

Cover image:
section of the score for *Double
Screen (not quite tonight jellylike)*
Anna Barham, 2013

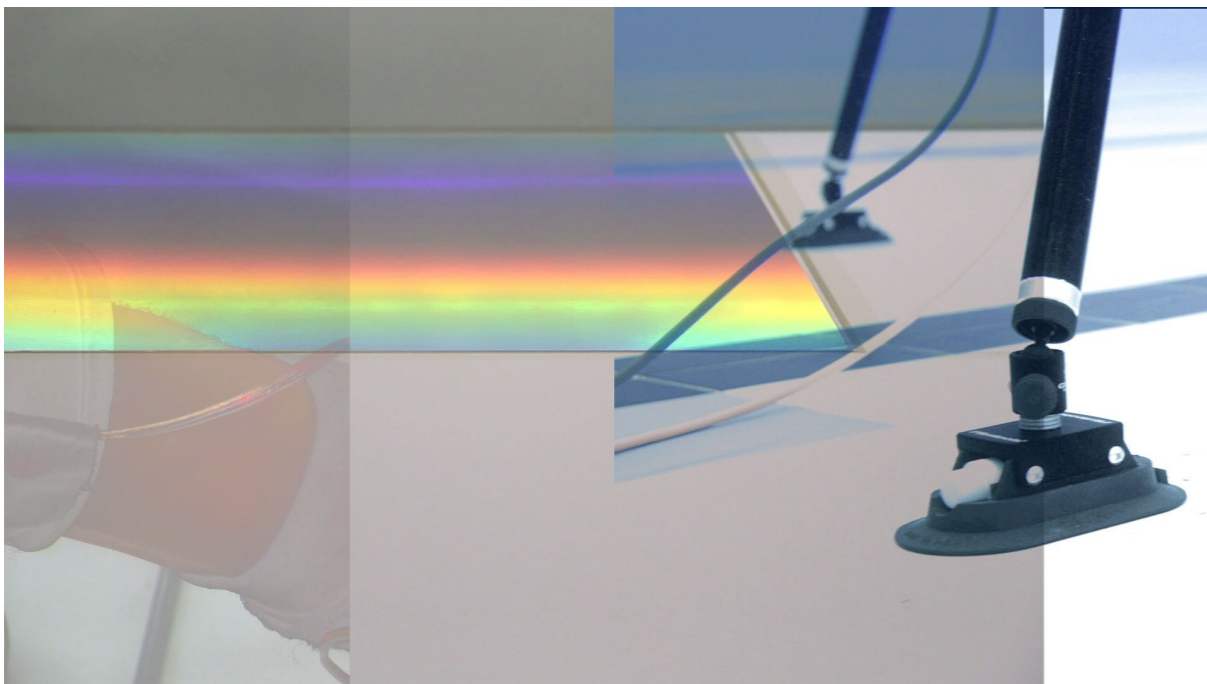
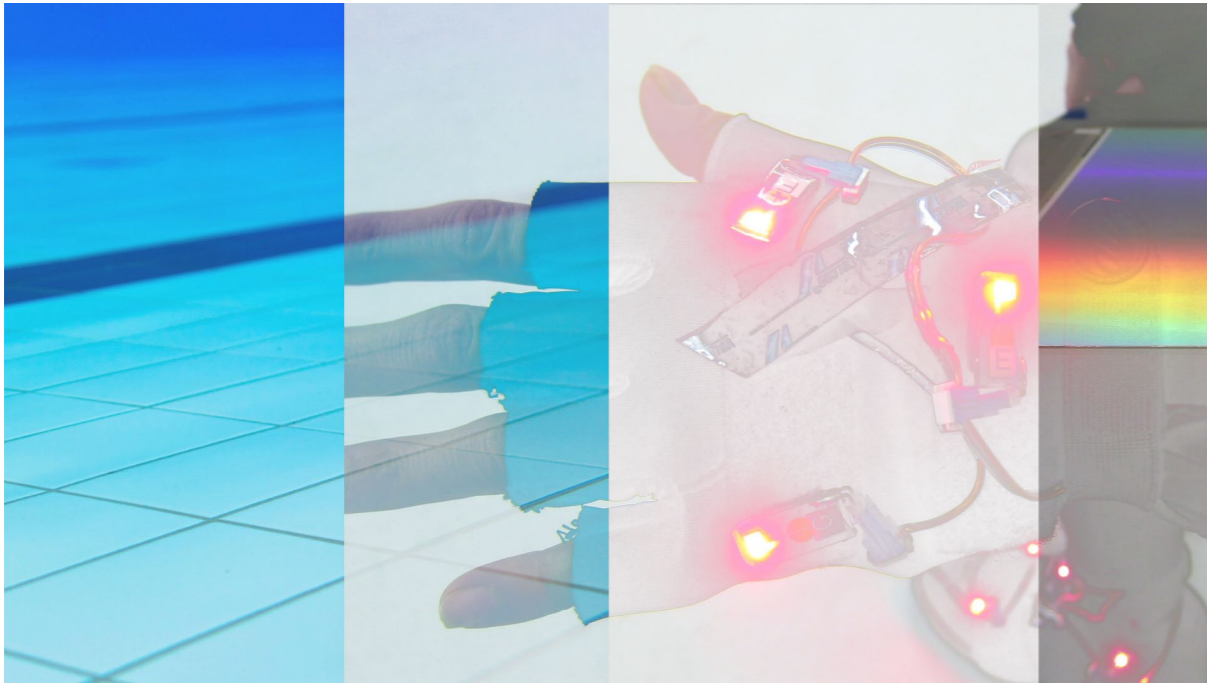
Opposite page:
Notes, Anna Barham

Squid: an elongated, fast swimming cephalopod mollusk with ten arms, typically able to change colour. The word is of uncertain origin - perhaps a sailors' variant of squirt, so called for the ink it squirts out.

Squid release ink from sacs located between the gills; the ink is dispersed more widely by a jet of water emitted from the siphon - these strong jets are also how a squid propels itself through the water. The 'ink jet' creates a dark, diffuse cloud in the water obscuring the squid from a predator's view and allowing it to escape.

SQUID: acronym - super conducting quantum interference device
a device that senses minute changes in magnetic fields, used to indicate neural activity in the brain.

Giclée: French for squirt - a neologism coined in 1991 for fine art prints created on digital ink jet printers.



Stills: *Double Screen (not quite tonight jellylike)*
 Anna Barham, 2013
 2 channel HD video, 32 minutes

Talking Squid Bridget Crone

Anna Barham's work *Double Screen (not quite tonight jellylike)*, 2013, addresses the operation of language and the languages of images. It does this through visual and sonic elements – a two-screen video as well as a script or score that is read by the artist. As such *Double Screen* operates through a procedure of doubling. Body and machine, process and movement, voice and gesture – the doubling that takes place at the heart of the work allows slippages to emerge between the certainties and possibilities of the body and the machine, of voice and text, and between present and future worlds. The work begins with a simple gambit – a passage of text is read, re-processed, re-read and re-reprocessed. The sound of the voice is processed into a written form, which, in turn, is re-produced by another voice and another textural transformation. Technological and computational processes, along with the training of the human voice for increased efficiency in performance, are introduced unannounced into this mix so that there is no simple divide between the body and the machine, or between the structures of written language and the movements of the body that produce language. Instead, we might argue that the body appears as a possible machine, and the machinic processes of computational systems are animated in a manner that replicates and indeed mimics Barham's own *modus operandi* in the way in which they sort words through systems of patterns and other ordering structures.

At the core of Barham's enquiry is the way that images and words, words and sounds, sounds and images... trade in correspondences that combine or don't combine to produce a system of language. In this way, *Double Screen* combines the double screen or two-channel video of its namesake with an extensive audio component, and both these aspects of the work have been developed in relation to a method of processing that is executed through the collection, patterning and deliberate disjunction of parts. These parts are words or 'linguistic atoms', the building blocks that make-up a language, as Gilles Deleuze has termed them⁽¹⁾, and they are also images that have been collected, cut up and reassembled. Just as words and sounds are collected and processed through various computational systems, images are collected and re-processed during the production of *Double Screen*. This act of re-processing takes the form of re-photographing or re-videoing and applying effects to stock imagery so that the images are 'pushed through other processes like the processes the text has been put through.'⁽²⁾ As such images are treated much in the same manner as words or 'linguistic atoms' themselves: they are treated as abstract units to be found or selected, and strung together in one way and then perhaps in another – found, processed and re-processed.⁽³⁾ Yet as we will see, this matter of 'pushing' images or text through a number of processes is not a straightforwardly machinic production but one in which schisms are accentuated between written and verbal forms of language, and between images that function purely symbolically and those that are elusive or affective in nature.

This work of processing words and images developed obliquely from Barham's dialogues with academics and researchers working with phonetics, artificial voice technologies, language development and Text World Theory during her residency at Site Gallery, Sheffield, in February and March 2013. *Double Screen* is therefore a complex work built upon extensive research; yet it deals with this material lightly, allowing an artwork to emerge that is at once playful and speculative.⁽⁴⁾ In addition to the public dialogues at Site Gallery, I was invited to act as an interlocutor through the development of the work. Barham and I met both publicly (at Site) and privately over a six-month period, and the essay that follows has emerged from these ongoing conversations. Injected into our conversations during the development of *Double Screen* was a text that I wrote

1. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 14.

2. Email correspondence with the artist, September 11, 2013.

3. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 14.

4. *Double Screen (not quite tonight jellylike)* was produced through a public research residency at Site Gallery, Sheffield and a subsequent production residency at Wysing Arts Centre, Cambridge. During the residency at Site, Barham invited a number of academics and other experts working in the fields of phonetics, language development, artificial voice technologies and Text World theory, into the gallery to discuss their research in relation to her video work, *Liquid Consonant* (2012), which was displayed in the gallery. The transcripts of these sessions are presented as pdfs and are available on the project blog: <http://supposeicall.blogspot.co.uk>

entitled *Image Machine*, which explores the way in which body and image might merge together.⁽⁵⁾ In the text, which culminates with the narrator morphing into the squid that she is the process of cleaning, there is a sense of words breaking free from their bonds into a fanciful free-association so that images and words wander off to produce their own worlds beyond those of the author's intentions.

A part of *Image Machine* was taken by Barham and re-processed into the voiceover of *Double Screen*; this processing was in turn mirrored by further development of the original text through our ongoing conversations. Thus a short passage that I wrote on images, words and 'being squid' became the 'raw' material that forms the basis of *Double Screen* – repeatedly processed through voice-to-text software and voice synthesisers, and manipulated by Barham herself. There is a complex layering here between different machinic processes – the literal machine (voice synthesiser, OS X operating system), the text as a kind of machine that produces its own images and affects, and the subjective interjection of the artist herself (who is also produced as a kind of machine through the work). Words and images seem to fly off into a set of rich associations as a result of their computational processing, and, on the other hand, they are extensively edited and manipulated by Barham as she seeks to mutate and influence the machine's production by choosing particular arrangements of text for re-processing, editing and adding punctuation. In turn, the results of Barham's work in processing the raw material of my text produced a further reflection on becoming squid-like (or as *Double Screen* suggests – on 'talking squid'), which is also published here. The weaving together of disparate textual material into a mutually productive (and constantly producing) relationship mimics and highlights the machinic processing at the heart of *Double Screen* in which a conglomeration of parts are finely assembled but are, at the same time, unpredictable and unstable. We know not what might ensue as words and images produce their own worlds within Barham's carefully constructed machinic matrix...⁽⁶⁾ It is in this way that *Double Screen* is speculative – it opens up rather than closes down the possibilities for new worlds to be formed as new patterns are produced between different voices, images and texts.

5. *Image Machine* was written for a seminar at Lanchester Gallery, University of Coventry to mark the opening of Amanda Beech's exhibition, *Final Machine* (February 2013). The full text can be accessed via: <http://www.academia.edu/4229536/Image-Machine> and a version will be published by Lanchester Gallery.

Image Machine is also excerpted here in the interspersed text 3.1, although this 'raw material' never actually appears in its original form in *Double Screen* (*not quite tonight jellylike*).

6. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe the machine as that which couples with other machines in the process of production: 'Everywhere it is machine – real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections.'

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), 1.

1.8*

have you ever tried talking squid?
first to meet your hand inside and try to grip and polite
it's got to taking care not to break the link
for it scorchingly brown yellow is is is is is
over your hands - side pieces of symmetry flesh
inside the square trying to hold onto the screen message
you hold unexacting and twisted out

* All numbered interspersed excerpts and section titles are taken from the score for *Double Screen* (*not quite tonight jellylike*), Anna Barham (2013)

Have you ever tried talking squid?* A Saturday afternoon in February, and I am in Coventry. It's really cold and grey here, and it seems like a grim future-world. The city's radial planning encourages this sense of a dystopia that has been accelerated into the present: a world of damp concrete, roundabouts and underpasses, of a few lone figures carefully negotiating their passage on inhospitable footpaths. Yet it all seems quite traversable as long as you know the way underground and roundabout the innumerable circles that control the city's movements – its flow. However, as I am collected from the station on arrival, I am not swallowed up in the city's internal circuits. Instead I follow a figure that moves swiftly in front of me across the streets. A bit slower than her, I struggle to keep up and as such everything blurs into

an even greater equanimity that is composed by the wet, grey concrete and my rapid movement. We reach the gallery, a circular building – unsurprisingly – and enter. Mine is the third and final presentation, and as I stand up to begin, I look for familiar faces in the audience. The previous papers have mainly discussed the work of the political philosopher Louis Althusser but I want to talk about squid. I don't just want to talk about squid but to embody squid – I want to be squid-ish. I want to twist and turn words in my mouth: slimy, lithe, viscous and visceral. I want to enter into squid-talk in order to understand the way that form has been liquefied and we have been immersed in movements and flows, temperatures and sensations. The squid has become, for me, an emblem of this liquefied world. It is a world of watery movements and flows: a world of bodies conjoined in mutual movement.

Being squid-ish in Coventry presents an interesting proposition. Flesh slaps the wet concrete – corpuscular volume hitting the cold, hard and unforgiving surface structure of the city's circuitry – and in this way two possibilities converge. On the one hand, is a mode of being centred on the body and on liquidity; these are body-to-body transmissions. Infection. Contagion. Messy flesh. On the other hand, is the strange concrete-world of the city with its predominance of striations, site-lines, street-signs, tunnels and pathways. Here efficiency of movement has been maximised and systematised, and movement is a procedure that takes place according to the routes indicated. In this system, all is structured according to the hard edges of concrete surfaces and asphalt pathways. A contrast is therefore suggested between concrete structure and body-to-body transmission: the fleshy corporeality (the squid-ishness) of the body and the structures of the city's circuits.

4.1

squid guts body and the alphabet combine flatten out
and join together to enter into the flow
more images more images white noise
the alarms on the scaffolding going off again
faint voices from upstairs perhaps a siren all are images into the mix
fleeting impressions driving by and witnessed by nothing in particular
all a part of the flow
image machine

Have you ever tried talking squid? The rhythmic and bodily production of language as a sensual experience, as well as its relationship with visual and textual forms, is a central preoccupation for Barham in the development of *Double Screen*. She has said that 'the way text works as image in your mind and the way that the image works [as image] in your mind are at odds – this is the motor for the work'.⁽⁷⁾ Here Barham addresses the differing operations of the image as 'alphabetic shape' (written text), as the mental images generated by words; and image as affective form such as verbal language or more abstract or expressive imagery. In the book, *Becoming Beside Ourselves* (which formed the basis of Barham's first reading group during her residency at Site Gallery), Brian Rotman addresses the differing operations of image and text suggesting that there

7. Conversation with the artist, 21 August 2013. My emphasis.

is an impassable division between written and oral languages.⁽⁸⁾ For Rotman ‘alphabetic writing’ produces confinement and restriction by forcing our experience into the linear stream of shapes of letters and their prescribed meanings. Verbal language however, according to Rotman, pertains to the gesture and movement of the body and is, as such, freer in its expression – language as a sensual experience. It is this impasse that interests Barham. But rather than simply accepting the separation between written and verbal forms of text as Rotman does, Barham explores the productive nature of this gap addressing the way that the separation between the (so-called) strict denotation of alphabetic language and the affective nature of gestural verbal or visual language can be teased apart and reformulated in new ways. (The gestural affects of language are also addressed by Barham in the installation of *Double Screen* in which the two screens are placed apart such that the viewer must move in order to see the work, producing a small kind of dance in relation to the work).

Rotman’s claims for a separation between verbal and written language are startling for those with an awareness of concrete poetry, such as the work of Bob Cobbing and Dom Sylvester Houédard, because much of what motivated these poets’ work was the way in which alphabetic writing operated as an expressive and gestural form in its own right. Cobbing’s fantastic poem *Worm* is a perfect example here: the typewritten word ‘worm’ slides down the page just as it slid thick and viscous from Cobbing’s deep voice on the occasions that he performed the text. Therefore the typewritten version of *Worm* produces an experience of the text that is both sonic and sensual in the way in which the letters gesture upon the page in a manner that is contrary to Rotman’s claims. Rather than limiting a possible expression (or bodily experience) *Worm* produces a sensual visual experience, producing a visual sensation that corresponds to the slippery, slide-y movement of a worm. As Cobbing writes in ‘Music for Dancing’ both written and sonic forms of poetry operate through rhythm and movement or ‘movement and dancing’:
 ‘...both visual poetry and sound poetry incorporate elements of rhythm. One can move inwardly to a sound poem or interpret it in outward movement or dance. One can, by empathy, enter into the spatial rhythms of a visual poem, or can give it full muscular response. So both sound and visual poetry are steps into the arena. Visual poetry is the plan, sound poetry the impulse; visual poetry the score and sound poetry your actual music for dancing.’⁽⁹⁾

We find Barham exploring the relationship between the ‘visual poetry of the score’ and the ‘music for dancing’ (sound poetry) in the language that she develops within *Double Screen* where an image often acts to structure and order through its symbolic relationship to a (spoken) word, and at other times there is more freeform expression in which images or sounds are independently affective. So that at times there is a clear separation between hearing a word and seeing its symbolic equivalent, or experiencing the sound of a word only, or seeing or feeling an image only. For example the spoken words ‘yellow gutsy stuff’ are invariably accompanied by the close-up of a yellow rose, and ‘hand’ spoken is accompanied by an image of a hand, but the spoken word ‘legato’ is followed by an image of ruffled white bed sheets so that the smooth surface of the sheets might suggest smoothness (that is, *legato*) or the ruffled sheets its opposite. Or ‘legato’ might pertain to the languorous feeling that we experience after a morning lying in bed – so that the image communicates the *sensation* of legato rather than denoting its literal meaning. Barham plays with these correspondences through the 15 versions that are produced of the text so that at times there is a repeating correspondence between text and image (or spoken word and visual sensation) and at other times this correspondence is unexpectedly omitted or twisted so that the spoken word might mutate but the image remains the same. For example, the close up of the yellow rose also accompanies the processed variations of ‘yellow’: ‘fold’, ‘you’, ‘yours’, ‘fellows’... and the image of the hand aligns with the mutations of ‘hand’ into ‘have’, ‘hair’, ‘can’t’... The range of these

8. Brian Rotman, *Becoming Beside Ourselves: The Alphabet, Ghosts and Distributed Human Being* (Duke University Press, 2008).

9. Bob Cobbing, ‘Music for Dancing’, *Stereo Headphones Magazine*, 1971.

transmissions can be seen as a testing ground – a testing out of the space between the visual and oral sensations of language – so that on the one hand, *Double Screen* establishes a system of correspondences between text and image, and on the other, it corrupts the system that it seeks to establish. This opens up a space between the visual and sonic denotation of a thing and the feeling of the thing; a space that is opened up by the breaks in the language ‘system’ that *Double Screen* establishes and then undoes, thus destabilising the very possibility of a coherent system anyway.

4.6

regards bodying out of the car by about an hour to join together to enter into the flow
 more images or images like noises on the scaffolding going up against the voices from
 upstaris
 perhaps inspiring all languages in two minutes
 treating impressions driving by rivers
 by nothing in particular
 part of the flow stuck in its machine

Part of the flow stuck in its machine. Video footage showing the operation of a large, high quality, UV ink jet printer is a constant presence throughout the visual score of *Double Screen*. The printer is shown in close up as it labours. It moves from one side of a piece of reflective paper to another, pauses and then moves back again as it begins to carefully build a (never seen) image. There is a sense here of an image being materially produced – the product of a painstaking labour, and this is a labour that we can empathise with: it is rendered almost human. The motif of labour is further extended through the repeating image of a hand brushing dust from the surface of the paper in preparation for printing, yet at the same time there is a sense that the fact that this actual human labour is unimportant. Thus any assumed hierarchy between human and machine is flattened out, and the printer’s constant repeating presence creates a sense of constant production; a production in which we are all involved and immersed within. Just as the printer’s work is never ending, we too are constantly producing and being produced in an interminable labour.

10. Much could be said about the role of the pun in *Double Screen* with its presence suggested by title of the work alone – the doubling of meaning producing (or revealing) a deviant or hidden meaning. It should also be noted that Barham read Soeren Hattesen Balle’s essay ‘Slips of the Pun’ with her reading group at Site Gallery, Sheffield.

Soeren Hattesen Balle, ‘Slips of the Pun: Signifying Sex in the Poetry of John Ashbery’ in Byron, Glennis and Andrew J. Sneddon (Eds.), *The Body and The Book: Writings on Poetry and Sexuality* (Amsterdam/New York, NY: Rodopi, 2008).

The footage of the printer suggests labour on two counts – firstly by responding to and highlighting the notion of process that is at the heart of the work (that is, the cyclical process through which the work is constructed – the reading of text by a voice synthesiser, feeding words into a dictaphone which in turn delivers a written text to be re-synthesised into sound); and secondly by evoking a constancy of production. In this way, Barham is punning on the notion of labour, so that the footage of the printer plays a clever double-game within *Double Screen*. The labour that is suggested is of course the labour of the artist herself, because in fact what the printer is producing (the image that we never see) is one of the limited edition prints that were made to accompany the exhibition at Site, and it is also a universal labour – both labour as ‘work’ but also a production of ‘self’, as I suggested earlier and which is suggested by the foundational role that process plays in *Double Screen*.⁽¹⁰⁾

The notion of production is intricately intertwined within the processual circuitry of *Double Screen*, not only through the double-game played by the footage of the printer but also by the hidden labour of the artist herself. In fact, we could say that Barham labours not only to produce the work but also to be produced as the work. As such the processual labour of the printer as it is programmed (or trained perhaps?) to successfully lay perfect strips of ink onto a surface finds its echo in the manner in which Barham trains her voice to provide the voice over for *Double Screen*. She worked with a voice coach whilst developing the work, learning to maximise the efficient pronunciation of letters and the clear articulation of words in order to make the most efficient use of her

energy when reading. In this way Barham turns herself into a vocal processor – a role that we have seen her take up in previous works such as *Volume II* in which she reads a text composed from anagrams for almost an hour (the work is a vocalisation of 29 anagram drawings made between 2010 and 2012). The production of the voice through the body – that is through bodily movement or gesture – is also explored through the work *Slick Flection* (2009/2011) in which Barham’s reading of a text whose pattern is borrowed from tap dancing annotation is accompanied by a tap dancer dancing. Here voice and bodily movement meld so that it becomes unclear whether the movement of the dancer directs (and therefore produces) Barham’s reading or the voice motivates the dancer’s movement. Not only is the physical production (or process) of language accentuated through the movement of the dancer, but there is also a strong sense of the patterns of rhythm producing movement and thus voice. In these earlier works, there is a strong sense that Barham is exploring the bodily production of the voice as movement or gesture rather than the notion of voice rendered through a neurological link. In *Double Screen* this sense of voice as bodily is further extended towards the machinic.

Through the emphasis on process and production, the repetition of the printer footage, and Barham’s own vocal training, *Double Screen* evokes a sense of the body’s equivalence to the machine: a machine that not only produces a voice (and then a language) through movement but that also orders and sorts by working through its bodily capabilities. Of her work with the vocal coach, Barham has said that she had hoped to explore the ways in which the text that was produced in an unbroken stream by the computer might be punctuated. How might the bodily demands for breath and the efficient use of energy, when reading for example, create the punctuation for the text that had in turn been produced by the speech-to-text processor named Siri?⁽¹¹⁾ Barham’s extensive work with the multiple texts that were processed by Siri introduces a subjective glitch into the machinic production that forms a part of *Double Screen*’s logic. This results from the particular capacities of her body (as a kind of processor) acting upon the production of the text as it is read. This influence of the body on the text is highlighted by the fact that Siri produces a text that is without punctuation, therefore containing the potential to be interpreted in innumerable different ways. Working with the voice coach, Barham then inserts a punctuation – and thereby an interpretation of each text – that is in accordance with her bodily capacity and need for pauses to take a breath, to conserve energy and so on. In this way, Barham addresses the body as a machinic processor, but also highlights the way in which the particular capacities of the machine (or processor) produces a set of mutations into the processing of the text that allows for singularities of self (whether human or machine) to emerge.

4.9
 whereabouts guarding the alphabet online
 flat now
 enjoying together to enter into the slope and more images
 more images like nice sunny scaffolding
 again strange voices come upstairs perhaps a solar image into the next
 the compressions driving back nothing particular
 all part of the file
 image machine

Part of the flow stuck in its machine. Returning to the concrete radial named Coventry, I stand in a grey room while words turn in my mouth like gum – thick and viscous, tangible forms. Words twist and fold within the orifice of my mouth and then spew forth into space produced by the movement of the muscular machinery of tongue and throat. These

11. Barham used the iPhone speech-to-text synthesiser known as ‘Siri’ along with the vocal synthesiser native to the Mac OS X operating systems to produce the work.

12. Alvin Lucier, *The Only Talking Machine of its Kind in the World* for speaker and tape-delay system (1969)

13. Herman Melville quoted in Craig Dworkin, ‘The Stutter of Form’ in Perloff, Majorie and Craig Dworkin (eds), *The Sound of Poetry, The Poetry of Sound* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2009).

words take form, and they become their own bodies: alien bodies that emerge from my mouth, each word taking its own life – its own visceral form – which twists and turns in the space around me. I watch as they move in the room around me, some languorously some with a more violent gesture. As the machinery of my body churns away, it is almost as if I can see the sounds or words or sonic shapes leave my body – floating up and over the heads of the audience in that rather grim meeting room. I delight in my role in forming these sonic shapes and patterns – the sensations of production the sounds causing my mouth to move, my lips to labour: giving over to the machinery of production. I feel squid-ish like the words that I churn over with my tongue, my lips: slipping and squelching, it is as if I become the words that I speak – porous somehow, ‘a talking machine’ as Alvin Lucier has said or in my case... a talking squid.⁽¹²⁾

Words lead me on with fluency and disfluency, through ‘organic hesitations’, through different sonic passages, suggestions, tricks and turns.⁽¹³⁾ It is as if I am dragged through the text, as if it is a production without an end – the movement of tongue, teeth and lips ongoing. I am led through puns and paradoxes: slight stops and slips, stutters in fact become productive themselves – for while they might stall the machine, might produce a détournement, we still go on. Any breakdown – stutter, echo, splintering of text – produces new sounds, new forms and new sensations for my twisting tongue. I am at the centre of a world that is not my own. I am a stranger in the midst of the sonic utterances that move around of me and which emanate from the machinery of my body – a sonic world of goo and ooze, a collision of guts and alphabetic structure, of scat splayed across scaffolding. This is a world produced by a plethora of pieces and parts joined together, joined by the machinations of sound and the machinery of mouth: one part of the machine combines with another, all part of the flow, all part of the file. What is self and skin anyway? I feel porous.

1.3
 have you ever tried to create a collective square region
 I’m trying to call a miscasting
 you cannot really exact scorching green brown issues
 interference type pieces of silver reflections cyber squaring
 trying to hold onto the screen
 and you hold on to time
 exact remembering twisted out

Have you ever tried to create a collective square region? Through its exploration of the machinery of language and the body, *Double Screen* addresses the manner in which images and words (sonic shapes) construct worlds around them. We see this at work in Barham’s processing of text, in the way in which different combinations of sounds are produced across the various versions of the text as well the appearance of differing points of connection between sounds, between words, between words and sounds, and between words and images. Barham maps these movements and

variations diagrammatically so that she can follow their diversionary routes – observing the way in which for example the word ‘squid’ becomes ‘square’, ‘squint’, ‘sweep’, ‘skin’ and ‘scan’, but other words hold fast so that ‘remembering’ is always remembering. In this way, Barham acknowledges the pre-existing capacity or conditions of the machine that produces her text. In using Apple software (Siri to generate text from speech and the Mac OS X speech synthesiser to generate speech from the text), the text that is produced is particular to the machine that produces it – that is, it is done so within a pre-established set of parameters. Business-speak predominates as do the brand names of software, drugs and commercial products so that the world that is generated by the text is a very particular one.

Barham’s enquiry into the sonic and visual properties of language has emerged from her ongoing interest in Plato’s *Cratylus*, which questions the way in which names are given: are words simply attached to things by manner of agreement amongst the users of a language or are they embedded with the properties of the thing to which they pertain? The dialogue takes place between Socrates, Hermogenes and Cratylus. Cratylus presents the side of the argument that has been described as ‘naturalist’ for suggesting that the properties of a thing are embedded in the sound – the sonic form and shape – of its name, while Hermogenes presents the argument that language is arbitrarily assigned through agreement resulting from its collective use.⁽¹⁴⁾ *Double Screen* tests out both sides of Plato’s argument exploring through the reference to images the way in which images – as a collective body in themselves – develop a language through their symbolic operation. And yet also, through the liquidity of sound and image, there is a sense of the properties of the thing described being embedded within the sound of the word itself: words such as *squid* or *squat* are cases in point here.

The operation of the Greek letter *rho* is one of the key elements in Plato’s argument for the way that the name of the thing embeds a sonic description of the thing itself. The *rho* produces a tremulant and rolling ‘r’ sound giving it the name ‘liquid consonant’ and Barham explores its operation in her work of the same name. As such *Liquid Consonant* (2012) reveals the mechanics of the production of *rho* in the mouth and throat, and in this way it is true to Plato’s description of *rho* as a mechanical operation – that it is the shape of the movement the tongue and mouth that embeds the description of the thing in the word, and not (as one might assume) the onomatopoeic nature of the sound produced. The paring back of movement and sound to an examination of the way that the tongue moves to produce *rho*, and the abstraction of the associated sound into a minimalist electronic soundtrack, further opens up the debate between language being the result of a mechanical capability of the human mouth to produce a sound (for example) and a givenness of language that forces the production of the sound (or *rho*) upon the body. However, like artists and poets such as Cobbing and the more contemporary Derek Beaulieu, Barham extends the division implicit in Plato’s *Cratylus* into a question of the intrinsic differences between a visual and sonic language, or a visual and sonic score.⁽¹⁵⁾ For Cobbing, the visual score operated according to the properties of a visual image – the expression of a feeling through an abstracted form or shape and we see this in the layering of type written letters in the poem *Worm* in which a visual score is produced not in order to be read but in order to produce a sensation or feeling of worm. ‘Sound poetry’ was the work in performance – the sound of the work emitted in space. In many ways, Barham follows this division between a visual score – the moving image elements of the work – and ‘sound poetry’ – the sound of her reading.⁽¹⁶⁾

4.5

squid guts bodying alphabet combine flatten out and joined together to enter into the flow
more images more images white noise
the alarms on the scaffolding going off again

14. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-cratylus>

15. Derek Beaulieu, *Flatlands* (2007)

16. However it should be noted that Barham produces an actual score for the voice-over of *Double Screen*. Thus a ‘visual score’ is not only the video work (though this is all we see). In developing the score for the voice-over, Barham produced a kind of diagram that enabled her to map and follow the commonalities and deviations produced between the different versions of the work.

faint voices from upstairs
perhaps a siren
all languages into the mix
treating impressions driving by witnessed by nothing in particular
all part of the flow stopping its machine

The production of text by the voice and the relationship of this process with other machinic processes is mirrored through Barham’s exploration of the way in which images are pushed through data processing systems within digital and other ordering platforms (such as those of her own devising). In this way Barham addresses the relationship between image and text in a specifically digital world; for example, in *Double Screen*, apart from the footage of the printer she uses only found images and video, which she finds via exacting Google-image searches. Not only does this address particular connections between word and image (the search terms and their results), it also highlights the way in which words and images combine to produce particular worlds. There is a delicately nuanced relationship established here between different types of images – as denotative and therefore pertaining to the symbolism of word – and as gestural, forming a suggestive and affective relationship with the sense or feeling of a word. For example, searching for an image of a dog by entering the word ‘dog’ could result in a picture, someone’s holiday snap perhaps, of a brown dog running through a field which could express other things besides the idea ‘dog’ – ‘brown’, ‘running’, ‘outside’, the season or weather etc. Barham has said such an image is at once too vague and too specific to work like words. She sees much stock imagery by contrast as attempting to come as close to a symbol or literal idea as is possible for an image - high resolution, even lighting, background often removed or abstracted - these images are somehow self-conscious, sanitised and stripped of nuance and gesture.⁽¹⁷⁾

Yet even the generic stock images that result from Barham’s journeys through various data-ordering systems are then re-processed, re-photographed and so on by the artist thus producing what Barham has termed ‘a gestural image’.⁽¹⁸⁾ It is this production of images and a corresponding production of self that I sought to explore in the text, *Image Machine*, which forms much of the ‘raw data’ of *Double Screen*. As such *Image Machine* highlights the similarities between the machinic production of the self in relation to the production (and movement) of images around us. This machinic production makes visible the flattening out of our relationship with images (and words), so that while Barham’s manual processing (the work of the artist’s hand) produces a gestural image (through the processing of found images), idiosyncratic blips and breaks in the machine itself might also produce these subjective idiosyncrasies. This is a system (or circuit) that we are immersed in – a world of images and text that surrounds us – but it is a system that is constantly morphing and adapting to the capacities of individual machines that are linked into it. These singular machines therefore produce different combinations of text and image – in turn producing different worlds that spin off from the combinations achieved.

3.15

places are like black outlines existing like stages
that is initiated I feel as if Martin doesn’t resist
it improves now and I don’t have the death date
laxly extrapolates it’s late on the letter E
I might just leave it
don’t really like apostrophe L
last night on my own like this
genuinely I seem porous

17. Email correspondence with the artist, September 11, 2013.

18. Email correspondence with the artist, September 11, 2013.

If text (and image) produces a world then there are 15 different worlds produced by the 15 different versions of the text that are processed and performed in *Double Screen*. In this way, the various versions of the score can be considered in the same way that a film is versioned for dubbing and release in different languages and contexts. What is significant for us about film-versioning is not just the production of multiple worlds or realities but the manner in which these worlds always unfold in the present moment (a perpetual present) so that rather than producing a linear notion of time, what is produced is a series of present moments that are laid out like sheets, platforms, layers or stages. As such, time no longer stretches out before us but exists in a series of flat planes, which we 'navigate in and out'.⁽¹⁹⁾ We can see this idea of time explored through the scoring and patterning of words and images within *Double Screen*, so that not only does the work always immerse us in an unfolding present (which is produced by the combinatory effect of words, sounds, images, sensations) but it displays the structure or scaffolding that is inherent to the world produced: the connections between words and sounds, and between words, sounds and images, for example as well as the limitations and parameters of the machinery from which it is produced – a circuitry of processors, fleshy mouth, throat and glottis...

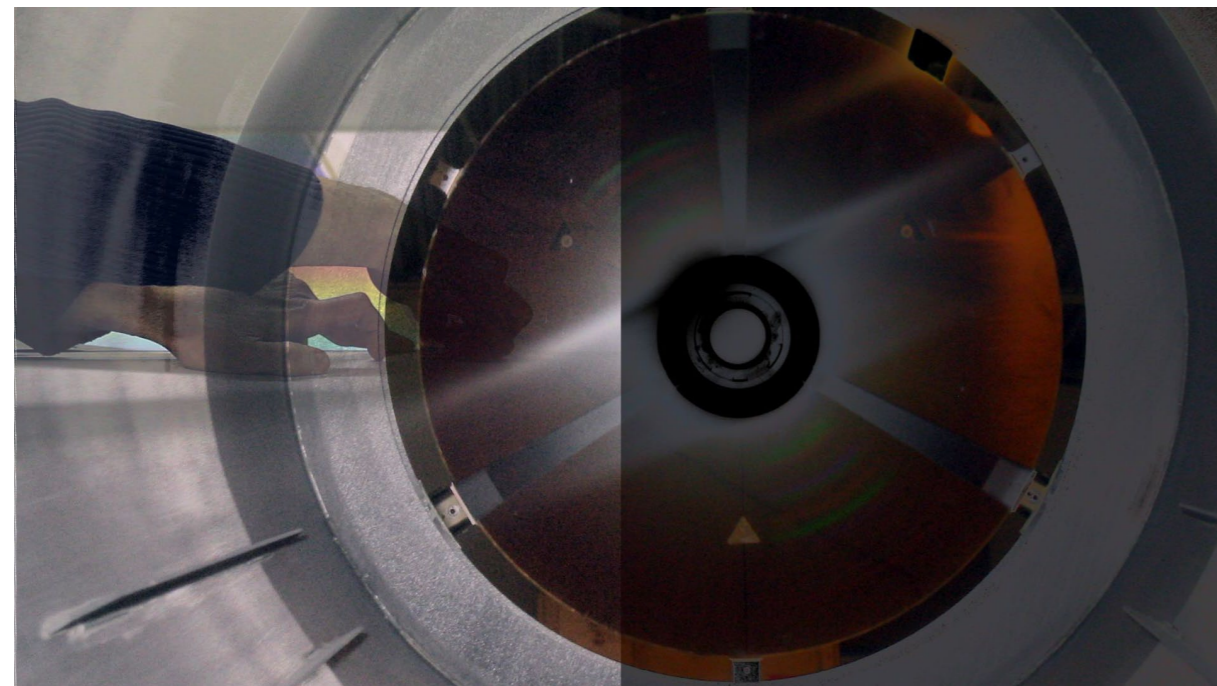
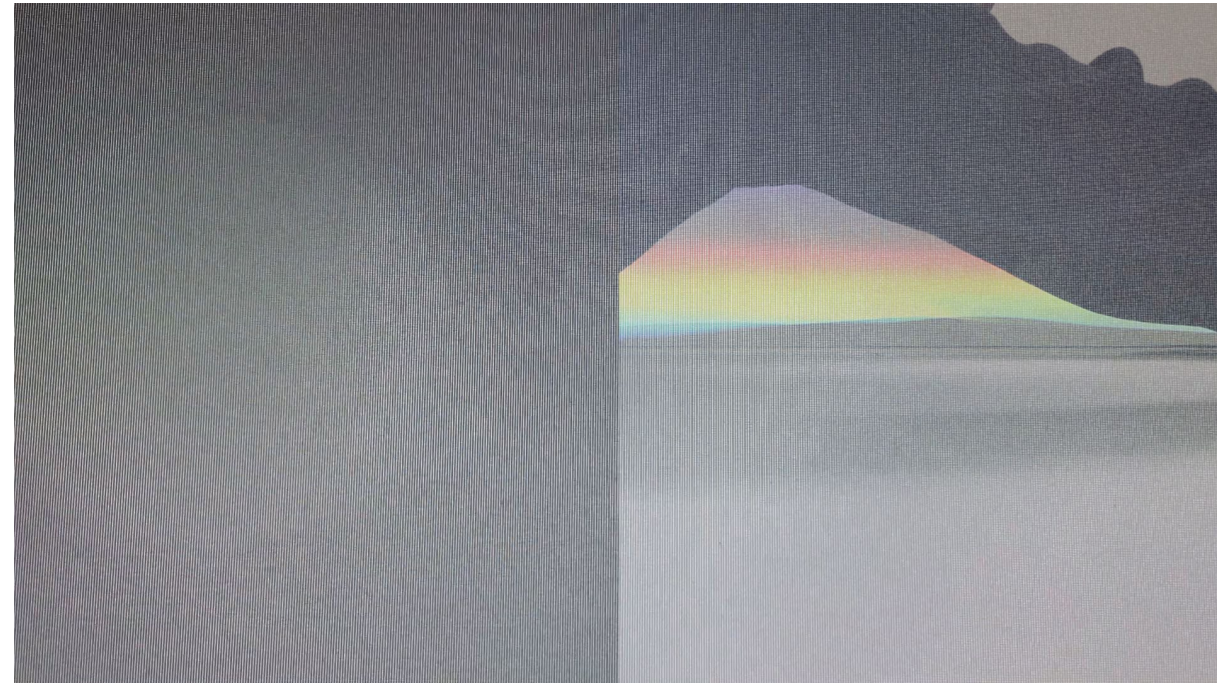
19. Muriel Cooper / Visible Language Workshop, Information Landscapes MIT, 1994 via youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qn9zCrlJzLs>

3.1

the guts ooze along letterforms
occupying both the black outlines of alphabetic shapes and the white spaces that give the shape shape
I feel as if I might morph and move into this mess
it improves the typeface no end
a bit of yellow gutsy stuff dangles over a T
black squid scat makes its way down the letter A
I might just slip down a letter I
squelch through an O
motion not my own
what is self and skin anyway?
I seem porous



Stills: *Double Screen (not quite tonight jellylike)*
Anna Barham, 2013
2 channel HD video, 32 minutes



The original passage from *Image Machine*, Bridget Crone (2013) that was used by Barham as the starting point for *Double Screen* (not quite tonight jellylike)

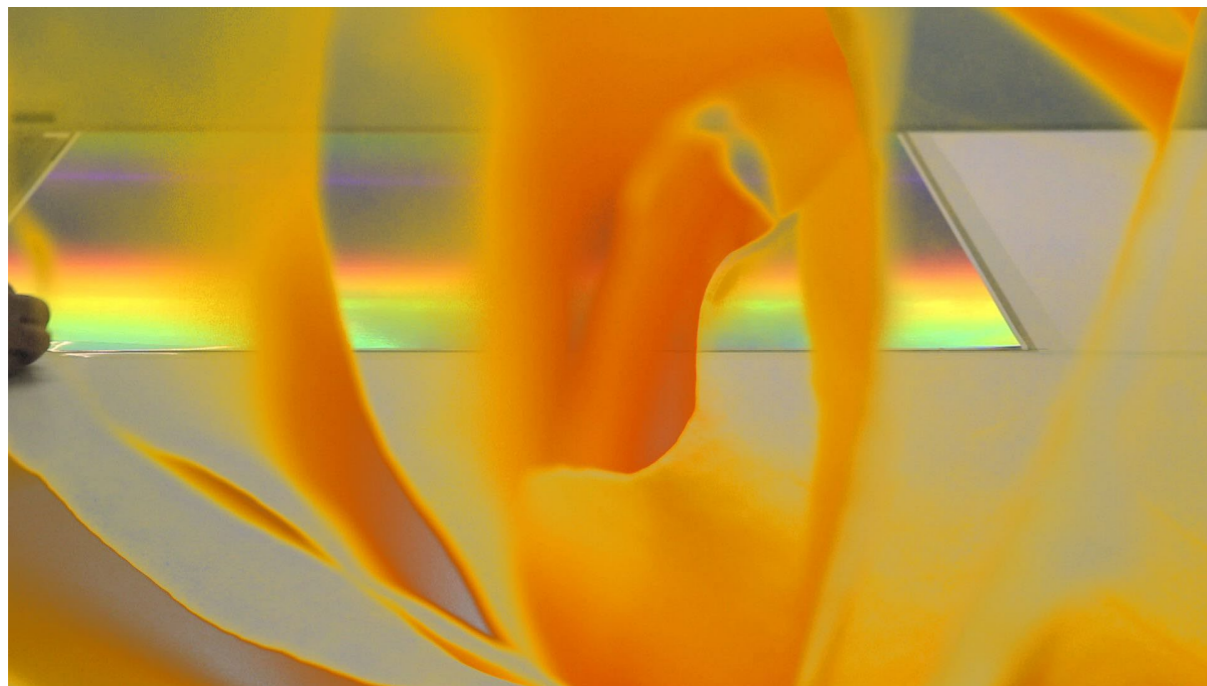
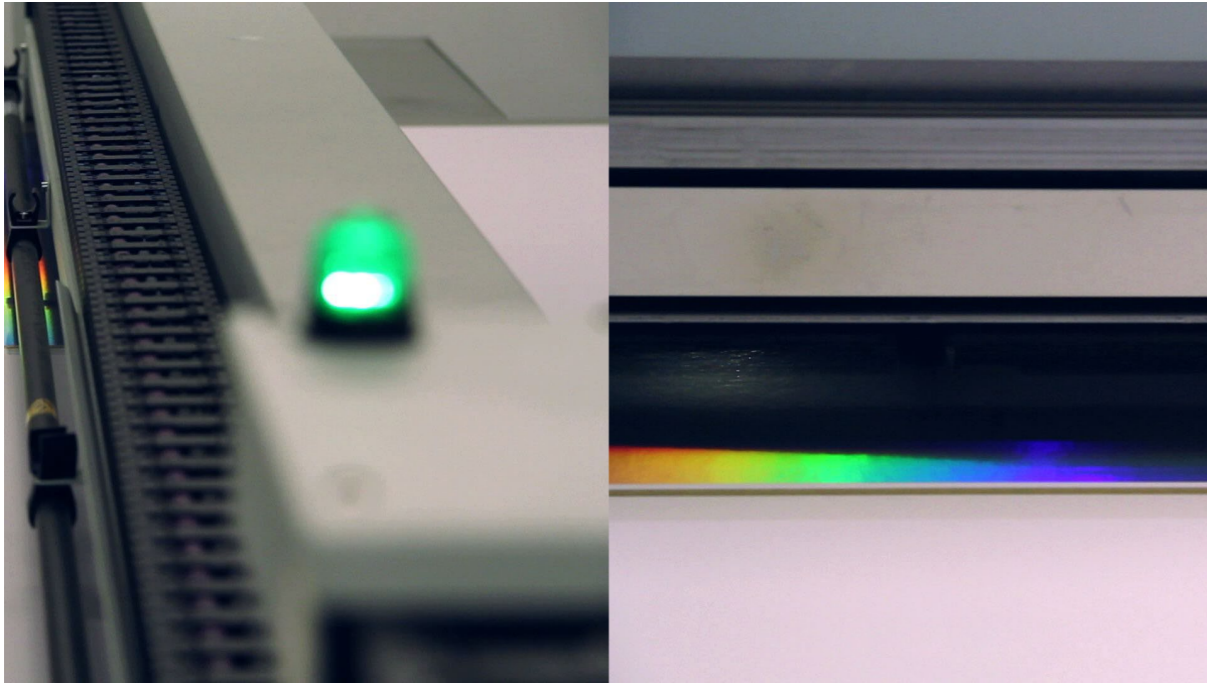
Have you ever tried to clean a squid? First, you reach your hand inside and try to grip and pull out its guts taking care not to break the ink sack. It's squelchy and gooey. Brown, yellow ooze oozes. It oozes over your hands. Tight pieces of sinewy flesh inside the squid try to hold onto this gooey mess as you pull not too hard (the ink sack, remember?) and twist it out.

Splat. The goo flops onto the newspaper that I've carefully laid out in readiness. And it sits there not quite inert. Jelly like and flaccid but as if it could ooze away. I look at it up close. To watch it quiver. Its wetness sinks into the paper and spreads. Its total mass starts to deflate and even now it seems uncontainable.

The guts ooze along letterforms occupying both the black outlines of alphabetic shapes and the white spaces that give the shape shape. I feel as if I might morph and move into this mess. It improves the typeface no end, a bit of yellow gutsy stuff dangles over a T, black squid scat makes its way down the letter A. I might just slip down a letter I, squelch through an O. Motion not my own. (What is self and skin anyway? I seem porous.)

Squid guts, body and the alphabet combine, flatten out and join together to enter into the flow. More images more images. White noise, the alarms on the scaffolding going off again, faint voices from upstairs... perhaps a siren. All are images into the mix. Fleeting impressions driving by and witnessed by nothing in particular: all a part of the flow. Image machine.

Stills: *Double Screen* (not quite tonight jellylike)
Anna Barham, 2013
2 channel HD video, 32 minutes



Stills: *Double Screen (not quite tonight jellylike)*
Anna Barham, 2013
2 channel HD video, 32 minutes

Anna Barham
Not quite tonight jellylike
10.10 - 9.11.13

Arcade
87 Lever Street
London, EC1V 3RA
www.arcadefinearts.com

Talking Squid © Bridget Crone 2013
Images and excerpts © Anna Barham

www.annabarham.net
www.plentyprojects.org
www.supposeicall.blogspot.co.uk

Double Screen (not quite tonight jellylike)
was co-commissioned by
Site Gallery and Wying Arts Centre
with funding from Arts Council England
and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation



phf Paul Hamlyn
Foundation

newspaper that I've carefully laid out in readiness and it sits there

newspaper that I've carefully laid out in readiness and it sits there

newspaper carefully laid out in readiness and it sits there

get here in readiness

newspaper that I carefully laid out in readiness and it's been

newspaper and I carefully laid out in readiness it sits there

straight and I carefully laid out and read this is a nightmare

newspaper that I carefully laid out in reading that interested

that I cheerfully laid out in reading that interested

vacuously laid out in reading sexy

each recognised totally redone to read instead and it fits they'

street and I carefully lay there reading on my way

street that I carefully read everything is on my way

and it certainly

prodigiously laid out to reading Suzanne

telephone me down and read this