Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies
Vol. 12, No. 1 (2016)

a hole in the light

Lyndsay Michalik Gratch

"a hole in the light" was adapted from the unpublished short story "Because Real Life Happens in 3D" by Becky Kaiser.[1] The story draws loose connections between cartographic digital imaging technologies, the erosion of the Outer Banks of North Carolina, and the bodily and emotional changes that the major character, Leah, experiences through the end of a romantic relationship, an unexpected pregnancy, and a miscarriage.

The fictional story traces Leah's emotional trajectory, yet its roots are in the hard sciences. LiDAR, a technology Kaiser alludes to but does not name, for instance, measures the effects that major storms and climate change have on US coastlines, including North Carolina's rapidly shifting Outer Banks, where the story takes place. NASA's Experimental Advanced Airborne Research LiDAR (also known as EAARL) has been used to trace the geological changes of the Outer Banks for over a decade (Riebeek). In essence, EAARL is a laser light mounted onto an aircraft, which bounces rapid pulses of light off of multiple types of surfaces to "measure ground elevation, vegetation canopy, and coastal topography" ("EAARL Coastal Topography"). EEARL has proved particularly useful when measuring the drastic coastal changes after major storms (Riebeek). LiDAR is similar, in ways, to ultrasound imaging. Both technologies rely on precision, in terms of the angle at which the light or sound is projected and received, and a measurement of the time it takes for the echo of the light or sound to return. In recent years, meanwhile, prenatal ultrasound imaging has expanded into 3D and 4D technologies, resulting in "3D" still images that "resemble photos of a newborn baby," and "4D" image sequences, when 3D images taken over a period of time are shown at a rate of 25fps, to show the movement of a fetus in utero ("What's the Difference").

Lyndsay Michalik Gratch (PhD, Louisiana State University) is an Assistant Professor at Georgia Gwinnett College, where she teaches courses in Film Studies. Her research and creative interests include adaptation studies, remix culture, internet memes, performance devising, documentary film, and video art.

[1] An earlier version of this video was included as part of the across-disciplines performance *Transadaptation* (2012), in the HopKins Black Box at Louisiana State University.

ISSN: 1557-2935 <http://liminalities.net/12-1/lighthole.pdf>

Yet, both types of imaging technologies, despite what they might trace or predict, are simply recording technologies that do little in terms of assisting the emotionally charged issues of how to move forward from the future gain or loss they help us imagine. At the Outer Banks, for instance, "[w]ithout human interference, the islands would [currently be] adapt[ing] to accelerating sea-level rise by migrating west" (Peach). However, because of engineering projects that maintain roads, sand dunes, and the other savable human-made structures that are damaged by major storms, the islands of the Outer Banks are growing thinner and "standing perfectly still, [while] we're beating our head[s] against the wall trying to hold [the] shorelines in place" (Ibid.). As for 3D and 4D prenatal ultrasounds, such technologies are claimed to aid in early family bonding, "maternal health habits," and "family dynamics," and are hailed by some as a marked improvement over traditional 2D ultrasounds ("What's the Difference"; Lewis). What is generally not included in such reports, though, are the instances in which the prenatal ultrasound is the image-bearer of sad news, or of unanticipated, unwanted, or otherwise impossible predictions.

Tracing a process of creative adaptation for "a hole in the light," meanwhile, is difficult, at best. The notion of a concrete tie to time, which is the necessity for successful LiDAR and ultrasound imaging, is also what allows for my adapted and re-mediated (i.e. text-to-video) version of the story. Video is temporally bound in ways that text is not. Yet, there is no major storm, per se, to mark a before and after of the piece in transition, à la LiDAR. Ultrasound as metaphor, now that the adaptation is born, also becomes less useful. There is only Kaiser's story—which cuts across any map we might make of it—and my story of how it came to be reflected in video. I return to a phrase that was not in the story, but added in multiple places throughout the video: *The angle of incidence is equal to the angle of reflection.* In physics, this is the Law of Reflection. The angle at which a ray of light hits a mirror (the "incidence") is equivalent to the angle at which this ray of light is reflected. Thinking about this concept as a metaphor for adaptation, I imagine the angle of incidence as the moment in which the story first struck me. I become the mirror. The video I created out of and in response to the story, my adaptation, however, is the result of more than one isolated incidence of exposure. Adaptation is often, of course, a palimpsest of meanings and intentions. I read the story multiply. Unlike a mirror, I do not immediately reflect. I let things sink in; I am more like the ocean than a mirror on certain days. Some ideas are swept to sea, like sand, never to be returned. Others linger, washing over themselves and each other, at play, on repeat. Phrases and passages from the story are left behind, others are shifted around, and new words are added. As I compose and layer the sound and moving images, I know the transformation of the piece will be at a great cost. Meanings in the text will be both found and lost through my digital adaptation. As Rebecca Solnit states, "the word *lost*... has many shades" and it is ultimately the "abandonment of memory,

of old ties, [that] is the steep cost of adaptation" (75). I find double entendre in Solnit's word choice. Solnit speaks in the context of people who have been taken captive and come to identify as members of their captor's community. As an adapter (or, perhaps, *captor*), I work to make Leah's narrative fit the medium of video without distorting her beyond recognition, all while I facilitate the forgetting—at least in part—that she was born in text.

Early in my process I thought a lot about how I could never re-present the piece perfectly in any other medium. I believed it to be perfect as it was, written. The incidences at which the story struck me, then, are reflected imperfectly, but still somehow equally, in terms of "angle"—or, one might say, *ɔpin* or *ɔlant*. The angle(s) of incidence are reflected in waves, in the spectrum of stutter, overlap, backtrack, fast-forward, repetition, and excess that video allows. My interpretations overflow into the voice, sound, and moving images that I layer, moment by moment. For me, the angle(s) of reflection still "equal" the angle(s) of incidence in this adaptation, despite a lack of science to chart how imagery in the story might inspire a sound, vocal pattern, rhythm, color, segment of video, transition, layering, or visual effect; an individualized way of knowing, a transformative manner of telling. Finally, as I further adapt the piece for an internet audience, I mourn losses that will invariably arise from this process. The time, energy, and passion I gave to the adaptation become data, which will be compressed by algorithms I do not fully understand to fit another medium. As data, the piece experiences additional loss, in multiple senses. Compressing and converting the video for upload results in a file that is 97% smaller than the video I built. Somehow only 3% of the video data remains. Additionally, once uploaded to an online platform, I do not know and cannot fully predict where and to whom the data will *ɔtream*, and if the intricacies that I pored over while creating the video will even be perceivable in the streaming file. Like Leah, I want *more life, without more loɔɔ* for the story, but I question whether this is possible. The story, again, cuts across any map we might imagine for it, as it moves in this new space, online. From "sea" to "see" and back again, motion is the overlap and the constant when dealing with land (particularly where waters meet sand), the human body, and processes of creative adaptation within and across mediums. This story seeks the "voice of your eyes," as, I imagine and hope, it is swept or pulled toward "somewhere I have never travelled, gladly beyond any experience" (cummings).

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