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‘The Caravan’: thresholds and fault lines in digital space

Abstract:

Digital poetry can foreground and explore the inherently unstable nature of poetic composition and the protean, and often unruly forms, of new media poetry. Rosemary Huisman lists the components of such poetry as ‘a new syntax made of linear and non-linear animation, hyperlinks, interactivity, real-time text generation, spatiotemporal discontinuities, self-similarity, synthetic spaces, immateriality, diagrammatic relations, visual tempo [and] multiple simultaneities’ (1999: 160). This practice-led paper explores how a traditional poem on the page may be translated into such a ‘new syntax’, and the kinds of things that happen to the work when this occurs. In this practice-led research project, Jordan Williams has taken a ‘finished’ poem by Paul Hetherington, ‘The Caravan’ and has created two versions: one disassembles and re-inflects it as a digital work which uses several of the components Huisman lists; the other leaves the poem virtually intact and plays only with visual time, visual line, and visual rhythm. This has produced digital works that read differently from the original, but also differently from each other. They each bear a different relationship to the original poem and analysing these differences speaks to the challenge of extending the language of poetics to digital forms.

Biographical notes:

Associate Professor Paul Hetherington has published eight full-length collections of poetry, including the verse novel, *Blood and Old Belief* (2003), *It Feels Like Disbelief* (2007) and, most recently, *Six Different Windows* (UWA Publishing, 2013), along with two poetry chapbooks. He was a finalist in the 2013 international Aesthetica Creative Writing Competition, and shortlisted for both the 2013 Newcastle Poetry Prize and the 2013 Montreal International Poetry prize. In 2011 he was one of the founding editors of the international

online journal Axon: Creative Explorations. He is deputy chair of the Board of Manning Clark House, a former chair of the ACT Cultural Council, a former chair of the Australasian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP).

Associate Professor Jordan Williams is a member of the Centre for Creative and Cultural Research at the University of Canberra. Her research interests include digital poetics and practice led research in poetry. As Associate Dean of Postgraduate Studies, she is also vitally interested in research into research degrees and research culture within the higher education sector.

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1. New media poetry

In its own way, Talan Memmott's minimalist definition of new media poetry—a form that Eduardo Kac (2007: 7) has described simply as 'media poetry'—indicates that it may be many different things. He merely requires that 'that the object in question be "digital," mediated through digital technology, and that it be called "poetry" by its author or by a critical reader' (2006: 293). Rosemary Huisman, writing as early as 1999, is more explicit and lists the components of digital poetry as

... a new syntax made of linear and non-linear animation, hyperlinks, interactivity, real-time text generation, spatiotemporal discontinuities, self-similarity, synthetic spaces, immateriality, diagrammatic relations, visual tempo, multiple simultaneities' (1999: 160).

Even today, this list remains reasonably comprehensive.

Yet despite all that new media or digital poetry offers, much of what is written about it continues to focus on how it differs from poetry on the page—and perhaps this is not surprising given that poetry has been produced in manuscript and print form for many thousands of years while new media poetry is still only a few decades old. What's more, a good deal of new media poetry in one way or another borrows from poetic practices and traditions associated with poetry in print. As a result, not only is it worth re-examining the relationship between new media poetry and printed poetry, but new media poetry as a site of creative practice offers the opportunity to examine this relationship through making new work (see below).

Writers about new media differ in their approaches to poetry in print—sometimes such poetry is like a spectre in the background of discussions about new media poetry; sometimes it is the central issue. A number of critics write as if poetry on the page and new media poetry might even be two different kinds of art. For example, Eric Vos (2007: 199) wants to separate the '[m]any poems scattered over the internet [that] appear to ignore their electronic environment ... aspiring to the conditions of print poetry' from what he understands as fully-fledged 'media poetry'. He defines such work as

innovative poetry created and experienced within the environment of new communication and information technologies ... [that] could not have been created nor ... experienced in other environments. It is a poetry based on the integration of characteristic features of these technologies in the strategies that underlie the writing and reading of poetic texts. (199)

Considering what new media poetry of the kind that Vos refers to offers is a way into articulating a variety of issues central to understanding the form—and central, too, to a further consideration of the relationship between new media poetry and poetry on the page.

Jim Andrews' *Seattle Drift* (1995), Thom Swiss's and George Shaw's *The Language of New Media* (2001), David Clark's *Likewise* (2006) and Pip Smith's *Renga* (2013) are all well-known examples of new media poetry that attempt to make use of new media to expand the ways in which poetry may be 'read' and experienced. Andrews' work, like much early digital poetry, may now seem somewhat simplistic, but in the 1990s this style of work proliferated and was hailed in some quarters as a kind of brave new world of poetry. His *Seattle Drift* exploits the ability of code to mimic the cut-up technique of Dada and overlays that with the gestural metaphor of snowdrift—the words of his poem reassemble as they fall into a seemingly random pattern.

Seattle Drift also makes use of a form of interactivity—the user/reader can click to set the code running, to freeze the text, or to restore the text to its initial position. Andrews' poem relies for various of its meanings on such 'chance' juxtapositioning and the often surprising placements of words that result. In doing so, it emphasises the instability of poetic language and the ways in which a kind of happenstance creates what one may understand as poetry. Reflecting some of the poststructuralist preoccupations of so-called Language poetry, *Seattle Drift* appears to suggest that poetry is nothing other than language—and to emphasise language's surprise and unpredictability. What Linda Reinfeld has written of Language poetry in general might be applied to this work—that it 'tends to privilege the abnormal over the normal, the marginal over the mainstream, the artificial over the plain' (1992: 5).

However, the process of ‘cutting up’ poetry to create the shifting form of *Seattle Drift* does not rely on chance alone—it is part of the poem’s programming. Further, this is not so different from what many poets do—whatever medium they are working in—when, in drafting poems, they make use of methods akin to cut-up, shifting words around as part of the process of finessing and refining their lines and stanzas. When words are manipulated by code they certainly look different from the drafts of traditional poems but, like these drafts, the author and/or designer of that code shapes the way in which words shift on the screen. Arguably, *Seattle Drift* brings only a relatively small difference to the table—the employment of the reader’s capacity to choose from the three options mentioned above and a foregrounding of apparently ‘random’ poetic effects.

Smith’s *Wayside Renga* (2013) combines audio interview excerpts with poetic language which can be read in stanzas or can also be read in its code-manipulated form, arranged into far more random arrangements. The poem has five discrete layered parts and the poem is excavated via a series of hyperlinks. The makers explain: ‘The poem is designed to expand as the reader digs through each layer, loosely mimicking the way we encounter new people, or remember old acquaintances in a dream’. Clicking on words reveals the lines they came from in the original, traditional poem.

More generally, some claims for the superior poetic potential of computer-generated poetry of this kind have been argued on the basis that such poetry is able to provide to a reader many more combinations of words than a printed poem—and that, consequently, ‘better’ poems will sooner or later be a result of such works. It has also been argued that such poems are dynamic in nature; that they are events or becomings, rather than fixed textual objects, and that because of this they are more exciting or more interesting than traditional poetry—and it has even been suggested that poetry of this kind extends to a logical conclusion the notion of the death of the author, empowering the reader to create the poem in the moment of reading (see, for example, Bootz 2000: n.pag.)

However, if it is true that—at least in theory—better poetry may result from the generation of such digital poetry, however that is to be judged, it may also be true that worse poetry may result. Further, to argue that code-generated poetry is an event and inherently dynamic, whereas a poem on the page is a fixed artefact or object, tends to

imply that printed literature is static over time. Yet the history of literary criticism demonstrates that works in print are always being read differently and are always generating significantly different meanings—that all reading is an unpredictable and dynamic encounter with language.

The hypertextual nature of some modernist and postmodernist print fiction emphasises this point. Works such as James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1992), Alain Robbe-Grillet's (1962) *Last Year at Marienbad* screenplay for Resnais, and Julio Cortazar's *Hopscotch* (1966), foreground the multiplicity and fluidity of meanings in literary texts; the way in which language is almost infinitely suggestive and often indeterminate—or, at least, multiplicitous—in its meanings. They are also works that demonstrate how each literary composition makes use of, and to a significant extent depend upon, the literature and traditions that precede them. Sandy Baldwin argues that Pound's exhortation to 'make it new' (1971) was always a paradox as the words themselves came from Confucius. He also argues that the at-once-ness of 'novelty and tradition, surprise and repetition, the paradox of innovation—and the degree to which we resolve or displace it—explains something of the role of literature today' (2003: n.pag.). In this context new media poetry may also be understood as an extension of what has gone before it—of the coexistence and interplay of novelty and tradition, surprise and repetition.

However 'new' it may or may not be, there is no doubt that duration and dynamism are two of the hallmarks of new media poetry, and can be argued to set it apart from poetry on the page. Katherine Hayles reminds us that new media, or digital, poetry is 'a process, an event brought into existence when the program runs on the appropriate software loaded onto the right hardware ... the poem organizes time' (2006:181). In new media works, time is evident through movement, absence and transformation. Words, letters, images, sounds and space can all be manipulated over time by the author's code and by the interaction of the reader with the work. And while Hayles allows that print poetry also organises time, the new media poem is often conspicuously different on every occasion it is read or viewed—not only because of its various design and writerly aspects but also because every machine used to view the poetry—be it a computer screen, or the side of a building, or a large screen in a gallery—will produce a different result. This is not to suggest that software enhanced or generated poetry is an event and inherently dynamic, whereas a

poem on the page is a fixed artifact or object, as this tends to imply that printed literature is static over time – whereas works in print are always being read differently and are always generating significantly different meanings—that all reading is an unpredictable and dynamic encounter with language is now accepted as self-evident.

2. Outlining the Proximities project

Eric Vos (2007: 199) expresses an interest in media poetry that is ‘virtual, dynamic, interactive [and] immaterial’. In creating the new media poetry that forms the creative component of the practice-led research project, *Proximities: Intimate Histories and Imagined Lives*, we were particularly interested in collaborating as colleagues and fellow poets to create works that were virtual and dynamic—as far as possible making exemplary use of new technologies. However, we also wanted to explore the relationship between traditional poetry written for the ear and the page and new media versions of the same poems, partly to tease out some of the issues already mentioned in part one of this article.

In order to do so, we agreed to transform three existing and fairly traditional ‘free verse’ poems by Hetherington into new media works. These ‘traditional’ poems make use of many of the devices regularly employed in contemporary poetry. Our project was driven by a number of considerations and questions, such as the extent to which we would need to edit and in other ways change a traditional poem in order to make it effective as a work fully adapted to the new media environment; what new words, if any, we would need to produce in ‘translating’ the poem into a new media work; and what imagery or technological assistance we would need to employ to aid this process. It was in these broad terms that we originally judged that the three ‘traditional’ poems we chose were works that would be readily adaptable to the new media poetic space

And it was in this light that we devised a series of statements to summarise our project’s research focus, as follows:

The Proximities project will investigate:

- 1) the poetics of digital space: that is, how digital space may function in ways that can be described as ‘poetic’;

- 2) the creative processes and implications of turning poems written for the page into digital poems;
- 3) the differences in dynamic between words and space on a page and on a screen;
- 4) the nature of the different kinds of decisions that are required when writing a poem for the page as opposed to creating a digital poem that starts with, and interprets, the same original text;
- 5) the ways in which, in a poem's digital manifestation, digital imagery and enhancements lead to revisions of the original poem and, in some instances, the replacement, deletion or recasting of words from the original poem;
- 6) the ways in which metaphors, imagery, connotation and denotation work in translating a poem written for the page into a digital poem;
- 7) how particular digital features, such as screen colour, affect the interpretation and readings of poems in a digital environment.

(Hetherington and Williams 2012: 1)

Hetherington's poem, 'The Caravan' add , was the first of the three poems we chose for the Proximities project and we will use it in this article to illustrate how we proceeded in putting the principles listed above into practice and to exemplify our project's preoccupations and conclusions. While 'The Caravan' takes the reader on a narrative journey—and, in this sense, the poem travels in time and space—the poem itself, at every moment that the reader encounters it, may be said to be static and fixed. Its words are all more-or-less immediately available to the reader and the poem's imagery, suggestive as it is, is also fixed as part of the poem's unchanging language:

The Caravan

When we carted it on holidays
the car dragged and swerved around bends.
We sat in the back seat chewing lollies and gum
or drank cordial from flasks, luminously sweet

with the taste of raspberry or cherry,
arriving, grumpy and carsick,
eager to escape
from sticky-on-legs vinyl seats,
pushing each other, climbing ragged trees
at caravan parks. Someone would set
the awning out front,
marshmallows were charred in glowing coals
and mulled wine sent round
the casual circle—‘not for kids’.
Days moved as slowly as someone
who’d missed the start of a race,
dawdling at the rear of everyone’s excitement.
We were sidetracked by tadpoles in creeks
or ice creams from local shops—
sucking our gritty fingers with approval—
and found what was never anywhere else,
when weeks and days that hemmed us in
were stripped away like a tarpaulin to let in air.

Years later, we set off by ourselves—
three adolescents and their friends,
nearly careering over a cliff, parking near a creek
trying adventure and romance,
girls and boys bunking together.
Not long afterwards
the caravan was taken to a secondhand yard
and sold for a hundred dollars.
Nothing replaced it
and years commented on its absence
until everything became a travelling away
from that earlier journeying—confined in humid light
at some coastal park, watching midges gather.

We chose this poem for our project because it is relatively rich in imagery and contains significant narrative content. We also chose it because, while our project does not focus on the nature of poetic authenticity, we wanted the project to focus on poems that presented ‘intimate histories’—histories of people’s lives, however fictional they may be, along with one or more objects or things that belonged to those lives.

Making use of poetry that was rich in imagery provided us with a choice of material that could immediately be adapted to, or interpreted by, the actual visual imagery of digital versions of photographs, paintings or the like. The presence of a clear poetic narrative meant that we could fairly easily (at least in theory) adapt the poem to a medium that, as we have discussed, accords poems a particular duration (in this respect, a new media poem is in some respects more like a movie than any traditional reading experience).

The ‘intimate history’ of a thing or things appealed to us because we also wished to recognise in these new works the power and significance of cultural artefacts—that is, to recognise some of the ways in which objects are invested with, and can ‘speak’ about, people’s experiences—almost as if they are repositories of memory. As they are invested with ‘significance’ in this way—often through their association with particular human activities over time—they often come to represent more generally certain *kinds* of experiences, and then tend to become symbolic of particular values—often named through generalities such as ‘childhood’, or ‘holidays,’ or ‘growing up’; there are many examples. The Proximities project aimed to explore how well poetry on the page could relay such experiences to the reader-viewer, and whether a new media version of the poem could do this more or less successfully.

Given the preoccupations outlined above, we wished to incorporate into our new media versions of Hetherington’s poems selected imagery from national archival collections—such as those in the National Library of Australia, the National Archives of Australia and the National Museum of Australia. In the case of ‘The Caravan’, for example, there is a range of images of caravans in these collections, along with related material, which we incorporated into a re-versioning of the poem. In this way, the ‘intimate history’ that the poem conveys is immediately connected to the larger national stories that these archival collections ‘tell’, including through their extensive

pictures collections. Linking a poem to these collections is one way of extending the original poem—of making the new media version ‘do’ things that the original version does not. Or, to put this another way, the new media version of the poem makes explicit things which are only implicit in the original, more traditional work.

New media forms are a good choice for achieving those intentions. They are not the only choice: Brecht wrote poetry for print as well as for performance. However on this occasion they provided the opportunity to bring more of the Brechtian aesthetic of the epic theatre into a poetry (Brecht & Mueller 1961) that attempts a history in the tender interval, a phrase used by Nabokov to suggest that time really sits in the space between the thudding rhythms of life which fool us into believing that time is a measured commodity (cited in Elden’s introduction to Lefebvre 2004).

As we have already remarked, new media poetry also enables a nuanced authorial relationship with time. Movement in two dimensions on a screen can be multiplied across many elements. Because the Proximities project deals with history, culture and memory, Adobe AfterEffects[®] presented an interesting parallel with the project’s aims with its metaphors of the ‘timeline’ and ‘layers’ for arranging, images, sounds and space. As we will report below, the use of AfterEffects[®] proved less conducive to highly experimental re-workings of the poem than did using a programming language to manipulate components of the original. Whether employing a specific software package or a coding language, the ability to employ both still images and filmic forms also enables the use of archival footage, much as Brecht used film as one of the alienating elements of epic theatre.

We have taken the position that choosing to use a feature of software in a certain way is not a merely a technical matter but is itself an aesthetic decision: for example, the structuring of AfterEffects software itself employs a teleological metaphor with timeline, layers within time and so on. The issue of interactivity and reader control is not as simple as saying that more interactivity equals more reader control. Marjorie Perloff (2006: 377) reminds us about the very limited notions of interactivity often found in digital poetry and comments that ‘Adorno would have had a field day with this perfect cipher of the “culture industries”’. We have taken interactivity to be a metaphor for power given to or taken by individuals in their engagement with the intimate histories that our poems present.

More generally, decisions concerning the new media versions of poems such as ‘The Caravan’ have proven to be complex. This complexity reflects our desire to create work that does a number of things at once—work which is visually, intellectually and socially engaging and which, while functioning entirely as new media poetry, continues to bear the trace of what we traditionally understand to be ‘writing’.

3. Re-making ‘The Caravan’: decisions and investigations

Version one of The Caravan (<http://www.proximitiespoetrylab.net/>)

As the authors entered into the collaboration, Hetherington offered his poem to Williams with full permission to experiment in whatever way she chose in order to explore the project’s objectives. What ensued for the making of the first digital version was not so much the to-and-fro of daily or weekly collaboration, but rather one poet who works in new media, Williams, re-making the work of another poet, Hetherington, who works mainly on paper—albeit one who often collaborates with visual artists. Williams responded strongly and positively to the ‘original’ work, finding in it an auratic quality that resisted deconstruction: she found it difficult to divorce the page of words from the overall, significant impact the poem had on her: the risk seemed that translation might ‘break’ the satisfying whole. It was necessary to begin with a deliberate strategy.

But what additional elements, or recasting of poetry on the page, apply to media poetry? For the digital first version, we approached the task in a way that was what Mark Amerika calls ‘designwriting’ (2007: 419)—we sought to *add* visually and sonically to the existing poem. We considered:

- The space (of the line and the shape and the form);
- Movement through the space (an enhanced aspect of rhythm as well as a spatial quality);
- Prosody, including added sounds.

Collaborating in this way expands the range of decisions to be made when compared with composing traditionally, but it is possible to map the additional affordances of screen image and sound onto the usual taxonomy of components of a poem. Within

each category, there is an increased range of options. For example, the sequencing of images and sounds in media poetry introduces a rhythmic element that combines with the traditionally understood rhythm of the original. In poetry on the page, this rhythm is created by:

- The combination of words with different lengths and emphases;
- The breaking of words into lines and stanzas;
- The laying out of words and space on the page;
- The movement between pages;
- The adherence or not to established forms and the rhythmic effects, as well as the rhythmic requirements of those forms.

In bringing a poem from the page to the screen, rhythm is created by:

- The combination of words with different lengths and emphases;
- The combination of sound and written words;
- The breaking of words into lines and stanzas;
- The laying out of words and space on the page;
- The movement between pages;
- The manipulation of the shape, place, size, color, speed and transparency of words.
- The adherence or not to established forms and the rhythmic effects, as well as the rhythmic requirements of those forms.

There are similar considerations for the space of poetry on the screen as there are for poetry on the page, but there is the added ability for motion to be added, for the words themselves to move, for the letters to transform. Arguably it should not be for novelty's sake, but should be in the service of the poem as a meaning conveyor and generator and reflector. In media poetry, prosody is expanded to include not only word choice and style, but visual and audio style. For example, the choice of colour of a background might be influenced by a wish to evoke a historical period and the colour used in that period. Font choice might be influenced by similar considerations.

Williams began by trying to gauge the cultural associations of the word 'caravan', and in the context of other imagery in the poem and in her reading of what the poem was about. As part of doing this, she scanned the Picture Australia collection (an aggregated collection of documentary images from the collections of

numerous cultural institutions) and was drawn to works by John Olsen that feature gypsy caravans. However, prototypes using those images didn't accord with the poem's content which emphasises how recollections of a journey in a caravan may carry meanings about the larger journey from childhood to adulthood—a journey retaining memories of childhood that are hyperreal.

Having rejected photographs of caravans and fine art representations of caravans Williams decided to draw a caravan visually influenced by another strong image from the poem: the stickiness of lollies and sticking to vinyl car seats on long journeys. She chose to do this in a neon pink effect, wanting to steer the poem towards that image of stickiness as a metaphor for memory. However, the more she worked with the neon visuals, the more they seemed to detract from the strength of the written poem. The more she worked with the poem on the page, the more she admired its quietly powerful language, its subtle rhythms, its near-perfect arrangement of metaphors all working towards a haunting atmosphere—the less she felt able or willing to disturb the poem's own constellation of visual images and metaphors.

Instead, Williams made decisions about breaking the poem up into segments—much as a poet decides how lines and stanzas will be assembled on the page. This round of decisions was made predominantly on the basis of breaking the poem into groups of lines which worked together to make reasonably discrete units of meaning; which in turn made up the poems's apparatus for overall meaning. In doing this, the capacity in digital poetry to move words in space became important. It was possible, for example, to emphasise the 'left behind-ness' of someone coming last in a race by having the line 'Days moved as slowly as someone' being followed by a relatively long pause prior to the appearance of the words 'who'd missed the start of a race'.

Because of the quiet power of the prosody of the original, Williams deliberately chose not to have individual letters, words or lines moving drastically across the screen, thus avoiding dissonant effects which would be likely to have detracted from the original poem's meaning. Instead, she used the elements of time and place to emphasise the mood of the original as well as the ideas it expressed. She inserted video backgrounds which spoke metaphorically to the cultural associations of caravanning: a road with a white line speaking to the boring nature of travel from the perspective of a child who wants to 'get there' but not 'go there'; clouds and a blue

sky with occasional grey patches to suggest the seemingly endless days and spaces of summer holidays from the perspective of adults and children; video of a burning, melting marshmallow.

The visuals and the soundtrack were designed to fit with key images from the original: ‘lollies and gum ... cordial from flasks, luminously sweet with the taste of raspberry or cherry’; ‘marshmallows were charred in glowing coals’; ‘confined in humid light at some coastal park, watching midges gather’.

Version 2 of the poem (<http://www.proximitiespoetrylab.net/>)

Thus far in describing this collaboration we have depicted the choices as aesthetic, culturally informed and mostly visual. But are the other ways of describing the choices? The poet who makes the original on the page has something to say and would presumably like it to be heard; is at least somewhat invested in the meanings readers make. When code/software is used to drastically manipulate formal aspects and content of an original poem, what does the coder want, and is the point of such a collaboration to find a point where coder and poet can agree? Are coders in love with poetry or with code? Some argue that code is intrinsically poetic (Ward 2010).

The continuum in the page/screen relationship for the same poem is bounded by the following two positions. A coder may:

- Find a page to screen analogue for lines and words/visual and aural accompaniment; or
- Code manipulation of page into random or apparently random chunks with high emphasis on the visual and aural capabilities of the screen.

Our first version of ‘The Caravan’ adopted the former approach. By including the original poem in the digital version almost ‘as is’, the result is something akin to an illustrated poem. Our second version, the product of a closer collaboration than the first, is further towards the other end of the continuum, with significantly greater semantic disruption of the original poem.

In producing this version, the text of the original and a set of images drawn from the collections of national institutions were manipulated using Processing language. The final was arrived at by experimenting with different code interventions producing

different forms of disruption including, in some cases, almost completely random arrangements of words in space and over time. The poets also experimented with combining words with visual and sonic elements in random ways, emphasising the interplay of images and movement rather than any generation of specific predetermined meanings.

Given such experimentation, it was open to us to decide that preserving a sense of the original meaning/s of the poem were not particularly important and that the final versions could signify whatever they ended up signifying. However, we instead opted for producing a second version that would allow for significant difference but still resemble the original in clearly identifiable and meaningful ways. This allowed us to better analyse the ways in which space and other screen affordance impacted on meaning; how translation from page to screen revises the original in fundamental ways and alters the manner in which the poem functions to produce its meanings.

Not surprisingly, the code manipulation of the original ‘The Caravan’ produced vastly altered states of the original. The challenge was to settle upon a few manipulation modes from an infinite range of possibilities. This were decisions involving various aesthetic judgments and we ruled out in advance only those forms which would result in banal outcomes or—arguably worse—those which seemed not to connect with, or enhance, the original work at all.

4. Conclusion

In the case of writing a poem on the page and then bringing it to the screen, it is important to formulate a clear understanding, however partial, of what the poem does and means; how it operates on and for the reader; and how the authors of both the work on the page and the digital work wish to see the work transformed. There is also a decision, especially pertinent in in the second version of ‘The Caravan’, as to whether to allow the technological effects available to the digital poet to have a kind of primacy in generating new and random dimensions to the poem as the work is being re-made.

In describing the process of developing two vastly different versions of a poem that began life as a fairly conventional free verse poem on the page, we have addressed the research foci of this project by examining the context for making digital poetry in the

early 21st century and locating our project's relationship to the two poles of 1) preservation of the original written text in a digital poem; and 2) extensive code manipulation of the original poem to the extent that the original written work may even become unrecognisable in the digital work—which is where some of the most difficult and most interesting questions about digital poetry lie. This is the territory we aim to explore further in the next phase of the Proximities project as we examine how digital poetry, as it moves away from an 'original' written text, generates a new syntax including non-linear interactivity and animation and sometimes strange spatiotemporal discontinuities.

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