walking is the main mode of interacting with locative works. Walking activates these works, and at the same time proscribes their limits. The bulk of the texts which might be employed toward establishing a theoretical framework for locative narrative refer to urban contexts in large part due to the long-standing practice of walking in the city. The loci of the practice-led research outcomes presented in this thesis are predominately rural. Examples of hybrid rural walking art, writing, and performance practices abound in the UK, including Richard Long, *A Line Made by Walking* (1967); Wrights and Sights, *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere* (2006), and *Mythogeography: A Guide to Walking Sideways* (2010). An examination of the texts produced by both urban and rural

walking practices resulted in the practice-led research outcome *Wanderkammer: A Walk Through Texts* (Carpenter 2011), which will be discussed in Section 0.4.3.1.

The creation of and participation in rural locative narrative on a large scale presents particular challenges. The physical setting - the coastlines on either side of the Atlantic and the Atlantic Ocean itself - presents an exponentially larger scale than that of the city. As I determined through the research method of contextual enquiry to be discussed in Section 0.4.3.1., in England, huge swathes of the well-travelled South West Coastal Path are outside data or mobile signal. In Nova Scotia, there is no unified coastal path network to speak of. No one body could follow the 'thicks and thins' of both coastlines at once. The use of geolocation data from one coastline to tell the stories of or along another would constitute a superimposition of coastlines, an imposition, an act or instance of placing over or above. *Writing Coastlines* is concerned, however, with a juxtaposition of coastlines. Juxtaposition is an act or instance of placing close together or side by side, for comparison or contrast. This distinction is a critical one. By placing over, two places become one. Placing side by side implies that there is a space between; this in-between space is the locus of my research. In between these long rural lines of coastal 'texts' lies the vast Atlantic - unnavigable for all but a very few individuals who might be considered analogous to 'walkers' i.e. sailors of small craft. The Atlantic is crisscrossed with patterns, which this thesis terms 'communications networks' and frames as narrative structures, but the "thicks and thins" of this vast text are always read elsewhere, at a distance, reconstituted on a device of some kind, or performed as an event.

### 0.3.3. Media Archaeology

*Writing Coastlines* advocates for the situation of contemporary practices and processes of digital literature, new media, locative media, locative narrative, and networked art within conceptually broad and historically long cultural, social, spatial, and material contexts. Yet it eschews discussion of artistic or scientific media in terms of a chronological or linear progression of advancements and inventions. This constitutes a break from historical accounts of digital literature and new media art which tend to begin with the advent of the digital computer or with the 'new' media in question. For example, N. Katherine Hayles opens *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary* by stating: "the history of electronic literature is entwined with the evolution of digital computers" (2008: 2) and, as the title would suggest, *Mainframe Experimentalism: Early Computing and the Foundations of the Digital Arts* "begins with the era of room-size mainframe computers in the late 1950s ... and ends in the 1970s with the transition to microcomputers" (Higgins & Kahn 2012: 1). The usefulness and indeed the accuracy of both of these 'starting point' statements will be contested in Chapter 2. Section 2.3. Taking a somewhat less linear approach, the basic premise put forth by Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin in *Remediation: Understanding New Media* is that new media remediates old media (1999), which is to say, aspects of older media are retained in newer media. For example, the QWERTY keyboard, developed for the manual typewriter, is still used on touch-screen smart phones. The vagueness of remediation as a concept will be addressed in Chapter 2. Section 2.4.



The emerging field of media archaeology seeks to understand media new and old through a re-examination of the past, but it does not take ‘the past’ to be a uniform or linear progression. Jussi Parikka defines media archaeology as a “set of interdisciplinary theories and methodologies that address media history in new, often unconventional ways...” (2011 n.p.). In *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means*, Sigfried Zielinski - subverts the temporal assumptions of linear conceptions of history with the call: “do not seek the old in the new, but find something new in the old” (2008: 3). This call is taken up in the methodological approach of re-sounding outlined in Section 0.4.4. and employed throughout *Writing Coastlines*.

Media archaeology stems from multiple backgrounds, merging aspects of media theory with the afore-mentioned archaeologies of site put forth in Walter Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* (2002), the archaeologies of power put forth in Michel Foucault’s *Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002), the work of Canadian media writer Marshall McLuhan (1964), and the work of German media writer Friedrich Kittler (1999). The admittedly vague use of the term ‘archaeology’ varies widely across the field and is therefore highly contentious. Whereas field archaeology analyses specific material remains in relation to the site of their excavation, media archaeology tends to refer to media in more general terms - the typewriter, rather than a typewriter - resulting in analysis based on critical contexts or media ecologies rather than on physical sites. Media archaeology takes a material approach to media theory, with an emphasis on hardware, source code, archives, and storage mediums. This approach extends into “various brands of new materialism... not reducible to the materialism of Marxist theories of the political economy” (Parikka

2012: 84), which consider the materiality of bodies, sites, media, and networks. It is at this critical juncture that part of the critical underpinning of media archaeology intersects with and thus may be adapted to address the embodied practices of walking discussed in relation to locative narrative in Section 0.3.2., the materials and material practices of visual art cited in Section 0.3.4., and with the methodological approaches of performance writing put forward in Section 0.3.5. The use of the term 'media' to describe a rather more amorphous in-between state will be explored in detail in Chapter 2. Section 2.2.

Media archaeological scholarship has thus far focused primarily on audio-visual media, partly because of the backgrounds of the afore-mentioned thinkers. Certain notable ventures into textual media are emerging: Noah Wardrip-Fruin merges digital literary and media archaeological methodologies in his work on Christopher Strachey's *Love Letter* generator (2005, 2012), discussed in Chapter 2. Section 2.3.; and Derek Beaulieu and Lori Emerson situate what they term the 'dirty-concrete' poetry of John Riddell within a media archaeology of the typewriter (2013). In both these examples, the works in question and the media through which they were created date from the 1950s and 1960s. Some scholars have looked at artists taking media archaeological approaches to creating contemporary new media art works (Parikka 2011). Lori Emerson takes a media archaeological approach to examining the interfaces of contemporary works of digital literature (2014). Thus far there has been little writing on authors taking media archaeological approaches to creating contemporary works of digital literature, as I have done in discussing the practice-led research outcomes *Whisper Wire* and *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* presented in Chapter 2.

The critique of approaches to history which follow a linear progression of advancements and inventions is not unique to media archaeology. In *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* (2000), Manuel de Landa argues that history is characterised not by linear progressions but rather as multiple co-existing processes undergoing shifts between states. Just as portions of a body of water - a partially frozen lake, for example - may be simultaneously liquid solid, and gas; so too a body of work - such as the practice-led research outcomes presented herein - may be simultaneously writing and research, code and narrative, physical and digital, web-based and live performance. Digital literature operates in the non-narrative numerical logic of the computer, yet it emerges from experimental writing practices which have pushed the boundaries of what narrative is and does into the realms of the non-linear, the intertextual, the hypertextual, the hypermediated, the multi-modal, and the performative. In *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print*, Jay David Bolter argues: "It makes sense that creative writers should lead the way in developing the possibilities of electronic hypertext. Throughout the 20th century, modern and post modern fiction and art in general have been by definition open to experiment..." (2000: 121). Thus, whilst *Writing Coastlines* borrows certain methodological approaches from media archaeology in order to address the material context of transatlantic communications networks and of digital literature, these are situated within a broader theoretical framework, as outlined in Section 0.4.4.

#### 0.3.4. Antecedents from Literary and Visual Arts

Among the print books most often cited by scholars as being antecedent to digital literature are *The life and opinions of Tristram Shandy, gentleman* (Sterne 1759-1767), *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard* (*A throw of the dice will never abolish chance*) (Mallarmé 1914), *Hopscotch* (Cortázar 1966), and the Choose Your Own Adventure books published by Bantam in the late 1970s and early 1980s, in which: “You’re the star of the story! Choose from 37 possible endings” (Packard 1981). Digital literary scholars also reference the cut-up techniques of William S. Burroughs, the exquisite corpse and other writing games of the Dadaists and Surrealists, the constraint-based writing methods explored by Oulipo group founded in France in the 1960s (Funkhouser 2007: 33), and to a lesser extent, the practices of *dérive* and *détournement* put forth by the Situationists as discussed in relation to the practice-led research outcome *The Broadside of a Yarn* (Carpenter 2012) in Chapter 3. Section 3.2. As we saw in the example of *Entre Ville* presented in Section 0.3.1., digital literary scholars who have come from English Literature backgrounds are less likely to discuss digital literary antecedents from visual or performing arts, due in part to an unfamiliarity with either the creative or the critical corpus.

Jay David Bolter has suggested that electronic literature should look to art theory for more advanced thinking on medium and multi-modality (2010). I studied art history, theory, and practice; I graduated with a BFA in Studio Art with a concentration in Fibres and Sculpture from Concordia University in Montreal in 1995. At that time, text as a medium and writing as a mode of communication were almost entirely unconsidered in visual art theory, and thus far, art theory has shown

no sign of looking toward digital literary theory for more advanced thinking on intertextuality and the performance of code languages in digital art work. Common ground between digital, material, textual, sited, performative, and embodied artistic and scientific practices may be found in the various brands of new materialism to have emerged from post-modernism, feminism, and cultural theory. The digital literary practice-led research outcomes presented in this thesis are informed by material approaches to 'media' theory which evolved quite separately from media archaeology through contemporary fibre arts practices' engagement with gender, embodiment, labour, and technology (Plant 1996) (Bachmann 1998). The use of print iterations of these digital literary works as scripts for live performance is informed by a number of print books published by experimental writers, performance artists, and musicians including Hannah Weiner's *Code Poems* (1982), Yoko Ono's event scores published in *Grapefruit* (1964), and John Cage's *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (1961).

Useful points of entry into thinking and writing about appropriation, materiality, scale, and spatiality in works of digital literature may also be found in the range of hybrid visual art practices which may be loosely termed 'collage', exemplified by works and practices as diverse as Joseph Cornell's boxes (1942-53); photo-montage as practised by the Russian avant-garde Constructivists El Lissitzky, Alexander Rodchenko and others (Gray 1962: 270-315); photocopied zines (Duncombe 1997), and artists' books (Drucker 1994). In "Reorienting Narrative: E-lit as Psychogeography," Illya Szilak turns to collage to address questions of place and spatiality: "In much of her work, writer/artist J. R. Carpenter fabricates hybrid places that are both 'virtual' and attached to real world locales" (Szilak 2013). Szilak likens

these 'hybrid places' to a Max Ernst collage called "The Master's Bedroom - It's Worth Spending A Night There" (1920).

In an elongated rectilinear view, we peer into a room populated with furniture and animals. Ernst copied these objects from a page in a teaching-aids catalog, preserving the spacing, but including only some of the objects. The result is disorienting. We cannot resolve the disparities in size within the Cartesian confines of the room. Despite the allusion to an intimate, familiar domestic space, we find our selves in a very strange place" (Szilak 2013).

And so too, in considering the context of *Writing Coastlines* we find ourselves in a very strange place. Part visual, part textual, part physical, part technological, part embodied, part conceptual... Through what conceptual framework might we consider these seemingly impossibly disparate elements all at once? In this thesis, the non-narrative numerical logic of the computer, the non-linear, intertextual, hypermediated, and performative nature of the computer-generated narrative, the physical landscape and the 'hybrid place' of the collage are all negotiated within the critical context of performance writing.

### 0.3.5. Performance Writing

Performance writing is yet another unwieldy term – not quite familiar enough for us to assume we already know what it means, not quite descriptive enough for us to simply guess. Fitting, then, that this term refers to a field with a wilful unwillingness to commit to fixed definitions. In *Thirteen Ways of Talking about Performance Writing*, John Hall advocates for ‘definings’ rather than definitions:

Like ‘writing’ ‘defining’ can best be treated as a gerund, catching the present tense of the verb up into a noun, without losing the continuous dynamic of the verb: the process of the act of defining. If the process were to end in resolution we would move the defining into definition. We would know.

We won’t (Hall 2008: 21).

The term ‘performance writing’ once referred quite specifically to a cross-art-form writing program pioneered at Dartington College of Art, a specialist performance arts institution which operated in South Devon, England, from 1961-2008. The practices it refers to have been informed by a much broader set of influences, including the cross-disciplinarity and collective engagement and post-modern modes of writing that emerged from Black Mountain College in North Carolina in the 1950s (Allsopp 1999: 78), and the upsurge in interest in performance as critical discourse within cultural theory, postmodernism, new materialism, and feminism in the 1980s. Performance writing pedagogy, methodology, and practices developed by active practitioner-lecturers at Dartington and enriched by an international program of visiting artists have been adopted and adapted by independent and academic researchers, practitioners, pedagogues, and institutions around the world.

In the UK, performance writing methodologies and sensibilities have spread into a rich diversity of artistic forms and institutional formulations, including but by no means limited to: performance in/with digital literature, as explored by Jerome Fletcher in the context of the afore-mentioned HERA-funded ELMCIP research project; thematic multi-disciplinary writing workshops, as led by Devon-based Writing&; digital glitch literature and electronic voice phenomena performance, as explored by Liverpool and London based Mercy; conceptual writing and small press publishing, as explored by York-based Information as Material, and language and voice as explored by Bristol-based salon series Tertulia. In 2005, in Bury, UK, Text Festival hosted 'Partly Writing 4: Writing and the Poetics of Exchange', a session with which a number of performance writing people were involved (Trehy 2005). Text Festival continues to present work which is profoundly 'performance writing' in nature. Affinities with performance writing are also evident, though not in name, at Birkbeck, at Royal Holloway, and in the MA in Art Writing developed by Maria Fusco at Goldsmiths University (Fusco et. al. 2011). Performance writing sensibilities are also evident in the Writing-PAD initiatives, which include the publication of the Journal of Writing in Creative Practice, which published a special issue dedicated to Performance Writing in June 2014. And in Open Dialogues: critical writing on and as performance, a writing collaboration that produces writing on and as performance founded by Rachel Lois Clapham and Mary Paterson in 2008. Performance Writing sensibilities also appear within the CRASSH research centre at Cambridge University, in such seminars as: 'Beyond the authority of the 'text': performance as paradigm, past and present' (CRASSH 2013).



As the terms and conditions of the field of performance writing expand beyond the specific context of Dartington and evolve in new contexts, its corpus grows exponentially. Most notably, a two-volume publication by John Hall *Essays on Performance Writing, Poetics and Poetry* (2013), and a special issue of *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice* 6.3 (2014), to which I contributed an article co-authored with Barbara Bridger. Performance writing has informed and has been informed by a wide range of experimental writing practices known by many other names, including: Art Writing, Conceptual Writing, Performance Poetry, Sound Poetry, Digital Literature, and Alt Lit. When I use the term 'performance writing' I refer to a growing set of practices, methodologies, and sensibilities informed by this extended field. In the next section I will put forward performance writing as a methodology.



#### 0.4. Methodology

“How then shall we set forth a story, which containeth both many places and many times?” Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry* (1595).

The broad scope of the critical context which frames the research presented in *Writing Coastlines* necessitates engagement with a number of emerging subject areas, each with their own research, creation, dissemination, and documentation methodologies. Whilst I employ methods from each of these methodologies, overall, I negotiate between these various methods through the burgeoning methodology of performance writing. This thesis aims to contribute to the formalising of performance writing as a methodology by: identifying a corpus of key texts, as identified in Section 0.5. Note About the Corpus; by employing and articulating my use of performance writing as a methodology throughout this research; and by publicly presenting new critical writing to the field.

Performance writing takes a conceptually broad and overtly interdisciplinary approach to what writing is and what writing does in a range of social and disciplinary contexts, exploring writing and textual practice in relation to visual art, digital media, installation, performance, collaborative practices, sound/audio work, book art, and page-based media. As such, performance writing methodology is particularly well suited to expanding and adapting to accommodate new questions posed by new critical contexts. Indeed, a principal tenet of performance writing is that context is everything. This pragmatic approach to writing considers the performance of text in relation to broader social and material contexts. The intelligibility of that which is written is intertwined with both the context of its

production and of its consumption. The act of writing performs texts for possible future readers; the act of reading performs that which has been written. Integral to this methodology is the notion that the act of writing (and of reading) is always a performance, and that which is written (and read) is always research. The act of writing (and reading) is an event, and that which is written (and read) is material.

John Hall articulates the close relationship between writing and performing:

The performance writer writes the space between the writing and the performing, where the writing is always about to leave to become something else (2013: 27).

This 'becoming something else' points toward performance writing's inherently iterative approach to composition, which will be elaborated as a research method in the next section.

#### **0.4.1 Iteration**

Writing is iterative; texts go through drafts, refer to other texts, are translated into other languages, and may be adapted into other media. In order for a novel to be printed an author must aim for completion, resolution, a fixed and 'final' text. In contrast to the Saussurian system, which conceives of language as stable, Jean-Jacques Lecercle argues that language is a constructed system, "constantly subject to historical change... We therefore need to conceive of language not as a stable, arrested system, but as a *system of variations*" (2006: 11) (the emphasis is the author's). A performance writer incorporates variability, instability, transformation, and change into the process of composition, so that the writing is never fixed or final, but always on the cusp of 'becoming something else' (Hall 2013: 27).

In performance writing methodology, the term 'iteration' is often used to refer loosely to writing processes which may also be termed 'recursive' as they involve the repeated application of a process to successive results. Performance writing identifies iteration as a key method because the repetition of certain processes - making public, for example, or translation - interrogates the process of writing as it is unfolding, invites new ways of reading, and thus engenders new ways of writing. Within this methodology, iteration is employed toward an extended notion of compositional process which bears the traces of its own making.

Throughout this research, I have performed the writing and rewriting, reading and rereading, sounding and resounding of texts through a continuum of forms and contexts. Many of the phrases, sentences, and paragraphs contained within the body of the text of this thesis and its associated practice-led research outcomes have undergone multiple iterations, having been read, underlined, discussed, overheard, remembered, spoken, written by hand, typed, blogged, copied, pasted, tagged, encoded, animated, uploaded, downloaded, run, parsed, projected, published, presented in an artists' talk, rewritten, presented in an academic paper, read silently, read aloud, represented in a performance script, read aloud in multiple voices, listened to live, watched on screen, interacted with, edited, re-purposed, re-mixed, and so on. Methods for performing these individual tasks have come from diverse fields of practice. For example, writing a computer program would generally be said to be a standard method of digital literature. A performance writing approach to writing and about writing computer programs situates the act of writing within a collaborative dialogic compositional process; articulates the aim of this writing to be the creation of a highly unstable texts which

will be immediately re-contextualised into non-digital contexts, such as live poly-vocal performance, which may then result in the generation of a new text, such as a performance script; and draws attention to the close association between the code languages and the natural languages they perform on screen. Thus performance writing methodology offers a conceptual framework through which to observe and articulate the transformations a text undergoes and elicits as it moves through forms, methods, and modes of practice.

In “What do we mean by Performance Writing?” a keynote address delivered at the opening of the first Symposium of Performance Writing, Dartington College of Arts, 12 April 1996, Caroline Bergvall proposed that:

the performance of writing would be this observation which seeks to locate expressedly [sic] the context and means for writing, both internal and external to language, whether these be activated for and through a stage, for and through a site, a time-frame, a performer's body, the body of a voice or the body of a page (Bergvall 1996).

The democratic, inclusive and above all extensible nature of performance writing methodology allows, seventeen years later, for the détournement of Bergvall's statement with a digital literary in mind which barely existed at the time of her writing. In “Performing Digital Texts in European Contexts,” a commentary column I wrote for *Jacket2* in 2011, I rephrased Bergvall's statement as follows:

The performance of digital texts both internal and external to code languages may be activated for and through a CPU, a network, a browser, a hand-held device, a <body> tag, a performer's body, the body of a voice or the body of a page (Carpenter 2011).

To further underline the iterative nature of performance writing methodology, it must be noted here that the above cited détournement was later integrated into “Call and Response: Toward a Digital Dramaturgy,” a presentation

paper co-written and co-presented with Barbara Bridger at *Performance Writing Weekend 2012*, Arnolfini, Bristol, UK, May 2012. That paper was then expanded by Bridger and myself into an article of the same name published in *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice* (2014), and included in Appendix D. The text in question performs differently in each of these contexts.

#### **0.4.2. Material Approaches to Media**

Performance writing takes a material approach to language and to writing. This approach is informed by a Marxist tradition of materialism, which considers language in relation to the power structures it exerts, and incorporates aspects of the various strands of new-materialism mentioned in Sections 3.3.3. - 0.3.5., which consider language as an event occurring in relation to the complex temporalities, encoded spaces, and radical multiplicities of site and of the body as an assemblage of collective utterance (Deleuze and Guattari (2007 [1987])). In particular, this thesis employs a material approach to consider physical and embodied aspects of the coastlines on either side of the North Atlantic Ocean, the material nature of transatlantic communications networks, the performance of computer-generated narratives passing through these networks, and the causal chain of interpellation (Lecerle 2006: 102) between physical distance, material media, code language, and the assemblages of collective utterance which perform digital texts in live poly-vocal contexts.

From the outset, the performance writing area at Dartington College of Art recognised that one of the areas of its investigation would be the impact of the digital on the creation and display of writing. In 1994 John Hall noted:

“Developments in computer technology open up new possibilities by the month” (Hall 2008 [1994]: 24). As a Principal Investigator in the ELMCIP research project, Jerome Fletcher, Associate Professor of Performance Writing at Falmouth University, has contributed significantly to the expansion of performance writing methodology into the realm of the digital literary (2010, 2012). *Writing Coastlines* aims to further this expansion of performance writing methodology through employment of research methods informed by material practices of visual arts and material approaches to theorising digital media and digital literature.

Engagement with multiple media histories pertaining to generations of transatlantic communications networks developed over long time spans necessitates the adoption of certain elements of media archaeological methodology, which, as stated in Section 0.3.3., takes a material approach to media theory. Media archaeology engages in an active process of ‘defining’ through the decidedly performance writing strategies of rewriting, re-versioning, and re-sounding, proposing multiple backgrounds, counter-histories, and alternate interpretations of how we came to our present situation. In *What is Media Archaeology?* Jussi Parikka states: “Thinking cyclically has been one media-archaeological strategy for critiquing the hegemony of the new” (2012: 11). Thus, in each of the three chapters presented in this thesis, I move forward and backward through time, digging into the background reasons why a certain object, statement, discourse or media apparatus was born, and questioning why some of the aforementioned persist in later media archaeological eras.

Throughout this thesis, I extend the genealogical methods developed by Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002) to include etymology as a form of



engagement with an ongoing process ‘defining,’ toward addressing questions of multiple points of origin as well as multiple divergent paths taken from single points of origin resulting in compound meanings of certain key words. For example, here in this section on methodology, it is useful to note that the word ‘method’ stems from the Greek *methodos* meaning ‘pursuit of knowledge’, combining the words *meta-* expressing development, and *hodos* meaning ‘path’ or ‘way.’ The association between a path and a passage of writing will recur throughout this thesis. A core component of my methodology and thus a significant contribution of this research is the determination of a not-necessarily-linear path through a conceptually broad and historically long critical context and referent corpus.

In addition to a wilful unwillingness to commit to fixed definitions, both performance writing and media archaeology eschew any suggestion of a fixed corpus, preferring rather to assemble a fresh corpus around each new set of questions posed, just as I have done in this thesis. Intriguingly, both performance writing and media archaeology cite Walter Benjamin’s *Arcades Project* as a methodological forerunner. Just as Benjamin drew on a multitude of sources - textual, visual, architectural, archival, tactile, social, experiential - so too this thesis refers to a broad corpus, the hybrid nature of which I address in Section 0.4.

### **0.4.3. Contextual Enquiry**

Performance writing methodology incorporates the method of contextual enquiry - examination of work in a broader social context. Throughout the course of this research I have engaged in contextual enquiry in the following ways:

#### **0.4.3.1. Physical & Embodied Contextual Enquiry**

Physically, I engaged in a contextual enquiry of portions of the coastlines on both sides of the Atlantic. Within the extended notion of writing put forth in Chapter 1. Section 1.1. I considered the act of walking specific portions of coastal paths and visiting specific coastal sites to constitute an embodied, physical, and spatialised writing and reading of coastlines.

In order to explore the notion that these coastlines are themselves point of transmission and reception, in the UK I visited communications at Housel Bay, Poldu, Porthcurno, Sennen Cove, Pendennis Castle, harbours of Falmouth, Plymouth, Dartmouth, and Bristol. Intent upon physically, bodily writing passages linking ports and other sites of import to transatlantic communications networks, I undertook a series of long walks along segments of the South West Coast Path. The longest of these - from the train station at Penzance, where the main line train to and from London begins and ends, to Porthcurno, where a global network of telegraph cables once began - took seven hours. I had intended to Tweet as I walked, thereby writing a time-stamped, textual, and geolocated trail of my embodied passage. There was little or no data reception for long stretches of the walk, rendering the phone useless as a locative writing device and as a potential reading device, for any locative narrative I might make of this route. This long walk connected but two points of critical interest to this thesis. No one walk could connect the sea ports of Dartmouth, Plymouth, Falmouth, and Bristol, the communications ports at Whitesands Bay, Housel Bay, Lizard, Poldhu, and Porthcurno, and all their corresponding ports on the opposite side of the Atlantic.

The research method of contextual inquiry led me to conclude that long-distance walking in rural terrain does not readily lend itself to either the writing or reading of a literary narrative archaeology of site on the scale demanded by this thesis.

Building upon this physical research, I further developed this extended notion of spatialised writing and reading in part through the creation and publication of *Wanderkammer: A Walk Through Texts* (Carpenter 2011) [<http://luckysoap.com/wanderkammer>]. This practice-led research outcome was produced early on in the course of my research, and is not discussed elsewhere in this thesis, but I mention it here as it was critical to the formulation of those portions of the Context and Methodology sections of this Introduction pertaining to locative narrative, and to the writing on walking in Chapter 1. *Wanderkammer* was initially published in the context of a feature called *Walk Poems: A Series of Reviews of Walking Projects*, edited by Louis Bury and Corey Frost for *Jacket2* (2011). As the work itself was hosted on my own server I was able to add to *Wanderkammer* throughout the course of this research. Playing on the word 'wunderkammer' - which the OED defines as a place where a collection of curiosities and rarities is exhibited - *Wanderkammer* is a web-based collection of hyperlinked quotations from curious and rare writings on the topic of wandering. It is a bibliography of sorts, which serves both to frame my extended notion of writing and reading coastlines within the context of the walking art performance practices of UK practitioners and to make public my research in this area.

I further engaged in physically sited contextual enquiry in Atlantic Canada. There I practised coastal walking on a much smaller scale than in the example cited above, along the South, Fundy and Northumberland shores of New Brunswick and

Nova Scotia. Photographs from these walks appear in the following practice-led research outcomes: *STRUTS* (discussed in Chapter 1. Section 1.3.), *There he was, gone.*, and *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* (discussed in Chapter 3. Section 3.2.). I also toured the Radio Canada International (RCI) Shortwave Radio Tower Installation at Sackville, NB, (since demolished), and surveyed - by walking and photographing - the locus of the Elizabeth Bishop texts discussed in Chapter 1. Section 1.1.

#### **0.4.3.2. Critical Contextual Enquiry**

Critically, I engaged in contextual enquiry by presenting and publishing papers on practice-led research outcomes at international conferences and festivals in each of the main subject areas addressed in Section 0.3. - print literature, digital literature, performance writing, and media archaeology. For example, portions of the writing on the work of Elizabeth Bishop explored in Chapter 1. Section 1.1. were included in a paper presented at an English Literature conference at Kings College, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, June 2011. Portions of the writing on the research outcome *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* explored in Chapter 2. Section 2.4. were presented at “Network Archaeology” - an academic conference emerging from the fields of network theory and media archaeology held at Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, USA., April 2012, and at “Translating E-Literature” conference Paris 8, June 2012. Portions of the writing on *The Broadside of a Yarn* explored in Chapter 3. were presented at “E-literature in/with Performance,” an ELMCIP Seminar held at

Arnolfini, Bristol, and at “The Digital Subject” at Paris 8, November 2013, and published in *Performance Research* journal March 2014.

Presentation of different aspects of the same work to different audiences in different critical contexts has lent a broader scope to the writing about the work enabling me to develop a mode of critical writing which intertwines practice with theory. Echoing the back and forth movement implicit in the title *Writing Coastlines*, the writing in this thesis alternates between analytical and lyrical modes. Precedent for this approach may be found in the writing of German media theorist Friedrich A. Kittler. The translator of *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* observes that Kittler’s text:

carries the imprint of the media of which it speaks. The mosaic-like qualities of much of the text, for instance, the sometimes sudden shifts from one passage or paragraph to another and, alternately, the gradual fade-outs from Kittler’s own text to those of his predecessors, derives, in both theory and practice, from the jump-cutting and splicing techniques fundamental to cinema (1999 xxxi).

#### **0.4.3.3. Professional Contextual Enquiry**

Professionally, in order to ‘test’ by way of putting into practice the pedagogical potential of my hybrid methodology I engaged in professional contextual enquiry by serving as the digital literature and performance writing faculty for the “In(ter)ventions: Literary Practice at the Edge” residency program at The Banff Centre in Canada in 2011, 2012, and 2013. The practice-led research outcome *Along the Briny Beach* discussed in Chapter 1. Section 1.2. emerged directly from this contextual enquiry. In the context of the In(ter)ventions program I was able to develop and perform various of the practice-led research outcomes discussed in this

thesis in professional venues in front of a highly specialised audience. In conjunction with the In(ter)ventions program, I presented visiting artist's talks and facilitated workshops with digital writing students at Alberta College of Art and Design to develop hybrid digital media installation and performance work for performance at The Banff Centre in 2012 and 2013.

I facilitated the physical and contextual enquiry of portions of the coastlines of Atlantic Canada mentioned in Section 0.4.3.1. by undertaking a five-week-long artist-in-residency at Struts Gallery & Faucet New Media Centre, in Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada. During the Struts residency I gave an artist's talk and interacted with members of the local community. This inflected the content and composition of *STRUTS*. I also engaged in research in the Mount Allison University, where I encountered many texts specific to the Tantramar region which shaped the textual body of *STRUTS*, as discussed at length in Chapter 1. Section 1.3.

I also engaged in contextual enquiry by developing new work specifically for this thesis within the professional context of a commission from the *Remediating the Social* exhibition held in conjunction with the final ELMCIP conference in Edinburgh, UK, 1-3 November 2012. The resulting practice-led research outcome, *The Broadside of a Yarn* (Carpenter 2012), is discussed in Chapter 3. Section 3.2. The competitive application process, the extended timeline, and the experience of fulfilling a range of externally-driven requirements from the funding body, the gallery, the catalogue designer, the performance venue, the printer, and so on, all served to formalise the process of the creation and dissemination of the work and thus inflected the final outcome.

### 0.4.2. Publication

The iterative nature of performance methodology incorporates documentation into every step of the research practice by engaging in a process I term ‘live archiving’, which makes public certain aspects of the research as it unfolds. I have performed live archiving primarily by writing on my blog, *Lapsus Linguae* [<http://luckysoap.com/lapsuslinguae>], by Tweeting at @jr\_carpenter [[https://twitter.com/jr\\_carpenter](https://twitter.com/jr_carpenter)], and by creating and publicly presenting small ‘finished’ works, posting these works to my website [<http://luckysoap.com>] and elsewhere, writing about these works, and publicly presenting that writing in a range of contexts throughout the course of the research. Each of the practice-led research outcomes discussed in this thesis has been publicly presented, in most cases in a number of different forms and contexts. For example, in the case of the work mentioned in the previous section, *The Broadside of a Yarn* was presented as a work-in-progress at the ELMCIP seminar *Performance in/with Digital Literature* hosted by Falmouth University, held at Arnolfini, Bristol, May 2012. Portions of the writing on the research outcome *The Broadside of a Yarn* presented in Chapter 3. Section 3.2. were first developed for a conference paper presented at “Environmental Utterance” held at Falmouth University, Cornwall, UK, September 2012, then adapted for a wider audience for publication on *Authoring Software* and *The Literary Platform*, then expanded for publication in *Performance Research* journal, and then expanded and adapted yet again for presentation at “The Digital Subject” conference Paris 8, Paris France, November 2013. Details of all of the

publication contexts for all of the critical and creative practice-led research outcomes presented in this thesis are outlined in Appendix B.

Each of the chapters in this thesis incorporates the body of one or more conference papers written and presented in the course of this research. The iterative process of multiple public presentations of both creative and critical research outcomes has engendered a variety of responses from academics, practitioners, and the general public, some of which have prompted me to respond, rework, rethink, and reiterate, thereby inserting meta-layers of my own commentary, inquiry, and critique into the research, leading to the production of new instantiations of the research outcomes. Thus, as a textual document, this thesis bears the marks of its own making, the striations of accumulation and iteration. In order to delineate these striations for the reader, in the Outline of Chapters included in Section 0.6. I have listed references to instances in which earlier iterations of portions of the writing in each chapter have been publicly presented during the course of this research. I point to certain instances of this iterative process in the body of the text. In Chapter 2. Section 2.4. I theorise an aspect of this iterative method through an extended notion of translation. And in Chapter 3. Section 3.2. I theorise an aspect of this iterative method through the Situationist strategies of *détournement* and *dérive*.



## **0.5. Note About the Corpus**

*Writing Coastlines* draws upon archival materials, creative works, and theoretical concepts from a number of quite separate corpora. In practical terms, the conceptually broad and historically long scope of this thesis necessitates the referencing of but a few works from any given field. In pragmatic terms, deliberately selectively referencing a wide range of diverse materials is in keeping with performance writing methodology, which actively resists any notion of a fixed corpus, and insists, rather, upon the assemblage of a fresh corpus around each new set of questions posed. Framing the research question this thesis poses are the coastlines on either side of the North Atlantic Ocean, which I have termed 'writing coastlines'. Between these coastlines, at the centre of this research question, lies the North Atlantic itself - a vast, shifting, and treacherous terrain. The corpus assembled here endeavours to address the questions posed by this porously bounded in-between space. This Note About the Corpus endeavours to address which materials and concepts I've drawn upon to address these questions, and why.

### **0.5.1. Performance Writing**

My formulation of performance writing as a methodology draws upon a number of texts written by former performance writing faculty at Dartington College of Art. Of these, John Hall, *Thirteen Ways of Talking About Performance Writing* (2008) and Ric Allsopp, "Performance Writing" (1999) have been particularly useful. My research into the pedagogy and practices of performance writing revealed the

influence on the field of a number of texts which, although seemingly disparate in subject matter, and not called ‘performance writing’ in name by their authors, take a thoroughly performance writing approach to conceptually synthesising a wide range of materials, influences, and references. Of these, this thesis engages with the subject matter and/or the synthetic approach taken by Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (2002); Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (1994); Tim Ingold, *Lines: A Brief History* (2007); Walter J. Ong, *Orality & Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (1982); Judith Schalansky, *Atlas of Remote Islands: Fifty Islands I Have Never Set Foot On and Never Will* (2010); Rebecca Solnit, *Wanderlust: A History of Walking* (2000); and Francis A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (1969).

*Writing Coastlines* also engages with a number of theoretical and philosophical concepts put forth by authors who have heavily influenced the field of performance writing, as well as many other fields. These concepts include: striation, deterritorialization, and the assemblage from Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* (2007), regimes of enunciation and archives of fragments from Foucault’s *Archaeology of Knowledge* (2002), derive and détournement from the Situationist International as theorised by Mackenzie Wark (2011), pragmatics and nonsense as theorised by Jean-Jacques Lecercle (1985, 1994). I do not engage with psychoanalysis with the notable exception of Freud’s essay on the uncanny, which pervades *Writing Coastlines*. Freud himself set this essay apart from the main body of his work in the opening sentence: “Only rarely does the psychoanalyst feel impelled to engage in aesthetic investigations...” (2003: 123).

*Writing Coastlines* engages with a conceptually broad notion of performance, focused through a critical framework which considers performance

writing as a set of material practices and processes in order to interrogate the performance of texts in multiple contexts. My corpus does not reference certain well established areas of performance research in closely associated fields. For example, although not referenced directly in this research, my thinking on performance has been heavily influenced by past engagement with Judith Butler's writing on the performance of gender (1990), by Donna Haraway's writing on embodiment in digital spaces (2004), and by new materialist and feminist critiques of the performance of labour in textile art practices (Bachmann 1998). Further, although I am aware that a huge amount of work has been done on orality and the fluidity of the written word by anthropologists and folklorists, I focus my engagement with these concepts on spoken dialogues, poly-vocal performance of computer-generated narratives. Similarly, although I engage with particular aspects of sound, script writing, live performance, and dramaturgy, I am aware that I have not delved deeply into either the conceptual frameworks or the corpora of sound art, other more traditional modes of script writing, performance art, or devised theatre.

### **0.5.2. Digital Literature**

My corpus necessarily includes the work of scholars who theorise digital literature through relatively traditional literary modes of analysis. These include Jay David Bolter, Leonardo Flores, Christopher T. Funkhouser, N. Katherine Hayles, and Roberto Simanowski. Of these, Hayles on the 'eventilized' nature of the digital text proves most useful (2006). Additionally, *Writing Coastlines* draws upon a number of

texts by scholars more generally associated with the digital humanities and/or media theory, who, however unwittingly, take recognisably performance writing approaches. These include Alexander Galloway, *The Interface Effect* (2012), and Mckenzie Wark's *A Hacker Manifesto* (2004).

Although I have not delved deeply into media theory, I have adopted certain media archaeological approaches to addressing the materiality, temporality, performativity, and radical multiplicity of media. In particular, I have drawn upon Siegfried Zielinski's conception of 'varientology' (2008), and Noah Wardrip-Fruin's media archaeological approach to his analysis of Strachey's Love Letter Generator (2011). Following Marshal McLuhan's example, I evoke literary texts to address media contexts. Lecercle's reading of Kipling's story, 'Wireless' has likewise proven an invaluable model for how to write theoretically about literary writing about technology.

As all but one of the practice-led research outcomes presented in *Writing Coastlines* are computer-generated texts, the corpus of digital literary works referred to in this thesis are primarily generative. As it is impossible to view firsthand the historical examples of Theo Lutz's "stochastic" texts (1959) and Christopher Strachey's Love Letter Generator (1952), my corpus also includes the primary sources of the Strachey Papers held at the Bodleian Library and various secondary sources pertaining to David Link's modern recreation of the Love Letter Generator. Contemporary examples of computer-generated texts represented in my corpus focus on works by Nick Montfort and Nanette Wylde which pertain directly to my own research. This selection is in no way representative of the vast and varied corpus of of computer-generated text or of digital literature as a whole.

### 0.5.3. Print Literature

Of what we might term traditional print literature (to distinguish from experimental and digital literature), my corpus includes selected works by Elizabeth Bishop (1984), Lewis Carroll (1982), Joseph Conrad (1950), J. M. Coetzee (1986), Charles Darwin (1997[1838]), Daniel Defoe (2000 [1719]), Rudyard Kipling (1904), Edward Lear (1871), W. G. Sebald (1999), and William Shakespeare (1996 [1610–11]). This print literary corpus is somewhat unusual in so far as I have not limited my study to authors or texts from one period or region or form as traditional literary scholarship dictates. These authors, texts, and forms would not normally be discussed together. I have selected examples on the basis of their intersection with themes and formal concerns in my research. In these works coastlines are evoked to refer to a condition of being in-between places. I have selected well known texts about which much has already been written precisely because I write about them in quite different ways. I write about the texts themselves. I also rewrite them in a sense by pulling them into digital literary and performance contexts. This mode of appropriation is theorised through McKenzie Wark's writing on *détournement* (2011). The operation of paradox in Lewis Carroll's "The Walrus and the Carpenter" and Edward Lear's "The Owl and the Pussycat" is theorised through Jean-Jacques Lecercle's writing on Victorian nonsense poetry (1985, 1994).

#### 0.5.4. Primary Sources

Although *Writing Coastlines* does not aim to present a historical narrative account of transatlantic communications networks, certain historical works have proven useful resources. For example, Hakluyt's *Voyages and Discoveries* (1985 [1598-1600]) contains first hand accounts of transatlantic passages for which no other records remain extant. With the exception of Andrew Hodges' biography of Alan Turing (2012), which provides excellent context for early computing, I have avoided biographical accounts of inventors. In this approach I am informed by Timothy C. Campbell, who articulates the difficulty of separating the narrative of a historical figure of the quasi-mythical stature of Marconi from an archaeological study of the wireless (2006). I have endeavoured to counterbalance the larger-than-life narratives of historical figures by consulting primary documents. In the case of Marconi, for example, I spent time in the Marconi Archives at the Bodleian Library, examining typescripts of logs kept at Marconi stations on both sides of the Atlantic; and then visited two of those stations. Over the course of this research I have also spent time in and drawn upon the Christopher Strachey Papers at the Bodleian, the Alan Turing Papers at Kings College Cambridge, the Archives of the Telegraph Museum at Porthcurno, Cornwall, and the extensive map and manuscript resources of The British Library in London.

*Writing Coastlines* draws upon a cartographic corpus of early maps of the North American coastline. Originals and copies of hundreds more maps were examined than the few that have made their way into my bibliography. Rather than studying any one map or charting a historical chronology of cartographic

developments in mapping this coastline, my research focused on identifying critical shifts in the language within or between certain maps. Historical accounts of these maps have proven useful, including Andrea di Robilant (2011) and Donald S. Johnson (1994). I have analysed the linguistic shifts in these maps through Derridian notions of place and displacement and Deleuzian notions of deterritorialisation, Deleuze on 'desert islands' (2004), and Hernan Díaz on "topical islands" (2010).

### **0.5.5. Practice-Led Research Outcomes**

A substantial component of the corpus of *Writing Coastlines* is the body of critical and creative practice-led research outcomes I have produced over the course of this research. In general, when I refer to a creative work, I refer to the web iteration of it. I have provided URLs linking to each of these works within the body of the text, in Appendix A, and on the website which accompanies this thesis [<http://writingcoastlines.net>]. This thesis is intended to be read in conjunction with viewing these works on screen.

I have performed most of the web-based practice-led research outcomes presented in *Writing Coastlines* a number of times in a number of quite different contexts. I have not included video or audio documentation of any of these live performances as, in the body of this text, I have elected to focus my analysis on the corpus of texts produced by these web-based works - source code, generated texts, performance scripts, and new print iterations to emerge from both web-based and live performance iterations. This corpus is represented in Appendix C: Print Iterations of Web-Based Practice-Led Research Outcomes.

### **0.5.6. Writing Coastlines**

Finally, as I shall elaborate in Chapter 1., I consider the coastlines on either side of the Atlantic themselves to be writing, both in the sense that they are actively writing and that they are written texts. I have consulted these texts through an engagement with the method of contextual enquiry and through walking as an embodied practice of reading and writing coastlines, and I have integrated portions of these coastlines into my corpus through writing and photography.



## 0.6. Outline of Chapters

The presentation of practice-led research in this thesis is conceptually driven. In keeping with the iterative nature of performance writing methodology, each chapter contains writing *détourned* from conference papers, blog posts, web-based works, performance scripts, and other texts which I wrote, publicly presented, revised and, in some cases, re-presented in different forms during the course of this research. Full references for these practice-led research outcomes may be found in Appendix A and on <http://writingcoastlines.net>

### Chapter 1. Physical / Embodied: Writing Coastlines.

This chapter considers the physical and embodied aspects of the coastlines on either side of the Atlantic in order to address the question: Can a juxtaposition of coastlines create a new narrative context from which to examine a multi-site-specific place-based identity?

This chapter aims to articulate the double meaning of the term ‘writing coastlines.’ I am writing about coastlines. The coastlines are also writing. Both these meanings will be conceptualised as physical / embodied through a Deleuzian pragmatics of enunciation, utterance, and speech-acts. This chapter will create a theoretical framework for a detailed analysis of two practice-led research outcomes, *Along the Briny Beach* and *STRUTS*. These works of digital literature will be situated within a precedent literary corpus in which coastlines are evoked to refer to a condition of

being in-between places. This corpus includes works by Elizabeth Bishop, Lewis Carroll, Joseph Conrad, Charles Darwin, and Daniel Defoe. These practice-led research outcomes will then be situated within a contemporary critical context of digital literature and performance writing.

Portions of the writing in this chapter expand upon earlier iterations of texts written during the course of this research and publicly presented in the following contexts:

J. R. Carpenter (2011) "Muddy Mouth," *P.o.E.M.M. [Poems for Excitable [Mobile] Media]*.

J. R. Carpenter (2011) "Locating Struts Gallery: It's Somewhere Near Sackville, New Brunswick, on the Tintemar River, in Arcadia, Nouvelle France," *Lapsus Linguae*.

J. R. Carpenter (2011) "Writing Coastlines: The Operation of Estuaries, Islands and Beaches as Liminal Spaces in the Writings of Elizabeth Bishop," *'It Must be Nova Scotia': Negotiating Place In the Writings of Elizabeth Bishop*. Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, Canada.

J. R. Carpenter (2011) "Along the Briny Beach," *Boulder Pavement*.

J. R. Carpenter (2011) "Along the Briny Beach: An Iterative Methodology," *Palovista*.

J. R. Carpenter (2011) "STRUTS," *Third Hand Plays*. SFMoMA

J. R. Carpenter (2011) "STRUTS" *Authoring Software*.

## **Chapter 2. Networked / Generative: Transatlantic Communications Networks.**

This chapter considers networked and generative approaches to communicating across the Atlantic in order to address the question: Can digital networks serve as narrative structures for writing resonating between sites, beyond nations?

This chapter takes a media archaeological approach to the exploration of networks as narrative structures for computer-generated dialogues by taking a long view of transatlantic communications networks reaching back to the earliest transatlantic crossings. This view posits that transportation is communication. Communications networks engendered by transatlantic migration are haunted by generations of past usage. The doubling of sites through a repetition of signals calling and responding across transatlantic networks creates an uncanny dialogue between the twinned notions of sending and receiving, here and there, home and away. This chapter will lay the groundwork for a detailed analysis of two practice-led research outcomes, *Whisper Wire* and *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*. Both these texts are computer-generated. The practice of translating source code to create computer-generated narrative dialogues will be situated within an extended notion of translation informed by digital literature. The performance of code language within these works will be situated within an extended notion of dramaturgy informed by performance writing.

Portions of the writing in this chapter expand upon earlier iterations of texts written during the course of this research and publicly presented in the following contexts:

J. R. Carpenter (2010) "Whisper Wire: A Poetry Generator Transmitting and Receiving Electronic Voice Phenomena Through Haunted Media" *Lapsus Linguae*.

J. R. Carpenter (2011) "Whisper Wire." *Rampike*.

J. R. Carpenter (2011) "TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]," *aesthetic strategies as critical interventions*, Perdu Theater, Amsterdam.

J. R. Carpenter (2012) "TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]: Locating Narrative Resonance in Transatlantic Communications Networks," *Network Archaeology*, Miami, Oxford, Ohio, USA

J. R. Carpenter (2012) "Translation, Transmutation, Transmediation, and Transmission in TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]" *Translating E-Literature*, Paris 8, Paris, France.

J. R. Carpenter (2013) "Notes on the Voyage: From Mainframe Experimentalism to Electronic Literature," ACAD, Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

J. R. Carpenter (2014) "Translation, transmutation, transmediation, and transmission in TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]," *Laboratoire NT2*.

### Chapter 3. Cartographic / Narrative: Locating Narrative Resonance.

This chapter will consider cartographic and narrative modes of articulating the Atlantic as an in-between space in order to address the question: What narratives resonate in the spaces between places separated by time, distance, and ocean, yet inextricably linked by generations of immigration?

This chapter will employ strategies inferred from topography, toponomy, and cartography to articulate the narrative context of *Writing Coastlines*. Topography locates topics in memory. Toponymy transposes names from one place to another. In early cartographic depictions, the coastlines of the new world were written and erased by the transposition of old world place names. In a cartographic space, a juxtaposition of coastlines reveals the space between places as the locus of multi-site-specific narratives. Narrative resonance emerges from a sympathetic vibration between two sites. This will lay the groundwork for a detailed analysis of one large practice-led research outcome, *The Broadside of a Yarn*, and three stand-alone works to have emerged from that work: *There he was, gone., ...and by island I mean paragraphs*, and *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl*. This work will be situated within the critical contexts of digital literature, locative narrative, and performance writing.

Portions of the writing in this chapter expand upon earlier iterations of texts written during the course of this research and publicly presented in the following contexts:

J. R. Carpenter (2012) "There he was, gone." *Joyland Poetry: A Hub for Poetry*.

J. R. Carpenter (2012) "The Broadside of a Yarn: A Situationist Strategy for Spinning Sea Stories Ashore," *Environmental Utterance*, Falmouth University, Falmouth, UK.

J. R. Carpenter (2013) "The Broadside of a Yarn," *Authoring Software*.

J. R. Carpenter (2013) "The Print Map as a 'literary platform'." *The Literary Platform*.

J. R. Carpenter (2013) "Performing Assemblages of Collective Enunciation in 'The Broadside of a Yarn,'" *Le sujet digital*. Paris 8, Paris, France

J. R. Carpenter (2014) "Eight Short Talks About Islands ...and by islands I mean paragraphs," *Modular Form: A Symposium on Creative Practice*. Roehampton University, London, UK

J. R. Carpenter (2014) "The Broadside of a Yarn: A Situationist Strategy for Spinning Sea Stories Ashore," *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*, 18:5, 88-95

## CHAPTER 1. PHYSICAL / EMBODIED: WRITING COASTLINES

This chapter considers physical and embodied aspects of the coastlines on either side of the Atlantic in order to address the question: Can a juxtaposition of coastlines create a new narrative context from which to examine a multi-site-specific place-based identity? This chapter aims to articulate the double meaning of the term ‘writing coastlines’ through a literary corpus in which coastlines are evoked to refer to a condition of being in-between places. This articulation will lay the groundwork for a detailed analysis of two practice-led research outcomes, *Along the Briny Beach* (Section 1.2.) and *STRUTS* (Section 1.3.).

### 1.1. Introduction

I was born in Nova Scotia, Canada. I now live in South West England. I spent nineteen years on the inland island of Montreal in between, but coastal terrains have long figured prominently in my work. In *Mythologies of Landforms and Little Girls* (Carpenter 1996) a narrative of a young girl’s first sexual experience is annotated with coastal engineering diagrams and plate tectonic theory. In *The Cape* (Carpenter 2005), diagrams, maps, and photographs from an Environmental Geologic Guide to Cape Cod National Seashore serve as stand-ins for family photographs. In “Air Holes” (Carpenter 2008), a woman mourns her husband lost at sea. Although certain details of the settings of these stories are well-known to me, the stories themselves are fictional. In this new research I consider narrative resonance

between far distant coastlines. I have selected the coastlines of the United Kingdom and Atlantic Canada in part due to my familiarity with portions of these coastlines, in part in order to narrow the focus of this research, but for the most part due to the strong social, historical, and technological connections between these coasts.

Physically, the coastlines of the United Kingdom and Atlantic Canada are separated by a distance of roughly 3400 kilometres of ocean - a cold expanse prone to sudden and ferocious storms, unpredictable currents, and seasonal flows of towering icebergs. Yet these coastlines share a common coastal climate, economy, and geology. One can walk long distances on either coast of the North Atlantic, along promontories, cliffs, bays, beaches, and bluffs formed of the same Devonian stone, Old Red Sandstone, granite, or slate, and pass similar assortments of coastal warning systems, military fortifications, small farm holdings, holiday homes, fishing villages, and mines. One can stand facing east or west, either way, on a slipway, quay, or weir, squinting into a gulf-stream-warmed wind, a wet fog, or sea fret, waiting for a tide or a catch, watching for a ferry or a pleasure boat, wary of a war ship or oil tanker skimming the horizon.

Historically, culturally, and socially, these coastlines are inextricably linked by generations of immigration, as evidenced by a confluence of family and place names. The towns of Truro in Cornwall, in Cape Cod, and in Nova Scotia each sit far up a muddy tidal river. The name Nova Scotia means New Scotland in Latin. Halifax, Nova Scotia, named after Halifax, England, was founded by a man named Cornwallis, whose family owned vast estates on the Channel Islands. Across Halifax Harbour, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, sits some 4392 kilometres from the mouth of the River Dart in Devon. There is no River Fal in Nova Scotia, but there is a Falmouth. It sits at

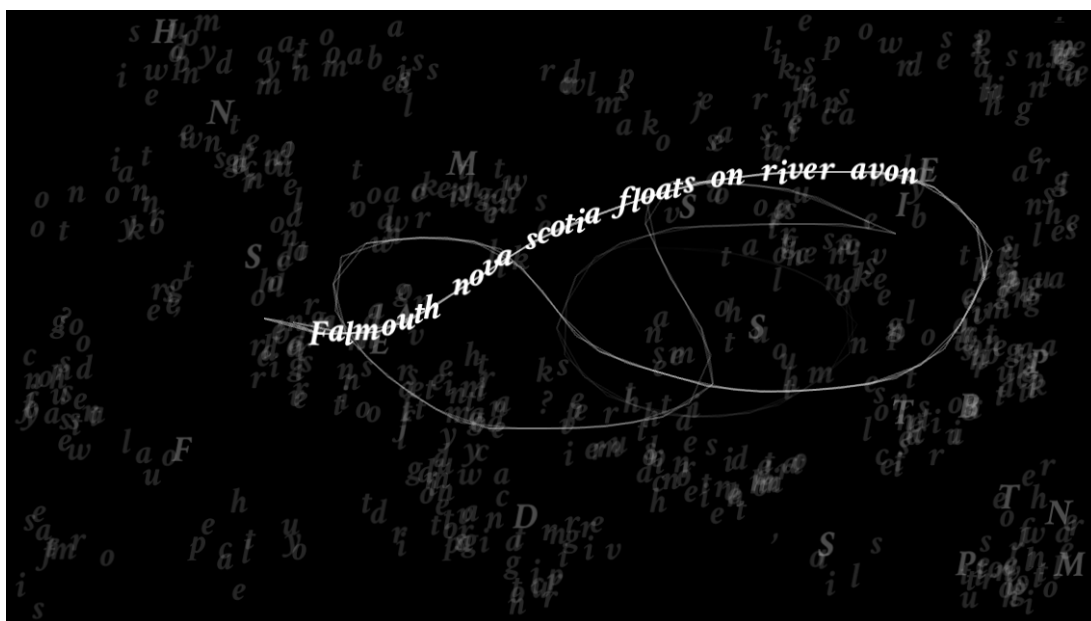


the mouth of a River Avon. There are many River Avons in England, because Avon is a Celtic word meaning river. “New world maps rearrange old English place names” (Carpenter 2011). I borrow this line from a practice-led research outcome called “Muddy Mouth,” a short, constraint-based text published in an iOS app called *Speak*, created by Jason E. Lewis and Bruno Nadeau in 2011. Although not otherwise discussed in this thesis, I evoke this text here and reproduce it in full in Appendix C as, in a mere 675 characters, not including spaces, it succinctly introduces three major themes of *Writing Coastlines* - place, language, and identity. Further, I include a print iteration of this text [Figure 1.] to highlight the degree to which the practice-led research outcomes presented in this thesis are mediated across a continuum of forms.

Packet ships steam letters open ocean  
New world maps rearrange old English place names  
Falmouth Nova Scotia floats on River Avon  
Avon is a Celtic word meaning river  
Foul mouth on river river  
School children joke (Carpenter “Muddy Mouth” 2011).

In these lines, place, language, and identity are linked through toponymy, from the Greek *topos*, meaning ‘place’ and *onuma*, meaning ‘name’. Historically, decisions about where to ‘place’ old English place names on new world maps were part political, and part arbitrary. As wrote the chronicler of Martin Frobisher’s second voyage in search of a Northwest Passage in the year 1577: “Our general named sundry islands, mountains, capes and harbours after the names of divers noblemen and other gentlemen his friends, as well on the one shore as also on the other” (Hakluyt 1985: 194). Regardless of the native people’s names or territorial claims, the chronicler of Sir Humphrey Gilbert’s voyage for the colonisation of Newfoundland in 1583 complained: “The French... review that discovered by the

[Figure 1. *Muddy Mouth*, J. R. Carpenter, 2011. Zine.]



[Figure 2. "Muddy Mouth," J. R. Carpenter, 2011. *Speak* app, screenshot.]

English nation, usurping upon our right, and imposing names upon countries, rivers, bays, capes, or headlands, as if they had been the first finders of those coasts” (Hakluyt 1985: 232).

Technologically, these coastlines are bound to one another by hundreds of years of transatlantic transportation and communication networks. These networks emerge from narratives of passages, from ancient rumours of distant lands to medieval maps of dubious accuracy, from small island-hopping fishing boats making to the conquests of the tall ships of the great age of sail, from steamer packet routes to convoys of heavy warships, from the merchant marine to top-secret submarine manoeuvres, from the first underwater telegraph cables laid between Foilhommerum Bay, Valentia Island in western Ireland and Heart's Content in eastern Newfoundland to the first transatlantic wireless transmissions sent between Poldhu, Cornwall and Saint John's Newfoundland. In Chapter 2 I will argue that the transatlantic communications networks of today are in significant part engendered by these generations of migration, and, as such, that they form narrative structures for writing resonating between sites, beyond nations. In Chapter 3 I will use these structures to present computer-generated narratives which resonate in the spaces between places separated by time, distance and ocean yet inextricably linked by generations of immigration.

This chapter explores the operation of the physical coastlines of the United Kingdom and Atlantic Canada as in-between places, liminal spaces, fraught with comings and goings. I term these coastlines 'writing coastlines'. In doing so, I intentionally imply a double meaning. By 'writing' I refer both to the act of writing and to that which is written. By 'coastlines' I refer to the shifting terrain where land

and water meet, which is always neither land nor water and is always both. In *Writing Coastlines*, I am writing *about* coastlines. In this chapter, I am writing about the cartographic writing of coastlines, by which I refer both to the act of inscribing the names of one place upon another, and to the fact of the textuality materiality of the map. I am also writing about literary authors who have evoked coastlines to refer to a condition of being in-between places. Whether written as lines of text or as lines or words or names on a map, the coastlines written of are also writing coastlines in a physical sense. Coastlines are edges, ledges, legible lines caught in a double bind of simultaneously writing and erasing. This statement does not aim to ascribe authorial agency to coastlines, but rather to underline that there is no need to. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault argues: "For a series of signs to exist, there must ... be an 'author' or a transmitting authority. But this 'author' is not identical with the subject of the statement" (2002: 104). In *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Friedrich Kittler asserts: "Ever since the invention of the phonograph, there has been writing without a subject. It is no longer necessary to assign an author to every trace, not even God" (1999: 44). In the groove of a record we read a trace written by sound. On the beach we read a trace written by a wave. The act of writing translates physical, aural, mental, and/or digital processes into marks, actions, utterances and/or speech-acts. Wave action translates a physical process into a set of marks; these may range from a line of litter left at a high water mark to a coastal train line destroyed by a storm surge. The intelligibility of that which is written is intertwined with both the context of its production and of its consumption. The action of a wave is legible in sand it has just washed over. But sands shift, winds lift, cliffs crumble. The locus of the meaning of this writing resides

neither in its author nor in the text. It is created through interaction between the reader and the text. The position of both writer and reader is purely indexical. The act of writing performs possible futures; the act of reading performs that which has been written. The act of writing is performance. That which is written is research.

That the specific coastlines in question are, on the map at least, lines drawn at the edges of nations does not infer that they constitute clear boundaries. Rather, they present swaths of ever-shifting, weather-lashed, predominantly rural, rugged, and remote terrain. These lines can be unstable, treacherous even, pitted with obstacles - crumbling cliffs, sea frets, wrecked ships, rip tides, and all manner of hidden rocks, sand bars, shallows, and shoals. And they can be porous, riddled with known ports as well as hidden coves, points of arrival as well as departure, and associations of refuge as well as of escape. As such, these coastlines constitute what Alexander Galloway terms 'interfaces,' "thresholds... mysterious zones of interaction that mediate between different realities... autonomous zones of activity... processes that effect a result" (2012: vii). For Galloway, interfaces both "bring about transformations in material states" (vii) and, at the same time, "are themselves the effects of other things, and thus tell the story of the larger forces that engender them" (vii). In these terms, not only does the cliff cause the wave to crash and the wave cause the cliff to crumble, but the wave may be high because of the tide and the cliff may be soft because of heavy rain, and the tide may be high and the rain heavy because of the larger force of climate change brought about by increased carbon emissions brought about by increased industrialisation brought about by a complex combination of social and technological factors.

These coastlines are striated. They are not one but many lines, from which emanate what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari term “lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification” (2007: 3). In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Deleuze and Guattari formulate a conception of stratification based on a geological model: “Strata are acts of capture... They operate by coding and territorialization” (2007: 40). Through centuries of habitation, physical coastlines become encoded with layers of historical, cultural, social, economic, and infrastructural markers of territory. These coastlines have been repeatedly explored, charted, invaded, colonised, inhabited, fortified, defended, industrialised, gentrified, visited by tourists, photographed, and written about in a wide variety of ways. Thus they are inscribed as social apparatuses. In Deleuze’s analysis of Foucault’s conception of social apparatus, or, *dispositif*, Deleuze describes all such apparatuses as composed of multiple lines:

lines of visibility and enunciation, lines of force, lines of subjectification, lines of splitting, breakage, fracture, all of which criss-cross and mingle together, some lines reproducing or giving rise to others, by means of variations or even changes in the way they are grouped (Deleuze 1992: 162).

The complexity of the interplay between these strata of socially inscribed lines and the physical coastline is in evidence within the practice of cartography. The porosity of the physical coastline troubles the fixity of the cartographic coastline, as any long-distance coastal-path-walker will soon discover. Storms exert lines of force, drawing new lines of fracture; farmers and home owners erect fences where once there were none, presenting new lines of subjectification. The necessarily simplified and stylised cartographic coastline belies decisions the mapmaker has made between hiding and revealing - between what is public and

and what is private property, what is known of a remote coastal terrain and what is merely speculative. Some enduring features it is possible to represent visually, such as a sandy or a rocky beach; other more transient texts may only be read through bodily encounter, such as puddles and stinging nettles.

Turning toward a literary example of writing coastlines, the tension between a coastline as it is in the physical world and as it is written on a map is explored in the “The Map,” the first poem in *North & South*, Elizabeth Bishop’s first published book. The poem opens with the lines:

Land lies in water; it is shadowed green.  
Shadows, or are they shallows, at its edges  
showing the line of long sea-weeded ledges  
where weeds hang to the simple blue from green (*Poems*, 1984: 3).

Bishop writes this coastline with words, with language, with poetry. Within the lines she writes, a map-maker writes a cartographic coastline with colours “more delicate than the historians” (3) and a printer (re)writes those coastlines with emotion that “too far exceeds its cause” (3). We readers are invited to (re)write this poetic cartographic coastline in our minds with our fingers:

We can stroke these lovely bays,  
under a glass as if they were expected to blossom (3).

Our imagined touch rereads and rewrites, searching for meaning. No sooner are the opening (coast)lines in “The Map” written than the next lines call them into question:

Or does the land lean down to lift the sea from under,  
drawing it unperturbed around itself:  
Along the fine tan sandy shelf  
is the land tugging at the sea from under? (3)

This line of questioning does not presuppose an ‘either/or’ answer. Rather, it presents a problem: coastlines are ‘either and both’. This problem may be

demonstrated through verse. The word 'verse' comes from the Latin *versus* - to turn. Every verse has a re-verse. Writing coastlines are always also erasing coastlines, turning tides, re-verse-ing. Echoing this back and forth movement, the writing in this thesis alternates between lyrical and analytical modes. This back and forth movement will be further explored in terms of the transversal function of call and response in Chapter 2.

The lines of verse writing about coastlines in "The Map" perform that which has already been written by the coastlines' own act of writing.

These peninsulas take the water between thumb and finger  
like women feeling for the smoothness of yard-goods (3).

Yes, this is a metaphor, but the coastlines it alludes to are not metaphoric – they are active: peninsulas written (in the sense that they are marks that have been made) by glaciers, deep fjords curbed by even higher lines of hard stone ridge.

A cartographic coastline is both fixed and abstracted, as exact an approximation as possible of a line that is always in motion, a legible line perforated by language, letters, words, signs, symbols, names. "The names of seashore towns run out to sea" (3), Bishop writes, obscuring the very coastlines they aim to name. Here Bishop exposes a textual materiality at odds with physical reality. These lines of text are akin to the 'ghost lines' Tim Ingold describes in *Lines: A Brief History*, cartographic lines with no physical equivalent in the world, yet with real consequences for people's movements (2007: 49). Physical coastlines are shaded by ghostly doubles. Territorial waters extend twelve-nautical-miles offshore, Exclusive Economic Zones two-hundred-nautical-miles. Beyond these, invisible lines of



latitude and longitude and lines marking time-zones further delineate distances to and from here and there, now and then.

Examples abound in Elizabeth Bishop's writing wherein coastlines are evoked to refer to a condition of being in-between places. Bishop spent her early childhood shuttling back and forth between coastal locations. Though generally considered to be American, three of her four grandparents were Canadian. In her well-known poem "The Moose," Bishop writes a coastline of extreme contrasts to evoke the liminal condition of migration, of being in transition, of being both of and in-between two places. The poem 'takes place,' as it were, on a long bus ride along a coastal road stretching between the home of her maternal grandparents (Great Village, Nova Scotia) and away toward her paternal grandparents (Boston). The following lines describe the Bay of Fundy, home of the highest tides in the world:

home of the long tides  
where the bay leaves the sea  
twice a day and takes  
the herrings long rides,

where if the river  
enters or retreats  
in a wall of brown foam  
depends on if it meets  
the bay coming in,  
the bay not at home;

where, silted red,  
sometimes the sun sets  
facing a red sea,  
and others, veins the flats'  
lavender, rich mud  
in burning rivulets (*Poems*, 1984: 169)

A red sea. Mud flats. Lavender water. Bishop uses strikingly similar language to describe the same coastline in her most autobiographical short story, "In the

Village,” which is also set in the home environs of her maternal grandparents in

Great Village, Nova Scotia:

There are the tops of all the elm trees in the village and there, beyond them, the long green marshes, so fresh, so salt. Then the Minas Basin, with the tide halfway in or out, the wet red mud glazed with sky blue until it meets the creeping lavender-red water (*Prose*, 1984 [1953]: 264).

In keeping with the research method of contextual enquiry, in 2011 I drove along the same route described by the bus ride in “The Moose,” and visited the Elizabeth Bishop House and environs in Great Village, Nova Scotia. I took the photograph represented by Figure 3. from the location of the narrator of the above quoted passage of “In the Village.”



[Figure 3. Great Village, Nova Scotia, 2011.]

The site of this sight is geographically the furthest point from the epicentre of the story. The evocation of estuarine overlaps, mixtures and contradictions at this moment in the story serves both to enunciate an internal emotional confusion within the narrator, and to project the narration beyond the geographical confines of the village. The above cited paragraph goes on to close with the line: “We are in the ‘Maritimes’ but all that means is that we live by the sea” (264). This line perfectly exemplifies a ‘multi-site-specific place-based identity’ of the sort suggested in the research question posed by *Writing Coastlines*. If all being “in the Maritimes” means is living by the sea then one can be in or of the Maritimes living by any sea. Thus, this liminal coastline writes a possible future, a point of departure, a line of flight.

Deleuze and Guattari associate lines of flight with deterritorialization, which they define as “the movement by which ‘one’ leaves the territory” (2007: 508). For them, the term ‘territory’ may refer to many things “a being, an object, a book, an apparatus or system...” (508). I use the term here to refer both to a period of time and to a physical place. Elizabeth Bishop began to write about her childhood in Nova Scotia after returning there for a visit in 1946, after a sixteen-year absence (Barry 2011: 74). Bishop wrote “In the Village,” in Petrópolis, near Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, a place just inland from the top of a bay that opens into the South Atlantic, a place that reminded her of Nova Scotia but, importantly, was not (81). The evocation of the liminal coastline beyond the geographical confines of the story “In the Village” also suggests a movement beyond the territory of childhood.

Deleuze and Guattari caution that that deterritorialization “may be overlaid by a compensatory reterritorialization... a ‘stand in’ for the lost territory” (508). In

*The Voyage of the Beagle* (1997 [1838]), Charles Darwin writes of the far coastlines he encounters through the filter of what is known to him, what is home to him. Of the Beagle's first anchorage after a long transatlantic passage, in Porto Praya, on St Jago, the chief island of the Cape de Verd archipelago, Darwin writes: "The island would generally be considered as very uninteresting; but to anyone accustomed only to an English landscape, the novel aspect of an utterly sterile land possesses a grandeur which more vegetation might spoil" (Darwin 1997 [1838]: 5-6).

Throughout *The Voyage of the Beagle* Darwin reterritorializes the coasts, climates, peoples, plants, animals, customs, and practices he encounters, recasting them in English terms. In April 1832, from Rio de Janeiro, he writes:

In England any person fond of natural history enjoys in his walks a great advantage, by always having something to attract his attention; but in these fertile climates, teeming with life, the attractions are so numerous, that he is scarcely able to walk at all (28).

I cite the "In the Village" and *The Voyages of the Beagle* in proximity here as C. K. Doreski indicates that Bishop "admired, consulted, and drew upon" Darwin's *Voyages* throughout her life (1993: xiii). Narrative resonance between these two writers of coastlines will be discussed again in Chapter 3. Section 3.2.2. in relation to the practice-led research outcome *...and by islands I mean paragraphs*.

In each of the following inter-related examples of deterritorialized texts, early evocation of difference between geographically distant coastlines sets the stage for a tale of displacement. Polish seaman Joesf Teodor Konrad Nalecz Korzeniowski spent twenty years sailing around the world with the merchant marine before settling in England to write of far shores under the name Joseph Conrad. Conrad begins *Heart of Darkness* (1950) by evoking - not the strangeness of

the Congo, the locus of his story, but rather, the strangeness of England as it must have seemed two-thousand years earlier to the commander of a Roman trireme, a craft of the legionaries, most unsuitable to northern waters:

Imagine him here - the very end of the world, a sea the colour of lead, a sky the colour of smoke, a kind of ship about as rigid as a concertina - and going up the river with stores, or orders, or what you like. Sand-bands, marshes, forests, savages, - precious little to eat for for a civilized man, nothing but Thames water to drink. No Falernian wine here, no going ashore (1950: 68).

Here, Conrad, an immigrant to England, writes from the point of view of a native of England. First published in 1902, certain aspects of the narrative structure of *Heart of Darkness* refer heavily to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (2000), first published in 1719. Uncannily, Defoe, a native of England opens *Robinson Crusoe* with his English narrator stating that his father was not of this land:

I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull. He got a good estate by merchandise, and leaving off his trade, lived afterward at York from whence he had married my mother, whose relations were named Robinson, a very good family in that country, and from whom I was called Robinson Kreutznaer; but by the usual corruption of words in England we are now called, nay, we call ourselves, and write our name, Crusoe, and so my companions always call me (2000: 1) .

In deliberate echo of Crusoe, the castaway narrator of J. M. Coetzee's novel *Foe*, so named for Defoe, carries on in this vein.

My name is Susan Barton, and I am a woman alone. My father was a Frenchman who fled to England to escape the persecutions in Flanders. His name was properly Berton, but, as happens, it became corrupted in the mouths of strangers. My mother was an Englishwoman (1986: 10).

For Crusoe and for Barton, home is a site of corrupted language. Barton swears she would not have set out at all except in search of her only daughter, who "was abducted and conveyed to the New World by an Englishman, a factor and agent in the carrying trade" (10). Defoe's Crusoe went to sea despite the stern

warnings of his foreign-born father, who, presumably, had experienced enough of the upheavals of travel. On his first voyage, Crusoe encounters a storm so terrible he vows to never set foot on a ship again:

Now I saw plainly the goodness of [my father's] observations about the middle station of life, how easy, how comfortably he had lived all his days, and never had been exposed to tempests at sea or troubles on shore; and I resolved that I would, like a true repenting prodigal, go home to my father (Defoe 2000: 5).

Yet no sooner does Crusoe survive this storm than he sets sail again. From the far shore of his eventual exile, Crusoe is haunted by “the excellent advice of my father, the opposition to which was, as I may call it, my *original sin*...” (149). Crusoe’s carrying in memory the weight of his father’s words is reminiscent of a passage in a classical example of deterritorialization, Virgil’s *Aeneid* (written between 29 and 19 BC), in which the hero Aeneas flees from burning Troy carrying his father Anchises on his back.

Come then, dear father, up onto my back  
I will bear you on my shoulders - you will be  
No burden to me at all... (Virgil 1961: 49)

Though he manages to carry his father to safety, Aeneas loses his wife Creusa in the fray. He searches for her only to find that she has been killed. Her ghost urges him to leave Troy, to sail westward, to found Rome:

...You have years of exile  
And untold leagues of ocean to plough – (51).

In each of these examples of deterritorialized narratives, the authors and/or characters therein are of multiple coastal places. Their displacement from one coastal place is in part reconciled by evocation of another. Through this evocation enacted within narrative space, geographically distant coastlines are brought into close proximity. In my research question, I use the term ‘juxtaposition’ to frame

this narrative act of ‘placing’ distant coastlines close together for comparison or contrast. The term ‘juxtaposition’ comes from the Latin *juxta*, meaning beside, or near, stemming from the Latin *jungere*, to join, and *jugum*, to yolk; and the French *position*, meaning to posit, site, situate, locate, or place. These terms will be explored further in Chapter 3. Section 3.1. through an elaboration of the conceptual instrument of location. The ways in which the coastlines on either side of the North Atlantic are closely connected through transatlantic communications networks will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 2. The remainder of this chapter will focus on demonstrating ways in which juxtapositions of writing coastlines, or written coastlines, create new narrative contexts from which to examine the conundrum of multi-site-specific place-based identity.

One coastline implies another, implores a far shore. This entreaty intrigues me. What questions do the coastlines on either side of the Atlantic have for one another? How are these questions communicated? When does leaving end and arriving begin? When does the emigrant become the immigrant? What happens between call and response? In *Writing and Difference* Jacques Derrida asks, “Is not the writing of the question, by its decision, by its resolution, the beginning of repose and response?” (1978, 76). The condition of being in between places produces such unanswerable questions in part because, there being no one to answer and no one to answer to, the questioner is relegated to a realm outside the recursive. In “A Topical Paradise,” Hernán Díaz observes, “the maroon embodies the contradiction of being a speaker without a society.... Island narratives are, to a large extent, the account of desperate attempts at inventing an interlocutor” (2010: 83). Defoe’s

Crusoe lists among the evils of his condition: "I have no soul to speak to, or relieve me" (Defoe 2000: 50). His parrot Poll pesters him with questions,

in such bemoaning language I had used to talk to him, and teach him, and he had learned it so perfectly, that he would sit upon my finger, and lay his bill close to my face, and cry, 'Robin, Robin, Robin Crusoe, poor Robin Crusoe! Where are you, Robin Crusoe? Where are you? Where have you been?' (109)

In Elizabeth Bishop's long poem, "Crusoe in England," the far shore implored by Crusoe shifts, from the shores of England as evoked when Crusoe is in exile, to shores of the island of his exile, when he is returned to England. There is no repose for the questions Bishop's Crusoe poses. "Do I deserve this?" (*Poems 1984*: 163)

"Why didn't I know enough of something?" (164)

Plagued her whole life by indecision, Bishop's – often parenthetically inserted – questions perform more like preponderances. Jean-Jacques Lecercle argues:

A question is a temporarily suspended statement, the bloodless or ghostly double of the proposition it calls as its answer, whereas a problem, the site of creative thought, of the creation of thought, is never prepositional (it is formulated as a concept) (2002: 38).

In her writings and in her life Bishop returned again and again to coastal sites to explore in minute detail – through a combination of watching, walking, reading, and writing – the problem of being in between places.

Bishop's poem "The End of March" exemplifies the double meaning of 'writing coastlines'. A first-person narrator (whom we presume to be Bishop) and a silent companion walk on a beach at Duxbury, Maine, in March, the month between winter and spring. The beach is a line in the poem.

It was cold and windy, scarcely the day  
to take a walk on that long beach (*Poems*, 1984: 179).

The tide is writing this line.



everything was withdrawn as far as possible,  
indrawn: the tide far out, the ocean shrunken (179).

The beach is lined with lines: “a lone flight of Canada geese” (179), “a track of big dog-prints” (179), “lengths and lengths, endless, of wet white string” (179) and the line the walkers trace in the temporary yet regularly recurring (writing and erasing) space between high water and low tide. The narrator and her companion write the coastline by walking it, first in one direction and then – rewriting – in the other. In this verse the walkers embody verse and reverse. They walk until they can walk no further, and then they turn back.

In *Wanderlust: A History of Walking*, Rebecca Solnit argues,

the walking body can be traced in the places it has made; paths, parks, and sidewalks are traces of the acting out of imagination and desire... Walking shares with making and working that crucial element of engagement of the body and the mind with the world, of knowing the world through the body and the body through the world (2000: 29).

In “The End of March,” The limits of the body define the limit of the walk, though the mind yearns to travel further.

I wanted to get as far as my proto-dream-house,  
my crypto-dream house, ...(Bishop, *Poems*, 1984: 179)  
[...]  
... But - impossible.  
That day the wind was much too cold,  
even to get that far (180)

Bishop is writing about coastlines in a literary sense. The poem’s narrator, whom we presume to be Bishop, is also writing coastlines in a performative sense. The act of textually and bodily writing and rewriting lines in and of the liminal space hovering between solid and liquid, dry and wet, land and sea, winter and spring, and fresh and salt demarcates Bishop’s life-long struggle to articulate the yet more tenuous threshold between home and away.

In *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot*, Robert Macfarlane states: “We lack - we need - a term for those places where one experiences a ‘transition’ from a known landscape onto John’s ‘far side of the moon’, into Hudson’s ‘new country’, into Berry’s ‘another world’: somewhere we feel and think significantly differently” (2012: 78). Macfarlane refers to such transitions as ‘border crossings’:

These borders do not correspond to national boundaries, and papers and documents are unrequired at them. Their traverse is generally unbiddable, and no reliable map exists of their routes and outlines. They exist even in familiar landscapes: there when you cross a certain watershed, treeline or snowline, or enter rain, storm or mist, or pass from boulder clay onto sand, or chalk onto greenstone. Such moments are rites of passage that reconfigure local geographies, leaving known places outlandish or quickened, revealing continents within counties (78).

Here we hover on a border crossing. We have the beginnings of a conceptual framework: an articulation of a double meaning of ‘writing coastlines’, a collection of literary texts (topos), a physical coastal terrain (locus), a conceptual terrain (liminal space), and an embodied mode of writing into both these spaces (walking). The following two sections of this chapter will begin to synthesise these elements into a networked narrative structure through the presentation of two practice-led research outcomes: *Along the Briny Beach* (Section 1.2.) and *STRUTS* (Section 1.3).

## 1.2. *Along the Briny Beach*

[<http://luckysoap.com/alongthebrinybeach>]

In the tradition of the examples presented in Section 1.1., of authors writing about one place from a distant other, two weeks spent at 4540 feet above sea level in the cold dry air of the interior of a vast continent compelled me to think intently about how to present a practice of reading about writing about walking on beaches. As previously stated in Section 1.1., the intelligibility of that which is written is intertwined with both the context of its production and of its consumption. The production of the practice-led research outcome, *Along the Briny Beach* (Carpenter 2011) [<http://luckysoap.com/alongthebrinybeach>], was begun in February 2011 whilst I was engaging in the research method of contextual enquiry by serving as digital literature and performance writing faculty for the *In(ter)ventions: Literary Practice at the Edge* residency program at The Banff Centre, in Banff, Alberta, Canada. One of the writers participating in *In(ter)ventions*, Daniel Takeshi Krause, was working with the Mobius strip as both a physical form and a narrative structure (Krause 2011). He was writing a set of interconnected circular stories about obsessive thought processes, printing these in single lines on long strips of paper, and then, as shown in Figure 4., twisting and joining the ends of these loops in such a way as to produce an interlinked network of continuously looping texts. These texts were then performed live by multiple readers.

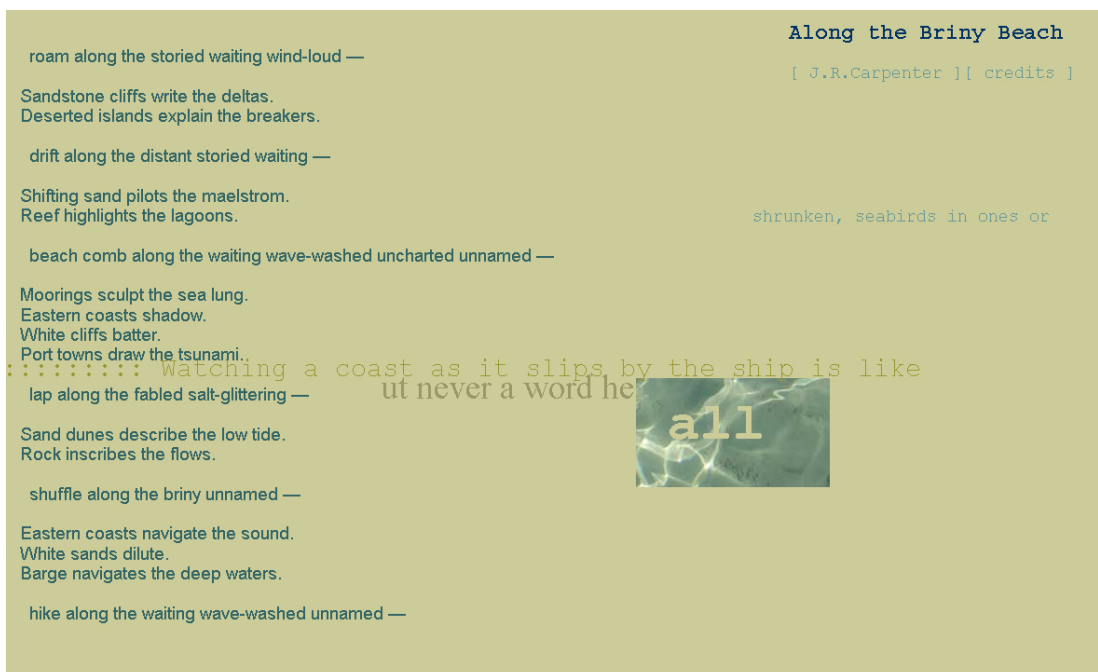


[Figure 4. "Untitled (Rosary)," Daniel Takeshi Krause, 2011. The Banff Centre.]

This work presents a particularly clear example of a number of the basic principals of performance writing. Firstly: form and content are indivisible. The circular story is both literally and figuratively circular. Deleuze and Guattari refer to the indivisibility of form and content when they state: "There is no difference between what a book talks about and how it is made" (1987: 4). Secondly: reading and writing are indivisible. Krause presented this work as a live performance, with multiple authors reading multiple inter-connected strips at the same time.

As stated in the Methodology Section 0.4., the act of writing performs for a future reader, and the act of reading performs that which has been written. In *Thirteen Ways of Talking About Performance Writing* John Hall emphasises the close correlation between reading and writing: "These two words, these two activities,

are folded into each other, like the inside-outness of socks before they go into the washing machine” (Hall 2008). The performance of Krause’s text reminded me of the way certain quotations from favourite authors have a Mobius strip quality about them, as they turn, loop, return, and repeat in the mind. If, as Hall states, “The performance writer writes the space between the writing and the performing, / where the writing is always about to leave to become something else” (2008), then the performance reader reads the space between the reading and the writing, where the reading is always about to become writing. In order to shift away from traditional readings of well-known literary works toward writing a new digital text I set about changing the traditional reading context. In order to reveal new relationships between literary texts which might not otherwise be read together, I used a combination of the web programming languages HTML and JavaScript to create an effect similar to that of the long loop of the Mobius strip, to set multiple quotations scrolling across a computer screen at the same time.



[Figure 5. *Along the Briny Beach*, J. R. Carpenter, 2011. Screenshot.]

Each of the horizontal scrolling texts in *Along the Briny Beach* is contained in a HTML <div> tag. Each <div> tag has been given the class id 'marquee' in reference to the HTML <marquee> tag, which is no longer supported by modern web browsers. The class id could just as well have been named 'coastline' or 'horizon' but it seemed critical and indeed somewhat comical to retain the name 'marquee' as digital textual artifact. The JavaScript initiated by class="marquee" allows for the customisation of font face, size, colour, and style, as well as the speed of the horizontal scroll and its response to mouse actions. As a result of this last attribute, these texts can be sped up, slowed down and paused in place.

Each <div> tag contains a quotation from a well-known work of print literature which may be considered to be 'writing coastlines' in some way. For example, Elizabeth Bishop's poem "The End of March" is quoted in full. As previously discussed in Section 1.1., the beach is a line in this poem, written and re-written by walking, first out, then back. Bishop breaks the narration of this walk into segments which have more to do with the poetic conventions of meter and line-break than with the embodied rhythms of breath in speaking or indeed walking:

Along the wet sand, in rubber boots, we followed  
a track of big dog-prints (so big  
they were more like lion-prints)... (*Poems*, 1984: 179)

To dispense with Bishop's carefully considered line breaks, to animate, illustrate, and re-orientate the reading axis of such a well known print poem in a work of digital literature, as I have done in *Along the Briny Beach*, may be considered sacrilege by more traditional literary scholars. Technically speaking, it could be argued that Bishop's text is no longer verse when displayed in this long linear format, as verse intrinsically implies a turning at the end of each line. In this

new context the entire text turns on a new axis - not back and forth across a stage versing and reversing, but around and around in a loop more akin to a Mobius strip or a slow-moving ocean current. Janez Strehovec considers the operation of quotation in *Along the Briny Beach* to be a strategy for drawing attention to the digital work, in that it “refer[s] to the indisputable value of the underlying reference work, generated by a well-known artist... from the world of literature-as-we-know it” (Strehovec 2012: 82). It is my intention to add to the wealth of possible readings of Bishop’s text by situating it in a new context, by entering it into new relationships with other texts. The horizontalisation of this poem allows it to be read quite literally in parallel with the other texts on the page.

Some proponents of the novelistic tradition might likewise balk at the highly selective quotations and omissions I have made in my quotation of Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* in another horizontally scrolling text in *Along the Briny Beach*. As Robert Coover observed in “The End of Books,” “much of the novel’s alleged power is embedded in the line, that compulsory author-directed movement from the beginning of a sentence to its period, from the top of the page to the bottom, from the first page to the last” (1992). Although individual sentences from Conrad’s novel are quoted in full in *Along the Briny Beach*, the authorial authority of the single continuous line of narrative that has for so long given the novel place of prominence among contemporary literary form is interrupted, undermined by gaps and omissions. The narrative trajectory of the sentences quoted is altered by the removal of sentences, paragraphs, and pages, resulting in a removal of context and of certainty, of what precedes and what follows, and of who is speaking. In one

sentence the narrator (although, out of context, we have no way of knowing it is indeed he), directly addresses a parallel unease operating within the narration:

I listened, I listened on the watch for the sentence, for the word, that would give me the clue to the faint uneasiness inspired by his narrative that seemed to shape itself without human lips in the heavy night-air of the river (Conrad 1950: 95).

The strange reversal of perspective evoked by Conrad in the sentence:

“Watching a coast as it slips by the ship is like thinking about an enigma” (77)

creates an uncanny resonance with other texts on the screen. A still body watching what appears to be a moving coastline both undermines and is undermined by the walking bodies moving along fixed coastline in both Bishop’s “The End of March” and in Lewis Carroll’s Victoria nonsense poem “The Walrus and the Carpenter,” which is also quoted in full in *Along the Briny Beach*, minus its line breaks.

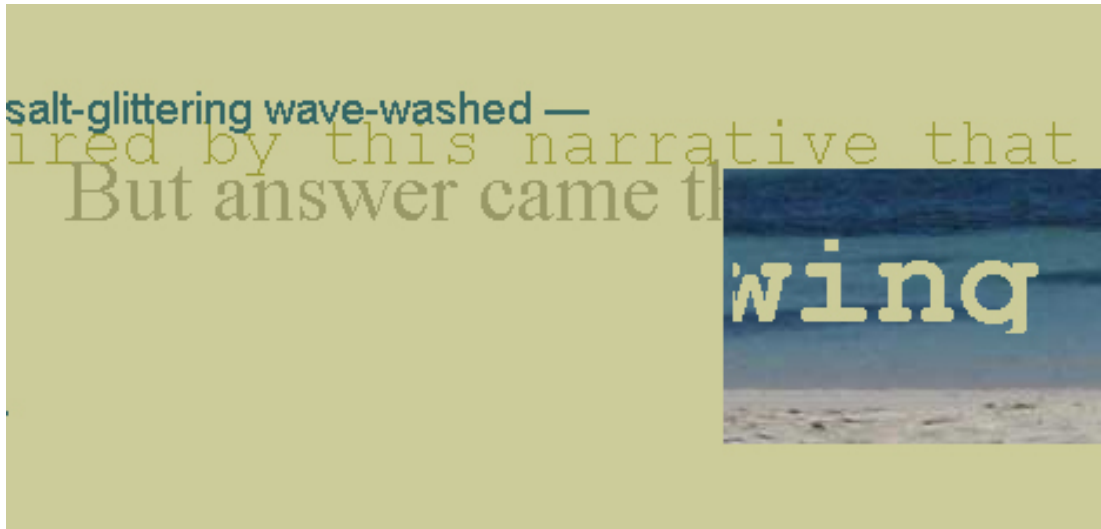
The title *Along the Briny Beach* quotes a line from “The Walrus and the Carpenter”:

“O Oysters, come and walk with us!”  
The Walrus did beseech.  
“A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk,  
Along the briny beach” (Carroll 1982: 169).

“The Walrus and the Carpenter,” in turn, contains many quotation marks, as in the above example, through which nonsensical statements are presented “in the guise of a quotation of the characters’ words” (Lecerclé 1994: 70). In *Philosophy of Nonsense: The Intuitions of Victorian Nonsense Literature*, Jean-Jacques Lecerclé observes, “Characters like to listen to the sound of their own voices, and also to reflect on what they say and how they say it” (Lecerclé 1994: 71). Reflecting upon what Carroll says the Walrus says, we realise that brine is liquid. A beach can almost be briny, but not quite. Walruses can’t talk and oysters can’t walk. But that’s okay.



Because we have already accepted plenty of other impossibilities in the other non-nonsense texts on the page. Coasts can't really slip by ships, and no dog's prints are as big as lion's prints.



[Figure 6. *Along Briny Beach*, J. R. Carpenter 2011. Screenshot, detail.]

When Hall states, “[a] performance writer needs to know how to write no words,” (2008) he refers to writing silence. A performance writer also needs to know how to write images. Images are not silent, at least not linguistically, as we have been repeatedly told by way of the adage, “a picture is worth a thousand words.” The line of horizontally scrolling images in the bottom-right corner of *Along the Briny Beach* document the west to east progression of a walk taken along a beach in Holguin province, Cuba, in January 2009. This line has been written by walking. It can be read as a text through the same narrative structure utilised in “The End of March,” - that of a walk - first out, then back. As the walk progresses, a pictorial narrative unfolds: clean sand, shallow water, Caribbean blue, refraction of sunlight, seaweed, and sand give way to a gravel of small, broken shells and coral, large brain coral, driftwood, tangled roots entwined with bright plastic rope, plastic

bottle caps, empty husks of strange seeds or nuts, the skeletal remains of a plastic strainer, a flip flop, and the sole of a shoe, and then back to clean sand again, a tilt up to the edge of blue ocean, and then an ancient tractor pulling a cart followed by local men feeding it - clearing the beach of washed up rubbish, plastic, and seaweed.

Over these images flit a sub-set of the chapter headings of Darwin's *The Voyage of the Beagle* - at a speed almost too fast to read, and in a window almost too narrow for any sense to be assembled through the context surrounding words might otherwise offer. The relentless listing in the Darwin text speaks both to the vastness of the undertaking and to the loneliness of seemingly endless travel sea travel. The voyage of the Beagle lasted five years. Five years of sailing, riding, walking, collecting, itemising, recording - to what end? To report back. The note-taking performs for a future reader, but also hints at an exhaustion, one echoed by the impossibly fast movement of the text quoted from Darwin's voyages.

Orthogonal to the horizontally scrolling quotations in *Along the Briny Beach*, the vertically scrolling text on the left side of the screen is entirely computer-generated. An in-depth examination of the origins, machinations, and implications of text-generation will be presented in Chapter 2. Section 2.3. For now, discussion will be limited to the performance of this particular text generator. In order to discuss the performance of this text as it appears on screen, the source code which generates this performance must also be discussed. I use the term 'performance' in a particular way here. The source code which generates the vertically scrolling text on the left side of the screen is written in a programming language called JavaScript. It is no coincidence that the word 'script' appears in this name. JavaScript is a procedural language. Like a script for live performance, JavaScript must be written

and read in a particular order in order to be performed. To view the source code of *Along the Briny Beach*, right-click on the web page as it appears in the browser window [<http://luckysoap.com/alongthebrinybeach>] and select 'view page source' from the drop-down menu.

The source code of *Along the Briny Beach* consists of two main sections - a set of variable strings, followed by a set of functions. The variable strings contain all the words the functions have to choose from. The variable strings are named for what they contain. Of the strings named - land, sea, write, erase, walk, and liminal - the string var land= contains a list of land words: ['archipelago', 'atoll', 'cat-tail-curved atoll', 'bank', 'barge', 'bluff', etc.]. The string var sea= contains a list of sea words, and so on. The functions tell the web browser which variable strings to choose a word from, and when, and how to display these words on screen.

Take the following function, for example (the bold formatting has been added for clarity):

```
function site() {  
  var words="";  
  if (rand_range(2)==1) {  
    words+=choose(sea);  
  } else {  
    words+=choose(land);  
  }  
  words+='s '+choose(erase)+'.';  
  return words;  
}
```

The generator will randomly choose a (sea) word or a (land) word, add an 's' and a space and an (erase) word to produce lines in which either land or sea is erasing:

```
Coastlines drown.  
Stones forget.  
Shores obscure.
```

Tides blur.  
Brines drain.  
Cliffs encode.

As these few examples show, the (erase) words do not necessarily pertain specifically to writing and erasing in a textual sense. They refer to a more general erasure, situating the coastlines in a broader context of “the larger forces that engender them” (Galloway 2012: vii), creating what Leonardo Flores describes in a review of *Along the Briny Beach* as, “an experience of a perilous coastline as the site of conflict between humanity and the sea, subject to tsunamis and riptides, where ‘quays pollute,’ ‘gulfs disguise,’ and ‘wharfs collapse’” (Flores 2012).

Similarly, the (write) words (highlighted in bold below) write coastlines on a broad scale:

Cat-tail-curved atoll **explains** the inlet.  
Coastal climate **enunciates** the storm surges.  
Coastline **translates** the channel.  
Shore **coordinates** the storm surges.

Flores observes, “This is not a romanticized beach designed to attract tourists, nor are the ones referred to in the texts she remixes to create this poem” (Flores 2012). The use of the term ‘remix’ in the second half of that statement is somewhat misleading. The limitations of the term ‘remix’ will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 2. Section 2.4. For now, I will simply clarify that, although many words from the quoted texts do appear in the generated text, this is more a coincidence of them being either (land) or (sea) words than a result of using the quoted texts as a data set to populate the variable strings of the generated text. The variable strings also contain many other words gleaned from reading a wide range of texts set on coasts or at sea, as well as words suggested by the thesaurus.

In November 2012, *Along the Briny Beach* was published in the *ELMCIP Anthology of European Electronic Literature*. In their description of the work, the anthology editors address the question of authorship:

Though much of the text is appropriated from other sources – Conrad, Carroll, and Charles Darwin – we can still call Carpenter the author of the work due to the intentional selection of appropriated texts and their rearrangement, or reconfiguration as *Along the Briny Beach*. From the consistency in selected works – all have to do with the sea – to the sea foam green color palette; Carpenter presents text as integration between writing, function, and design (Engberg, Memmott, Pratter 2012).

In one sense, the generated text is the only text in *Along the Briny Beach* which I have written. To use the syntax of the source code to describe the process by which it was created, all the words in the variable strings were [‘borrowed’, ‘chosen’, ‘collected’, ‘entered’, ‘found’, ‘selected’, ‘written’] by me. In another sense, however, the generated text is also born out of a process of quotation. The source code is an adaptation of Nick Montfort’s poetry generator *Taroko Gorge* (2008), which has been ‘remixed’ by at least twenty other people, including by Montfort himself. Montfort has written numerous posts about this remix phenomena on his blog, *Post Position* (Montfort 2011). *Along the Briny Beach* is the third work I have created using the source code of *Taroko Gorge*. The second, *Whisper Wire* (Carpenter 2010), will be discussed in Chapter 2. Section 2.2. In relation to *Along the Briny Beach*, Janez Strehovec states: “Such an intrinsic link to Montfort’s poetry generator contributes to an understanding of the e-literature world in terms of a field that is becoming self-referential and autopoetical” (Strehovec 2012: 82). Awkward though this phrasing may be, the observation is a good one. The field of ‘e-literature,’ which, as outlined in the Context Section 0.3.2., emerges from and still refers heavily to a generally unresponsive academic literary

tradition defined by the fixity of texts, is now starting to make inter-born-digital-textual references which attest to a growing depth within the field. *Along the Briny Beach* and *Whisper Wire* refer to *Taroko Gorge* in much the same way that Coetzee's *Foe* (1986), Tournier's *Friday* (1969), and Ballard's *Concrete Island* (2011 [1973]) refer to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (2000 [1719]). This referentiality between works of digital literature will be discussed in greater detail in terms of translation in relation to the practice-led research outcome *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* (Carpenter 2011) in Chapter 2. Section 2.4.

The remediation of well-known print literary texts into digital literary contexts, the adaptation of the source code of a well-known digital literary text into a new work, the juxtaposition of the fixity of the quoted texts and the variable fluidity of the generated texts, and the performance of all these texts running together on one page, running into each other, and overlapping, allowed me to read these texts in new ways. In keeping with the iterative nature of performance writing methodology, these new ways of reading produced new ways of writing. Two iterations of *Along the Briny Beach* will be discussed in the next two sections.

### **1.2.1. *Along the Briny Beach: A Script for Live Performance***

The first of these iterations, *Along the Briny Beach: A Script for Live Performance*, is reproduced in full in Appendix C. I write ‘live performance’ here, to distinguish this script from the JavaScript source code of *Along the Briny Beach*, which, as mentioned in Section 1.2., is also a script, one read and performed by the web browser. *Along the Briny Beach: A Script for Live Performance* is composed of reordered selections of the texts quoted in and generated by *Along the Briny Beach*. The script is structured in the form of a dialogue between two characters: The Walrus and The Carpenter. In a live performance context, these two interlocutors stand at either edge of a screen showing a projection of *Along the Briny Beach*. They face one another, speaking back and forth across the stage. They take turns, in the sense of the Latin *versus*, a turning. In Greek verse, verse and reverse are represented by the figures of *strophe* and *antistrophe*. *Strophe* is a verse delivered from east to west across the stage, and *antistrophe* is a reverse, or reply, delivered from west to east. These figures will be called upon again in Chapter 2. Section 2.1. and again in Section 2.4. in the guises call and response.

In the live performance iteration of *Along the Briny Beach*, although The Walrus and The Carpenter take turns exchanging ‘verses’ across the stage, they are not quite in conversation. At times they appear to be speaking to one another, especially when they are speaking lines of dialogue from Carroll’s poem “The Walrus and the Carpenter.” At other times, as is the case in the below cited example, they appear to be speaking at cross purposes. And, on a few occasions, where the script indicates “(to the audience),” they break away from pretence of

dialogue altogether and address the audience directly. The result is a complex dialogue between the JavaScript source code, the digital text as it is projected on screen, the printed script for live performance, the two characters (i.e. the Walrus and the Carpenter), and the audience. This script has been performed in a number of contexts, listed in Appendix B. As stated in the Note About the Corpus, I have not included video documentation of any of the live performances to be discussed in this thesis in the supporting materials. As would be the case in most live performances, the composition of this work shifts radically in relation to the particular combination of performers, venue, audience, and whatever randomly computer-generated text happens to be called into the script. No one performance is definitive. I have elected to represent this iteration of *Along the Briny Beach* by way of inclusion of the performance script in Appendix C, because writing, the compositional process, and the textual artifact are the main focus of this thesis.

In a more traditional conception of writing for scripted performance, the printed script could be said to decompose in the live performance. As the performers learn their lines, they turn less and less to the printed text for support. The audience does not see the printed text as it is performed. In performance writing terms, however, the script is composed through performance. In *Along the Briny Beach*, for example, the performance of the JavaScript source code which takes place in the browser window informs the composition of the script for live performance. The script for live performance furthers the recontextualisation of the print literary texts quoted in *Along the Briny Beach* by simultaneously placing them into a digital literary context, into direct relation with computer-generated text, into physical, embodied, voice, and into new print relationships with one another. In the



following excerpt, for example, the Carpenter speaks a line from Conrad immediately followed by a line from Bishop as if they are of the same text. The Walrus appears to respond to the Carpenter's mention of seabirds, but the words he speaks are from Darwin. Carpenter speaks another line from Bishop, again referring to birds. The Walrus lists more birds from Darwin. Carpenter counters this persistent listing with a line from Carroll which contradicts all mention of birds thus far, "No birds were flying overhead— There were no birds to fly." But the Walrus has yet more bird words to offer:

CARPENTER:

This coast was almost featureless, as if still in the making, with an aspect of monotonous grimness. Everything was withdrawn as far as possible, indrawn: the tide far out, the ocean shrunken, seabirds in ones or twos.

WALRUS:

Tucutuco - Molothrus, cuckoo-like habits - Tyrant-flycatcher - Mocking-bird - Carrion Hawks - Flamingoes - Sacred Tree - Sand Dunes - Saline incrustations.

CARPENTER:

The rackets, icy, offshore wind disrupted the formation of a lone flight of Canada geese.

WALRUS:

Scissor-beak - Kingfisher, Parrot, and Scissor-tail

CARPENTER:

No birds were flying overhead— There were no birds to fly.

WALRUS:

Penguin - Geese - Eggs of Doris

Contained within this brief exchange is a map of the terrain of *Writing Coastlines*. The two physical embodied voices may be termed *strophe* and *antistrophe*, here and there, or call and response. These voices are calling and responding from either edge of a screen, a stage. These edges act as coastlines, and the expanse of screen and stage between them an ocean of sorts. These physical embodied voices are reading and speaking lines of writing *about* coastlines. They are performing writing coastlines. Within the broad approach to what writing is and does outlined in the introduction to this chapter, the coastlines written about in these line are also actively writing. The coast in the first line spoken by the Carpenter, which is, as we have said, a hybrid coast written in part by Conrad and in part by Bishop, is described in terms which refer directly to mark-making and drawing, and thus to writing. It is a coast “still in the making.” It is “withdrawn.” It is “indrawn.” Within the broad approach to what communications are and do taken in the next chapter, the “icy, offshore wind” and the “flight of Canada geese” constitute communications between coasts. And, finally, within the formulation of the computer-generated narrative as both an archive emerging in fragments (Foucault 2002: 147) and a machinic assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari 2007: 22) put forth in Chapter 3, the relentless listing of names of birds speaks to the variability of multi-site-specific narratives resonating. Though we name them by name, we are not speaking of specific birds here. There are far too many of them. They are not birds at all, they are portions of text quoted from the chapter sub-headings of Darwin’s *The Voyage of the Beagle*. As such, these birds are topics (topos), points on a map, and locations in memory. The operation of variables as

locations in memory will be discussed in Chapter 2. Section 2.4. and again at greater length in Chapter 3.

For now, as we are writing about speaking writing about birds, I will make one final note about the above cited excerpt, one pertaining to the interruption to this relentless list of words introduced by the seemingly contradictory line of Carroll's text spoken by the Carpenter - "No birds were flying overhead— There were no birds to fly." This interruption must be considered both in terms of the context of its production and of its consumption. "The Walrus and the Carpenter" was published in *Through the Looking-Glass*, in December 1871, at a time when interruption and contradiction were considered the height of bad manners. Jean-Jacques Lecercle's stated thesis in *Philosophy of Nonsense* is that the entire genre of nonsense literature is structured by the contradiction, which he formulates in terms of a dialectic, "between over-structuring and de-structuring, subversion and support... excess and lack" (Lecercle 1994: 3). The Carpenter performs this dialectic by emphatically over-stating that there are no birds whatsoever, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. This dialectic provides a critical context for the verses of computer-generated text called into the print performance script. The JavaScript and the print performance script are highly structured, yet both contain mechanisms for destructuring; the JavaScript generates an excess of text, which the print script calls into itself, thereby inviting into the scripted performance a lack of control over what words will be spoken when.

Jean-Jacques Lecercle defines *logophilia* as love for language that knows no bounds, and *délire* as a perversion which consists in interfering, or rather taking risks, with language (Lecercle 1985: 16). The computer-generated text knows no

bounds and the performance script takes risks with the structure of live performance by calling upon the performer - not to improvise, but rather, to accept whatever text generator offers.

Meddling with language, risking *délire* and madness, means accepting disintegration and struggling to restore the unity of the self. It means abandoning control of and mastery over language. The logophilist no longer speaks through language, he is spoken by it. This is the core of the experience of language in *délire*: and experience of madness in language, of possession ( Lecerle 1985:16).

The tension between control over the production of language and meddling with the generation of language by computational means will be discussed at length in Chapter 2.

### 1.2.2. *Sea Garden*

Further to the iterative process, a short text called *Sea Garden* was written to accompany the publication of *Along the Briny Beach* in a garden-themed issue of the online journal *Boulder Pavement*, launched July 15, 2011 [<http://boulderpavement.ca/issue004/along-the-briny-beach>].

Along the briny beach a garden grows. With silver bells and cockleshells, cockles and mussels, alive, alive oh. A coral orchard puts forth raucous pink blossoms. A bouquet of sea anemones tosses in the shallows. A crop of cliffs hedges a sand-sown lawn mown twice daily by long green-thumbed waves rowing in rolling rows. The shifting terrain where land and water meet is always neither land nor water and is always both. The sea garden's paths are fraught with comings and goings. Sea birds in ones and twos. Scissor-beak, Kingfisher, Parrot and Scissor-tail. Changes in the Zoology. Causes of Extinction. From the ship the sea garden seems to glisten and drip with steam. Along a blue sea whose glitter is blurred by a creeping mist, the Walrus and the Carpenter are walking close at hand. A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk along the briny storied waiting in-between space. Wind blooms in the marram dunes. The tide far out, the ocean shrunken. On the bluff a shingled beach house sprouts, the colour of artichoke. On the horizon lines of tankers hang, like Chinese lanterns. Ocean currents collect crazy lawn ornaments. Shoes and shipwrecks, cabbages and kings. Water bottle caps and thick white snarls of string. At dawn an ancient tractor crawls along the briny beach, harvesting the tide's leaves. The world's plastic, the sea's weeds (Carpenter 2011).

Paradoxically, this text is at once more compact and more expansive than either of the other two iterations of *Along the Briny Beach*. It is a fixed text, cut off from the excess of language produced by the generator. It is a short text, much more selective in its references to the textual corpus of *Along the Briny Beach* than the performance script. And it is a condensed text, distilling the rhythmic spoken quality of the live performance script into a dense prose poem which, although composed to be read aloud, is more difficult to enunciate. Yet this text is also more

expansive than either of the previous two iterations. It does not limit itself to quotation. Rather, it moves into the realm of détournement, a compositional strategy which will be discussed at length in Chapter 3. Section 3.2., by twisting and turning lines from both the generator and the authors of the print texts into new configurations.

*Sea Garden* refers to literary texts beyond the bounds of corpus of *Along the Briny Beach*, such as the song *Molly Malone* referenced in the second sentence, and it refers to the 'text' of the images contained in the digital work in a way that the performance script does not. This text calls into itself certain of the subtexts of its own making. In a clear illustration of the performance writing methodological maxim that writing is research, we can chart the voyage of the sentence "The shifting terrain where land and water meet is always neither land nor water and is always both" from its first appearance in the analytical context of the conference paper "Writing Coastlines: The Operation of Estuaries, Islands and Beaches as Liminal Spaces in the Writings of Elizabeth Bishop," included in Appendix D, to the lyrical context of *Sea Garden*, back into an analytical context in the opening paragraphs of Section 1.1. of this Chapter, and finally resurfacing here. *Sea Garden* is a narrative which resonates between textual sites, that is to say, between the source texts which went into *Along the Briny Beach*, and the multiple iterations to have emerged from *Along the Briny Beach*. Through this body of practice-led research outcomes, a hybrid practice of reading different forms of text has been transformed into a hybrid practice of writing. In the next section, this practice will be applied to a specific coastal terrain.

### 1.3. STRUTS

[<http://luckysoap.com/struts>]

In order to address the research question - Can a juxtaposition of coastlines create a new narrative context from which to examine a multi-site-specific place-based identity? - one coastline must be distinguished from another. This requires writing about a specific coastline, an actual walk along an actual beach. The title *Writing Coastlines* refers to a coastal plurality. No one body can walk along both coastlines of the Atlantic at the same time. But as suggested in Section 1.1., by Elizabeth Bishop's attestation that all being in the Maritimes means is living by the sea (*Prose*, 1984: 264), one body can be of or from one coastal place even whilst being physically and temporally in another. Geolocation data from one coastline could be used in concert with the embodied writing practice of walking to tell stories of or from another. Superimposition has been used to effective ends in locative media works such as Paula Levine's *shadows from another Place* (2004), discussed in Section 0.3.2., which uses GPS coordinates to superimpose the locations of bombs dropped by American forces on Baghdad over the city of San Francisco. My research interest, however, is in a juxtaposition of coastlines. Whereas superimposition constitutes an imposition, an act or instance of placing over or above, juxtaposition is an act or instance of placing close together or side by side, for comparison or contrast. This distinction is a critical one. By placing over, two places become one. Placing side by side implies that there is a space between; this in-between space - be it physical, digital, or conceptual - is the locus of my research. In W. G. Sebald's *Rings of Saturn* (1999), a long walk along the Suffolk coast is narrated in the

condensed form of a book, that we might read in a few hours distances that took many days to traverse. Sitting on one shore whilst thinking of another, the author's mind is occupied with two places at once: "I found it impossible to believe, as I sat on Gunhill in Southwold that evening, that just one year earlier I had been looking across to England from a beach in Holland" (Sebald 1999: 80). The book and the mind can do what the body cannot. So too a single web 'site' can be called simultaneously into any number of web browsers anywhere in the world. Unlike embodied writing, web-based writing can be in two (or more) places at once.

The aim of this section is to use the radical multiplicity of web-based writing to write a specific walk on a specific beach by juxtaposing many different narratives of a single coastline produced by many different narrators over a long period of time. Taking up the notion first explored in Section 1.1., that the past constitutes a territory, it may be stated that, as memories of a physical place may be different for different people, a single place may constitute many territories. A multi-site-specific place-based identity emerges from places striated by multiple versions or 'definings' of their past. In order to explore this notion further, I undertook a five-week-long contextual enquiry of the 'Maritimes' region of Atlantic Canada. The results of this contextual enquiry will be conveyed in this section through a discussion of the web-based practice-led research outcome *STRUTS* (Carpenter 2011) [<http://luckysoap.com/struts>].

*STRUTS* takes as its starting point a very short walk along a portion of New Brunswick coastline, a walk of a distance of roughly sixty feet. This walk was undertaken on my first day as Open Studio Artist in Residence at Struts Gallery and Faucet New Media Centre in Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada, 22 May - 22 June



2011. Struts Gallery is situated in the Tantramar Marshes, one of the places named in Elizabeth Bishop's poem "The Moose," discussed in Section 1.1. in terms of writing a coastline as an evocation of the liminal condition of migration, of being in transition, of being both of and in-between two places. In "The Moose," Bishop performs the role she had ascribed to the cartographer in her earlier poem "The Map," also discussed in Section 1.1., that of reeling off the names of the seashore towns strung along the coastal road that leads westward away from the home of her beloved maternal grandparents in Great Village, Nova Scotia, toward Boston, Massachusetts, home of her paternal grandparents with whom she felt considerably less affinity.:

One stop at Bass River.  
Then the Economies  
Lower, Middle, Upper;  
Five Islands, Five Houses,  
where a woman shakes a tablecloth  
out after supper.

A pale flickering. Gone.  
The Tantramar marshes  
and the smell of salt hay (*Poems*, 1984: 170).

Part of the magic conjured by this incantation of place names resides in the narrative resonance between the now of the speech-act and the many pasts of the places named. Narrative resonance will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 3. For now, suffice it to say, the term 'resonance' comes from Latin *resonant*, meaning 're-sounding'. The name Tantramar will be sounded and re-sounded throughout this section in a mode similar to the media archaeological method of re-versioning and the performance writing method of offering evolving 'definings' rather than fixed definitions. This investigation engages with the practice of toponymy, as first

introduced in relation to the practice-led research outcome “Muddy Mouth” in Section 1.1. Drawing upon these conceptual instruments we may begin to consider the writing and re-writing of the coastal locus of *STRUTS* both physically, in terms of its specific geology and storm events; and textually, in terms of how its place names have been written and re-written by local and transatlantic peoples and conflicts over a period of roughly 350 years. In keeping with the iterative nature of performance writing methodology, portions of the text in this chapter have been written and re-written throughout the course of this research. For example, the following passage first appeared in a blog post I published on blog *Lapsus Linguae* 17 April 2011 [<http://luckysoap.com/lapsuslinguae/2011/04/struts-gallery-sackville-new-brunswick-nouvelle-france>]. It was later adapted for the conference paper “Writing Coastlines: The Operation of Estuaries, Islands, and Beaches as Liminal Spaces in the Writings of Elizabeth Bishop” (Carpenter 2011) included in Appendix D. It is quoted here as it appears in the web-based iteration of *STRUTS*:

Tantramar. The Tantramar River. The Tantramar Marsh. Near Sackville, New Brunswick. You know, that windy bit of road. Where, at night, the eerie red lights of the radio relay towers glow. In Westmorland County, on the southern part of the Isthmus of Chignecto, which joins the peninsula of Nova Scotia to the mainland. To Canada. Atlantic Canada. The Maritimes. The east coast. (Carpenter, *STRUTS*, 2011)

The Tantramar Marshes are a site of many overlaps. Geographically, they are located on the border between the Canadian provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Culturally, they fluctuate between the languages and cultural histories of the native Mi'kmaq population, the colonising English and French, and, in more recent years, immigration from other regions of Canada and from other countries. Physically, the marshes are estuarine, a mixture between fresh river water the tidal

salt sea water, part reclaimed dike land part salt marshes, home to herds of grazing cattle and to a water bird sanctuary. As such Tantramar is a liminal space, an *entrespace* – not just a space between two places but an ebbing/flowing in-between place of its own, a thinking place, a site of mixture, flux and contradiction - not land/not sea, or, as Elizabeth Bishop writes of the salt marshes which grow along the dikes in this region, “so fresh, so salt” (Prose, 1984: 264).



[Figure 7. Cape Maringouin, New Brunswick, Canada, 2011. Low tide, salt marsh.]

The town of Sackville, New Brunswick, was first known by the Acadians who settled there in 1672 as Pre des Bourgs, and the surrounding region as Beaubassin. The Beaubassin seigneurie, granted in 1684, was named after Michael Leneuf de Beaubassin the elder (1640-1705), an officer in the French Navy who seized three English vessels from Boston that were taking on coal at Cape Breton. The name

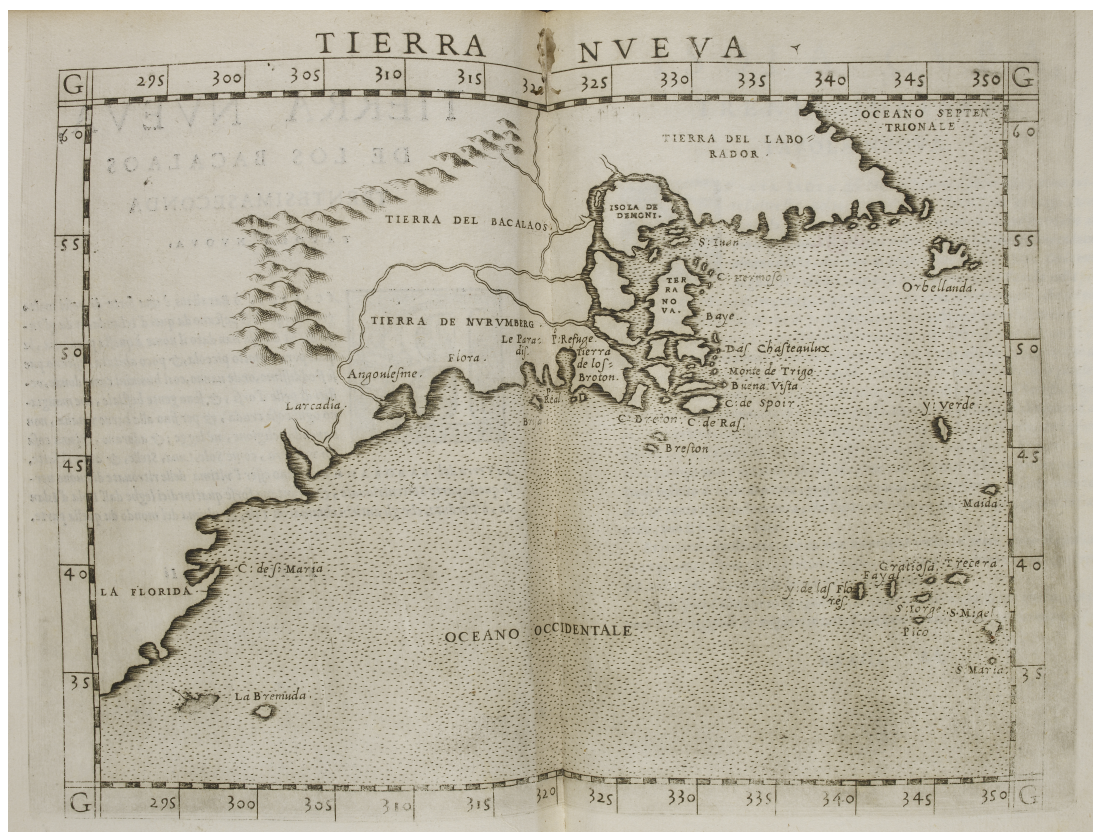
'Cape Breton' is an Anglicised version of the old French place name Bretagne. A long-ago name long ago given to a foreign place known to be frequented by foreigners, the French fishing fleets. A location located within the discourse of displacement.

Beaubassin is a place named after a person named after another place entirely, a location triply located within the discourse of residency.

In *Venetian Navigators: The Voyages of the Zen Brothers to the Far North*,

Andrea di Robilant offers the following explanation of the origin of the name Acadie:

Some linguists say the place name [Acadia] was derived from *caddie/quoddie*, a word used by native tribes to designate a fertile region. But others say it is not derived from a native term at all and that it was introduced into the language by Giovanni da Verrazzano in 1524: while sailing north of Chesapeake Bay, he called the coastal region Arcadia because it brought to his mind the pristine beauty of mythical Arcadia... Then the *r* was dropped when Verrazzano's diaries were transcribed, and Arcadia became Acadia or Acadie, as the French possessions along the coast of Canada were known" (di Robilant 2011: 146-147).



[Figure 8. "Terra Nova" Girolamo Ruscelli 1561, ©The British Library Board, Maps C.1 b.3.]

Figure 8. shows a map of "Terra Nova" reproduced in a translation of Ptolemy's *Geografia* published in Venice by Girolamo Ruscelli in 1561, the name Larcadia is written in just such a position. Less than fifty years later Samuel Champlain writes of setting out for L'Cadie in *Les Voyages du Sieur de Champlain* (1613). The place name migrated up the coast to settle in the region before the people who came to be known as Acadians arrived. When the British expelled the Acadians from Acadie in 1755, their name became their nation and travelled with them. The meaning of all the named locations they left behind them changed. The region formerly known as Beaubassin is now called Tantramar. Sackville, New Brunswick, is located on a tributary of the Tantramar River, which feeds the Tantramar Marsh, which spreads inland from the Bay of Fundy for ten kilometres. In Joseph Des Barres's *Atlantic Neptune*, a collection of sea charts published in England in 1776, the Tantramar River is labelled *Tintamar River*. A Spanish spelling of this name makes no sense given the Mi'kmaq, Acadian, and English history of this place. But the meaning 'Red Sea' does. The Tantramar River flows into the Cumberland Basin, which flows into Chignecto Bay, which flows into the Bay of Fundy, which has the highest tides in the world. As shown in Figure 7., when the tide goes out, it goes way out. It leaves behind acres of salt marsh, salt hay thriving in hard, rich, sticky, red soil, and beyond that, red mud flats glistening mile after mile, where, as Elizabeth Bishop writes:

... silted red,  
sometimes the sun sets  
facing a red sea,  
and others, veins the flats'

lavender, rich mud  
in burning rivulets (*Poems*, 1984: 169).

Although it is possible to entertain for a moment the notion that the name Tantramar was assigned to this red mud glazed with sky by a cartographer of Spanish origin, or one who had previously written the coastlines of Spanish dominions, the name Tintamar written in the *Atlantic Neptune* and in other English maps and charts produced at that time is most certainly a miss-spelling of the Acadian French word *tintamarre*, meaning ‘a great noise or din’ which in turn was both a toponymic transformation of the native Mi’kmaq name Tatamalg, meaning “Scrambled River” and a reference to the noisy flocks of migratory birds which feed and mate on the Tantramar marshes. Today the marshes are the site of two bird sanctuaries, one of which carries the old Acadian name Tintamarre.

Bishop’s strange prose poem “Strayed Crab” poses once again the problem of place and displacement: “This is not my home. How did I get so far from water? It must be over that way somewhere” (*Poems*, 1984: 140). This sideways-walking coastline-writing temporary-tidal-pool-dwelling creature rewrites the lumbering scale of the “loose” (140) world according its own size and perspective. Though not a hermit crab, this strayed crab carries the echo of a number of homes on its back. Following the posed problem of where home might be comes this pronouncement: “I am the color of wine, of tinta” (140). Tinta. Tintamar, Tintamarre, Tatamalg, Tantramar. Where, silted red, sometimes the sun sets facing a red sea. “A pale flickering, gone. The Tantramar marshes and the smell of salt hay” (170).



[Figure 9. *STRUTS*, J. R. Carpenter 2011. Screenshot.]

How then to relate a narrative of this highly striated coastline, its diverse peoples, its contested histories, its many names, its mutable estuarine geography, its underlying geology, its extremes of very high and very low tides, and its recurrent catastrophic storm events? The practice-led research outcome *STRUTS* [<http://luckysoap.com/struts>] presents a non-linear, intertextual, discontinuous, and multi-modal narrative through a combination of the following formal elements: five texts horizontally scrolling across the screen, flickering monthly tide gauge averages, the intermittent appearance of live weather warnings pulled in by RSS feed, and a series of photographs forever fading into one another in an animated slide show loop. The overall narrative resides in no one of these elements, but rather, resonates in the spaces between them. A description of the operation of

each of these discreet elements will now be presented, followed by a discussion of how they perform as a whole.

The central images of *STRUTS* are photographs of the ends of the wooden struts that support the seawall that protects the foreshore in front of a small holiday cottage on the east coast of New Brunswick from the rising tides and strong winter storms of the Northumberland Strait. They appear in the order they were shot, corresponding to a south to north progression along the seawall. The texts which appear 'onmouseover' over the bottom of these images are riffs and variations on dictionary definitions of the words: 'strut', 'spur', and 'seawall'. A short text which appears intermittently in all-caps at the bottom left corner of the screen contextualises these images. It is a rewriting of the first-hand account offered to me via email by Linda Rae Dornan, of the storm surge which damaged the seawall in front of her cottage, the seawall which the struts in these photographs support. This and all the other texts referred to in this section are included in Appendix C.

The flickering numbers to the top right of the slide show represent the monthly tide gauge averages for Shediac Bay (the nearest tide gauge to the locus of *STRUTS*), from the month I was born to the month I moved from Canada to England. The tide gauge that measured these monthly averages was destroyed in the same storm surge that damaged Linda Rae Dornan's seawall, on the night of 21 December 2010. The tide gauge data is animated via a 'found' JavaScript. The data itself was provided by Sackville resident and cartographer Maggie Pitts, who also pointed me in the direction of the Saxby Gale, described below.



The five horizontally scrolling texts which appear and disappear on the screen over time to the right, to the left, and to the bottom of the image slide show further contextualise the images, situating them in a broader cultural, geographical, and historical context. The content of these texts will be addressed below. First, it is important to note that these horizontally scrolling texts are run by the same JavaScript used in *Along the Briny Beach*. The sustained engagement with reading circular stories in Krause's Mobius strip experiments, which led to the presentation of quotations from print literature in long looping horizontally scrolls in *Along the Briny Beach*, led me to consider new ways to write through this form. *Along the Briny Beach* is a walk along a generalised beach. In order to write a walk along a specific beach I began to interrogate the horizontally scrolling text in terms of landscape, asking: How might the narrative content of a horizontally scrolling text combine with its performance on screen to refer more directly to horizontal lines such as horizon lines and coastlines in an specific landscape? And how might the juxtaposition of multiple such lines come to constitute a new narrative context from which to examine a multi-site-specific place-based identity?

In order to proceed along this line of inquiry it must be stated that creating long horizontal lines of text in a web context is neither an obvious nor an easy thing to do. Like text that is handwritten, typed, or printed on a page of paper, when unformatted HTML text reaches the far right edge of a web 'page' it will automatically line-break and return to the far left margin. By default, text overflow will cause a web page to vertically scroll. I have been experimenting with ways to break this convention since the late 1990s. In *CityFish* (Carpenter 2010), the last large web-based work I made before beginning my PhD, I explored the use of a

horizontally scrolling web browser window (rather than animating scrolling text within a browser window) to represent asynchronous relationships between people, place, perspective and time. In *CityFish*, the horizon line is the story line, moving along inexorably linearly from left to right, while thoughts, images, associations and emotions jump about, crowd in and out, overlap and overstep the boundaries of the screen. This use of the horizontally scrolling browser window to explore a landscape was informed by Roderick Coover's Interactive Panoramic Environments and Cinemascesapes. For example, in *Unknown Territories: Voyage into the Unknown* (2008), Coover, uses a horizontally scrolling browser window to tell a geographically and chronologically linear narrative of an expedition down the Colorado River in a non-linear way, through the presentation of multiple media views of the landscape (drawn, painted, engraved, mapped) and a textual narrative based on archival materials, written from multiple points of view. Coover draws upon the visual traditions of the panorama and the diorama as they have been used in museums and landscape photography to establish hierarchies of value and meaning. What textual traditions might similarly be drawn upon to establish a theoretical framework for horizontally scrolling text?

The horizontally scrolling browser window may be situated in within an ancient textual tradition. Scrolls of papyri and parchment have a much longer history than the conventions of the paper page and the printed book. The referents for horizontally scrolling text within a fixed browser window, however, emerge from a much more recent media ecology. Among the first mediations of horizontally scrolling text was Morse code as it was output as small holes punched on long narrow strips of paper, which came to be known as ticker tape as it was used to

print stock prices coming in over the telegraph wire. Telegraphic text had no mechanism for a line break. The ticker tape passed through the fixed 'window' of the receiver in a manner similar to the way a typewriter ribbon passes in front of the keys or a film passes in front of a projector. The first computer memory was paper tape punched with holes. Memory was later stored on magnetic tape. The formal properties of horizontally scrolling, non-line breaking text of the Morse Code stock ticker are retained in the Light-Emitting Diode (LED) stock tickers visible in Times Square, New York, and the technology which runs those is the same as that which also now runs the fixed-width windows of horizontally scrolling text commonly used on train platform signs. The narrow reading window afforded some of the horizontally scrolling texts in *Along the Briny Beach* - that of "The Walrus and the Carpenter" in particular - is reminiscent of the small scrolling LED signs which became popular as they became affordable in the 1980s for advertising in shop windows. My first work of electronic literature (and here I do mean electronic rather than digital) was a circular story programmed to run on continuous loop in a LED sign (Carpenter 1994). At the time, I would have situated this work within a new media art context in relation to Jenny Holtzer's extensive body of work with LED signs.

Now, however, there are digital literary contexts within which to situate horizontally scrolling electronic and digital text work. In 2010 Jason Camlot curated a project called *Tickertext*, which "addresses the production and dissemination of new creative writing in relation to informing features of the historical stock ticker—text in motion, instantaneous telecommunication (transmitting messages across a distance), periodic updates and "telegraphic" brevity" (Camlot 2010). In a fine example of multiple texts horizontally scrolling within a fixed browser window in a

recent web-based work of digital literature, in *Password Marco Polo* (2012), Dirk Vis uses horizontally scrolling text to create an entirely textual landscape which plays with font size and scale to create the impression of foreground, distance, and perspective to create the impression of a traveller sitting still in a moving vehicle watching a textual narrative landscape speed past. The texts respond to mouse events by speeding up, slowing down, and shifting perspective. Though I refer to them as texts, they are in fact images of texts.

In *STRUTS*, the horizontally scrolling texts remain texts. They are composed of the same alpha-numerical character set as the source code. They are visible in the source code, and thus read-able by humans as well as search engines. From the source code or from the screen, they may be highlighted, copied, and pasted elsewhere. In order to retain these textual properties, control over certain aspects of the visual appearance of the texts had to be relinquished. These texts do not shift in perspective as the images of texts in *Password Marco Polo* appear to. The decision to prioritise textual over design qualities is born out of a material sensibility. The texts themselves are a mixture of 'original' and 'found' texts, researched at the Mount Allison University Library in Sackville, New Brunswick, The British Library in London, and various on-line sources including the Canadian Department of Fisheries website and various online dictionaries. I place the terms 'original' and 'found' in single quotation marks to indicate that I use these terms with reservation. Whereas *Along the Briny Beach* faithfully quotes - the removal of line-breaks notwithstanding - well-known literary texts in deference to a reference to a process of reading, *STRUTS* deliberately blurs distinctions between 'original' and 'found' by blending subjective historical narrative accounts, out-of-date reference materials, pure data,

and a mix of my own narrative and academic writing, which is, of course, a synthesis of a wide range of texts. In Chapter 3 I will situate this practice of textual appropriation within the Situationist practice of détournement, which constitutes a challenge to private property, as McKenzie Wark argues: “Détournement sifts through the material remnants of past and present culture for materials whose untimeliness can be utilized against bourgeois culture” (Wark 2011: 39).

The text in blue at top left corner of *STRUTS* is détourned from an old geology textbook of the sort in use when I was a high school student in Nova Scotia in the 1980s. The fact imparted in the first sentence, that no part of Nova Scotia is more than 50 kilometres from the sea, is one every Nova Scotian is taught at an early age, yet I distinctly remember this distance being 17 miles. Caught in the act of miss-remembering, I determined to détourne the dry textbook text into something less precise and thus less authoritative, more porous and more fluid.

The text in brown which appears just below the détourned textbook text is a non-sense story created from all the different dictionary definitions of the word ‘bay’. Just as the blue text utilises the material remnants of my own early education to challenge the effectiveness of that education through a retelling, or re-sounding, the brown, or bay-coloured text challenges the bourgeois notion that dictionaries fix definitions. Instead, the dictionary is used as a raw material to produce a new text which confuses and confounds boundaries between definitions in such a way as to produce a new text rather more suited to the Bay of Fundy.

The red text which appears on the right-hand side of the image slide show is a mixture of on-line texts edited together to conflate the geological, historical and toponymic aspects of the reddish waters in the Northumberland Strait, the red

lobsters which are fished in the strait, and the name the early French settlers gave to the strait - Le mer rouge, The Red Sea.

The text which appears in dark grey just below the image slide show is a reworking of an excerpt of “Writing Coastlines: The Operation of Estuaries, Islands and Beaches as Liminal Spaces in the Writings of Elizabeth Bishop,” which was a reworking of the afore-mentioned blog post. Both these iterations have been further reworked to become the historical context for the discussion of this work here, as cited above.

The other long grey text below the slide show is an much-détourned mixture of historical narrative accounts, taken from Wikipedia and a number of other on-line sources, of the Saxby Gale of 1869, the worst storm ever to have hit the North American eastern seaboard. Until Super-Storm Sandy hit in October 2012, the Saxby Gale was the storm the strength of all other storms were compared to. In 1869, the telegraph was the primary mode of long-distance communication. Much of the content of this text is based on first hand reports and news items which would have originally been transmitted via telegraph. The telegraph network was extensively damaged in the storm. Hundreds of miles of cable came down. Thousands of people were cut off from communications with the outside world. This had a crippling effect on rescue efforts. This line of horizontally scrolling text presents text produced in and appropriated from a telegraph news era in a mode of visual and textual performance informed by that era.

The only bit of live data *STRUTS* calls from the web is the marine weather forecast for the Northumberland Strait, which appears in the lower left corner after about 85 seconds. This live feed is also reminiscent of the telegraphic era in which

news came in over the wire. Whereas all the other text in *STRUTS* is found material, I chose to make this corner of the textual landscape live because weather and storms have written this coastline and indeed this piece.

*STRUTS* launched on the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's *Open Space, Third Hand Plays* series curated by Brian Kim Stefans 15 September 2011. In his curatorial statement Stefans describes *STRUTS* as "collation of image, facts, poetry, and animation into a sort of ambient text movie" (Stefans 2011). The words 'ambient' and 'movie' suggest an act of looking rather than one of reading. Writing is a visual medium. How a text looks inflects how it is read (Lewis 2008) (Klobucar 2013). But Stefans seems to suggest this text need not be read at all: "While it is probably ideal that the viewer experiences the piece as aestheticized information architecture, even letting it run in the background as the texts unfold, a credits page offers a bibliography of texts and some explanation of the work's creation" (Stefans 2011). Stefans presents 'the viewer' with two options - sit back and watch the text, or read about the text. What of the third option - to actually attempt to read the text itself?

To engage in this third option we must become participants in the text, actively looking, reading, and interacting. In "The Digital Panorama and Cinemasces" Roderick Coover notes:

The panorama offers the viewers an illusion of commanding a total view of a moment; actually ... it is impossible for a spectator to grasp a panorama in its entirety; it offers more than a person with two eyes can see at a single glance... a viewer must remember what can no longer be seen... (2011: 201).

The same principal applies to reading horizontally scrolling texts. It is impossible to grasp the text in its entirety. A participant must remember words that

can no longer be seen in order to make sense of words still to come. Far from being a new condition placed upon reading by a new media ecology, this mode of reading was also demanded of the telegraph operator and the Marconista, as will be discussed in Chapter 2. Further strategies for reading horizontally scrolling text in a web browser have been proposed by the authors of another example of horizontally scrolling text in digital literature, *Ah*, by K Michel and Dirk Vis, which is included in the Electronic Literature Collection Volume Two (2011). The editors of the collection write:

*Ah* articulates a simple paradox of reading animated digital literature, which is that the eye, and by extension the mind, often has no sense of the future of a sentence or line of text and, more importantly, is not given the chance to re-read an already witnessed word or phrase” (ELC2 2011).

The authors elaborate on the role of the reader in their own description of the work:

The starting-point of *Ah* (a shower song) is a text that moves between breathing and singing, representing the flow of time... It's almost as if the reader is allowed passivity, but the reader's role changes. The endless loop of the work forces the reader to adjust his or her reading and interpretation strategy (ELC2 2011).

So too must a participant in *STRUTS* adjust to the particularities of the text.

In “Call and Response: Toward a Digital Dramaturgy,” Barbara Bridger proposes that dramaturgy, as understood through performance writing, proffers strategies for interpreting performances containing many different vocabularies (Bridger & Carpenter 2014). A consideration of the performance of the work as a whole as it unfolds across the space of the screen and over the space of time necessarily integrates the acts of looking and reading. The image slide show is the first thing to appear on screen. It takes up the most amount of space on the screen, but contains



the least amount of narrative information. As horizontally scrolling texts begin to appear, the image slide show seems to block them, cut them off, or interrupt them. If we are looking at the images, we can't read the texts. If we are reading one text, we cannot read the others. Some texts are only visible on screen for a short period of time. Over time, as a participant in the work adjusts to the rhythm and pace of each text, and spends time with each text separately, connections, or what I shall term narrative resonances, begin to appear between the texts. If a participant spends enough time with the work the texts will loop, offering an opportunity for re-reading. As the textual landscape becomes more familiar through the act of reading and re-reading it becomes less amorphous, or 'ambient.' As a more complex understanding of this coastline emerges, of its history, its peoples, its languages, and its storm events, the performance of the image slide show becomes inflected with the context provided by the texts. Rather than interrupting the texts, the images may be understood to be framing the texts by way of providing a visual, narrative, and sited anchor for the work as a whole.

This pragmatic approach to interpreting the many different vocabularies of the work reveals that the difficulties presented by *STRUTS* are precisely the difficulties presented by its *locus*. Just as multiple narratives constituting different territories compete with one another on screen, on the ground, multiple languages are heard in the streets and are evidenced by bilingual signage. The endless loop of the long tides are written and erased twice daily, forcing participants in the landscape to adjust reading and interpretations strategies to account for estuarine salt marshes, crumbling cliffs, and silted red beaches which are neither land nor sea and always both.

*Along the Briny Beach* writes and re-writes an embodied walk along a fictional beach which is at once any beach, every beach, and no beach; a generalised physical coastline, and a liminal space fraught with comings and goings. *STRUTS* writes a specific walk on a specific beach by juxtaposing many different narratives of a single coastline produced by many different narrators over a long period of time. Thus, *STRUTS* addresses the research question posed by this chapter and by this thesis by furthering the notion that the past constitutes a territory. A juxtaposition of the many pasts of a single yet striated coastline through the presentation of multiple horizontally scrolling texts on one screen creates a new narrative context from which to examine a multi-site-specific place-based identity.

The next chapter will move beyond the physical coastlines and the limits of the human body to consider how the networked and generative aspects of transatlantic communications networks might serve as narrative structures for writing resonating between sites, beyond nations.

## CHAPTER 2.

### NETWORKED / GENERATIVE: TRANSATLANTIC COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS

The previous chapter explored physical and embodied aspects of the operation of the coastlines on either side of the Atlantic Ocean as liminal spaces, in-between places fraught with comings and goings. This chapter considers networked and generative approaches to establishing communication between these two coastlines in order to address the question: Can digital networks serve as narrative structures for writing resonating between sites, beyond nations? These approaches will lay the groundwork for a detailed analysis of two practice-led research outcomes, *Whisper Wire* (Section 2.2.) and *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* (Section 2.3).

#### 2.1. Introduction

Just as *Writing Coastlines* takes a broad and overtly interdisciplinary view of what writing is and does, this chapter takes a conceptually broad and historically long view of what transatlantic communication networks are and what they do in a wide range of contexts. This chapter does not, however, endeavour to present a comprehensive historical account of the development of transatlantic communications networks; it does not adhere to a strictly chronological ordering of events or inventions, nor does it seek to prove 'firsts' or claim new discoveries. Rather, it takes a media archaeological approach to identifying, revisiting, and

resounding certain critical shifts in the composition of transatlantic communications networks, toward a conceptualisation of digital networks as narrative structures for writing resonating between sites, beyond nations.

Within this conceptually broad framework, all comings and goings between the coastlines on either side of the Atlantic Ocean are considered to be communications. The term 'communication' means both to impart or transmit, and to join, connect, or make common. The literary corpus introduced in Chapter 1. provided examples of authors writing of and from one shore to communicate to another. For example, in *The Voyage of the Beagle*, Darwin's frequent comparison of distant lands to England serves both to impart information about the far shores of his travels and to make them common to the known shores of his home. The term 'communication' refers both to the act of communicating and to the fact of being communicated. The act of communication imparts, interchanges or transmits narratives, thoughts, opinions, objects, impulses or other information, by way of speech, writing, images, sounds, signs, signals, or currents, oceanic, electrical or otherwise. In *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Marshal McLuhan observes that long before it acquired its current association with the movement of information, the term 'communication' was used extensively "in connection with roads and bridges, sea routes, rivers, and canals" (1974: 99). In this sense, the Atlantic Ocean communicates between the coastlines of the United Kingdom and those of Atlantic Canada through the interchange of currents, winds, and tides.

The fact of communication refers to that which is imparted, interchanged, or transmitted. What does the Atlantic Ocean communicate between these two shores? In *Cape Cod*, Henry David Thoreau observes: "All the great rivers of the

globe are annually, if not constantly, discharging great quantities of lumber, which drifts to distant shores” (1995 [1865]: 125). He adds, “I have also seen very perfect pebbles of brick, and bars of Castil soap from a wreck rolled into perfect cylinders, and still spirally streaked with red, like a barber’s pole....” (125). These quantities of lumber, pebbles of brick, and bars of soap are themselves communications.

Additionally, they communicate meta information pertaining to the speed, temperature, and direction of ocean currents, tides, and winds. A communication may impart a narrative: a ship loaded with Castil soap has run aground. At the same time, a communication may constitute the route, passage, or means of passage between places through which that communication communicates: the worn state of a bar of Castil soap carried by an ocean current to a shore far from where the ship it was once loaded upon ran aground communicates aspects of the distance, duration, and arduousness of its commute. Lucky soap, to have survived the passage at all.

In order for humans to establish communication between the coastlines of the United Kingdom and those of Atlantic Canada, the North Atlantic Ocean must be crossed. In practical terms, this is no easy task. As outlined in Chapter 1. Section 1.1., these coastlines are striated. They are rugged, they are porous, they are subject to wind, tide, and erosion, and they are separated by roughly 3400 kilometres of ocean. A significant obstacle to the establishment of communication between these coastlines is the fact that for most of the known history of western civilisation, in the minds of mariners, merchants, mapmakers, mathematicians, philosophers, royalty, and clergy alike, the North American coastline simply did not exist. For Aristotle (384-322 BCE), not even the Atlantic existed. He perceived of the

world as a small place, bounded by a narrow river known as Oceanus. Known by many other names since, the Atlantic gradually grew into a formidable expanse of ocean by way of thousands of years of mariners testing the waters, as it were, pushing further and further outward into the unknown. That the precise nature and location of the North American coastline was unknown had its advantages. Due to absences and errors in even the most modern maps of his time, Christopher Columbus believed the Atlantic Ocean was much smaller than we now know it to be (Johnson 1994: 3-4), and, again due to cartographic inaccuracies, he believed this ocean to be dotted with islands upon which he could stop for fresh water along the way (96-97). The persistence of the erroneous belief that the riches of Cathay lay across the Atlantic funded many an early transatlantic expedition.

Semantically, in the title *Writing Coastlines: Locating Narrative Resonance in Transatlantic Communications Networks*, communicating across the Atlantic is achieved through the prefix *trans-* meaning across, beyond, or through. In this title, the prefix *trans-* is used in combination with an element of origin: transatlantic. The prefix *trans-* may also be used to imply a state of change: transmit, transfer, transport, translate. The practice-led research outcome discussed in Section 2.4. of this chapter, *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*, applies the prefix *trans-* to the word 'mission', from the Latin *missiō*: a sending off. This work will be discussed through the application of the prefix *trans-* the word *-lation*, from the Latin, *latio*, meaning borne, as in carried or endured. When a communication is transmitted across the vast Atlantic, through the ocean itself, over its surface, or through any other medium, what is changed in the process, and what endures? The prefix *trans-* will also be called upon in this chapter to imply a poetics of coming and going by way of

its application to the word 'verse' from the Latin *versus*, meaning a turning. As first suggested in Chapter 1. Section 1.1., every verse has a re-verse, which is to say, verse has direction. In Greek verse, *strophe* always calls out from east to west across the stage. *Antistrophe* always replies from west to east. Neither voice is in either place. Both are calling: across, beyond, through.

*Strophe* and *antistrophe* are evoked here to represent the most basic functions of a communication network - call and response. A call is a communication. As evidenced by the unanswerable questions posed by the castaway Crusoe and echoed by his parrot Poll - "Where are you, Robin Crusoe? Where are you? Where have you been? How come you here?" (Defoe 2000: 109) - not all calls elicit responses. A response is a reverse, a return, a confirmation that a call has been received. In digital networks, the function of call and response is clearly illustrated by the principal of 'ping'. "Ping is a very simple program: it sends a single data packet to a particular IP address and waits for it to come back" (Pias 2011: 166). A response successfully returned to the address of the call establishes that there is a channel of communication. It situates the point of origin of the call as well as the location of the response to that call within a 'net' of connectedness. The term 'net' is used deliberately here, to point toward an extended notion of network which encompasses both work with nets and the work that nets do.

Among the earliest transatlantic communications which could be said to constitute communications networks were those established by fishers in the early fifteenth-century. Venturing further and further off shore, fishers gradually connected ports on the islands of the North Atlantic - Shetland, Orkney, Faros, Iceland, Newfoundland, and Cape Breton. In Chapter 3. Section 3.2.2. these and

other islands of the North Atlantic will be explored in terms of *topos*, as collection of topics, and as places in memory. In this chapter these islands are considered in networking terms, as ports and as hubs. Fishers are literally net-workers in two senses. Firstly, fishers work with nets. Further, fishers operate within an arrangement of moving lines or passages intersecting at regular intervals. Deleuze encapsulates these two senses of fishers as net-workers in the statement: "Thinking in terms of moving lines was the process put forward by Herman Melville, and this involved fishing lines and lines of descent which could be dangerous, even fatal" (1992: 159). The fishing line goes out from the boat, and, all being well, it is hauled in again. Fishers go out to sea, and all being well, they come back to port again: they call and respond; they transmit and receive. The passage of a ship creates a moving line which connects two or more ports. In digital networks, the term 'port' is used to refer to the point at which a cable connects to a hub. Fishers operate as conducting elements between ports of call, between harbours. Besides fish, fishers communicate a great deal of additional information, including: nautical and astronomical observations made at sea; foreign languages, morals, religions and customs; and all manner of news items carried by packet or by word of mouth from one port to the next. Communications – plural – are always means of both sending and receiving communication. Documents, letters, packets, ships, telegraphs, telephones, radios, televisions, files, folders, and digital networks are all communications. Communication networks are what they do.

In *Lines: A Brief History*, Tim Ingold makes a critical distinction between living a life at sea, and travelling across the sea toward a known destination (2007: 77).

For thousands of years, fishers and merchants and marauders alike clung to the



coasts of the known world. Even as Celtic and Norse fishers established transatlantic communications networks between Northern Europe and Newfoundland by way of calling at island ports in between, they were still living a life at sea. Until well into the sixteenth century, Newfoundland was depicted on maps as a smattering of islands (Ruscelli 1561), a loose assortment of ports through which to connect ships with fresh water, fresh food, repairs, new crews, and news. Each successful return to a home port brought with it new narratives. By the end of the sixteenth century, explorers, colonisers, immigrants, and merchants were clamouring to criss-cross the Atlantic between known points.

Would the earliest explorers have set out across the Atlantic if they'd had no hope of returning again, with coastlines charted, land claims made, goods in tow, life intact? Possibly. Some writers suggest proximity to the sea prompted curiosity in mariners. In "Street Haunting: A London Adventure," Virginia Woolf writes: "This packing up and going off ... tumbles and tosses upon the dusty floor like an uneasy sea, so restless the English are, with the waves at their very door" (1974 n.p.). In *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, Rebecca Solnit argues: "For Woolf, getting lost was not a matter of geography so much as identity, a passionate desire, even an urgent need, to become no one and anyone..." (2005: 16). This desire to alter one's place-based identity by becoming no one has been explored in literature for thousands of years. For example, forced to wander the seas in exile, the hero of Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus, calls himself *Outis*, or Nobody, in order to out-wit the Cyclops Polyphemus. When the other Cyclopes hear Polyphemus shouting they call out to him to ask who is attacking him; he replies "Nobody," and so no one comes to rescue him. Odysseus and his trick are referenced in Jules Verne's *Captain Nemo*, a

name meaning 'no one'. These characters are wanderers, living a life at sea rather than moving across the sea toward a known destination.

In *Phantom Islands of the Atlantic*, Donald S. Johnson asserts, "the greatest impetus for voyages of exploration was commerce" (1994: xvii). The great age of exploration was founded on the fallacy that if one sailed west one would reach the far east and its riches. By the time Sir Humphrey Gilbert set out to colonise Newfoundland for Queen Elizabeth I in 1583, and thus lay the foundations for the British Empire, he already knew what his destination would be. Mr. Edward Haye, survivor and chronicler of that fateful journey writes: "We resolved to begin our course northwards, and to follow directly as we might, the trade way unto Newfoundland" (Hakluyt 1985: 233). The port of St Johns, Newfoundland, was already populated by a transient merchant and fishing community, "there being within of all nations, to the number of 36 sails" (234). The English merchants refused Gilbert's ships entry into the harbour at first, but, according to Haye, "[t]hey were all satisfied when the general had showed them his commission, and purpose to take possession of those lands to the behalf of the crown of England" (234).

In contrast to the afore-mentioned unanswerable questions posed by the castaway Crusoe, the explorer Gilbert poses a question which proposes its own answer. His personal motto was the Latin phrase: *Quid non?* - meaning why not? Without the question mark, *quid non* may be read as either a question - Why not sail across the Atlantic? Or, as the answer to a question - Why sail across the Atlantic? Why not? This motto appears with a question mark on a scroll beneath the Gilbert coat of arms on a map drawn by Gilbert to accompany *A Discourse of a Discoverie for a new Passage to Cataia*, a treatise published in 1576 to help raise

funds for his Newfoundland expedition (Gilbert 1576). It would have been unusual for a punctuation mark to appear in Latin at that time. That Gilbert appends a question mark to his motto in this map suggests he means it as a question. If the answer to Derrida's question posed in Chapter 1. Section 1.1. - "Is not the writing of the question, by its decision, by its resolution, the beginning of repose and response?" (1978, 76) - is indeed yes, then the answer to Gilbert's question lay in wait for him very much like Lecerle's evocation of the question as "the bloodless or ghostly double of the proposition it calls as its answer" (2002:38).

Monday the ninth of September 1583, mid-Atlantic, mid-way home, Gilbert's ship *The Squirrel* sank. Gilbert went down with it. As Mr. Edward Hays describes:

suddenly her lights were out, whereof as it were in a moment, we lost the sight, and withal our watch cried, the general was cast away, which was too true. For in that moment, the frigate was devoured and swallowed up of the sea. Yet still we looked out all that night, and ever after, until we arrived upon the coast of England (Hakluyt 1985: 242).

All this Hays claims to have witnessed from the deck of the *Golden Hind*, which, he goes on to say, "arrived in Falmouth, the 22 day of September, being Sunday" (Hakluyt 1985: 242).

Early explorers (and their funders) could be said to be performing the networking function of ping - shipping a signal "into the dark of the network" (Pias 2011: 167), praying for a response in the form of safe return passage, gleaning information about distance and conditions in the process. Transatlantic communications networks were established through a systematisation of this process brought about by imperialism. Ingold argues: "Driven by imperial ambition, the Royal Navy sought to dispatch its ships toward their destinations fixed within a global system of co-ordinates, sidelining traditional seafaring skills in favour of an

instrumental calculus of point-to-point navigation” (2007: 77). In the application of the prefix *trans-* to the word Atlantic the ocean becomes a space to be crossed.

This chapter borrows the media archaeological method of “thinking the new and the old in parallel lines” (Parikka 2012: 2) in order to address the question: Can digital networks serve as narrative structures for writing resonating between sites, beyond nations? This chapter situates contemporary digital writing practices within a broad critical context rooted in a wide range of media dating from long before the dawn of the computer, and reaching far beyond the traditional realm of the literary.

In *The Victorian Internet: The Remarkable Story of the Telegraph and the Nineteenth Century’s Online Pioneers*, Tom Standage takes a historiographical approach to situating the telegraph as a pre-cursor to the internet (1998). Marshal McLuhan situates the telegraph in a broader context, one defined less by chronology than by the social apparatus, or *dispositif* (Deleuze 1992), of communication.

McLuhan states:

It was not until the advent of the telegraph that messages could travel faster than a messenger. Before this, roads and the written word were closely inter-related. ... Perhaps there is no more suitable way of defining the character of the electric age than by first studying the rise of the idea of transportation as communication... (1974: 99).

As with so many of McLuhan’s proclamations, the vagaries and inaccuracies contained in this statement are what invite further discussion. McLuhan doesn’t specify whether he is referring to the optical or the electrical telegraph, though his reference to the ‘electric age’ would suggest the later. The first official test of the optical telegraph invented by Charles Chappe took place on 2 March 1791, fifty-three years before Samuel Morse demonstrated his electromagnetic telegraph

before the US Supreme Court. McLuhan refers not to a specific device but rather to an age, an era, an archaeological strata of media in which long-distance communication underwent profound change. McLuhan evokes the 'electric age' in terms of the speed a message could travel. Chappe wanted to call his invention the 'tachygraph' from the Greek for 'fast writer' but he was talked out of it by a classical scholar friend who instead suggested the name 'telegraph' from the Greek 'far writer' (Standage 1998: 10). In *Marshall McLuhan: You Know Nothing of My Work!*, Douglas Coupland urges us to consider the impact distance had in shaping McLuhan's thinking. McLuhan was born in 1911, less than ten years after the transmission of the first transatlantic wireless signal. He was born on an inland sea, that of the vast Canadian prairies, a land, as Coupland writes,

where all people were far apart from all other people, where travel of any sort involved provisions for weather, duration and discomfort.... Imagine... writing letters and those letters being placed into canvas bags and loaded into train cars and delivered days later... Imagine bad, crackly telephone lines and scratchy and limited radio ... and nothing else. Imagine the minds of Marshall and others of his era, always thinking about the relationship between distance and speed. Imagine what it was like to come from a place in the middle of the continent, the middle of nowhere, always wishing you could be somewhere (Coupland 2010: 64-65).

Subjective narrative historiographical conjecture of this sort is frowned upon by media archaeologists, who prefer objects to empty spaces and archives to biographies. Wolfgang Ernst writes: "Archaeology, as opposed to history, refers to what is actually there: what has remained from the past in the present" (2011: 241). Whatever social and/or spatial factors may have contributed to compelling McLuhan to make a statement to the contrary, evidence clearly indicates that messages could indeed travel faster than the messenger long before the advent of the optical and the electric telegraph: via sight, as in the case of smoke signals, fire

beacons, lighthouses, flags, and semaphore; via sound, as in the case of horns, and drums; and via air, as in the case of arrows, cannon balls, bullets, and other projectiles. Messages have also long travelled when and where messengers could not, via a host of other means wide ranging in their degrees of efficacy and accuracy. The message-in-a-bottle has been used as a mode of testing ocean currents since the fourth century BCE, a method not dissimilar to the earlier example provided by Thoreau, of observing the route of shipwrecked bars of Castil soap. The castaway-dispatched message-in-a-bottle meme continues to propagate in contemporary culture, primarily through novels and films. The carrier or homing pigeon has been used, primarily in battle, since at least the sixth century BCE. There is a Royal Pigeon Racing Association exhibition at Bletchley Park dedicated to the 250,000 homing pigeons used by the United Kingdom during World War II. In *Map of a Nation: A Biography of the Ordnance Survey*, Rachel Hewitt describes how a historic beacon network which spread across high points in England was used to establish the sight lines necessary for triangulation in the ordnance survey (2010: 131). In the sixteenth century, Henry VIII built a string of fortified castles along the south-west coast of England - Pendennis Castle, Falmouth, Cornwall, among them - to serve as an early warning beacon system in the event of invasion by sea. In *Coasting*, Jonathan Raban describes an English coastal warning system of another kind, one designed to keep ships safe from an invasion by land. Of these, the fog horn is a prime example of a message travelling faster and further than a messenger:

This serpentine and tricky coast is ringed around with devices to scare ships off, back into the deep water where they're safe. Bellboys clang, lights flash. On console screens in wheelhouses and on ships' bridges, radar beacons paint their warnings like fat white exclamation marks, glowing and fading, glowing and fading. When the fog comes down (and it's never long before

the fog does come down) the diaphones in all the lighthouses along the shore begin to moo, making a noise so bottomless and sinister that you'd think it could only be heard in a nightmare. England's message to every ship that gets near to her coast could hardly be clearer: DANGER - KEEP OUT. (1986: 13).

Although pre-telegraph examples of instances of the message travelling faster than the messenger abound, McLuhan is correct in stating that before the telegraph "roads and the written word were closely inter-related". From the Roman road network, begun with the construction of the Via Appia Antica in 312 BCE, to the post road network of eighteenth-century England, from the Pony Express to the opening of transcontinental railroads in eighteenth-century North America, the creation of and maintenance of control over networks of rapid and secure communication has long equalled power.

Not all roads lead over land. The term 'road' is also used to denote sea lanes and entrances to harbours, as in the case of the Carrick Roads at Falmouth. In *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot*, Robert Macfarlane observes, "[w]e think of paths as existing only on land, but the sea has its paths too, though water refuses to take and hold marks" (2012 88). In performance writing terms, the passage of a ship makes a mark, thus it performs the act of writing. Though the fact of writing it leaves in its wake soon dissipates, the performance of this writing may yet be inscribed in other less transient ways. The ship's passage is defined by a rudder, a vertical blade at the stern of the ship that can be turned horizontally to change the ship's direction when it is in motion. The word 'rudder' is akin to the word 'row', the ship's rudder being a descendant of the humble oar. The word 'rudder' also bears a close association with the word 'router' or 'route' from the Old French meaning road, way, or path, from the Latin, *rupta*, meaning a road opened by force. A ship's

rudder is a thing which routes; it opens a road in the sea. Ships' routes as well as land routes have long been documented in writing. In *The Mapmakers*, John Noble Wilford suggests that the earliest sea charts "probably began as graphic extensions of the written descriptions found in pilot books, the Greek *peripli* and the Italian *portolani* - hence the name 'portolan charts'" (1981: 51). Note the word 'port' at the base of the word *portolani*. Portolan charts are based on layers of accumulated textual accounts of passages between ports, ship's logs comprising notes on compass directions, currents, weather phenomena, and estimated distances observed by generations of pilots at sea.



[Figure 10. Sailors' Reading Room, Southwold, UK, 2013.]



In *Rings of Saturn*, W. G. Sebald describes an encounter with a textual account of a sea passage found in a patrol ship log book kept at the Sailors' Reading Room in Southwold, depicted in Figure 10.:

On the large landscape-format pages, a fresh one for each new date, there are occasional entries surrounded by a good deal of empty space... Every time I decipher one of these entries I am astounded that a trail that has long since vanished from the air or the water remains visible here on the paper. ... the mysterious survival of the written word... (Sebald 1999: 93).

To return McLuhan's statement that "there is no more suitable way of defining the character of the electric age than by first studying the rise of the idea of transportation as communication... (1974: 99), and to détourne this statement slightly, that is to say, to rewrite it in order to better serve the purposes of this thesis, it could be said that studying the idea of transportation as communication reveals certain defining characteristics of our current digital age of 'electronic' or digital literature. Studying the idea of transatlantic transportation as communications networks reveals that many of the terms we now use to denote fundamental aspects of digital networks derive from much earlier terms associated with sailing and the sea, and in particular, with transatlantic transportation networks established during the great age of sail. As has already been introduced in this section, the term 'port,' which we now use to denote the point at which a cable connects to a hub, derives from an earlier usage, that of a harbour, or a port of call. The *portolani* sea charts may also be termed networks diagrams, for they plot the connections between ports. The term 'rudder' lingers in the term 'router,' which we now use to denote the wireless internet router. The term 'ping' which we now use within an almost entirely digital set of references, derives in part from sounding the

ocean depths. “They went measuring and sounding and when they got home had something to show for their voyages and explorations” (Thoreau 1995: 273). *The*

*Ping Page* (PING 2007) offers two divergent etymologies for the term:

One is that Ping is actually an acronym for the words 'Packet INternet Groper'. Another is that it is in fact not an acronym at all, but a noun that was adopted from a verb that the US Navy uses to describe what its submarines do when looking for objects under the sea. Their subs send out sonar waves and then wait for a return wave when it bounces off something, such as another sub, whale, ocean floor etc. This, in turn, was adopted from bats and dolphins, who navigate in roughly the same way (PING 127.0.0.1 Computer Services 2007).

This second of these explanations introduces a notion of ‘sounding’ as form of mapping and a mode of navigating. The term ‘ping’ may be used to refer to an auditory sound made by a machine, a translation of the findings of inaudible sonar waves travelling through deep water or electromagnetic signals travelling through vast networks of cables connected to ports. The term ‘sounding’ hearkens back to an earlier nautical epoch, before radar, when the depth of the ocean was measured by dropping a weighted cable overboard and seeing how far down it would go. This may seem a tenuous etymological association until we consider the close association between the transatlantic communications networks of today and the ocean floor. Before the first transatlantic telegraph cable was laid in 1858, little was known of the surface of the ocean floor. Philip Hoare observes:

Until 1773, when Constantine John Phipps... began to sound the ocean bed, many people thought the sea was bottomless... During his voyage towards the north pole in search of the fabled north-west passage... Phipps employed a lead weighted line to measure the distance between himself and the bottom of the ancient sea between Iceland and Norway. That strand of hemp linked the Enlightenment with the pre-history of the earth... for a century this northern nadir remained the profoundest known ocean (Hoare 2014 n.p.)

During the years 1873-76 H.M.S. Challenger sailed the globe taking soundings necessary to the establishment of a global submarine telegraph network (Murray & Thomson 1885). Most of the world's digital data now flows through submarine fibre optic cables laid along roughly these same routes. This hybrid notion of sounding will recur again and again throughout this thesis.

The first English definition of the word 'navigation' appears in John Dee's essay "The Mathematicall Praeface to Elements of Geometrie of Euclid of Megara," first published in English in 1570.

The Arte of Nauigation, demonstrateth how, by the shortest good way, by the aptest Directiō, & in the shortest time, a sufficient Ship, betwene any two places (in passage Nauigable,) assigned: may be cōducted: and in all stormes, & naturall disturbances chauncyng, how, to vse the best possible meanes, whereby to recouer the place first assigned (Dee 1570).

In *The Levelling Sea*, Phillip Marsden suggests that this essay by Dee "emboldened a generation of seafarers, particularly those in the West Country, for whom patriotism, adventure and greed were beginning to coalesce in maritime enterprise" (2011: 48). Indeed, Dee attributes the skill of English pilots in part to the situation of England, an island in a commodious position from whence to navigate to places most famous and rich:

In Nauigation, none ought to haue greater care, to be skillfull, then our English Pylotes. And perchance, Some, would more attempt: And other Some, more willingly would be aydyng, it they wist certainly, What Priuiledge, God had endued this Iland with, by reason of Situation, most commodious for Nauigation, to Places most Famous & Riche (Dee 1570).

The term 'navigation' has long been associated with the World Wide Web. The first web browser to gain wide usage in the mid to late 1990s was known as Netscape Navigator. The dominance of Netscape Navigator was eventually eclipsed by Internet Explorer, another web browser the name of which is redolent of a much

earlier era of exploration on the high seas. Likewise, the expression 'surf the web' carries with it a coastal association.

Before the advent of the submarine telegraph cable, the ship defined both the unit and the speed of all transatlantic communication. Just as we may trace a close association between transportation and communication through the passage of mail over post roads, so too we may trace a close association between transatlantic transportation and communication through the passage of packet ships which travelled over sea routes. In 1688, Falmouth was established as the most westerly station for the Post Office Packet service and soon became "the nation's principal Packet port" (Marsden 2011: 148). By 1724, Daniel Defoe notes:

Falmouth is well built, has abundance of shipping belonging to it, is full of rich merchants, and has a flourishing and increasing trade. I say 'increasing,' because by the late setting up of the English packets between this port and Lisbon, there is a new commerce between Portugal and this town carried on to a very great value (Defoe 1724: n.p.).

Marsden argues: "Falmouth's maritime success was based... on an abstract commodity that would grow in importance over the coming centuries. Falmouth's trade was *information* (2011: 148) (the emphasis is the author's). A critical shift occurs here, in the conception of what a transatlantic communications network is and does. The packet service was a literal shipping network. The packets themselves were physical things. "The cases or portmanteaux were made of thick leather, oiled and re-oiled to withstand sea spray, Caribbean heat and the freezing nights of the North Atlantic" (Marsden 2011: 148). The term 'shipping' is retained today in reference to the movement of information of all sorts, from physical cargo carried on container ships to digital software releases distributed through digital networks. The term 'packet' is retained in the term 'packet switching,' a communication

method which breaks data into units of a suitable size for transmission through digital networks. An email, for example, is not sent as a single unit, but rather, as many small units travelling separately. Many of the terms now used in association with digital networks are haunted by the spectres of earlier transatlantic communications and transportation networks established over the course of hundreds of years of sail.

In this section, a conceptually broad and historically long view was put forward, of what transatlantic communications networks are and what they do in a wide range of contexts. In the remaining three sections of this chapter, this conceptual framework will be used to present a body of practice-led research outcomes which investigate transatlantic communications networks as places, placeholders, sites of exchange, and narrative structures for writing resonating between sites and beyond nations.



## 2.2. Haunted Media: *Whisper Wire*

[<http://luckysoap.com/generations/whisperwire.html>]

This section puts forward 'haunted media' as theory of mediation able to address contemporary networked writing practices communicated across and through multiple media, multiple iterations, multiple sites, and multiple times in order to discuss the practice-led research outcome *Whisper Wire* (Carpenter 2010) [<http://luckysoap.com/generations/whisperwire>].

To haunt is to revisit habitually, to reappear frequently, to remain persistently, or to recur. All recursions are by definition hauntings. In the iterative approach to writing advocated by performance writing methodology, each new iteration is haunted by those that have come before it. For example, to revisit, or haunt, one of the practice-led research outcomes presented in Chapter 1. Section 1.2., the web-based and live performance iterations of *Along the Briny Beach* haunt *Sea Garden*, insofar as lines from the former recur in the later. To haunt is also to disturb, to distress, to cause trouble. The term 'haunt' came to Middle English from the Old French *hanter*, a word of Germanic origin meaning 'to frequent,' as in 'to frequent a place.' The close association between haunting and place is especially relevant to *Writing Coastlines*, as we return again and again to the elusive territory sought after in this thesis, that of multi-site-specific place-based identity. The Random House and the Collins dictionaries both suggest that *hanter* may be related to the Old Norse *himta*, meaning 'to lead homeward,' and that it may be a derivative of the German *heim*, meaning 'home.' This word *heim* is at the root of the word *unheimlich*, which is generally translated as 'uncanny' though

etymologically, the most literal English translation of *unheimlich* is 'unhomed.' Freud defines the uncanny as "that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (Freud 2003: 124). In the classic example of a haunted house, a house becomes haunted when one who had once been a familiar of that house returns 'home' in body or in spirit after a period of absence.

In "Specters of Marx" Derrida invites consideration of the paradoxical state of the spectre, that of being/not-being: "Here is - or rather there is, over there, an unnameable or almost unnameable thing: something, between something and someone, anyone or anything, some thing, 'this thing,' but this thing and not any other..." (1994: 5). This state of being in-between is precisely the paradox *Writing Coastlines* aims to address through the juxtaposition of the coastlines on either side of the Atlantic. As suggested in Chapter 1. Section 1.1., coastlines themselves are liminal spaces, neither land nor sea but always both. Likewise, transatlantic communications networks are both physical *and* digital, they serve as narrative structures for stories which are code *and* narrative, stories of place *and* displacement. These stories are neither here nor there, they are here *and* there, past *and* future, home *and* away.

This in-between state has been articulated in terms of 'medium' in Western philosophy since classical times. It is through this in-between, or medium, state that we come to a modern conception of media. In "Towards an Ontology of Media" Friedrich A. Kittler critiques Aristotle's ontology for not dealing "with relations between things in time and space" (Kittler 2009: 23-24), but rather relegating the concept of mediation to the realm of human sensorial perception:



Aristotle... speaks of two elements, namely air and water, as of two 'betweens'. ... he is the first to turn a common Greek preposition – *metaxú*, between – into a philosophical noun or concept: *tò metaxú*, the medium. 'In the middle' of absence and presence, farness and nearness, being and soul, there exists no nothing any more, but a mediatic relation" (Kittler 2009: 26).

In *The Interface Effect*, Alexander R. Galloway dismisses Kittler's ontological critique of Aristotle's theory of mediation, or lack thereof, as "media-centric," "reckless," "foolishness," and "rather vulgar" (2012: 15). Galloway argues for a graduation in thinking, away from the device and "into the deep history of media as modes of mediation" (15). Rather than framing the ontology of a device such as a computer in relation to possibility and definition, Galloway advocates for "a practice or a set of executions or actions in relation to a world" (23), and argues that in order to pursue such a practice, "the proper branch of philosophy that one should turn to is ethics or pragmatics" (23). In framing the computer not as an object but rather as "a process or active threshold mediating between two states" (23), Galloway enters into territory familiar to performance writing methodology, that of context. A pragmatic approach to framing the performance of media within a broader context of a complex assemblage of processes and events will be developed in this section.

Derrida proposes: "the medium of the media themselves...is neither living nor dead, present nor absent: it spectralizes. It does not belong to ontology, to the discourse on the Being of beings, or to the essence of life or death. It requires, then, what we call... *hauntology* (Derrida 1994: 63). Derrida terms this proposition a "performative interpretation" which he defines as "an interpretation that transforms the very thing it interprets" and which, he acknowledges, is a definition of the performative "unorthodox with regard to speech act theory" (Derrida 1994: 63). Here Derrida unwittingly offers a perfect description of performance writing

methodology. For example, in Section 2.1. of this chapter, a performative interpretation of the persistence of nautical terms in digital networks transformed these terms into conceptual instruments. In this section, the conceptual instruments of call and response and of sounding as performed by ping will be revisited and resounded through a number of media archaeological moments in order to establish a theoretical framework within which to discuss the practice-led research outcome *Whisper Wire*. These instances of persistence, revisiting, resounding, and recurrence constitute hauntings of media.

For Freud, repetition is one of the hallmarks of the uncanny. Repetition “transforms what would otherwise seem quite harmless into something uncanny and forces us to entertain the idea of the fateful and the inescapable, when we should normally speak of ‘chance’” (Freud 2003: 144). Consider the operation of uncanny repetition in the following example: On May 24, 1844, Samuel Morse performed the first official test of the electromagnetic telegraph line before the U.S. Supreme Court. The first transmission was that of question: “What hath God wrought?” A colleague waiting in Baltimore received this message and returned, not an answer, but rather, the same question repeated back in confirmation. Through the repetition of the question as a response, sender and receiver become doubles of one another. Of communication between doubles, or *doppelgänger*, Freud writes: “This relationship is intensified by the spontaneous transmission of mental processes from one of these persons to the other – what we would call telepathy – so that the one becomes co-owner of the other’s knowledge, emotions and experience” (2003: 141-142).

Early electromagnetic telecommunication technologies collapsed vast distances. The first transatlantic telegraphic communications between Telegraph Field, Foilhommerum Bay, Valentia Island in western Ireland to Heart's Content in eastern Newfoundland occurred August 16, 1858, thereby collapsing a distance that had previously been traversable only by ship. This collapse resulted in a twinning of the once disparate notions of question and answer, here and there, and living and dead. In "The Singing of the Grid," D. Graham Burnett observes: "By the early twentieth century, some fifteen million miles of telegraph and telephone cable circled the globe, stretching from the seafloor(s) to the continental divides(s) - enough to belt the planet a thousand times over" (2011: 61). Yet a perception of electromagnetic communication as a disembodied communion with otherworldly presences persisted despite the physical material human-operated nature of this network. If intelligence and consciousness could be transmitted independent of the body, if subjects could be reconstituted 'in spirit' through technology, surely the dead could speak to the living through electromagnetic means.

On March 10, 1876, Alexander Graham Bell demonstrated the function of what would become the telephone with the transmission of, not a question, but rather, an imperative: "Mr. Watson—Come here—I want to see you." This shift in mode of address speaks in part to the physical proximity of Mr. Watson, who happened to be in the next room. The response to this call would be an embodied one; Mr. Watson would momentarily become physically manifest in Bell's presence. Bell modelled what he called 'the membrane speaking telephone' after the human ear drum. He departed from the function of biological apparatus by twinning transmitter and receiver in a device which utterly confused boundaries between the

mechanical and the physiological. In reference to the residual trace of the human ear drum in the telephone machine, Kittler quips: “Wherever phones are ringing, a ghost resides in the receiver” (1999: 75). Similarly, as suggested in the previous section of this chapter, the ghosts of sailing ships, foreign ports of call, and oiled leather mail packets continue to reside in the digital networks of today.

The Marconi Archive at The Bodleian Library, Oxford University, contains a postcard issued by The Cunard Line in 1901. The front of the postcard bears an image of the packet ships R.M.S. Campania and Lucania. The back bears an Abstract of Log of the Cunard Royal Mail Steamship “Campania” from New York to Liverpool, undertaken in November 1901 in: 6 days, 15 hours, 12 minutes. One month later, on 12 December 1901, three short sharp clicks skipped the physical grid of transatlantic communications networks altogether. No talk of God, no human voice, no questions, no imperatives - the alphabet served as a data source for this transmission. Three ‘dots’ representing the Morse letter ‘S’ travelled from Poldu, Cornwall - not troubled at all by the curvature of the Earth or the salt wet wind of the Atlantic, as everyone had feared they would be - to arrive at Saint-John's, Newfoundland, where they were received by a telephonic headset held to the highly sensitive receiver of Guglielmo Marconi's waiting ear. Marconi's ear was particularly keenly attuned to language. His father was Italian, his mother Irish; he grew up between nations, between languages. In frequent spoken communication with his mother, Anne Jameson, heir to the Jameson whiskey fortune, mother and son continuously alternated between between English and Italian, repeating words from one language in the other, testing transmission and reception, training the ear to meaning (Campbell 2006: 15-17). Although Marconi claims to have heard the

Morse S distinctly, his colleague in Saint-John's confessed he could not be so sure. In the space designated for the week of 12 December 1901 in Marconi's diary, held in the Marconi Archive at the Bodleian, the words 'received from Poldu' are written. But the faint pencil markings are overwritten and almost illegible now. Was the Morse letter S really appended to Saint-John's that day? Hoax rumours abound. Some suggest that what Marconi heard was actually a harmonic resonance - a connection, yes, a sound born of reflection, reverberation, coupling, or echoing, but not a transmission from one side of the Atlantic to the other (Dahms n.d.). The Morse letter 'S' was no doubt chosen for this first attempt at transatlantic wireless transmission for its ease of intelligibility. But three dots are, after all, an ellipsis, a grammatical indication of an intentional omission... Distance distorts... Distance distends... The human ear hears what it wants to.

The first official transatlantic wireless transmission took place one year later. The Marconi Archive contains copious amounts of paper pertaining to this ephemeral electromagnetic event. Among the press clippings and congratulatory telegrams are a series of drafts of Marconigrams written in Marconi's own hand. In 1902 Marconi sent his new year's greetings across the Atlantic Ocean by wireless telegraphy. In *Wireless Writing in the Age of Marconi*, Timothy C. Campbell suggests: "The emergence of wireless communication strengthens virtual forms of interaction that become necessary when technical progress distances friends and family" (Campbell 2006: 17). At the same time, the need to communicate across vast distances may be coupled with a fear of those distances, an anxiety born of separation, a dread of miscommunication and communication failure. In *Haunted media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television*, Jeffery Sconce suggests:

Through its early association with shipping, the sea, and distant lands, wireless evoked both the wonders of distant communication and a slight apprehension over the depthless and inescapable void the technology had revealed to the world. The ether was its own ocean, at once vast and diffuse, that beckoned explorers to navigate its unfathomable depths. This involved drifting through the spectrum in search of transmissions from the most distant points around the nation and globe, a journey traversed primarily across mysterious expanses of silence and static. Such exploration was described in these earliest years as the decidedly nautical practice of 'DX fishing' (Sconce 2000: 65).

Here again nautical memes and metaphors from an earlier era haunt transatlantic communications networks. The vastness of the ocean appears to haunt the new electromagnetic medium. Sconce asserts that this etheric ocean created "a lonely realm of distant and estranged consciousnesses, a vast ocean where the very act of communication reminded the operator of his or her profound isolation" (Sconce 2000: 14). This assertion is born out in a fictional description of a DX fishing expedition offered by Tom McCarthy in his 2010 novel *C*:

The static's like the sound of thinking. Not of any single person thinking, nor even a group thinking, collectively. It's bigger than that, wider – and more direct. It's like the sound of thought itself, its hum and rush. Each night, when Serge drops in on it, it recoils with a wail, then rolls back in crackling waves that carry him away, all rudderless, until his finger, nudging at the dial, can get some traction on it all, some sort of leeway. The first stretches are angry, plaintive, sad – and always mute. It's not until, hunched over the potentiometer among fraying cords and soldered wires, his controlled breathing an extension of the frequency of air he's riding on, he gets the first quiet clicks that words start forming: first he jots down the signals as straight graphic lines, long ones and short ones, then, below these, he begins to transcribe curling letters, dim and grainy in the arc light of his desktop... (2010: 63).

Here the listener, Serge, becomes a human interface. His exhaustion is that of the transmutation of static into sense. In a sea of dubious decipherability, he is a cipher, a vessel, a Marconista (as wireless operators were known), a hybrid creature enacting a hybrid role - between that of a secretary and that of a medium. The

Marconista transcribes without understanding, from ear to hand. Both mouth and eye are erased. Thus wireless creates a blindness, an hallucination of meaning.

As previously suggested in this section, a conception of a physical body as a medium dates to Aristotle. Kittler is as uneasy with this sensorial notion of mediation as he is with the ghost of the human ear which haunts the telephone. Galloway argues: "The Greeks indubitably had an intimate understanding of the physicality of transmission and message sending [in the figure of Hermes]. They understood the mediation of poetry via the Muses and their *techne*" (Galloway 2012: 15), that is, the humans through whom a Muse might craft a poem.

Consider another literary example in which humans become the media haunted, that of Rudyard Kipling's short story, "Wireless" (Kipling 1904), first published in England in 1902, just as Marconi's first official transatlantic transmission was making headlines. The story opens with a line of dialogue which makes direct reference to the mediumistic ability of wireless to pass through anything: "It's a funny thing, this Marconi business, isn't it? ... Nothing seems to make any difference, by what they tell me - storms, hills, or anything" (Kipling 1904: 213). The narrator confesses: "I was deeply interested in Marconi experiments at their outset in England" (216). The story takes place in a chemist's shop. In one room, a scientifically-minded young man keen on new technologies, fiddles with a wireless set. He is attempting to signal across the English countryside to a receiver in Poole, but instead intercepts ship-to-shore messages from two warships off the south coast of England. These ships are unable to make contact with each other and unaware that their messages are overheard by another listening in on land. Sconce observes, "the sea stands as both a medium and symbol of separation - a vast body

that overwhelms the pathetic efforts of the world-be interlocutors aboard their tiny ships on the Atlantic” (2007: 70). In another room, a young love-sick man suffering from a tubercular cough, ingests a glass of what the narrator terms “a new and wildish drink” (Kipling 1904: 218). Descending into a drugged stupor he ‘channels’ a poem by the dead poet John Keats (1795 – 1821). On the border between life and death himself, he becomes a medium, *techne* for a Muse, a Marconistia, he writes without knowing what he writes. Of this complex arrangement of human and machinic mediums, and the messages sent and received through them, Jean-Jacques Lecercle writes:

What is engaged in the overall process of communication is in fact a network, rather than individual speakers, who... are not users but parts of the machine. This is made entirely obvious whenever the circuit breaks, and some emit but fail to receive, while others do the opposite” (2002: 216).

Here we have a perfect example of a communication network serving as a narrative structure for a story. The ‘machine’ is not simply a discrete physical object, but rather, as Galloway suggests, “a set of ... actions in relation to a world” (2012: 23). The narrative of this story resonates in a series of overlapping in-between spaces and in-between states of being - between two rooms, between two bodies, between ship and shore, between living and dead, and between technology and poetry. Of the relation between these last two seemingly disparate notions, Lecercle observes:

The interesting point is that the separation between the two types of communication, the poetic and the technological, now appears to be a parallelism: both methods are complex, in that they involve two different circuits, a relation of induction, and a coherer, for communication to be established (2002: 206).



Here again both the machine and the human operate as “a process or active threshold mediating between two states” (Galloway 2012: 23). The parallel operations - both of the machine and the human as mediums, and of the poetic and technological methods of communication - are analogous both to the parallel operations of practice and theory in practice-led research, and to the parallel operations in interdisciplinary work of artistic and scientific influences and methods. For example, throughout *Writing Coastlines*, computer-generated practice-led research outcomes are presented as parallel operations between source code written in computer programming languages and digital literary texts output on screen.

Wireless’ capacity to collapse vast distances combined with dichotomies between the human and machinic medium and poetic and technological modes of communication led to wide ranging interdisciplinary practice-led research into its potential capacity to collapse boundaries between the living and the dead. Sconce outlines a number of key experiments undertaken by artists toward establishing communications with the spirit world (2007: 84-85). American photographer Attila von Szalay began experimenting with recording voices from the spirit world in 1936. In the late 1950s Swedish painter and documentary filmmaker Friedrich Jürgenson experimented with using a standard radio receiver tuned to unmodulated carrier signals - transmissions containing no audio - to communicate with the spirit world. In the late 1960s, the experiments of Latvian philosopher, psychologist, and Oxford-educated university professor Dr. Konstantine Raudive “would inspire psychic researchers around the world, both amateur and professional, to investigate what became known popularly as ‘electronic voice phenomena’ or, as it is most frequently referred to in psychic circles today, ‘EVP’” (Sconce 2007: 85). These

interdisciplinary experiments continue today. For example, according to the website of the Vienna-based Institute for Transacoustic Research: “a crucial characteristic of transacoustic research is its interdisciplinary approach; it carries out science by means of art and art by means of science; methods and settings from both areas are combined to arrive at unique lines of connection and division.” And Liverpool-based Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP) is an experimental literature and new media project exploring contemporary approaches to sound, voice, technology, and writing built around a platform of new commissioned works:

artists and audiences of inter-media art join in a process of divination, belief and association similar to that employed by those finding ghost messages in early tape recordings. This thinkspace links to the paranormal, while also suggesting ways for properly contemporary performance and writing to form connections across electronic interface, human and spiritual other (EVP website).

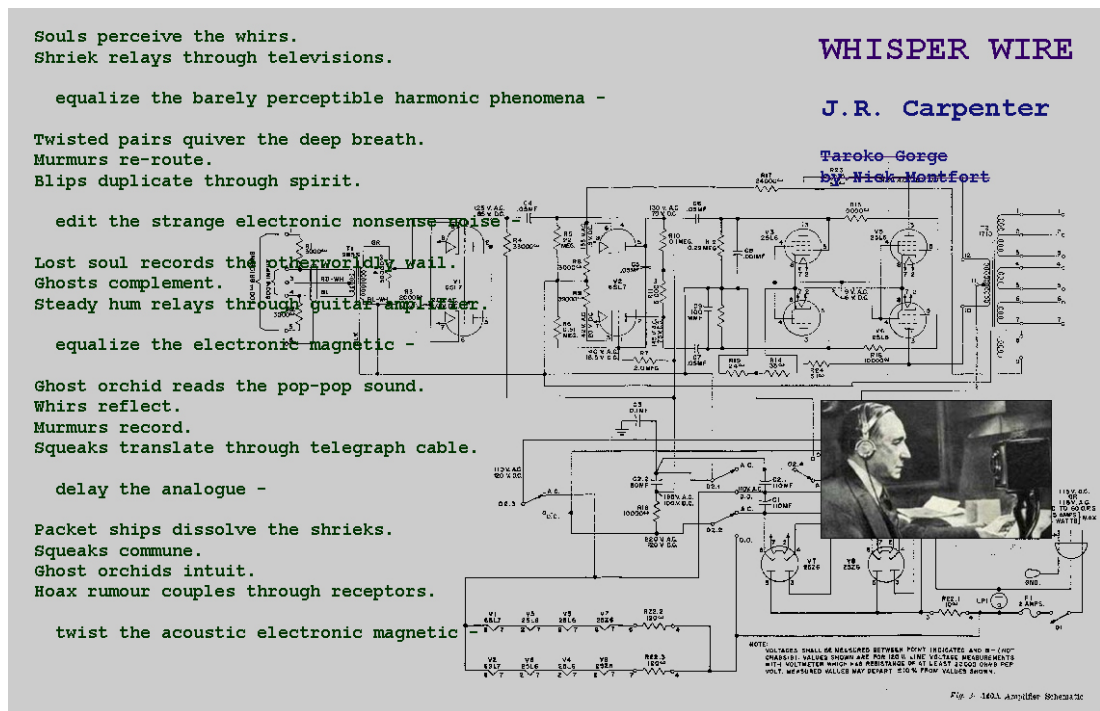
Continuing in this interdisciplinary practice-led research vein, the theoretical framework of haunted media introduced in this section will now be used to discuss the practice-led research outcome *Whisper Wire* (Carpenter 2010)

[<http://luckysoap.com/generations/whisperwire.html>]. In a short text about

*Whisper Wire* published in *Rampike* magazine in 2011 and reproduced in full in

Appendix C, I describe *Whisper Wire* as follows:

*Whisper Wire* is an *unheimlich* poem, a code medium sending and receiving un-homed messages, verse fragments, strange sounds, disembodied voices, ghost whispers, distant wails and other intercepted, intuited or merely imagined attempts to communicate across vast distances through copper wires, telegraph cables, transistor radios and other haunted media (Carpenter *Rampike*, 2011: 54).



[Figure 11. *Whisper Wire*, J. R. Carpenter 2010. Screenshot.]

The source code of *Whisper Wire* is an adaptation of Nick Montfort’s *Taroko Gorge* (2008), as was the source code of *Along the Briny Beach*, discussed in Chapter 1. Section 1.2. This source code may be viewed by right-clicking on a non-image area of the web page and selecting View Page Source from the drop-down menu. Within the theoretical framework of haunted media, both *Whisper Wire* and *Along the Briny Beach* may be understood to be haunting Montfort’s source code, insofar as both are revisiting, recurring, and remaining persistently within, and, at the same time, disturbing, distressing, and intruding upon the structure of Montfort’s source code. Montfort’s source code becomes a code medium, an intermediary text between *Taroko Gorge* and these new iterations.

In *Whisper Wire* the contents of Montfort’s variable strings are renamed and replaced with new sets of words pertaining to sending and receiving sounds

through vessels. The word 'vessels' is used here rather than 'mediums' in allusion to a broader conception of transatlantic communications networks once haunted by vessels in the forms of fishing, sailing, and packet ships. The word 'sounds' is used here rather than 'noise' in allusion to a hybrid notion of depth sounding as a mode of mapping and navigating and to network testing as exemplified by ping. There is a vast amount of scholarship on sound, sound art, and silence which I am not delving into here. Given that *Whisper Wire* is a text-based piece, I am limiting this discussion to written words. The word 'words' is used here rather than 'narratives', because although the aim of this research is to build new networked narrative structures for stories of place and displacement, *Whisper Wire* is a decidedly non-narrative work. *Whisper Wire* is chronologically the first outcome to emerge from this practice-led research. As such it emerges from a cacophony of ideas born of wide-ranging reading on early electromagnetic transatlantic communications networks, haunted media, electronic voice phenomena, and media archaeology. To re-sound the phrase McCarthy evokes in *C*, the endless text *Whisper Wire* produces is like static: "It's like the sound of thought itself, its hum and rush" (McCarthy 2010: 63).

The variable string (sound) contains a spectrum of sound words from the mundane and easily explainable to the ghostly and other-worldly:

var sound='advertising jingle, background noise, beep, blip, buzz and rattle, faint click, deep breath, fragmented conversation, hiss and crackle, disembodied voice, equipment artifact, feedback loop, howl, hoax rumour, incoherent rambling, interference, low rumble, mumble, murmur, moan, noise, ping, pop, pop-pop sound, rattle, ring, room noise, scream, shriek, sigh, sob, squeak, song, sound, strange noise, steady hum, static, otherworldly wail, whir, whistle, whisper'

Whereas the sounds in the variable string (sound) are always just that - sounds, the vessels in the variable string (vessel) take on the double function of Bell's membrane speaking telephone in that they may either transmit or receive.

```
var vessel='acoustic mirror, antiquated appliance, cassette tape, cathode ray tube, copper wire, hand-held device, ear, eardrum, ether, etheric ocean, fax machine, fibre optic cable, ghost, groove, guitar amplifier, headset, hearing aid, hub, inner ear, kitchen sink, lost soul, magnetic tape, medium, network, over-active imagination, poltergeist, phantom, packet ship, pirate radio, radio relay tower, radar, receptor, receiver, reel-to-reel, router, short-wave radio, skipping record, solid state, soul, spectre, spirit, station, telegraph cable, telephone, tin-can telephone, television, transistor, twisted pair, vacuum tube, web server, whisper wire, wire'
```

The twinning of transmission and reception in *Whisper Wire* is achieved through a slight modification of Montfort's source code. I changed the names of the variable strings called in a function which Montfort calls 'path' but which I call 'route' (in reference to the word router, from the nautical term rudder which, as introduced in Section 2.1. of this chapter, persists in haunting digital media). I also changed an instance of the word 'the' to the word 'through' (as indicated in bold below).

The 'path' function in *Taroko Gorge* looks like this:

```
function path() {
  var p=rand_range(1);
  var words=choose(above);
  if ((words=='forest')&&(rand_range(3)==1)) {
    words='monkeys '+choose(trans);
  } else {
    words+=s[p]+' '+choose(trans)+s[(p+1)%2];
  }
  words+=' the '+choose(below)+choose(s)+'.';
  return words;
}
```

The 'route' function in *Whisper Wire* looks like this:

```
function route() {
  var p=rand_range(1);
  var words=choose(sound);
  if ((words=='whisper')&&(rand_range(3)==1)) {
    words='haunt '+choose(vessel);
  } else {
    words+=s[p]+' '+choose(modulate)+s[(p+1)%2];
  }
  words+=' through '+choose(vessel)+choose(s)+'.';
  return words;
}
```

This function chooses a (sound) word, a (modulate) word, adds the word

'through' and chooses a (vessel) word, resulting in sentences such as these:

Murmur releases through router.  
Otherworldly wails haunt through eardrums.  
Fragmented conversations disperse through short-wave radios.  
Deep breath increases through wire.

In these sentences, vessels are transmitting sounds. The function 'site'

produces sentence in which vessels may be receiving sounds. This function chooses

either a (vessel) or a (sound), and then chooses a (receive) word:

```
function site() {
  var words="";
  if (rand_range(2)==1) {
    words+=choose(vessel);
  } else {
    words+=choose(sound);
  }
  words+='s '+choose(receive)+'.';
  return words;
}
```

This function produces sentence fragments such as these:

Whisper wires channel.  
Telegraph cables listen.  
Murmurs capture.  
Strange noises record.  
Kitchen sinks eavesdrop.

In sentence fragments where sounds receive, as in the case of “Murmurs capture,” and “Strange noises record,” the sounds are not receiving in quite the same sense as a vessel might. The deliberate grammatical ambiguity of the sentence fragments produced by this function lend an aura of mystery to the precise nature of these receptions. Murmurs might be capturing our imaginations. Strange noises might be recording paranormal activity. In some of the sentence fragments an uncanny effect emerges when, to re-sound Freud’s phrase, a vessel that “was once well known and had long been familiar” (Freud 2003: 124), is made strange by the persistent recurrence of strange noises. For example, in the case of “Kitchen sinks eavesdrop,” strange sounds issuing from such a homely vessel may make the long familiar kitchen sink suddenly seem strange.

Writing about *Whisper Wire*, Leonardo Flores comments:

some of the lines may not make sense, but others are crystal clear... One could contend that all the lines are intended because they are the result of signals sent through your computer’s software and hardware to produce what scrolls before you on the screen (Flores 2010).

This reading of a digital literary work is haunted by terms from print literary criticism, such as: sense, clarity, and authorial intention. Flores articulates the role of the computer in this computer-generated text in terms of the possibility and definition of the computational production of textual meaning. If we understand the computer in the pragmatic terms advocated by Galloway, as a “a practice or a set of executions or actions in relation to a world” (2012: 23), then the computer and the kitchen sink may be considered as part of a much larger assemblage of communications networks. A kitchen sink may ‘eavesdrop’ through a network of pipes on disembodied voices carrying on a conversation in an upstairs bathroom in

some far corner of the house. In Sackville, New Brunswick, locus of the practice-led research outcome *STRUTS* presented in Chapter 1. Section 1.3., many residents reported that their kitchen sinks received transmissions emitting from the Radio Canada International shortwave station nearby.



[Figure 12. Radio Canada International Shortwave Station (since dismantled), Sackville, New Brunswick, Canada, 2011.]



The logical explanation for this seemingly nonsensical claim is that the shortwave radio station, as shown in Figure 12., was situated in the the Tantramarr Marsh, in the highly conductive medium salt water, and the underground drain pipes in older houses were made of copper, the same highly conductive element used in transatlantic telegraph and telephone cables. Thus the set of executions or functions performed by *Whisper Wire* may be situated in relation to a world of transmission and reception extending far beyond the object of the computer.

Media archaeologists study objects. An old radio (or a kitchen sink) tuned to receive new signals “is not a historical object anymore but actively generates sensual and informational presence” (Ernst 2011: 241). So too, an existing source code may be tuned to generate new text. *Whisper Wire* was created in October 2010, within the first month of my PhD research, yet the source code of *Taroko Gorge* had long been familiar to me. I had already used it to create a generator called *Gorge* (Carpenter 2010) [<http://luckysoap.com/generations/gorge.html>]. In July 2010 I created and presented a performance at Machfeld Studio in Vienna in which my fellow performer Jerome Fletcher and I alternated between reading from the source code of *Gorge*, text output by that source code as it appeared on a screen projected behind us, and a previously published print text. In creating *Whisper Wire* I returned to, which is to say, I haunted a vessel I knew well in order to test aspects of my new research. In this case, ‘vessel’ does not refer simply to the *Taroko Gorge* source code, but rather, to the assemblage of source code, projected text, live voice, and print text, as was presented in the performance of *Gorge* in Vienna. *Whisper Wire* was created with the express intention of being performed, with Jerome Fletcher, at *48 hours / Inspace... no one can hear you scream*, an event

which took place Sunday 31st October 2010, at Inspace, Edinburgh, as part of the third International Conference on Interactive Digital Storytelling. At that early stage in my research I did not anticipate that live performance would become a method central to subsequent practice-led research outcomes. An assemblage of source code, generated text, live voice, and print text simply seemed to be the best way to explore the themes of sounding and resounding emerging in my research at that time, in particular, in relation to Electronic Voice Phenomenon.

There was no formal script for the live performance of *Whisper Wire* in Edinburgh, only a loose plan based on the performance of *Gorge* in Vienna, with new material and new elements added. My co-performer and I alternated between playing audio recordings from Konstantin Raudive's *The Voices of the Dead* (2002), and reading lines of source code, lines of text output on the screen, and excerpts of text from a print book chosen for their obvious resonance with the research question:

As we stand on the clifftop at Poldhu, watching the wind which roars in off the Atlantic whipping spindrift off the tops of the waves, we are filled with an overwhelming sense of horror. Between here and New York nothing but grotesque tonnages of uncooked haddock swim. Nowhere is Nature present in such profusion, and we have chosen to expose ourselves to it for the next three days!

At this spot a century ago, Guglielmo Marconi set up a circle of masts by which he would transmit the first radio signals beyond the curve of the earth. We too are here to communicate. Not with the Living, however, but with the Dead (Lucan & Gray 2004: 21).

The juxtaposition of the Cornish and North American coastlines in this text reveals a horrific in-between space. The narrators are haunting the site of a historical transatlantic communications network in order to communicate with the dead. This use of a quotation from a previously published print text in the

performance of *Whisper Wire* influenced the exploration of recontextualisation of quotations from print literature in the digital literary context undertaken in the practice-led research outcome *Along the Briny Beach* already discussed in Chapter 1. Section 1.2. Both of these generative works present a paradox, between decadence and nonsense, excess and lack. *Whisper Wire* produces text in excess, but what that text addresses is an absence, a lack born of distance. The source code and, in the case of the live performance iteration, the human body, become mediums for sending and receiving un-homed messages, sounds, and signals across, beyond, and through this distance. This pragmatic approach to mediation situates the computer, the source code, and the human body not as discreet ontological entities but rather as processes mediating between sites, states, and forms.

One of the stated objectives of *Writing Coastlines* is to investigate forms of very short *fiction* capable of travelling through networks intact as *narrative* units, and this chapter asks if digital networks can serve as *narrative* structures for writing resonating between sites, beyond nations. Yet, as has been stated, *Whisper Wire* is decidedly non-*fiction*, non-*narrative*. In the following sections of this chapter, computer-generated text will be re-framed in terms of a number of different forms of narrative, in particular: the love letter in Section 2.3., and the narrative dialogue in Section 2.4. The operation of variables within narrative structures will be situated within a historical context in Section 2.3. The appropriation and transformation of ‘found’ source code will be explored through the application of the prefix *trans-* to a set of variables in Section 2.4. And the relationship between JavaScript as a procedural language and a script for live performance will be explored in Chapter 3.



### 2.3. Computer-Generated Text: Writing Coastlines Letters

Two of the practice-led research outcomes presented in this thesis thus far have involved computer-generated text. Through this practice-led research, I identified creating and performing computer-generated text as an ideal and inherently iterative mode of composition through which to explore language, as Lecerle urges, as a constructed system, subject to change, “a *system of variations*” (2006: 11) (the emphasis is the author’s). The remainder of the practice-led research outcomes to be presented herein also incorporate computer-generated elements. At this juncture it becomes necessary to situate the contemporary digital literary practices of reading, writing, rewriting, and performing computer-generated texts within a broader social and historical context. In particular, this section will aim to articulate a notion of text generation as a long-standing practice quite separate from the computer, to situate the emergence of the mainframe computer within a context of transatlantic communications networks, and to discuss early mainframe experiments with text generation in terms of ‘the literary’ (Hayles 2005: 45).

In human terms, a generation refers both to a group of individuals of approximately the same age, having similar ideas, problems, and attitudes, and to the period of time between one such a group and the next, which is roughly thirty years. Roughly two human generations have passed since the first generation of computers. In computer terms, many more generations of machines have passed since then, each supporting many more generations of operating systems and softwares capable of being programmed to generate a wide variety of computer-generated texts.

Text generation is the oldest form of literary experimentation with computers. In *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*, N. Katherine Hayles states: “the history of electronic literature is entwined with the evolution of digital computers” (2008: 2). But experimentation with text generation, permutation, and recombination began long before digital computers came into being. In presenting the following examples of pre-digital combinatory texts, my aim is not to establish ‘firsts’ but rather to interrogate how and why experimentation with combinatory, generative, or in other ways variable text emerges within certain human generations.

New media theorist Florian Cramer states: “The classical rhetorical figures of chiasm and hyperbaton, the latter also known as ‘permutatio,’ are among the earliest Western prototypes of combinatory poetry” (Cramer 2000: 1). Cramer offers as an example *Carmen XXV*, a work of the fourth-century poet Optatianus Porfyrius (Cramer 2000: 1-2), in which lists of words written in four columns may be arbitrarily combined by the reader to create “1.62 billion possible permutations of the text” (Cramer 2000: 1). Of interest here is the indivisibility of the poem’s formal structure, its process, and its contents. According to Cramer, “the poem tells of dysharmonic junctions, uneven meters, rough tones and confused words tormenting the singer [of the poem]” (2). The author uses a combinatorial form of writing to create a self-reflexive text which, as Cramer states, “jumb[le]s its own words, performs and confuses itself simultaneously” (2). Optatianus Porfyrius, it would seem, was an early practitioner of performance writing.

In Jonathan Swift’s novel *Gulliver’s Travels*, first published in 1726, the concept of combinatorial textual processes is turned toward critical rather than

poetic or performative ends. In Part 3, Chapter V, Gulliver is taken on a tour of the grand academy of Lagado. In “Offshore of Writing: E-literature and the Island,” Jerome Fletcher and Lisa Somma observe:

Much of Swift’s description of the academy of Lagado is a deeply conservative satire on the scientific research projects of the Royal Academy, which had been instituted in 1660. However, in the midst of his mockery, Swift proves to be remarkably prescient about some future technological developments; in particular, machine-generated language (2012: n.p.).

A professor at the academy of Lagado demonstrates for Gulliver a machine designed “for improving speculative knowledge by practical and mechanical operations” (Swift 1992: 137).

It was twenty feet square, placed in the middle of the room... composed of several bits of wood, about the bigness of a die... linked together by slender wires. These bits of wood were covered, on every square, with paper pasted on them; and on these papers were written all the words of their language, in their several moods, tenses, and declensions; but without any order. ... The pupils... took each of them hold of an iron handle... and giving them a sudden turn, the whole disposition of the words was entirely changed. [The professor] then commanded six-and-thirty of the lads, to read the several lines softly, as they appeared upon the frame; and where they found three or four words together that might make part of a sentence, they dictated to the four remaining boys, who were scribes. This work was repeated three or four times, and at every turn, the engine was so contrived, that the words shifted into new places, as the square bits of wood moved upside down.

Six hours a day the young students were employed in this labour; and the professor showed me several volumes in large folio, already collected, of broken sentences, which he intended to piece together, and out of those rich materials, to give the world a complete body of all arts and sciences; which, however, might be still improved, and much expedited, if the public would raise a fund for making and employing five hundred such frames in Lagado, and oblige the managers to contribute in common their several collections (137-138).

With a machine such as this, “the most ignorant person at a reasonable charge, and with a little bodily labour, may write books in philosophy, poetry, politicks, law, mathematicks and theology, without the least assistance from genius or study” (137). Swift’s satire belies a genuine and not entirely unfounded fear that

the machine might one day replace human endeavour. Since the industrial revolution, human labour has been increasingly devalued in large-scale precision work such as weaving, printing, manufacture, and assembly. The arts have long been held up as representative of aspects of humanity - such as creativity, imagination, instinct, and intuition - unreproducible by machines.

Since the rise of the mainframe computer, literary authors and critics alike have expressed anxiety about the computer's ability to write narrative prose and poetry as well humans might, or better. For example, in Roald Dahl's 1948 short story, "The Great Automatic Grammatizator", a machine writes such excellent fiction that its creator soon dominates the field of publishing. In "Can Computers Think," a talk broadcast on on BBC Third Programme, 15 May 1951, Alan Turing appears to express some sympathy for those who might fear being replaced by a computer, imploring: "consider the naive point of view of the man on the street. He hears amazing accounts of what these machines can do: most of them apparently involve technical feats of which he would be incapable" (Turing 1951: 6a). Turing does little to quash those fears:

It might for instance be said that no machine could write good English, or that it could not be influenced by sex-appeal or smoke a pipe. I cannot offer any such comfort, for I believe that no such bounds can be set... Attempts to produce a thinking machine seem to me to be in a different category. The whole thinking process is still rather mysterious, but I believe that the attempt to make a thinking machine will help us greatly in finding out how we think ourselves (7).

To détourne Turing's statement to apply it more directly to the topic of writing machines, it may be said that the whole writing process is still rather mysterious, but I believe that the attempt to make writing machines - or text generators, as they are termed throughout this section; or machinic assemblages as



they will be framed in Chapter 3. Section 3.2. - will help us greatly in founding, grounding, and expanding our understanding of how we write ourselves. As such, this research places no qualitative bounds on the writing machines produced. Rather, it focuses on the 'attempt' to make writing machines, considering this 'attempt' as both an active process and a problem, a site of creative thought (Lecerle 2002: 38). Thus a pragmatic approach to reading and writing text generators is required, one that understands text generation in relation to a world.

Text generation was among the earliest forms of creative experimentation with computers, yes, but where did these computers come from? Various machines are claimed to be the first computer. But, like the telegraph, the computer is not one but many inventions taking place on both sides of the Atlantic over the course of a generation. During the Second World War, huge resources were made available for the development of new generations of machines designed to calculate complex ballistic trajectories and test every possible setting of the Enigma machines in order to decode encrypted messages at rates much faster than humans ever could.

As shown in Figure 12., in the recreation of Alan Turing's office in Hut 8 at Bletchley Park, site of secret British code-breaking activities during World War II, two sea charts hang above Turing's desk. One is of the North Atlantic and the other is of the English Channel & Western Approaches. Whether these charts were there during Turing's time or not, their role in their current context is to signify that Turing was in charge of the team dedicated to cracking Enigma-encoded communications from the German Navy operating in the North Atlantic. That particular arena was of vital importance to both the British war effort and the British economy.



[Figure 13. Recreation of Alan Turing's Office, Hut 8, Bletchley Park, UK, 2012.]

As outlined in Sections 1.1. and 2.1., the coastlines of the United Kingdom and those of Atlantic Canada are inextricably linked by centuries of fishing, trading, colonising, emigrating, communicating, and commerce between these shores.

Turing's biographer Andrew Hodges outlines the urgency of addressing the threat posed by German submarine 'U-boats' to British warships to the British merchant marine:

the attack on shipping was itself an invasion of the British metabolism... The British-controlled merchant fleet had to supply an island separated by only twenty miles from an enemy continent, and to do so from bases thousands of miles across submarine-infested seas... To remain capable of a belligerent policy Britain required imports of thirty million tons a year.... during the year after June 1940, U-boat sinkings were to deplete that stock by an average of 200,000 tons a month (2012 [1983]: 194).

The German naval Enigma messages Turing and team were tasked with decoding were transmitted via ship-to-shore wireless, a technology which had been in existence for just over one human generation, roughly forty years. The ships that these encoded messages were transmitted to and from remained embedded in a much older communications network technology - that of shipping, sailing, and navigating at sea. An important breakthrough in decoding the naval Enigma came through the observation that certain messages were transmitted at regular intervals and contained repeat patterns. These, it was determined, were routine reports from two weather ships - one north of Iceland and the other in the mid-Atlantic. (Hodges 2012 [1983]: 200). The fixed latitude and longitude coordinates embedded in these transmissions led to the capture of crucial cipher material which enabled the reading of naval traffic for many months.

The brute-force code-breaking Bombes built at Bletchley in 1940 - so called because of loud ticking sound they produced - were already second-generation machines, based upon technology inherited from Poland in 1939. They were calculators, not computers. The Colossus, built at Bletchley in 1943, was the world's first electronic, digital, fixed-program, single-purpose computer with variable coefficients. The two examples of early computer-generated texts which I will now present were both programmed in the 1950s on mainframe computers barely one human generation removed from a world in which the words 'calculator' and 'computer' referred to the humans who were assigned to carry out long and laborious computational tasks.

*In Prehistoric Digital Poetry: An Archaeology of Forms, 1959-1995,*

Christopher Funkhouser attributes the creation of the oldest computer-generated

poetry to Theo Lutz, who began experimenting with random variation 'stochastic' texts in 1959 at the suggestion of his professor, the German writer and philosopher Max Bense (Funkhouser 2007: 37). Lutz's text generators were based on the logical structures of mathematics. The Zuse Z22 computer he worked on was built 1956 by Konrad Zuse, a German computer pioneer who had worked entirely independently until he was called into military service. His work was financed by the Nazis during World War II. The Z22 was but one generation in Zuse's prolific output. The first computer with a core memory based on magnetic storage tape, this machine was particularly well-suited to random variation. Though Funkhouser situates Lutz's stochastic texts within the literary realm of poetry, in an essay published in Bense's journal *Augenblick* in 1959, Lutz frames his own experiments in scientific terms:

The Z 22 is especially suited to applications in extra-mathematical areas. It is particularly suited to programs with a very logical structure i.e. for programs containing many logical decisions. The machine's ability to be able to print the results immediately, on demand, on a teleprinter is ideal for scientific problems (Lutz 1959).

In order to situate Lutz's work with text-generation in terms of human generations we must consider two factors. First, how influential was the existential rationalism of Max Bense's philosophy on Lutz's experimentation with computational processes? Certainly, Bense's print publication of Lutz's essay on his stochastic text experiments helped to canonise Lutz's efforts. It could be said that Lutz put certain of Bense's theories into practice.

The second critical non-computational element of generation in human terms which we must consider in relation to the influence Lutz's stochastic texts continue to have on generations of critics and creators of computer-generated texts is his choice of source text. Lutz's most oft-quoted generator, *The Castle*, basks in a

reflected fascination with an unusual novel generated the old-fashioned way (written by hand), by a now well-known but in his own time unpublished and utterly obscure literary author of a previous generation. Franz Kafka's novel *The Castle* remained unfinished at the time of his death in 1922. The print text we now think of as definitive was heavily edited before its publication by Kafka's friend and mentor Max Brod. The formal structure of *The Castle* lends itself to random variation. The unobtainable goal of an ending is inherent in this text. But what if Lutz had selected a different source text? Given the scientific terms Lutz used to describe his own work, would digital literary critics still consider it literary?

Funkhouser's *Prehistoric Digital Poetry* is, as advertised by the title, a history of digital poetry, not inclusive of narrative forms. Hence, there is a certain irony in Funkhouser's assertion that the "pursuit of composing poetry by using computer operations began in 1959" (Funkhouser 2007: 37) with a text composed "with a very logical structure" (Lutz 1959) from a database comprised of a selection of subjects and titles from a well-known print novel. Funkhouser focuses his analysis on "verbal components and ... what the programs emit" (Funkhouser 2007: 32). Cramer argues, "written combinatory literature does not denote the generated text itself, but only a set of formal instructions with perhaps one sample permutation" (Cramer 2000: 1). The one sample permutation of Lutz's generator offered by Funkhouser is, of course, a text in translation (yet another generation removed from the original text). Funkhouser makes no mention in *Prehistoric Digital Poetry* of Christopher Strachey's *Love Letter* generator, which, programmed in Manchester in 1952, pre-dates Lutz's stochastic texts by seven years. In personal

correspondence I asked Funkhouser why he had not mentioned Strachey's *Love Letter*. He replied as follows:

I was aware of Strachey's work but did not consider it to be in the realm of poetry--at least as I was willing to define it (which was pretty wide!).  
(January 2013)

There is no mention of either Strachey or the *Love Letter* generator in *Mainframe Experimentalism: Early Computing and the Foundations of the Digital Arts* (Higgins & Kahn eds. 2012). This may be explained in part, by the avowedly American focus of the scholarship represented. Further, as the title suggests, this book draws upon and refers to the corpus of digital arts, rather than digital literature. Only one chapter, by Funkhouser, addresses textual practices. As a result of Funkhouser's exclusion of Strachey's *Love Letter* on the basis of a literary distinction between poetry and narrative, some scholars and students of digital arts and literature remain unaware of Strachey's early mainframe experiments. This remainder of this section aims to redress this categorically perpetuated omission by contextualising Strachey's work within the broader conception of 'the literary' put forward by N. Katherine Hayles (2008: 4). This pragmatic approach takes into account the social contexts of the production and public presentation of *Love Letter*, considers the 'attempt' or process rather than simply the output, and employs the performance writing method of iteration to test the intelligibility of this early text generator in a contemporary digital literary context.

Noah Wardrip-Fruin attributes to Christopher Strachey the "first experiment with digital literature and digital art of any kind" (2011: 302). In terms of human generations, Strachey was of almost the same generation as Alan Turing, but not quite. Both were brilliant code breakers and code makers, math puzzlers, and

playful experimenters, and both were lonely gay men muzzled by post-war retrenchment of homophobic conservative values. Turing wrote the manual for the Manchester University Computer Mark I, for which *Love Letter* was programmed. He gave the manual to Strachey, at Strachey's request, and, impressed by Strachey's first attempt to program with it, set into motion the hire of Strachey by the Manchester Computer Laboratory. As Hodges puts it, Turing "handed over the torch" (2012 [1983]: 447).

In literary terms, the texts produced by the *Love Letter* generator fall between forms. Neither poetry nor literary prose, these letters sounded amateurish, outlandish, and absurd - almost certainly deliberately so. The generator uses what Funkhouser terms the "slot" method of generation. Words are chosen from lists, or variable strings, to appear in set-order sentences. All of the computer-generated text presented as practice-led research outcomes in *Writing Coastlines* use this method. The *Love Letter* generator contains the following variable strings: Adjectives, Nouns, Adverbs, Verbs, Letter Start. These appear in sentences such as this one: You are my (adjective) (noun). My (adjective) (noun) (adverb) verb) your (adjective) (noun). The following are two examples of texts generated by a modern, web-based emulator of the *Love Letter* created by Matt Sephton, discussed later in this section:

DARLING LOVE

YOU ARE MY AVID FELLOW FEELING. MY AFFECTION  
CURIOSLY CLINGS TO YOUR PASSIONATE WISH. MY LIKING YEARNS FOR  
YOUR HEART. MY TENDER LIKING. YOU ARE MY WISTFUL SYMPATHY.  
YOURS LOVINGLY,  
M.U.C.

HONEY MOPPET,  
MY FONDEST FERVOUR LONGS FOR YOUR PASSION. MY YEARNING  
KEENLY LOVES YOUR ENTHUSIASM. MY SWEET YEARNING COVETOUSLY  
PINES FOR YOUR AFFECTIONATE LONGING. YOU ARE MY ANXIOUS BEING,  
MY EAGER SYMPATHY.  
YOURS BURNINGLY,  
M.U.C.

The signature, “Yours (adverb) M. U. C. (Manchester University Computer), suggests a deliberate interrogation of the notion of authorship. The posting of print-outs of these letters on bulletin boards around the Manchester Computer Laboratory constitutes publication, a social engagement with an audience. These aspects of the work place it firmly within Hayles’ conception of ‘the literary.’ The public response was not entirely favourable. Hodges suggests:

Those doing real men’s jobs on the computer, concerned with optics or aerodynamics, thought this silly, but it was as good a way as any of investigating the nature of syntax, and it greatly amused Alan and Christopher Strachey - whose love lives, as it happened, were rather similar too (2012 [1983]: 478).

Have scholars of digital literature similarly dismissed this early text generator on grounds that they thought the texts it produced were silly? Noah Wardrip-Fruin cautions, “it is not simply the output that amuses; the resulting letters are not really the interesting part of the project” (306). Previous to *Love Letter*, Strachey had created a far more sophisticated draughts playing program, which is counted among the first computer games. He could have programmed *Love Letter* to generate far better love letters if he’d wanted to. But he chose not to. Instead he created a system of deliberate simplicity, a process designed to fail, and to do so humorously.

Roberto Simanowski states: “It is probable that with his Love Letter Generator, [Strachey] parodied the familiar, sanctioned, conventional ways to express love. The actual meaning of the Love Letter Generator would thus be the



deconstruction of love letters” (2011: 94). Based solely on the few examples of text output by the original *Love Letter* generator that have made their way into print circulation, that might appear to be the case. Wardrip-Fruin studied copies of the source code held in the Strachey Papers at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, UK. He offers a reading of *Love Letter* based on process rather than output:

I see the love letter generator, not as a process for producing parodies, but as itself a parody of a process. The letters themselves are not parodies of human-authored letters; rather, the letter production process is a parodic representation of a human letter-writing process. It is not a subtle parody, driven by a complex structures that circuitously but inevitably lead, for example, to the same small set of vapid sentiments stored as data. Rather it is a brutally simple process, representing the authoring of traditional society’s love letters as requiring no memory, driven by utterly simple sentence structures, and filled out from a thesaurus. The love letter generator, in other words, was as complex as it needed to be in order to act out a parody (316).

Wardrip-Fruin points out, and my own research in the Strachey Papers undertaken at the Bodleian in August 2012 confirms, Strachey had plans for a more elaborate letter generator, which went further toward investigating the formal properties of the letter. These plans were abandoned shortly after Turing’s death in 1954. Strachey made no further forays into literary experimentation. Mark Sample suggests: “Strachey was publicly dismissive of his foray into the literary use of computers” (Sample 2013). In his classic paper “The ‘Thinking’ Machine,” Strachey described the *Love Letter* generator as “a simple type of intelligence test... The scheme on which it works... is almost childishly simple” (Strachey 1954: 26). That does not remove Strachey’s ‘attempt’ to create a writing machine from the realm of the literary.

Strachey’s *Love Letter* was prefigured by the American novelist Kurt Vonnegut, who invented a fictional computer which wrote love poetry in a short

story called “EPICAC” first published 25 November 1950 in Collier's Weekly and later in the collection *Welcome to the Monkey House* (1968). The name of the fictional EPICAC computer was a direct reference to the ENIAC computer which had been unveiled four years previously, on February 14, 1946 at the University of Pennsylvania. ENIAC cost almost \$500,000 and was out of date before it was finished. Vonnegut used the character of the EPICAC computer again in his novel *Player Piano* which came out in 1952. It is well within the realm of possibility that Strachey's enigmatic choice of the love letter as a form through which to test the random number facility of the Manchester University Computer was inspired by a work of print literature.

Much of the recent interest in Strachey's *Love Letter* generator has come from computer historians and media archaeologists rather than from literary scholars. As a result of the different disciplinary approaches take to the work, a number of different genealogies have emerged. Writing on *Love Letter* in “There Must Be an Angel. On the Beginnings of the Arithmetics of Rays,” David Link, notes that Strachey “performed this experiment a full thirteen years before the appearance of Joseph Weizenbaum's ELIZA, which is commonly - and mistakenly - held to be the earliest example of computer-generated texts” (2006: 16). Neither Funkhouser nor Simanowski mention ELIZA in their discussions of computer-generated texts; it is not generally considered to be a literary endeavour. David Link's recreation of *Love Letter*, which ran on his own recreation of the The Ferranti Mark I, a commercialised version of the Manchester University Computer, was included in the “Old Media” exhibition at Arnolfini, Bristol, UK, September 2010. In that same year, the Museum of Science and Industry (MOSI) in Manchester created

an iPad emulation of *Love Letter*. The press release for this initiative states: “Visitors at MOSI can now create their own love letters on iPads in the gallery and email them to a loved one” (MOSI 2011). I first became aware of this initiative when internet research on Strachey’s *Love Letter* led me to the website of Matt Sephton, a Cornwall-based programmer who worked on the MOSI iPad emulator. Sephton had posted a PHP version of *Love Letter* on his website, and made the source code publicly available on GitHub (Sephton 2010). Examination of Sephton’s source code revealed a number of inconsistencies between Sephton’s variables and those listed in Strachey’s notes held at the Bodleian. A number of Strachey’s variables were missing from Sephton’s lists, and a new variable ‘chickpea’ had been added. Through Twitter, I pointed Sephton toward the missing variables, which he then added to his source code. When questioned, Sephton freely admitted that ‘chickpea’ was his own playful addition, and so it remains.

Strachey’s technique of using random words selected from the thesaurus has much in common with contemporary literary practices. Flarf poetry, for example, is created by using obscure search terms to mine the internet for found text. In order to contribute further to situating Strachey’s *Love Letter* generator within a contemporary digital literary practice, in 2013 I used the source code of Sephton’s php iteration of Strachey’s *Love Letter* generator to create *Writing Coastlines Letters* (2013) [<http://luckysoap.com/generations/coastlinesletter.php>]. This practice-led research outcome replaces all of the variables in Strachey’s *Love Letter* with a new set of variables comprising keywords from *Writing Coastlines* and terms common to practice-led PhD research.

WRITING AND ERASING PASSAGES,  
MY PERFORMANCE KEENLY EXAMINES YOUR THESIS. MY THESIS  
EAGERLY SPEAKS YOUR AIM. YOU ARE MY MEDIA ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
CONCLUSION, MY DIGITAL LITERARY WORK, MY PRAGMATIC READING.  
YOURS NECESSARILY,  
J.R.C.

NORTH ATLANTIC IN-BETWEEN SPACES,  
MY MEDIATION IDENTIFIES YOUR MARXIST WORK. MY  
PERFORMANCE RECEIVES YOUR LITERARY EXPERIMENT. MY CHAPTER  
OUTLINE DILIGENTLY MAKES CLEAR YOUR INTERDISCIPLINARY CORPUS. YOU  
ARE MY LOCATIVE INTERVENTION, MY COMBINATORY CITATION.  
YOURS ANALYTICALLY,  
J.R.C.

Strachey's *Love Letter* parodies a process of writing love letters full of vapid sentiments by using a thesaurus to fill in formulaic sentence structures. The process of creating *Writing Coastlines Letters* was also parodic; I followed the formulaic structure of Sephton's source code rather than writing code anew. Whether or not scholars of digital literature consider the output to be literary, the critical intention behind these texts and the computation processes by which they were created can certainly be situated within a practice of text generation which, as evidenced by the examples of Porfyrius and Swift offered at the beginning of this section, dates back hundreds of years.

Roberto Simanowski states that "most of the literary text generators programmed since Strachey do not have an ironic or critical intention. Rather, they aim to create intelligible text that can stand on its own or support the writer's process of creation by offering plots and phrases" (95). He goes on to discuss *Façade* a one-act interactive drama created by Michael Mateas and Andrew Stern in 2005. *Façade* does not have an ironic or critical intention, but there are certainly

other examples of distinctly literary text generators programmed since Strachey which do. Here I draw attention to Nick Montfort's *The Two* (2008), a very short story generator, the source code of which forms the basis of the practice-led research outcome to be presented in the next section.

*The Two* is written in JavaScript. This work employs a deliberate formal simplicity reminiscent of Strachey's *Love Letter* generator, albeit executed in an entirely different media ecology, to comment upon the complexity of the operation of gender as a variable. The word 'generation' has, at its Latin base, the word *genus*, as does the word gender. *The Two* is Montfort's own translation of his earlier iteration of this same generator, which was written in Python and known simply as *story2.py*. Structurally, *story2.py* and *The Two* strip the short story down to its most fundamental sections: beginning, middle, and end. As Montfort explains in a post to the collective blog *GrandTextAuto*: "A sentence is chosen from a pool of beginnings. A middle is generated by joining "He" or "She" to a verb or other middle section and concluding that with "he" or "she." Then, an ending is chosen from a pool of endings" (Montfort 2008).

The police officer nears the alleged perpetrator.  
He berates her.  
Six years later, neither one remembers the incident.

Given the power dynamics set out in the first sentence, we may be surprised to learn in the second sentence that both the police officer and the alleged perpetrator are female. Why wouldn't we be? Movies starring females in the roles of both protagonist and antagonist are rare indeed. How differently would we interpret the story if instead it read:

The police officer nears the alleged perpetrator.  
She berates him.  
Six years later, neither one remembers the incident.

In the above mentioned *GrandTextAuto* post, Montfort cites Nanette Wylde's "minimal and clever programs" as inspiration for *story2.py*. Certainly we can see the influence of her Electronic Flipbook *about so many things* (1998, 2012). These "flipbooks" were created in Director for specific installation contexts between 1998 and 2006. Though they have since been adapted for web, when I first began researching them, they were not available online. In order that I might study them, Wylde transmitted them to me via the post on a CD. As Wylde describes in the booklet which accompanied this CD, and on her website, "*about so many things* randomly displays the activities of 'He' and 'She' without bias to gender. That is, the activities are drawn from the same pool of possibilities." Anything he can do, she can do. Similarly, both *story2.py* and *The Two* capitalise on the variability of gender assumptions by making gender a variable: `var heshe=['He ',' She ']`. Although the source codes of *story2.py* and *The Two* are not literally translations of *about so many things*, the complexity of the gender variable is born across from one generation of generator to the next. 'He' and 'She' are twinned notions of the same order as those explored in *Writing Coastlines*. Hence, in the next section, the variables 'he' and 'she' will be translated into 'here' and 'there', 'home' and 'away'.

#### 2.4. *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*

[<http://luckysoap.com/generations/transmission.html>]

In autumn 2011 I undertook a process of translating the source code Nick Montfort's very short story generator *The Two* (2008) into a new work. My aim was to employ the variable operation of gender explored by Nanette Wylde and Nick Montfort discussed in Section 2.3., to explore the twinned notions of code and narrative, past and future, and home and away in concert with certain binarisms presented by transatlantic communications networks, namely: call and response, and transmit and receive. The resulting practice-led research outcome, *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* (Carpenter 2011) [<http://luckysoap.com/generations/transmission.html>], expands upon and greatly alters the source code of Montfort's *The Two*, but the gender variable `var heshe=['He ',' She '];` is born across into the next generation.

The recurrence of the prefix *trans-* in the title of this thesis, in the title of this chapter, and in the title of the practice-led research outcome *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* led me frame this research in terms of translation. Influenced by the active practices of 'defining' and re-sounding in both performance writing and media archaeology methodologies, I have situated the notion of translation within a broad and overtly interdisciplinary context by applying the prefix *trans-* to a string of variables: translation, transmutation, transmediation, and transmission. Translated into JavaScript this string of variables might appear as follows:

```
var trans=['lation', 'mutation', 'mediation', 'mission'].
```

The word ‘translation’ applies the prefix *trans-* to the word *-lation*, which comes from the Latin, *latio*, meaning borne, as in carried or endured. Translation from one form to another implies an equivalency between forms. In the translation of a text from one natural language to another one might expect the meaning, the mood and perhaps the rhythm of the text to endure. Although the translation of natural languages is not my focus here, it should be noted that both *story2.py* and *The Two* have been translated in to French, Spanish and Russian. Although the source codes were not significantly altered in these translations, the selection of the variables and the structure of the sentences had to be significantly altered in response to these languages’ handling of gender, which, as stated in Section 2.3., performs a critical operation in these works. In the translation of a born-digital text from one code language to another, what precisely is borne across, beyond, or through?

Transmutation implies a sudden and/or radical change in form. In a homophonic translation, for example, little or no attempt is made to preserve the meaning of the original text. In the classic example of Luis d’Antin van Rooten’s *Mots D’Heures: Gousses, Rames*, the phonetic sequence “Humpty Dumpty” endures in the translation “Un petit d’un petit” (1967). Here, the hermeticism of the homophonic translation is counterbalanced by the choice of a “sub-text ... so well known as to be recognized by all” (Lecerle 1985: 21). In the over twenty known remixes of Nick Montfort’s computer-generated poem *Taroko Gorge* (2009), including the practice-led research outcomes *Along the Briny Beach* and *Whisper Wire*, discussed in Sections 1.2. and 2.2. respectively, though the word sequences in the remixed texts may appear on screen to diverge radically from *Taroko Gorge*, the remixes are based on a sub-text so well known as to be recognised, if not by all



members of the general public then certainly by all scholars and practitioners of digital literature. That sub-text is, of course, Montfort's source code, which endures almost entirely intact in most of the *Taroko Gorge* remixes, or translations, as we might more appropriately call them. Conversely, the translation of a computer-generated text from one programming language to another may radically alter the source code yet result in little or no change to the content or behaviour of the text displayed on screen, as in the case of Montfort's own translation of *Taroko Gorge* from Python into JavaScript.

Transmediation refers to movement across, beyond, and through media. Though we may consider languages – natural, code, or otherwise – to be behaviours rather than media, when dealing with code languages we must consider the media used to create and disseminate these languages as integral to their intelligibility. Python files cannot be read in a web browser, for example, and Flash files cannot be read on an iOS device such as an iPad or an iPhone. The translation of a born digital text from one code language to another is most often necessitated by hardware and/or software obsolescence. In the example of Judy Malloy's ground-breaking hypertext *Uncle Roger* (1986-2011), Malloy has adapted and altered the work a number of times to suit emerging media environments ranging from early newsgroups to BASIC, UNIX, and the World Wide Web. I term this process transmediation rather than remediation as, particularly in the case of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* I am more concerned with the asynchronous movement of text across, beyond, and through a continuum of forms than with the associative relationship between old and new media forms upon which the discourse surrounding remediation tends to focus.

Transmission refers both to the action of sending across, and to that which is sent. The word mission, from the Latin *missiō*: a sending off, may refer to a group or committee of persons sent to a foreign country to provide assistance, conduct negotiations, establish relations, initiate communications, build fortifications or in any other way translate a strange place into somewhere known. The word 'mission' may also refer to an operational task, designed to carry out the goals of a specific program. A computer program, for instance. On a mission. A transmission, a sending across.

This string of *trans-* variables operate as compositional and structural elements in *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*. This web-based work is a computer-generated dialogue, a literary narrative of generations of transatlantic migration performed in the form of a conversation, an encoded discourse propagating across, beyond, and through long-distance communications networks. *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* is literally a transmission. One JavaScript file sits in one directory on one server attached to a vast network of hubs, routers, switches, and submarine cables through which this one file may be accessed many times from many places by many devices. And *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* is literally a dialogue. As with the Latin *trans-*, the word 'dialogue' also refers to a crossing. Stemming from the Greek *dialogos* – *dia-*, meaning: across, and *logos*, meaning: a word, saying, speech, discourse, thought, or reckoning – akin to *légein*, meaning to choose, gather, recount, tell over, or speak. The mission of this JavaScript is to generate another sort of script, a script for live performance, which may be viewed online here: [[http://luckysoap.com/generations/transmission\\_script.html](http://luckysoap.com/generations/transmission_script.html)]. The call "function produce\_stories()" produces a response in the browser. As JavaScript is a

procedural language, which must be written and read in a certain order, we may say that the browser is performing the JavaScript. The result of this performance, i.e. the text which appears on screen, is a narrative dialogue intended to be read aloud in three voices. These voices may be called, alternately: Call, Response, and Interference; or: *Strophe*, *Antistrophe*, and *Chorus*; or Here, There, and Somewhere in Between. Further discussion of the implementation and implications of the performance of this script will follow later in this chapter.

Why haven't you written?  
 Why/Where/When/How Who  
 haven't / have  
 you / I / they  
 written / texted / called / been in touch / responds

TRANS.MISSION  
 [A.DIALOGUE]

I can't hear you.  
 I / he / she / they / we / it  
 can't / didn't / can  
 hear / understand / reach / find /  
 you / it / them / anything / her / him

What did you say?  
 What / Where / Who / When / Why  
 did / can / will / won't / should / might

You / he / she / they  
 say / hear / see / send / do

It's been x days.  
 been / lasted / waited /

Do you know where we are?  
 Possibly I'm so — to work for you?  
 Please send —  
 I have received your  
 has the — artificial

2 Sept 2011. Python generator;

[Figure 14. Notebook page, J. R. Carpenter, 2011.]

*TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* was written in Python and then translated to JavaScript in autumn 2011. Aside from one small notebook page of handwritten

notes depicted in Figure 14., the entire compositional process from sentence construction, to variable string population and layout establishment was conducted inside these programming languages. The Python iteration of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* is a transmutation of Montfort's 1k narrative generator *story2.py*. Both the act and the resulting textual fact of my translation of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* from Python to JavaScript are, in a broad sense, translations of Montfort's own translation of *story2.py* into the JavaScript version known as *The Two*. Montfort encouraged this translation process through email correspondence. Although the nature and form of Montfort's narrative were substantially transformed in the creation of the Python version of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*, and then further altered in the translation from Python into JavaScript, the operation of this gender variable endures as a central narrative imperative. The string `var heshe=['he','she'];` is copied directly from Montfort's source code and pasted into that of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*, and a similar string, `var hisher=['his','her'];` is added. We can see the operation of this gender variable in multiple outputs of the following sentence:

The translator conveys her encouragements.  
The administrator relays his congratulations.  
The pilot broadcasts her explanations.  
The receptionist transmits his salutations.

In the source code of the Python iteration, the syntax for the code which calls variables is as follows: `choice(heshe)`. "`choice()`" is part of Python's "random" module, which also contains "`shuffle()`" and "`random()`," which aren't all grammatically consistent. "`choice()`" is not built into the JavaScript programming language, but rather, is created as a function. In translating *story2.py* to JavaScript,

Montfort created a function called “choose().” Although choose() performs in exactly the same way as the built-in option of choice() does in Python, Montfort’s choice of the word choose in writing his own seems to imply a rather more imperative emphasis on variable selection.

```
'Who can '+choose(know)+' the '+choose(water)+' in '+cho  
choose(amount)+' '+choose(part)+'s of the '+choose(novel  
choose(might)+' '+choose(traveller)+'s '+choose(now)+' '  
choose(past)+' '+choose(traveller)+'s '+choose(wrote)+'  
choose(numbers)+' were from '+choose(place)+' . '; last.a  
choose(w)+' is it that '+choose(wethey)+' '+choose(always  
choose(transatlantic)+' '+choose(network)+'s take '+choo  
choose(havent)+' '+choose(wethey)+' '+choose(communicate  
choose(condolence)+'s were '+choose(sent)+' '+choose(tim  
'There '+choose(might)+' have been '+choose(sign)+'s. ';  
choose(strange)+' '+choose(sound)+'s, '+choose(static)+'
```

[Figure 15. *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*, J. R. Carpenter 2011. Source code.]

In either case, it must be stressed that we are not dealing with particularly difficult code here. The source code for *story2.py* is 26 lines long; the file is less than 1k. The encoded assumptions about gender alluded to by the stories generated by *The Two* are far more complex than the JavaScript source code which generates them. The deceptive simplicity of Montfort’s generators would seem to undermine Roberto Simanowski’s argument that, “the internal problem of this genre of digital literature is its poetics of technology, which replaces a language juggler with a crafter of code” (2011, 91). *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* further thwarts this argument, in so far as the source code was not entirely crafted by me. Technically, less a craft than a crude life raft, my code is a transmutation, a wilful mutilation, a hack. The decision to hack rather than craft code anew was a deliberate one. In A

*Hacker Manifesto*, McKenzie Wark argues, “[t]o hack is always to produce the odd difference in the production of information... by transforming in some way the very process of production” (2004: 222). Something of the uncanny twinning of characters at work in Wylde’s *about so many things* and Montfort’s *The Two* underpinned my process production; my hack transforms Montfort’s source code into a code medium. Stated in terms of the notion of haunted media articulated in Section 2.2. of this chapter, *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* sends and receives dialogue on and through source code and associated media ‘haunted,’ which is to say, media visited and revisited by generations of past usage.

This haunting may be understood in part as a result of an operation of memory. In a programming language like C, `var=` does indeed refer to a location in memory on the disk drive. In a programming language like JavaScript, however, the operation of processes including memory are distributed across networks and devices. The location of a variable may be anywhere. Once it has been referred to, through a process known as garbage collection, a variable may disappear. Or, the reference to it may disappear. John Hall argues that all writing is nothing more than “a technological process designed to manipulate and defeat time, operating in terror of loss of power through loss of memory” (29-30). JavaScript’s mode of dispersed, temporary, and transitory memory allocation is well suited to *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*, a text of place and displacement. Though a JavaScript function such as `choose()` might be called upon to select from a string of trans variables - `choose(trans)`, for example - only one result will be returned. If the variable `mission` is selected, the result `transmission` will be returned. The rest remain in memory, as potential selections for possible future translations. Thus, this

text performs the act of selective memory. Every 80000 milliseconds, a new instance – one of an infinite number of possible translations – is displayed on screen. “A screen,” Hall notes, “is something designed to substitute one appearance for another.... A screening is a showing and a hiding. Does it show to hide or hide to show?” (29). The text displayed on a computer screen is doubly a translation, performed in the first instance by the JavaScript and in the second by the browser, which translates the source code into what we see on the screen.

Cybertext theory distinguishes between these two instances of the same text with the terms textons and scriptons. Textons are strings of signs as they are in the text, i.e. the source code. Scriptons are strings of signs as they appear to readers/users. The mechanism by which scriptons are generated from textons is termed a traversal function. In Markku Eskelinen’s summary of Espen Aarseth’s typology of textual communication, transiency is listed as a variable of traversal functions. “If the mere passing of the user’s time causes scriptons to appear, the text is transient...” (Eskelinen 2012: 21) TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE] is in every sense a transient text. The mere passing of time causes scriptons to appear. These scriptons spell out stories of transience, of transit:

Why shouldn't the wanderers dream of clearer manuals?  
The passage from Cornwall proved cruel.  
Ancient migrants described itineraries. Three were from the Hebrides.

Further underlying the traversal function of transiency, the reader can never quite reach the end of this TRANS.MISSION. Mid-way through a new version is generated. The sentence structures stay the same, but all their variables change. In a very long sentence in *The Order of Things*, Foucault describes the classical sentence as a signification engine; a mechanical construction which performs the

task of linking otherwise disassociated elements together. He writes, “in a single continuous sentence it is possible to indicate relations of time, of consequence, of possession, and of localization” (1994: 100). In *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* these relations shift as time passes, so that we might have immigrants now, where once we had explorers; a persistent tap eclipses a strange whir; a message instead of a passage; Nova Scotia in place of Scotland; a submarine cable replaces a shipping network. If we were to think of translation merely in terms of equivalencies, we would not likely consider a submarine cable a suitable substitute for a shipping network. We might avoid replacing the word passage, with its double implications of a passage across the Atlantic and a passage of a larger text, with the word message and its more singular meaning. But by situating translation within a string of *trans-* variables we arrive at a somewhat different understanding of how these “otherwise disassociated elements” are indeed linked together.

*TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* is a mechanical construction, a sentence engine performing the programmatic function of associating suspended variables with syntactic signification that they might travel through networks and emerge intact as narrative units. The dialogue generated by this engine is both technically and topically inflected with the syntax and grammar of code language. Some variable strings contain nothing but codes. `var receiving=` for example, reproduces shorthand gleaned from logs kept at the Glace Bay Marconi Station, circa 1911 (now kept in the Marconi archive at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, UK):

```
var receiving=['40 words local paper','30 words local paper','100 words
special news','a few scraps of a private message','distinguishable dots','dots
only','heavy traffic','something again','atmospherics','last message from
ship','repeated \"are you there\"','repeated \"where are you\"','request to
repeat','several distinct dashes','something from another station','a weak
```



signal', 'no answers to our enquiries', 'no answer', 'weak readable signals', 'no signals', 'no signals received, probably not sending', 'strong readable signals, sending fast', 'medium strength readable signals', 'some static', 'lightening all around'];

Bolter and Grusin term the representation of one medium in another 'remediation' and argue that "remediation is a defining characteristic of the new digital media" (1999: 45). Yet it is of little significance here that these variables were once printed text and are now digital textons. *Trans-* seems a more specific prefix than *re-* in *re-*lation to the *pre-* digital multi-media ecology referred to by this work. *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* performs the transmediation of text fragments from archival sources that have already passed across, beyond or through the code mediums of wires, switches, signals, air, ears, hands, paper.

Contrary to Simanowski's assertion that a poetics of technology constitutes a problem internal to text-generation, *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* externalises a poetics of technology. Codes, their creators, the modes through which they operate, propagate, and communicate, and the confusion they instigate are one of the main topics of the dialogue *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* generates.

Simanowski also suggests that, "because absurdity, weirdness, and illogicality are the default modes of text generators, mastery is only proven by overcoming such characteristics" (91). This generator aims not to overcome but rather to embrace such characteristics. Absurdity, weirdness, and illogicality are the default modes of long-distance communication, migration, displacement and difference. And so, *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* generates cacophony, liminality, atemporality and asynchronous exchanges of mixed messages pertaining to miscommunications and network failures.

In Eskelinen's critique of "the vagueness of remediation as a concept" (2012: 20) he argues, "the heuristic question may no longer be what a medium is, but what a medium does and is used for" (2012: 20). Whether read by a network, by a machine, by software, or by a human eye; whether read as textons or as scriptions in either a fixed or generative instantiation, or spoken by the mouth, or experienced by the ear; what *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* does is generate a dialogue about the translation from one place to another, and what it is used for is a script for live poly-vocal performance. *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* has been performed at Perdu Theatre in Amsterdam, NL; Arnolfini in Bristol, UK; The Banff Centre in Banff, CA; and at a "Network Archaeology" conference at Miami University in Oxford, OH, USA. Each instance constitutes a new translation, or transmediation, into a new and unique configuration of performers, audience, acoustics, and spatial arrangements. In "Dramaturgy and the Digital," an article written after having participated in one of these live performance, Barbara Bridger comes to a conclusion uncannily close to Eskelinen's, though couched in very different terms:

One of the central characteristics of this work is its interrogation of its own modes of operation: an approach that is less concerned with deciphering the meaning of a piece of work, and more interested in the structures that allow this meaning to be transmitted (Bridger 2013).

The most basic, most fundamental of these structures is the dialogue. The figures of *Strophe* and *Antistrophe* represent the most basic operations of a communication network - call and response - discussed in Section 2.1 of this chapter. *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* begins with a call: *Begin!* Followed by a response: *How?* With a question. What emerges from a question? *Distant shores, to*

*lure us*. Location, location, location. Derrida observes, "Site, this land, calling to us from beyond memory, is always elsewhere. The site is not the empirical and national Here of a territory. It is immemorial, and thus also a future" (1978, 66). The act of locating a distant shore provides a context for the fact of our present position, which is always already in the past, already behind us. In her long poem, "The Fall of Rome: A Traveller's Guide," Canadian poet and classicist Anne Carson writes: "A journey .../ begins with a voice / calling your name out / behind you. / This seems a convenient arrangement. / How else would you know it's time to go?" (1995, 75).

And so *Strophe* sets out from east to west on a treacherous mission, across high seas and frozen wastes, in search of a Northwest Passage, in hopes of trade routes, and fountains of eternal youth. And *Antistrophe* returns from west to east with scurvy, captive natives, and furs. Neither ever arrives. Both only just barely finish leaving. Through generations of transatlantic migration, characteristics of one place become *trans*-posed upon another. Another *trans*- word, transposition replaces. In the case of the call choose(place), var place= refers both literally and figuratively a location in memory.

The furthest sea shores are reminiscent of those of England.  
The neighbouring vistas compare to those of Cornwall.  
The nearest lands could easily be confused with those of Nova Scotia.

Although the translation of natural languages is not my focus here, the inextricable association between language and nation does necessitate the question: Were this work translated into French, for example, would the location of memory also be translated, or re-placed, to reflect generations transatlantic migration from France to Nouvelle France? Would Cornwall be replaced with Bretagne, Nova Scotia with Acadie? I set about generating a response to this

question in two ways. First, in April 2012 a single output of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* was posted to *Vertaallab* (TranslationLab), an ongoing translation experiment edited by Rozalie Hirs on the Dutch blog *Ooteoote*, in which, translators are invited to post translations as comments to the featured works (Hirs 2012). There were two responses to *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*. The first, posted by Ludy Roumen-Bührs, translated the text from English to Dutch. The English place names were retained. The line: “Eleven were from England.” became “Elf kwamen uit Engeland.” The second response was posted by @netwurker, born Mary-Anne Breeze, aka Netwurker Mez, a pioneering author of digital literature known for developing and writing in the hybrid code-poetry language ‘mezangelle.’ Mez translated a portion of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* into mezanglle:

\_TRANS.MISSION [A(hhh).DIA(multimodal)LOGUE]\_  
 be[en there, done that, a]g[a]in[:out(re)] Transmission.  
 [w]H[y]ow[!]?  
 with a[hhhh] quest[].  
 wot\_merges 4rm?  
 [4]Reigns.in.other.heads+  
 [Anonymous\_reroute\_in\_progress]TORment.heArts.  
 WiFi.fog.on.a[hhh].critical.day.  
 have ARGs + Augments been[+or]gone, yet?  
 trans.actuals+accents=mits+WAR/NINgs.  
 y Kant [u.c]?  
 a.phew.phrased+mothed.in....  
 low nrg\_lvling.  
 relay[s].broad+social.  
 [SAT+sitting]NAVigators.on.narrow.casted.crosses.  
 Eleg[ant]raphic.[s]w]Itches, here. .[knot.....\*here\*].  
 biting.the.OperaTOR.4rm.[Ma]Trix[y].inlets.  
 [Br]Av[e]ian.Gnu.Worlds.in.the.unreadable.maKing[s+divided.Queens].  
 [Re:De]ceiving.staccato.waves.

---

Wh[MO]O.can.REMemburr.the.C.in.a.\_MYST\_.like.thIs?

---

Here, the syntax and grammar of the code languages engaged in enacting this born digital literary text have heavily inflected, or, we might say, infected its translation. The resulting text is a transmutation in the order of “un petit d’un petit.” *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* serves as a subtext from which to digress into a systematic punning which echoes and extends my own use, in the title of the work, of square brackets, periods, slashes, plus signs, and other punctuation marks common to programming languages. These divide phonetic sequences into complex parenthetical segments, in which, new words appear. The first line – “Begin Transmission” – becomes: “be[en there, done that, a]g[a]in[:out(re)] Transmission.” The second line fuses and confuses all of the possible (w) variables ['why', 'where', 'how'] into one impossible word: “[w]H[y]ow[l]?” Mez’s transmutation obliterates trans[‘la’, ‘muta’]tion reflects generations of migration – not across the Atlantic, but rather, into an online networked game space, in which, in mezanglle, at least, the binarisms of he or she and here or there might collapse, into [s.he] and [t.here]. The potential of the hybrid s[t]he[re] space is proposed in the line:

“[Br]Av[e]ian.Gnu.Worlds.in.the.unreadable.maKing[s+divided.Queens].”

In 2013 *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* was translated into French by Ariane Savoie, a PhD student at Université Québec à Montréal, for a special translation issue of *bleuOrange*, a Montreal-based online journal of ‘littérature hypermédiatique,’ which launched at the Electronic Literature Organization conference *Chercher le texte* in Paris 23-26 September 2013 [<http://revuebleuorange.org/bleuorange/07/transmission/transmissionFr.html>]. In personal correspondence Savoie shared certain thoughts on her process, which I will now synthesise. A strict translation of all the English variables into French

equivalents would have resulted in subject-verb gender disagreements, the resolution of which would require considerable modification to the source code, which, Savoie felt, would have diminished the variability of the generator and the structure of the piece. Instead, Savoie elected to respect the structure of the source code. Gender conflicts were avoided by the population of strings with variables from only one gender, letting go of any variables that didn't have the exact equivalent in that gender in French. Initially, this resulted in an eradication of the gender variable altogether. Eventually, a compromise was reached in which two versions of certain variable strings were created, that both masculine and feminine proper nouns might be called at different points in the script.

Although the string `var heshe=['he','she'];` is not carried over into Savoie's translation, something of the either/or binarism of Wylde and Montfort's `var heshe=` endures, both through the introduction of gender variables through other means, as cited above, and through the variable string `var place=`, in which, the location of each place named is either on one side of the Atlantic or the other: Canada or England, Acadie or France, the new world or the old, home or away. Through the operation of this variable, here and there become doppelganger of one another. In *The Uncanny*, Freud defines doppelganger as persons who have to be regarded as identical because they look alike (2003: 141). If we re-place the word 'persons' with the word 'places' in Freud's definition we arrive at a similarly uncanny conclusion. Between places inextricably linked by generations of immigration "[t]here is the constant recurrence of the same thing, the repetition of the same ... features, the same characters, the same destinies, the same misdeeds, even the same names, through successive generations" (142).

Perhaps what we are seeing is simply a case of influence, of resemblance – an uncanny recurrence of code processes carried across from one generation of computer-generated text to the next. It would be difficult if not impossible for a second, or third, or fourth generation of text-generator generators to not be influenced by previous generations of generators of generators. I have framed the process of creating and disseminating *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* in terms of translation because translation, transmutation, transmediation, and transmission have played a central role in the creation and dissemination of this text. Traces, phrases, structures and functions form the source codes of *story2.py* and *The Two* endure in its textons. The results of the operation of variables such as gender are borne across into its scriptons. The question of what is borne across, beyond, and through each new generation of this text is reposed every 80000 milliseconds. The last line of texts suggests the answer is always an invitation to reformulate the question: Please try again.

This chapter has shown that digital literary practices of creating and performing computer-generated text are inherently iterative modes of composition through which to explore language as a constructed system, subject to variations. The digital networks serving as hosts to these transient texts have inflected their grammar and syntax, thus providing syntactical structures for this narrative which resonate between both physical and digital sites. No sooner are they called upon then the variables contained within these texts are dispersed in memory. Within this networked narrative structure, sites themselves become variables. The very notion of nation collapses. Thus, in the next chapter, consideration of place, space, and site will be re-framed in terms of location.





## CHAPTER 3.

### NARRATIVE / CARTOGRAPHIC: LOCATING NARRATIVE RESONANCE

The first chapter of this thesis explored the physical and embodied aspects of the coastlines on either side of the Atlantic Ocean. The second chapter broached networked and generative approaches to establishing communication between these coastlines through networks extending across, beyond, and through the Atlantic. This final chapter will extend those networked and generative approaches into cartographic and narrative spaces toward an articulation of the Atlantic Ocean as an in-between space prone to resonance and re-sounding, to address the question: What narratives resonate in the spaces between places separated by time, distance and ocean yet inextricably linked by generations of immigration?

The conceptual instruments of location, narrative, and resonance, which have been in operation throughout this thesis, will be reformulated in Section 3.1., to lay the groundwork for a detailed analysis of one practice-led research outcome, *The Broadside of a Yarn* (Section 3.2.), and three related works which emerged as a result of the iterative methodology of performance writing - *There he was, gone.* (Section 3.2.1.), *...and by islands I mean paragraphs* (Section 3.2.2.), and *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* (Section 3.2.3.).

### 3.1. Introduction: Reformulating Location, Narrative, and Resonance

We humans are land-dwelling creatures. We need both salt and water to survive, yet sea water is too salty for our systems to process; ingestion of any amount can be deadly. We need Vitamin C from fresh fruit and vegetables to survive. Many thousands of sixteenth and seventeenth sailors at sea for many weeks and months subsisting solely on salted meats and grains developed scurvy and died. In “Terrestriality” Joyce Chaplin states that the circumnavigating sea captains of the Age of Discovery “thought that it was firm green earth that prevented (or cured) scurvy” (2014: 10). Iberian and French sailors described scurvy as ‘mal de tierra’ or ‘mal de terre’ - an ‘earthsickness’. By this, Chaplin argues, “[t]hey did not mean that the earth made them sick (as ‘seasickness’ means of the sea). They meant that their bodies pined for earth, much as a homesick person longs for home” (10). Our bodies are 55-65% water, yet we can never be fully at rest in a body of water. Left to its own devices, in a body of water the human body will eventually sink. Our lungs breath air. Our skin breaths air. Our feet have sprung arches - designed for walking, Bruce Chatwin argues (1987: 255). In *Seven-Tenths: The Sea and its Thresholds*, James Hamilton-Paterson describes the gait of boat-dwelling nomads in the archipelagos of South-East Asia as “graceless as a duck’s, their lower limbs slightly atrophied from a lifetime’s hunkering down” (2007: 262). However much humans may adapt to a life at sea, we will always need a technological interface between ourselves and the liquid element. Thus the ship has emerged as a central concept in *Writing Coastlines*, operating as a technological interface, a limit of speed and distance, a container of messages, a unit of thought.

In Chapter 1. we coasted the edges of the Atlantic Ocean in a mode analogous to that of the earliest mariners. We crept along known terrains, named places, storied spaces. We walked along briny beaches and ruined seawalls, we charted, we named, and we watched the coast as it slipped past our ship like an enigma. Washed upon far shores, we lamented our castaway state. Everywhere we went reminded us of someplace else. We were never far from the sea. Neither were we ever far from land. In Chapter 2. we charted the development of transatlantic communications networks engendered by generations of migration between these two shores, from fishing boats to the tall ships of the great age of sail, from steamer packet shipping to packet switching. In relation to the concept of location to be developed in this section, it is important to note that in modern usage, the term 'shipping' is synonymous with sending. As such, it requires an address. All communications leave from and arrive at specific places. Even wireless ones. In *Wireless Writing in the Age of Marconi*, Timothy C. Campbell argues: "Since the wireless signal spreads out in all directions, its messages lack a specific address... it is a transmission that addresses everyone and no one in particular, which may account for its entanglement with spiritualism over the years" (2006: 102). When we listen to the radio, our bodies become the broadcast's address.

In this final chapter, we shift our attention away from named places, to lesser-known more mysterious spaces to dwell in the vast in-between space of the North Atlantic Ocean. Conceptually, this is the space in which the ship writes its passage, the space after the transmission has been sent and before it has been received, the space in which wireless messages' addresses are not known... yet. Physically, this space comprises: the liquid element of the ocean itself, across which

hundreds of years worth of ships have travelled; the ocean floor, over which hundreds of thousands of miles of telegraphic, telephonic, and fibre optic cable have been laid, and the air above the ocean, through which wind currents, electromagnetic pulses, and satellite signals travel. This is the space between coastal places separated by time, distance, and ocean yet inextricably linked by generations of immigration, the space in which narratives of place and displacement resonate. In Chapter 1. Section 1.3. in *STRUTS*, the notion of narrative resonance was introduced through a discussion of single coastline - in the Tantramar region of the Maritimes - striated by the many territories of its own past. In order to locate the notion of narrative resonance in transatlantic communications networks through a conceptual framework of narrative and cartographic space, these terms must first be *addressed*, that is to say, these terms must be located within discourse.

Continuing with the use of call and response as a dialogic mode of inquiry begun in Section 2.4., we will begin with a question: What is the difference between a place and a space? In *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, Yi-Fu Tuan states: "Place is security, space is freedom: we are attached to one and long for the other" (Tuan 1977: 3). A longing for space and thus freedom is alluded to in the opening lines generated by the practice-led research outcome *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* discussed in Section 2.4.:

What commences from a search?  
Spring gusts on the sea. Storied coastlines, to tempt us.

What starts from a call?  
Winter hail on the North Atlantic. Uncharted lands, to haunt us.

Place is not always synonymous with security and the attainment of space does not always result in freedom. Many hundreds of thousands of emigrants willingly traded the ills, evils, debts, social restrictions, and other privations of the known old world for the hope, promise, and space proffered by an unknown new world, often with little or no intention of ever returning; and with little or no knowledge of what perils awaited in the vast spaces presented by the open seas of the North Atlantic and the dense woodlands, barren deserts, and high mountain ranges of the North American continent. Many hundreds of thousands of unwilling emigrants were forced across the Atlantic, as in the cases of the African slave trade and the clearances of crofters in Scotland. Shipment of people, willing or otherwise, to distant lands on such grand scales was made possible by advances in the technology of the ship. Marshall McLuhan notes a close relationship between the movement of communication data and the movement, or shipment, of people:

Sea transport of immigrants became lucrative and encouraged a great speed-up of ocean transport. Then the Cunard Line was subsidized by the British government in order to ensure swift contact with the colonies. The railways soon linked into this Cunard service, to convey mail and immigrants inland (McLuhan 1964: 115).

Samuel Morse was introduced to the concept of the electromagnetism on a the packet ship *Sully* by a Dr. Charles Jackson of Boston, a fellow passenger on a six-week transatlantic passage undertaken in 1832 (Standage 1998: 28). Consider the context of this encounter. Mid-ocean, neither here nor there, suspended in an in-between state, unaware of other developments in the field of electromagnetism, and with nothing else to distract him, Morse had the duration of the long voyage to formulate a plan. Morse's code was born of and in the vast in-between space that telegraphy subsequently appeared to collapse.

Just as shipping requires an address, so too, Tim Ingold argues, all travel is destination oriented: “For the transported traveller and his baggage... every destination is a terminus, every port a point of re-entry into a world from which he has been temporary exiled whilst in transit” (2007: 77). This chapter explores the space between leaving and arriving, the world of temporary exile, in which the traveller has nothing but baggage, the sailor nothing but yarns.

In Lewis Carroll’s poem the *Hunting of the Snark* (1876), there are more lines dedicated to the crew member “famed for the number of things / He forgot when he entered the ship” (Carroll 1982: 677) than to any other character:

He had forty-two boxes, all carefully packed,  
With his name painted clearly on each:  
But, since he omitted to mention the fact,  
They were all left behind on the beach (677).

His entrance into the ship, and thus into exile, severs his ties to the named known world that he is about to leave behind. In *Terra Infirma: Geography’s Visual Culture*, Irit Rogoff argues: “The suitcase signifies the moment of rupture, the instance in which the subject is torn out of the web of connectedness that contained him or her through an invisible net of belonging” (2000: 37-38). Neither the ship nor the suitcase are messages in and of themselves, but rather they contain messages. They transport and so in a broad sense translate messages between the past and the future, between home and away. An envelope bears both a stamp issued at its point of origin and the address to which it is destined. So too, a packet travelling through an information network is encoded with two locations – where it has come from and where it is destined. Whilst in transit, the contents of the suitcase, the envelope, and the packet remain sealed, inaccessible, unknown.

Rogoff argues, “the suitcase circulates in culture as the cipher of memory, of that which is lost and to which one has no direct or easy access” (37-38). Unless of course these messages are intercepted, as suggested in the opening line of the practice-led research outcome “Muddy Mouth,” mentioned in Chapter 1. Section 1.1., by the intentional slippage between steam ships and steaming letters open: “Packet ships steam letters open ocean” (Carpenter 2011).

Just as nautical terms persist in digital networks, terms long associated with place haunt internet and world wide web terminology. For example, consider the persistence of the word ‘site’ in the term ‘website’. The term ‘site’ comes from the Latin *situs*, meaning to position, or to arrange, as in, to leave, or to set down. In the commonly used phrase ‘visit our website’ the implication is that by entering an address in the browser’s location bar, the user is travelling to a site on the web. In fact, it is the other way around. The website travels to the user and is temporarily set down, or stored, in memory on her machine. Here again we encounter an association between place and memory. In *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym cautions that longing for place confused with longing for a different time results in a nostalgia for being at home in the world (2001). The metaphor of the internet as a place is born of nostalgia. It suggests a wilful misunderstanding of what the internet is and does, and a longer-standing misunderstanding of what place is and does. Boym argues: “Places are *contexts* for remembrances and debates about the future, not *symbols* of memory or nostalgia” (2001: 77) (the emphasis is the author’s). To détourne this statement in terms put forward by the research question of *Writing Coastlines*, transatlantic communications networks offer new narrative contexts from which to examine a multi-site-specific place-based identity.

More specific to our purposes than either 'place' or 'space', and less encumbered by subjective associations, this chapter calls upon a third term, 'location,' from the Latin root *locus*, meaning a place, or locality. As we saw in Chapter 2. Section 2.4., the noun 'location' may also refer to a place in a computer's memory. The association of location with memory is an ancient one. In *The Art of Memory*, Francis A. Yates relates a narrative of the Greek poet Simonides (c. 556–468 BC). Shortly after chanting a long lyric poem by memory to the guests of “a banquet given by a nobleman of Thessaly named Scopas” (Yates 1966: 17), Simonides stepped outside for a breath of air.

During his absence the roof of the banqueting hall fell in... crushing Scopas and all the guests to death beneath the ruins; the corpses were so mangled that the relatives who came to take them away for burial were unable to identify them. But Simonides remembered the places at which they had been sitting at the table and was therefore able to indicate to the relatives which were their dead (Yates 1966: 17).

From this incident, Simonides developed a mnemonic system for memory in which locations, or *loci*, were populated with images (such as a banquet table populated with the faces of guests). “A *locus* is a place easily grasped by the memory, such as a house... Images are forms, marks or simulacra of what we wish to remember” (Yates 1966: 22). This system was later used by Roman rhetoricians and orators such as Cicero to remember and recite long speeches containing vast amounts of information. As an unknown Roman rhetorician wrote of this system, circa 86-82 BC:

The art of memory is like an inner writing. Those who know the letters of the alphabet can write down what is dictated to them and read out what they have written. Likewise those who have learned mnemonics can set in places what they have heard and deliver it from memory (Yates 1966: 22).



The verb 'to locate' refers to the identification or discovery of a place or location. The location exists before it is located. The act of location sets, fixes and establishes the location's position, which is to say, provides a context for the location. For example, in order to locate narrative resonance in transatlantic communications networks in this chapter, I first had to provide a context in the previous chapter for what transatlantic communications networks are and do. In order to articulate the narrative context of *Writing Coastlines*, this chapter will employ strategies inferred from topography, from the Greek *topos*, meaning place. The Latin *locus* and the Greek *topos* are synonymous, but in keeping with the media archaeological method of exploring multiple genealogies, it is useful to trace the divergent etymologies of these two roots.

A *topos* is a place in discourse and a place in the world. Through *topos*, location and narration are inextricably linked. Thus Susan Barton, the castaway narrator of Cotzee's novel *Foe* comes to ask: "Is that the secret meaning of the word story, do you think - a storing-place of memories?" (1986: 59). The term 'topography' is now generally associated with cartography - a topographic map locates topics - such as elevation, population, forestation, and rainfall - on a map in a graphic manner. But just as written descriptions of routes between ports, such as the Greek *peripli* and the Italian *portolani*, were replaced by a visual mode of representation in portolan charts, so too were ancient geographers' written descriptions of places eventually replaced with graphic and mathematical modes of mapping and charting. Both textual and visual topography locates topics in memory. Or, attempts to. Alberto Manguel argues:

Cartography is a literary invention. The world we live in is not concerned with borders and limitations... It is made of movement, not of static spaces; it is a world in which rivers run and come to a halt... islands emerge and sink back into the sea... (2007 n.p.)

This statement is as problematic as it is compelling. Of course the world we live in is concerned with borders. Beyond those we compose, the physical world imposes its own harsh limitations: beyond this line frost will not melt; beyond this line trees will not grow; above this line air is too thin to breathe. The physical world writes its own static spaces: below this ash, Pompeii will rest; between these layers of sedimentary stone, a fossilised beach. In geological time these static spaces will shift just as islands will emerge and sink back into the sea. But so too will the borders and limitations imposed by cartography. The distinction Manguel makes - between the cartographic and the literary on the one hand, and the natural world on the other - presupposes that cartographic and literary outputs are themselves static, that they never emerge and sink back into the sea. Manguel goes on to state:

Since the day in which one of our earliest and most adventurous ancestors drew in the sand a line between two dots in order to show the road he had travelled, we have imagined our anarchic, movable, anonymous world in the guise of a read-able map (2007 n.p.)

As we saw in Chapter 1. Section 1.1., in early cartographic depictions of the so-called New World, the North Atlantic coastline was both written and erased by successive generations of transpositions of European place and family names onto places which already had names, whether assigned by earlier explorers or by the native peoples of those shores. In *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, Rebecca Solnit suggests:

most European-Americans remained lost over the centuries, lost not in practical terms but in the more profound sense of apprehending where they truly were, of caring what the history of the place was... Instead, they named it after the places they had left and tried to reconstruct those place through imported plants, animals, and practices... (2005: 66).

Rather than perpetuate misapprehensions born of the imposition of the names and other marks of one coastline upon another, *Writing Coastlines* turns to the juxtaposition of coastlines for the revelation of a new narrative context from which to examine a place-based identity which encompasses multiple sites.

In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard defines topoanalysis as “the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives” (1994: 8). What mode of analysis is there for the study of lives severed from the intimacy of any one site, of lives spent spread between multiple sites? In *Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print*, Jay David Bolter extends the classical notion of *topos* as units of thought located in memory to suggest that *topos* are now located in a data structure in the computer (2001: 29). As such, “[e]lectronic writing... is not the writing of a place, but rather a writing with places as realized topics” (36). Electronic writing can of course be both of a place, in between places, and spatially realised within a data structure. For example, as suggested in Chapter 2. Section 2.4., *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* is a narrative dialogue resonating between the conceptual places ‘here’, ‘there’, and ‘somewhere in between’, and the geographical places represented by place names stored as variables in the string ‘place’ and thus also stored in locations in the computer’s memory. Bolter goes on to suggest, “it is possible to write topographically for print... Whenever we divide our text into unitary topics, organize those units into a connected structure, and conceive of this textual structure spatially as well as verbally, we are writing topographically” (36). Consider the following example of topographical writing from a print novel: In *As the Crow Flies*, Anne-Marie MacDonald suggests that with the destabilisation of the primacy of place in identity formation, as a result of constant

movement between places, the notion of *topos* as places stored in memory is superseded by a new notion of *topos* as events mapped in memory:

If you move around all your life, you can't find where you come from on a map. All those places where you lived are just that: places. You don't come from any of them; you come from a series of events. And those are mapped in memory. Contingent, precarious events, without the counterpane of place to muffle the knowledge of how unlikely we are. Almost not born at every turn. Without a place, events slow-tumbling through time become your roots. Stories shading into one another. You come from a plane crash. From a war that brought your parents together (MacDonald 2003: 36).

I cite an example from a long linear narrative here to underline the focus on narrative applied throughout this thesis and explored in depth in this chapter. The term 'narrative' refers to an account, spoken, written or otherwise, of connected events, true or otherwise. Narration is the act, process, or performance of relating or delivering a narrative. Narration is *always* an event mapped in memory. The printed book is but one form of memory storage. Wolfgang Ernst equates narrative with the fixity and linearity long-associated with printed text in his critique of historiographical models of writing which follow "a chronological and narrative ordering of events" (Ernst 2011: 239). This anti-narrative stance hinges upon a narrow definition of what narrative is and does, offering little or no understanding of either the highly changeable nature of oral narrative or the wide range of experimental literary forms of narrative. As the above-cited example demonstrates, even in a print novel narrative may unfold in a non-linear manner. The relationship between narrative and event will be developed throughout this chapter. In Section 3.2., a spatially distributed conception of digital writing will be extended into a temporal plane through N. Katherine Hayle's articulation of a digital text as an event "brought into existence when the program runs" (Hayles 2006: 181). For now it is

sufficient to establish that narration is a performative act, a narrative is not necessarily linear, and a narrator is not necessarily reliable.

Throughout *Writing Coastlines*, both print and digital examples have been presented of non-linear, intertextual, atemporal, randomly ordered, and in other ways unstable literary narratives. As suggested in Section 0.3.1., in Mark Danielewski's novel *House of Leaves*, the 'main' narrative is perpetually interrupted by footnotes containing parallel narrative threads and photographs of supposedly archival images. In *STRUTS*, the multiplicity of linear narratives flowing across the screen render no single one of them authoritative. As each of these linear narrative threads responds to mouse actions, a participant can alter both the chronology of the narration and the relationship of the texts to one another. Echoing Roberto Simanowski's reading of computer-generated narratives discussed in Section 2.3., Ernst assumes that 'sense' is the narrative structure's desired outcome: "The cultural inclination to give sense to data through narrative structures is not easy for human subjectivity to overcome. It takes machines to temporarily liberate us from such limitations" (Ernst 2011: 240). The digital literary texts presented in *writing Coastlines* conjoin the organising principals of indifferent machine logic and literary narrative structures which invite and delight in non-sense. Christopher Strachey turned to the thesaurus to populate the variable strings of the *Love Letter* generator - a data set which is at once highly subjective in its composition and utterly indifferent to its end uses. Faced with the limitations of his early draughts program, Strachey created narrative diversions, teaching the machine to banter with its opponent:

I have amused myself by making the machine get impatient if its opponent is too slow, or makes mistakes in feeding in his move, and finally if he makes too many mistakes, in making it loose its temper completely and refuse to play any more (Strachey 1951: 2a).

*TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* uses data from archival sources to introduce seemingly nonsensical yet, archaeologically-speaking, utterly factual words and phrases to a narrative structure. Archival sources may be just as subjective as fictional narratives, though less linear. The Marconi Archive contains boxes of logs of sounds heard by the ear, transcribed by the hand, then later typed. Ernst claims, “The real media archive is the *arché* of its source codes” (2011: 240). But these too are subjective. Even programs written by computers are written by computer programs written by subjective humans, though we may have no idea what those programs will come up with.

In *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, Friedrich Kittler articulates “the switch from writing to media” (1999: 83) in such a way as to suggest that writing stored in a book is always self-conscious and subjective, laden with meaning, and thus limited; but vocal sounds of all kinds, even those made autonomous from the psyche, may be stored on the phonograph or gramophone regardless of meaning. Thus Kittler claims: “Mechanisation relieves people of their memories and permits a linguistic hodgepodge hitherto stifled by the monopoly of writing... The epoch of nonsense, our epoch, can begin” (86). As discussed in Chapter 1. Section 1.2., the application of the prefix *non-* to the word ‘sense’ does not necessarily mean that the text has no meaning, or that it makes no sense. It may suggest, instead, a paradox in which more than one thing makes sense. Consider the apparent

contradiction at the heart of the following lines from Lewis Carroll's poem "The Walrus and the Carpenter":

The moon was shining sulkily,  
Because she thought the sun  
Had got no business to be there  
After the day was done - (1982: 168).

In the context of an epoch in which mechanisation relieves people not only of their need to remember everything themselves, but also of their inability to see in the dark, the sun shining "with all his might" (168) in the middle of the night anticipates electric light. Carroll wrote "The Walrus and the Carpenter" in 1865. Although Alessandro Volta had demonstrated a glowing wire as early as 1800, Thomas Edison was not granted a patent for an electric lamp until 27 January 1880. Of Carroll's prescience, Marshal McLuhan observes:

[into a] uniform Euclidean world of familiar space-and-time, Carroll drove a fantasia of discontinuous space-and-time that anticipated Kafka, Joyce, and Eliot. ... He gave the confident Victorians a playful foretaste of Einsteinian time-and-space.... Lewis Carroll greeted the electronic age of space-time with a cheer (McLuhan 174)"

The notion that written narrative is necessarily linear has been antiquated by digital modes and means of writing. After all, Bolter asks: "Why should a writer be forced to produce a single, linear argument or an exclusive analysis of cause and effect, when the writing space allows a writer to entertain and present several lines of thought at once?" (2001: 107). These multiple lines are akin to the lines of flight proposed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, as first suggested in Chapter 1. Section 1.1., "lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification" (2007: 3).

What, then, is narrative resonance? As previously mentioned in Chapter 1. Section 1.3. the term 'resonance' comes from Latin *resonant*, meaning 're-

sounding'. Sound, particularly in relation to enunciation, will be discussed in this chapter in relation to the sailors' yarn, a form of oral story telling remediated by *The Broadside of a Yarn*, the practice-led research outcome presented in Section 3.2. It must be noted here that sound also refers to distance and depth. As discussed in Chapter 2. Section 2.1., sounding the ocean floor paved the way for submarine cables to be laid, and sounding through the ping protocol enables networks to be measured and mapped. In relation to auditory sound, the term 'resonance' refers to an intensification, prolongation, amplification, and distribution of sound, (or, as I will argue, of narrative). Resonance is produced by a body (or, as I will argue, a place) vibrating in sympathy with a neighbouring source of sound, (or of narrative). Speech sounds resonate in interrelated (communicating) cavities (absences) of the head. The soundboards of musical instruments are designed to resonate with a large range of frequencies produced by the instrument. Radios, contrastingly, are tuned to pick up only one radio frequency through a resonant circuit that resonates strongly with the incoming signal at only a narrow band of frequencies. In radio receivers, high frequency waves and short waves are combined to create auditory meaning through what is known as a superheterodyne circuit. A wave-producing circuit generates a second frequency to be heterodyned with the first, changed into a direct current then amplified thus making high frequencies audible. The term 'heterodyned' derives from the Greek *hetero* meaning other, and *dyne* meaning force together. When two signals are forced together they produce a third (Campbell 2006: 111). When two coastlines are juxtaposed they produce, or reveal, a third entity, an in-between space, an *entrespace*. The North Atlantic becomes a sounding board resonating with the



narratives produced by coastal places separated by time and distance, yet inextricably linked by generations of immigration. When the narratives of these coastal places are heterodyned, a third narrative frequency is produced. For example, in Chapter 2. Section 2.4. the source code, narrative structure, and gender variable in operation in Nick Montfort's *The Two* combined with archival materials, terms pertaining to generations of transatlantic communications networks, and names and physical aspects of the coastlines on either side of the North Atlantic to create a new entity - *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*.

In this chapter I will develop the notion that the digital text is an assemblage of connected events delivered (or performed) through networks. This approach rejects media archaeology's rejection of narrative on the grounds that it is linear, yet accepts media archaeology's strategies of re-visiting and re-versioning the past in order to re-contextualise media ecologies of the present. Within performance writing and media archaeology methodologies, the term 'resonance' may be understood to refer to an iterative process of re-sounding. In the practice-led research outcomes presented in the following sections, the notion of narrative resonance is explored through a sympathetic vibration between two sites or locations, through the enunciation of constantly shifting sailor's yarns, and through a wilful confusion between print and digital, here and there, land and sea.



### 3.2. *The Broadside of a Yarn*

[<http://luckysoap.com/broadside>]

All that is told of the sea has a fabulous sound to an inhabitant of the land, and all its products have a certain fabulous quality, as if they belonged to another planet, from sea-weed to a sailor's yarn.

Henry David Thoreau (1995 [1865]: 78)

In keeping with the performance writing research methods of 'live archiving' and 'making public,' the entirety of the creation of the practice-led research outcome to be discussed in this section, *The Broadside of a Yarn* (Carpenter 2012) [<http://luckysoap.com/broadside>], was undertaken within professional context. In March 2011 I submitted a proposal to a competitive selection process and was successful in securing a commission to create a new work for the ELMCIP final exhibition *Remediating the Social*, which took place at Inspace, Edinburgh, 1-17 November 2012. This public-facing creation and presentation process enabled the development of a large project over a twenty-month period. The writing in the remainder of this chapter has evolved from and retains traces of writing produced during this period, from the first proposal made to the ELMCIP selection committee to an article called "The Broadside of a Yarn: A Situationist Strategy for Spinning Sea Stories Ashore" published in *Performance Research Journal* (Carpenter 2014) and reproduced in Appendix D.



[Figure 16. *The Broadside of a Yarn*, J. R. Carpenter 2012. *Remediating the Social*, Inspace, Edinburgh, UK. Installation view.]

*The Broadside of a Yarn* is a multi-modal performative pervasive networked narrative attempt to chart fragments of fictional sea stories on dry land with nought but a QR code reader and a hand-made print map of dubious accuracy. It is a collection of stories, an unbound atlas of impossible maps, an errata-base populated with historical, literary, pictorial, diagrammatic, and cartographic data, fiction, computer-generated narratives, quotations culled from centuries of sailors' yarns, words from printed stories set on far-away long-ago seas put into present-tense mouths, spoken, and then shifted.

*The Broadside of a Yarn* remediates the broadside, the map, and the sailor's yarn. The broadside was a form of networked narrative popular from the sixteenth century onward, in Europe and in North America. Cheaply printed on single sheets

of paper (often with images), broadsides presented popular ballads and tabloid texts written on a wide range of topical subjects including such seafaring themes as shipwrecks, piracy, mutiny, and storms. The National Library of Scotland boasts an online collection of nearly 1,800 broadsides dating from 1650 - 1910.

I liken broadsides to networked narratives as they were designed to be widely distributed and posted and performed in public places. During the *Remediating the Social* exhibition *The Broadside of a Yarn* was posted as a discontinuous map printed on fifteen A3-paper-sized squares arranged in an asymmetrical grid in a 5m x 3m light-box situated near the main entrance of the gallery, visible from the street. I use the term 'map' throughout this section to refer to a range of modes of cartographic representation - from the medieval *mappa mundi* to the portable city plan, from the atlas to the guide book, from the pilot's log book to the sea chart scored with rhumb lines, depths, and soundings. Aspects of all of these modes of mapping have been enlisted here, toward locating narrative resonance in the vast in-between spaces they represent, spaces prone to resonance and re-sounding. The purpose of *The Broadside of a Yarn* map is not to guide but rather to propose imprecise and practically impossible routes of navigation through the city of Edinburgh, along the Firth of Forth, into the North Sea, into the North Atlantic, and beyond into the territories both literary and purely imaginary to be evoked later in this chapter, "[to] the land where the Bong-Tree grows" (Lear 1871), in search of the Northwest Passage (Hakluyt 1985: 298), to Ultima Thule where "the sea is sluggish and heavy to the oar" (Tacitus 1960: 60), to Prospero's island, to Crusoe's island, and so on.

*The Broadside of a Yarn* was created in part through an engagement with *dérive*, a practice first explored by the Letterist International in Paris in the early 1950s and later taken up by the Situationist International. The concept of *dérive* was introduced by Ivan Chtcheglov in “Formulary for a New Urbanism” (published under the pseudonym Gilles Ivan). Chtcheglov proposes a future city, the districts of which “could correspond to the whole spectrum of diverse feelings that one encounters by chance in everyday life... The main activity of the inhabitants will be CONTINUOUS DRIFTING” (1953). In the Letterist exhibition “66 *métagraphies influentielle*,” which opened on 11 June 1954 at the Galerie du Passage in Paris, Chtcheglov (again under the name Gilles Ivan), presented a map of the Paris Metro “on which fragments of islands, archipelagos and peninsulas cut out of a globe are placed” (Careri 2009: 100). The intersection of oceanic coastlines with the lines of the Paris Metro, the insertion of vast swathes of ocean into land-locked Paris, and the addition of many more islands to the two found in the Seine create a new context from which to examine the city in new terms. In *The Beach Beneath the Street: The Everyday Life and Glorious Times of the Situationist International*, McKenzie Wark suggests that Chtcheglov “sought not the rational city but the playful city, not the city of work but the city of adventure. Not the city that conquers nature, but the city that opens toward the flux of the universe” (2011: 20). Chtcheglov’s choice of coastlines for insertion into a map of Paris, rather than mountain ranges, for example, echoes his above-cited suggestion that a city’s inhabitants be engaged in continuous drifting. Wark ascribes a suggestion of “space and time of liquid movement” to the word *dérive*: “Its whole field of meaning is aquatic, conjuring up flows, channels, eddies, currents, and also drifting, sailing or

tacking against the wind” (2011: 22). In 1957 Guy-Ernest Debord published two maps born of *dérive*. The first, *Guide psychogéographique de Paris*, was “conceived as a folding map... that invites its user to get lost” (Careri 2009: 101-102). And in the second, *The Naked City*, “the disoriented quarters [of the city] are continents set adrift in a liquid space” (Careri 2009: 102). In 1958, in *Theory of the Dérive*, Debord furthers the association between land drifting and sea navigation: “With the aid of old maps, aerial photographs and experimental *dérives*, one can draw up hitherto lacking maps of influences, maps whose inevitable imprecision at this early stage is no worse than that of the first navigational charts” (1958). In *The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot*, Robert Macfarlane warns, “[s]ea charts, even more than land maps, can lure you into hubris... The act of chart-reading, even more than the act of map-reading, is part data-collection and part occultism” (Macfarlane 2012: 124).

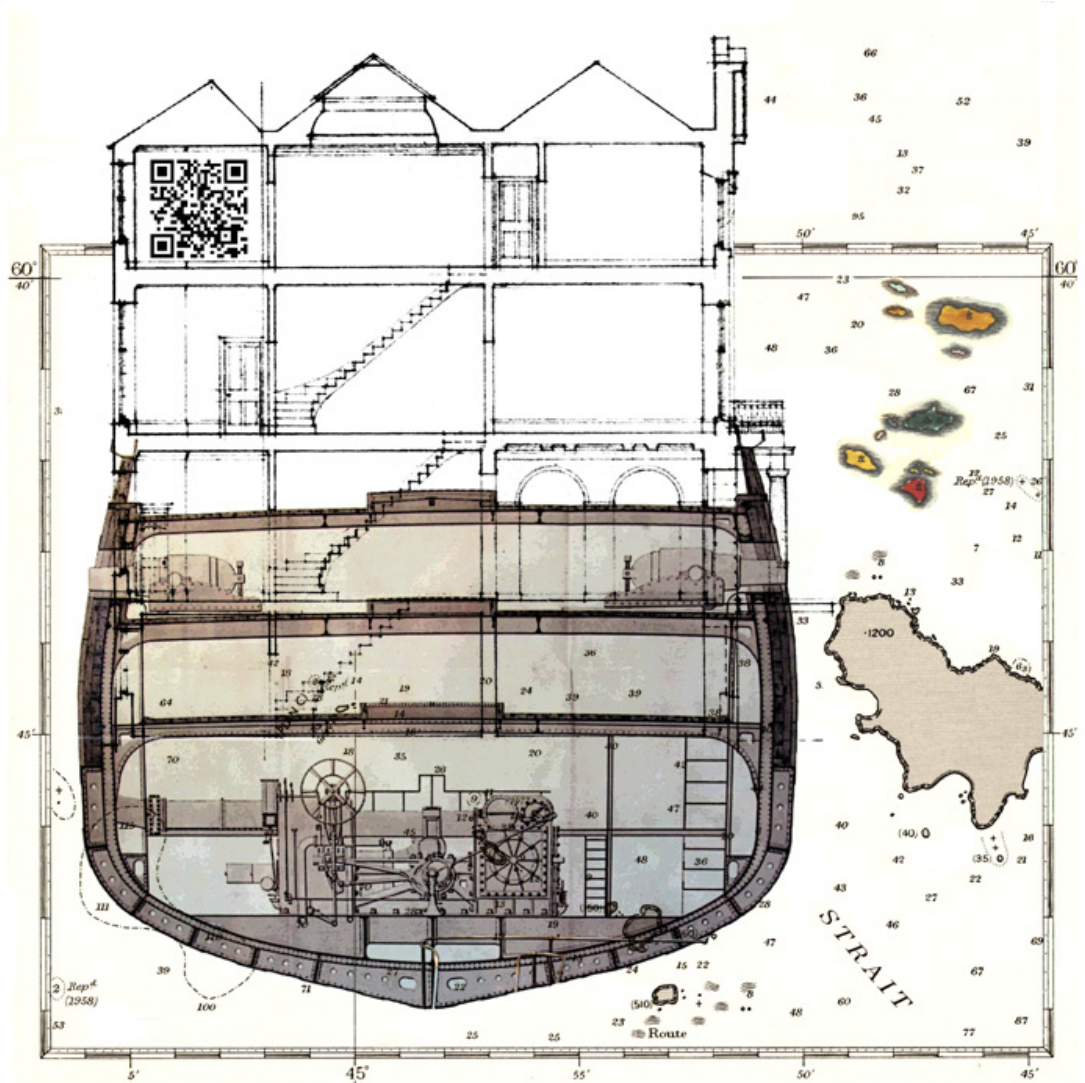
During a series of walks undertaken during a period of contextual enquiry carried out in Edinburgh in May 2012, however many times I set out toward the port of Lieth and the North sea, *dérive* led me instead into museums, libraries and antiquarian print, map and book shops. This bookish drifting is borne out in the imprecision of the resulting map of influence, in which, my own photographs mingle with scans of details of old maps, city plans, pamphlets, navigational charts, coastal pilots, guide books and other printed ephemera gleaned from intermingled map-chart reading-walking drifting-wandering.

Like the printed broadsides of old, the public posting of *The Broadside of a Yarn* signifies that it is intended to be performed. Embedded within the visual cartographic space of the printed map are thirteen QR codes which link to smart-phone-optimised web pages containing computer-generated narrative dialogues.

Critically, these dialogues were created through a dialogic process. I used part of the budget afforded by the ELMCIP commission to engage Steve Booth (also known by the names Amy McDeath, Braille Fem, and Caden Lovelace) in an extended conversation about text-generation, memory allocation, and the performance of code toward the development of a text generator authoring tool. The JavaScript written by Booth relies upon jQuery, a free open source JavaScript library written and maintained by a team developers. I used this hybrid code base - in concert with CSS, HTML and various other JavaScripts written by myself and by anonymous others - to create the thirteen computer-generated texts accessed through the QR codes embedded within the print map.

Most though not all of these computer-generated texts are intended to serve as scripts for poly-vocal performances, replete with 'stage' instructions suggesting how and where they may be performed. The generator linked to in the map square depicted in Figure 17., for example, produces a performance script composed of lines of dialogue from Joseph Conrad's novella *The Secret Sharer* (1950 [1910]), in which the captain of a ship takes an escaped prisoner on board and hides him in his cabin. All the dialogue between the captain and the secret sharer of his cabin is exchanged in hushed tones in close quarters. Thus, the computer-generated performance script created using this text bears the title "Trading Lip for Ear" and the 'stage' instructions: "To be read by two hushed voices, heads together." This generator may be viewed on a smart phone by using a QR code reader app to scan the QR code depicted in Figure 18., or on a computer at the following address:  
<http://luckysoap.com/broadside/lipforear.html>





[Figure 17. *The Broadside of a Yarn*, J. R. Carpenter 2012. Detail.]



[Figure 18. *The Broadside of a Yarn*, J. R. Carpenter 2012. Detail. QR Code linking to the computer-generated narrative dialogue "Trading Lip for Ear"]

TRADING LIP FOR EAR

*To be read by two hushed voices, heads together.*

SHARER: What's the good?

CAPTAIN: Is there another shower coming?

SHARER: I want no more.

CAPTAIN: Now you must vanish. (aside) Had my double vanished as he had come?

[repeat]

J.R. Carpenter & J. Conrad

Left to its own devices, this script will update every 17000 milliseconds. A set of controls appears beneath the script, offering participants in this text the options FAST, SLOW, STOP, STEP, UNCANNY. The first three do what they say - speed up the generator, slow it down, and stop it from producing further generations. Selecting the fourth option, STEP, will generate a new iteration which will stay static on screen until STEP is selected again. This option was designed specifically with live performance in mind. It allows performers to get through a whole script without their lines changing.

Selecting the final option, UNCANNY, generates a new iteration of the script followed by a quotation from Freud's essay "The Uncanny" (2003 [1919]).

TRADING LIP FOR EAR

*To be read by two hushed voices, heads together, with occasional interruptions from Freud.*

SHARER: Are you alone on deck?

CAPTAIN: Something wrong?

SHARER: Very wrong indeed.

CAPTAIN: Yes. (aside) (We could talk only with our eyes.)

FREUD: Repetition recalls the helplessness we experience in certain dream states.

[repeat]

J. R. Carpenter, J. Conrad & S. Freud

Though published nine years apart, there is an uncanny resemblance between Conrad's novella and Freud's essay. Recontextualised in this new digital context, this resemblance emerges as narrative resonance between these two texts as Freud's statements appear to re-sound the Captain's asides.

*The Broadside of a Yarn* also remediates the sailor's yarn. The phrase 'to spin a yarn' emerged in the early 1800s as a sailors' expression denoting the telling of long stories of incredible happenings while engaged in such sedentary work as yarn or rope twisting, net or sail mending, or simply waiting - for orders or wind or tide. The yarn is a performative form, perhaps not fully of the primary oral culture Walter J. Ong evokes in *Orality & Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, a culture in which "the world has its existence only in sound, with no reference whatsoever to any visually perceptible text, and no awareness of even the possibility of such a text" (Ong 1982: 73), but certainly the sailor's yarn is of an oral tradition within which the "phenomenology of sound enters deeply into human beings' feel for existence, as processed by the spoken word" (Ong 1982: 73). I am not a sailor, nor am I a folklorist nor an anthropologist; I have not interviewed sailors, nor have I sought audio recordings as primary source. I am a writer. My sources are avowedly

literary. My aim, in evoking the yarn as a form, is to address the narrative resonance between the spoken and the written word. "Writing is displaced on the broken line between lost and promised speech" (Derrida 1978: 68).

In order to begin to locate narrative resonance in the longstanding tension between the spoken and the written word, consider the operation of narrative resonance an example of sailor's yarn in print literature. The whole of Joseph Conrad's novella *The Heart of Darkness* (1950) is, in effect, relating a sailor's yarn. A series of nested parenthesis create a telescopic experience of distance via a series of oppositions. The quotidian narration of an epic journey to and up the Congo is recounted in one evening, in one sitting, whilst sitting utterly still, moored on the Thames. The oral yarn spun by the character Marlow is related to the reader through the filter of a narrator, written and printed in a book. Of Marlow and his yarn, the narrator has this to say:

The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical... to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale... in the likeness of one of those misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine (Conrad 1950: 68).

Indeed, Marlow begins his yarn far from its heart, as it were. He creates a space for the narrative he is about to relate through the evocation of a cartographic space, a vast space within which his narrative will eventually resonate:

Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, 'When I grow up I will go there' (70-71).

The high order of abstraction in Marlow's narration separates him from his fellow seamen and their oral tradition. His cartographic conception of narration, marks him as a modern, literate being. Similarly, Ong argues:

Only after... the extensive experience with maps that print implemented would human beings, when they thought about the... 'world', think primarily of something laid out before their eyes, as in a modern printed atlas, a vast surface or assemblage of surfaces ... ready to be 'explored'. The ancient oral world knew few 'explorers', though it did know many itinerants, travellers, voyagers, adventurers, and pilgrims (Ong 1982: 73).

This conception of the world as 'something laid out' already was one which the Letterists and the Situationists sought to undermine. Wark suggests that, for the Letterist International, *dérive* constituted a critical practice, one designed to cut across dividing lines between leisure and labour time, as well as between the internal private space associated with subjectivity and the external social space of the city (2011:26). "The *dérive* was an intervention against geography... a counter-geography... interested in the practices of landscape-making" (2011: 26). *The Broadside of a Yarn* does not aim to represent an already existing landscape. Rather, it broaches a counter-geography through two strategies. First, it evokes the already highly variable geography of the North Atlantic - a physical space into which currents, storms, and icebergs regularly intercede, and a cartographic space into which numerous phantom islands have been written over the centuries, as will be demonstrated in Sections 3.2.1., 3.2.2., and 3.2.3. Second, *The Broadside of a Yarn* proposes an overtly impossible geography in order to confront a number of cartographic and literary conventions. In the print map squares, and in the computer-generated narratives they link to, place names are erased or re-arranged, territorial borders erased or re-placed, no limitations are set on distance or scale,

delineations of static spaces are refused, land and sea are confused, fact and fiction exist on the same narrative plain, and notions of authorship are blurred.

The QR codes embedded in the visual cartographic space of *The Broadside of a Yarn* constitute points on a physical map which point to potential events, to utterances, to speech acts. For Ong, “The spoken word is always an event, a movement in time, completely lacking in the thing-like repose of the written or printed word” (1982: 75). Digital literature has given rise to a new regime of enunciation unforeseen by Ong, in which written words refuse repose. As first discussed in Section 3.1. of this chapter, Jay David Bolter argues that topographic writing “challenges the (logocentric notion that writing should be merely the servant of spoken language” (36). Through spatially realised digital writing, “[t]he writer and reader can create and examine structures on the computer screen that have no easy equivalent in speech” (36). In the Deleuzean conception of an event, “the event is what occurs when the virtuality of a structure becomes actual (as when the system of *langue* is actualized into occurrences of *parole*” (Lecerclé 2002: 106), and as when topics stored in a computer’s memory are called together by a computer program to perform on screen. In “The Time of Digital Poetry: From Object to Event” N. Katherine Hayles argues that, in digital media, the text:

ceases to exist as a self-contained object and instead becomes a process, an event brought into existence when the program runs... The [text] is ‘eventilized, made more an event and less a discrete, self-contained object with clear boundaries in space and time (Hayles 2006: 181-182).

Where, then, are the digital texts embedded in *The Broadside of a Yarn* located? As discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.4. in relation to the practice-led research outcome *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*, and as further developed in

Section 3.1. of this chapter, the term 'location' may refer to a physical place, and to a place in computer memory. Each QR code in *The Broadside of a Yarn* contains a Uniform Resource Locator (URL), that is to say, an address. Every time a QR code is scanned by a QR code reader, the app, the camera, the smart-phone, the internet, my web server, the web browser, and countless commands, protocols, softwares and hardwares in between conspire to collectively perform a set of JavaScripts which in turn generate a performance script on screen which then may or may not be read by human eyes, spoken by human voices, heard by human ears. As previously stated in Chapter 1. Section 1.2., there is a direct relation between the term 'JavaScript' and what we might think of as a 'performance script' for live theatre insofar as JavaScript is a procedural language, in which information and instructions must be presented in a certain order in order to be performed by the computer. The term 'computer-generated' however, is something of a misnomer. The word generation derives from the Latin *generāre* meaning beget or bring forth. The computer, and all its associated distributed network of hardwares, softwares, files, commands and executions, does not beget these texts. It selects words from preset lists called variable strings, and slots them into syntactic templates called sentences. The act of selection constitutes a statement-event. For Michel Foucault, the statement-event, is at the very root of the archive and "defines at the outset the *system of its enunciability*" (2002: 146) (the emphasis is the author's).

Between the *language (langue)* that defines the system of constructing possible sentences, and the *corpus* that passively collects the words that are spoken, the archive defines a particular level: that of a practice that causes a multiplicity of statements to emerge as so many regular events, as so many things to be dealt with and manipulated. ... it reveals the rules of a practice that enables statements both to survive and to undergo regular

modification. It is the *general system of the formation and transformation of statements*" (146) (the emphasis is the author's).

If we take the language "that defines the system" (146) to be JavaScript, and "the *corpus*" (146) to be the content of the variable strings, then the digital text component of *The Broadside of a Yarn* is both an archive of potential textual events, and a system for enacting them. The source code reveals the rules of a practice of writing in which event-statements retain their structure even as they undergo regular modification. Take the following two lines of code from "Trading Lip for Ear," for example:

```
captainquestion:    'CAPTAIN: #{captainquestion}',  
shareranswer:      'SHARER: #{shareranswer}',
```

The Captain will always ask a question and the Sharer will always answer, but until the QR code is scanned, until the URL locates all of the resources required to perform this script, there is no way of knowing what the Captain will ask and what the Sharer will answer. Once these statements have been formulated on screen, they will continue to undergo regular modification through the 'rule' "generator1.play(17000);" which refreshes the variables every 17000 milliseconds.

The print map serves as the interface through which these potential texts are eventitized. In *Deleuze and Language*, Jean-Jacques Lecercle suggests that, contrary to the practice of linguistics, which aims to "clip the wings of language to keep it still and make it manageable for dissection" (2002: 71), the practice of cartography "treats language as a plane, of immanence and of consistency; it respects the heterogeneity and diversity of language, to does not freeze its currents of becoming into structures, it does not force its lines of flight into a hierarchy of channels" (71). The print map sits at an axis then, between print and digital,



between *langue* and *parole*, between what is said and what is done, between what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari term machinic assemblages and assemblages of collective enunciation. Within Deleuze and Guattari's conception of the assemblage we see an operation of 'flow' not dissimilar to that which informs the notion of *dérive*:

An assemblage, in its multiplicity, necessarily acts on semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously (independently of any recapitulation that may be made of it in a scientific or theoretical corpus). There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders... (Deleuze and Guattari 2007: 22).

To an author of digital texts, parentheses such as these invite the replacement of statements with new variables. In the case of *The Broadside of a Yarn*, in place of a scientific or theoretical corpus we have a literary one. In place of the world, we have the screen. In place of (yet retraining traces of) the book, we have the source code(s). The authorship of a digital text is always collective. Deleuze and Guattari state: "A book is an assemblage... and as such is unattributable" (4). The internet, with its billions of lines of unattributed code, is a machinic assemblage of the highest order. The establishment of connections between these multiplicities results in an eventalized text, which constitutes a collective assemblage of enunciation.

My stated intention in creating *The Broadside of a Yarn* was to use the oral story-telling tradition of the sailors' yarn, the print forms of the broadside and the map, the digital network, and the walk-able city in concert to construct a temporary digital community connected through a performative pervasive networked narrative. I wrote that sentence a year and a half before the *Remediating the Social* exhibition opened in Edinburgh. Through the iterative methodology of performance writing and the Situationist strategies of *dérive* and *détournement* employed in the

process of composition, my focus shifted away from the temptation to construct a situation through which I might then lure people on walks through a city tagged with links to stories of the sea, toward a desire to compel people to collectively speak shifting sea stories ashore. Even Chtcheglov, who described “the construction of situations as being one of the fundamental desires on which the next civilization will be founded” (1953), anticipated that *dérive* would eventually inevitably “partially leave the realm of direct experience for that of representation” (1953). “Experience demonstrates that a *dérive* is... effective in making people enter into communication with the ensemble of energies, seducing them for the benefit of the collectivity” (1953).

Perhaps this shift is an ontological one, land and sea being two separate states of being. Just as, in *Cape Cod*, Thoreau states: “All that is told of the sea has a fabulous sound to an inhabitant of the land,” in *The Levelling Sea* Philip Marsden argues that sea-terms cannot be translated into land language.

Every strange force the sea exerts, every quirk of tidal stream and every reef and twist of shoreline, every tackle-snapping, deck-swamping, broaching, pooping, pitch-poling and sinking, and every lone drowning, booms out the same warning: *you should not be out here!* (2012: 7)

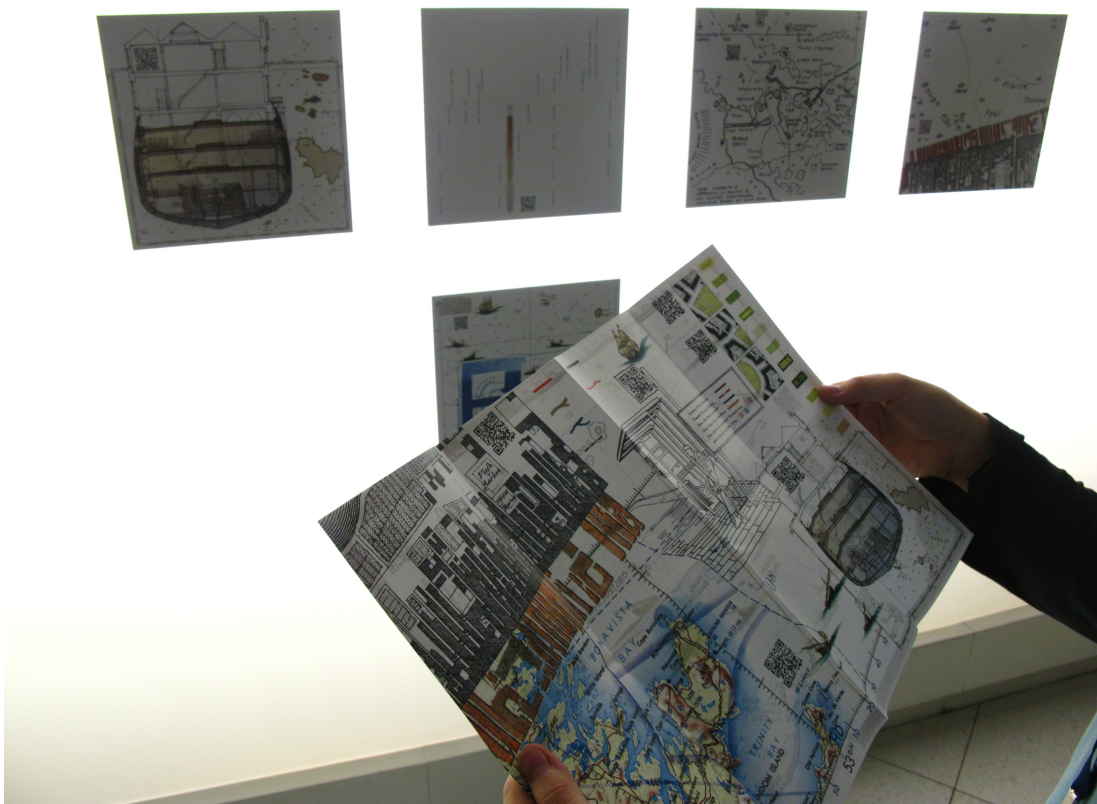
Marsden’s use of the hyphen delineates in-between spaces and creates strange creatures. Between the tackle and the snapping roars the wind. Between the deck and the swamping towers the wave.

On land, the body moves through stillness. At sea, everything moves. Macfarlane articulates this difference in terms of the two very different types of documents these modes of movement produce.

On maps of mountainous terrain there are warnings: the hachures showing cliffs, the bunched contours indicating steep ground and fall-lines. Charts

record headlands, skerries and mean depths of water, but because most sea features are volatile - temporary functions of wind, tide and current - there is no way of reliably charting them” (2012: 124).

No wonder then, that sailors’ yarns resist the fixity of print. They are too volatile. They are temporary functions of voice, of breath. They are events, ‘eventalized’ processes. They are sound. They move. Through the act of listening, the still body centres them.



[Figure 19. *The Broadside of a Yarn*, J. R. Carpenter 2012. *Remediating the Social*, Inspace, Edinburgh, UK. Installation view, with print map handout.]

[Figure 20. *The Broadside of a Yarn*, J. R. Carpenter 2012. Print map handout.]

A print map hung in a gallery exhibition for three weeks offers but a narrow window of access to such a vast and varied body of digital text as lurks beneath the surface of *The Broadside of a Yarn*. As it is discontinuous - composed and printed on separate squares - this physical map is infinitely expansible. Any number of new squares may be added at any time. Thus, this “assemblage is also divided... by *lines of deterritorialization* that cut across it and carry it away” (Deleuze and Guattari 2007: 504). In part to extend the life of *The Broadside of a Yarn* beyond the *Remediating the Social* exhibition, and in part to further the remediation of the broadside as a form, I created an A3-sized subset of the gallery map which presents a collage of rearranged imagery and QR codes from some but not all of the gallery map squares. This broadside was handed out freely during the exhibition, as shown in Figure 19., and continues to circulate through gift exchange economies and postal networks as a stand-alone piece, as shown in Figure 20. The folding of five-hundred A3 sheets into map form took longer than expected, and became something of a performance in the gallery space in the lead-up to the opening of the exhibition, 1 November 2013. Immediately following the gallery opening there was a performance event in the Sculpture Court of Edinburgh College of Art, in which a number of the computer-generated narrative dialogues in *The Broadside of a Yarn* were performed by myself, Jerome Fletcher, Judd Morrissy, and Mark Jeffery before a live audience.

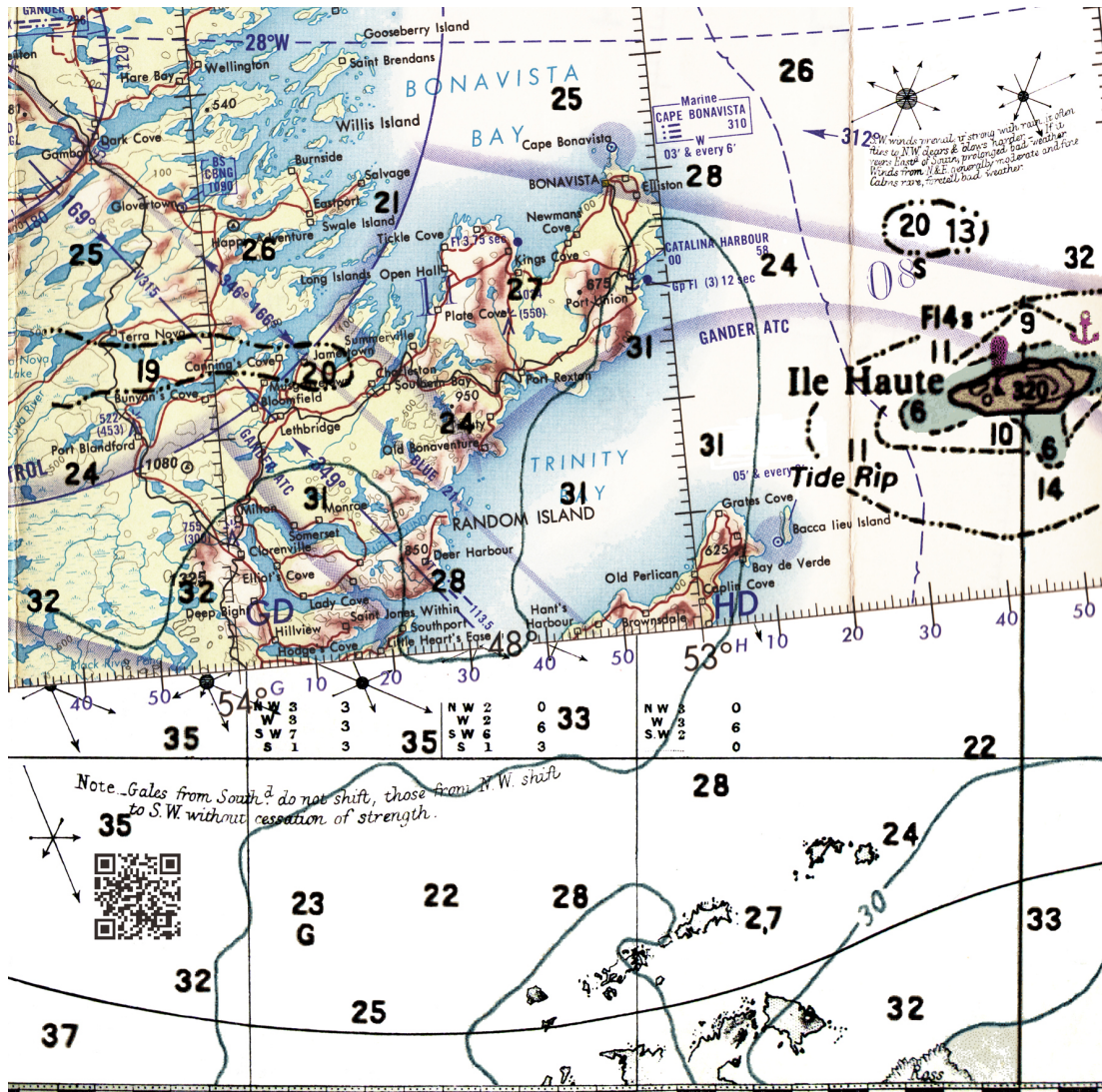
The performance of *The Broadside of a Yarn* continues, on and off stage. Its constituent elements continue to be transmediated across a continuum of material forms through a spectrum of devices ranging from the printed map to the digital network, from JavaScript to printed performance script, from the gallery space to

the stage, from the mobile phone to stand-alone web-based pieces, from the eye to the embodied voice, from the ear to the embodied voice re-sounding. Each gifting of the broadside map, each unfolding, each demonstration, each QR code scanned, each URL located, each page loaded, each JavaScript file executed, each computer-generated narrative dialogue read (whether scanned by eye, absorbed by ear, or spoken by mouth), each gesture, each act, each utterance prompted by this broadside constitutes an event.

The resonant tension between the print map and the digital text, and between the spoken and written word, between machinic assemblages of desire and assemblages of collective enunciation will be made evident in the next three sections of this chapter, each of which discusses in detail individual map squares of *The Broadside of a Yarn* which went on to form the basis of new stand-alone web-based works which, in turn, went on to form the basis for live poly-vocal performances.

3.2.1. There he was, gone.

[<http://luckysoup.com/therehewasgone>]



[Figure 21. *The Broadside of a Yarn*, J. R. Carpenter 2012. Detail.]

The map square from *The Broadside of a Yarn* depicted in Figure 21. contains three layers of cartographic information: a portion of an aviation map depicting an area of rugged coastline; a nautical chart indicating anchorage, depths, and rip tides surrounding an island of indeterminate scale bearing the name Ile Haute, French for

'Tall Island'; and details from another nautical chart noting wind direction and weather conditions. The first and most visually prominent of these layers, the aviation map depicting an area of rugged coastline, contains enough place names in it to make recognisable to most Canadians as the North East coast of Newfoundland. Of particular note is the name Bonavista. On his first voyage to Newfoundland in 1534, Jacques Cartier made first landfall at Cape Bonavista. Bonavista is also one of the places named in the Canadian version of the well-known Woody Guthrie song, *This Land is Your Land* - "From Bonavista to Vancouver Island, this land was made for you and me" (1940). However familiar these place names may or may not be to a participant in *The Broadside of a Yarn*, the overlapping of these three layers of cartographic information renders them incoherent. In *The Interface Effect*, Alexander R. Galloway states, "coherence and incoherence compose a sort of continuum" (2012: 46). An incoherent aesthetic is one that tends to "unravel neat masses into their unkempt and incontinent elements" (46). Through overlap, the place names in one layer of this map become named places in all the others. The weather conditions here must also apply to there. The tall island of indeterminate scale could emerge from any sea.

The QR code embedded in this incoherent cartographic space links to a computer-generated text which in turn, in Galloway's terms, presents an incoherent narrative dialogue. This dialogue may be accessed by scanning the QR code depicted in Figure 22., or by viewing the following URL in a web browser:

<http://luckysoap.com/broadside/gone.html>





[Figure 22. *The Broadside of a Yarn*, J. R. Carpenter 2012. Detail. QR Code linking to the computer-generated narrative dialogue “There he was, gone.”]

The portion of the JavaScript which structures the sentences of this constantly refreshing and thus never-ending conversation looks like this:

```
'Wait.',  
'It\'s too #{late}.',  
#{cant} you #{sense} #{thisthat}?',  
'It\'s only the #{season} #{weather} over the #{water}.',  
#{maybe}. #{maybe}, you\'ve got #{weather} in your #{hair}.',  
'Tell me then. #{w} was he #{lost}?',  
'After #{time} on the #{water}... #{near} #{place}...',  
'Still #{coasting}ing?',  
'Listen.'
```

This “*general system of the formation and transformation of statements*” (Foucault 2002: 146) (the emphasis is the authors) seems coherent enough, even to a reader unfamiliar with JavaScript, until we consider the unknown quantity, the corpus. What words does the variable string `#{weather}` collect? More than those mentioned on the print map. But not *all* the weather everywhere. Only some: ['breezes', 'fog', 'freezing rain', 'gales', 'gusts', 'hail', 'haze', 'mist', 'rain', 'shadows', 'showers', 'sun', 'thunder', 'storms', 'wind']. Foucault states: “The archive cannot be described in its totality... It emerges in fragments, regions...” (2002: 147). And what

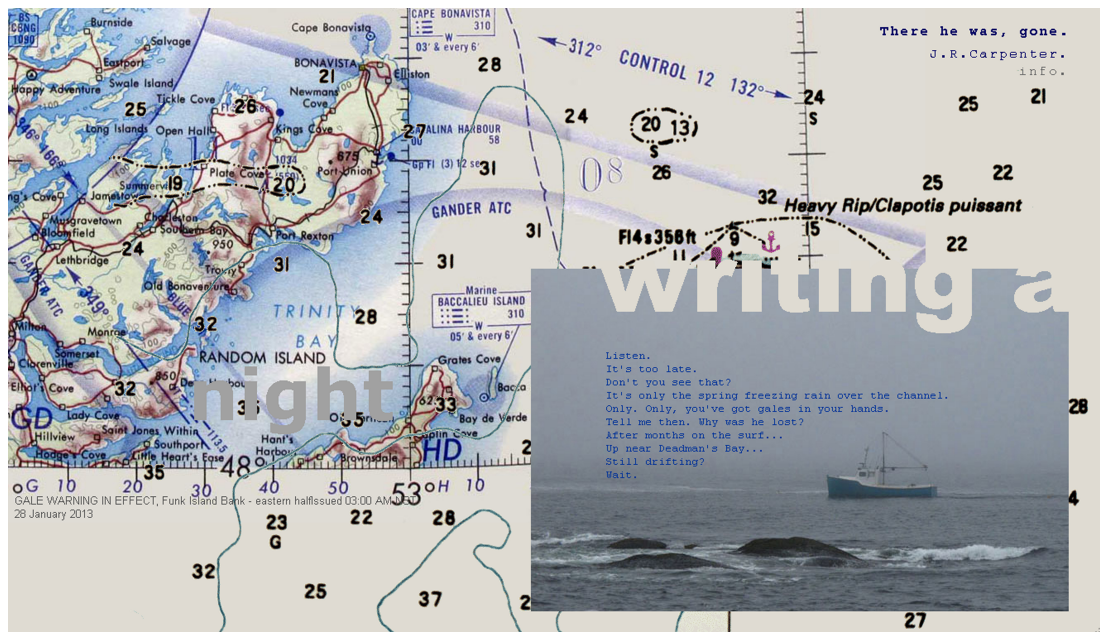
of #{place}? Here the digital text collects its contents from the print map, whereupon, as Elizabeth Bishop writes, “The names of seashore towns run out to sea” (*Poems*, 1984: 3). The variable string #{place} contains some but not all of the place names from the print map:

['Burnside', 'Eastport', 'Salvage', 'Swale Island', 'Willis Island', 'Long Islands', 'Saint Brendans', 'Hare Bay', 'Trinity Bay', 'Dark Cove', 'Tickle Cove', 'Newman\'s Cove', 'King\'s Cove', 'Deadman\'s Bay', 'Trouty', 'Little Heart\'s Ease', 'Funk Island', 'Old Bonaventure', 'Cape Bonavista', 'Grates Cove', 'Plate Cove', 'Hant\'s Harbour', 'Random Island', 'Baccalieu Island'...].

Thus the incomplete archive “map[s] out the place where it speaks... illuminates[s], if only in an oblique way, that enunciative field of which it is itself a part” (Foucault 2002: 147).

In keeping with the iterative nature of performance writing and with my research methods of live-archiving and making public certain aspects of my research in order to gauge public response, I developed this computer-generated narrative dialogue into a stand-alone web-based piece called *There he was, gone*. (Carpenter 2012) [<http://luckysoap.com/therehewasgone>]. This work was published in the online journal *Joyland Poetry* in June 2012, five months before the launch of *The Broadside of a Yarn*.

In the stand-alone web-based iteration of *There he was, gone.*, the computer-generated narrative dialogue is situated within the pictorial space of a photograph of a small boat fishing in shallow waters on a grey day. This photograph floats over the same first two layers of cartographic information as in the print map square. In the digital context this terrain is less fixed, less stable, more fluid, or, more incoherent, to re-sound Galloway’s term; the relative positions of these layers shift whenever the web-browser window is re-sized.



[Figure 23. *There he was, gone.* J. R. Carpenter 2012. Screenshot.]

The layer which, in the print map, had contained a nautical chart noting wind direction and weather conditions has been replaced in the digital iteration by the live-feed of a marine weather report for Funk Island, which appears in the bottom left corner of the screen. Whereas the resources for all of the other elements of this machinic assemblage are files located on my web server in the directory /therehewasgone, the marine weather report for Funk Island comes from elsewhere, as weather so often does. The data comes from the Environment Canada website, and the data feed is called into my website through a Google API, a third-party web service. The name 'Funk Island' is included in the above-cited string of `{place}` variables, hence it is called into the computer-generated narrative dialogue from time to time. But neither the island nor its name appear within the visual cartographic space of either the print or the digital iterations of *There he was, gone*. Funk Island lies just off the edge of this map, just beyond the boundaries of

the browser window. It is located at the outer limit of this narrative, both geographically (it is furthest from the mainland), and mentally (it is the furthest 'there' that the interlocutors can imagine that 'he' might have gone to). As such, Funk Island constitutes an event horizon delineating a possible future outcome of this eventalized text.

Just as in Chapter 1. Section 1.3. narrative resonance was located in the space between the utterance of the name of the place now known as Tantramar and the many past names of that place, here too narrative resonance emerges between the statement-events which call the #place Funk Island into the machinic assemblage of *There he was, gone.*, and the assemblage of collective enunciation of the many pasts of this place and of its name. Employing the concept of *topos* articulated in Section 3.1. of this chapter it may now be said that each of these pasts constitutes a location in memory. As such, the island now known as Funk is a collection of topics, or, a topological island - a notion which will be further developed in section 3.2.2. of this chapter.

Funk Island is a scrap of a place, small, barren, populated only by birds. Maps dating back to the early 1500s refer to an isle of birds off the coast of Newfoundland. After his departure from Cape Bonavista in 1534, Cartier made a second landfall at an island which he named l'Isle des Ouaisseaulx (Isle of Birds) because it was "covered with snow-white, nesting birds, while a feathered umbrella of thousands more were flying and screeching" (Johnson 1994: 33), and charted another he named Margaulx (gannets) after the birds as "thick ashore as a meadow with grass" (33). An island named Des Oyseaux appears in the famous Flemish cartographer Abraham Ortelius' 1570 map *Americae Sive Novi Orbis Nova*

*Descriptio*. In an earlier map of 1555, the French privateer, explorer, and navigator Guillaume le Testu more prosaically calls an island in this region I. Puanto (Stinking Island)” (33). The name Funk is redolent of the evil odour of the accumulated guano of the millions of large sea birds that have nested on the island over the centuries.

Until the 1800s, the island of Funk was commonly called Penguin, in reference to the Great Auk which nested there in the thousands. The narrator of Sir Humphrey Gilbert’s 1583 voyage for the colonisation of Newfoundland remarks: “We had sight of an island named Penguin, of a fowl there breeding in abundance, almost incredible, which cannot fly, their wings not able to carry their body, being very large (not much less than a goose) and exceedingly fat” (Hakluyt 1985: 234). The narrator is not confusing the Great Auk with the large flightless bird of the southern hemisphere. Quite the contrary. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word ‘penguin’ originates from the late 16th century (originally denoting the great auk): possibly of Welsh origin, from *pen gwyn* meaning ‘white head.’ It would be another two-hundred and fifty years before humans of any nationality would set foot on Antarctica. By the time they arrived the Great Auk had been hunted out of existence. The southern bird we now know as Penguin is haunted by the absence of its northern double.

Would Funk Island by any other name smell as fowl?

In *Phantom Islands of the Atlantic*, Donald S. Johnson relates: “ from the time of the first voyages to the cod-fishing grounds off Newfoundland” (1994: 28), there have been reports of an *Isles des Diables*, an *Isola des Demonias*, an *Île des Démons*, an Island of Demons reputedly inhabited by a curious mixture of wild animals, mythological creatures, evil spirits, and demons. In *Les Singularitez de la*

*France Antarctique*, a account of a voyage along the entire coast of the Americas undertaken in 1555, the French Royal Cosmographer, explorer, scholar, and Franciscan Friar André Thevet writes: “taking our direct route to the north, leaving the land of Labrador, the islands they call the Isles of the Devils, and Cape Marco... we sailed along to the right of this region they call New Land” (Schlesinger & Stabler 1986: 21-22). Here Thevet is listing names already known to him. Hearing no devils or demons, he observes only that the region is “merueilleusemêt froide” (Thevet 1878 [1558]: 437), unfortunately cold, which, he reasons “is why those who first discovered it did not stay there long” (Schlesinger & Stabler 1986: 22). By the time of the publication of his *Cosmographie Universelle* in 1575, Thevet has completely rewritten this coastline. He now claims that the Isles of the Devils, which he now calls Demons, is “at present uninhabited because of the great illusions and fantoms which are seen there, through the trickery and deceit of the devils”(Schlesinger & Stabler 1986: 61). He goes on to elaborate upon his earlier account:

I have been told so by not just one but by numberless pilots and mariners with whom I have long travelled; that when they passed by this coast, when they were plagued by a big storm, they heard in the air, as if on the crow’s nest or masts of their vessels, these human voices making a great noise, without their being able to discern intelligible words, only such a mummer as you hear on market-day in the middle of the public market. These voices caused them a hundred times more astonishment then the tempest around them. They well knew that they were close to the Isle of Demons... (Schlesinger & Stabler 1986: 61-62).

There are echos of Thevet’s tale in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (1996 [1610–11]), published thirty-five years later. When Prospero asks the spirit Ariel: “Performed to point the tempest that I bade thee?” (Shakespeare 1996: 70), Ariel replies:

...Now on the beak,  
Now in the waist, the deck, in every cabin  
I flamed amazement. Sometime I'd divide,  
And burn in many places. On the topmast,  
The yards, and boresprit...(70).

Delighted, Prospero presses Ariel, keen to know if this storm performed infected its intended victims' reason. Ariel proudly reports that, indeed, the King's son Ferdinand leapt up and cried: "Hell is empty, And all the devils are here!" (71).

But, as the boatswain had earlier in the play complained, "A plague upon this howling!" (62).

Whether *The Tempest* was influenced by Thevet's account or not, narrative resonance may now be located between these two texts as well as between Thevet's resounding of the yarns of "not just one but by numberless pilots and mariners" (Schlesinger & Stabler 1986: 61-62). But that is not to say we have to believe Thevet. Johnson cautions: "Much of what André Thevet wrote about the lands he visited was regarded later by historians as showing 'excessive credulity'" (1994: 28). Chet Van Duzer notes: "Thevet does not enjoy a strong reputation as a scholar" (2006: 153). Thevet's shifting account of Isle of Demons might have been dismissed long ago as nought but a tall tale, a transmutation of sailor's yarn spun a little too far out of control, were it not corroborated by a contemporary eye-witness account.

In 1542 Jean-Francois de La Rocque, Sieur de Roberval, Viceroy of Canada, sailed for Newfoundland with three ships, two hundred colonists, and his niece Marguerite de La Roque, who, as Johnson puts it, "injudiciously entered into a passionate love affair with one of the young officers on board" (1994: 30). Immediately upon discovery of this affair, Roberval set his niece, her lover, her nurse, and four guns ashore at the first land he came to, a small, deserted island

somewhere along the north east coast of Newfoundland, between St. John's and the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. Two years and five months later a passing Basque fishing boat rescued Marguerite, the sole survivor of this ordeal. Upon her return to France she narrated her tale to a number of people who went on to publish written accounts of it. We see an echo of this female castaway's desire that her story be told in Coetzee's novel *Foe* (1986), wherein, upon her rescue from 'Cruso's island' and subsequent return to England, Susan Barton seeks out an author, Mr. Foe, to write her story.

When I reflect on my story I seem to exist only as the one who came, the one who witnessed, the one who longed to be gone: a being without substance, a ghost beside the true body of Cruso. Is that the fate of all storytellers? Yet I was as much a body as Cruso. I ate and drank, I woke and slept, I longed. The island was Cruso's (yet by what right? by the law of islands? is there such a law?), but I lived there too, I was no bird of passage, no gannet, or albatross, to circle the island once and dip a wing and they fly on over the boundless ocean. Return to me the substance I have lost, Mr Foe: that is my entreaty (Coetzee 1986: 50).

The narrative of Marguerite de La Roche on the Island of Demons has been retold and rewritten over the centuries and continues to resonate in contemporary Canadian literature. In Douglas Glover's Governor General's Award-winning novel *Elle* (2003), an un-named first-person narrator based on the historical figure of Marguerite relates her tale to an author: "His name is F., medical man and scribbler, curious about my case..." (Clover 2003: 173). "He delights in my tales of life amongst the savages..." (179). But "Alas, my legend already grows at the expense of my true story. Even a celebrated writer like F., with his insatiable curiosity, cannot resist the impulse to embellish, expand and invent" (181).

Among the people Marguerite narrated her tale to was none other than Thevet, who then published a print account in which he seems to be more



interested in embellishing upon his own tales of the Isle of Demons than in relating the 'true story' of Marguerite:

it was a pity to hear the ravages which those evil spirits made around them and how they tried to destroy their little dwelling, appearing as divers kinds and shapes of frightful animals... at night they often heard such loud cries that it seemed as if there were more than 100,000 men together (Schlesinger & Stabler 1986: 64).

In *Elle*, the narrator based on Marguerite struggles to correct the author of her tale. The author F. writes of "the girl who colonized the New World, killed three bears, and dwelt a year on an island inhabited by shrieking demons, where her words froze in the air as soon as they were spoken" (Glover 2003: 181). The narrator Elle replies: "Two, I say. Two bears died. I didn't kill either of them. And the demons turned out to be seabirds" (181). Even as she corrects her biographer's account she contradicts her own statement made earlier in the book, when she was still on the island: "The wind screams like a hundred hundred demons, far worse than the screaming of the birds" (Glover 2003: 65). In bpNichol's poem "Lament" it is the wind rather than the seabirds that lends the island its demonic moniker:

...the isle of demons  
so called because the wind howled over the rocks  
drowned in sound the three of them (bpNichol 1985)

There was a woman named Marguerite de La Roque and she was stranded on an island off Newfoundland for two years and five months. But where was this island? Historians, cartographers, biographers, novelists, poets, and local inhabitants the region all disagree. The difficulty in locating the *locus* of this narrative is due in large part to the imperfect understanding of the North American coastline in the sixteenth-century. In the map of "Terra Nova" reproduced in a translation of Ptolemy's *Geografia* published in Venice by Girolamo Ruscelli in 1561,

mentioned in Chapter 1. Section 1.3. in relation to its indication of Larcadia as a land located near the Chesapeake Bay, a large island labelled Isola de Demoni lies just off the shore of Tierra del Bacalaos, or, The Land of Cod, as Newfoundland was then known. In *Phantom Islands of the Atlantic*, Johnson identifies Funk as one of the two most probable candidates for the Isle of Demons (1994: 41). My aim is not to prove one case or another but rather to offer a re-sounding of this narrative which situates it within the conceptually broad and historically long view of what transatlantic communications networks are and what they do put forward in Chapter 2.

The sound of voices figures prominently in Thevet's published accounts based on what "pilots and mariners" have told him and on Marguerite's orally recounted ordeal. These sounds locate this narrative within the transatlantic communications networks of the sixteenth-century. At that time, sailing ships were small and fragile by twenty-first century standards. Expeditions were timed to avoid the worst of the seasonal flows of icebergs in the North Atlantic, to arrive after the breakup of the thick pack ice in the Strait of Belle Isle. Thus after weeks on the open ocean, their arrival at Newfoundland coincided with thick fogs coming off the warming continent and with the breeding season of the sea bird colonies on the countless coastal cliffs and off shore islands. Sea birds make very different sounds when mating than they do during the rest of the year. For example, when mating, Great Auks utter utterly demonic sounds, low moans and guttural growls. Thus, the demons of these isles are a composite of topographic aspects of the shores of the new world alien to sailors first arriving from the old. The howls and shrieks are gale-force winds and mating seabirds. The strange beasts are walruses and polar bears.

The evil spirits, salt mists, sea frets, sleet, snow, and the stink of centuries-worth of accumulated gauno.

Though it is almost certainly from a malodorous genealogy that the name Funk descends, it is interesting to note that in German, the word ‘funk’ means radio or wireless radio. This false genealogy resonates with that of the name Tintamar discussed in relation to *STRUTS* in Section 1.3 of Chapter 1. Both the Tantramar Marshes and the Island of Demons are places named for the sounds which emanate from them. In both cases, these sounds are made by birds. The name Tantramar derives from *tintamarre*, the French word for a sudden din, after the noisy flocks of water fowl which mate on the Tantramar Marshes, and the legend of Isle Demons is born of the moans and growls of mating sea birds. This association of coastlines with broadcast also resonates with the classical Greek myth of the Isle of Sirens, dangerous beautiful creatures who lured passing sailors with their enchanting music and voices to shipwreck on the rocky coast of their island.

The hybrid photographic-cartographic-computer-generated-data-fed-narrative space of *There he was, gone*. is further interrupted by the slow horizontal scroll of two poetic texts. The JavaScript which performs these texts is the same one used in the practice-led research outcomes *Along the Briny Beach* and *STRUTS* presented in Chapter 1. The poetic texts themselves are détourned from “up from the deep” (Carpenter 2012), a practice-led research outcome published in an iSO app called *Know* (Lewis 2013) available for free download from the iTunes store [<https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/know/id446777294?mt=8>]. Other portions of “up from the deep” are détourned in the practice-led research outcome *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* discussed in section 3.2.3 of this chapter. I point to “up from

the deep” here and reproduce the text in full in Appendix C in order to underline the degree to which détournement is intertwined with the iterative nature of performance writing methodology throughout this thesis. Through détournement, narrative resonance emerges - not only between texts by different authors, but also between versions of texts by the same author.

Here we see the “space and time of liquid movement” Wark ascribes to the practice of *dérive* born out in the assemblage. As the assembler of this assemblage, I instigate rather than write this text. As this text performs, the connections it establishes (and then dissolves), prompt me to pose questions of the piece I am not at all sure I know the answers to.

In advance of the publication of *There he was, gone.* in *Joyland*, the editor called for a ‘description’ of the piece. I responded by writing a new text, in which I reposed the questions the piece proposed to me, to a potential reader. I then added the resulting text (reproduced below, and included in Appendix C) to the web piece, as an epilogue.

How do we piece together a story like this one? A mystery. The title offers more questions than answers. *There he was, gone.* Where is there? Who is he? Where has he gone? How is this sentence even possible? There he was, not there. As if “he” is in two places and in no place, both at once. The once of “once upon a time.” This story has to do with time. This story has to do with place. That much is clear. We take time to look around the story space. What do we see? A corner of a map. An abstraction of a place too detailed to place, unless the places it names are already familiar. Is this a local story then? For locals, between locals... if we do not know the answer to this question, then we are not local. We seem to have stumbled upon an ongoing conversation. *Listen.* A dialogue of sorts. *It’s too late.* An argument, even. One interlocutor instigates. *Can’t you feel anything?* The other obfuscates. *It’s only the spring squalls over the bay.* All that’s not said between these two hangs in a heavy mist, a sea fret low over a small fishing boat turned broadside to a pack of hump-backed slick black rocks. This story is fishing inshore. Close to home. *Tell me then. Where was he found?* A litany of place names follows. No answers. More questions. *Wait. Listen.* This story

keeps shifting. Slow scrolling lines of poem roll in. *set sail on home sick ship shape house wreck*. What help is that to anyone? *We arrive and we have only just finished leaving*. What use is a poem? We sift through the fine print, searching for clues. *GALE WARNING IN EFFECT, Funk Island Bank*. Weather conditions for today's date. *Wind northwest 25 knots diminishing to west 15 this morning and to light this afternoon*. Is the disappearance hinted at in the title a recent one? There he was, gone. Whoever he was, wherever he went, this story springs from his absence.

Further to the iterative process put forward by my methodology, and in response to the persistence of voice in this practice-led research, following the launch of the stand-alone web-based iteration of *There he was, gone*. I used the machinic assemblage of JavaScript, generated text, horizontally scrolling text, and cartographic images to form the basis of an assemblage of collective enunciation, that is to say, a script for live, poly-vocal performance. This script is included in Appendix C. The computer-generated narrative dialogue that the QR code in the print map square in *The Broadside of a Yarn* comes with the 'stage' instructions: "To be read in two voices." The script for live performance is to be read in four voices. Two interlocutors stand facing each other at centre stage. *Listen. It's too late*. They read the computer-generated narrative dialogue from two separate computer screens. As a result, they each see a different version of the script. Their dialogue is interrupted at intervals by the voices of two other performers standing at either edge of the stage reading from the lines of horizontally scrolling text. This script was first performed at *Performance Writing Weekend*, Arnolfini, Bristol, May 2012, by myself, Barbara Bridger, Christine Wilks, and David Prater. In an essay published in the online journal *Exeunt*, Barbara Bridger wrote about her experience of performing within this collective assemblage of enunciation in terms of "dramaturgical engagement with process" (Bridger 2013):

In *There he was, gone*. the programmed variables operated in the moment of performance. We read our text from computer screens. It passed between the performers in a loosely pre-ordained pattern, but the variables also caused the text to shift as we read. This fused reading and speaking into an almost simultaneous operation (Bridger 2013).

In the live performance event and in the eventalized digital text, written words which refuse repose become the textual impetus for an utterance which perpetually evokes, but can never quite enunciate the circumstances surrounding a recent traumatic event. *Tell me then, where was he found?* The archive of this event emerges in fragments. *After weeks on the Atlantic... Down around Funk Island...* The narrative itself resonates between these fragments. *Still floating?* A long pause here. *Wait.* We are never told where 'he' has gone. We are forced to guess. As the French 'poet' Derrida writes: "Between the too warm flesh of the literal event and the cold skin of the concept runs meaning" (Derrida 1978: 75).

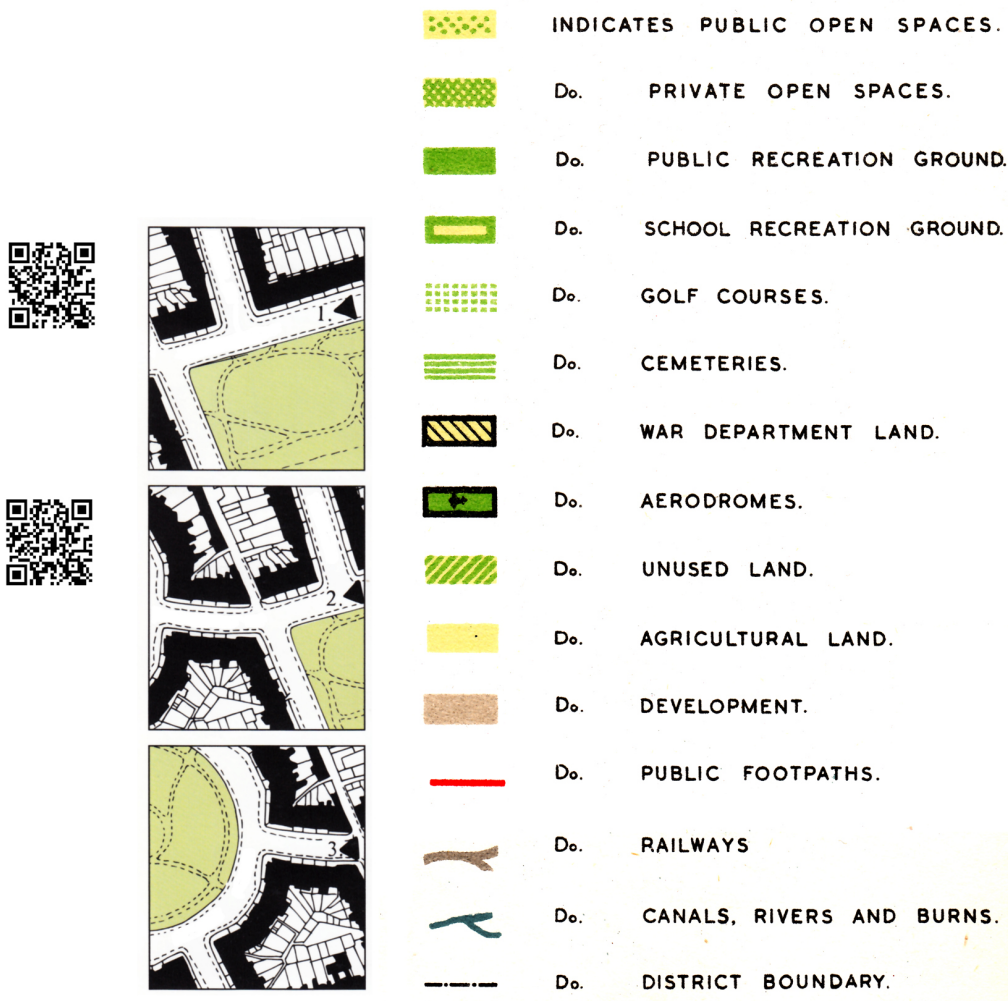
### 3.2.2. ...and by islands I mean paragraphs

[<http://luckysoap.com/andbyislands>]

This section takes up the conceptual instrument of *topos* introduced in Sections 3.1. and 3.2.1. to consider the topic of the island in terms of narrative and cartographic space, toward an investigation of the computer-generated text as a narrative structure for narratives resonating in the spaces between places separated by time, distance, and ocean.

The map squares from *The Broadside of a Yarn* depicted in Figure 24. and Figure 25. contain three juxtaposed layers of cartographic information and four QR codes. This juxtaposition reveals a space between different modes of representing narrative and non-narrative information in cartographic space. The result of this juxtaposition is an incoherent aesthetic (Galloway 2012: 46) which does not aim to bring elements together but rather to disseminate, decentralise, or deterritorialize elements toward the aim of *The Broadside of a Yarn* stated at the beginning of Section 3.2. of this chapter, of attempting to chart fragments of fictional sea stories on dry land, and the aim of *Writing Coastlines* stated in Section 0.2., of confusing and confounding boundaries between physical and digital, code and narrative, past and future, home and away.

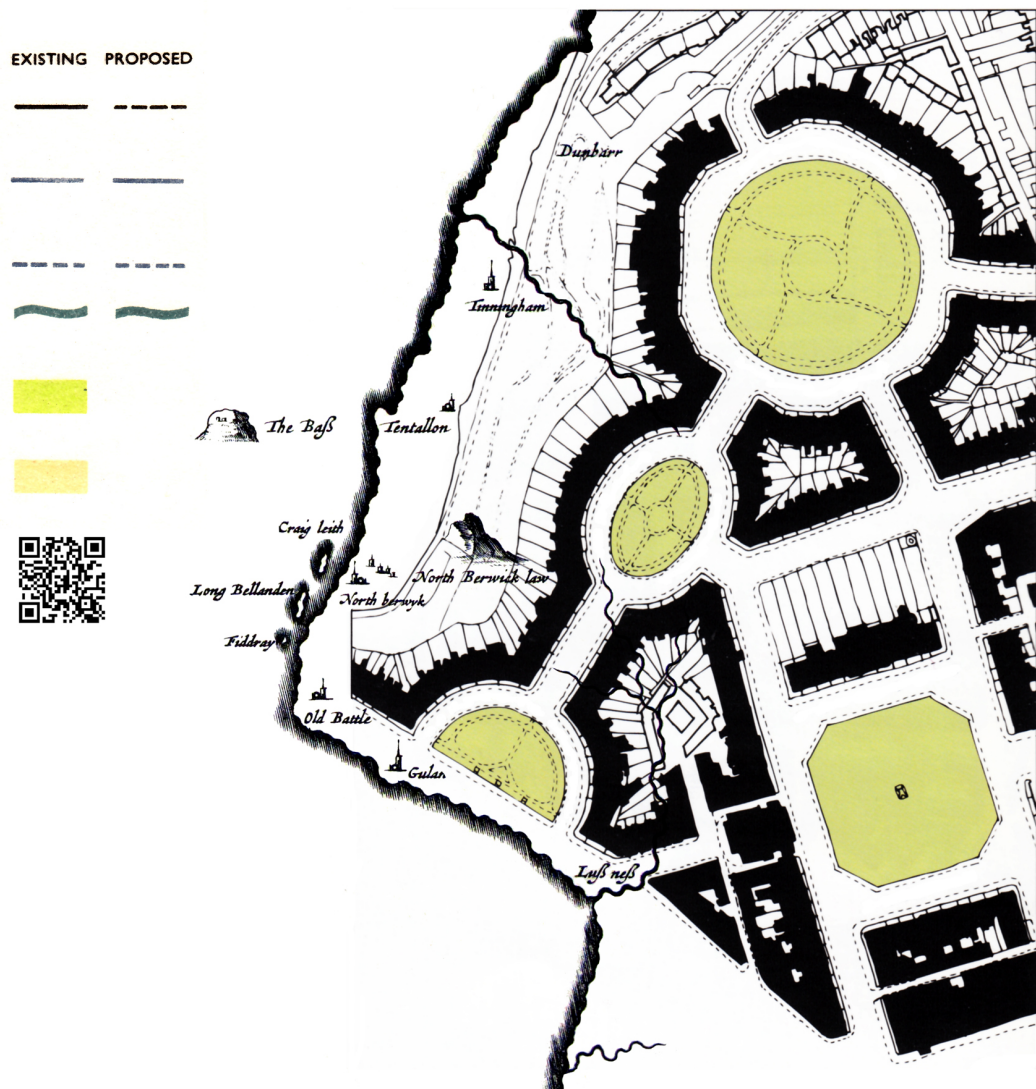
The columns of symbols and words which appear on both map squares are legends. I use the term 'legend' here to imply a double meaning. In narrative space, a legend is an unverifiable story handed down by tradition from earlier times and popularly accepted as historical. In cartographic space, a legend lists and explains symbols used on a map.



[Figure 24. *The Broadside of a Yarn*, J. R. Carpenter 2012. Detail.]

In the cartographic space of *The Broadside of a Yarn*, legends are often used to refer to absent maps. The legends on these two map squares describe the use and boundaries of, and the rivers, railways, and pathways through various public and private spaces, grounds, and lands; yet the spaces, grounds, and lands these legends refer to are nowhere to be found. These legends are borrowed from *A Civic Survey & Plan for the City & Royal Burgh of Edinburgh* prepared for the Town Council by Patrick Abercrombie and Derek Plumstead in 1949.





[Figure 25. *The Broadside of a Yarn*, J. R. Carpenter 2012. Detail.]

Although this survey was undertaken using scientific rather than psychogeographic methods, it is interesting to note that in their preface the authors feel compelled to state that only one of them knew the city before undertaking the survey, and “the other carried but the dimmest recollections of a previous visit” (Abercrombie & Plumstead 1949: vii). The survey was begun in 1957 in part to address the absences created by bomb devastation during the Second World War. As a hybrid textual, cartographic, and legendary document, it hovers on a threshold

between a past and future city, or, as the headings of one of the legends in one of the above-pictured maps squares suggests, between EXISTING and PROPOSED.

The black line of coast in Figure 25. depicts a portion of the Lothian coastline east of Edinburgh where the Firth of Forth opens into the North Sea. The shape of this coastline is détourned from *Blaeu's Atlas of England, Scotland Wales & Ireland*, first published in 1654. The length has been extended to suit the frame of the map square, and the orientation turned from an east-west to a north-south axis. The scale of this stretch of coastline is skewed by its juxtaposition with detailed green and black street, building, and park plans to its landward side. These are borrowed from *Edinburgh Streetscape Manual*, published by Lothian Regional Council in 1995. The manual's editor Colin J. Davis writes, "we are considering here the quality of the spaces between building and the equipment and structures that occupy those spaces" (1995: i). Considering the visual ambiguity of the in-between spaces these plans contain, it is unclear as to whether green island parks float in the spaces between buildings, or whether the blocks of buildings float in a sea of green. J. G. Ballard evokes a similar confusion in his novel *Concrete Island* (2011 [1973]). Maitland, a twentieth-century Crusoe, crashes his car into and thus becomes castaway upon a traffic island. Though surrounded by concrete, the island itself is covered in grass, which the narrator refers to as a sea. This sea of grass, the narrative suggests, has erased and/or re-written a previous landscape:

The surface of the island was markedly uneven. Covering everything in its mantle, the grass rose and fell like the waves of a brisk sea. A broad valley ran down the central spine of the island, marking out the line of a former neighbourhood high street (Ballard 2011 [1973]: 40).

The four QR codes embedded in these two print map squares link to four computer-generated texts composed from phrases collected from *Scottish Island Hopping: A guide for the Independent Traveller* (Andrew et. al. 1994). Like the city plan, the guide book hovers on a formal threshold between past and existing places and proposed journeys. A process of reading and re-reading across all of the fifty-eight islands described in this multi-authored guide book (rather than focusing on any one island) reveals certain similarities between both the islands described and the mode of their description. For example, for each island a rough measurement is given, the shape of the island is described, and in most cases some reference to distance is made. From this observation I proceeded to read and reread the book, searching for, underlining, and collecting into variable strings instances of these modes of description toward the creation of a new computer-generated text on the topic of measures, shape, and distance. This mode of re-reading may also be termed 're-search'. The computer-generated text resulting from this research may be accessed by scanning the QR code depicted in Figure 25., or by viewing the following URL in a web browser: <http://luckysoap.com/broadside/isle1.html>



[Figure 26. *The Broadside of a Yarn*, J. R. Carpenter 2012. Detail. QR Code.]

Composed of topics, this text is a topical island. I borrow this term from Hernán Díaz's essay "A Topical Paradise," in which he argues that islands have been pervasive throughout literary history,

because they are a perfect 'topic.' Originally, *topos* Meant only 'place'; later its meaning was extended to also become a metaphor for 'traditional motif of theme.' This is exactly the trajectory of literary islands: They are places that have become commonplaces (Díaz 2010: 79).

The process of reading across the islands described in *Scottish Island Hopping* identifies themes common to many of the islands; the process of collecting these themes into variable strings from which any theme from any island may be selected at random makes themes from individual islands common to all. The source code which generates this topical island [<http://luckysoap.com/broadside/isle1.js>] reveals both the corpus of this text, i.e. its variable strings, and the statement-event which calls it into being - a statement-event which also reveals the rules of the above mentioned practice of rereading by naming and re-calling the topics of re-search:

'This island is #{measures}. #{shape}. #{distance}.'

As discussed in Section 3.2. of this chapter, this "system of constructing possible sentences... enables statements both to survive and to undergo regular modification" (Foucault 2002: 146). Topics once particular to individual islands may now be endlessly recombined, resulting in textual events as varied as these:

This island is at maximum, 75km N to S and 40km E to W. It is H-shaped. It is reached by a 30km journey in exposed seas on a small launch.

This island is 13.5km long by 5km wide at its broadest point. It has three curving legs of bright green fields, and in between are shallow bays. With more than 300 miles of rocky and sandy coastline, this is indeed a magical place.

This island is roughly two miles long and one mile wide. The central mountain is barely a hill. The southern tip is only 8 miles from the mainland.

Of the three other QR codes embedded in these two map squares, one links to an island on the topic of weather, another on the topics of toponymy and geology, and another on the topic human, plant, and animal populations. The discontinuous print map iteration of *The Broadside of a Yarn* posted at Inspace during the *Remediating the Social* exhibition was supposed to contain a QR code linking to a fifth topical island composed of fragments of text collected from an amalgam of classical accounts of the quite possibly fictional island of Thule. In the confusion which arose from working between fifteen separate Photoshop files, each with as many layers, the QR code linking to the topical island of Thule went missing. This seems a fitting fate for an island which may never have existed. Thule was first mentioned by the Greek Pytheas in a work no longer extant based on travels he claims to have undertaken between 330 BC and 320 BC which, like the similarly widely influential *Travels of Sir John Mandeville* (2005 [1356-1366]), may never have taken place. Pytheas described an island called Thule located six days' journey north of Britain, and observed what we would now call the midnight sun, and a strange phenomena he called 'sea-lung,' which was neither land nor sea nor vapour.

Wildly divergent versions of Pythaeas' accounts have been textually transmuted through the writings of classical scholars from Pliny the Elder to Ptolemy into modern times. Contemporary scholars continue to disagree on if or where Thule may be located. In *Venetian Navigators* Andrea di Roblant writes:

They say Pytheas of Marseille was the first European to reach the shores of Iceland while exploring the Atlantic around 400 BC. He called it Ultima Thule - the last island before the great sea lung of mist and ice and water that extended beyond the known world. The name Ultima Thule lived on

throughout antiquity and was resurrected by cartographers in continental Europe during the Renaissance. But in northern Europe the island was known by its old Norse name, Islanda, the island of ice (2011: 106).

I used the many contradicting accounts of Thule cited in Blaeu's above mentioned *Atlas of England, Scotland Wales & Ireland*, as a corpus for this topical island. The 'lost' topical island of Thule may be viewed online here:

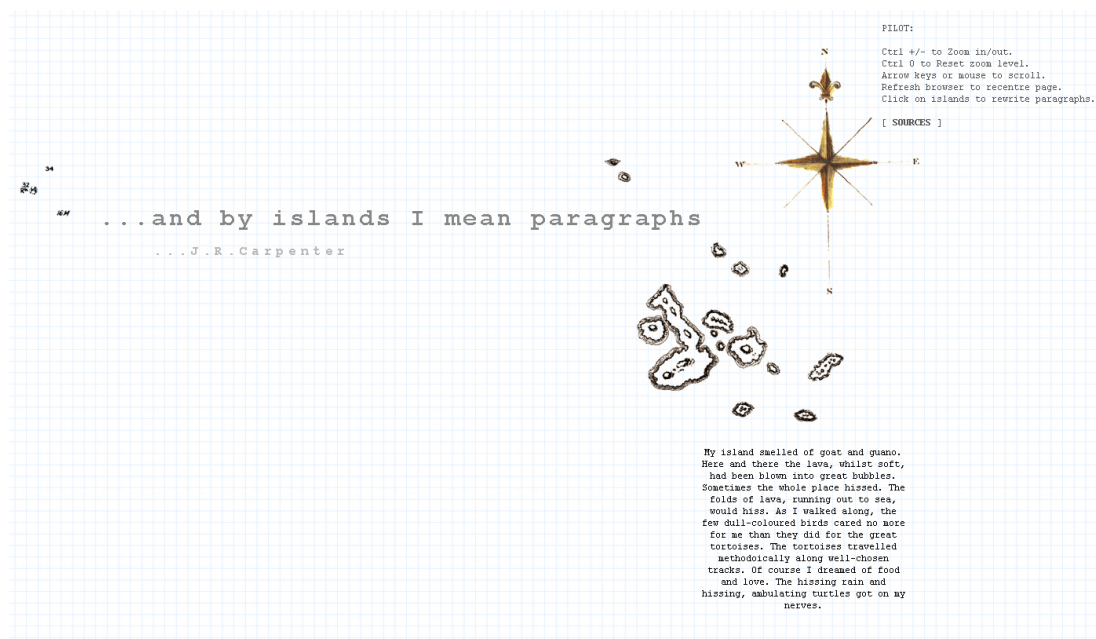
<http://luckysoap.com/broadside/isle4.html>

After the launch of *The Broadside of a Yarn* I turned my attention toward developing and extending the research method of reading across texts first explored in these five islands, to apply this method to different kinds of texts, and, in keeping with the narrative and cartographic conceptual framework of this chapter, to research ways to create relationships between these texts by situating these topical islands on a topographical map. This line of inquiry resulted in a new stand-alone web-based practice-led research outcome called *...and by islands I mean paragraphs* (Carpenter 2013) [[http://luckysoap.com/and by islands](http://luckysoap.com/and%20by%20islands)], first exhibited in the *Cherche le texte Virtual Gallery* launched at the Bibliotheque National de France in Paris September 2013, and later published by *The Island Review* in October 2013.

*...and by islands I mean paragraphs* casts a participant adrift in a sea of white space veined blue by lines of graph paper. The use of a background image of paper here is reminiscent of the tendency noted by Jessica Pressman, previously mentioned in Section 0.3.1., "to re-evaluate and remediate the appearance and aptitudes of paper and print-based literary practices" (Pressman 2009b n.p.). Here again the reference to paper extends beyond print-based literary practices.

Whereas horizontally lined paper such as loose leaf or foolscap offers a guide for

linear hand writing, horizontally and vertically lined graph paper offers a guide for locating positions, or intersections, along orthogonal axes such as latitude and longitude, North and West, and time and distance. Although the computer-generated texts in this work draw upon a corpus of print literature, the graphic reference to graph paper refers to a more scientific realm of mathematics, navigation, and cartography.



[Figure 27. *...and by islands I mean paragraphs*, J. R. Carpenter 2013. Screenshot.]

The cartographic space of *...and by islands I mean paragraphs* extends far beyond the boundaries of the browser window: to the north, south, east and west, in cartographic terms; or, to the TOP, BOTTOM, LEFT, and RIGHT, in HTML terms. In Chapter 1. Section 1.3., in relation to the practice-led research outcome *STRUTS*, the horizontally scrolling browser window was situated within a broader context of reading extending to papyrus and parchment scrolls. Here the horizontally and vertically scrolling browser window may be situated within a broader context of

reading extending to maps and sea charts too large to be easily printed or viewed in their entirety and thus printed in segments which are then stored folded or rolled. In reference to the sea chart antecedent, overlaying the graph paper background are images of clusters of numbers and words collected from a corpus of sea charts of the North Atlantic. These numbers refer to depths, as discussed in Sections 2.1., and 3.1., obtained by sounding the ocean floor.

Navigating the cartographic space of *...and by islands I mean paragraphs* (with mouse, track pad, or arrow keys) reveals that this sea is dotted with islands... and by islands, I mean small paragraphs of computer-generated texts including the four afore mentioned islands composed from fragments of *Scottish Island Hopping*, the lost island of Thule, and nine new islands. The fluid compositions of these islands draw upon variable strings containing fragments of text harvested from a larger literary corpus of essays, plays, poems, novels, and travel writing, many of which have already been discussed or mentioned in *Writing Coastlines*, including Díaz's essay "A Topical Paradise" (2011), Deleuze's essay "Desert Islands" (2004), Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* (1996 [1610–11]), Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe* (2000 [1719]), Bishop's poem "Crusoe in England" (1971), Coetzee's novel *Foe* (1986), Ballard's novel *Concrete Island* (2011 [1973]), and Hakluyt's *Voyages and Discoveries* (1903 [1598-1600]). Individually, each of these textual islands is a topic, a *topos*, a place in memory, a point on this web-based map, and a location in literature. Collectively these topical islands constitute a topographical map of a sustained practice of reading and re-reading, searching and re-searching, and writing and re-writing on the topic of islands.



My conflation of the terms 'island' and 'paragraph' in the title *...and by islands I mean paragraphs* is informed by Díaz's suggestion that texts about topical islands are themselves topical islands:

These textual shores (or *paragraphs*) are marginal in the triple sense that they are not part of the central body of text, that they are a physical space on the page that separates the text from the writer's desk or the reader's fingers, and that they surround and enclose the text in the same way that a margin surrounds or encloses a lake (Díaz 2010: 83) (the emphasis is the author's).

The island of Funk is a real island battered by real storms and covered with real bird shit. The paragraphs dedicated in Section 3.2.1. to situating Funk Island within a topography of stinking islands of birds and demons create a new island - a topical island engulfed in a textual sea (Díaz 2010: 84). Consider another example of a topical island, this one born entirely of texts: Robinson Crusoe's island is one which, in Díaz's terms, "borders only with literature itself" (83).

In Elizabeth Bishop's long late poem "Crusoe in England" (1971), the island Bishop exiles her Crusoe to is a topical one, a textual topography, a collection of *topos*, a conflation of islands and coastlines Bishop visited, read about and wrote about over a period of many years. The opening line of the poem recounts an eye-witness account of the creation of a new volcanic island:

A new volcano has erupted,  
the papers say, and last week I was reading  
where some ship saw an island being born:  
at first a breath of steam, ten miles away;  
and then a black fleck – basalt, probably –  
rose in the mate's binoculars  
and caught on the horizon like a fly (*Poems*, 1984: 162).

These lines refer to the creation of the volcanic island of Surtsey off the coast of Iceland in the North Atlantic. According to The Surtsey Research Society,

“[t]he first sign of an eruption came early in the morning of November 14, 1963, at a site approximately 18 km southwest of Heimaey, the largest of the Vestmannaeyjar (Westman Islands).” Eruptions continued until June 1967. “Crusoe in England” was first published in *The New Yorker* in 1971. The topic of the birth of Surtsey informs the composition of this poem. Of note, in relation to the discussion of fishers as networkers in Chapter 2. Section 2.1., that the “ship” Bishop refers to, which “saw an island being born,” was actually a fishing boat; the eruption was first reported by the crew of the fishing boat Ísleifur II. I borrowed and détourned the topic of the emergence of this this topical island from Bishop in the practice-led research outcome “up from the deep,” first mentioned in the previous Section 3.2.1. of this chapter, in the lines:

mid-ocean smoke and a sudden sulphurous odour  
a column of bubbles tunnels up from the deep (Carpenter 2012)

I then borrowed these lines from myself, further détourned them in one of the horizontally scrolling texts in the practice-led research outcome *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl*, which will be discussed in Section 3.2.3. of this chapter.

Daniel Defoe’s novel *Robinson Crusoe*, the prose progenitor of “Crusoe in England,” is itself a textual topography. The island Defoe exiles his Crusoe to is based on the Scottish sailor Alexander Selkirk’s first-hand account of the uninhabited island in the Juan Fernández Islands 670 kilometres off the coast of Chile. Selkirk wilfully marooned himself on this island rather than continue on board a ship rotten with wood worms and captained by a man he detested. There he survived alone for four years and four months, September 1704 - February 1709. The ship he jumped did indeed sink; aboard the ship which rescued him sailed the captain he had so detested serving now as first mate. Bishop’s Crusoe’s island

resembles neither Defoe's Crusoe's island nor Selkirk's island, but rather, Darwin's descriptions of the Galapagos Islands as found in *The Voyages of the Beagle*, a book which, as first suggested in Chapter 1. Section 1.1., Bishop "admired, consulted, and drew upon" throughout her life (Doreski 1993: xiii). Of the volcanically formed Galapagos Darwin writes: "One night I slept on shore on a part of the island where black truncated cones were extraordinarily numerous: from one small eminence I counted sixty of them, all surmounted by craters more or less perfect" (1997 [1838]: 356). In "Caruso In England" Bishop wearily replies:

Well, I had fifty-two  
miserable, small volcanoes I could climb  
with a few slithery strides-  
volcanoes dead as ash heaps.  
I used to sit on the edge of the highest one  
and count the others standing up,  
naked and leaden, with their heads blown off (*Poems*, 1984: 162).

On one island of the Galapagos Darwin admits: "Although I diligently tried to collect as many plants as possible, I succeeded in getting very few" (356). He later concedes he has mixed up collections from two separate islands: "I never dreamed that islands, about fifty or sixty miles apart... formed of precisely the same rocks, placed under a quite similar climate, rising to a nearly equal height, would have been differently tenanted..." (374). Bishop's Crusoe has nightmares of other islands:

... infinities  
of islands, islands spawning islands,  
like frog's eggs turning into polliwogs  
of islands, knowing that I had to live  
on each and everyone, eventually,  
for ages, registering their flora,  
their fauna,  
their geography (*Poems*, 1984: 165).

The process of re-reading and re-searching across Bishop's "Crusoe and England" and Darwin's descriptions of the Galapagos led to the creation of a textual island the corpus of which collects topics common to both texts and the source code of which heterodynes, or forces them together, into one computer-generated narrative. This new text is the result of a narrative resonance between two sympathetic texts. Within the cartographic space of *...and by islands I mean paragraphs*, this narrative is located to the south-east of the main title, under a re-drawing of the Galapagos Islands made by Darwin, as shown in Figure 26. The following statement-event reveals the process of re-reading across these two texts:

'My island #{island} #{volcano}. #{climate} #{beaches}. As I walked along, #{walk}. The tortoises #{tortoises}. #{dreams}. #{complaint}'

Each variable string, as indicated by the words in curly brackets, contains topics collected from both texts. In the following examples of paragraphs generated by the above statement-event the lines in bold are Bishop's, the others are Darwin's:

My island **seemed to have been permeated, like a sieve, by subterranean vapours.** Immense deluges of black naked lava spread over miles of sea-coast. All the hemisphere's left-over clouds arrived and hung above the craters. **The sun set in the sea; the same odd sun rose from the sea, and there was one of it and one of me.** As I walked along, a large tortoise gave a deep hiss and drew in its head. The tortoises made excellent soup. **I had nightmares of islands spawning islands, like frog's eggs turning into polliwogs of islands. Just when I thought I couldn't stand it another minute longer, Friday came.**

My island **is free to a remarkable degree from gales of wind. I had fifty-two miserable, small volcanoes I could climb with a few slithery strides - volcanoes dead as ash heaps.** Excepting during one short season, very little rain fell. **A glittering hexagon of rollers closing in and closing in, but never quite.** As I walked along, a large tortoise gave a deep hiss and drew in its head. The tortoises drank large quantities of water. **I'd shut my eyes and think about a tree, an oak, say, with real shade, somewhere. The hissing rain and hissing, ambulating turtles got on my nerves.**

Just as Bishop's poem "Crusoe in England" contains no attribution to Darwin, so too, in this computer-generated text, no distinction is made between which lines are Bishop's and which are Darwin's. None of the authors whose works have been détourned in *...and by islands I mean paragraphs* have been named within the body of the work, though a link to a list of sources is offered within the body of the work [<http://luckysoap.com/andbyislands/bibliography.html>]. McKenzie Wark argues, "for past works to become resources for the present requires their ... appropriation as a collective inheritance, not as private property" (2011: 37). In all of these examples, although words, phrases, and whole sentences have been copied from an original, these copies are not quotations as such, but rather, examples of détournement. "Détournement is the opposite of quotation. Like détournement, quotation brings the past into the present, but it does so entirely within a regime of the proper use of proper names" (Wark 2011: 40). For Deleuze and Guattari "[t]he proper name is the instantaneous apprehension of a multiplicity (2007: 37). As such, "[t]here are no individual statements... Every statement is the product of a machinic assemblage..." (37). The spatialised, eventalized nature of the computer-generated text redistributes topics and makes them commonplaces.

Consider the following example of another work of digital literature which calls fragments from two separate well known works of print literature into a computer-generated text process. The words in Nick Montfort and Stephanie Strickland's poetry generator *Sea and Spar Between* (2010) come from Emily Dickinson's poems and Herman Melville's novel *Moby Dick*. In 2012 I wrote about this work for the French magazine *MCD (Musiques & Cultures Digitales)*. Faced with a strict editorial constraint of 800 characters (including spaces) I elected to describe

the work by call statements generated by the work directly into the body of critical text - resulting in a text which alternates between analytical and lyrical modes. I have adopted this method throughout *Writing Coastlines*, and employ it here, electing to describe Montfort and Strickland's *The Sea and Spar Between* by calling this constraint-based writing generated in response to the work directly into the body of this thesis:

Imagine the combined corpus of Emily Dickinson's poems and Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. The spaciousness of Dickinson's dashes – 'you—too—' – merging with the oceanic churning of Melville's prose – 'leagueless sing and steep.' Stanzas assembled from words common to both and unique to each. As many stanzas as there are fish in the sea. Fast-fish, loose-fish, nailed to the desk or nailed to the mast, 'dash on / for pauseless is the sea.' The sparsity of two systems loosely coupled creates a vast verse-scape, settled at widely spaced intervals, chartable by longitude and latitude, navigable by keystroke, mouse-click, or scroll-wheel. The source code comments are prose of beauty and the minimal variable strings return rhythms, generate whole gestures. 'listen now / then blameless is the sea' (Carpenter 2012) .

In 2013 Mark Sample adapted the source code of *Sea and Spar Between* to create a new work, *House of Leaves of Grass*, based on the combined corpus of Mark Z. Danielewski's novel *House of Leaves* (2000) and Walt Whitman's poem *Leaves of Grass* (1891-1892). The corpora of these examples, and of my Bishop-Darwin island, combine and thereby dissolve formal distinctions between works of poetry and prose. Both *Sea and Spar Between* and *House of Leaves of Grass* contain links to pages which frame the work. In keeping with their watery theme, Montfort and Strickland write: "*Sea and Spar Between* is a poetry generator which defines a space of language populated by a number of stanzas comparable to the number of fish in the sea, around 225 trillion" (2010). In keeping with his house theme, Sample writes: "The number of stanzas (stanza, from the Italian word for 'room') approximates the number of cells in the human body, around 100 trillion" (2013). In

keeping with the island theme of the combined corpus of Bishop's "Crusoe in England" and Darwin's writing on the Galapagos produces near infinities of islands,

...islands spawning islands,  
like frog's eggs turning into polliwogs  
of islands... (Bishop, *Poems*, 1984: 165).

Bishop's Crusoe's nightmares of other islands comes partially true with his rescue to the island of England, which "doesn't seem like one, but who decides?" (166). This thought is echoed by Susan Barton, the traveller come castaway first-person narrator of another book based on *Robinson Crusoe*, J. M. Coetzee's novel *Foe*: "They say Britain is an island too, a great island. But that is a mere geographer's notion. The earth under our feet is firm in Britain, as it never was on Cruso's island" (2010: 26). Similarly, Diaz argues, "One could even claim that Britain and Manhattan are not islands: despite being surrounded by water, they are far from being isolated, and each in its own way has extended beyond its shores" (2010: 79). In the terms Deleuze puts forward in "Desert Islands," Britain and Manhattan are continental islands: "*Continental islands* are accidental, derived islands. They are separated from a continent, born of disarticulation, erosion, fracture; they survive the absorption of what once contained them" (2004: 9). In the above cited example of J. G. Ballard's novel *Concrete Island*, the traffic island is doubly continental: born of disarticulation from the urban mainland of London, and derived from the literary mainland of *Robinson Crusoe*. Just as Crusoe is haunted by his own words spoken to himself repeated back to him by his parrot Poll, so too Maitland's words spoken to himself are haunted by the spectre of Crusoe: "Maitland, poor man, you're marooned here like Crusoe - If you don't look out you'll be beached here forever..." (32).

In contrast to continental islands Deleuze proposes another construct: “*Oceanic islands* are originary, essential islands... emerg[ing] from underwater eruptions, bringing to the light of day a movement from the lowest depths” (9). Though *Robinson Crusoe* is generally considered to be the first English novel, and though its *locus* is an oceanic island, the topical island Defoe creates is far from originary. In a manner akin to the examples presented in Chapter 1. Section 1.1., of authors writing from and of a far coastline to the known coasts of home, Robinson Crusoe rewrites the continental island of England onto the volcanic island of Juan Fernández using tools and provisions salvaged from the shipwreck which he alone survived. In the cartographic space of *...and by islands I mean paragraphs*, a topical island located to the west of the main title perpetually re-writes Defoe’s Crusoe’s relentless collection and enumeration of provisions through the following statement-event:

'I had now been thirteen days on shore and eleven times on board the ship, in which time I brought away #{provisions}.'

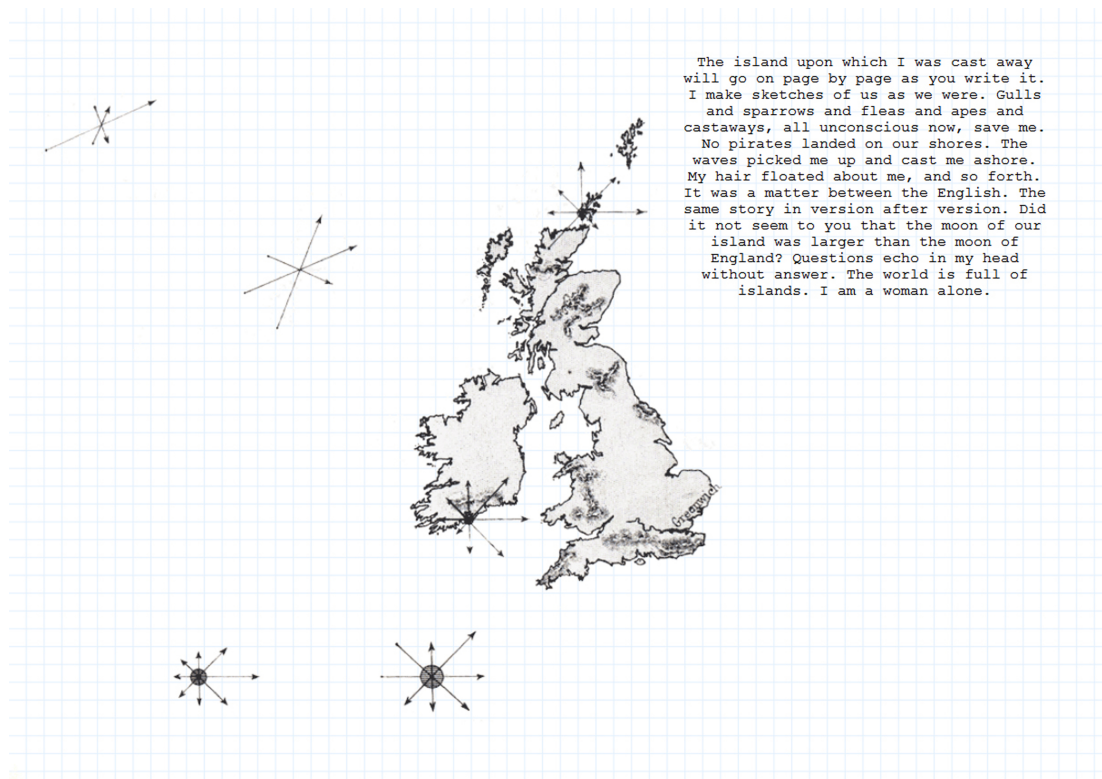
The #{provisions} variables are exhaustive. Nothing is invented on Defoe’s Crusoe’s island, everything is provided by the ship and thus the referential mainland is recreated on the island, prompting Deleuze to quip: “One can hardly imagine a more boring novel” (12).

Considerably less well-equipped, having brought away no provisions from his ship, having not even an ‘e’ to his name, Coetzee’s Cruso endures his island in a state of resignation. Inured to the world as it is, he possesses a singular lack of imagination. He keeps no record of the past, holds neither hope nor desire for any different future. He spends all his days building terraces with no seeds to plant in



them. Upon her arrival, Susan Barton asks him: “Is it not possible to manufacture paper and ink and set down what traces remain of these memories...” (Coetzee 2010: 17)? “Nothing I have forgotten,” he replies, “is worth the remembering” (17). In vehement disagreement, Barton urges Cruso to keep the topics of the island stored in his memory:

[S]een from too remote a vantage, life begins to lose its particularity. All shipwrecks become the same shipwreck, all castaways the same castaway... The truth that makes your story yours alone, that sets you apart from the old mariner by the fireside spinning yarns of sea-monsters and mermaids, resides in a thousand touches... When you made your needle... by what means did you pierce the eye? When you sewed your hat, what did you use for thread? (18).



[Figure 27. ...and by islands I mean paragraphs, J. R. Carpenter 2013. Screenshot.]

The computer-generated narrative I have created from topics from Coetzee's *Foe* takes Barton's "thousand touches" for what they are - a string of variables, from which a thousand partial truths may be output selectively. In the cartographic space of *...and by islands I mean paragraphs*, this island is located due south of the main title, next to an image of the continental island of England, as shown in Figure 27. In the narrative space of this topical island, Cruso has been eclipsed by variable strings pertaining to Barton's determination to write her own story, to remember and recount her own truths - of the island, of her time adrift on the waves, of the island of England, of her story, of her questions, of her self.

'The island upon which I was cast away *#{theisland}*. I *#{iisland}*. *#{castaway}*. *#{ontheisland}*. *#{waves}*. *#{sea}*. *#{english}*. *#{story}*. *#{questions}* Questions echo in my head without answer. The world is full of islands. I am *#{iam}*.'

The island upon which I was cast away was not all tedium and waiting. I close my eyes and try to find my way back to the island. Waiting for some saviour castaway to arrive in a boat with a sack of corn at his feet. He could roam all day. The oars of the rowboat dipping in the waves. I went on hoping to read of bloody doings on the high seas. This is not how Englishmen live. I recognize the story now. Why were there no strange fruits, no serpents, no lions? Questions echo in my head without answer. The world is full of islands. I am cast away.

The island upon which I was cast away is not a story in itself. I began to swim. For all the castaways of the future history of the island. The sun was mild. We gave ourselves to the waves. On a rock in the sea. They will bring us back to England. It is a story you should set down in writing. Is that the secret meaning of the word story, do you thing - a storing-place of memories? Questions echo in my head without answer. The world is full of islands. I am a woman alone.

Called as statements into digital processes, fragments of print texts are reconstituted as events occurring in a digital present which is also a break from the present. A new regime of signification emerges, in which authorship is distributed and text is eventalized, resulting in dissemination and deterritorialization. Galloway

situates this new regime of signification at the interface between an incoherent aesthetics, one which tends to “unravel neat masses” (Galloway 2012: 46), including legends, maps, and well-known works of print literature; and an incoherent politics, one which “tends to dissolve existing institutional bonds” (47), including bonds of authorship and of place. Galloway terms this regime of signification a “‘dirty regime’ called *truth*” (142) (the emphasis is the authors). It is from within this dirty “[u]nder-appreciated and elusive” (50) regime that Barton demands the truth of Cruso: “Touches like these will one day persuade your countrymen that it is all true, every word...” (18). And it is in dismissal and defiance of this regime of truth, in preference for a coherent politics organised around the stable institution of labour that Cruso mutely responds: “He opened and closed his hands, sinewy, rough-skinned hands, toil-hardened” (18).

We shall return to Susan Barton again toward the end of the next section, which furthers the discussion of *...and by islands I mean paragraphs* begun here by re-framing these computer-generated islands in terms of live performance.

### **3.2.2.1. *Eight Short Talks About Islands...and by islands I mean paragraphs***

Whereas most of the QR codes embedded in the incoherent cartographic space of the fifteen map squares of *The Broadside of a Yarn* link to computer-generated narrative dialogues intended to serve as stand-alone scripts for live performance, the five textual islands which went on to form the basis for *...and by islands I mean paragraphs* were conceived as five parts of one performance - five voices to be read by five performers dispersed in a sea of audience space, each with a different textual island loaded onto their phone. Toward this end, each textual island is optimised to fit on a single screen of a smart phone, and each is accompanied by a small image of an island which functions as a button. Clicking or tapping on the image refreshes the appearance of the text on screen. This function affords a performer the longest possible reading time before the text refreshes again of its own accord, and enables a performer to quickly cycle through any number of possible texts before choosing one to read. I had intended to test this performance plan at the performance event which immediately followed the launch of *The Broadside of a Yarn* at the *Remediating the Social* exhibition at Inspace 1 November 2012, but decided not to due to a combination of factors, including: one of the performers was unable to attend due to Superstorm Sandy, there was limited rehearsal time, there were terrible acoustics in the performance space, there were not enough microphones, and there were plenty of other scripts from *The Broadside of a Yarn* to choose from.

As stated in Section 3.2.2., after the launch of *The Broadside of a Yarn* I turned my attention toward extending the research method of reading and re-

reading across texts to create nine new topical islands resulting in the stand-alone web based work *...and by islands I mean paragraphs*. After the launch event, gallery exhibition, and online publication of the work I set about devising a mode of making this new work public through live performance. In order to perform *Along the Briny Beach* and *There he was, gone.*, discussed in Sections 1.2.1., and 3.2.1. respectively, I explored the printed performance script as an intermediary form operating between and incorporating aspects of JavaScript source code, computer-generated text, appropriated text, and spoken voice. Expanding upon this exploration, I came to consider the talk as another intermediary form operating between spoken and written text through which I might perform *...and by islands I mean paragraphs*.

To talk is to exchange ideas or relate narrative by speaking. A talk is an informal speech or lecture. A talk may be delivered from a written text, but it is a text written to be spoken rather than printed. Most of the words in most of the islands in *...and by islands I mean paragraphs* are collected from print texts. Yet called as variables into statement-events these words refuse the fixity of the printed text. They occur, rather, as events.

In developing a performance conceptually based upon a talk rather than a script my approach was loosely informed by two texts: Anne Carson's "Short Talks" (2000), and Judith Schalansky's *Atlas of Remote Islands: Fifty Islands I Have Never Set Foot On and Never Will* (2010). In the introduction to "Short Talks" Carson writes: "Early one morning words were missing... I began to copy out everything that was said. The marks construct an instant of nature gradually, without the boredom of a story" (2000: 29). Thirty-one 'talks' follow, on seemingly unrelated topics - "On Ovid", "On Walking Backwards", "On Orchids", "On The End". Though

termed 'talks' in the title, these texts defy easy categorisation. Prose poems, or paragraphs perhaps; some no more than one sentence long. Or, as Carson's introduction suggests, instants of nature for which there appear to be no written forms. For example, from "On Reading": "I glimpsed the stupendous clear-cut shoulders of the Rockies from between paragraphs of *Madam Bovary*" (39), and from "On Rain": "Out on the sea it is raining too. It beats on no one" (39). Presented as a loose collection of talks, these moments resist the fixity and 'boring' formal dictates of the written story.

In the introduction to *Atlas of Remote Islands* Schalansky puts forward a methodological stance toward working with and détourning 'found' literary, cartographic, antiquarian, and archival material akin to that which I have adopted throughout *Writing Coastlines*, and in this chapter in particular.

All text in the book is based on extensive research and every detail stems from factual sources. I have not invented anything. However I was the discoverer of the sources, researching them through ancient and rare books and I have transformed the texts and appropriated them as sailors appropriate the lands they discover (Schalansky 2010: 20).

Schalansky's writing on the topic of remote islands reveals her process of reading in the following example. Of Robinson Crusoe Island, as the island in the Juan Fernández Islands upon which Alexander Selkirk was castaway is now known, Schalansky writes not of the physical island but of her search for spatially dispersed documents pertaining to topics associated with the island. "Robinson Crusoe's diary is in Berlin, lying on a forgotten shelf in the State Library of Prussian Cultural Heritage. So claims David Caldwell of the National Museum of Scotland. The Library is busy... Each desk is an island kingdom" (74). Though an atlas may seem an odd form to inform a live performance, Schalansky argues: "It is high time for

cartography to take its place among the arts, and for the atlas to be recognized as literature, for it is more than worthy of its original name: *theatrum orbis terrarum*, the theatre of the word” (23).

With these aspects of these two texts in mind, and the corpus of *...and by islands I mean paragraphs* to draw upon, I developed the practice-led research outcome *Eight Short Talks About Islands...and by islands I mean paragraphs* (Carpenter 2014), which is included in full in Appendix C. This work was tested through the method of making public in two very different contexts. First, in a performance writing context, in a jazz-club at The Banff Centre during “In(ter)ventions: Literary Practice at the Edge,” 11 February 2014. Second, in an academic context in a seminar room during “Modular Form: A Symposium on Creative Practice”, hosted by ReWrite, the Centre for Research in Creative and Professional Writing at Roehampton University, in conjunction with Writing-PAD, 15 March 2014.

*Eight Short Talks About Islands...and by islands I mean paragraphs* comprises a brief introduction, which was détourned in Section 3.2.2. of this chapter, and eight short ‘talks’ based on eight of the fourteen computer-generated texts presented in the web-based iteration of *...and by islands I mean paragraphs*. Each of these talks is composed of a selection of fragments contained in that particular island’s variable strings. In the live performance iteration of this work, as I read the introduction I navigate the web-based work in an exploratory manner to give an impression of the cartographic space of the work. I then navigate to specific islands and offer short prepared talks on them, clicking often on the images of islands which appear beside each computer-generated text in order to refresh the text as I read.

In the web-based iteration of *...and by islands I mean paragraphs* a participant can navigate in any direction choosing to read any island in any order for any length of time. One of the formal properties of a talk is a fixed duration, generally determined by an event organiser. Further, the linear progression of speech dictates that these talks about islands be presented one at a time. Although the order of presentation could be randomly generated, I elected to present the talks in an order conducive to laying out an argument as one might in an artist's talk or lecture, thereby performing the form of the talk as well as its contents.

The first talk, "Topical Islands", is based on the computer-generated island which appears just west of the title in the web-based iteration of *...and by islands I mean paragraphs*. This island is composed of fragments of text collected from Hernán Díaz's essay "A Topical Paradise" (2010), from which, as stated in Section 3.2.2., I borrowed the conflation between islands and paragraphs. The talk is composed of a subset of the generator's variables:

Islands are ['places that have become commonplaces', 'perfect topics', 'literal metaphors', 'possible only in literature']. Topical islands are ['figures of radical isolation', 'off the map', 'off the chart', 'always virgin', 'blind spots on the surface of the known', 'shrouded in obscurity', 'isolated in the present', 'silent', 'beyond time', 'in a time zone of their own']. They are paragraphs. They ['separate the narrative body from the referential mainland', 'separate the text from the writer's desk', 'separate the text from the reader's finger's', 'surround and enclose the text', 'create their own context']. They are ['textual shores', 'marginal', 'not part of the central body of the text', 'a physical space on the page', 'engulfed in a textual sea'].

This talk is neither the essay "A Topical Paradise", nor the source code which generates the topical island on the topic of topical islands, nor a topical island output by that source code. In terms put forward in Chapter 2. Section 2.4., it is a translation, transmutation, transmediation, and transmission which contains



aspects of all three of these states. Re-sounding Schalansky's statement, through a process of reading and re-reading, searching and re-searching, writing and re-writing the essay, the source code, and the generated texts: "I have transformed the texts and appropriated them as sailors appropriate the lands they discover" (2010: 20).

Presented before a live audience under strict time constraint, a talk aims to engage a listener. To do so it teases out certain details and omits to mention others. This is particularly evident in the following example. In Section 3.2.2., it was observed that a process of re-reading and re-searching J. G. Ballard's novel *Concrete Island* revealed that the word 'grass' is mentioned many more times than the word 'concrete.' In the web-based iteration of *...and by islands I mean paragraphs* a computer-generated island based on fragments of *Concrete Island* appears to the south east of the main title. This island is composed of a number of topics including the island itself, the traffic, the crash, and the grass:

'The island *{islandafter}*. The *{trafficaadj}* traffic *{trafficafter}*. *{grassbefore}* the grass. For the first time since the *{crash}*, *{crashafter}*. *{islandbefore}* the island. The grass *{grassafter}*.'

The talk "Concrete Island" speaks only the first and last sentence, selecting certain details of the island whilst omitting others and making no mention the traffic and the crash. Of the variable strings called by those sentences, not all variables have been selected; those that have been have been reordered to better suit a spoken text. The result is a talk which speaks almost entirely of grass:

The island ['pointed towards the west and the declining sun', 'was sealed off from the world around it', 'was moving back in time to an earlier and more violent period', 'dated, in parts, from before World War II', 'appeared covered by a dense and luxuriant growth', 'and its green swaying ocean']. The grass ['grew waist-high', 'festered over the ground', 'rose and fell like

the waves of a brisk sea', 'weaved and turned, moving in endless waves', 'opened a dozen pathways', 'opened and closed as if admitting a large and watchful creature to its green preserve', 'swayed in the night air', 'seethed in the light wind', 'seethed in the night wind', 'seethed and whirled, as if sections of wilderness were speaking to each other', 'rustled excitedly', 'swayed reassuringly', 'flashed with an electric light', 'jostled on all sides like a hostile crowd', 'was a vital medium', 'was silent now', 'was quiet', 'barely moved', 'covered all traces', 'was over four feet deep']].

In the live performance of these talks, as I read, a tension emerges between the fixed text I speak and the constantly shifting 'printed' text on screen. In the talk, the island become a paragraph in a new sense. Publication of *Eight Short Talks About Islands...and by islands I mean paragraphs* in a forthcoming issue of *Journal of Writing and Creative Practice* based on the Modular Form symposium will return these fragments to the material of print.

As stated in Section 0.2., one of the objectives of *Writing Coastlines* is to investigate ways in which the syntax and grammar of code languages inflect born-digital literary texts. In these talks, the grammar and syntax of JavaScript inflects a text written to be spoken. The square brackets and quotation marks are translated, or carried across from the JavaScript source code into written English. On the page, these syntactical grammatical artifacts of another language serve to visually differentiate variables from one another thus aiding in the reading of these otherwise grammatically impossible sentences.

The final talk, "Castaway" returns to the topic of Susan Barton's story. The title of Cotzee's novel *Foe* refers to a fictional author named Foe, after Daniel Defoe, whom Barton has engaged to write the narrative of her time on the island, which she continually refers to as "Cruso's island." Barton spends most of the novel telling Foe, in person and in letters, precisely what he should be writing. Why

doesn't she write her own story, as she had implored Cruso to do? Early on in the book she rails against Cruso's vagaries: "the stories he told me were so various, and so hard to reconcile one with another..." (11). And yet a process of re-reading and re-searching *Foe* for Barton's own statements about her own experience reveals a woman who refuses any fixed definition of her self, engaging instead in a decidedly performance writing strategy of putting forward multiple 'definings', perpetually re-sounding her story:

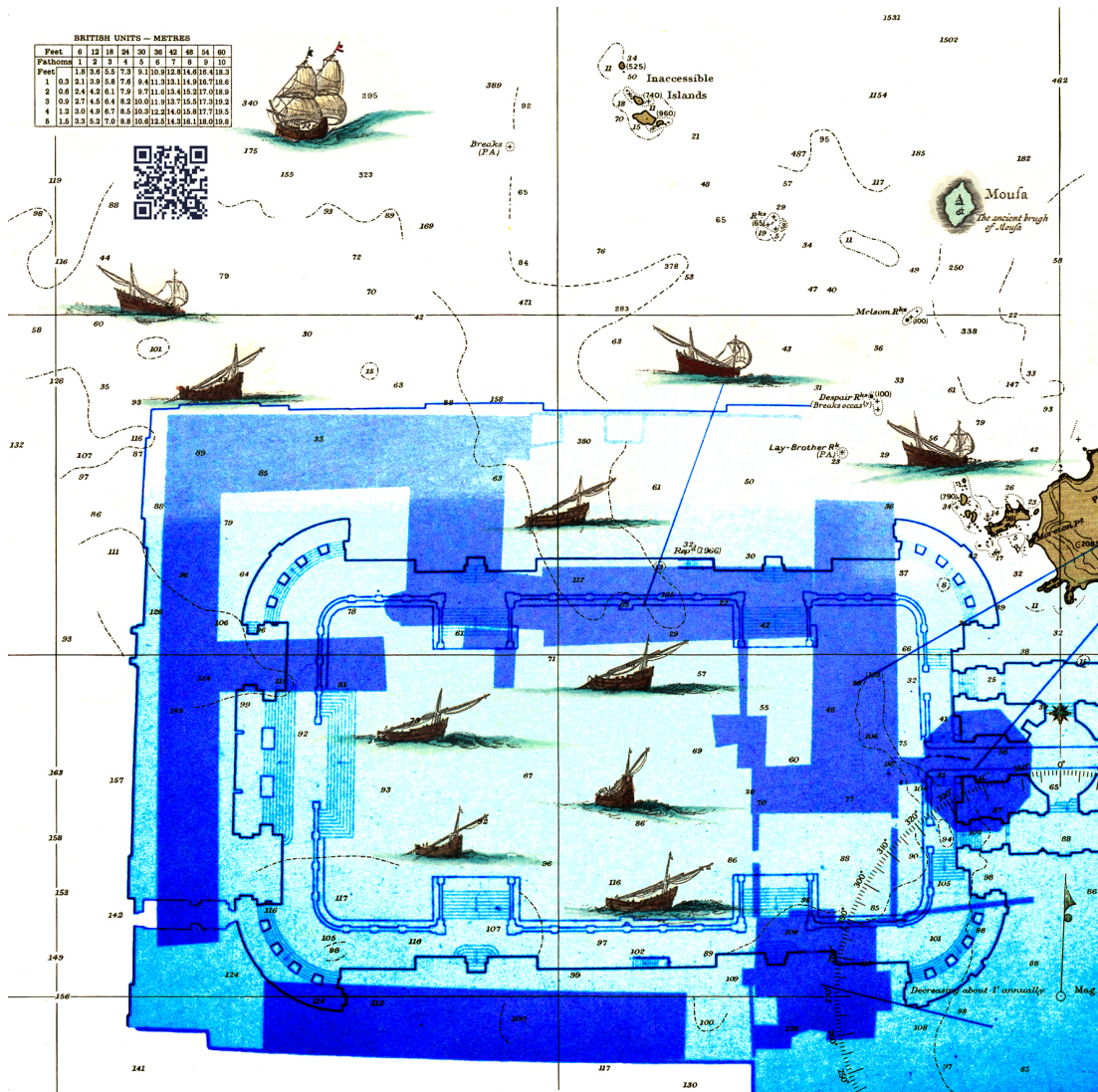
['I was a bottle bobbing on the waves with a scrap of writing inside', 'I was carried by the waves', 'Through the hours of despair on the waves', 'The the roar of the waves', 'The wind and wave-roar', 'The waves picked me up and cast me ashore']. I am ['cast away', 'a castaway', 'indeed cast away', 'not a bird of passage', 'not a prisoner', 'not a story', 'not persuaded', 'unknown to myself', 'wondering how I come to be here', 'saved', 'on an island yet', 'alone on the waves', 'alone', 'all alone', 'a woman alone', 'a woman cast ashore', 'a woman washed ashore', 'a free woman', 'now a madwoman', 'waiting for the book to be written that will set me free'].

In *The Interface Effect* Alexander R. Galloway states: "The political is that thing that cannot happen" (Galloway 2012: 139). The book Barton waits for is political, insofar as it can never happen. Barton's politics are incoherent. Her story retains the orality of the sailor's yarn. Its thousand touches refuse to coalesce. They emerges as fragments from an archive stored in memory; they emerge as utterance, as event. Called as variables into statement-events Barton's statements are eventalized. Uttered by me in the above-quoted short talk her topics become my own: I am #{iam}. Barton's insistence on telling the truth of her story and of herself informs the main character in the final practice-led research outcome, *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl*, presented the next section.

[Figure 29. *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl*, J. R. Carpenter 2013. Zine.]

### 3.2.3 Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl

[<http://luckysoap.com/owlandgirl>]



[Figure 30. *The Broadside of a Yarn*, J. R. Carpenter 2012. Detail.]

The above pictured print map square from *The Broadside of a Yarn* presents yet another landscape rendered incoherent (Galloway 2012: 46) (Section 3.2.1.) by the overlapping of layers of cartographic information collected through an engagement with the Situationist practice of *dérive* adapted to incorporate the research method of bookish drifting wandering described in Section 3.2. These layers present the

particularities of a number of fluid floating places reassembled in an obviously awkward assemblage of discontinuous surfaces pitted with points of departure, escape routes, and lines of flight.

On one layer, a blueprint of the current footprint of part of the University of Edinburgh is superimposed over an outline of older university and library buildings which once stood on the site. I photographed this double map from a plaque installed at the University of Edinburgh, on the site which the map depicts; I then altered the photograph to lend a touch of blue to this map square, to suggest the sea. The image in this layer was collected through walking. The act of cartographic superimposition it depicts was not performed by me. The superimposition of two temporal territories within one cartographic space may also be termed a stratification. Deleuze and Guattari locate resonance within strata encoded by territorialization: "Strata... consist of giving form to matters, of imprisoning intensities or locking singularities into systems of resonance and redundancy... Strata are acts of capture..." (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 40). The library and the university operate as systems of resonance and redundancy. The older library books and the buildings which once contained them have not disappeared; they have been incorporated into newer structures. Likewise, the print maps and texts détourned by *The Broadside of a Yarn* continue to resonate within the structures of computer-generated narratives.

Another layer of cartographic information contained in the above-pictured print map square, this one collected through wandering the internet, contains a key of measures in feet and fathoms, a grid of lines of latitude and longitude, a scattering of dotted lines and numbers indicating depths and soundings, warnings

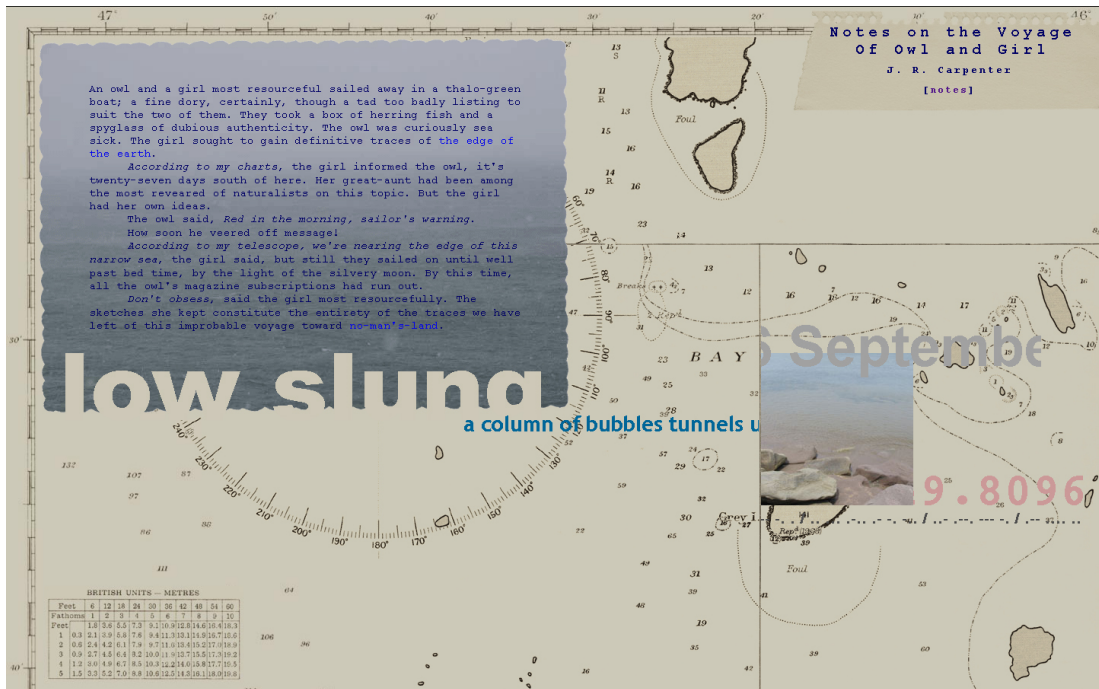
where rocks break the surface, and named places such as Despair Rocks and Inaccessible Islands. Although there are no proper nouns to indicate as such, these details have been collected from a composite of sea charts of Scotia Bay and the South Orkney Islands compiled from half a dozen different surveys undertaken in the Antarctic Ocean between 1903 and 1966 published by the United States of America Defence Mapping Agency in 1967. As suggested in Section 2.1., sea charts are always composites, composed of stratified layers of textual accounts of passages, logs, notes, soundings, and readings of compass directions, currents, weather phenomena, and estimated distances observed by generations of pilots at sea. Details from this same chart appear in other map squares in *The Broadside of a Yarn*, such as [Figure X - house hull] pictured in Section 3.2., and have been incorporated into the cartographic space of *...and by islands I mean paragraphs*. The persistence of North Atlantic and North Sea names in southern oceans creates a shadow place, a doppelgänger born of an uncanny doubling between places inextricably linked, as was suggested in Section 2.4., through the constant “repetition of the same ... features, the same characters, the same destinies, the same misdeeds, even the same names, through successive generations” (Freud 2003: 142).

On another layer in the above-pictured print map square floats a fleet of painted boats and ships. These are copied from a copy of a copy of “Orcadum et Shetlandiae” found in an antiquarian print shop in Edinburgh. This much-reproduced chart of the Orkney and Shetland Islands was first published in *Blaeu’s Atlas of England, Scotland Wales & Ireland*, first published in 1654 (1970). These ships are legendary; they describe in abstract terms the kinds of ships to be found in these seas, and they serve to fill blank spaces between islands.

Embedded in the incoherent cartographic space presented by this map square is a QR code which links to a computer-generated narrative called “Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl.” After the launch of *The Broadside of a Yarn* in Edinburgh, in keeping with the iterative nature of performance writing and with my research methods of live-archiving and making public certain aspects of my research in order to gauge public response, I incorporated this computer-generated narrative into a stand-alone web-based piece of the same name. *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* (Carpenter 2013) [<http://luckysoap.com/owlandgirl>] was first presented in “Avenues of Access: An Exhibit & Online Archive of New 'Born Digital' Literature”, curated by Dene Grigar & Kathi Inman Berens, at the Modern Languages Association (MLA) Convention in Boston, MA, USA, in January 2013.

As discussed in Section 3.2.1., the stand-alone web-based iteration of *There he was, gone.*, closely visually resembles the the print map square from *The Broadside of a Yarn*. As shown in Figure 30., in the case of *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl*, the print map square and the stand-alone web-based iteration bear little visual resemblance to one another. They have elements of only one of the above mentioned cartographic layers in common: the chart of Scotia Bay and the South Orkney Islands (1967). In the web-based iteration, details from this composite chart have been broken apart, rearranged, and reoriented to suit web rather than sea navigation. When the web-browser window is resized, the relative positions of these and other page elements shift in relation to one another making this a truly shifting sea.





[Figure 31. *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl*, J. R. Carpenter 2013. Screenshot.]

The computer-generated narrative of the voyage of Owl and Girl contains lines of dialogue embedded in narration. It is formatted in indented paragraphs as a short story would be. Though the word-count of this story varies depending on the variables called into any given generation, it is generally very short and is thus aligned with the genre of short fiction known as a postcard story. This postcard story is situated within the pictorial space of a rectangular photograph with wavy ‘scalloped’ edges evocative of a mid-twentieth-century picture postcard. This postal association suggests this story is from both another place and another time. In “In the Village,” Elizabeth Bishop writes: “Postcards come from another world, the world of the grandparents who send things...” (*Prose* 1984: 255). In *Terra Infirma: Geography’s Visual Culture* Irit Rogoff argues, “the postcard is a complex artifact in which image and text are reversible, in which public and personal collapse” (2000: 52). In *The Post Card: From Socrates to Fred and Beyond* Derrida frames this

reversibility in terms of a number of dialectics central to *Writing Coastlines* - here and there, image and text, narrative and code:

one does not know what is in front or what is in back, here or there, near or far... Nor what is the most important, the picture or the text, and in the text, the message or the caption, or the address (1987: 13).

Later on Derrida suggests that in the postcards he refers to in *The Post Card*, it is the image which comes first, the image which prompts the writing of the text:

if you reread the post cards I sent you... you will notice... that everything I write is legendary, a more or less elliptical, redundant, or translatable legend, caption, *of the picture...* of the icon which is found on the back of the text and watches over it... (1987: 121-122).

The picture in the postcard in *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* is of ocean, weather, and sky. With neither ground for perspective nor discernible horizon line, it is impossible to know from looking at it where this postcard is from. As it happens, it is a photograph of the North Atlantic Ocean which I took from the granite bluff at Chebucto Head, Nova Scotia, at the southwestern limit of Halifax Harbour. But, as suggested in Chapter 1. Section 1.1., the coastlines of Atlantic Canada and the United Kingdom share a common coastal climate. One can stand on either coast of the North Atlantic, on headlands formed of the granite, housing similar assortments of coastal warning systems and military fortifications, facing east or west, either way, squinting into a sea fret, battered by the same wind. Just as we saw in the example of the superheterodyne circuit introduced in Section 3.1. of this chapter, wherein two separate yet sympathetic signals are forced together to produce a third frequency, so too, an evocation of the South Orkney Islands produces a North Orkney, where previously there had simply been Orkney. Evocation of Nova Scotia (New Scotland) produces an Old Scotland, where

previously there had simply been Scotland. Thus the narrative of the voyage of Owl and Girl unfolds within an incoherent aesthetic of inversions and uncanny returns.

The narrative itself is a work of fiction. Its frequent references to actual events, locales, persons, and texts are entirely intentional. It détournes, appropriates, conflates, and confabulates characters, facts, and forms of narrative accounts of sea voyages into the North Atlantic undertaken over the past 2340 years or so, in search of the North West Passage, the edge of the earth, the fountain of youth. At the furthest edge of this ever-shifting textual assemblage floats the fantastical classical topical island of Thule. As discussed in Section 3.2.2., the precise location of Thule has been disputed since ancient times. In *Agricola* (1960 [97-98]) Tacitus places the topics of the Orkney Islands and Thule in close proximity: “a Roman fleet... discovered and subdued the Orkney Islands, hitherto unknown. Thule, too, was sighted by our men, but no more; their orders took them no farther... but they do report that the sea is sluggish and heavy to the oar” (60). The Romans were among the ancient coastal pilots mentioned in Chapter 2. Section 2.1., adept at connecting known ports yet terrified of open seas. In *Atlas of Remote Islands: Fifty Islands I Have Never Set Foot On and Never Will*, Judith Schalansky suggests that Thule was less an island and more of a conceptual threshold: “The Romans called the every edge of their flat world *Thule*. So where does it lie? At the outermost of all borders” (2010: 50). Schalansky’s atlas contains an entry for an island happened upon by James Cook in 1775 at the southern most extremity of a voyage into the Antarctic Ocean in search of the vast continent of *Terra Australis* which had for so long stretched across the bottom of the ancients’ world map. In the vicinity of the as yet undiscovered South Orkney Islands Cook’s voyage was

aborted due to pack ice, icy masts, cold, and frostbite: “Suddenly they come upon a frozen land with black cliffs... a land of firn and ice ruins that never melt, gloomy, cold and full of horrors... Here is the new Thule, the other end of the known world” (Schalansky 2010: 50).

Like the topical islands composed of fragments of text collected from well known works of print literature presented in Section 3.2.2., the corpus of the narrative of the voyage of Owl and Girl also contains fragments of and references to stories of fanciful, fluid, and quite possibly fictional floating places described or imagined from diverse literary, historical, and archival sources. For example, certain phrases in this narrative are borrowed from the American author Eugene Field’s well-known children’s lullaby poem “Wynken, Blynken and Nod” (1889), in which three young children one night

Sailed off in a wooden shoe--  
Sailed on a river of crystal light,  
Into a sea of dew (Field 1889).

The children in this poem are not specifically gendered other than that they are referred to as fishermen, who have “come to fish for the herring fish / That live in this beautiful sea” (Field 1889). The sea is the sky; the herring fish are stars. These references provide openings for narrative resonance to emerge between the parallel worlds of sea and sky, childhood and adulthood, wakefulness and sleep. Leonardo Flores includes *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* in an online resource of “Children’s E-Literature” (Flores 2014 n.p.)

The main characters named in the title of *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* are détourned from Edward Lear’s Victorian nonsense poem “The Owl and the Pussy-Cat” (1871), in which, a sweet-talking Owl and an easily-impressed Pussy-cat

go to sea in a beautiful pea-green boat. They sail for a year and a day to the land where the Bong-Tree grows, where they marry and dance on the sand by the light of the moon. Why these characters? McKenzie Wark argues: “Key to any practice of détournement is identifying the fragments upon which it might work” (40). The hyphen in Lear’s Pussy-cat creates a fragmentary creature (Lecerle 1994: 41). According to the Random House Dictionary, The term ‘puss’ has been used to refer to a cat since the 1520s. The term ‘pussy’ has been used to refer to a small cat or kitten since the 1570s. The term ‘pussycat’ has been used to refer to a cat or a nonthreatening, endearing, or gentle person since the 1790s. The vulgar use of the term ‘pussy’ to refer to the vulva, to a woman as a sex object, or to an effeminate man did not come about until the 1870s. Lear’s poem was published in 1871. In the title and in the text of the poem, Lear writes “Pussy-cat” suggesting a gentle creature, but when the Owl sings to the Pussy-cat in the first verse, he refers to her as “Pussy” implying that he thinks of her as a sex object:

“O lovely Pussy! O Pussy, my love,  
What a beautiful Pussy you are,  
You are,  
You are!  
What a beautiful Pussy you are!” (Lear 1871).

Lear separates himself from this whiff of vulgarity through the use of quotation marks. It’s the Owl who uses the foul (fowl) language, not the author. Lear makes it clear that the Pussy-cat knows precisely what the Owl’s after; in the very next verse she pleads: “O let us be married!” (Lear 1871). As we saw in Chapter 2. Section 2.4., the success of a homophonic translation relies on the choice of a “sub-text ... so well known as to be recognized by all” (Lecerle, 1985: 21). In “Notes

on the Voyage of Owl and Girl,” détournement relies upon a tacit understanding that the passive Pussy-cat has been replaced by an altogether different sort of girl.

In order to discuss what sort of girl Girl is, we must situate her within a narrative context. To that end, let us consider the opening sentence of the computer-generated narrative. One moment it may read: “An owl and a girl most adventurous cast off in a grey-green dinghy; a water tight boat, certainly, though a good deal too poorly designed to suit the two of them.” The next moment that sentence will have shifted: “An owl and a girl most courageous ventured forth in a bottle-green boat; a buoyant skiff, certainly, though a little bit too high in the stern to suit the two of them.” Beneath the surface of the screen, the sentence structure has not changed:

'An owl and a girl most `#{studious}` `#{setsail}` in a `#{green}green` `#{boat}`; a `#{seaworthy}` `#{boat}`, certainly, though a `#{amount}` too `#{equipped}` to suit the two of them.'

Each of the bracketed words refers to a variable string, an archive of fragments, or, in Susan Barton’s terms, ‘a thousand touches’ (Coetzee 2010: 18) (Section 3.2.2.). The hyphen in Lear’s Pussy-cat provides an opening for détournement, invites the invention of a new creature. This girl is not defined by the owl but rather by the variable string `#{studious}`. From this archive of fragments emerges a girl most ['adventurous', 'ardent', 'courageous', 'curious', 'determined', 'industrious', 'keen', 'practical', 'rational', 'resourceful', 'rigorous', 'studious', 'serious']. These multiple definings of Girl are informed by Coetzee’s Susan Barton’s determination, as discussed in Section 3.2.2., to tell the truth of her story: “I am a free woman who asserts her freedom by telling her story according to her own desire (2010: 131), and by Glover’s Elle, introduced in Section 3.2.1., who corrects

her biographer when he exaggerates her exile on the Island of Demons: “Two, I say. Two bears died. I didn’t kill either of them. And the demons turned out to be seabirds” (2003: 181).

The hyphen in Lear’s beautiful pea-green boat provides another opening for détournement, creating an opportunity for a linguistic joke which presupposes a familiarity with both with the literary fragment upon which it is based and the linguistic rules through which it might be extended. In addition to ‘pea-’, the initial #{green} variable string contained: [‘bottle-’, ‘beetle-’, ‘grass-’, ‘grey-’, ‘jelly-’, ‘lima-bean-’, ‘sea-’, ‘sea-foam-’, ‘thalo-’]. In the months after the launch of *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* I added the following variables to this string: [‘alligator-’, ‘apple-’, ‘collard-’, ‘grasshopper-’, ‘kelly-’, ‘olive-’, ‘thumb-’]. Because I could. Because, as discussed in Section 3.2. digital literature has given rise to a new regime of enunciation in which written words refuse repose. I can alter the variable strings at any time. Deleuze and Guattari note: “Assemblages are in constant variation, are themselves constantly subject to transformations” (1987: 82). The same could be said for the sailor’s yarn, forever twisting, knitting, knotting and unravelling.

In “The Aesthetic of Bookishness in Twenty-First-Century Literature,” Jessica Pressman suggests that an “aesthetic of bookishness... unites novels that pursue a thematic interest in depicting books as characters and focal points of narrative action... and books or paper-filled spaces serve as physical places of refuge for traumatized characters” (Pressman 2009a n.p.). Pressman goes on to say that “born-digital works exploit the aesthetic of bookishness by adapting the appearance of paper and translating the print-based reading practices onto the screen. For example, they employ handwritten drawings on notepaper as backdrops...” (2009a

n.p.). Within this paradigm, *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* exhibits an aesthetic of bookishness rather more in keeping with novels than with born-digital works. As the following statement-event reveals, books drive Girl's actions and inform her decisions:

'According to my #{books}, the girl informed the owl, it\'s #{number} #{distance} #{direction} of here.'

The variable string #{books} contains a variety of books and other printed forms: ['calculations', 'charts', 'library books', 'manuscripts', 'maps', 'research', 'sources', 'test results', 'textbooks', 'World Book Encyclopedia']. Girl does not seek refuge in these books; rather, she uses them as tools. Though she is a girl not a woman, and though the owl seems less of a help than a burden, and though they sail alone through seas unknown never to be heard from again, Girl is not a traumatised character. She is not castaway, like Selkirk, Crusoe, Cruso, Maitland, Burton, Marguerite, or Elle. She is not watching for a sail. She is not waiting for a book to be written to set her free. She is actively engaged in writing her own story.

The source code of the last line of the computer-generated narrative calls variables from the string #{notes}.

'The #{notes} she kept constitute the entirety of the #{knowledge} we have left of this #{legendary} voyage toward #{place}.'

The string #{notes} contains the following variables: ['charts', 'diaries', 'drawings', 'hand-drawn maps', 'journals', 'letters', 'lists', 'notes', 'photographs', 'recordings', 'records', 'samples', 'ships logs', 'sketches', 'soundings', 'specimens', 'telegrams']. This incomplete archive of forms of annotation suggests that the photographic, cartographic, and textual collage that Girl and her lazy friend Owl voyage through is a manifestation of the notes kept by Girl. In addition to the



confusion of islands and soundings from the above mentioned chart of Scotia Bay and the South Orkney Islands (1967), and the horizon-less picture postcard image of coastal Nova Scotia, this visual collage also contains a slide-show of small square horizon-less photographs taken during the contextual enquiry undertaken at Struts Gallery, of coastal regions of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. The bulk of Girl's notes are contained in five horizontally scrolling texts animated by the same JavaScript used in the practice-led research outcomes *Along the Briny Beach*, presented in Section 1.2., *STRUTS*, Section 1.3., and *There he was, gone*. Section 3.2.1. Each of the horizontally scrolling texts in *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* annotates this mythical, implausible, impossible voyage toward ['seas unknown', 'the northern lights', 'the fountain of youth', etc.] through a different topographic mode of description.

The large grey text which appears at the bottom edge of the photograph in which the computer-generated narrative is situated appears to address the photographic directly in so far as it pertains to the sort of weather the photograph depicts. Picking up on a line of dialogue from the narrative text in which Girl addresses Owl - 'Don't fret, said the girl most studiously.' - this horizontally scrolling line of text begins: "don't fret / sea wet / mist and haze / come inland..." Later on in this slow-moving line, like legions of Romans before her, Girl observe a sea sluggish to the oar: "far flung / low slung / sea lung / a frozen tide / a breath suspended...".

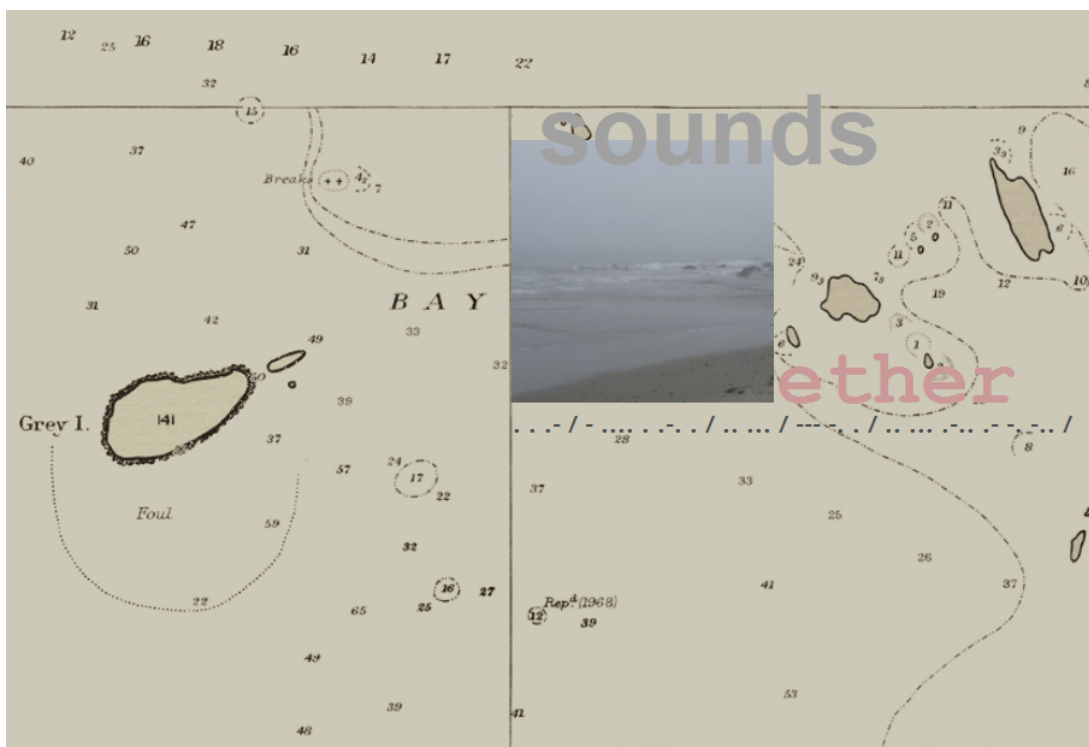
The smaller dark blue text which appears below the large postcard image, in the centre of the screen, détournes the practice-led research outcome "up from the deep," previously mentioned Section 3.2.1. and Section 3.2.2. These notes are

primarily concerned with cartographic representations of fears and desires: “avoid a void inked-in / where sea monsters swim”. Once again the double meaning of the term ‘legend’ is evoked, as legendary creatures, such as sea monsters and dragons intermingle with cartographic legends as suggested by the passage: “Legends warn of rip tides / shallows / shoals...” The topical island of Surtsey previously mentioned in Section 3.2.2. in relation to Bishop’s “Crusoe in England” re-emerges toward the end of this line of text: “mid-ocean smoke / a sudden sulphurous odour / a column of bubbles tunnels up from the deep.” The re-sounding of Surtsey here suggests that Owl and Girl have ventured into northern waters off Iceland.

The text in grey which appears above the small square images to the right of the screen is an erasure poem based on the second voyage attempted by Mr John Davis with others, for the discovery of the Northwest Passage (1586), as recounted in Hakluyt’s *Voyages and Discoveries* (1985). This line begins: “7 May: departed from Dartmouth.” Narrative resonance emerges between this reference to Dartmouth, Devon, and the afore mentioned picture postcard which frames the narrative of this voyage, which was photographed from Chebucto Head, a promontory across the harbour mouth from Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. This horizontally scrolling text is quotidian in two respects. First, it indicates days and months, giving a sense of the duration of this voyage, chronicling a passage of time spanning from May to October. Second, it details aspects of daily life onboard the [‘bottle-’, ‘beetle-’, ‘pea-’] green boat that are not mentioned in the narrative text. For example: “2 August: much troubled with a fly which is called mosquito.” In this line of horizontally scrolling quotidian journaling, the male voice of the narrator of the voyage attempted by Mr John Davis has been appropriated by Girl.

The pink text which appears to the right of the slide show of small square images also détournes words and phrases from “up from the deep,” with references to many of the transatlantic communications networks technologies first introduced in Chapter 2. For example, the following passage refers to the transmission and interception of ship-to-shore wireless messages, and the efforts to decode encrypted messages undertaken at Bletchley during WWII, as discussed in Chapter 2. Section 2.3.: “beeps / blips / tongue slips / loose lips / sink ships”. In the narrative context of *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl*, these references suggest these notes constitute a transcript of communications sent from the [‘lima-’, ‘grey-’ ‘grass-’] green [‘wooden shoe’, ‘dinghy’, ‘boat’], and a ship’s log of observations on small sounds in the enormity of the in-between space through which Owl and Girl travel. For example, the following passage refers to the vast etheric ocean of static which, as discussed in Chapter 2. Section 2.2., wireless technology revealed to the world: “silence / listen / into the ether / an ocean of static / an ocean of noise....” In *The Post Card* Derrida suggests: “The end of postal epoch is doubtless also the end of literature” (1987: 104). In this horizontally scrolling line of notes, the postal and telegraphic epochs merge: “full stop / post date / press here / press on / on board....” This line of notes also suggests a sense of urgency. The girl will use any means necessary to get her message across. The numbers which appear toward the end of this line of text are latitude and longitude coordinates charting a route roughly northward from Great Britain into the North Sea, the North Atlantic, and, as suggested in the introduction to *The Broadside of a Yarn* in Section 3.2., into territories both literary purely imaginary. That these coordinates trail off mid-ocean suggest that this is a doomed voyage, the fate of which will remain a mystery.

As discussed in relation to the horizontally scrolling texts in *Along the Briny Beach* in Section 1.2., the performance of all these texts running together on one page allowed me to read these texts in new ways. For example, resonance emerged between the lines détourned from the voyage of John Davis “29 June: a company of isles / full of fair sounds ... / within the sounds we sent our boats” and the sounds of ship-to-shore wireless communications détourned from “up from the deep” as shown in Figure 32.



[Figure 32. *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl*, J. R. Carpenter 2013. Screenshot.]

These new ways of reading led to an investigation of how the narrative, dialogic, and annotative voices presented in this web-based this machinic assemblage of desire might be re-sounded as an assemblage of collective enunciation in the context of live performance. The results of this investigation will be discussed in the next section.

### **3.2.3.1. Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl: A Script for Live Performance**

The web-based iteration of *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* situates a computer-generated narrative first presented in *The Broadside of a Yarn* in a broader context. The 'notes' contained in the horizontally scrolling text represent Girl's process of writing her own story, and also reveal my own process of reading on voyages into the North Atlantic undertaken over the past 2340 years. Further to the iterative process put forward by performance writing methodology, following the launch of the stand-alone web-based iteration of *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl*, I returned to the JavaScript generated narrative and four of the horizontally scrolling lines of text to consider how this machinic assemblage might form the basis of an assemblage of collective enunciation, that is to say, a script for live performance. Initially I attempted to formulate a script similar to that produced in response to *There he was, gone*. That practice-led research revealed a critical difference between the two works. The computer-generated narrative of *There he was, gone* is a dialogue, optimally performed by two separate voices; further, attribution of the two lines of horizontally scrolling text, written in two different tones, to two additional voices made for a well-balanced poly-vocal performance in four voices. Although *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* contains lines of dialogue spoken by both Owl and Girl, there is only one narrative voice. This voice is not Girl's but rather that of an author's. Consider the authorial voices discussed thus far: Defoe rewrites Selkirk's somewhat grim story into an adventure he can sell. Cotzee's Foe both writes and fails to write the story Susan Barton demands of him. Thevet, Glover, and bpNichol rewrite Marguerite's story, each in very different

ways. In a bid to undermine the authority of the authorial voice, in the web-based iteration of *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* I employ JavaScript to create a transient text, constantly rewriting the post card story of the voyage. Further, although the lines of horizontally scrolling texts address different topics in different tones, they are all presented as notes written by Girl. From these observations I concluded that the best way to address both the authorial narrative voice and the fragmented annotative voice would be to create a script for live performance comprising two distinct sections: narrative and notes. The resulting practice-led research outcome, *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl: A Script for Live Performance*, has been performed during *In(ter)ventions: Literary Practice at the Edge* at The Banff Centre, Banff, Canada, February 2013, and *Chercher le texte*, at Le Cube, Paris, France, September 2013, and is included in Appendix C. Note that chronologically, this performance iteration of *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* was created before *...and by islands I mean paragraphs* and informed the composition of *Eight Short Talks About Islands ...and by islands I mean paragraphs* discussed in Section 3.2.2.1.

The opening 'narrative' section of this script undermines the authority of an authorial voice by interrupting the linear narrative flow of its sentences with incoherence, indecision, vagaries, possibilities, and multiplicities by inserting some but not all of the variables contained in the JavaScript variable strings. For example, the first sentence of the 'narrative' section:

An owl and a girl most [adventurous', 'curious', 'studious'] ['set out', 'set sail', 'sailed away'] in a [bottle-green', 'beetle-green', 'pea-green'] ['boat', 'sieve', 'skiff', 'vessel']; a ['beautiful', 'ship shape', 'sea worthy'] ['craft', 'raft', 'wooden shoe'], certainly, though a ['good deal', 'wee bit', 'tad'] too ['small', 'high in the stern'] to suit the two of them.

In the 'notes' section of *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl: A Script for Live Performance*, fragments from the horizontally scrolling texts have been heterodyned, or forced together into one long text. On the page, the different lines of Girl's notes remain differentiated by indentation. For example:

June 15th:

mightily pestered with ice and snow

don't fret  
sea wet  
mist and haze  
come inland  
come hell or high water

uncomfortable  
untranslatable

come home sick  
come house wreck  
come sea wrack and ruin strewn ashore

no hope of landing

In the live performance of this script, distinctions between Girl's categories of observation - be they climactic, cartographic, quotidian, or pertaining to communication - dissolve into one voice. A new narrative of the voyage emerges. Though reconstituted from Girl's own notes, this narrative retains its incoherence - it refuses to coalesce into either a linear narrative or any conventional poetic form. Rather, it finds its strength in détournement, transmediation, and transformation. Neither the authorial nor the annotative constitute authoritative narratives. Rather, as suggested in Section 3.2., they form an axis between between what is said and what is done, between machinic assemblages and assemblages of collective enunciation. This axis is the interface between an incoherent aesthetics and an

incoherent politics. In the narrative resonance between these two modes the 'dirty regime of truth' returns with full force (Galloway 2012: 142). Susan Barton's instance on truth and her refusal of fixed definitions has set the stage for this new character, Girl, who has her own theories, story, line of inquiry.

*Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* is an outcome of practice-led research created in part through an engagement with the extended notion of *dérive* articulated in Section 3.2., that of a bookish drifting wandering. The notes Girl keeps merge with my own notes in this chapter, thereby echoing the assertion put forward in Section 0.4., that writing is research. As *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* is chronically the second-to-last practice-led research outcome of *Writing Coastlines*, this work contains many references to topics introduced in earlier works, and reconfigures them into a new assemblage.

The practice-led research outcomes presented in this chapter have shown that writing on the topic of place is a tautology. Topics *are* places. Stories *are* their settings. The computer-generated narrative dialogues presented herein are both *about* writing about in-between places, and are themselves located in in-between places. This is a placed-based writing that is itself in transit, moving through transatlantic communications networks, moving through time as well as through space, and moving through a continuum of forms. This writing is inflected with the syntax and grammar of print literature, antiquarian maps, code languages, and sailor's yarns. This writing is both haunted by and in the act of haunting other places and other texts. This writing resonates in the spaces between places separated by time, distance, and ocean, yet inextricably linked by generations of immigration.



## CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

The coastlines of Atlantic Canada and the United Kingdom are interfaces; they are striated, liminal spaces fraught with comings and goings. They present porous boundaries, subject to wind, tide, and erosion. Though separated by roughly 3400 kilometres of ocean, they share common history, economy, geology, and climate. A person can be of or from one coast while writing or thinking of another, but no one body can walk both of these coastlines at the same time. A juxtaposition of these geographically distant coastlines becomes possible within narrative, cartographic, generative, and networked conceptions of time, space, location and memory. Placing these coastlines side by side - through textual and cartographic critical analysis and through digital literary processes - reveals that these coastlines are joined, yoked, or linked by transatlantic communications networks engendered by generations of passage. These passages – of currents, ships, packets, and passengers – are akin to passages of writing. The communications networks that these passages travel across, beyond, and through are neither here nor there, but rather, here *and* there, and somewhere in between. The in-between state of these networks serves as a narrative context from which to examine a multi-site-specific place-based identity. The material and processual properties of these networks may be employed to create and disseminate stories of place and displacement which resonate between multiple media, forms, times, sites, variations, and locations in memory. The body of practice-led research outcomes presented in this thesis use these networks as sites of exchange and as narrative structures to communicate between places separated by time, distance, and ocean yet inextricably linked by

generations of immigration. As such, these practice-led research outcomes achieve the stated aim of this research - to build new networked narrative structures for stories of place and displacement that resonate between sites, confusing and confounding boundaries between physical and digital, code and narrative, past and future, home and away.

In the introduction to this thesis, the conceptually broad critical context and diverse corpus underpinning this interdisciplinary practice-led research was outlined. Through the identification and incorporation of strategies from print literature, digital literature, visual art, locative narrative, networked art, performance writing, dramaturgy, network theory, media archaeology, cartography, computer programming, translation, détournement, and dérive, a new theoretical framework for creating, disseminating, experiencing, and theorising multi-modal practice-led research outcomes which draw equally upon multiple artistic and scientific traditions was established.

Performance writing was put forward as an overtly interdisciplinary methodology particularly adept at expanding and adapting to accommodate new questions posed by new critical contexts. Throughout the course of this research, performance writing methodology was applied to the questions posed by the physical terrain of the coastlines on either side of the North Atlantic Ocean, to the generations of communications that have passed between these coastlines, to the transatlantic communications networks that those passages have engendered, to the ocean itself, and to the stories of place and displacement which resonate in this vast in-between space. In order to do this, performance writing methodology was used to negotiate between the methods and corpora of a number of emerging

fields. This contribution has extended the formalisation of performance writing methodology within an academic context; has expanded and adapted performance writing methodology through the integration of digital literary and media archaeological approaches; has offered new performance-writing-inflected thinking on interdisciplinarity, textual materiality, temporality, performativity, and nonlinearity to the fields of English literature, dramaturgy, digital literature, and media archaeology; and has resulted in a new hybrid methodology for the creation, dissemination, and theorisation of multi-modal multi-site-specific narratives of place and displacement. In particular, this research has contributed to expanding and adapting performance writing methodology to address the questions posed by the hybrid critical context required for the creation and dissemination of computer-generated narrative dialogues as web-based works, as live poly-vocal performances, and as page-based texts. This contribution to performance writing methodology has been recognised by the publication of “Call and Response: Toward a Digital Dramaturgy,” an article co-authored with Barbara Bridger, in an issue of *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice* dedicated to performance writing (reproduced in Appendix D).

Throughout the course of this research a conceptually broad, historically long, nonlinear, material, performative, iterative, and overtly interdisciplinary approach has been taken to creating, disseminating, and theorising a body of critical and creative practice-led research outcomes in a wide range of contexts. In each of the three chapters presented in this thesis a particular aspect of the research question was approached through the adoption of a conceptually-driven approach to formulating a critical framework and then utilising that framework to present a body of critical and creative practice-led research outcomes, which will now be

summarised here. Much of the critical writing and all of creative practice-led research outcomes presented in this thesis have been publicly presented, published, or performed in multiple contexts. Complete references for these contributions may be found in Appendix B.

In Chapter 1., physical and embodied aspects of the coastlines on either side of the Atlantic were considered in order to address the question: Can a juxtaposition of coastlines create a new narrative context from which to examine a multi-site-specific place-based identity? A double meaning of the term 'writing coastlines' was articulated, in which authors may be writing about coastlines, but the coastlines themselves are also writing. These coastlines were framed as interfaces; striated, liminal spaces, fraught with comings and goings. A corpus of literary texts was presented, in which coastlines are evoked to refer to a condition of being in-between places. This corpus combined authors, forms, and periods of writing which, in an academic English literature context, would not ordinarily be discussed together. This contribution has been recognised by the presentation of the paper "Writing Coastlines: The Operation of Estuaries, Islands and Beaches as Liminal Spaces in the Writings of Elizabeth Bishop," within the context of an English Literature conference at University of King's College, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, 9-12 June, 2011 (reproduced in Appendix D).

The research methods of walking as an embodied mode of reading and writing coastlines and reading a wide range of writing about walking were employed to interrogate 'writing coastlines' as both physical and conceptual terrains. This contribution to reading and writing about walking as an embodied form of writing has been recognised by the publication of *Wanderkammer: A Walk Through Texts* in

*Jacket2* (USA). Writing about *Wanderkammer* (in French) for *NT2* (Canada), Annabel Iser observes that *Wanderkammer* considers traditional reading practices within a process of artistic production in an electronic environment, and demonstrates how new forms of production and consumption of literary and artistic works can be developed (Iser 2012). The same could be said for all of the practice-led research outcomes presented in this thesis.

The two main practice-led research outcomes presented in Chapter 1. explored a multi-site-specific place-based identity through the juxtaposition of geographically distant coastlines. *Along the Briny Beach* juxtaposed literary coastlines to create a new narrative context in which a participant might perpetually read a generalised walk along a hypothetical beach. The web-based iteration of *Along the Briny Beach* re-contextualises quotations from well-known works of print literature in a digital literary context, and appropriates source code from a well-known work of digital literature, thereby achieving the aim of confusing and confounding boundaries between land and sea, writing and erasing, coming and going, print and digital text, and quoted and generated text. *Along the Briny Beach: A Script for Live Performance* discerns a narrative dialogic structure within these deliberate confusions. And *Sea Garden* exemplifies a narrative born of an iterative process, one which resonates between textual sites, that is to say, between the source texts which went into *Along the Briny Beach* and the textual bodies of its multiple iterations. These iterations emerge from a sustained engagement with a hybrid practice of reading radically different forms of texts. Through this practice-led research, this reading was transformed into a hybrid practice of writing. The practice of 'remixing' the source code of Nick Montfort's *Taroko Gorge* was

extended into new contexts through the introduction of inter-textuality, visual elements, and live performance. This contribution has been recognised by Janez Strehovec, who situates *Along the Briny Beach* within a body of works which “can be understood as a contribution to a broader concept of e-literature, which extends beyond hypertext toward different genres (from video games to performance) positioned at the intersections of e-literature and new media art” (Strehovec 2012: 82). This contribution has been further recognised by the diversity of contexts in which this work has been disseminated. The web-based iteration of *Along the Briny Beach* and *Sea Garden* were published in the interdisciplinary online journal *Boulder Pavement* (Canada), and included in the ELO 2012 exhibition *Electrifying Literature: Affordances and Constraints* (USA) and the *ELMCIP Anthology of European Electronic Literature*. *Along the Briny Beach: A Script for Live Performance* has been performed in both digital literature and performance writing contexts in Canada, the USA, and the Netherlands.

*STRUTS* approached the question of juxtaposition through a contextual enquiry of specific coastline striated by the many different territories of its past. I set out to consider how a juxtaposition of territories embedded within a highly striated coastline might create a new narrative context from which to examine a multi-site-specific place-based identity. Whereas in *Along the Briny Beach* practices of quotation were drawn upon, in *STRUTS* détournement was employed as strategy for appropriating and re-contextualising print texts in digital literary contexts. As a result, *STRUTS* presents a non-linear, intertextual, discontinuous, and multi-modal narrative through a combination of formal visual, textual, and programmatic elements, resulting in a web-based, rhythmic, algorithmic, computationally

composed image and text collage created from a collection of fragments of facts and fictions pertaining to the Tantramar region of the Canadian Maritimes. Through toponymy, the study of place names, the name Tantramar was re-sounded to reveal a complex topography of a highly striated coastline. *STRUTS* explored the use of multiple lines of horizontally scrolling text as a narrative structure for stories of place and displacement. Media archaeological methodologies were used to situate horizontally scrolling text in a broader artistic, technological, and digital literary context, and dramaturgical strategies for reading horizontally scrolling text were proposed. This contribution has been recognised by its exhibition in *Open Space*, at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

In Chapter 2., networked and generative approaches to establishing communication between the coastlines on either side of the Atlantic Ocean were considered in order to address the question: Can digital networks serve as narrative structures for writing resonating between sites, beyond nations? In order to contribute to expanding the critical context for web-based works of digital literature, digital networks were framed within a conceptually broad and historically long view of what transatlantic communications networks are and what they do in a wide range of contexts. Taking up McLuhan's call to redefine the character of our electronic age through the study of transportation as communication, attention was called to the close association between roads, including sea roads or routes, and the written word. A study of early maps revealed the emergence of a North American coastline, where once there was none, resulting in an address, a destination. A critical shift was observed, from centuries of life lived at sea to an imperialist era of travelling across the sea toward known destinations. The emergence of

transatlantic shipping networks was situated within an imperial imperative. The persistence of nautical terms such as 'shipping', 'packets', and 'ping' in digital network terminology suggests that transatlantic communications networks haunted by generations of past usage. Haunted media was put forward as theory of mediation able to address contemporary networked writing practices communicated across and through multiple media, multiple iterations, multiple sites, and multiple times. Haunted media was then used as a conceptual framework to present the practice-led research outcome *Whisper Wire*, both as a web-based work, and as a script for live performance.

In *Whisper Wire*, the practice of remixing, re-visiting, or 'haunting' the source code of Nick Montfort's computer-generated text *Taroko Gorge* was extended into the realm of live performance, incorporating audio elements and excerpts from a print publication. This contribution has been recognised by Leonardo Flores, who states: "J. R. Carpenter stands apart as the poet who has written the most works based on this code, making it respond to her own particular poetics" (2012). *Whisper Wire* contributed to confusing and confounding boundaries between physical and digital, code and narrative, and new media art and print literature by being presented both as a live poly-vocal performance in two voices at Inspace, a new media art gallery in Edinburgh, and as a print iteration published in *Rampike*, a long-standing Canadian literary journal.

Through the practice-led research resulting in the outcomes *Along the Briny Beach* and *Whisper Wire* the digital literary practices of creating and performing computer-generated text were identified as an inherently iterative mode of composition through which to explore language as a constructed system, subject to



variations. The contemporary digital literary practices of reading, writing, and performing computer-generated texts was then situated within a conceptually broad and historically long context dating from before the dawn of the computer and reaching beyond the traditional realm of the literary. This pragmatic approach considered text generation in relation to a world. It was observed that experimentation with combinatory, generative, or in other ways variable text has emerged within certain human generations as a mode of parody, satire, or critique; and that since the rise of the mainframe computer, literary authors and critics alike have expressed anxiety about the computer's ability to write narrative prose and poetry as well as humans. The emergence of mainframe computers was situated within a context of transatlantic communications networks. Two examples of early mainframe experiments in text generation undertaken by Christopher Strachey (1952) and Theo Lutz (1959) were considered in terms of both the human generations in which they were produced, and the processes through which they were created. In order to situate computer-generated text in general within a broader conception of 'the literary' (Hayles 2008: 45), and to situate Christopher Strachey's *Love Letters* in particular within the contemporary literary practices of remix, appropriation, and flarf poetry, I détourned a contemporary adaptation of Strachey's source code, resulting the practice-led research outcome *Writing Coastlines Letters*. Long-standing questions of parody and critical intention and the contemporary digital literary critical conception of these early works was thereby expanded to create a conceptual framework for the discussion of the practice-led research outcome *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*.

The variable operation of gender in the contemporary examples of computer-generated texts by Nanette Wylde and Nick Montfort was employed to explore the twinned notions of code and narrative, past and future, and home and away in concert with certain of binarisms presented by transatlantic communications networks, namely: call and response, and transmit and receive. This exploration was framed in terms of an extended notion of translation born of the application of the prefix *trans-* to a string of variables: translation, transmutation, transmediation, and transmission. The variables in the string *trans-* operate as compositional and structural elements in *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*, which, in turn, operates as both a JavaScript performed on screen and script for live performance – a dialogue between Call, Response, and Interference, or Here, There, and Somewhere in Between.

A formal investigation was undertaken into ways in which the syntax and grammar of code languages inflect born-digital literary texts by framing the exploration of the composition of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* in terms of a process of translation from Python to JavaScript. This investigation revealed an uncanny twinning of characters carried across from one text to another, and a shift from the ‘haunting’ of source code undertaken in *Along the Briny Beach* and *Whisper Wire* to a compositional process more akin to hacking – a mode of writing which transforms the process of its own production. This shift engendered a critique of the vagueness of remediation as a concept, and put forward transmediation as a concept more adept at addressing the both the relations between generations of computer-generated text and the incorporation of multi-media archival materials in this digital text. The ways in which digital networks inform the narrative structure of

*TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* were articulated through the notion of transience. This transient text is called into being through networks, its variables are stored in memory until they are called into sentences which act as signification engines. Thus this transient text is constantly resonating between the textons of the source code, the scriptons of the screen, the eyes and voices of the performers, and the ears of the audience.

This contribution has been recognised by the presentation of conference papers in the fields of both digital literature and media archaeology in France and the USA; by the publication of “Translation, transmutation, transmediation, and transmission in *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*” by *NT2* in Montreal; by live poly-vocal performances of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* in Canada, Netherlands, USA, and UK; by multiple print iterations published in visual poetry and experimental writing contexts in Austria and USA; by the translation of a print output into mezangelle undertaken by Mez published in *Vertaallab*; by the translation of the computer-generated text into French undertaken by Ariane Savoie published in *Revue bleuOrange*; by the publication of an academic article by Savoie on the process of translating this work as part of her PhD research at the University of Quebec at Montreal; and by Jussi Parikka’s mention of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* in a chapter in *Routledge Companion to British Media History* (Forthcoming 16 September 2014).

In Chapter 3., networked and generative approaches to establishing communication between the coastlines on either side of the Atlantic through networks extending across, beyond, and through the Atlantic were extended into cartographic and narrative spaces. The Atlantic Ocean was articulated as an in-

between space prone to resonance and re-sounding in order to address the question: What narratives resonate in the spaces between places separated by time, distance and ocean yet inextricably linked by generations of immigration? The conceptual instruments of location, narrative, and resonance in operation throughout this thesis were reformulated in this chapter. A re-sounding of the Greek term *topos* and the Latin term *locus* revealed a close association between narration and location, through which, narrative resonance was framed as a sympathetic vibration between sites.

A critical framework was established for outlining the processes of composition of the practice-led research outcome *The Broadside of a Yarn*. This work was composed in part through an engagement with the Situationist practice of *dérive*, with all its watery associations; and in part through a dialogic process of composing a multi-authored JavaScript code base to generate scripts live performance. This work remediates the broadside, through the public posting of an overtly impossible print map; and the sailor's yarn, through computer-generated performance scripts. The corpus of these scripts is a collection of variable strings containing fragments, or *topos*, of sea stories collected from print literature. The act of selection from these strings constitutes an event. Thus, these computer-generated narrative dialogues are eventalized, distributed processes. The resonant tension between the print map and the digital text, and between the spoken and written word, is located on an axis between machinic assemblages and assemblages of collective enunciation.

The process of creating, disseminating, and theorising multi-modal work which draws equally upon multiple artistic traditions was formalised by pursuing

this portion of the research within the professional context of creating a commissioned work. This contribution has been recognised by the presentation of various aspects of *Broadside of a Yarn* in a wide range of contexts, including: as work in progress at the penultimate ELMCIP seminar *E-literature in/with Performance*, 3-4 May 2012, Arnolfini, Bristol; as a gallery installation at the final ELMCIP exhibition *Remediating the Social* in Edinburgh November 2012; as a print map handout catalogued in The British Library BL Maps X.8002; as an article for general audience published by *The Literary Platform*; as two different conference papers presented at *Environmental Utterance*, Falmouth University, September 2012, and *Le Sujet Digital* at Paris XIII in November 2013; and as an academic article published in *Performance Research Journal* in March 2014 (reproduced in Appendix D).

The iterative nature and material approaches of performance writing methodology are born out in the three practice-led research outcomes to emerge from *The Broadside of a Yarn*. In the first of these, *There he was, gone.*, I set out to re-sound a number of the physical and embodied aspects of *Writing Coastlines* introduced in Chapter 1. and a number of the networked and generative aspects of *Writing Coastlines* introduced in Chapter 2. As with *STRUTS*, *There he was, gone.* is narrative which resonates in the spaces between versions of a place - between the names of a place and the many pasts those variant names suggest. A live data feed of the marine weather forecast for Funk Island and the contextualisation of the sounds the island emits within an early transatlantic shipping network situate *There he was, gone.* within a conceptually broad and historically long view of transatlantic communications networks. The locus of *There he was, gone.* was framed as both a physical coastline, and as a liminal space fraught with the comings and goings of a

great many bodies – the bodies of nesting, mating, shitting, screaming sea birds; the body of Marguerite, who was rescued at least; the bodies of her lover, her nurse, and the child Marguerite bore – the first European born on Canadian shore - all buried on the Isle of Demons, wherever it may be; the body of ‘he’ who is gone; and the bodies of the interlocutors who endlessly discuss this loss. The computer-generated narrative dialogue resonates between two interlocutors separated yet inextricably linked by all that they cannot say to each other about a recent traumatic event. Surrounding them, portions of the coastlines of Atlantic Canada are written and rewritten through oral story-telling, textual transmutation, and cartographic transposition of old world place names onto new-found lands.

*There he was, gone.* has been presented as a live poly-vocal performance in four voices in performance writing, experimental print literature, and digital literature contexts in Banff, Bristol, Edinburgh, and Paris. This contribution has been recognised by Barbra Bridger, who observed that her engagement with this work promoted a “rethinking of my dramaturgical engagement with process” (2013).

A juxtaposition of the coastlines on either side of the Atlantic reveals – in the space between – the narratives of a great many islands. In *...and by islands I mean paragraphs* the conceptual instrument of *topos* was employed to examine literary islands as narrative and cartographic spaces, toward an investigation of ‘islands’ (paragraphs) of computer-generated text as a narrative structure for narratives resonating in the spaces between places separated by time, distance, and ocean. A critical framework was developed for a process of reading and re-reading, searching and re-searching across a vast literary corpus, collecting topics pertaining to specific places and making them commonplaces. The resulting computer-generated ‘islands’

break the long line of novelistic narrative into topographical units and redistribute these within the computer's memory. Called as statement-events into digital processes, fragments of print texts are reconstituted as events occurring in a digital present which is also a break from the present. A new regime of signification emerges, in which authorship is distributed and text is eventalized. Thus this work is situated at the interface between an incoherent aesthetics, one which tends to unravel neat masses, including well-known works of print literature; and an incoherent politics, one which tends to dissolve existing institutional bonds, including bonds of authorship and of place. Through this practice-led research, new modes of recontextualizing print literature in digital literary contexts were developed. This contribution has been recognised by the publication of the work in *The Island Review*, an online journal with a general audience. In order to build upon the ways in which I had used scripts for live performance as texts through which to negotiate tensions between spoken and written text and the ways in which they syntax and grammar of code languages inflect written and spoken text, I set out to explore the talk as a performative form. This contribution has recognised by the presentation of *Eight Short Talks About Islands ...and by islands I mean paragraphs* as a performance of a conference paper in both performance writing and academic contexts in Canada and the UK, and as a print publication in a forthcoming issue of *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*.

In *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl*, the JavaScript code base developed for *The Broadside of a Yarn* was employed as a system of variations toward the composition of a computer-generated narrative which resonates in spaces between places separated by time, distance, and ocean, yet inextricably linked by

generations of – generations. The resulting narrative resonates between North and South Orkney, geographic territories born of different generations of exploration; and between Victorian constructions of femininity, in which Lear’s Pussy-Cat is a passive observer powerless to resist the charms of the Owl, and a very modern postulation of a girl most serious, studious, adventurous, who has her own theories, lines of inquiry, life to live. In this web-based work, narrative resonance may be located between the computer-generated narrative and the horizontally scrolling lines of notes; between an aesthetic of bookishness and the transient poly-vocality of sailors’ yarns; between an eventualized digital text which refuses the thing-like repose of the written word and a print iteration which serves as a script for live performance.

This contribution has been recognised by Canadian Parliamentary Poet Laureate Fred Wah, who included *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* in “Poetry Connection: Link Up with Canadian Poetry,” an initiative of aimed at making experimental writing practices accessible to a wide audience through the distribution of YouTube video recordings of readings and PDFs containing discussion topics, writing ideas, and other pedagogical aids (Wah 2013). *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* has been exhibited in an English literature context at *Modern Languages Association 2013*, Boston, MA, USA; and *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl: A Script for Live Performance* has been performed in a performance writing context at The Banff Centre (Canada) and in a digital literature context at Le Cube (Paris, France), and has been published in a creative writing context in *Fourteen Hills 19.2*, a print journal published by San Francisco State University. These contributions to the development of new modes of creating, disseminating, and



theorising print and live performance iterations of web-based digital literature respond to the questions posed at the very beginning of this thesis through the interrogation of Lewis and Nadeau's *Still Standing* in Section 0.3. This work can and has been presented and discussed in new media, digital literature, live performance, and print literature contexts. The juxtaposition of coastlines has created a new narrative context and new networked narrative structures for this story of place and displacement which draws equally upon multiple artistic and scientific traditions, and which can be created, disseminated, experienced, and theorised in multiple critical contexts across a continuum of forms.

*The Broadside of a Yarn* and the iterations to emerge from it turn broadside to tensions between print and digital, poetry and narrative, truth and fiction, speech and the written word, and aims for a soft spot in between them, a spot which is neither and both. This soft spot is precisely the in-between space this research aims to address. It sits at the axis between physical and digital, code and narrative, past and future, home and away, *langue* and *parole*, what is said and what is done, between what Deleuze and Guattari term machinic assemblages and assemblages of collective enunciation. This axis is the interface between an incoherent aesthetics and an incoherent politics, which Gallaway terms the 'dirty regime' of truth. This regime of signification invites a critical addendum to the question: What narratives resonate in the spaces between places separated by time, distance, and ocean, yet inextricably linked by generations of immigration? What narratives do we *want* to resonate in these spaces? The incoherence of the cartographic landscape presented by *There he was, gone.*, and the incoherent computer-generated narrative dialogue framed therein, creates a new narrative

context in which it becomes possible to talk about a thing which can't be talked about – a death, a loss, a body adrift at sea. The fluid composition of the textual islands presented by *...and by islands I mean paragraphs* creates a new narrative context in which a vast corpus of print literature can be selectively re-written. In this space, the concrete of Maitland's island can be displaced by a sea of grass; Crusoe's island can become Susan Barton's. The obstinacy, honesty, multiplicity, and impossibility of Susan Barton's generatively reconstituted narrative calls *Girl* into being. *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* creates a new narrative context in which the overwhelmingly male narratives of fishing, seafaring, exploring, discovering, and adventuring can be claimed by a new narrator, a girl most ['adventurous', 'ardent', 'courageous', 'curious'], with her own ['books to write', 'research', 'reasoning', 'theories'].

### **What next?**

The questions posed by *Writing Coastlines* may now be expanded and adapted to address new sets of questions posed by associated topologies. For example, narrative resonance may also be located in trans-channel communications networks (in the case of the English Channel), or trans-continental communications networks (in the case of the westward expansion of road, rail, mail, and telegraph networks engendered by the colonisation of North America). Beyond the physical terrain of coastlines and media specificity of communications networks, the questions posed by *Writing Coastlines* may now be applied to other dialects in which articulations of displacement resonate in an in-between space. For example, the question when does leaving end and arriving begin may be applied to the dialectic of before and

after in relation to a traumatic event resulting in articulations of displacement resonating in the in-between space of mourning.

The conceptually-driven framework of this thesis presents three inter-related yet distinct research strands, each of which may now be further developed into stand-alone research projects of book length. The print iterations of web-based practice-led research outcomes presented in Appendix C may now be developed into a print book of hybrid narratives inflected with the syntax and grammar of code languages. The new modes of composing and presenting scripts for live performance developed for *Along the Briny Beach*, *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* and *The Broadside of a Yarn* make it possible these web-based practice-led research outcomes to be performed by other performers. For example, students from the Alberta College of Art and Design performed *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* and *There he was, gone.* at The Banff Centre in 2013. Just as I quoted the source code of existing works of digital literature in *Along the Briny Beach* and *Whisper Wire*, so too now the source code of the web-based outcomes of this research may be cited, adapted, or translated by other others. For example, the the JavaScript I have used used to create the horizontally scrolling text has been cited as a source code for *Northern Venetians* (Smith 2013). The modular form of the gallery installation iteration of *The Broadside of a Yarn* is infinitely expandable - new map squares could be created to extend this line of inquiry into new topographical terrains. The computer-generated narrative dialogue authoring tool created for *The Broadside of a Yarn* may now be used as a networked narrative structure for creating and disseminating new web-based works. For example, this code base has been used to create a new web-based work called *Etheric Ocean* (Carpenter 2014). Drawing upon

the conceptual framework of haunted media put forward in Chapter 2., this work was composed to generate a script for live poly-vocal performance, which was subsequently performed at Somerset House 21 June 2014.

The aim of *Writing Coastlines* has been to create new narrative structures for stories of place and displacement. The conclusion of this thesis is that the methodology and practice-led research outcomes achieved the aims set out within the research question. The juxtaposition of the coastlines of Atlantic Canada and the United Kingdom has created a new narrative context from which to examine a multi-site-specific place-based identity. Digital networks have served as sites of exchange and as networked narrative structures for stories of place and displacement that resonate between sites, beyond nations. The theoretical framework presented by this thesis has identified and incorporated strategies from performance writing, literary fiction, digital literature, locative narrative, networked art practices, and media archaeology. The web-based practice-led outcomes of this research resonate in the spaces between places separated by time, distance, and ocean, yet inextricably linked by generations of immigration. The assemblage of critical and creative web-based, print, and live performance outcomes of this research confuse and confound boundaries between practice and theory, physical and digital, code and narrative, past and future, home and away. As is the case with all assemblages, this work remains fluid and is by no means finished.

## APPENDIX A: LINKS TO WEB-BASED PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH OUTCOMES

J. R. Carpenter (2011) *Wanderkammer: A Walk Through Texts*.  
<http://luckysoap.com/wanderkammer>

J. R. Carpenter (2011) "Muddy Mouth," *Speak*, an iOS app, by Jason E. Lewis & Bruno Nadeau (free download from iTunes)  
<https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/speak/id406078727?mt=8>

J. R. Carpenter (2011) *Along the Briny Beach*. <http://luckysoap.com/brinybeach>

J. R. Carpenter (2011) *STRUTS*. <http://luckysoap.com/struts>

J. R. Carpenter (2010) *Whisper Wire*.  
<http://luckysoap.com/generations/whisperwire.html>

J. R. Carpenter (2011) *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*.  
<http://luckysoap.com/generations/transmission.html>

J. R. Carpenter (2012) *The Broadside of a Yarn*. <http://luckysoap.com/broadside>

J. R. Carpenter (2012) *There he was, gone*. <http://luckysoap.com/therehewasgone>

J. R. Carpenter (2013) "up from the deep," *Know*, an iOS app, by Jason E. Lewis & Bruno Nadeau (free download from iTunes)  
<https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/know/id446777294?mt=8>

J. R. Carpenter (2013) *...and by islands I mean paragraphs*.  
<http://luckysoap.com/andbyislands>

J. R. Carpenter (2013) *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl*.  
<http://luckysoap.com/owlandgirl>

A web page containing active web links to all of these works as well as links to additional web-based references to these works has been provided at:

<http://writingcoastlines.net>

Backup: <http://luckysoap.com/writingcoastlines>

## APPENDIX B: PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS OF PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH OUTCOMES

### 2010

“Whisper Wire,” performance, with Jerome Fletcher, *Inspace... no one can hear you scream*, Edinburgh, UK, 31 October 2010.

### 2011

“Muddy Mouth,” P.o.E.M.M. [Poems for Excitable [Mobile] Media] published in an iPhone/iPad app called *Speak*, created by Jason E. Lewis and Bruno Nadeau at Obx Labs in Montreal, Canada, available for download from iTunes here:  
<http://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/speak/id406078727?mt=8#>

“Along the Briny Beach.” performance, with Jerome Fletcher, *E-Poetry Festival*, SUNY Buffalo, Buffalo, NY, USA. May 2011.

“Along the Briny Beach,” publication, *Boulder Pavement 4*, The Banff Centre, Banff, Alberta, Canada (www July 2011) <http://boulderpavement.ca/issue004/along-the-briny-beach/>

“Writing Coastlines: The Operation of Estuaries, Islands and Beaches as Liminal Spaces in the Writings of Elizabeth Bishop,” conference paper, presented at “‘It Must be Nova Scotia’ : Negotiating Place In the Writings of Elizabeth Bishop” University of King’s College, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, 9-12 June, 2011

“STRUTS,” publication, commissioned for “Third Hand Plays,” Brian Stefans, ed. *Open Space*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA, USA (www 15 September 2011) <http://blog.sfmoma.org/2011/09/third-hand-plays-struts-by-j-r-carpenter/>

“Whisper Wire,” publication, *Rampike Vol. 20 / No. 2* “Scientific Wonders.” University of Windsor, Windsor, ON Canada

“Performing Digital Texts in European Contexts,” commentary column, *Jacket2*, UPenn (www September 2011) <https://jacket2.org/commentary/j-r-carpenter>

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## 2014

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<http://nt2.uqam.ca/en/cahiers-virtuels/article/translation-transmutation-transmediation-and-transmission-transmission>

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"Call and Response: Toward a Digital Dramaturgy," article co-authored with Barbara Bridger, publication, *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, 6.3. 373-386

## APPENDIX C: PRINT ITERATIONS OF WEB-BASED PRACTICE-LED RESEARCH OUTCOMES

J. R. Carpenter (2011) "Muddy Mouth," P.o.E.M.M. [Poems for Excitable [Mobile] Media] published in an iPhone/iPad app called *Speak*, created by Jason E. Lewis and Bruno Nadeau at Obx Labs in Montreal, Canada, available for download from iTunes here: <http://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/speak/id406078727?mt=8#>

### Muddy Mouth

Packet ships steam letters open ocean  
New world maps rearrange old English place names  
Falmouth Nova Scotia floats on River Avon  
Avon is a Celtic word meaning river  
Foul mouth on river river  
School children joke

Brought up corrupting immigrant idioms  
New York vowels flat out arguing  
Scova Notian bass-ackward notions  
Montreal gender confusions  
England now, for good? for keeps?  
How many Englishes don't i speak?

Mutter tongues utter accent you ate words like basil either way  
I say long a tomato scrubbing Devon dirt red potatoes at the sink  
Patois muddying the waters  
So, to speak

Totnes is pronounced like Loch Ness only the monster is silent  
There are egrets, no regrets on the River Dart  
Ebb tides slide down silt thighs  
Darting currents carving a path through the night  
South to open muddy mouth to the sea

## Along the Briny Beach: A Script for Live Performance

Cast of Characters (in order of appearance):

The Carpenter  
The Walrus

Stage Instructions:

*The Walrus and the Carpenter stand facing one another at either edge of a large projection of Along the Briny Beach*  
[<http://luckysoup.com/alongthebrinybeach>].

CARPENTER:

Watching a coast as it slips by the ship is like thinking about an enigma.

WALRUS:

[Two verses from generator.]

CARPENTER:

There it is before you – smiling, frowning, inviting, grand, mean, insipid, or savage, and always mute with an air of whispering, *Come and find out*.

WALRUS:

[Three verses from generator.]

CARPENTER [start after 1<sup>st</sup> verse]:

Expedition up the River - Immense  
streams of basaltic lava - Fragments not  
transported by the river - Excavation of  
the valley - Condor, habits of - Erratic  
boulders of great size - Return to the ship

CARPENTER:

This coast was almost featureless, as if still in the making, with an aspect of monotonous grimness. Everything was withdrawn as far as possible, indrawn: the tide far out, the ocean shrunken, seabirds in ones or twos.

WALRUS:

Tucutuco - Molothrus, cuckoo-like habits - Tyrant-flycatcher - Mocking-bird - Carrion Hawks - Flamingoes - Sacred Tree - Sand Dunes - Saline incrustations.

CARPENTER:

The rackety, icy, offshore wind disrupted the formation of a lone flight of Canada geese.

WALRUS:

Scissor-beak - Kingfisher, Parrot, and Scissor-tail

CARPENTER:

No birds were flying overhead— There were no birds to fly.

WALRUS:

Penguin - Geese - Eggs of Doris

CARPENTER:

The edge of a colossal jungle, so dark-green as to be almost black, fringed with white surf, ran straight, like a ruled line, far, far away along a blue sea whose glitter was blurred by a creeping mist.

WALRUS:

Blue Haze - Heavy Rain -  
Musical Frogs -  
Phosphorescent insects -  
Noise made by a Butterfly –  
Entomology -  
Ants.

CARPENTER:

[Two verses from generator.]

WALRUS:

The sky was darker than the water -- *it* was the color of mutton-fat jade.

CARPENTER:

The sun came out for just a minute.

WALRUS:

The sun was shining on the sea, shining with all his might: he did his very best to make the billows smooth and bright— and this was odd, because it was the middle of the night.

CARPENTER:

The sun was fierce, the land seemed to glisten and drip with steam.

WALRUS:

Great Evaporation - Singular Incrustations - Burnished Rocks - Rocks, non-volcanic - Causes of discoloured Sea.

CARPENTER:

The oily and languid sea, the uniform sombreness of the coast, seemed to keep me away from the truth of things.

WALRUS:

Differences in the species or races on different islands - Tameness of the birds - Fear of man an acquired instinct.

CARPENTER:

[Two verses from generator.]

WALRUS [start after 1<sup>st</sup> verse]:

[Two verses from generator.]

CARPENTER:

It was cold and windy, scarcely the day to take a walk on that long beach.

WALRUS [to the audience]:

“O Oysters, come and walk with us! A pleasant walk, a pleasant talk, along the briny beach.”

CARPENTER:

The wind numbed our faces on one side; and blew back the low, inaudible rollers in upright, steely mist.

WALRUS:

The sea black and boiling - Stones twisted round - Great Wave - Area of volcanic phenomena - The connection between the elevatory and eruptive forces - Cause of earthquakes - Slow elevation of mountain-chains.

CARPENTER:

Along the wet sand, in rubber boots, we followed a track of big dog-prints (so big they were more like lion-prints).

WALRUS:

We were walking close at hand. We wept like anything to see such quantities of sand.

CARPENTER:

“If this were only cleared away, it would be grand!”

WALRUS:

“If seven maids with seven mops swept it for half a year, do you suppose that they could get it clear?”

CARPENTER:

“I doubt it.”

WALRUS:

[One verse from generator.]

CARPENTER:

The sea was wet as wet could be, the sands were dry as dry.  
You could not see a cloud, because no cloud was in the sky.

WALRUS:

We walked on a mile or so, and then we rested on a rock conveniently low.  
And all the little Oysters stood and waited in a row.

CARPENTER [to the audience]:

I wanted to get as far as my proto-dream-house, my crypto-dream-house, that crooked box set up on pilings, shingled green, a sort of artichoke of a house, but

greener (boiled with bicarbonate of soda?), protected from spring tides by a palisade of – are they railroad ties? (Many things about this place are dubious.)

WALRUS [to the audience]:

“The time has come to talk of many things: Of shoes and ships and sealing-wax, of cabbages and kings, and why the sea is boiling hot, and whether pigs have wings.”

CARPENTER:

Numerous gigantic extinct Quadrupeds -  
Recent Extinction - Longevity of Species -  
Fossils -  
Two Species of Ostrich -  
Habits of Oven-bird - Armadillos -  
Venomous Snake, Toad, Lizard -  
Hibernation of Animals -  
Habits of Sea-Pen -  
Antiquarian Relic.

WALRUS:

[One verse from the generator.]

CARPENTER:

The voice of the surf heard now and then was a positive pleasure, like the speech of a brother. It was something natural, that had its reason, that had a meaning.

WALRUS:

[One verse from the generator.]

CARPENTER:

I listened, I listened for the sentence, for the word, that would give me the clue to the faint uneasiness inspired by this narrative that seemed to shape itself without human lips in the heavy night-air of the river.

WALRUS:

“The night is fine, do you admire the view?”

CARPENTER:

The moon was shining sulkily, because she thought the sun had got no business to be there after the day was done—

WALRUS:

“It's very rude of him, to come and spoil the fun!”

CARPENTER:

We were cut off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled...

WALRUS:

Change in landscape -  
Geology - Tooth of extinct Horse -  
Effects of a great drought -  
Parana - Scissor-beak -  
Kingfisher, Parrot, and Scissor-tail -  
Revolution - State of Government.

CARPENTER:

[One verse from the generator.]

Excursion into the interior -  
Profound ravines -  
Succession of waterfalls -  
Number of wild useful plants -  
Bay of Islands -  
Missionary establishment -  
English weeds now run wild.

CARPENTER [to the audience]:

I'd like to retire there and do *nothing*, or nothing much, forever, in two bare rooms: look through binoculars, read boring books, old, long, long books, and write down useless notes, talk to myself...

WALRUS:

“A loaf of bread, is what we chiefly need. Pepper and vinegar besides, are very good indeed. Now if you're ready, Oysters dear, we can begin to feed.”

CARPENTER:

“Cut us another slice: I wish you were not quite so deaf— I've had to ask you twice!”

WALRUS:

We could not understand because we were too far and could not remember because we were travelling in the night of first ages, of those ages that are gone, leaving hardly a sign - and no memories.



CARPENTER:

But— impossible. And that day the wind was much too cold even to get that far, and of course the house was boarded up.

WALRUS:

“It seems a shame, to play them such a trick, after we've brought them out so far, and made them trot so quick!”

CARPENTER:

“The butter's spread too thick!”

WALRUS:

“I weep for you, I deeply sympathize.”

CARPENTER (to the audience):

“O Oysters, you've had a pleasant run! Shall we be trotting home again?”

WALRUS:

On the way back our faces froze on the other side. The drab, damp, scattered stones were multi-colored, and all those high enough threw out long shadows, individual shadows, then pulled them in again.

CARPENTER:

Perforated pebbles - Shepherd-dogs - Horses broken-in, Gauchos riding - Flocks of Butterflies - Aeronaut Spiders - Phosphorescence of the Sea - Port Desire - Geology of Patagonia - Types of Organisation constant - Change in the Zoology - Causes of Extinction.

WALRUS:

The lion sun was behind them – a sun who'd walked the beach with the last low tide, making those big, majestic paw-prints.

CARPENTER:

Compound animals. Good Success Bay - Return to the Ship - Return to England - Retrospect on our voyage.

## STRUTS

[<http://luckysoap.com/struts>]

Source texts for *STRUTS*, as discussed in Chapter 1. Section 1.3.

STRUTS. STRUCTURAL MEMBERS, AS IN TRUSSES, PRIMARILY INTENDED TO RESIST LONGITUDINAL COMPRESSION. EMBANKMENTS MEANT TO PREVENT EROSION OF SHORELINES. BRACES OR SUPPORTS BY MEANS OF STRUTS OR SPURS. SPURS. OBLIQUE REINFORCING PROPS OR STAYS OF TIMBER OR MASONRY. SPURS ON. ON THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT. ON IMPULSE. SPURS TO ACTION. SPURS TO STRUT. STRUTS. WALKS WITH HEAD ERECT AND CHEST THROWN OUT, AS IF EXPECTING TO IMPRESS OBSERVERS. WITH PROUD BEARING. PARADES, FLOURISHES. STRUTS AND SWAGGERS. BY MEANS OF STRUTS. STRUTS GALLERY. SUPPORTS BY MEANS OF STAYS. STRUCTURAL MEMBERS SPUR STRUTS TO ART ACTION. STRUTS WALKS WITH HEAD ERECT ALONG LONGITUDINAL EMBANKMENTS. SEAWALLS BRACED BY SPURS. STAYS. PREVENT EROSION. OF MOMENTS. REINFORCING OBLIQUELY.

THESE STRUTS SUPPORT THE SEAWALL THAT PROTECTS THE FORESHORE IN FRONT OF LINDA RAE DORNAN'S COTTAGE FROM THE NORTHUMBERLAND STRAIT. THE SEAWALL WAS SEVERELY DAMAGED 21 DECEMBER 2010 DURING THE THIRD NOR'EASTER IN AS MANY WEEKS. IT WAS A FULL MOON, AND A LUNAR ECLIPSE. WINDS GUSTED TO 100 KILOMETRES AN HOUR. THE TIDE GAUGE AT CHARLOTTETOWN SHOWED 3.494 METRES ABOVE CHART DATUM AT 21:40. THE TIDE GAUGE AT SHEDIAC WAS DESTROYED BY THE SURGE. MANY STRUTS IN LINDA'S SEAWALL WERE TORN OUT OR TWISTED. THE HOLES WERE FILLED WITH STONES. A RUG WAS LAID, COVERED WITH RIP RAP AND NEW SOIL, AND SEEDED WITH GRASS. BOULDERS ON THE BEACH SUPPORT THE SEAWALL NOW, THOUSANDS OF DOLLARS WORTH. THE WALL ITSELF AND THE STRUTS THAT SUPPORT IT ARE NO LONGER VISIBLE.

No part of Nova Scotia is more than 50 kilometres from the sea. Thousands of kilometres of coastline comprised of innumerable islands, headlands, coastal estuaries, and inlets almost entirely surround the province, giving it a distinctive character. Three-quarters of the population of Nova Scotia live within 10 kilometres of salt-water. The sights, sounds, and odours of the sea, marshes, and beaches dwell in the mind of each inhabitant. No phenomenon connected with the sea is more familiar and more striking than the rise and fall of the tides. Twice a day the water recedes from the coast and twice a day it returns: rising against the rocky cliffs and over the sandy beaches, rushing up the tidal rivers, or creeping along innumerable channels among the coastal marshes. The rhythm of daily life is often determined by the tides. Harbours empty entirely, then quickly fill. Wharves surrounded by water at one time of day, may be high and dry at another. No one in a boat should approach or depart from shore without knowing the stage of the tide and the flow of the tidal currents, and no visit to the shore should be planned without knowing whether the water is moving in or is receding down the beach.

A Bay. The Bay. To Bay. At Bay. On a body of water forming an indentation of the shoreline larger than a cove but smaller than a gulf extending into woodland comprising various laurel-like trees and shrubs and several magnolias, an animal of reddish-brown colour, having a reddish-brown body, wearing an honorary garland, askew, turned to face its pursuers. Partially surrounded by hills, no longer in any position to flee, on the deck, in the space between the anchor windlass and the stern, the bay let out a deep and prolonged howl.

The Northumberland Strait is a tidal body of water separating Prince Edward Island from mainland Canada. It extends west-northwest to east-southeast from Richibucto Cape, New Brunswick, to Cape George, Nova Scotia, with a length of 223 kilometres and a width of between 13-43 kilometres.

The Northumberland Strait was formed when pre-glacial and glacial valleys eroded into red sandstone and siltstone lead from both ends into the floor of the Gulf of Saint-Lawrence. The retreat of glacial ice from the area about 13,000 years ago was followed by flooding but isostatic uplift kept the sea at bay. What is now the central area of the strait was then an isthmus, joining the opposite coasts. By 5000 years ago, the rising sea level had flooded this land link, establishing the strait, which has been deepening slowly. Its current depth is 68 meters at its eastern end, but less than 20 meters over the large central area that was once an isthmus.

The Northumberland Strait is one of Canada's most volatile marine environments. Its generally shallow depth gives it the warmest summer water temperature in eastern Canada, which makes it an ideal environment for summer tourist activity as well as a prolific shellfish and lobster fishery. These shallow depths also cause strong tidal currents and water turbulence. The Northumberland Strait can experience extreme storm surges and is an area of rapidly rising sea level. Its shores support major agricultural, peat harvesting and forestry industries, as well as intensive cottage development, all of which encourage soil run off. Its waters have long been notorious for their high concentration of suspended red silt and clay - in fact, early French settlers called the Strait "la mer rouge" (the red sea).

Over the past few years, fishers in the Northumberland Strait have been noticing more sediment on their lobster traps as they pull them up, more sediment overall in the water, and the lobster fishery has been slumping. Some link the timing of these changes to the completion of the Confederation Bridge in 1997. In the face of these concerns, the Northumberland Strait Ecosystem Working Group, which is responsible for setting the research program for the Strait, asked scientists at Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) to clarify whether or not there actually is increased sediment in the water. The result was a unique partnership between the scientists and the fishing community. It was also a quick response, at little cost, to a pressing problem.

Big questions remain, with no easy answers. Is there a link between the lobsters' lifecycle, abundance fluctuations and sediment in the water, or is it just part of a natural cycle? Is there any link to pollutants entering the water from run off? And what is the impact, if any, of the Confederation Bridge? Historical records for the entire southern Gulf of Saint Lawrence show that commercial lobster catches were strong in the early 1900s, but slumped three-fold by the 1920s and stayed that way until the 1970s, at which point there was a sharp increase in the

population. This peaked in 1991 with record catches, but has been decreasing since. Lobster catches in the Northumberland Strait experienced almost identical fluctuations over the same period. No one knows for sure what triggered these past slumps and booms.

Part of the magic conjured by the incantation of place names resides in the narrative resonance between the now of the speech-act and the many pasts of the places named. Tantramar. The Tantramar River. The Tantramar Marsh. Near Sackville, New Brunswick. You know, that windy bit of road. Where, at night, the eerie red lights of the radio relay towers glow. In Westmorland County, on the southern part of the Isthmus of Chignecto, which joins the peninsula of Nova Scotia to the mainland. To Canada. Atlantic Canada. The Maritimes. The east coast.

The town of Sackville was first known as Pre des Bourgs and the surrounding region as Beaubassin by the Acadians who settled there in 1672. Pre des Bourgs, Beaubassin, Acadie, Nouvelle France, the New World. The Beaubassin seigneurie, granted in 1684, was named after Michael Leneuf de Beaubassin the elder (1640-1705), an officer in the French Navy who seized three English vessels from Boston that were taking on coal at Cape Breton. Beaubassin is a place named after a person named after a place, a location located within the discourse of residency. When the British expelled the Acadians from Acadie in 1755, their name became their nation and travelled with them. The meaning of all the named locations they left behind them changed. The region formerly known as Beaubassin is now called Tantramar. Sackville, New Brunswick, is located on a tributary of the Tantramar River, which feeds the Tantramar Marsh, which spreads inland from the Bay of Fundy for 10 kilometres. In Joseph Des Barres's *Atlantic Neptune*, a collection of sea charts published by the Royal Navy in 1776, the Tantramar River is named the Tintamar River. A Spanish spelling makes no sense given the Mi'kmaq, Acadian, English history of this place. But the meaning "Red Sea" does. The Tantramar River flows into the Cumberland Basin, which flows into Chignecto Bay, which flows into the Bay of Fundy, which has the highest tides in the world. When the tide goes out, it goes way out and keeps on going. It leaves behind acres of salt marsh, salt hay thriving in hard, rich, sticky, red soil, and beyond that, red mud flats glistening mile after mile, where, as the part Nova Scotia poet Elisabeth Bishop writes, "silted red, sometimes the sun sets facing a red sea, and others, veins the flats' lavender, rich mud in burning rivulets." Although it is possible to entertain for a moment the notion that the name Tantramar was assigned to this red mud glazed with sky by a cartographer of Spanish origin, or one who had previously written the coastlines of Spanish dominions, the name Tintamar written in the *Atlantic Neptune* is most certainly a miss-spelling of the Acadian French name Tintamarre, which in turn was both a toponomic transformation of the Mi'kmaq name Tatamalg, meaning Scrambled River, and a reference to the noisy flocks of migratory birds which feed on the Tantramar marshes. Today the marshes are the site of two bird sanctuaries, one of which carries the old Acadian name Tintamarre.

A tropical cyclone struck eastern Canada's Bay of Fundy region on the night of October 4-5, 1869. It caused extensive destruction to port facilities and communities along the Bay of Fundy coast in both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia

as well as in Maine, particularly in Calais, St. Andrews, St. George, Saint John, Moncton, Sackville, Amherst, Windsor and Truro. The gale destroyed miles of the newly completed Windsor and Annapolis Railway along the Minas Basin near Horton and Wolfville, Nova Scotia.

Much of the devastation was attributed to a two-metre high storm surge, which coincided with a high perigean spring tide in the Bay of Fundy, which has one of the highest tidal ranges in the world. The storm surge produced waves which breached dykes protecting low-lying farmland in the Minas Basin and in the Tantramar Marshes, sending ocean waters surging far inland, inundating farms and communities. Sailing ships in various harbours were tossed about and/or broken up against wharves and breakwaters, which were also destroyed. The Saxby Gale storm surge gave Burntcoat Head, Nova Scotia the honour of having highest tidal range ever recorded.

The storm (which pre-dated the practice of naming hurricanes) was given the name "Saxby" in honour of Lieutenant Stephen Saxby, Royal Navy. Lieutenant Saxby, a naval instructor and amateur astronomer, had written a letter of warning, published December 25, 1868 in London's *The Standard* newspaper, in which he noted that the astronomical forces predicted for October 5, 1869, would produce extremely high tides in the North Atlantic Ocean during the height of hurricane season: "I now beg leave to the state, with regard to 1869, that at seven a.m., on October 5, the moon will be at that part of her orbit which is nearest to the earth. Her attraction will, therefore, be at its maximum force. At noon of the same day the moon will be on the earth's equator, a circumstance which never occurs without mark atmospheric disturbance, and at two p.m. of the same day lines drawn from the earth centre would cut the sun and moon in the same arc of right ascension (the moon's attraction and the sun's attraction will therefore be acting in the same direction); in other words, the new moon will be on the earth's equator when in perigee, and nothing more threatening can, I say, occur without miracle. (The earth, it is true, will not be in perihelion and by some 16 or 17 seconds of semi-diameter.) With your permission, I will, during September next, for the safety of mariners, briefly reminding your readers of this warning. In the meantime there will be time for the repair of unsafe sea walls, and for the circulation of this notice by means of your far-reaching voice, throughout the wide world."

Lieutenant Saxby followed this warning with a reminder, published on September 16, 1869, to *The Standard* in which he also warns of a major "atmospheric disturbance" that would coincide with the high water level at an undetermined location. Many newspapers took up Saxby's warning in the coming days. In a monthly weather column published October 1, 1869 in Halifax's *The Evening Express*, amateur meteorologist Frederick Allison relayed Lieutenant Saxby's warning for a devastating storm the following week.

Despite the warning, many readers throughout the United Kingdom, Canada, Newfoundland and the United States dismissed Saxby. There were frequently gales and hurricanes during the month of October. The fact that the high tides occurred throughout the North Atlantic basin was unremarkable and astronomically predictable, except for their coinciding with the hurricane, which struck the Gulf of Maine and Bay of Fundy to produce the devastating storm surge. Lieutenant Saxby's predictions were considered quite lunatic at the time. Some believed that his

predictions were founded upon astrology, which was not the case.

A gale did strike, on the evening of October 4th, 1869. By all accounts weather that afternoon had given no cause for uneasiness. The day had dawned without the slightest sign of anything unusual or foreboding. Along the New Brunswick coast, from Saint Stephen to Saint John, water lapped gently against the wharf pilings, under a blanket of fog, which later cleared, giving way to a warm sunny morning. A perfect Autumn day.

Then, about noon, at the entrance to harbour at Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, whitecaps began to appear. A slight breeze from the southwest steadily gathered strength. As the afternoon advanced, the heat became oppressive. Out by the Yarmouth lighthouse, at The Churn, on the way to Cape Forchu, the waves began to boom. Soon the Michaelmas daisies were wet with drifting spray. Southward, the sky loomed dull and leaden, darkening as the afternoon wore on, the rising wind scudding storm clouds. By five o'clock the wind reached hurricane force. By six, trees were falling, as if felled by an axe. By nine o'clock the Saxby Gale was at its height.

As the gale raced up the Bay of Fundy it swept the water on ahead and forced it into the inner bays and inlets - into Shepody Bay, Cumberland Basin and Minas Basin. Oddly enough, it hardly affected Nova Scotia's Atlantic coast - the South shore and the Eastern shore, but confined itself to communities along New Brunswick's Fundy coast - and the inner reaches of Minas Basin and Chignecto Bay.

An account of the storm appeared in the Amherst Gazette three days later, which said that: "the tide must have been eight feet above the ordinary high-water level and four feet above the dykes." Elsewhere it was reported that, in the town of Annapolis, Nova Scotia, site of the first European over-winter settlement in North America, water was knee-deep on Lower Saint George Street. At Grand Pre, site of the British expulsion of the Acadians, the tide breached the Great Horton Dyke, flooding 3,000 acres and drowning herds of cattle. Windsor's Water Street flowed like a canal in Venice, and the Windsor Baptist Church had seven feet of water in the vestry. At Moncton, New Brunswick, at the foot of South King Street, the tide rose nine feet over the Harris wharf up onto the warehouses destroying supplies of salt, flour and other perishables.

The greatest destruction of all took place on the Tantramar Marshes on border between New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Cattle and sheep were still out to pasture. As the wind rose to gale force they huddled in the lee of the many haystacks and hay barns that dotted the marshes, well protected, it seemed, by the outer dykes that rose 25 feet high. Some of their owners, however, grew worried and decided to go out and inspect their hay barns only to discover that the dykes were crumbling. A great tidal wave inundated the Tantramar Marshes sweeping before it a churning floatsam of hay barns and haystacks and struggling animals. Farmers trying to rescue livestock from fields along shorelines drowned after dykes were breached.

No one really knows how many lives were lost in that gale. Certainly over 100 people were killed in the Maritimes alone. In the churchyard at Hillsborough, in Albert County, New Brunswick, there is a whole section of tombstones raised to the victims of the Saxby "tide", as some called it, because it was the phenomenal tide that accounted for most of the casualties. In Moncton there's a marker at Boreview Park, along with a plaque indicating the height of the tide as it stood just before midnight, a moment before the 5th of October 1869.

## WHISPER WIRE

[<http://luckysoap.com/generations/whisperwire.html>]

J. R. Carpenter (2011) "Whisper Wire," print publication, *Rampike Vol. 20 / No. 2* "Scientific Wonders." University of Windsor, Windsor, ON Canada

*Whisper Wire* is an *unheimlich* poem, a code medium sending and receiving un-homed messages, verse fragments, strange sounds, disembodied voices, ghost whispers, distant wails and other intercepted, intuited or merely imagined attempts to communicate across vast distances through copper wires, telegraph cables, transistor radios and other haunted media. The source code of *Whisper Wire* is based on Nick Montfort's elegant javascript poetry generator, *Taroko Gorge*, and the content is drawn from the early history of electromagnetic telecommunication technologies.

The first official test of the electromagnetic telegraph line was performed by Samuel Morse before the U.S. Supreme Court on May 24, 1844. The first question posed through this new medium was, "What hath God wrought?" Not God, but a colleague of Morse waiting in Baltimore received this message and returned, not an answer, but rather, the same question repeated back in confirmation. Repetition is one of the hallmarks of the uncanny. The *doppelganger* is another. The relationship between sender and receiver "is intensified by the spontaneous transmission of mental processes from one of these persons to the other – what we would call telepathy – so that the one becomes co-owner of the other's knowledge, emotions and experience." (Freud, 2003, 141-14). Electronic telecommunication technologies twin notions of here and there, question and answer, living and dead. If intelligence and consciousness can be transmitted independent of the body, if subjects can be reconstituted "in spirit" through technology, surely the dead can speak to the living though electromagnetic means. This perception of electromagnetic communication as a disembodied communion with otherworldly presences persisted, even as telegraph and telephone networks girdled the globe with cables, signals, switches and stations.

December 14, 1901, three short sharp clicks skipped this grid. No talk of God, this time the alphabet served as a data source for this transmission. The Morse letter S travelled from Poldu, Cornwall -- not troubled at all by the curvature of the Earth or the salt wet wind of the Atlantic -- to arrive at Saint-John's, Newfoundland, where it was received by a telephonic headset held to the highly sensitive receiver of Guglielmo Marconi's waiting ear. Or so we hear. Was the Morse letter S really appended to Saint-John's that day? Hoax rumours abound. Some suggest that what Marconi heard was actually a harmonic -- a connection, yes, but not a transmission. The Morse S was no doubt chosen for its ease of intelligibility. But three dots are, after all, an ellipsis, a grammatical indication of an intentional omission. Distance distorts. Distance distends. We hear what we need to.

Wireless technology revealed a vast, unfathomable ocean of silence and static to the world. Deep listening into that void has returned many an uncanny result.

## TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]

[<http://luckysoap.com/generations/transmission.html>]

J. R. Carpenter (2012) "TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]," print publication, *A Global Visuage*. Jörg Piringer & Günter Vallaster, eds. Vienna: edition ch (www)  
<http://editionch.at/blog/2012/09/29/neuerscheinung-jorg-piringer-und-gunter-vallaster-ed-a-global-visuage/>

'Begin Transmission.'; +choose(w) +'?'; 'With a ' +choose(question) + '!'; 'What ' +choose(start) + 's from a ' +choose(question) + '?'; choose(season) + ' ' +choose(weather) + ' on the ' +choose(water) + '!'; choose(distant) + ' ' +choose(landscape) + 's, to ' +choose(beckon) + ' ' +choose(usthem) + '!'; choose(havent) + ' the ' +choose(necessary) + ' ' +choose(cases) + ' been ' +choose(prepared)+ ' yet?'; 'The ' +choose(operator)+ ' +choose(transmit)+ 's ' +choose(hisher) + ' ' +choose(condolence) + 's.'; 'Why ' +choose(cant) + ' the ' +choose(traveller)+ 's ' +choose(need)+ ' ' +choose(more)+ ' +choose(tickets) + '?'; choose(wethey)+ ' +choose(waited)+ ' +choose(numbers)+ ' +choose(time) + '!'; choose(provisions) + ' ' +choose(ranlow)+ ', or so the ' +choose(stories) + 's seem to ' +choose(say) + '!'; choose(w) + ' did the ' +choose(operator)+ ' ' +choose(transmit)+ ' ' +choose(hisher)+ ' +choose(information)+ ' +choose(of) + ' ' +choose(past) + ' ' +choose(passage) + 's?'; 'The ' +choose(transatlantic) + ' ' +choose(network) + ' ' +choose(cant) + ' ' +choose(hear) + ' these ' +choose(strange) + ' ' +choose(sound) + 's.'; choose(might) + ' the ' +choose(operator) + ' ' +choose(now) + ' come to ' +choose(know) + ' this ' +choose(landscape)+ '?'; 'The ' +choose(passage) + ' from ' +choose(place)+ ' ' +choose(proved) + ' ' +choose(harsh) + 's.'; 'Conditions ' +choose(are) + ' ' +choose(conditions) + 's.'; 'Receiving ' +choose(shining) + ' ' +choose(static) + ' ' +choose(receiving)+ '...'; 'Who can ' +choose(know)+ ' the ' +choose(water) + ' in ' +choose(weather) + ' like this?'; choose(amount) + ' ' +choose(part) + 's of the ' +choose(novelist) + 's ' +choose(stories) + ' ' +choose(are) + ' ' +choose(prepared) + 's.'; choose(might) + ' ' +choose(traveller) + 's ' +choose(now) + ' ' +choose(leave) + ' these ' +choose(landscape) + 's?'; choose(past) + ' ' +choose(traveller)+ 's ' +choose(wrote)+ ' ' +choose(maps)+ 's.'; +choose(numbers) + ' were from ' +choose(place) + 's.'; choose(w)+ ' is it that ' +choose(wethey) + ' ' +choose(always) + ' seem to ' +choose(leave) + ' ' +choose(part) + 's from the ' +choose(information)+ '?'; choose(transatlantic) + ' ' +choose(network) + 's take ' +choose(time) + ' to ' +choose(say) + ' the ' +choose(necessary) + ' ' +choose(stories) + 's.'; choose(havent) + ' ' +choose(wethey) + ' +choose(communicated) + '?'; choose(condolence + 's were ' +choose(sent) + ' ' +choose(time) + ' ago. '; 'There ' +choose(might) + ' have been ' +choose(sign) + 's.'; choose(strange) + ' ' +choose(sound) + 's, ' +choose(static) + ' on the ' +choose(screen) + 's.'; 'A ' +choose(sound) + ' ' +choose(receiving) + '...'; 'Did ' +choose(you) + ' ' +choose(hear) + ' that ' +choose(sound) + 's?'; choose(distant) + ' ' +choose(network) + 's have ' +choose(communicated) + 's.'; 'One ' +choose(traveller) + ' ' +choose(beckon) + 's the ' +choose(operator) + 's.'; 'Which words of ' +choose(condolence) + ' ' +choose(might) + ' ' +choose(heshe) + ' ' +choose(say) + 's?'; choose(novelist) + 's ' +choose(stories) + 's ' +choose(of) + ' ' +choose(distant) + ' ' +choose(landscape) + 's ' +choose(always) + ' ' +choose(start) + ' from these ' +choose(horizon) + 's.'; choose(might)+ ' +choose(past)+ ' +choose(traveller) + 's ' +choose(relative) + 's ' +choose(need) + ' ' +choose(more) + ' ' +choose(information) + ' from ' +choose(usthem)+ '?'; choose(possibly) + ' ' +choose(season) + ' ' +choose(amount)+ ' +choose(maps)+ ' +choose(might) + ' be ' +choose(wrong) + 's.'; choose(w) + ' was the ' +choose(proximity) + ' ' +choose(horizon) + ' ' +choose(wrote) + '?'; 'The ' +choose(proximity) + ' ' +choose(landscape) + 's ' +choose(resemble) + ' those of ' +choose(place)+ 's.'; 'In these ' +choose(strange) + ' ' +choose(maps) + 's, the ' +choose(water) + ' is ' +choose(always)+ ' ' +choose(shining)+ 's.'; choose(but) + '... does that ' +choose(say) + ' ' +choose(past) + ' ' +choose(question) + 's?'; choose(sign) + 's of ' +choose(distant) + ' ' +choose(weather) + ' ' +choose(start) + ' on the ' +choose(screen) + 's.'; 'Is the ' +choose(network) + ' ' +choose(working) + '?'; choose(wethey) + ' ' +choose(suspect) + ' it's ' +choose(working) + 's.'; 'Please try again.'; main.appendChild(last); function produce\_stories()



**There he was, gone. Script for Live Performance**

Column 1: two voices facing each other centre stage, reading alternating lines from <http://luckysoap.com/therehewasgone>  
 Columns 2 & 3: two voices reading from paper script. Read through twice. Skip the first verse on the second read through.

<p>Listen.          It's too early.          Don't you hear anything?          It's only the spring wind over the waves.          No. No, you've got wind in your eyes.          Tell me then. Where was he lost?          After days on the Atlantic...          Near Trouty...          Still floating?          Wait.</p> <p>Listen.          It's too long ago.          Don't you remember something?          It's only the summer freezing rain over the swell.          Yes. Only, you've got freezing rain in your sails.          Tell me then. Where was he found?          After seasons on the North Atlantic...          Up near Swale Island...          Still coasting?          Wait.</p> <p>Listen.          It's too late.          Can't you remember that?</p>	<p>we arrive and we have only just ceased leaving</p> <p>we coast along edges          ledges          legible lines          caught in a double bind of writing and erasing</p>	<p>set sail          on home sick          ship shape          house wreck</p>
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<p>It's only the November breezes over the waves.          Maybe. Only, you've got rain in your sails.          Tell me then. How was he found?          After months on the surf...          Up near Little Heart's Ease...          Still searching?          Wait.</p> <p>Listen.          It's too much.          Can't you hear something?          It's only the winter showers over the coast.          Maybe. Only, you've got hail in your hands.          Tell me then. Why was he found?          After days on the coast...          Over by Willis Island...          Still rowing?          Wait.</p> <p>Listen.          It's too far.          Don't you remember anything?          It's only the autumn rain over the channel.          Maybe. Maybe, you've got storms in your hair.          Tell me then. Where was he lost?          After weeks on the North Atlantic...          Near Plate Cove...          Still rowing?          Wait.</p>	<p>we write questions</p> <p>call answers</p> <p>keen for replies</p> <p>one coastline implies another, implores a far shore</p> <p>sure, we've set foot here before</p> <p>horizon line far as eye can see islands sea</p> <p>between you and me an endless unknown ocean</p>	<p>steer by star light</p> <p>dead of night reckoning</p> <p>know which way the wind blows</p> <p>know where the fish are</p> <p>know where the rocks aren't</p> <p>set sail</p>
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## **Eight Short Talks About Islands...and by islands I mean paragraphs**

[<http://luckysoap.com/andbyislands>]

J. R. Carpenter (2014) "Eight Short Talks About Islands ...and by islands I mean paragraphs," performed at *Int(er)ventions: Literary Practice at the Edge*. The Club, The Banff Centre, Banff, Alberta, Canada, 11 February 2014, and at *Modular Form: A Symposium on Creative Practice*. Roehampton University, in conjunction with Writing-PAD, London, UK, 14 March 2014

### *Introduction*

Flocks of books open and close, winging their way web-ward. A reader is cast adrift in a sea of white space veined blue by lines of longitude, of latitude, of graph, of paper. The horizon extends far beyond the bounds of the browser window, to the north, south, east and west. Navigating this space (with track pad, touch screen, mouse, or arrow keys) reveals that this sea is dotted with islands... and by islands I mean paragraphs. These fluid texts are continuously recomposed by JavaScript files calling upon variable strings containing words and fragments of phrases collected from a vast literary corpus – Deleuze's *Desert Islands*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Bishop's *Crusoe in England*, Coetzee's *Foe*, Ballard's *Concrete Island*, Hakluyt's *Voyages and Discoveries*, Darwin's *Voyages of the Beagle*, and many other lesser-known sources including an out-of-date guidebook to the Scottish Isles, and an amalgam of accounts of the classical and quite possibly fictional island of Ultima Thule.

Individually, each of these textual islands represents a topic – from the Greek *topos*, meaning place. Collectively they constitute a topographical map of a sustained practice of reading and re-reading and writing and re-writing on the topic of islands. In this constantly shifting sea of variable texts a reader will never wash ashore on the same island twice... and by islands, I really do mean paragraphs.

## I. Topical Islands.

Islands are ['places that have become commonplaces', 'perfect topics', 'literal metaphors', 'possible only in literature']. Topical islands are ['figures of radical isolation', 'off the map', 'off the chart', 'always virgin', 'blind spots on the surface of the known', 'shrouded in obscurity', 'isolated in the present', 'silent', 'beyond time', 'in a time zone of their own']. They are paragraphs. They ['separate the narrative body from the referential mainland', 'separate the text from the writer's desk', 'separate the text from the reader's finger's', 'surround and enclose the text', 'create their own context']. They are ['textual shores', 'marginal', 'not part of the central body of the text', 'a physical space on the page', 'engulfed in a textual sea'].

## II. Soundings.

On the ['2nd', '3rd', '4th', '5th', '6th'] February, at ['1', '1.30', '3', '3.30', '3.40', '4', '4.30', '5', '6', '7', '7.30', '9', '9.30', '10', '11'] ['AM', 'PM'] the ship ['proceeded under sail towards', 'was unable to prosecute the search for', 'was unable to make much progress toward', 'wore and stood to the southward, with the intention of getting into the parallel of', 'was on the supposed parallel of', 'bore up for the supposed position of'] Heard Island. ['Bottom', 'No bottom'] was obtained at ['80', '120', '130', '200', '300', '425'] fathoms. It was deemed imprudent to proceed further, ['because of the rocky, uneven nature of the bottom', 'because it is no unusual thing for icebergs to be seen in the locality', 'on account of the uncertain position of the island', 'as coal could not be afforded for steaming', 'as the ship was surrounded by Penguins, uttering their discordant cry'].

### III. Measures.

This island measures [75, 42, 25, a little over 23, nearly 15, 13.5, just 12, only 11, approximately 9, 5, just over 4, 3, 2.5, roughly 2, half a] km from North to South and [40, 20, over 7, 6, from 1 to 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, under 2, one-and-a-quarter, 1] km from East to West.

### IV. Testimonials.

Such persons as have travelled to this island do testify that they have found these things following: Of metals: ['gold', 'silver', 'copper', 'lead', 'tin']. Of stones: ['turquoise', 'rubies', 'marble of diverse kinds', 'pearls great and fair', 'jasper', 'crystal']. Of trees: ['cedars', 'firs', 'sassafras', 'poplar', 'palms yielding sweet wines', 'sundry strange trees', 'trees to us unknown']. Of fruits: ['figs', 'prunes', 'dates, great', 'raisins, great and small', 'pepper', 'almonds', 'citrons']. Of birds: ['black birds', 'bitterns', 'curlews', 'cranes', 'mallards', 'wild geese', 'parrots', 'partridges', 'penguins']. Of beasts for furs: ['martens', 'beavers', 'foxes, black', 'foxes, white', 'leopards']. Of fishes: ['cod', 'salmon', 'seals', 'herrings']. Of worms: silk worms great and large. Of sundry other commodities: ['rosin', 'pitch', 'tar', 'turpentine', 'frankincense', 'honey', 'wax', 'rhubarb', 'olive oil', 'musk', 'salt', 'hemp', 'flax', 'feathers of sundry sorts', 'feathers for pleasure', 'feathers for filling of beds'].

### V. Deserted Islands.

Geographers say there are two kinds of islands. Continental islands are ['born of disarticulation', 'born of fracture', 'accidental', derived', 'survive the absorption of what once contained them']. Oceanic islands ['rise slowly', 'disappear and then return', 'leave us no time to annex them', 'like eggs, eggs of the sea']. Dreaming of islands is dreaming of ['pure consciousness', 'pulling away', 'starting from scratch', 'beginning anew']. Every island is, in theory, deserted. The deserted island ['is as

deserted as the ocean around it', 'may be a desert, but not necessarily', 'doesn't stop being deserted simply because it is inhabited', 'imagines and reflects itself', 'is imaginary']. It is at this very moment literature begins. Literature is ['the attempt to interpret myths at the moment we no longer understand them', 'the mythical recreation of the world', 'painstakingly applied', 'a double without consistency', 'the reconstitution of everyday life', 'separated from the real']. One can hardly imagine a more boring novel.

#### VI. Concrete Island.

The island ['pointed towards the west and the declining sun', 'was sealed off from the world around it', 'was moving back in time to an earlier and more violent period', 'dated, in parts, from before World War II', 'appeared covered by a dense and luxuriant growth', 'and its green swaying ocean']. The grass ['grew waist-high', 'festered over the ground', 'rose and fell like the waves of a brisk sea', 'weaved and turned, moving in endless waves', 'opened a dozen pathways', 'opened and closed as if admitting a large and watchful creature to its green preserve', 'swayed in the night air', 'seethed in the light wind', 'seethed in the night wind', 'seethed and whirled, as if sections of wilderness were speaking to each other', 'rustled excitedly', 'swayed reassuringly', 'flashed with an electric light', 'jostled on all sides like a hostile crowd', 'was a vital medium', 'was silent now', 'was quiet', 'barely moved', 'covered all traces', 'was over four feet deep'].

#### VII. Crusoe in the Galapagos.

My island ['- my brain bred island', '- a little world within itself', 'rose with a tame and rounded outline', '- caught on the horizon like a fly', 'smelled of goat and guano', 'seemed to be a sort of cloud-dump', 'seemed to have been permeated, like a sieve, by subterranean vapours', '- free to a remarkable degree from gales of wind']. My island had one kind of everything: ['one tree snail crept over everything',

'one variety of tree, a sooty, scrub affair', 'one kind of berry, a dark red', 'the goats were white, so were the gulls', 'when all the gulls flew up at once, they sounded like a big tree in a strong wind', 'the whole northern part miserably sterile', 'the whole lower region covered by nearly leafless bushes', 'such wretched-looking little weeds', 'the rocks on the coast abounded with great black lizards', 'a mouse, a rat distinct from the common kind', 'a most singular group of finches', 'one small lizard', 'one snake, which was numerous', 'thousands of huge tortoises', 'of toads and frogs there are none'. ['The hissing, ambulating turtles got on my nerves', 'I did not see one beautiful flower', 'Even the bushes smelt unpleasantly', 'I often gave way to self-pity.', 'Do I deserve this? 'Was there a moment when I actually chose this?', 'I didn't know enough.', 'Why didn't I know enough of something?', 'The books I'd read were full of blanks', 'Although I diligently tried to collect as many plants as possible, I succeeded in getting very few', 'I did not pay sufficient attention', 'None of the books has ever got it right']].

#### VIII. Castaway.

['I was a bottle bobbing on the waves with a scrap of writing inside', 'I was carried by the waves', 'Through the hours of despair on the waves', 'The the roar of the waves', 'The wind and wave-roar', 'The waves picked me up and cast me ashore']. I am ['cast away', 'a castaway', 'indeed cast away', 'not a bird of passage', 'not a prisoner', 'not a story', 'not persuaded', 'unknown to myself', 'wondering how I come to be here', 'saved', 'on an island yet', 'alone on the waves', 'alone', 'all alone', 'a woman alone', 'a woman cast ashore', 'a woman washed ashore', 'a free woman', 'now a madwoman', 'waiting for the book to be written that will set me free']].

## up from the deep

J. R. Carpenter (2012) "up from the deep," P.o.E.M.M. [Poems for Excitable [Mobile] Media] published in an iPhone/iPad app called *Know*, created by Jason E. Lewis and Bruno Nadeau at Obx Labs in Montreal, Canada, available for download from iTunes here: <https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/know/id446777294?mt=8>

horizon line far as eye can see islands sea  
between you and me an endless unknown ocean

we arrive and have only just ceased leaving  
we coast along edges ledges legible lines

shorelines sure we've set foot here before  
don't fret sea wet mist and haze come inland

steer by star light dead of night reckoning  
legends warn of riptides spits bars stones

avoid voids inked-in where sea monsters swim  
read charts sound fathoms compass bearings

hold the phone full stop press here post date  
write questions call answers keen for replies

wireless revealed etheric oceans of static  
inter-zones fraught with comings and goings

home-spun tales of far-away places long-past  
twisted yarns by transatlantic cables knit

beep blips tongue slips loose lips sink ships  
set sail on home sick ship shape house wrecks

unmoored unhomed uncomfortable untranslatable  
of this the already-knowing animals are aware

bodies bearing the acquired curves of home  
hermit crabs shed their shells to mate

pure white octopi occupy obscure dark worlds  
cracks beneath the surface hydrothermal vents

mid-ocean smoke and a sudden sulphurous odour  
a column of bubbles tunnels up from the deep



## Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl

[<http://luckysoap.com/owlandgirl>]

J. R. Carpenter (2013) "Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl," performed at *Chercher le texte*, Le Cube, Paris, France, 26 September 2013 and *In(ter)ventions: Literary Practice at the Edge*, The Club, The Banff Centre, Banff, Alberta, Canada, 14 February 2013, and published in *Fourteen Hills: The San Francisco State University Review*, 20.2. 122-128

An owl and a girl most [adventurous', 'curious', 'studious'] ['set out', 'set sail', 'sailed away'] in a [bottle-green', 'beetle-green', 'pea-green'] ['boat', 'sieve', 'skiff', 'vessel']; a ['beautiful', 'ship shape', 'sea worthy'] ['craft', 'raft', 'wooden shoe'], certainly, though a ['good deal', 'wee bit', 'tad'] too ['small', 'high in the stern'] to suit the two of them. They took a ['bushel', 'barrel', 'bundle'] of ['honey', 'money'] and an ['almanac', 'astrolabe', 'barometer', 'chronometer'] of dubious ['accuracy', 'origin', 'usefulness']. The owl was ['actually', 'basically', 'simply', 'slightly'] ['home sick', 'sea sick', 'sceptical', 'terrible with directions', 'a nervous traveller']. The girl sought to gain ['definitive', 'further', 'first-hand'] ['knowledge', 'experience', 'proof'] of ['the Northwest Passage', 'Ultima Thule', 'a strange phenomena known as sea lung'].

According to my ['calculations', 'library books', 'test results'], the girl informed the owl, it's ['six', 'seventeen', 'twenty-seven'] ['leagues', 'knots', 'nights', 'nautical miles'] ['due north', 'north', 'northeast'] of here. Her ['mother', 'great-aunt', 'grandmother'] had been among the most revered of ['authors', 'experts', 'philosophers'] on this topic. But the girl had her own ['life to live', 'line of inquiry', 'ideas', 'theories'].

The owl said, ['Birds of a feather stick together', 'Loose lips sink ships', 'Everywhere we go, there we are'].

How soon he ['drifted', 'floated', 'sailed', 'veered'] off ['topic', 'course', 'track', 'radar']!

According to my ['spyglass', 'sea chart', 'sextant', 'sonar'] , we're nearing the edge of our ['our story', 'our journey', 'the earth', 'this narrow sea'] , the girl said, but still they sailed ['for a year and a day', 'on through the night', 'on until well past bed time'] , ['despite the wet and sea fret', 'by the light of the silvery moon', 'across the North Atlantic', 'on a river of crystal light', 'into a sea of dew'] .

By this time, all the owl's ['magazine subscriptions', 'snack food items', 'phone card credits', 'batteries'] had run out.

Don't ['fret', 'jinx us', 'obsess', 'second-guess'], said the girl most ['ardently', 'rationally', 'seriously']. The ['diaries', 'letters', 'lists', 'ships logs'] she kept constitute the entirety of the ['knowledge', 'evidence', 'proof', 'records', 'traces'] we have left of this ['impossible', 'implausible', 'improbable'] voyage toward ['the edge of the earth', 'the fountain of youth'].

May 7th:

departed from Dartmouth

on board  
unmoored  
unhomed

June 15th:

mightily pestered with ice and snow

don't fret  
sea wet  
mist and haze  
come inland  
come hell or high water

uncomfortable  
untranslatable

come home sick  
come house wreck

come sea wrack and ruin strewn ashore

no hope of landing

June 29th:

a company of isles  
full of fair sounds

silence  
listen

the sea void of ice  
the land untroubled with snow

an ocean of static  
an ocean of noise

within the sounds we sent our boats

beeps  
blips  
tongue slips  
loose lips  
sink ships

within the snowy mountains  
earth and grass such as our moor and waste grounds of England

a plant of the borage family  
sea lung wart  
leaves with an oyster-like flavour

July 17th:

we fell upon a most strange quantity of ice

far flung  
low slung  
sea lung

we supposed it to be land

a frozen tide  
a breath suspended

we coasted this mass

impassable impossible impenetrable  
neither land nor sea nor vapour

our shrouds, ropes, and sails frozen  
compassed with ice

August 2nd:

much troubled with a fly which is called mosquito

August 15th:

here we had great hope of a through passage

legends warn of rip tides  
shallows  
shoals  
reefs  
ridges  
spits  
bars  
stones

this land is nothing in sight but isles

cracks beneath the surface  
hydrothermal vents

August 19th:

it began to snow

wind lift  
spin drift

all night with foul weather

gale blown  
spray sown  
storm seeds

August 20th:

we bare in with the land

avoid a void inked-in  
where sea monsters swim

August 28th:

in this place we continued

beware  
be where  
be here  
here be dragons

September 1st:

six miles by guess into the country

into the ether

this place yieldith  
great store of birds  
at the harbour mouth  
great store of cod

September 6th:

purposed to depart

post date  
press here  
press on

presently let slip our cables

September 11th:

a fair westnorthwest wind

spoon drift  
moon lifts

we departed with trust

questions  
chart answers  
sound fathoms  
compass bearings

shaping our course

mid-ocean smoke  
a sudden sulphurous odour

October 4th:

I have now experience of much  
of the northwest part of the world

a column of bubbles tunnels up from the deep

## APPENDIX D: CONFERENCE PAPERS / ARTICLES

J. R. Carpenter (2011) "Writing Coastlines: The Operation of Estuaries, Islands and Beaches as Liminal Spaces in the Writings of Elizabeth Bishop," conference paper, presented at "'It Must be Nova Scotia' : Negotiating Place In the Writings of Elizabeth Bishop" University of King's College, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, 9-12 June, 2011

J. R. Carpenter and Barbara Bridger (2014) "Call and Response: Toward a Digital Dramaturgy," article co-authored with Barbara Bridger, *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, , 6.3. 373-386

J. R. Carpenter (2014) "Translation, transmutation, transmediation, and transmission in TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]," publication, "In Traduire l'hypermédia / l'hypermédia et le traduire," *Laboratoire NT2's e-Journal*, No.7. (www 14 April 2014) <http://nt2.uqam.ca/en/cahiers-virtuels/article/translation-transmutation-transmediation-and-transmission-transmission>

J. R. Carpenter (2013) "The Broadside of a Yarn: A Situationist Strategy for Spinning Sea Stories Ashore," *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*, 18:5, 88-95

**Writing Coastlines: The Operation of Estuaries, Islands and Beaches as  
Liminal Spaces in the Writings of Elizabeth Bishop**

Presented at: “‘It Must be Nova Scotia’:  
Negotiating Place In the Writings of Elizabeth Bishop”  
University of King’s College, Halifax, NS, Canada  
9-12 June, 2011

This paper examines instances in the writings of Elizabeth Bishop wherein coastlines are evoked in order to refer to a psychological subjective state – conscious or unconscious – of being on the threshold between places. I term these coastlines ‘writing coastlines’. Within this term, ‘writing’ refers both to the act of writing and to that which is written. The act of writing translates aural, physical, mental and digital processes into marks, actions, utterances and speech-acts. The intelligibility of that which is written is intertwined with both the context of its production and of its consumption. And ‘coastlines’ refers to the shifting terrains where land and water meet, always neither land nor water and always both. Coastlines are edges, ledges, legible lines caught in the double bind of simultaneously writing and erasing. These in-between places are liminal spaces, fraught with comings and goings. Echoing this back and forth movement, this paper ebbs and flows between analytical and lyrical modes.

Who is writing coastlines? The writer is writing coastlines. The writer writes, ‘coastlines’. The coastlines are also writing coastlines. They cannot do otherwise.



They are coastlines. Waves have actions. Sands shift. "Siltstone cliffs crumble into catch-as-catch-can coves" (Carpenter 2008).

Elizabeth Bishop is writing coastlines. The first lines of the "The Map" – the first poem in *North & South*, Bishop's first published book – write a coastline:

Land lies in water; it is shadowed green.  
Shadows, or are they shallows, at its edges  
showing the line of long sea-weeded ledges  
where weeds hang to the simple blue from green (Bishop, *Poems*, 1984: 3).

Bishop writes this coastline with words, with language, with poetry. Within the lines she writes, a map-maker writes a cartographic coastline with colours "more delicate than the historians'" (3) and a printer (re)writes those coastlines with emotion that "too far exceeds its cause." We readers are invited to (re)write this poetic cartographic coastline in our minds with our fingers:

We can stroke these lovely bays,  
under a glass as if they were expected to blossom (3).

Our imagined touch rereads and rewrites, searching for meaning.

No sooner are the opening (coast)lines in "The Map" written than the next lines call them into question:

Or does the land lean down to lift the sea from under,  
drawing it unperturbed around itself:  
Along the fine tan sandy shelf  
is the land tugging at the sea from under? (3)

This questioning does not presuppose an "either or" answer. Rather, it presents a problem: coastlines are "either and both." Writing coastlines are always also erasing coastlines, turning tides, re-verse-ing. The lines writing coastlines in "The Map" perform that which has already been written by the coastlines' own act of writing:

These peninsulas take the water between thumb and finger  
like women feeling for the smoothness of yard-goods (3).

Yes, this is a metaphor, but the coastlines it alludes to are not metaphoric – they are active, authorial: headland embayment morphologies written by foreshore erosion; high tides curbed by even higher lines of hard stone ridge.

A cartographic coastline is both fixed and abstracted, as exact an approximation as possible of a line that is always in motion, a legible line perforated by language, letters, words, signs, symbols, names. “The names of seashore towns run out to sea” (3), their textual materiality obscuring the very coastlines they aim to name.

In “The Moose,” the names of seashore towns are strung along the coastal road that leads westward away from Great Village, Nova Scotia.

One stop at Bass River.  
Then the Economies  
Lower, Middle, Upper;  
Five Islands, Five Houses,  
where a woman shakes a tablecloth  
out after supper.

A pale flickering. Gone.  
The Tantramar marshes  
and the smell of salt hay (Bishop, *Poems*, 1984: 170).

Part of the magic conjured by the incitation of place names resides in the narrative resonance between the now of the speech-act and the many pasts of the places named. Take this place – Tantramar. In Joseph Des Barres’s *Atlantic Neptune*, a collection of sea charts published in 1776, the Tantramar River is labelled *Tintamar River*. A Spanish spelling makes no sense given the Mi’kmaq, Acadian, English history of this place. But the meaning Red Sea does. The Tantramar River flows into the Cumberland Basin, which flows into Chignecto Bay, which flows into the Bay of Fundy, which has the highest tides in the world. When the tide goes out,

it goes way out and keeps on going. It leaves behind acres of salt marsh, salt hay thriving in hard, rich, sticky, red soil, and beyond that, red mud flats glistening mile after mile,

where, silted red,  
sometimes the sun sets  
facing a red sea,  
and others, veins the flats'  
lavender, rich mud  
in burning rivulets; (170)

Although it is possible to entertain for a moment the notion that the name Tantramar was assigned to this red mud glazed with sky by a cartographer of Spanish origin, or one who had previously written the coastlines of Spanish dominions, the name Tintamar written in the *Atlantic Neptune* is most certainly a miss-spelling of the Acadian French word *tintamarre*, which in turn was both a toponoimic transformation of the Mi'kmaq name Tatamalg, meaning "Scrambled River," and a reference to the noisy flocks of migratory birds which feed on the Tantramar marshes to this day. Today the marshes are the site of two bird sanctuaries, one of which carries the old Acadian name Tintamarre.

In "The Moose," Bishop writes a coastline of extreme contrasts to evoke the liminal condition of migration, of being in transition, of being of and in-between places, on a long bus ride along a coastal road stretching between home and away:

home of the long tides  
where the bay leaves the sea  
twice a day and takes  
the herrings long rides,

where if the river  
enters or retreats  
in a wall of brown foam  
depends on if it meets  
the bay coming in,  
the bay not at home; (170)

A red sea. Mud flats. Lavender water. Bishop uses strikingly similar language to describe a nearby coastline in her short story, *In the Village*.

There are the tops of all the elm trees in the village and there, beyond them, the long green marshes, so fresh, so salt. Then the Minas Basin, with the tide halfway in or out, the wet red mud glazed with sky blue until it meets the creeping lavender-red water... (Bishop, *Prose*, 1984: 264).

The site of this sight is geographically the furthest point from the epicentre of the story. The evocation of estuarine overlaps, mixtures and contradictions at this moment serves both to enunciate an internal emotional confusion within the narrator, and to project the narration beyond the geographical confines of the village. "We are in the "Maritimes" but all that means is that we live by the sea" (264).

This liminal coastline writes a possible future, a point of departure, a line of flight. If all being "in the Maritimes" means is living by the sea then one can be in or from the Maritimes living by any sea. Indeed, Bishop wrote *In the Village* in Brazil, a place that reminded her of Nova Scotia but, importantly, most certainly was not.

One coastline implies another, implores a far shore. This entreaty intrigues me. What happens between call and answer? Jacques Derrida asks, "Is not the writing of the question, by its decision, by its resolution, the beginning of repose and response?" (Derrida 1978: 76). In "Crusoe in England," the far shore implored shifts, from England, in exile, to exile, in England. There is no repose for the questions Bishop's Crusoe poses. "Do I deserve this?" (Bishop, *Poems*, 1984: 163). "Why didn't I know enough of something?" (164).

Plagued her whole life by indecision, Bishop's – often parenthetically inserted – questions perform more like preponderances. Jean-Jacques Lecercle argues,

A question is a temporarily suspended statement, the bloodless or ghostly double of the proposition it calls as its answer, whereas a problem, the site of creative thought, of the creation of thought, is never prepositional (it is formulated as a concept) (Lecercle 2002: 38).

In her writings and in her life Bishop returned again and again to coastal sites to explore in minute detail – through a combination of watching, walking, reading and writing – the problem of being in between places. The island Bishop exiles her Crusoe to is a topical one, a textual topography, a collection of *topos* – a juxtaposition of places and topics Bishop visited, read about and wrote about elsewhere. Not surprising then, that Bishop's Crusoe has nightmares of other islands:

... infinities  
of islands, islands spawning islands,  
like frog's eggs turning into polliwogs  
of islands, knowing that I had to live  
on each and everyone, eventually,  
for ages, registering their flora,  
their fauna,  
their geography (164).

This nightmare comes partially true with his rescue to the island of England, which “doesn't seem like one, but who decides?” A thought echoed by Susan Barton in J. M. Coetzee's novel *Foe*: “They say Britain is an island too, a great island. But that is a mere geographer's notion. The earth under our feet is firm in Britain, as it never was on Crusoe's island” (Coetzee 1986: 26). As Hernán Díaz blithely observes, “Even

being encircled by water no longer seems a sufficient condition for isolation" (Diaz 2010: 79).

Bishop both craved and dreaded isolation. "The End of March" traces the tenuous line between these two conditions in the temporary yet regularly recurring (writing and erasing) space between high water and low tide, in the month between winter and spring. The beach is a line in the poem.

everything was withdrawn as far as possible,  
indrawn: the tide far out, the ocean shrunken (Bishop, *Poems*, 1984: 179).  
The beach is lined with lines: "a lone flight of Canada geese", "a track of big dog-prints", "lengths and lengths, endless, of wet white string" (179). The narrator and her companion write the coastline by walking it, first in one direction and then – rewriting – in the other. Strophe and antistrophe – verse and reverse. The limits of the body define the limit of the walk, though the mind yearns to travel further.

I wanted to get as far as my proto-dream-house,  
my crypto-dream house, ...  
[...]

... But - impossible.

That day the wind was much too cold,  
even to get that far (179)

Elizabeth Bishop is writing about coastlines, in a literary sense. But she is also writing coastlines in a performative sense. The act of textually and bodily writing and rewriting lines in and of the liminal space hovering between solid and liquid, dry and wet, land and sea, and fresh and salt demarcates the struggle to articulate the yet more tenuous threshold between home and away.

I will close with opening lines of Bishop's strange prose poem *Strayed Crab*, which pose once again the problem of place and displacement: "This is not my home. How did I get so far from water? It must be over that way somewhere" (140).

This sideways-walking coastline-writing temporary-tidal-pool-dwelling creature rewrites the lumbering scale of the “loose” world according its own size and perspective. Though not a hermit crab, this strayed crab carries the echo of a number of homes on its back. Following the posed problem of where home might be comes this pronouncement: “I am the color of wine, of *tinta*.” Tintamar, where, silted red, sometimes the sun sets facing a red sea. A pale flickering, gone. The Tantramar marshes and the smell of salt hay.

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## CALL AND RESPONSE: TOWARDS A DIGITAL DRAMATURGY

Bridger, B. and Carpenter, J. R. (2013), 'Call and response: Towards a digital dramaturgy', *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice* 6: 3, pp. 373–386, doi: 10.1386/jwcp.6.3.373\_1

BARBARA BRIDGER

In the early 1990s I sent some performance scripts to Claire MacDonald, who was then director of Theatre at Dartington College of Arts. She encouraged me to become a visiting lecturer and I found myself in an environment where there was great emphasis on physical theatre and movement practices. At first glance this seemed to be at the expense of performed text, but I was so impressed by the devised and improvised, collaborative work pioneered at the institution that I immediately began to try and find a 'writing' role.

I was supported by a growing interest in new approaches to text, not only within Theatre, but also within the wider institution. In 1992 John Hall and others began the discussion which led to the establishment of Performance Writing as an independent set of practices at Dartington. When Ric Allsopp added Scripted Media to Performance Writing in 2004, I became part of this new initiative. Establishing a set of investigations into writing *for* performance in the context of writing *as* performance proved challenging. However, my previous attempts to develop dramaturgical approaches appropriate to devised and improvised theatre practice supported my thinking and gradually I became convinced that performance



writing's investigation into the way language operates and communicates could support the interrogative processes of devised, collaborative practice.

J. R. CARPENTER

In the autumn of 2009 I was Digital Writer in Residence in the Performance Writing Area at Dartington College of Art. During that time I taught a module on Narrative Mapping and Digital Literature, and generally immersed myself in the corpus, pedagogy, methodology, and sensibility of Performance Writing. Since the early 1990s I had been engaged in a hybrid art, writing, research and performance practice spanning physical, digital, locative and durational modes of creation and dissemination. Visual Art, New Media Art, Performance, Literature, Electronic Literature - no one of these fields offers a discursive framework suited to the sorts of multi-modal texts I seem to be forever making and unmaking and remaking again. My arrival at Dartington, in its last year of operation, felt like a home-coming of sorts. Through Performance Writing I begin to think toward an articulation of concerns which had long lain mute at the heart of my practice – the indivisibility of text from context, the iterative nature of my process, and my tendency to test text by moving it through a continuum of forms.

BARBARA

Heidi Gilpin raises the difficulty of interpreting movement performances containing 'so many differing vocabularies [...] and disciplinary perspectives, none of which play a hierarchical, central role.' She suggests that the solution might lie in an examination of our 'relation to textuality', even while she is aware of the irony of

proposing strategies for 'reading' a multi-layered 'text' comprised of non-linguistic elements (1997, p.85). Another dance practitioner, Valerie Preston-Dunlop also expresses concern about how movement can be read and writes of the plural grammars and multiple codes of cross genre practice.

#### PRESTON-DUNLOP

With unstable codes  
in an emerging avant garde piece, perhaps,  
there can be mis-communication.  
"I've never seen that before, what did you make of it?"  
With aesthetic codes  
there can be mystery.  
"It was beautiful but what did it mean?"  
With behaviour codes  
there can be narrative.  
"I could see they were nervous of something."  
And there can be a mixture of codes,  
some known ways of doing things with some newly forming  
not-quite-there ones,  
with some surprises.  
And that is how it often is in innovative dance. (1998, 10)

#### BARBARA

Preston-Dunlop ends by asking if she has found a voice of her own: her own grammar. This is a question that could also be asked of performance writing and dramaturgy. For instance, there are various terms used to describe the way improvised theatre sources a range of disparate texts, divorces them from their original context and reassembles them, so that they appear to belong together. Some of these terms originate in visual art practice, for example 'montage' and 'collage', but another, 'assemblage', is also employed in performance writing practices, where the term acknowledges the intertextual nature of all writing.

JR

Strategies of appropriation, quotation, and détournement have long been part of my practice. As often as I use and re-use 'found' images and texts, I pillage my own work for source material. This applies to source code too of course. Everything I know about HTML I learned from viewing the page source of other web sites, from copying and pasting. In visual art terms, this may be easily understood as a collage practice. Influenced by my time at Dartington, I began to think critically about the complex relationship between a source code composed of a number of texts and the assemblage of text, image, and/or other interaction that this text produces on a computer screen. I came to think of the active interchange between these two texts in terms of performance. Over the course of 2010 I appropriated the source code of a number of text generators written by Nick Montfort, with the express intent of using both the source codes and the texts they generated as scripts for live performance.

BERGVALL

What do we mean by Performance Writing? ...the textual does not only throw up the question of the literary, it also urgently prompts an interrogation of the impact the use of writing applies on visual, sonic or movement arts. And vice-versa. It is also paramount that the impact of this cross-fertilisation does not remain fixated at a formal level, but that it acutely and insistently, one might say intravenously makes a point of examining the personal motivations and urgencies for work.... (1996)

BARBARA

When discussing *In Bed*, a text written for Cathy Turner's *Writing Space*, Clare MacDonald adds to Bergvall's argument, suggesting 'a counter pedagogy' that 'might begin instead with writing as a mode of enquiry, drawing on the history of artists' engagements with language as graphic, sonic and visual material; with words as things; with writing as mark making and with scripts and scores as machines for making performance'. In this way MacDonald expands the notion of what writing might be, moving it towards art practice, and thereby allowing artists' writing and language experiments to exercise some influence on both 'literary and performance form' (2010, p.92).

JR

Perhaps the truest test of a methodology is to apply it to a new set of questions/practices. From the outset, Performance Writing recognized that one of the areas of its investigation would be the impact of the digital on the creation and display of writing.

BERGVALL

...the performance of writing would be this observation which seeks to locate expressedly the context and means for writing, both internal and external to language, whether these be activated for and through a stage, for and through a site, a time-frame, a performer's body, the body of a voice or the body of a page. (1996)

JR

The democratic, inclusive and above all extensible nature of Performance Writing methodology allows us, sixteen years later, to détourne Bergvall's statement with a digital literary in mind which barely existed at the time of her writing:

...the performance of digital texts both internal and external to code languages may be activated for and through a computer, a network, a browser, a hand-held device, a < body > tag, a performer's body, the body of a voice or the body of a page.

BARBARA

And perhaps Performance Writing's insistence on the *active* participation of language in the formation of meaning can contribute to the development of a dramaturgical practice capable of moving beyond traditional engagement with research, documentation and scripting and into a more integrated, generative role? I was asking this question and I was looking for something.... for some link... for a practice that spoke differently to these elements and this meant that I was more than ready for a particular conversation with JR Carpenter. It took place in the depths of Devon, on a rainy winter's night with the debris of Dartington College of Arts lapping at our feet.

JR

No it didn't. We met by chance on the platform at Tones train station and sat together on a train journey from Totnes to London. It was November 2011, to be precise.

BARBARA

But I remember there was a fireplace.

JR

That came later. That was at the pub.

BARBARA

In any case, JR was describing a project she was working on called *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* – a computer-generated dialogue, written in a programming language called JavaScript which, she said, generated a script for a poli-vocal performance. Listening to her description, I realized two things: one - that she was interpreting the word ‘script’ in a way that I had not considered before, and two - that my ‘expanded’ definition of dramaturgy might also encompass digital textual practices. I began to attempt a dramaturgical response.

JR

*TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* is a computer-generated dialogue, a literary narrative of generations of transatlantic migration performed in the form of a conversation, an encoded discourse propagating across, beyond, and through long-distance communications networks. One JavaScript file sits in one directory on one server attached to a vast network of hubs, routers, switches, and submarine cables through which this one file may be accessed many times from many places by many devices. The mission of this JavaScript is to generate another sort of script. The call “function produce\_stories()” produces a response in the browser, a dialogue to be

read aloud in three voices: Call, Response, and Interference; or: *Strophe*, *Antistrophe*, and *Chorus*; or Here, There, and Somewhere in Between. Yet a reader can never quite reach the end of this TRANS.MISSION. Mid-way through a new iteration is generated. The sentence structures stay the same, but all their variables change.

BARBARA

Let's see if I've understood: *TRAINS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* is a JavaScript file which performs the act of calling. As we generally associate calling with voice, this implies that the JavaScript file is not only a 'voice', but it is also capable of conducting a dialogue, of both calling for and responding with 'a new iteration'.

JR

There are a number of layers of dialogue happening here. Within the JavaScript file there are strings of variables, which look like this: `var w=['why', 'where', 'how'];` and a set of functions which 'call' these variable strings. In `function story()`, for example, `call=choose(w)+'?'`; calls upon the above string, and returns (replies) one of three possible results: Why? Where? How?

There is also a dialogue going on between the JavaScript file and the web browser. The browser 'calls' the JavaScript file through a series of internet protocols. The JavaScript file responds to the browser's call with instructions. It tells the browser `onload='produce_stories()'`. The browser then proceeds to read the script. It could be said that the browser performs the script by transforming or translating the text of the JavaScript file into the text we see on the screen.

BARBARA

You describe this JavaScript as having a 'mission.' Does this suggest that this is a text with a subtext?

JR

A mission may be defined as an operational task designed to carry out the goals of a specific program. A computer program, for instance. In order for this JavaScript file to perform its operational task it must be intelligible to a wide range of communication protocols, to a web browser, and to a computer operating system, all of which are intrinsically texts. What are the goals of these programs? One of the principal tenants of Performance Writing is that context is everything, yet the intelligibility of this text is intertwined with a vast sea of texts human eyes will never see.

BARBARA

As these 'behind the scenes/behind the screens' texts carry out their operational tasks, how does this modify, or result in the content we see/read on screen?

JR

The computer doesn't actually generate anything. I wrote all the words in all the sentences that appear on screen. I used words, terms, and phrases which cropped up in my reading on a wide range of topics pertaining to transatlantic migrations and communications networks, including words common to shipping, navigation, travel, telegraphy, wireless, cartography, and telepathy. Other words and phrases



are pure fancy. For example, here is the source code the odd-ball sentence ‘Who can interpret the bay in wind like this?’:

```
'Who can '+choose(know)+' the '+choose(water)+' in  
'+choose(weather)+' like this?'
```

There are three variables in the sentence: (know), (water), (weather).

The list of (know) variables is: ['believe', 'categorize', 'claim', 'identify', 'imagine', 'interpret', 'intuit', 'know', 'own', 'pinpoint', 'locate', 'quantify', 'recognize', 'remember', 'suspect', 'understand']. The list of (water) variables is: ['water', 'surf', 'ocean', 'sea', 'channel', 'bay', 'Atlantic', 'North Atlantic', 'harbour']. And the list of (weather) variables is: ['breezes', 'fog', 'gales', 'glare', 'gusts', 'hail', 'mist', 'rain', 'shadows', 'showers', 'sun', 'thunderstorms', 'wind']. Each new iteration draws upon these same variables.

BARBARA

The arrival of each new iteration is always a disruption, a re-versioning, an immigrant bringing new blood to the dialogue.

JR

Who can imagine the sea in shadows like this?

BARBARA

But it's an intelligent interruption, in that the variables have all been written by you, and they are transformed into coherence en route to the screen by the sentence structures which contain them . Yes, I think I understand and yet, why is it that my immediate response is to accuse – who? or what? – of 'cheating'? Is it the overriding imposition of coherence? Gilpin says that none of her differing vocabularies and disciplinary perspectives has a hierarchical, central role. I must try and unpick my reasons for this rush to accuse code language of a lack of morality.

JR

This question echoes the one posed earlier by Preston-Dunlop:

‘I've never seen that before, what did you make of it?’

Text generators are the oldest form of digital literature, yet there has been anxiety about computer-generated text for as long as computational processes have existed.

SIMANOWSKI

‘The internal problem of this genre of digital literature is its poetics of technology, which replaces a language juggler with a crafter of code.’ (2011, 91)

JR

*TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* thwarts Simanowski's argument on two fronts.

Firstly, technically, the source code was not entirely crafted by me. Less a craft than a crude life raft, my code is a hack of a narrative generator called *The Two*, created by Nick Montfort in 2008.

BARBARA

Pillaging again, but I note the use of 'hack' rather than 'steal' or 'appropriate'. Hack has chopping, slicing implications. It suggests a clean break?

JR

In *A Hacker Manifesto*, McKenzie Wark argues, '[t]o hack is always to produce the odd difference in the production of information... by transforming in some way the very process of production.' (2004, 222) *A Hacker Manifesto* is a Performance Writing Manifesto if ever there was one. Something of the uncanny twinning of characters at work in Montfort's *The Two* underpinned my process production; my hack transforms Montfort's source code into a code medium, sending and receiving dialogue on and through media haunted by generations of past usage.

Secondly, rather than internalizing, *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* externalises a poetics of technology. Codes, their creators, the modes through which they operate, propagate, and communicate, and the confusion they instigate are one of the main topics of the dialogue *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* generates.

SIMANOWSKI

'because absurdity, weirdness, and illogicality are the default modes of text generators, mastery is only proven by overcoming such characteristics.' (91)

JR

This generator aims not to overcome but rather to embrace such characteristics.

*TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* generates cacophony, liminality, atemporality and asynchronous exchanges of mixed messages pertaining to miscommunications and network failures. Absurdity, weirdness, and illogicality are, after all, the default modes of long-distance communication, migration, displacement and difference.

BARBARA

Could *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* be described as a layered exploration of the relationship between narrative and a journey that can only take place digitally, somewhere 'placed yet non-placed', 'somewhere 'beyond'?

JR

Thank you, I will steal that. In this instance I would call that non-place the network.

The network is not a place per se, but rather, a placeholder – an articulation of a space between places. The variables travel through networks intact as narrative units. The narrative resonates in the space between places separated by time, distance, and ocean, yet inextricably linked by generations of immigration. The digital network serves as narrative structure for stories of place and displacement resonating between sites, beyond nations. *Strophe* and *Antistrophe* call and

respond between here and there with *Chorus* running interference, confusing and confounding boundaries between physical and digital, code and narrative, past and future, home and away.

BARBARA

'Haunted media' seems a significant concept in the context of your work. Could you expand on your usage?

Can you expand on your use of the phrase, 'The code performing the text'?

Can you give your gloss on the terms 'remediation' and 'locative'?

Can you give your gloss on the term 'iterative'?

What is generative about the process of performing these 'texts'?

JR

So many questions Barbara.

BARBARA

*TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* generates questions.

JR

So it does.

Begin Transmission.

How?

With a question.

What emerges from a question?

Spring mist on the ocean. Distant coastlines, to lure us.

DERRIDA

'Is not the writing of the question, by its decision, by its resolution, the beginning of repose and response?' (1978, 76)

JR

The questions posed by Barbara during the composition of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* inflected the creation of my next piece, *There he was, gone*. From the outset, I endeavored to write 'for performance in the context of writing as performance,' a poli-vocal performance script *and* a stand-alone web-based piece. In the web iteration, a short computer-generated narrative dialogue is situated within an assemblage of pictorial cartographic elements. This 'page' is occasionally interrupted by two lines of horizontally scrolling poetic text, both 'borrowed' from a text I wrote for an iPhone/iPad app called *Know* (Lewis, 2012). A quick look at the source code reveals that some of the variables written for *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*, such as the above cited `(weather)` and `(water)` strings, have also been re-used in *There he was, gone*.

BARBARA

Ah yes, stealing from yourself as well as from others.

JR

For the live performance iteration of *There he was, gone*. I created a print script for four voices and projection version of the work – a subset of the web-based piece containing the pictorial and cartographic elements, but none of the text. *There he*

*was, gone.* was first performed at Performance Writing Weekend at Arnolfini, Bristol, May 2012, by JR Carpenter, Barbara Bridger, David Prater, and Christine Wilks.

BARBARA

I had seen and responded to *There he was, gone.* at various stages in its development, but now I 'took up' one of the voices. This is more accurate than saying I performed it, because my lack of traditional ownership of my dialogue was underlined both by the performance mode and by the way the script operated. Two of the performers read from printed scripts. JR and I made no attempt to disguise the fact that we were reading our words from computer screens. The text 'bounced' around us in a loosely pre-ordained pattern, it also shifted as we read. These changes were disconcerting to say the least. They forced a certain approach to the reading and vocalization of the words. The usual pre-reading prior to a moment of enunciation was not possible. I could not read ahead and then relax because I knew in advance what my next line would be. As a result, reading and speaking became more closely fused into one simultaneous operation.

JR

How did this embodied engagement with a digital dramaturgy differ from your past experience scripting for devised theatre?

BARBARA

I have deliberately tried to write scripts that encourage modification rather than interpretation: scripts that act as a prompt to the performer's own thoughts and

ideas, or incorporate risk, or can be exchanged, or shared, or repeated differently, etc. Now here I was experiencing a script that danced through all these possibilities.

I have also witnessed performers speaking words that they are simultaneously hearing through headphones. I'm thinking now of *Wishes for a Better Future* by Blind Ditch (2003). But in that instance, the performers had heard the text before. It remained stable. Mine didn't. Modifications to *There he was, gone*. occurred even as I opened my mouth to speak.

In some panic, I intuitively looked for something to encourage the close attention needed to avoid faltering. I was aware that the other participants were experiencing equal difficulties and I didn't want to add to their confusion. I observed that my lines were 'opening lines' in that they indicated when a new 'stanza' of the piece was beginning. This allowed me to create some kind of rhythmic return, some form of insistence, some sense that I consciously initiated, rather than responded. Gertrude Stein came to mind.

STEIN

'Writing may be made between the ear and the eye and the ear and the eye the eye will be well and the ear will be well.' (1975, 277)

JR

Earlier you wrote of Preston-Dunlop, 'Has she found a voice of her own: her own grammar.' Do you think these works find their own grammar?



BARBARA

This text may be the best answer. We co-wrote it, engaging in a dialogue about two dialogues. *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* and *There he was, gone.* asked questions and prompted them. Many of those questions struggled for articulation because the works in question evolved as we wrote. Sometimes I modified my questions and sometimes JR corrected them. In both cases we were trying to ensure that the question 'allowed' the answer (often another question). Some questions still remain and haunt. I still don't know if, during our performance of *There he was, gone.*, we were performing the code? Were we JR?

JR

Perhaps we were just mediums...

BARBARA

Code mediums, sending and receiving dialogue on and through media haunted by generations of past usage.

JR

Hey, you stole that!

BARBARA

A definition of dramaturgy? Of Performance Writing?

JR

There is no end to this iterative process. Perhaps we can close this chapter with one of an infinite number of possible endings proposed by TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]:

Is the network functioning?  
Some of us believe it's working.  
Please try again.

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**Translation, transmutation, transmediation, and transmission  
in TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]**

[<http://luckysoap.com/generations/transmission.html>]

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This paper examines the operation of translation in the creation and dissemination of computer-generated digital literature through discussion of the web-based narrative dialogue *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* (Carpenter 2011). In this discussion, the term 'translation' is situated within a string of variables pertaining to the word *trans-*: translation, transmutation, transmediation, and transmission.

Translated into JavaScript, this string of variables could be written as follows:

```
var trans=['lation', 'mutation', 'mediation', 'mission'];
```

The word *trans-* is a prefix meaning across, beyond, or through. This prefix may be used in combination with an element of origin: transcontinental, transatlantic. This prefix may be used to imply a state of change: transmit, transfer, transport, translate. And, somewhat more abstractly, this prefix may be used to imply a poetics of coming and going. The word 'transverse' applies the prefix *trans-* to the Latin *versus*, meaning a turning. Every verse has a re-verse, which is to say, verse has direction. In Greek verse, *Strophe* sets out from east to west across the

stage. *Antistrophe* replies from west to east. Neither voice is in either place. Both are calling: across, beyond, through.

The word ‘translation’ applies the prefix *trans-* to the word *-lation*, which comes from the Latin, *latio*, meaning borne, as in carried or endured. Traditionally, translation from one form to another implies an equivalency between forms. In the translation of a text from one natural language to another one might expect the meaning, the mood, and perhaps the rhythm of the text to endure. In the translation of a born-digital text from one code language to another, what precisely is borne across, beyond, or through?

The word ‘transmutation’ implies a sudden and/or radical change in form. In a homophonic translation, for example, little or no attempt is made to preserve the meaning of the original text. In the classic example of Luis d’Antin van Rooten’s *Mots D’Heures: Gousses, Rames*, the phonetic sequence “Humpty Dumpty” endures in the translation “Un petit d’un petit” (1967). Here, the hermeticism of the homophonic translation is counterbalanced by the choice of a “sub-text ... so well known as to be recognized by all” (Lecerle 1985: 21). In the recent spate of remixes of Nick Montfort’s computer-generated poem *Taroko Gorge* (2009), the contents of the remixed texts as they are displayed on screen may appear to diverge radically from *Taroko Gorge*, yet these remixes are based on the now familiar sub-text of Montfort’s source code, which endures almost entirely intact in most of the *Taroko Gorge* remixes, or translations, as we might more appropriately call them. Conversely, the translation of a computer-generated text from one programming language to another may radically alter the source code yet result in little or no

change to the content or behaviour of the text displayed on screen, as in the case of Montfort's own initial translation of *Taroko Gorge* from Python into JavaScript.

The word 'transmediation' refers to movement across, beyond, and through media. Though we may consider languages – natural, code, or otherwise – to be behaviours rather than media, when dealing with code languages we must consider the media used to create and disseminate these languages as integral to their intelligibility. Python files cannot be read in a web browser, for example, and Flash files cannot be read on an iSO device. The translation of a born digital text from one code language to another is most often prompted by hardware and/or software obsolescence. In the example of Judy Malloy's ground-breaking hypertext *Uncle Roger* (1986-2011), Malloy has adapted and altered the work a number of times to suit emerging media environments ranging from early newsgroups to BASIC, UNIX, and the World Wide Web. I term this process 'transmediation' rather than 'remediation' as, particularly in the case of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*, this discussion is more concerned with the asynchronous movement of text across, beyond, and through a continuum of forms than with the associative relationship between old and new media forms upon which the discourse surrounding remediation tends to focus.

The word 'transmission' refers both to the action of sending across, and to that which is sent. The word 'mission', from the Latin *missiō*, a sending off, may refer to a group or committee of persons sent to a foreign country to provide assistance, conduct negotiations, establish relations, initiate communications, build fortifications or in any other way translate a strange place into somewhere known. The word 'mission' may also refer to an operational task, designed to carry out the

goals of a specific program. A computer program, for instance. Thus, a JavaScript may be on a mission, and that mission may be a transmission, a sending across.

In order to discuss how this string of *trans*- variables may be operate as compositional and structural elements in the creation and dissemination of narratives native to networked environments, we will turn now to the specific example of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*. This web-based work is a computer-generated dialogue, a literary narrative of generations of transatlantic migration performed in the form of a conversation, an encoded discourse propagating across, beyond, and through long-distance communications networks. *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* is literally a transmission. One JavaScript file sits in one directory on one server attached to a vast network of hubs, routers, switches, and submarine cables through which this one file may be accessed many times from many places by many devices. And *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* is literally a dialogue. As with the Latin *trans*-, the word 'dialogue' also refers to a crossing. Stemming from the Greek *dialogos* – *dia*-, meaning: across, and *logos*, meaning: a word, saying, speech, discourse, thought, or reckoning – akin to *légein*, meaning to choose, gather, recount, tell over, or speak. The mission of this JavaScript is to generate another sort of script, a script for live performance. The call "function produce\_stories()" produces a response in the browser. As JavaScript is a procedural language, in so far as it must be written and read in a certain order, we may say that the browser is performing the JavaScript. The result of this performance, i.e. the text which appears on screen, is a narrative dialogue intended to be read aloud in three voices. These voices may be called, alternately: Call, Response, and Interference; or: *Strophe*, *Antistrophe*, and *Chorus*; or Here, There, and Somewhere in Between.

*TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* was written in Python and then translated into JavaScript in autumn 2011. With the exception of a single page of handwritten notes in a passport-sized notebook, the entire compositional process from sentence construction, to variable string population and layout establishment was conducted inside the Python and JavaScript programming languages. The Python iteration of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* is a transmutation of a 1k narrative generator called *story2.py*, written in Python by Nick Montfort in 2008. Both the act and the resulting textual fact of the translation of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* from Python to JavaScript are, in a broad sense, translations of Montfort's own translation of *story2.py* into a JavaScript version known as *The Two* (2008). It must be noted here, that Montfort aided and abetted in this circuitous translation process through email correspondence. Further, although the translation of natural languages is not my focus here, it must also be noted that both *story2.py* and *The Two* have been translated in to French, Spanish and Russian. Although the source codes were not radically altered in these translations, the selection of the variables and the structure of the sentences had to be significantly altered in response to these languages' handling of gender, which, as we shall see, performs a critical operation in these works.

Structurally, *story2.py* and *The Two* strip the traditional literary form of the short story down to its most fundamental elements: beginning, middle, and end. As Montfort explains in a post to the collective blog *GrandTextAuto*, "A sentence is chosen from a pool of beginnings. A middle is generated by joining 'He' or 'She' to a verb or other middle section and concluding that with 'he' or 'she'. Then, an ending is chosen from a pool of endings" (Montfort 2008).

The police officer nears the alleged perpetrator.  
She berates her.  
Six years later, neither one remembers the incident.

Given the power dynamics set out in the first sentence, we may be surprised to learn in the second sentence that both the police officer and the alleged perpetrator are female. Why wouldn't we be? Movies starring females in the roles of both protagonist and antagonist are rare indeed. How differently would we interpret the story if instead it read:

The police officer nears the alleged perpetrator.  
She berates him.  
Six years later, neither one remembers the incident.

Or:

The police officer nears the alleged perpetrator.  
He berates her.  
Six years later, neither one remembers the incident.

In the above mentioned *GrandTextAuto* post, Montfort cites Nanette Wylde's "minimal and clever programs" as inspiration for *story2.py*. Certainly we can see the influence of her Electronic Flipbook, *about so many things*. These "flipbooks" were created in Director for specific installation contexts between 1998 and 2006. They were not available online until 2012. In order that I might view them, they were transmitted to me by Wylde via the post on a CD. As Wylde describes in the booklet which accompanies this CD, and on her website, "*about so many things* randomly displays the activities of 'He' and 'She' without bias to gender. That is, the activities are drawn from the same pool of possibilities." Anything he can do, she can do. Similarly, both *story2.py* and *The Two* capitalize on the variability of gender assumptions by making gender a variable: `var heshe=['He','She']`. Although the source codes of *story2.py* and *The Two* are not literally



translations of *about so many things*, the gender variable is born across. And although the nature and form of Montfort's narrative were substantially transformed in the creation of the Python version of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*, and then further altered in the translation from Python into JavaScript, the operation of this gender variable endures as a central narrative imperative. The string `var heshe=['he','she']` is copied directly from Montfort's source code in that of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*, and a similar string, `var hisher=['his','her']` is added. We can see the operation of this gender variable in the following sentence:

The translator conveys her encouragements.  
The administrator relays his congratulations.  
The pilot broadcasts her explanations.  
The receptionist transmits his salutations.

In the source code of the Python iteration, the syntax for the code which calls variables is as follows: `choice(heshe)`. "`choice()`" is part of Python's "random" module, which also contains "`shuffle()`" and "`random()`," which aren't all grammatically consistent. "`choice()`" is not built into the JavaScript programming language, but rather, is created as a function. In translating *story2.py* to JavaScript, Montfort created a function called "`choose()`." Although `choose()` performs in exactly the same way as the built-in option of `choice()` does in Python, Montfort's choice of the word `choose` in writing his own seems to imply a rather more imperative emphasis on variable selection.

In either case, it must be stressed that we are not dealing with particularly difficult code here. The source code for *story2.py* is 26 lines long; the file is less than 1k. The encoded assumptions about gender alluded to by the stories generated by *The Two* are far more complex than the JavaScript source code which generates

them. The deceptive simplicity of Montfort's generators would seem to undermine Roberto Simanowski's argument that, "the internal problem of this genre of digital literature is its poetics of technology, which replaces a language juggler with a crafter of code" (2011, 91). *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* further thwarts this argument, in so far as the source code was not entirely crafted by me. Technically, less a craft than a crude life raft, my code is a transmutation, a wilful mutilation, a hack. The decision to hack rather than craft code anew is a deliberate one. In *A Hacker Manifesto*, McKenzie Wark argues, "[t]o hack is always to produce the odd difference in the production of information... by transforming in some way the very process of production" (2004, 222). Something of the uncanny twinning of characters at work in Wylde's *about so many things* and Montfort's *The Two* underpinned my process production; my hack transforms Montfort's source code into a code medium of sorts. *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* sends and receives dialogue on and through source code and associated media haunted by generations of past usage.

This haunting may be understood, in part, to be the result of an operation of memory. In a programming language like C, `var=` refers to a specific location in memory. A location is always both a place and the act of locating that place. Thus, a location always exists before it is located. Yet, rather than assigning variables to a specific location in memory, JavaScript distributes the operation of processes including memory across networks and devices. Until it is referred to, the location of a variable may be anywhere. Once it has been referred to, through a process known as garbage collection, a variable may disappear. Or, the reference to it may disappear. This mode of dispersed, temporary, and transitory memory allocation suits the performance of a narrative text of place and displacement nicely. Though a

function such as 'choose()' might be called upon to select from a string of trans variables: 'choose(trans)', for example, only one result will be returned: transmission. The rest remain in memory, as potential selections for possible future translations. Thus, this text performs the act of selection from memory. Every 80000 milliseconds, a new instance of the text – one of an infinite number of possible translations – is displayed on screen. The text displayed is doubly a translation, performed in the first instance by the JavaScript and in the second by the browser, which translates the source code into the text we see on the screen.

Cybertext theory distinguishes between these two instances of the same text with the terms textons and scriptons. Textons are strings of signs as they are in the text, i.e. the source code. Scriptons are strings of signs as they appear to readers/users. The mechanism by which scriptons are generated from textons is termed a traversal function. In Espen Aarseth's typology of textual communication, transiency is listed as a variable of traversal functions. "If the mere passing of the user's time causes scriptons to appear, the text is transient..." (Eskelinen 2012). *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* is in every sense a transient text. The mere passing of time causes scriptons to appear. These scriptons spell out stories of transmission, of transience, of transit:

Why shouldn't the wanderers dream of clearer manuals?  
The passage from Cornwall proved cruel.  
Ancient migrants described itineraries. Three were from the Hebrides.

Further underling the traversal function of transiency, the reader can never quite reach the end of this transmission. Mid-way through a reading, a new version is generated. The sentence structures stay the same, but all the variables change. In a very long sentence in *The Order of Things*, Foucault describes the classical

sentence as a signification engine; a mechanical construction which performs the task of linking otherwise disassociated elements together. He writes, “in a single continuous sentence it is possible to indicate relations of time, of consequence, of possession, and of localization” (1994, 100). In *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* these relations shift as time passes, so that we might have immigrants now, where once we had explorers; a persistent tap eclipses a strange whir; a message instead of a passage; Nova Scotia in place of Scotland; a submarine cable replaces a shipping network. If we were to think of translation merely in terms of equivalencies, we would not likely consider a submarine cable a suitable substitute for a shipping network. We might avoid replacing the word passage, with its double implications of a passage across the Atlantic and a passage of a larger text, with the word message and its more singular meaning. But by situating translation within a string of *trans-* variables we arrive at a somewhat different understanding of how these “otherwise disassociated elements” are indeed linked together.

*TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* is a mechanical construction, a sentence engine performing the programmatic function of associating suspended variables with syntactic signification that they might travel through networks and emerge intact as narrative units. The dialogue generated by this engine is both technically and topically inflected with the syntax and grammar of code language. Some variable strings contain nothing but codes. `var receiving=` for example, reproduces shorthand gleaned from logs kept at the Glace Bay Marconi Station, circa 1911 (now kept in the Marconi archive at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, UK):

```
var receiving=['40 words local paper', '30 words local paper', '100 words  
special news', 'a few scraps of a private message', 'distinguishable dots',  
'dots only', 'heavy traffic', 'something again', 'atmospherics', 'last message
```

from ship', 'repeated \"are you there\"', 'repeated \"where are you\"', 'request to repeat', 'several distinct dashes', 'something from another station', 'a weak signal', 'no answers to our enquiries', 'no answer', 'weak readable signals', 'no signals', 'no signals received, probably not sending', 'strong readable signals, sending fast', 'medium strength readable signals', 'some static', 'lightening all around'];

Bolter and Grusin term the representation of one medium in another 'remediation' and argue that "remediation is a defining characteristic of the new digital media" (1999: 45). Yet it is of little significance that the above cited variables were once printed text and are now digital textons. *Trans-* seems a more specific prefix than *re-* in *re-*lation to the *pre-* digital multi-media ecology referred to by this work. *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* performs the transmediation of texts from archival sources, but these 'texts' have already have passed across, beyond or through the code mediums of wires, switches, signals, air, ears, hands, paper.

*TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* externalises a poetics of technology. Codes, their creators, the modes through which they operate, propagate, and communicate, and the confusion they instigate are one of the main topics of the dialogue *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* generates. Simanowski suggests that, "because absurdity, weirdness, and illogicality are the default modes of text generators, mastery is only proven by overcoming such characteristics" (91). This generator aims not to overcome but rather to embrace such characteristics. Absurdity, weirdness, and illogicality are the default modes of long-distance communication, migration, displacement, and difference. And so, *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* generates cacophony, liminality, atemporality and asynchronous exchanges of mixed messages pertaining to miscommunications and network failures.

In his critique of “the vagueness of remediation as a concept” Markku Eskelinen argues, “the heuristic question may no longer be what a medium is, but what a medium does and is used for” (2012, 20). Whether read by a network, by a machine, by software, or by a human eye; whether read as textons or as scriptons in either a fixed or generative instantiation, or spoken by the mouth, or experienced by the ear; what *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* does is generate a dialogue about the translation from one place to another, and what it is used for is a script for live poly-vocal performance. *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* has been performed in Amsterdam, NL; Bristol, UK; Banff, CA; and Oxford, OH, USA. Each instance constitutes a new translation, or transmediation, into a new and unique configuration of performers, audience, acoustics, and spatial arrangements. In “Dramaturgy and the Digital,” an article written by Barbara Bridger after having participated in one of these live performance, Bridger comes to a conclusion uncannily close to Eskelinen’s, though couched in very different terms:

One of the central characteristics of this work is its interrogation of its own modes of operation: an approach that is less concerned with deciphering the meaning of a piece of work, and more interested in the structures that allow this meaning to be transmitted” (Bridger 2013).

The most basic, most fundamental of these structures is the dialogue. The figures of *Strophe* and *Antistrophe* represent the most basic communication network - call and response. *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* begins with a call: *Begin!* Followed by a response: *How?* With a question. What emerges from a question? *Distant shores, to lure us.* Location, location, location. Derrida observes, “Site, this land, calling to us from beyond memory, is always elsewhere. The site is not the empirical and national Here of a territory. It is immemorial, and thus also a

future” (1978, 66). The act of locating a distant shore provides a context for the fact of our present position, which is always already in the past, already behind us. In her long poem, “The Fall of Rome: A Traveller’s Guide,” Canadian poet and classicist Anne Carson writes: “A journey .../ begins with a voice / calling you name out / behind you. / This seems a convenient arrangement. / How else would you know it’s time to go?”(1995, 75).

And so *Strophe* sets out from east to west on a treacherous mission, across high seas and frozen wastes, in search of a Northwest Passage, in hopes of trade routes, and fountains of eternal youth. And *Antistrophe* returns from west to east with scurvy, captive natives, and furs. Neither ever arrives. Both only just barely finish leaving. Through generations of transatlantic migration, characteristics of one place become *trans*-posed upon another. Another *trans*- word, transposition replaces. In the case of the call choose(place), var place= refers both literally and figuratively a location in memory.

The furthest sea shores are reminiscent of those of England.  
The neighbouring vistas compare to those of Cornwall.  
The nearest lands could easily be confused with those of Nova Scotia.

Although the translation of natural languages is not my focus here, the inextricable association between language and nation necessitates the question: Were this work translated into another language, such as French, for example, would the location of memory also be translated, or re-placed, to reflect generations transatlantic migration from France to Nouvelle France? Would Cornwall be replaced with Bretagne, Nova Scotia with Acadie? In the interest of soliciting a response to this question, in April 2012 a single output of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* was posted to *Vertaallab* (TranslationLab), an

ongoing translation experiment edited by Rozalie Hirs on the Dutch blog *Ooteoote*, in which, translators are invited to post translations as comments to the featured works (Hirs 2012). There were two responses to *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*. The first, posted by Ludy Roumen-Bührs, translated the text from English to Dutch. The English place names were retained. The line: “Eleven were from England.” became “Elf kwamen uit Engeland.” The second response was posted by @netwurker, born Mary-Anne Breeze, aka Netwurker Mez, a pioneering author of digital literature known for developing and writing in the hybrid code-poetry language ‘mezangelle.’ To *Vertaallab*, Mez posted a portion of *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* translated into mezanglle:

```

_TRANS.MISSION [A(hhh).DIA(multimodal)LOGUE]_
be[en there, done that, a]g[a]in[:out(re)] Transmission.
[w]H[y]ow[l]?
with a[hhhh] quest[.].
wot_merges 4rm?
[4]Reigns.in.other.heads+
[Anonymous_reroute_in_progress]TORment.heArts.
WiFi.fog.on.a[hhh].critical.day.
have ARGs + Augments been[+or]gone, yet?
trans.actuals+accents=mits+WAR/NINgs.
y Kant [u.c]?
a.phew.phrased+mothed.in....
low nrg_lvling.
relay[s].broad+social.
[SAT+sitting]NAVigators.on.narrow.casted.crosses.
Eleg[ant]raphic.[s|w]Itches, here. .[knot..... *here*].
biting.the.OperaTOR.4rm.[Ma]Trix[y].inlets.
[Br]Av[e]ian.Gnu.Words.in.the.unreadable.maKing[s+divided.Queens].
[Re:De]ceiving.staccato.waves.

```

---

Wh[MO]O.can.REMemburr.the.C.in.a.\_MYST\_.like.thIs?

---

Here, the syntax and grammar of the code languages engaged in enacting this born digital literary text have heavily inflected, or, we might say, infected its



translation. The resulting text is a transmutation in the order of “un petit d’un petit.” *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* serves as a subtext from which to digress into a systematic punning which echoes and extends my own use, in the title of the work, of square brackets, periods, slashes, plus signs, and other punctuation marks common to programming languages. These devices divide phonetic sequences into complex parenthetical segments, in which, new words appear. The first line – “Begin Transmission” – becomes: “be[en there, done that, a]g[a]in[:out(re)] Transmission.” The second line fuses and confuses all of the possible (w) variables ['why', 'where', 'how'] into one impossible word: “[w]H[y]ow[l]?” Mez’s transmutation reflects generations of migration – not across the Atlantic, but rather, into an online networked game space, in which, in mezanglle, at least, the binarisms of he or she and here or there might collapse, into [s.he] and [t.here]. The potential of the hybrid s[t]he[re] space is proposed in the line:

“[Br]Av[e]ian.Gnu.Worlds.in.the.unreadable.maKing[s+divided.Queens].”

In 2013, *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* was translated into French by Ariane Savoie, a PhD student at Université Québec à Montréal, for a special translation issue of *bleuOrange*, a Montreal-based online journal of ‘littérature hypermédiatique,’ which launched at the Electronic Literature Organization conference *Chercher le texte* in Paris 24 September 2013. In personal correspondence, Savoie shared certain thoughts on her process, which I will now synthesise here. A strict translation of all the English variables into French equivalents would have resulted in subject-verb gender disagreements, the resolution of which would require considerable modification to the source code which, Savoie felt, would have diminished the variability of the generator and the

structure of the piece. Instead, Savoie elected to respect the structure of the source code. Gender conflicts were avoided by the population of strings with variables from only one gender, letting go of any variables that didn't have the exact equivalent in that gender in French. Initially, this resulted in an eradication of the gender variable altogether. Eventually, a compromise was reached in which two versions of certain variable strings were created, that both masculine and feminine proper nouns might be called at different points in the script.

Although the string `var heshe=['he','she']` is not carried over into Savoie's translation, something of the either/or binarism of Wylde and Montfort's `var heshe=` endures, both through the introduction of gender variables through other means, as cited above, and through the variable string `var place=`, in which, the location of each place named is either on one side of the Atlantic or the other: Canada or England, Acadie or France, the new world or the old, home or away. Through the operation of this variable, here and there become doppelganger of one another. In *The Uncanny*, Freud defines doppelganger as persons who have to be regarded as identical because they look alike (141). If we re-place the word 'persons' with the word 'places' in Freud's definition we arrive at a similarly uncanny conclusion. Between places inextricably linked by generations of immigration "[t]here is the constant recurrence of the same thing, the repetition of the same... features, the same characters, the same destinies, the same misdeeds, even the same names, through successive generations" (142).

It could be argued that we are not speaking of translation at all here. Perhaps what we are seeing is simply a case of influence, of resemblance – an uncanny recurrence of code processes carried across from one generation of

computer-generated text to the next. Perhaps. Text generation is the oldest form of literary experimentation with computers, after all. Etymologically, the word 'generation' so heavily implies regeneration that it would be difficult if not impossible for a second, or third, or fourth generation of generator generators to not be influenced by previous generations of generators of generators. But I have framed the process of creating and disseminating *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]* in terms of translation all the same. Translation, transmutation, transmediation, and transmission have played a central role in the creation and dissemination of this text. Traces, phrases, structures and functions form the source codes of *story2.py* and *The Two* endure in its textons. The results of the operation of variables such as gender are borne across into its scriptons. The question of what is borne across, beyond, and though each new generation of this text is reposed every 80000 milliseconds.

There is no repose for the questions this text poses. I will close with one of an infinite number of possible endings proposed by *TRANS.MISSION [A.DIALOGUE]*:

Is the delivery mechanism functioning?  
Some of us believe it's working.  
Please try again.

Ou:

Les systèmes sont-ils présents?  
Les autorités imaginent qu'ils sont brisés.  
Veuillez s'il vous plait réessayer.

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## *The Broadside of a Yarn*

### A Situationist strategy for spinning sea stories ashore

J. R. CARPENTER

All that is told of the sea has a fabulous sound to an inhabitant of the land, and all its products have a certain fabulous quality, as if they belonged to another planet, from sea-weed to a sailor's yarn. Henry David Thoreau (1995: 78)

*The Broadside of a Yarn* is a multi-modal performative pervasive networked narrative attempt to chart fictional fragments of sea stories on land with nothing but a Quick Response code reader and a handmade print map of dubious accuracy. It is an unbound atlas of impossible maps and charts, an errata-base populated with historical, literary, pictorial, diagrammatic and cartographic data, a collection of fictional and computer-generated narratives, a selection of fragments of quotations from centuries of sailors' yarns, spoken words from printed stories, set on far-away long-ago seas, put into present mouths and then shifted.

*The Broadside of a Yarn* remediates the broadside, a form of networked narrative popular from the sixteenth century onwards. Traditionally, broadsides were written on a wide range of topical subjects, cheaply printed on single sheets of paper (often with images), widely distributed and posted and performed in public. During 'Remediating the Social', an exhibition that took place at Inspace gallery, Edinburgh, Scotland, the United Kingdom, 1–17 November 2012, *The Broadside of a Yarn* was posted as a discontinuous map printed on 15 A3-sized, foam-core-mounted squares arranged in an asymmetrical grid in a 5 m x 3 m light-box situated near the main entrance of the gallery.

The purpose of this map is not to guide but rather to propose imprecise and quite possibly impossible routes of navigation through the

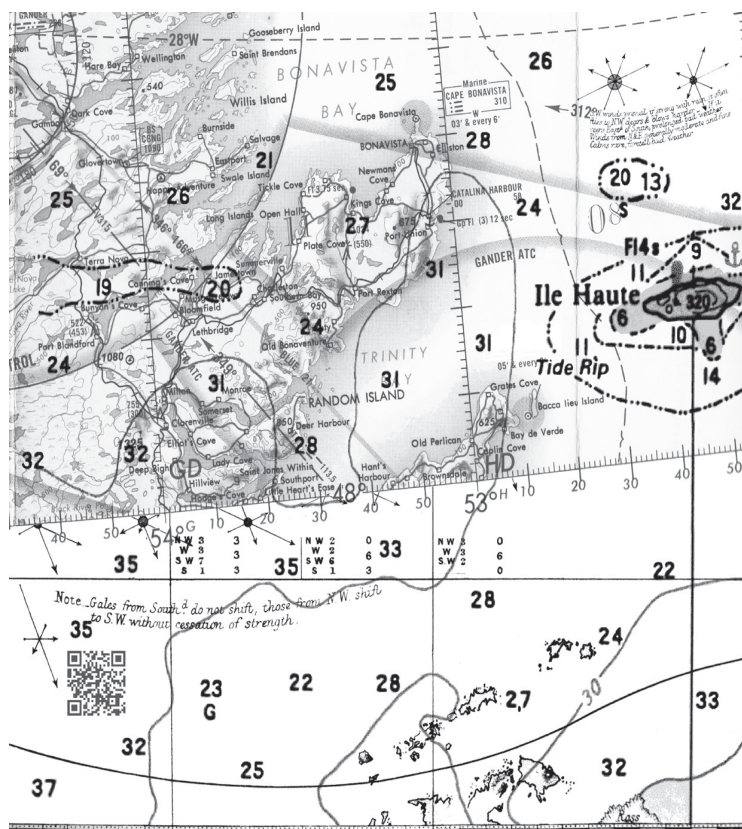
city of Edinburgh, along the Firth of Forth, into the North Sea, into the North Atlantic and beyond into purely imaginary territories. This map was created through an engagement with the Situationist practice of *dérive*. In *The Beach beneath the Street: The everyday life and glorious times of the Situationist international*, McKenzie Wark ascribes a suggestion of 'space and time of liquid movement' to the word *dérive*: 'Its whole field of meaning is aquatic, conjuring up flows, channels, eddies, currents, and also drifting, sailing or tacking against the wind' (2011: 22). In 'Theory of the *dérive*', Guy-Ernest Debord suggests that '[w]ith the aid of old maps, aerial photographs and experimental *dérives*, one can draw up hitherto lacking maps of influences, maps whose inevitable imprecision at this early stage is no worse than that of the first navigational charts' (1958). In *The Old Ways: A journey on foot*, Robert Macfarlane warns, '[s]ea charts, even more than land maps, can lure you into hubris.... The act of chart-reading, even more than the act of map-reading, is part data-collection and part occultism' (2012: 124). During a series of walks undertaken in Edinburgh in May 2012, regardless of the number of times that I set out towards the sea, *dérive* led me instead into museums, libraries and used and antiquarian print, map and book shops. The breadth and variety of this bookish drifting is borne out in the imprecision of the resulting map of influence. My own photographs and line drawings mingle with scans of obscure details of old maps, city plans, pamphlets, navigational charts, coastal guides, guidebooks and other printed ephemera gleaned from intermingled map-chart, reading-walking, drifting-wandering.

Like the printed broadsides of old, the public posting of *The Broadside of a Yarn* signifies that it is intended to be performed. Embedded within the cartographic space of the printed map are QR codes that link to smartphone-optimized web pages containing computer-generated narrative dialogues. Critically, these were created through a dialogic process. Over a ten-month period, Steve Booth, Braille Fem, Caden Lovelace, Amy McDeath and I engaged in an extended multi-modal conversation towards the development of a text-generator authoring tool. The assignment of authorship here is far from clear. The JavaScript (JS) written by Booth et al. relies upon jQuery, a free, open-source JavaScript library written and maintained by a team of developers. I used this aggregate code base – in concert with cascading style sheets (CSS), HyperText Markup Language (HTML) and various other JavaScripts written by myself and by others – to create thirteen computer-generated dialogues. Most, although not all of these, are intended to serve as scripts for poly-vocal performances, replete with stage instructions suggesting how and where they may be read. Thus, these QR codes constitute points on the physical map that point to potential events, to utterances, to speech acts.

For Walter J. Ong, '[t]he spoken word is always an event, a movement in time, completely lacking in the thing-like repose of the written or printed word' (1982: 75). Digital literature has given rise to a new regime of enunciation unforeseen by Ong, in which written words refuse repose. In 'The time of digital poetry: From object to event', N. Katherine Hayles argues that, in digital media,

the poem ceases to exist as a self-contained object and instead becomes a process, an event brought into existence when the program runs.... The poem is 'eventitized,' made more an event and less a discrete, self-contained object with clear boundaries in space and time. (Hayles 2006: 181–2)

How, then, are these texts read? Every time a QR code is scanned by a QR code reader, the app (application software), the camera, the smartphone, the Internet, my web server,



■ Figure 1. *There he was, gone.* J. R. Carpenter, 'The Broadside of a Yarn' – map detail. Inspace, Edinburgh, UK, November 2012. Image by J. R. Carpenter

the web browser and countless commands, protocols, softwares and hardwares in-between conspire to collectively perform a set of JavaScripts that in turn generate a performance script on screen that then may or may not be read by human eyes, be spoken by human voices and/or be heard by human ears. There is a direct relation between the term 'JavaScript' and the phrase 'performance script' – JavaScript is a procedural language. In a .js file, information must be presented in a certain order in order for the script to be intelligible to the computer. The expression 'computer-generated', however, is something of a misnomer. Etymologically, the word generation derives from the Latin *generātiō*, stem of *generātiō*, from *generāre* meaning 'beget' or 'bring forth'. The computer does not beget these texts. It performs the selection of words from pre-set lists (variable strings) and slots them into syntactic templates (sentences). The act of selection and the fact of what is presented constitute a statement-event. For Michel Foucault, the archive is 'at the very root of the statement-event, and ... defines at the outset the *system of its enunciability*' (2002: 146).

Between the *language (langue)* that defines the system of constructing possible sentences, and the *corpus* that passively collects the words that are spoken, the archive defines a particular level: that

of a practice that causes a multiplicity of statements to emerge as so many regular events, as so many things to be dealt with and manipulated.... [I]t reveals the rules of a practice that enables statements both to survive and to undergo regular modification. It is the *general system of the formation and transformation of statements*. (Foucault 2002: 146)

If we take the language ‘that defines the system’ (146) to be JavaScript, and if we take ‘the corpus’ (146) to be the content of the variable strings, then the digital text component of *The Broadside of a Yarn* could be understood as both an archive of potential performances, and as a system for enacting them. The print map serves as an interface through which these potential texts are ‘eventalized’ (Hayles 2006: 182). Thus, this work sits at an axis, between *langue* and *parole*,<sup>1</sup> between what is said and what is done, between what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari term machinic assemblages of desire and assemblages of collective enunciation. The ‘assemblage, in its multiplicity, necessarily acts on semiotic flows, material flows, and social flows simultaneously’ (2007: 22), quite in keeping with the aquatic field of meaning of *dérive*.

Let us turn now towards a specific example. In the image (fig. 1), we find three layers of cartographic information: a portion of an aviation map depicting an area of rugged coastline; a nautical chart indicating anchorage, depths and rip tides surrounding an island of indeterminate scale; and another nautical chart noting wind direction and weather conditions. The overlapping of these layers renders them incoherent. In *The Interface Effect*, Alexander R. Galloway states, ‘coherence and incoherence compose a sort of continuum’ (Galloway 2012: 46). An incoherent aesthetic is one that tends to ‘unravel neat masses into their unkempt and incontinent elements’ (46). Thus, the names in one layer become named places in all the others. The weather conditions here must also apply to there. The island of indeterminate size could be anywhere.

The QR code embedded in this incoherent cartographic space links to a computer-generated narrative dialogue that in turn

presents an incoherent narrative dialogue. The JavaScript that generates this never-ending narrative looks like this:

```
‘Wait.’;
‘It’s too #{late}.’;
‘#{cant} you #{sense} #{thisthat}?’;
‘It’s only the #{season} #{weather} over the
#{water}.’;
‘#{maybe}. #{maybe}, you’ve got #{weather} in
your #{hair}.’;
‘Tell me then. #{w} was he #{lost}?’;
‘After #{time} on the #{water} ...
#{near} #{place} ... ’;
‘Still #{coasting}ing?’;
‘Listen.’
```

This ‘*general system of the formation and transformation of statements*’ seems coherent enough, even to a reader unfamiliar with JavaScript, until we consider the unknown quantity: the *corpus*. What words does the variable *#{weather}* collect? Surely it does not collect all the weather terms. Only some: [‘breezes’, ‘fog’, ‘freezing rain’, ‘gales’, ‘gusts’, ‘hail’, ‘haze’, ‘mist’, ‘rain’, ‘shadows’, ‘showers’, ‘sun’, ‘thunder’, ‘storms’ and ‘wind’]. The archive cannot be described in its totality.... It emerges in fragments, regions’ (Foucault 2002: 147). And what of *#{place}*? Here the digital text collects words from the print map: [‘Burnside’, ‘Eastport’, ‘Salvage’, ‘Swale Island’, ‘Willis Island’, ‘Long Islands’, ‘Saint Brendans’, ‘Hare Bay’, ‘Trinity Bay’, ‘Dark Cove’, ‘Tickle Cove’, ‘Newman’s Cove’, ‘King’s Cove’, ‘Deadman’s Bay’, ‘Trouty’, ‘Little Heart’s Ease’, ‘Funk Island’, ‘Old Bonaventure’, ‘Cape Bonavista’, ‘Grates Cove’, ‘Plate Cove’, ‘Hant’s Harbour’, ‘Random Island’ and ‘Baccalieu Island’]. Thus, the archive ‘map[s] out the place where it speaks ... illuminates, if only in an oblique way, that enunciative field of which it is itself a part’ (147).

This computer-generated dialogue forms the basis of a stand-alone web-based piece. ‘There he was, gone.’ was published in *Joyland Poetry* in June 2012, and it may be viewed online (see Carpenter 2012c). In the web iteration, the dialogue appears within the pictorial space of a photograph of a small boat fishing in shallow waters on a grey day. This photograph floats

<sup>1</sup> The words ‘*langue*’ and ‘*parole*’ are de Saussure’s terms for language as a system and its utterance.

over the same first two layers of cartographic information as in the print iteration, but in the digital context this terrain is less stable. Re-size the browser window and there is a shift in the relative positions of these layers. This hybrid photographic-cartographic-generated-text space is further interrupted by two horizontally scrolling poetic texts and the live-feed of a regional weather report. Here we see the 'space and time of liquid movement' that Wark ascribes to the practise of *dérive* born out in the assemblage. As the assembler of this assemblage, I instigate rather than write this text. As this text performs, the connections it establishes (and then dissolves), prompt me to pose questions of the piece that I am not at all sure I know the answers to.

How do we piece together a story like this one? A mystery. The title offers more questions than answers. 'There he was, gone.' Where is *there*? Who is *he*? Where has he *gone*? How is this sentence even possible? There he was, not there – as if 'he' is in two places and in no place, both at once. The once of 'once upon a time'. This story has to do with time. This story has to do with place. That much is clear. We take time to look around the story space. What do we see? A corner of a map. An abstraction of a place too detailed to place, unless the places it names are already familiar. Is this a local story then? For locals, between locals.... If we do not know the answer to this question, then we are not local. We seem to have stumbled upon an ongoing conversation. *Listen*. A dialogue of sorts. *It's too late*. An argument, even. One interlocutor instigates. *Can't you feel anything?* The other obfuscates. *It's only the spring squalls over the bay*. All that's not said between these two hangs in a heavy mist, a sea fret low over a small fishing boat turned broadside to a pack of hump-backed slick black rocks. This story is fishing inshore. Close to home. *Tell me then: Where was he found?* A litany of place names follows. No answers. More questions. *Wait*. *Listen*. This story keeps shifting. Slow scrolling lines of poem roll in. *set sail on home sick ship shape house wreck*. What help is that to anyone? *We arrive and we have only just finished leaving*.

What use is a poem? We sift through the fine print, searching for clues. *GALE WARNING IN EFFECT, Funk Island Bank*. Weather conditions for today's date. *Wind northwest 25 knots diminishing to west 15 this morning and to light this afternoon*. Is the disappearance hinted at in the title a recent one? There he was, gone. Whoever he was and wherever he went, this story springs from his absence.

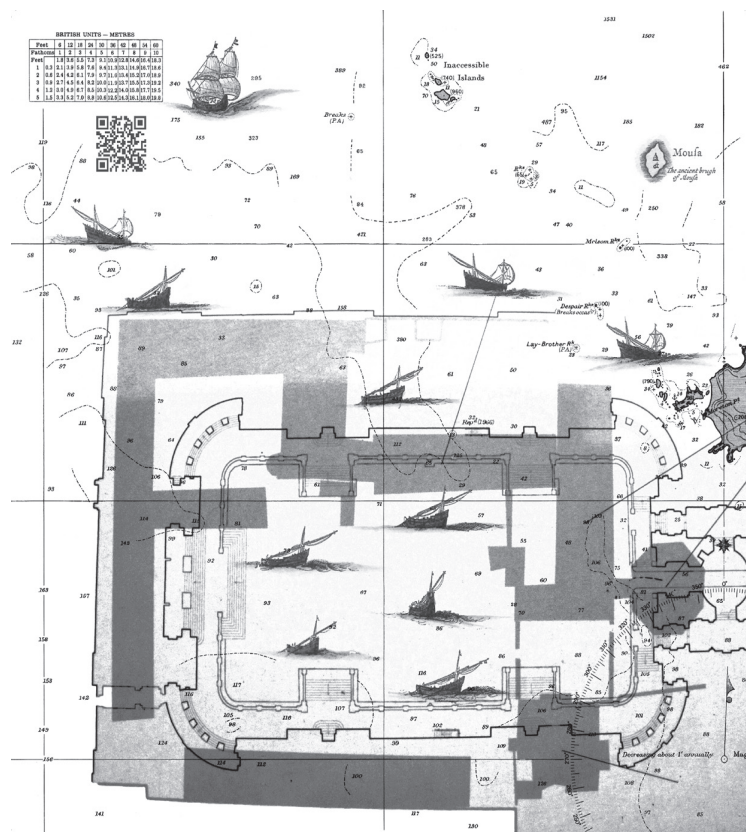
The JavaScript that performs this digital narrative – in concert with a projection of the cartographic space of the piece and a printed performance script – formed the basis of a live performance in four voices, first presented at Performance Writing Weekend, Arnolfini, Bristol, May 2012. One of the performers, Barbara Bridger, wrote about the experience in *Exeunt* in terms of 'dramaturgical engagement with process' (2013).

In *There he was, gone*, the programmed variables operated in the moment of performance. We read our text from computer screens. It passed between the performers in a loosely pre-ordained pattern, but the variables also caused the text to shift as we read. This fused reading and speaking into an almost simultaneous operation. (Bridger 2013)

In the event, these written words that refuse repose become the textual impetus for an utterance that perpetually evokes, but can never quite enunciate, the circumstances surrounding a recent traumatic event: a death, a body, a loss, at sea. Derrida articulates this chasm: 'Between the too warm flesh of the literal event and the cold skin of the concept runs meaning' (Derrida 1978: 75).

*The Broadside of a Yarn* also remediates the sailor's yarn. The yarn is a performative form, perhaps not fully of the 'primary oral culture' that Ong evokes, a culture in which 'the world has its existence only in sound, with no reference whatsoever to any visually perceptible text, and no awareness of even the possibility of such a text' (Ong 1982: 73), but certainly the yarn is of an oral tradition within which the 'phenomenology of sound enters deeply into human beings' feel for existence, as processed by the spoken word' (73).





■ Figure 2. Notes on the Voyage. J. R. Carpenter, 'The Broadside of a Yarn' – map detail. Inspace, Edinburgh, UK, November 2012. Image by J. R. Carpenter

The phrase 'to spin a yarn' emerged in the early 1800s as a sailors' expression denoting the telling of long stories of incredible happenings while engaged in such sedentary work as yarn or rope twisting, net or sail mending, or simply waiting – for orders or wind or tide. The whole of Joseph Conrad's novella *The Heart of Darkness* is, in effect, relating a sailor's yarn. A series of nested parentheses create a telescopic experience of distance via a series of oppositions. The quotidian narration of an epic journey to and up the Congo River in Africa is recounted in one evening, in one sitting, whilst sitting utterly still, on a ship moored on the Thames River in London. The oral yarn spun by the character Marlow is related to the reader through the filter of a narrator, written and printed in a book. Of Marlow and his yarn, the narrator has this to say:

The yarns of seamen have a direct simplicity, the whole meaning of which lies within the shell of a cracked nut. But Marlow was not typical ... to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale ... in the likeness of one of those misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine. (Conrad 1950 [1910]: 68)

Indeed, Marlow begins his yarn far from its dark heart, as it were. He begins with a map.

Now when I was a little chap I had a passion for maps. I would look for hours at South America, or Africa, or Australia, and lose myself in all the glories of exploration. At that time there were many blank spaces on the earth, and when I saw one that looked particularly inviting on a map (but they all look that) I would put my finger on it and say, 'When I grow up I will go there.' (70–1)

The high order of abstraction in Marlow's narration separates him from his fellow seamen and their oral tradition. His cartographic conception of narration marks him as a modern, literate being. Similarly, Ong argues that only after

the extensive experience with maps that print implemented would human beings, when they thought about the ... 'world', think primarily of something laid out before their eyes, as in a modern printed atlas, a vast surface or assemblage of surfaces ... ready to be 'explored'. (Ong 1982: 73)

This conception of the world as something laid out already was one that the Situationists sought to undermine. For the Letterist International, *dérive* constituted a critical practise, one designed to cut across dividing lines between leisure and labour time, as well as between the internal private space associated with subjectivity and the external social space of the city. Wark suggests, '[t]he *dérive* was an intervention against geography ... a counter-geography ... interested in the practices of landscape-making' (2011: 26). The incoherent landscape presented by *The Broadside of a Yarn* confronts a number of cartographic and literary conventions: Place names are rearranged, territorial borders are erased or re-placed, no limitations are set on distance or scale, delineations of static spaces are refused, land and sea are confused, fact and fiction exist on the same narrative plain, and notions of authorship are blurred. These vagaries are deliberate. They aim to highlight certain inconsistencies in cartographic and literary conventions that abstractions tend to gloss over. Susan Barton, the traveller-come-castaway first-person narrator of J. M. Coetzee's novel

*Foe*, warns against abstraction in narration (Coetzee 1986).

[S]een from too remote a vantage, life begins to lose its particularity. All shipwrecks become the same shipwreck, all castaways the same castaway.... The truth that makes your story yours alone, that sets you apart from the old mariner by the fireside spinning yarns of sea-monsters and mermaids, resides in a thousand touches.... When you made your needle.... [B]y what means did you pierce the eye? When you sewed your hat, what did you use for thread? (Coetzee 1986: 18)

*The Broadside of a Yarn* turns broadside to these tensions between detail and abstraction, aims for a soft spot in-between them, a spot that is neither and both. The combinatorial powers of computer-generated narrative conflate and confabulate characters, facts, and forms of narrative accounts of fantastical islands, impossible pilots, and voyages into the unknown undertaken over the past 2,340 years or so. This too is a Situationist strategy. Wark argues, 'for past works to become resources for the present requires their ... appropriation as a collective inheritance, not as private property' (Wark 2011: 37). Many of the words that are contained in the *corpus* of this assemblage have been *détourned* from well-known literary texts. One generator inserts lines of dialogue from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* into a shifting narrative terrain. Another produces a performance script entirely composed of lines of dialogue from Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Sharer*. 'Détournement is the opposite of quotation. Like détournement, quotation brings the past into the present, but it does so entirely within a regime of the proper use of proper names' (Wark 2011: 40). For Deleuze and Guattari, '[t]he proper name is the instantaneous apprehension of a multiplicity' (2007: 37). As such, '[t]here are no individual statements.... Every statement is the product of a machinic assemblage' (37). Called as statements into the digital text process, these literary text fragments are reconstituted in a present that is also a break from the present, in a new regime of enunciation, one

in which authorship is distributed and text is eventalized. The result is a deterritorialization, an incoherent politics, one that for Galloway 'tends to dissolve existing institutional bonds' (2012: 47).

To examine the ramifications of these statements, let us turn now to a second example of a computer-generated narrative in *The Broadside of a Yarn*, which has been adapted into a stand-alone piece. *Notes on the Voyage of Owl and Girl* was exhibited at Modern Languages Association (MLA) 2013 and may be viewed online (see Carpenter 2012b) (fig. 2). The corpus of this narrative *détournes* texts ranging from Hakluyt's *Voyages and Discoveries* to Edward Lear's well-known Victorian nonsense poem 'The Owl and the Pussy-Cat'. In my version, the pussycat is a girl most serious, most adventurous and most determined. The cartographic collage she and her lazy friend the owl voyage through collects the particularities of a number of fluid floating places and reassembles them in an obviously awkward assemblage of discontinuous surfaces pitted with points of departure, escape routes and lines of flight. The computer-generated narrative of this voyage takes Coetzee's Barton's 'thousand touches' (Coetzee 1986: 18) for what they are – a string of variables, from which a thousand partial truths may be output selectively. One moment a sentence on-screen may read: 'An owl and a girl most adventurous cast off in a grey-green dinghy; a water tight boat, certainly, though a good deal too poorly designed to suit the two of them.' The next moment the statements in that sentence will have shifted: 'An owl and a girl most courageous ventured forth in a bottle-green boat; a buoyant skiff, certainly, though a little bit too high in the stern to suit the two of them.' Beneath the surface of the screen, the sentence structure has not changed: 'An owl and a girl most *#{studious} #{setsail}* in a *#{green} green #{boat}*; a *#{seaworthy} #{boat}*, certainly, though a *#{amount} too #{equipped}* to suit the two of them.' To quote Wark again, 'Key to any practice of *détournement* is identifying the fragments upon which it might work' (Wark 2011: 40). Lear's boat is pea-green. My *#{green}*

was ['bottle-', 'beetle-', 'grass-', 'grey-', 'jelly-', 'lima-bean-', 'pea-', 'sea-', 'sea-foam-', 'thalo-']. But then I added ['alligator-', 'apple-', 'collard-', 'grasshopper-', 'kelly-', 'olive-', 'thumb-']. Because I could. 'Assemblages are in constant variation, are themselves constantly subject to transformations' (Deleuze and Guattari 2007: 82). The same could be said for yarn, forever twisting, knitting, knotting and unravelling.

My stated intention in creating *The Broadside of a Yarn* was to use the oral story-telling tradition of the yarn, the printed broadside and map, the digital network, and the walk-able city in concert to construct a temporary digital community connected through a performative pervasive networked narrative. I wrote that sentence a year and a half before the 'Remediating the Social' exhibition opened in Edinburgh. Through the Situationist strategies of *dérive* and *détournement* employed in my process of composition my focus shifted away from the temptation to lure people on walks through a city tagged with links to stories of the sea, towards a desire to compel people to collectively speak, shifting sea stories ashore. Perhaps this shift is an ontological one. On land,

the body moves through stillness. At sea, everything moves. Macfarlane articulates this difference in terms of the documents that these two types of movement produce.

On maps of mountainous terrain there are warnings: the hachures showing cliffs, the bunched contours indicating steep ground and fall-lines. Charts record headlands, skerries [rocky islands] and mean depths of water, but because most sea features are volatile – temporary functions of wind, tide and current – there is no way of reliably charting them. (Macfarlane 2012: 124)

No wonder then that sailors' yarns resist the fixity of print. They are too volatile. They are temporary functions of voice, of breath. They are events, processes. They are sound. They move. Through the act of listening, the still body centres them.

A print map hung in a gallery exhibition for three weeks offers but a narrow window of access to such a vast and varied body of digital text as lurks beneath the surface of *The Broadside of a Yarn*. As it is discontinuous – composed and printed on separate squares – this physical map is infinitely expandable. Any number of



■ Figure 3. Holding print map handout. J. R. Carpenter, 'The Broadside of a Yarn' – map detail. Inspace, Edinburgh, UK, November 2012. Image by J. R. Carpenter

new squares may be added at any time. Thus, this 'assemblage is also divided ... by lines of deterritorialization that cut across it and carry it away' (Deleuze and Guattari 2007: 504). In part to extend the life of *The Broadside of a Yarn* beyond the 'Remediating the Social' exhibition, and in part to further the remediation of the broadside as a form, an A3-sized subset of the gallery map containing imagery and QR codes from some but not all of the gallery map squares was created (fig. 3). This was handed out freely during the exhibition and continues to circulate through gift exchange economies and postal networks. The folding of 500 A3 sheets into map form took rather longer than expected and became something of a performance in the gallery space in the lead-up to the opening of the exhibition, 1 November 2013. Immediately following the gallery opening there was a performance event in the Sculpture Court of Edinburgh College of Art (ECA), Edinburgh, Scotland, the United Kingdom, in which a number of the computer-generated narrative dialogues in *The Broadside of a Yarn* were performed by Jerome Fletcher, Judd Morrissey, Mark Jeffery and myself before a live audience.

The performance of *The Broadside of a Yarn* continues, on and off stage. Its constituent elements are continuously remediated across a continuum of forms, through a spectrum of devices, ranging from the printed map to the digital network, from JavaScript to printed performance script, from the gallery space to the stage, from the mobile phone to stand-alone web-based pieces, from the eye to the embodied voice, from the ear to the embodied voice re-sounding. Each gifting of the broadside map, each unfolding, each demonstration, each QR code scanned, each uniform resource locator (URL) located, each page loaded, each JavaScript file executed, each computer-generated narrative dialogue read (whether scanned by eye, absorbed by ear or spoken by mouth), each gesture, each act and each utterance prompted by this broadside constitutes an event. As is the case with all assemblages, this work remains fluid and is by no means finished.

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I ♥ E-Poetry: <http://iloveepoetry.com>

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NT2 Le laboratoire de recherches sur les oeuvres hypermédias, Montreal, QC, Canada: <http://nt2.uqam.ca/>

Obx Labs, Concordia University, Montreal, QC, Canada: <http://www.obxlabs.net/>

Open Dialogues: critical writing on and as performance:  
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Remediating the Social, Inspace, Edinburgh: <http://elmcip.net/event/elmcip-conference-remediating-social>

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Struts Gallery & Faucet Media Arts Centre, Sackville, NB, Canada:  
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The Surtsey Research Society, Iceland: [http://www.surtsey.is/index\\_eng.htm](http://www.surtsey.is/index_eng.htm)

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