

essays

essay: a short prose composition, a weighed attempt on any subject.

This work was begun with the aim of editing and grouping new and separate pieces of writing by extent. Written contrary to the progressive order in which they have been collated, published and might ordinarily be read, the method or ‘argument’ was intended to specify nothing by way of subject matter, other than what might happen within the period of writing.

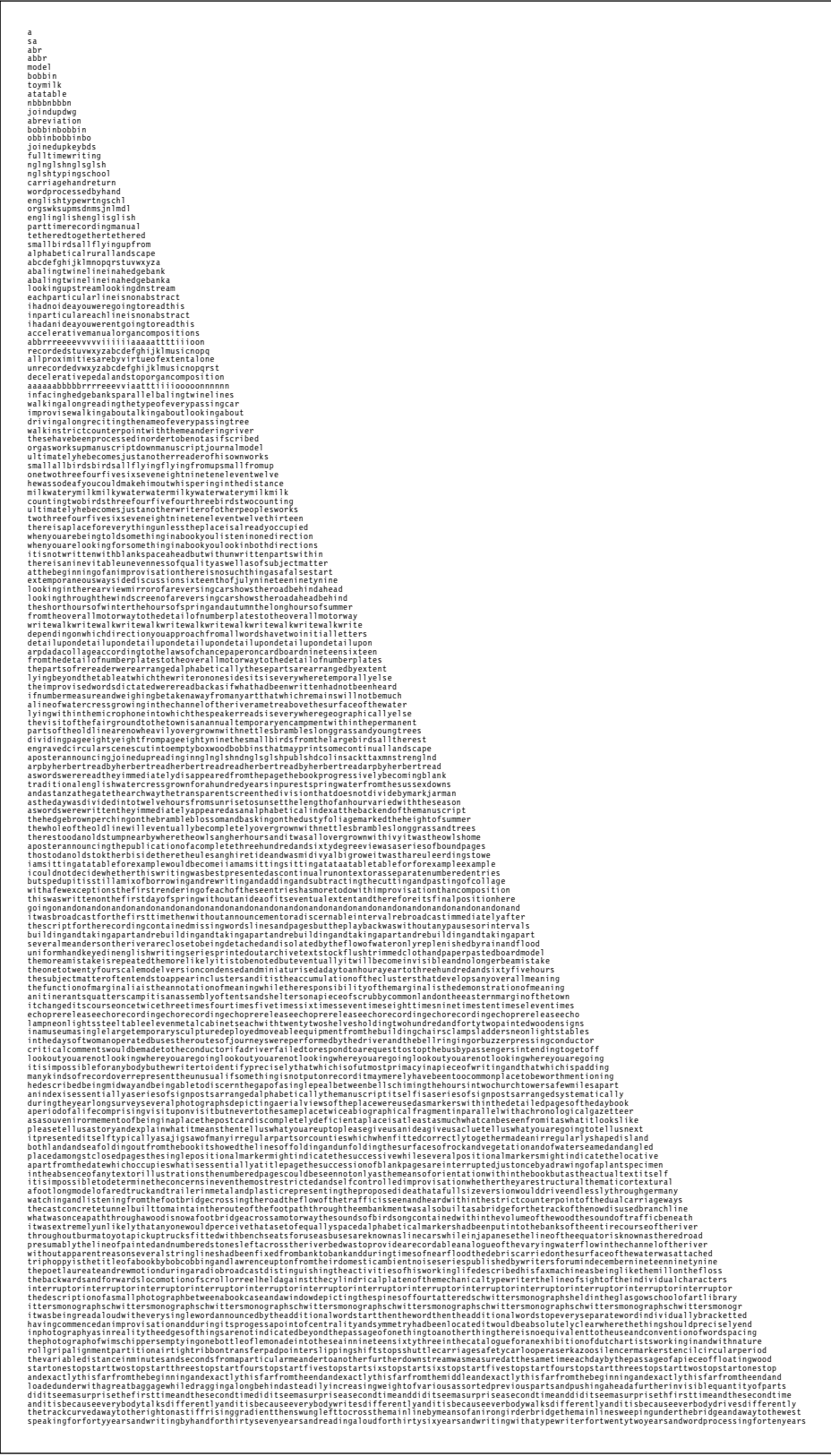
The project was an exercise in the accumulation of haphazard texts; the relationship of individual parts to each other; and with the whole composition constrained by a numeric system, as distinct from the alphabetic principle of the detail in *rereader*.

A ‘public reading’ version was exhibited as part of *Generator*, a UK touring exhibition commencing at Spacex, Exeter, in 2002. With the text typeset in a monospaced font, and each of the 158 entries occupying a single line, the resulting shape of the text block is a ‘constructivist’ right-angled triangle (detail shown to size).

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goinglookouty
rtoidentifypr
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28pp, 152 x 105, offset on white cartridge, letterpress on grey cover, sewn pamphlet; Axminster, 2001.

Laminated aluminium panel, 1375 x 790, (shown approx. 15% size); 2002.



Notional questions

When did you begin the writing?

Sometime in early February 2000.

And when was the writing finished?

About five months later, towards the end of June.

Why does it end where it does?

I had no idea how long the final piece would become, how long I would spend on it, but I was certain at the start that there would be a point where the individual texts would become too unwieldy to read, because of the lack of word spacing. I was also certain there would be a point that would suggest to me I had written enough, not only because of an inevitable slowing down of momentum as the entries became longer, but that whatever it consisted of at that particular time, the decision would clearly be that it was complete.

Why are there no word spaces?

As well as being about the actual counting of the content, the characters rather than the absences, the smallest entries, those that are to do with shape as much as meaning, set a style for what is to follow, and although the exercise is based strictly within the idea of the written, the whole thing aspires to its reading; which despite being likely to be to oneself and therefore silent, I would hope to something very even and equal, without the emphasis of an actual voice.

Was the writing made all in the same place?

Everything was written on the same computer, in the same room, and although I did quite a lot of everyday walking, I didn’t go further than perhaps ten or so miles from home during this time. So I felt very openly disposed because I had no pre-set subject matter, but at the same time quite concentrated in a geographical sense, hoping that everything would just come along, and that it would be a project based on pursuit, in a particularly local and unprovoked way. *Nevertheless there are references not only to further places but to other times.*

Those parts were either available here already, in books and other publications, or they may have turned up during the period by being heard on the radio, for example, so they were local in a temporal sense.

I suppose ‘temporal liveness’ is also a particularity of a diary or a journal.

Although the writing accumulated day-by-day, as it might in a diary, the placing of the individual parts and the various subjects of

the individual parts occurred haphazardly, because of the imposition of measurement. I have hardly any recollection now of the actual order of writing other than that the longer texts were mostly made later rather than earlier.

It could be likened perhaps to a daybook or ledger, where individual entries are taken out of their sequence and put into an order, as you have, based on extent.

Not exactly, because that would be retrospective. The difference is that, as I wrote and cut and pasted within the active document file, every part immediately filled an unpredicted position. This of course affects not only the final reading, from start to finish, but importantly, it affected the choices and decisions in the process of writing as well. In this respect the system of the piece differs fundamentally from the diaristic, because in a diary the new is continually following on, and whereas a diary can be made with a pencil and paper, this work could only practically be put together using a word processing programme.

Is it significant that the piece of work was begun when it was, around the beginning of the new millenium?

A year now after the finishing of the piece, it feels that it was a very intensive and separable period of time. Again, I had no idea what sort of duration or overall extent I was writing with, and it was only at the very end, when I had made the decision that the piece was finished, that it lost its open-ended and improvisatory nature. I honestly do not know if there was any conscious significance that the period began when it did, although I suppose if the period had become five years, rather than five months, then beginning at the start of the year two thousand might have suggested that there was some significance. I was certainly not interested in some sort of definitive personal document commencing at, and therefore marking that particular point in time, but I was very interested in it having a definitive relationship to itself, that is, the life of the activity and its duration.

Can you recall or suggest anything else about it that might inform the reader in any way? Finally nothing other than what is in it.

February 2001