



Software operations hide behind the veneer of media forms obscured by immediate distractions. In the background, concise source code operates obstinately, indifferent to the qualities of objects screened, whether text, image or audio. The appearance of changing content thus masks the rigidity of technological form.

The enclosed works comprise digital objects, their titles and the computational generation thereof. The digital imagery used herein was derived from .obj files used in previous works (Fig 2); these were, in turn, developed from prior works replicating promotional images of furniture.

A website generates the titles of works in this series, employing a procedure similar to that used in a previous work (www.t-j-watson.com/assets/tjw101020.pdf). A website was written to make the work, featuring a twenty-episode text, wherein animistic prophecies and revelations befall "the worker" (Fig 1). Simultaneously, the engorged titles of previous works (www.t-j-watson.com/assets/tjw300117.pdf, www.t-j-watson.com/assets/tjw010619.pdf) were each disaggregated into arrays of twenty textual units, the semblant self-sufficiency of which varied significantly. With each array of disaggregated units maintained in order, a matrix of eight columns by twenty rows was produced: twenty units retrieved from eight titles. Then, all personal names appearing in units were abstracted to "the worker". To complete the matrix, the twenty episodes from the initial text were added, creating a further column,

A JavaScript function was devised to operate on the matrix, delivering a new five-thousand-word title with every generation of the page, randomly selecting one unit from each of the matrix's twenty rows.

This work exists when a newly generated title is read aloud. The reader might be paid, might not be paid or might employ another to read on their behalf

Media forms occlude the operations of software, erecting an opaque, defiant facade; on the surface, inherited objects – text, image, audio – linger resistantly, indifferent to the computational constructions below. The appearance of persistent content thus masks swift transformations in technological form.

The enclosed works comprise computational generation, digital objects and their titles. Initially, works replicating promotional images of furniture begat the forms for .obj files used in later works; these .obj files, in turn, furnished the forms for the digital imagery used herein (Fig 2).

The titles of works in this series are generated by a website, the production of which employed a similar procedure to that used in another work (www.t-j-watson.com/assets/tjw101020.pdf). To make the work, a website was written, featuring a twenty-episode text, wherein animistic prophecies and revelations befall "the worker" (Fig 1). Simultaneously, the engorged titles of previous works (www.t-j-watson.com/assets/tjw300117.pdf, www.t-j-watson.com/assets/tjw010619.pdf) were each disaggregated into arrays of twenty textual units, the semblant self-sufficiency of which varied significantly. With each array of disaggregated units maintained in order, a matrix of eight columns by twenty rows was produced: twenty units retrieved from eight titles. Then, all personal names appearing in units were abstracted to "the worker". To complete the matrix, the twenty episodes from the initial text were added, appending a further column thereto.

With matrix established, a JavaScript function was devised to select one unit from each of the twenty rows at random, delivering a new five-thousand-word title with every generation of the page.

This work exists whether or not a newly generated title is read aloud. The reader might be paid, might not be paid or might employ another to read on their behalf

www.tjw201020.com

Website
2020-onwards

FIG 1.

Text.

1.

"One empty interminable morning shift, as hunger's billow bloomed below ribs, in a squelching hollow of circular disquiet, the worker reached to pocket to retrieve a chocolate bar, a nougat and caramel filled lump, whose body-softened warmth lay nestled beyond keys, beyond change, and was soon clasped, its foil wrapping unpeeled to denude the contents, the contents which, upon confrontation, upon immediate inspection, appeared to twitch, shifting spontaneously to magically move and toss and writhe in hand, there smearing its fatty brown residue from finger to wrist before eventually wriggling free of the worker's clutch to stand, its first unbroken square positioned parallel to the worker's face, static, before it spoke mouthlessly in a calm and measured metre, "I have seen your future, worker, your life in its complete, unbroken arc from death unto now, and I know you will parent a child, a delicate, beautiful infant, whose birth will bring joy, tears born of the rapture of cosmic gratitude; yet those tears will fall selfishly, for your child will never be happy, not once; rather, they will suffer and suffer only, tortured each hour in acute and enduring pain, in an endless stinging through which anguish will constrict their every breath, the cruelty deepened by a mental torment, by a persistent depression, a guilt and self-loathing, engorged by mockeries, beatings and abuses, which will neither be disclosed nor intimated, their misery obscured in deference to parents whose pride and contentment they look to maintain; yet, still, they will hope for death, always, insistently, and upon your eventual delayed expiration they, too, will seek theirs and die, relieved, not pleased, only dead," and thus, with their prophesy delivered the chocolate bar fell silent, hardening to a cold, inanimate lump lain flat upon the worker's palm, its firm mass neither desirable nor edible nor disposable, merely present,"

2.

"and thus the worker raised their ribs to inhale, breathing purposefully, meditatively, as if to expunge the unwanted thoughts of work, lifting diaphragm and shoulders before a dull ache rose from their foot, diffusing upwards to beget a sense of cumbrous heft, painful and unrelenting, such that they looked to foot and noticed a vague limpness, which they sought to inspect, bending their knee to rest shoe on thigh before hunching to

examine the pain that plagued the lower limb, its throbbing intensifying on each side as they placed a hand thereupon, where, on contact, on first gentle touch, a crack issued forth and the foot thudded heavily to ground, severed, the shoe and its contents strewn yards from their leg, feather-like strands of desiccated tissue left to protrude from its sock, from which the worker recoiled, stricken with horror, silent, until, suddenly, the shoe appeared to rise, uprighting, bouncing, twice, as an adenoidal wheeze spluttered forth, "Worker, know that I have seen your actions, I have seen your life's every movement, your daily practice now registered in aggregate, and know that each sinful indulgence, each thoughtless trespass has been registered, for I have seen your deceptions, lies, your everyday manipulative excuses and self-interested fabrications, and I have, too, seen your infidelities, undertaken in the confidence that the immediacies of gratification outweighs the faith of others, their hurt left to burgeon whilst you refused to repent, as you continued your wickedness, speaking insults and condescension, prejudice and denigration, degrading friends, strangers and loved ones to assuage your doubts, that reservoir of self-loathing debouched into blameless waters, and know that this cancer of wretchedness has been seen known and its impression lingers, ineradicably, in the world," and there the foot suddenly regained its moisture and leapt, returning to its limb, lighter and painless, voiceless as the worker stood static,"

3.

"and so, overcome with a shiversome urge to defecate, distractedly shifting weight between feet, hopping from heel to ball in an odd circular motion, as if dancing to an inaudible rhythm, the worker strode briskly bathroomwards, hurriedly approaching the toilet before loosening belt and trousers, pausing briefly as they cleaned the seat, unspooling paper, whereupon, with loose leaves scrunched lightly in hand, they registered a soft, muffled cough rise from the bowl, from a pool of fetid amber broth in which a frayed finger-length stool rocked rhythmically to the plumbing's current, swaying silently whilst a wheezing emerged, a small mouth protruding from the faecal lump, making faintly visible two parting lips, puckered and wrinkled, such that the worker leant fearfully forward to look at the shit, and the shit looked at the worker, and calmly, sonorously the excrement spoke, "You are loved, you are loved deeply and lastingly, and you are loved irrespective of that which you have done, or of that which you have thought; it matters not what selfishness nor wickedness nor cowardice have elapsed, nor what thoughts

have lingered in your deepest, saddest loathings, for I love you and I will love you forever: I will never cease to love you, and so all doubt, all fear and loneliness ought now to subside, the competitive, toxic dissatisfaction and your disappointments ought too to recede, for you are not alone, you are mine; I am with you always, in darkness and in light, in anguish and in joy, for all eternity, you are loved” and thus, with a final smile spread over the stool’s indistinct countenance, a silence ensued, its mouth vanishing, leaving the worker alone, perturbed and dumbfounded, no longer inclined to defecate, pensive as they refastened their belt to depart,”

4.

“and at that moment the worker felt an itch surface from their forearm in an erratic, tingling prickle that danced from wrist to elbow, shifting a blotched discomfort across the limb, prompting them to raise their sleeve to apprehend a red speckled rash last allayed some weeks ago, now recrudescient and manifest in a dispersed constellation of scarlet spots, each vivid and tender, raised in hemispherical bumps and felt as the worker ran fingers thereover, gingerly tracing the contours of every scale-like mound, every pimple, before the flecks ostensibly moved, slowly migrating and rapidly amassing in a cluster of red dots that shifted inwards, their distribution centrifugally, speedily rotating to assemble in a solid coalescent core whose centre gleamed lucent and enlivened, shining a bright crimson, pulsating as it spoke, “Your silent thoughts, your unspoken clandestine moments of insight, each hitherto kept hidden from the world, which have been unspoken, unwritten, whose powers of revelation have been thought lost, deemed only as your own, as pointless discoveries in a subterranean world-disclosing poetry never recognised by others and forever suppressed: this has not been for nought; no, I have seen and have heard each internal proposition ensconced or released, and I know the enduring genius thereof, for there is no ideal realm, no corner of mentality I cannot apprehend, such that I have seen too your kindest thoughts, your unique epiphanies and your acute concerns, your caring, committed cogitations that have never been recognised, and I know that you are good, you are good and you are great,” and thus the rash again disaggregated, returning to its previous dispersed condition, leaving only those final words to resound,”

5.

"and so the worker looked to the floor, where whilst vainly searching for distractive intrigue they spotted a cockroach, walking towards their shoes, scuttling such that the worker instinctively raised their feet to elude contact, yet as they did, as they hovered knees above seat, suspended as if part of some odd exercise routine, the insect curled its back to stand erect on hind legs, "Behold, I am God, I am the almighty, your companion and creator," it said, "and today I bring instructions to which you must adhere: you are to end your life, you are to die prematurely by your own hand and by a means of your choosing; whether through suffocation or drowning, through overdose or hanging, the method matters not, but you must die of your own volition, as indubitable proof of your faith in me, and when you do, salvation shall be yours, yours shall be the eternal glories of paradise, the riches of enlightenment, the fulfilment of fantasy; yet, if you fail, if you die otherwise, through age or illness or accident, you shall not reach heaven but eternal damnation and torture shall be yours, for you will suffer the smouldering agonies of hell; and so your fate remains your own, to be chosen and enacted or not, and that is final," and thus the cockroach returned to its forelegs and scurried back from the worker, beyond sight,"

6.

"and thus the worker placed hand to brow, running clammy digits across each deepened furrow, slowly edging at their temple until they registered a faint muttering noise vibrate against skin, whereupon they froze in concentration, pausing, whilst the low murmur continued, manifest as a persistent mumbling pitch that appeared to radiate from their finger, which, as they withdrew to inspect, displayed a small bleach-white cicatrix below the nail, opening and moving, closed and shut, dilating to reveal deeper tissue from which the once-sealed wound spoke, so that worker thrust the scar to their ear to apprehend its soliloquy, hearing, "I remember gifts given to friends, I remember sacrifices made for family, I remember inconveniences made for strangers, I remember burdens borne for siblings, I remember labours expended for colleagues, I remember pains suffered for lovers, I remember compromises made for others, I remember taxes paid for services, I remember embarrassments suffered for kindness, I remember donations made to charities, I remember hours given for political struggle, I remember interventions ventured for justice, I remember speeches uttered for morals, I remember each and every act of virtue undertaken in life thus far," the wound there falling silent, its message delivered as the fleshly

chasm closed motionless, serenely facing the worker who momentarily gasped before walking onwards, elsewhere,”

7.

“and there the worker crouched, overcome with a back pain acquired days previously, unremedied and worsening, the upshot of labour’s slouch, they supposed, which, unabated, prompted a stretch of the hips for alleviation, through the temporary palliation of muscular flex, the ache running from back to buttocks, yet with their groin opened, widening gradually and therapeutically, they felt vibrations issue from their pocket, sending a hand therein to search for phone, but upon retrieval of its contents they found only cash, notes and coins whose graphic insignia were strangely, inexplicably moving, automatically miming, their mouths shifting in unison, inaudibly, “Should you desire unending life, should you fear death and seek finitude’s transcendence, wanting only to endure in perpetuity without thought of closure, of fatality or the long declivity to cessation, then such shall be yours, worker; yet to grasp immortality you must change: you must renounce sexual pleasure in every myriad guise: you must neither kiss nor caress another nor imagine so doing, nor must you masturbate; you must not touch your body to elicit sensual enjoyments of any sort – neither stroking nor clenching nor penetrating yourself – and you must not look lustfully upon others; you must banish each concupiscent thought, not envisage unclothed bodies, others’ swollen genitals or coital contortions, nor must you imagine others looking upon you, whether with desirous intent or any intent that begets gratification; you must resist every temptation to lubricious gesture, every inclination to provoke the lasciviousness of strangers, and you must not divert your sexual urges, fantasies and impulses to other objects; rather, you must seek to eradicate sensuous longing entirely, because sexuality, whatever that shifting, unpredictable form might be, diffuse and ever changing, must end; you must maintain your distance or you will die,” and then the markings halted, returning to lifeless, frozen forms, upon which the worker gazed for five minutes, hoping to spy a flinch or movement whereby the cash might resume talking, to issue clarification or repetition, a mere confirmation of their previous animacy in repudiation of doubt, yet they did not; they did nothing, leaving the worker to return money to pocket gingerly, left with little option other than to continue their day,”

8.

"and with their hand on waist, their thumb settled firmly on belt and fingers dangling flaccidly down, the worker sensed a ripple spread through their genitalia, in a tingling, shivering sensation that soon subsided, but which moments later recommenced, palpitating, compelling their further enquiry, leading them to scan their surroundings and look in all directions until once confidently unsurveilled, once certain of solitude, they dropped a hand inside their underwear, their fingertips wandering from pelvis to the edge of their urethra, tracing the orifice's contours as they felt an opening and retraction, in a series of goldfish-like gulps, each mandibular flex releasing a mellow euphonious note, a soft mellifluous song unfolding, "There must be no more writing, no more inscription: words must no longer spill needlessly from incontinent pens nor must digits stab blindly at keyboards, at phones or touchpads, typing their compulsions to appease the world's conceptual hunger, the world's determinative thirst for inscription, for ever more voluminous, ever more detailed significations; for silence's sake, these must remain unslaked, without sentences, paragraphs, pages, without the momentary designations that constrain affect and intuition in names, in directions, imperatives; rather, the texts that attenuate experience must diminish, and the engorged world of letters must expand no further; you must deprive the malignant, tumescent growth of fuel, you must starve its swollen belly with reticence, with refusal, with a mute resolve to forgo communication and confine thought to its rightful realm," and thus without further valediction, without hint of warning, the genitalia fell silent, still, as the worker pondered how best to respond,"

9.

"and there, with neither warning nor discernible origin, a thick breeze rolled upon the worker, first tickling their ears and fingertips, pleasantly cooling each exposed extremity, then wafting stronger, gaining force and speed, intensifying, blowing faster and heavier to surge with the weight of an implacable wave that pressed clothes to bone and pushed the wearer staggering back, their shoulders caved to bear the heft, hearing, as they did, a slew of sibilant words surfing on the gale's crest, declaiming, "Worker, you will be poorer tomorrow than you are today; you will be poorer the day after than you were then, and you will be poorer the week beyond and the year beyond that, because every minute of your life will see your wealth diminish, your money, your possessions evanesce, dwindling to a previously

uncountenanced extent, depriving you of house, of holiday, of furniture and transport, and, when you feel your poverty has reached its lowest, you will nevertheless fall poorer still, you will forgo meals and sociality, you will find your clothes reduced to fetid rags, threadbare and stinking, you will barter and downgrade, plead and beg, plunging to the depths of desperation, seeking to sell whatever you can, your possessions and heirlooms, your labours, commitments, you will offer performances, degradations, sexual services to alleviate your misery, abandoning your body to remunerating subjugation, but your despoiled pleas will fall rebuffed, for you will have grown so malnourished, so decayed that you repulse and disgust passers-by, who will recoil from your sallow flesh, from your carious maw, seeking to rid themselves of the rotten squalor, of your leprous, carbuncular flesh, such that you will reside alone in pathetic indigence, left only to contemplate misfortune, your ill-health, your complete ruination, destitute and waning until you die," and upon the final evocation of mortality the noise, the wind, the incantation and its prophecy ceased, causing the worker to lurch forward, their face and hands tingling, their thoughts awlirl,"

10.

"and at that moment the worker registered a mild discomfort afflicting their nose, an itching pressure exerted on their nostril's inner wall, grating against each nasal twitch, such that they placed a finger therein, hoping to remove some sort of blockage with their nail's edge, scraping the sharpened digit until they retrieved a sinuous string of mucous whose viscous bulk clung to hand, doggedly sticking despite attempts at removal, transferring stubbornly to the worker's thumb as the worker struggled flick the snot free, the globule resolutely adhering, as if some pale green growth of skin, leading the worker to roll it to a ball, which, they imagined, when congealed to itself, would drop to floor, released with a mere shake of the wrist; though as they began to do so, rolling fingertips together, to condense the snot, they heard a giddy, giggling voice speak, "One day, you will be rich, wealthier than you could possibly imagine, basking, princely, in an opulence thought only the preserve royalty, your every consumptive desire satisfied: houses, cars, clothes and collectibles will be yours, your cash and assets will swell, mounting to incredible proportions, automatically, self-generatively delivering a world of bounteous abundance, whose offerings will not cease to delight, for you will neither turn complacent nor grow bored by plenitude, never inured to the offerings of money nor numb to finance's sway; rather,

you will be happy, truly, contently happy, no longer compelled to work or save, but coveted and admired by friends, family and strangers, whom will seek approval and intimacy, desperate for the most momentary glimpse of prosperity, reduced to fawning, obsequious pawns, awed by your power and affluence, such that you will loved and will be happy, fulfilled and happy for each day of your long and pleasurable life,” and thus the dehydrating mucous dropped to ground, silently, rapidly falling, camouflaged from the worker’s vision, which soon turned to its surroundings, unsure of where to look and of what to seek,”

11.

“then, after taking five leisurely paces forward, motivated more by restlessness than by purpose, the worker paused, standing rigid to observe their surroundings, breathing slowly and fully, lifting their diaphragm to expand their ribcage whilst considering past hours, assessing their significance and consequence, yet, as they did, as they attempted to think, they felt a streak of cold flicker at their toes, seizing concentration as they angled eyesight down to greet a shallow puddle of stagnant water, its turbid contents slowly transferring to seep between their shoe’s welt, dampening their sock to prompt them to recoil, the worker there wriggling their foot and shaking free any unabsorbed droplets, any loose liquid, though, as they did, their ankle raised and shaking, they noticed their face reflected in the pool, somehow larger than it ought to be, its eyes focused and confronting theirs, its lips inexplicably moving, quietly uttering a grim prognostication, “You will do vile, terrible deeds, you will lie, you will deceive and you will abuse, you will take – brazenly and unapologetically – from those needier than yourself and you will exploit; you will wreak wanton, unprovoked acts of violence on those weaker than yourself, asserting your dominance with fists to mouths, feet to throat, fingers to eyes, with your hands throttling necks mercilessly; you will consider only your own interests and only appear benevolent when performing some act of manipulation, you will bully and harass and exploit, you will blackmail and extract favours, incurring debts that you refuse to pay and obligations you deny; you will force others to submit to your sexual predilections, aware of their discomfort and disinclination, yet insistent on the primacy of your own satisfaction, encouraged and aroused by the distress, repeating your misdeeds with ever greater callousness and cruelty, for you will grow meaner and nastier, ever more wicked with each passing week, and you will never apologise nor feel remorse for your actions; you

will become a hateful, indelible stain on the world, a cause of misery and suffering that will never abate, whose death will engender only gladness and relief," and there the words stopped, the watery reflection splintering into countless ripples, which, once settled, remained mute, its countenance conventionally sized, oblivious to the message just uttered,"

12.

"so the worker resolved to stretch their legs further, treading several yards forward with the intention to exercise; however, as they paced, as they briskly pumped aching calves, they noticed a sticking sensation on each right footstep, a tacky feeling, delaying every second stride by an fraction of a second, the irritation of which demanded investigation, prompting the worker to cock their knee and raise the sole of their foot as close to vertical as their limited flexibility permitted, whereupon so doing they spotted a splodge of chewing gum cemented between their shoe's ridges, such that they began to turn their sole to ground, hoping to wipe free the flattened sweet, though before they could, before shoe touched ground, they felt their foot vibrate, as a deep monotone emerged therefrom, stating, "Worker, your world will burn: everything you have known and cherished, have loathed and lived aside, will be consumed by fire, thrown under raging, implacable flames, which will spread from town to town, plunging ever larger conurbations into chaos, melting pavements and crumbling homes, forcing their residents to flee in the vain hope of survival, seeking haven in the rural world, but there will be no haven, for beyond the city, too, in the unpopulated expanses of preservation and agriculture, the blaze will persist, expanding uncontrollably, desolating, eradicating and cremating, so that all peoples will die, suffocating on smoke, blistering with heat, until even those whose resilience appears greatest, who through sheer dogged determination have evaded death, succumb to starvation, for the harvest will have fail and the livestock burned and the rivers dried in this withered world without sustenance, a world of famine, and so there will soon be no one and nothing to speak of, for a time, before one day there might be more," and thus the voice ceased and the shoe fell still, gazed upon by the worker for several minutes until, tender and sore, they resolved to place limb down, unsure whether to walk further or not,"

13.

"then, looking skywards, straining, staring through the day's lingering firmament, the worker caught a vivid ray of light, suddenly glancing and bleaching their retina before, quickly, it abated, the brightness speedily occluded, obnubilated by a passing leaden cloud, which then refused to move, standing static before a childlike, high-pitched voice began speaking therefrom, tearfully uttering, "I am sorry, sorry for your suffering, your misery and your pain, none of which has been necessary and all of which I might have stopped, for I am the all-powerful, all seeing and all-knowing master, and yet I did nothing to improve your lot, to spare your sadness; I never acted, never intervened; rather, passive and curious, I contemplatively observed your pain, watching your troubles, intrigued and entertained, such that, glibly and pathetically, I gazed upon your tears to assuage my boredom, such that when you grieved, when you wept and sobbed at your grandparents death, when you retreated into yourself, astounded and raging at the cruelty of this world, I was at fault; I could have saved you the depression, the agony and hurt, and not only in that instance: every abuse and assault endured, too, could have been averted: your life could have been joy, tenderness and delight; but it was not, and for this I beg you your forgiveness, I apologise and I will try to be better, I promise," and thus the cloud rapidly drifted out of vision, as if thrown by some sky borne tempest, dragging its dark canopy leftwards, revealing once more the lance of sunlight that had stung the worker's retina, forcing their eyelids close once more, wherein the trace of white remained, mingling with thoughts of god and god's contrition, the significance of which, in weight and upshot, escaped understanding, obscure for the rest of the day

14.

"and so, anxious and restless, the worker strolled towards the day, purposefully pacing, striding before the electric shudder of phone intruded, quivering flesh, buzzing yet ignored, and buzzing once again, repeatedly, in what felt like a volley of successive messages, whose implicit urgency demanded attention, prompting the worker to retrieve their phone, where, instead of alert notifications, from one or two senders, they found the entire screen occupied by an odd, unrecognised plain text, obscuring all other information, presenting a white typed sentence on a black screen, reading, "For too long you have remained quiet, reticent, embarrassed, reluctant to tell the world of my magnificence, content in your abashment, reserving praise for moments alone; but this must now change: your life

must change entirely: you must amend your ways and preach, expounding my virtue to any and every possible audience, venerating and glorifying my ways to convert others and show the refulgent majesty of thankfulness, and you must do so now and do little else, for I have bestowed upon you a new categorical imperative: you must always attempt to enlarge my glory; each action regardless of perceived exiguity must be subjected to the test of whether it furthers recognition of my brilliance, of whether it could be done such that it achieves this end better and whether it ought to be done more, for now your remaining days have purpose, one purpose, and that is exaltation,” and thus, as their eyes imbibed the final noun, the text disappeared, revealing the phone’s home screen, complete with time, date, charge level and chosen image, with no angelic, textual trace to speak of,”

15.

“but then, suddenly, the worker noticed an emptiness of pocket, a conspicuous lightness registered in their weightless waistline, prompting them to dip their right hand to their left side, then to its neighbour, then behind, as they confirmed their phone’s absence, fruitlessly poking and rummaging at their trousers looseness, inducing a mild anxiety, such that they turned to retrace their steps, hoping to spot the dropped, glossy plastic device, yet instead they saw only the mucky imprint of their shoes, dotting several yards of brown outlines across the floor, each marked by an odd white line bisecting their otherwise solid fill, such that the worker looked to the their sole, whereupon so doing they saw no halving line, no indentation capable of printing interruptive whiteness on the ground to speak of, its absence inciting them to examine the besmirched floor closer, where, with closer inspection, they saw a narrow band of text vertically streaking each splodge, deposited in perfectly formed characters, between mud and pebbles, litter and faeces, inviting further reading, leading them to jump from shoeprint to shoeprint, face in ground, constructing sentential meaning as they manoeuvred to read, “You must retreat from public; you must hide; you have lived with others and now you must not, for you have socialised, conversed and interacted too long, and now community must end, you must learn to be alone, without the words, gestures and touch of friends, of families and lovers; you must retreat into yourself, to contemplate the past and the future, confronting the meaning of history in isolation from activity, for now practice must become contemplation, and must remain so until further instruction,” and there the worker reached the final visible

word, pivoting to regard the footsteps whilst reading, yet none were now visible, with neither dirt nor text to speak of, and, when the worker stamped their feet again, hoping to produce further marks, further words, nothing followed, their soles clean and unmarking, leading them to re-examine the previous footsteps, yet there, too, could no inscription be found, not a single phrase, so that, dumfounded and confused, the worker ruminated on their experience, real or imagined, and forgot their phone,”

16.

“and so, fatigued and sluggish, their eyelids heavy and flaccid, the worker reached fingertips to temple, pressing thereon before closing their eyes, whereupon so doing, whilst pressuring and focusing, an odd internal voice, neither theirs nor that of anyone recognised, began to speak, chirping, “You will never die, not from sickness or accident, old age or murder; you will live forever, always conscious and always yourself, persistent and whole; you will never die, not from sickness or accident, old age or murder; you will live forever, always conscious and always yourself, persistent and whole,” and then it stopped, leaving a slow, hollow silence, in which the worker was left to question whether the voice was given or dreamt, internal or external, and whether this mattered at all,”

17.

“then, blinking, the worker felt a small scratch at their cornea, a sudden stinging plaguing the corner of their eye, itching, begetting a swift onrush of tears that glazed their eyeball’s surface before tumbling slowly downwards, prompting the worker to close their eyelids tightly, forcefully, begetting a deep, thick darkness, wherein, from nothing, a white text arose, proclaiming, “You must never read again, not a single sentence; you must never apprehend words and derive their meaning, never parsing nor imbibing a phrase; you must permit textual characters to reduce to mere abstract shapes, opaque to interpretation, independent and empty; and you must do this now, for if you do not the consequences will be grimly, unspeakably dire, for you and for others, such that your and their well-being depend upon adherence to life beyond text,” and there the passage ended, visually lingering until, once fully grasped, the worker opened their eyes, greeting the world exactly as it was before the ocular affliction, leading them to close their eyes again, hoping to rediscover the message, though only blackness

appeared, bare and endless, extending limitlessly,”

18.

“and there, listless and eager for the day’s end, yearning for the afternoon’s anxieties and frustrations to depart, the worker looked to their watch, hoping to discover a time sufficiently late to deem the day done, to relieve them of the pressures of achievement and activity, yet the hour was early, bringing disappointment in an intense, overwhelming wave of dissatisfaction, which grew to almost unbearable levels, until, with further inspection, they registered that their clock’s face had frozen, sticking to a position that had long since passed, such that, happily, they rattled the device, keen to deduce whether battery or mechanism were at fault; though, after doing so, with wrist held close to face, they noticed the clock’s hands bend, its numbers, too, distorting, moving, transmogrifying to a crudely human countenance, whereby hands constituted lips and digits features, which began to whisper, “From now until death, nothing of interest will happen, not a single event of note will transpire, neither at personal nor societal level: there will be no biographical drama nor revolutionary upheaval, there will be no religious conversion nor institutional transformation, there will be no uplifting resolutions nor sinister twists, there will be no momentous tragedy nor remarkable comedy, there will no intense passion nor heart-breaking severance, there will be no confrontations nor commiserations, there will be no grave sin and no redemption, no glory and no ignominy; rather, a thick blanket of sameness, of flat, engulfing tedium, will smother life’s vitality, unbudging and enduring, without end in sight,” and there the clock fell silent, swiftly resuming its traditional form, rendering the face-like image a mere memory, to be dwelt on that afternoon and summoned repeatedly in coming weeks, when alone and with others,”

19.

“and, with a rasping, dry sensation lingering at their throat, prickling their tonsils to bury their discomfort chestwards, the worker imbibed a long and steady gulp of water; yet their irritation persisted, unabated, prompting them to issue a deep, chest-emptying cough, delivered with hand on sternum, as their mouth widened, breathing deeply before a soft squeal emerged, which continued even as their voice box remained motionless, as the worker failed to register a single vibration, feeling none of the movement ordinarily given

with sound, the emitted high hum developing into speech, stating, "I know what will become of you, your life's vicissitudes and terminus, and I want to share with you its secrets, its sorrows and fortunes; but I cannot; I must remain silent; but know that is known," the voice stopping, prompting the worker to look behind, to the surrounding walls, confused as to the source of the speech, there panicked and anxious, frantically searching until once more the cough intervened, quietening all thoughts beyond the exigency of comfort,"

20.

"then creeping from vision's limit the worker spotted an electric flicker release from a dangled, exposed tungsten bulb, registered at eyesight's fringe, glinting on, off, on, off, as if relaying some Morse-coded message, opaque to the worker yet enticing, prompting their approach, whereupon strolling, after gingerly placing foot before foot, treading carefully, they noticed each momentary flash of light was extending with proximity, brightening such that increasingly sustained illuminations lingered while distance diminished, the flash slowing until once underneath, once ensconced in direct irradiation, the fulguration ceased, transitioning to a steady and severe glow from which a light, sonorous voice cascaded, "Worker, I have heard your wretched thoughts, the silent, internal ruminations concocted when alone and with others, at dawn and at midnight, with contents kept private, with words and images contained and sealed, buried to the world, as if your clandestine hoard whose wickedness and cruelty you thought yours and yours alone, yet they have not remained so, for I have registered each repugnant cogitation, each sickly proposition, apprehending their entirety, spectator to the malicious desires that pullulate in your longings for violence, to be wreaked upon individual and nation, in your perverse relish for tragedy, in the giddy excitement gleaned upon market crash, upon famine and war, your spite and jealousy, too, bestowed on loved ones and enemies in wishes for revenge and illness, in fantasises of misery and sickness, death and dereliction, through which you have envisaged your gain from loss and satisfaction in strife; I have observed your scheming and selfish ideas, your lies and manipulative schemes, plotted for the most meagre of benefits, and, whilst these thoughts have come to nought, neither realised nor enacted, each stymied by conscience, reflection or cowardice, they have existed, and will not be erased, because, much as you might imagine these thoughts hidden, in your projected boundary between thought and action, their banks

have burst: the darkness has extended outwards, and I have seen your mind: your thoughts are not only your own and you are not only you," and there a silence enveloped the worker, the bulb dimming, fading to a dark inanimacy as the worker watched the hot filament dwindle to blackness, the two mute thereafter, together silent and inert, helpless and victim to the pitiless flow of history."

FIG 2.

Objects.

Grey.mp4 (00:14)



