

[EPC@20 Celebration](#), September 11-12, 2014

<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/cheek.php>

between 1996-9 your author made three small web works. The last of the three “how can this hum be human” exploited streaming audio and explored the glitch was made for a now defunct e-zine edited by Jennifer Ley called Riding the Meridian that is nicely archived on the web at Heelstone. The middle piece was a substantive crowd-sourced web text-image hypertext produced live as an online circadian performance response to hopes and fears generated by the New Labor general election of Tony Blair in the UK on Mayday 1997. The link to that archived work disappeared at some point in the past eighteen months. The earliest piece of these three is the one i’m going to focus on today, residing as it happily does on the Electronic Poetry Center for which it was made.

in this little piece of hauntology . i didn’t just say that . you never saw it or heard it . despite the fact that it remains embedded with mystory in partial mystery . wanting to wrestle a decent Derridean term away from its ostalgic and perhaps over-Marxist-centric specificity into a wider use . not at all opposed to Marxist critiques of the all too often all used up sense of labor lost belonging to art’s animation

of being overwhelmed with the material stuffing of one’s being . owned by one’s own stuff, stuffed

threading a past through the present and threading a present through that past

a jump between grooves paying homage to non-trivial appearances of animacy . loop

introducing not just the standard space that Peter Saenger documents having taken 400 odd years to come between the joined up flows of scriptua continua but a sequence of space between the words . those words in color so as to emphasize their adjacent . lying near to and alongside in visual punctuation . and separation rather than seamlessness . each suspended in tangible silences

a tension between reservation and exception

a sequence of silent acts . constantly told and retold

acrostics by the advisory circle to the caretaker of the moon wiring club down at the broken harbor

i am looking at

a shaved shadow

of a poisonous star

foreground and background

a white man in a plain white-t

middle-eastern in some distant origin he looks in this photofit surly and fitting the witness description he could be mugshot on the evening news a likely terrorist with a disproportionately large and hairy arm

it is a right hand arm but is it *his* arm whose hand covers his mouth to swallow secrecy or just to shut him himself up as he needs to be administered to

to keep his own counsel

to be forcefully manfully nursed into silence

his eyes bulge and roll

out there on a relatively flat surface

i'd been writing with my tongue, using beetroot and carrot juice and red wine and suchlike the tongue tip dipped into a cup then.

I'd been placing words on my tongue, such as articulate . . . even small objects like erasers

(show a couple of these pics)

one

thing

masquerades

inside alongside

another

thing

a triplet in 5 syllables a number of gestures and eye gestures
sound is implied perhaps

now from this distance . both in time and technology

an English determiner

putting words into my mouth i eat my words . . . shithead

or words on my tongue the sign for words

like a pay slip

medication to be taken with retinal fetishization

a pill to be delivered

the creation of the illusion of an irreversible series the reversal of which would
involve erasure of memory

a fat tongue sort of sticking out between the lips like a third lip

as if the tongue was itself a palimpsest or a sign for plenitude
as if a tongue between the lips were tythed

“The signs emanate from boxes which are liked boxes or containers” (Deleuze, Proust and Signs, p88-9) to generate an involution in that middle english sense of part/curling inward, an involvement of the diverse.

a tongue between lips . fat and uneven erotic

the invitation to intimacy . a little more information than expected

and the crowd go wild

as she comes and walks her presence through accumulating capitals

of being, tagged

by distance learning

on the web page the words

distance no object

each in a differing color

this moment of investment in a rapidly enlarging network

i flew back home to London and took the train to Lowestoft, a medium-sized town on the north Suffolk coastline

i had moved there the previous year in the knowledge that it might be possible to not be in one of the western world’s major cities and still remain connected

in fact to have enhanced connectivity with those i loved and knew but seldom saw in the flesh with those i did not know

moving out of London in late 1994 hoping to be able to afford a little more space and have some additional creative technical resources for working on publishing and sound recording .

the thought that at that point i could be outside London and more hooked up translocally than ever before with the burgeoning internet . at first i was on Bulletin Boards typing with my wizards but then invited onto the Poetics List in the New Year where i celebrated my first ten days or so in this community already grappling with its borders as many poets full of excitement and optimism entered the room by writing:

feb 10th 95

. . . I'm pretty tired and just typed poverty instead of poetry. Surely the One is sufficiently respectful of an Other as to not go walking in lines behind. I'm new to this space and am just realising its economy.

cris

Romana Huk, then at the University of New Hampshire now Notre Dame, put together an extraordinarily transatlantic conference of poetry practitioners scholars and critics in September 1996 building on that community and many earlier printed bridges. The maker flew over for that and took a long long train ride up to Albany from there. Stayed over with an old friend Pierre Joris before taking the next line to Buffalo to give a reading with Catherine Walsh as part of the Wednesdays at 4 series. Charles had put the reader into a hotel way away from the center, right by the Walden Galleria. I think it was that one, he'll put me right if not. In any case a visiting poet called him and asked him where the author was and what the author could do from there and why the author wasn't where everybody was or something along those lines and he replied but that's where everybody is, so the author went for a walk in the Walden and made a text Designer Dassein that the author read that afternoon.

I was and remain borderline addicted to improvising in on and around place, listening to and responsive to preparations of attention. But the outcome that day was a pokey poem far too enamored with being ironic in the sites of consumption and a pretty poor reading on my part. I can say sorry now.

Charles had assigned a couple of graduate students, Bill Howe and Scott Pound, to drive a visiting poet around. They took me down to the Falls, took me to bookshops, vinyl outlets, old warehouses . . I had an introduction to behind the scenes in the collection with Mike Basinski, sat in on one of Charles' graduate seminars, even reading Hopkins "Spelt from Sybll's Leaves" and it was suggested that i could do something by way of a performance maybe for the fledgling EPC.

William R. Howe had suggested a visiting poet could stay a couple of nights at his house. I ended staying three weeks. I have no memory of how air travel was so flexible then but it looks that way now in retrospect.

This visiting poet had a very small idea; kind of a crude animation. I had in mind a sequence of words and gestures in an image bank to construct a memory of a moment in a place passing through. I borrowed a sharpie and wrote three words on a sheet of paper. A visiting poet wrote “distance” and then “no,” then “object.” Cut them out into lozenges using my eye to snip one sequence of letters on each quadrilateral piece to make in effect three signs. Three *signs*, as with every sign standing for something other than for itself at the same time as pointing towards itself—as a sign. Met Loss in a small room that i think might have been his office with plenty of natural light and several sheets of paper pinned to a board. Eric Rosolowski was there. The camera must have been on a tripod to give consistent framing. Loss took four visiting poet author portraits gradually zooming in from my upper torso to focus solely onto my face and reducing the number of visible pieces of paper in the background from eight or nine to three. By the third shot my open-palmed right hand is clearly striking the right side of my face. The fourth shot is face on with my tongue sticking out. There was a pause. I switched clothes from a mauve foxglove to white and then in fairly quick succession we took five more pics; one of the seven frames in the animation is used three times as a space, a form of punctuation. But it’s more than merely punctuation and contributes a footnote to variant histories of silent reading. A hand across the mouth image that is either silencing or hiding a swallow or signaling kind of the realization of having made a mistake. Before face palm became the more emphatic new media gesture for stupid or grotesque or hilarious error.

I’m guessing they were in jpeg format. Loss and Eric wanted to layer me against another graphic background and so i left them the photo of a starfish from a CD i’d just released called skin upon skin. It’s an indo-pacific red-knobbed starfish. Also known as the African Sea Star the body of this echinoderm has the look of a grid formed by interconnecting lines that suggest a network graphic. It can be understood as negative, in that it eats clams, oysters and mussels as well as coral, which, once it gets a taste for it can end up killing. It can be understood as positive in that it exerts a critically important impact on the marine food chain. These life forms have no brains and no blood, kind of bodies without organs. The photo was taken in Madagascar in 1993 when i was on a trip researching forms of song-poetry used for healing in the south-west of the island.

Eric did graphic post-production, sitting me in front of the starfish and giving me an author-performer credit. He currently works in the business ERGB, a company focusing on visual identity and the role of the logo. He is both the ER and the e of the RGB in its title.

It's like a silent movie and made before streaming audio was widely available. It has no sound. It loops though, it's a GIF or like a GIF.

it must have been around the end of September 1996 when i got home to Lowestoft, a small fishing town at the most easterly point of England. I was excited to see the finished work online. My imagination had settled on a sequence moving at about one second intervals. I fired up my desktop computer and dialed up my 56k modem. You know the sound.

Information technology -- Digital compression and coding of continuous-tone still images: Extensions

Demon Internet, my e-dress was cris@slang.demon.co.uk using a post office protocol POP3 dialup to access my e-mail on Eudora

my browser was Netscape Navigator

and then i sat watching the screen as the first image took *about* ten minutes to load .

..

slowly scrolling down line by line ...

and the whole point of distance no object was dashed in one fell swoop. I thought, nobody is ever going to wait for this whole thing to load let alone watch it perform its loops once it does. They'll have exercised their right to click and clicked elsewhere.

i was hoist on my own self-enfordizing hook of speed and circulation

and once the internet began to speed up and access plus streaming speeds exponentially increased the work would be rendered banal, too close to keystone slops with a kind of vacuity of pacing

for a brief period around the millennium's Y2K frenzy of anxiety this little piece loaded pretty smoothly and played about right before it sped almost out of sight

and Keith Tuma, the kind of critical-scholarly reader that creative artists crave, who in his wickedly titled "Slobbering Distance" essay for the *Assembling Alternatives* collection published by Wesleyan is right to read and position a perceptible techno-arcadianism on my part in putting this work into the Electronic Poetry Center

archive would increasingly come into relief against critiques i had offered before then in *Stranger*:

so everything is possible
now who's brought the cash

as we see through those earlier Mondo 2000 and Wired tinted communities of spectacle by the light of an increasingly embarrassing barrage of competing attentions (that proliferation of fictions Foucault warned the societal structural power of "authorship" protected *the people* from being overwhelmed by) . thrown towards placing hindrance in the way of

we might ask what is the relationship of this form for reading in which the words and their paper document contexts simply ghost into each other rather than the eye scanning in saccades across a surface from one sequence of letter units to either the next or to scan back and look again or read backwards and so on . even with hypertext there is the possibility of play, or interactivity . even with a sound file or a moving image file one can move about in the timeline with one's cursor . here there is no way to stop the work other than to completely exit it

if this closed object in an archive is a noose where now to break the loop, other than through acts of copying and remaking?

death — is merely
a — permanent
— projection

a threshing machine

NO as in New Orleans, as short for Norway, a letter syllable in Japanese script, the villain Julius No from the Bond movie Dr No, an album by Old Man Gloom, the chemical substance Nitric Oxide

a machine into which language is deposited and by which it is digested, like Readers Digest is true

distance no object distance no object distance no object distance no object distance

no object distance no object distance no object distance no object distance no object distance

Distance no object. Listen and stream free music
Distance No Object. Borrowed Language
Distance no object, From The Guardian, The Guardian
Distance no object, Processed World
Distance no object, How we're taking healthcare to remote areas
Distance no object, Profile, AbsolutePunk

Distance No Object tour dates
distance no object for russian students
distance no object in milwaukee

distance, or "farness"

a numerical description of how far objects are apart
referring to a physical length
an estimation based on other criteria
traveled by a wheel — driving here

a right of way passing by milestones

that sense of becoming projected (with a gesture to the screen)

middle english for discord and debate

standing apart . to be remote

object

impersonal . unbiased
to bring forward in opposition
in a sense of land . set up to mark boundary

