Essay from a collection of essays that emerged from a transdisciplinary arts project curated by London Fieldworks and Resonance FM.

Reference:

Gilchrist, B., Joelson, J., Warr, T. (Eds.), 2015. *Remote performances in nature and architecture*. Ashgate Publishing, Farnham.

Written on the autumn equinox, 2014, Cornwall.

I am typing this in a small valley, 3 miles from the most Southerly tip of mainland England. And yet, I have also just read an extract from Ed Milibands’ speech to the Labour conference in Manchester, received an update on the US bombings of ISIS strongholds in Raqqa, Syria, as well as purchasing a copy of Hyperobjects by Timothy Morton. In short I have procrastinated my way through a good 45 minutes of precious time, that until recently in this house, I would have spent writing by hand in my notebook.

Contemporary remoteness is exposed by digital isolation, the proliferation of the off-grid retreat, the desperate attempts at attaining mobile signal, waving our phones in the air as we stand on tree-stumps in fields, or the enthusiasm with which one celebrates ones imminent off-gridness online – “I can’t wait! Five weeks of no internet, no phones at an ayurvedic retreat, see you all in November… ”.

I can also, however, remember a time (pre-mobile phones), in which I would step out of my front door in a city and luxuriate in the immediate remoteness one can feel when you realise that no one you know has any idea where you are right now. I used to walk the streets of Wellington in New Zealand in 2004 fuelled by this glorious sense of remoteness and isolation.

Remoteness these days can perhaps be accomplished by switching off the devices: those wireless boxes that have invaded our homes with their perpetual blinks and winks, abandoning your clever phone, your tablet and your laptop and your computer, it’s a lot to give I know. I grew up as one of a generation that was told that if everyone turned their TV’s off standby we’d be able to close 4 whole power stations. Instead of doing this we invented a whole new form of technology that doesn’t even come with the option or leaving it on standby. They are all just perpetually on, whirring away into the night, helping us download the latest illegal episode of whatever.

Remoteness, like Nature, has assumed an affiliation with the ‘Great Outdoors’, with wilderness, and wildness, the wild places. Yet whilst in Scotland, preparing for *Remote Performances* by wild-camping on the north face of An Gearanach facing Ben Nevis, I was still able to receive a text from a friend 656 miles away on the shores of the south coast of England, asking me when I’d be home.

Turn the damn things off. Step outside. Immediate remoteness is achieved. Half way up a hillside with a satellite and a bunch of technical wizards from London we were together alone at Outlandia, perpetually tweeting our excitement at all this space and all this time, to just be, existing in a perpetual state of contradiction. Anytime I received an unexpected txt or alert it made me wish I’d forgotten my charger.