

Thomas Wingfield

1st Year End-of-Module Portfolio

for

Creative Writing (Joint BA) at De Montfort University

(includes base text and commentary)

(this is just for you lovely scribd people)

Contents:

BOX (base text)

POEM

60 Minute Killing Spree

Commentary

BOX

The mime was trapped. It had been going well until the fifth movement, *The Box*. He first noticed it in his hair: the wind had stopped. Then the sounds of the city street died, and he was alone.

At first the onlookers thought he was incredible, but his silent panic scared them off... That was eight hours ago now. In the moonless night he couldn't even find his tears, stained grey with make-up. London had left him, only these walls (his own creation) stayed, to rub his back whilst he recycled stale air.

His own routine had caught him in an impossible cage, a box that was shrinking through the hours. He felt the tide of panic rising again, it cramped his toes.

He kicked.

Kicking wasn't helping.

“FUCK.”

Fuck wasn't helping either.

This street had been his father's stage just as it was his; “probably a heart attack” they'd told him. Seems they were wrong. He waited, he waited and prayed to wake up, but if he ever woke up Lord knows it wasn't in London.

The coroner's report was vague, they couldn't tell what killed him first.

Luckily, they had nobody to tell.

POEM

The insomniac opened his eyes to see that nothing had changed. The dawn chorus of machinery was still taunting him – it haunted his sleep. Every early morning he woke (always tired...) to that virgin light, and would promptly busy himself with all the nothing that needed doing.

This morning, however, he was uncharacteristically unsettled. He took a pen and a sheet of paper, and started to explore. What he found was a poem. Content with this, he resumed his day. One bowl of cornflakes and a teaspoon of sugar later, he was heading off into the London streets.

The following night's sleep was interrupted by the song of a morning lorry, so he found the poem again. To his slow surprise, the new poem was a perfect copy of the previous day's. Infinitely more peculiar was this: every morning – for a year – he would write this very same poem.

It was thirteen months before he spotted it, the comma that didn't fit. He had misused it 400 times and never even noticed. He didn't leave his room for a week.

Then one morning the comma wasn't there.

The morning after he took out an 'and'.

Within a week a whole phrase had gone but a conjunction was there.

Each morning he would make a change, never less than a comma, never more than a word. Once he even took out his surname, and within three days the author read as “The mime” (for that was what he was).

The slow shifting of verse was all that separated his lonely, grey days; it was his comfort and his danger.

After the world saw the CCTV of him dying in that box, his landlord tried to sell the mime's secret obsession. Only one copy remained:

“60 minute killing spree”.

60 minute killing spree

Knu. Ckle (s) s. Top Cou. Gh (h)

(breaths seize escape
but *late*)

and limply down to floor.

So lay it with family,
leave beige walls,

move to next,

along the town.

kick down
door
and
door

12: scratch to death

17, 18, 20 and 21: lie steaming in tea (19 takes the biscuit)

I drown 23-47 in blue ink

force-feed 55 chocolates till it bursts brown...

The 59th I s(imply)wish away.

In an ode to my own disarray,

I've killed a

w h o l e h o u r

(on
my

A short analytical essay to explain why Thomas Wingfield is a Genius,
by Thomas Wingfield.

The project in its entirety is a work of art. What I have created is two pieces which can stand alone in their brilliance, or be enjoyed in conjunction with one or both of the other texts. All three could also be a small part of one big project (something I plan to do).

My short short story, *The Box*, was a piece of work I greatly enjoyed, and which was close to perfect, so it seemed sensible to use this as my base text. The mime had a rich, deep character (though I was unable to express that in the original 200 words) that I wanted to explore further. The only tutor's comment that wasn't complimentary was that it was hard to follow at first. I took this as a compliment and decided to add more pieces to the puzzle.

“The insomniac opened his eyes to see that nothing had changed” was a line I was going to use in the original story. I always knew he was an insomniac, amongst other things, and so decided to review that. Originally I intended to just write the lead-up to the mime getting trapped in the box, but when I mentioned the poem it seemed to carry a lot more substance than I first thought. Rather than being a paragraph, his poetry became the subject of the whole piece.

Recently I've been reading a lot of Samuel Beckett's short stories, and I've been quite impressed. I found his style refreshing and unique, so I decided to replicate and then improve it. You can see this in phrases such as “every early morning” and “to his slow surprise”. This linguistic incongruence is also somewhat reflective of the work of E.E. Cummings, who influenced me in the actual poem. Whilst they were my influences, I genuinely believe that by creating a balance between both their styles and my own, the effect is greater than either of them achieved alone.

I also chose this style because of the surreal nature of the story, both Beckett and Cummings prefer surreality. *The Box* was also fairly surreal, so I decided to stick with that tone, with the strange arrangement of words, odd collocations and unexpected phrasing.

There are too many clever little features to explain in this essay, such as the incorrect comma before “the comma that didn't fit”, the references to my other pieces and the incredible use of numbers.

The second half is much faster than the first, both in style and content (At one point I considered starting it at “It was thirteen months” but this lacked the necessary character

development). This was so the piece felt like it was building momentum, like a moment of calm before action in a film. The action is, of course, 60 minute killing spree.

My first experience of poetry was that of comic verse and nonsense (Spike Milligan, Roger McGough, Edward Lear). Poetry for me meant taking pleasure from wordplay and puns, and although my recent work is serious and dark at times, the principal still applies: I like poetry to be lexical play and *preferably* to have a 'punch-line'.

The whole poem is actually structured like a joke; leading the reader deep into one story (killing people) before switching it at the last second (killing time). The ending reverberates back through the rest of the poem, even changing the meaning of the title. The phrase 'whole hour' is literally expanded to give it emphasis and physically delayed, like the punch-line of a joke.

Each violent death is just a metaphor for small events within each minute: coughing, scratching, drinking tea (and eating a biscuit), writing/doodling and eating chocolates.

I had quite a battle with the opening. Making it totally original constantly ran the risk of leaving it too clever for the reader. For earlier drafts the main criticism I got was people not fully understanding the opening, and then I realised that actually a stabbing didn't fit in with the rest of the metaphor.

It opens with what seems like the narrator strangling somebody, however the reader can later deduce that it is in fact just him coughing. I put full stops within the words to break them up, to create the sensation of the words being choked. The pauses came at moments to create the harshest sounds when read aloud. This is one of the aspects that resembles E.E. Cummings' writing, with the visual and sonic aspects of poetry taking equal standing with the semantic.

Upon reading back over comic verse it also seems where my visual poetry influences came from. I believe that if a poem is meant to be read and not heard, then the visual impact is incredibly important, and so the structure gave each word its own appropriate space and allowed the reader to make visual connections between words and phrases, as well appreciate the comic timing throughout. Of course, when put in context, the odd structure and spacing can be seen to relate back to the editing process that the *mime* went through, rather than myself.

One of the more genius parts of the poem is where I've underlined the word 'own' within words. This all links to the very last 2 words 'on my' which are also underlined,

implying that I'm saying 'on my own'. I did this to suggest that whilst through the whole poem I talk of 'others', the whole hour is spent being very lonely, with that loneliness woven into the whole piece. This all relates to the mime, who lives a dull and lonely life. It's his expression of his anger towards his own loneliness.

Through this work I have demonstrated my diverse abilities in creating beautiful and compelling prose as well as constructing intelligent and concise poetry. Personal taste alone will decide my mark.

Bibliography:

E.E. Cummings (Ed. Richard S. Kennedy), *Selected Poems* – 2007.

Roger McGough, *The Kingfisher Book of Comic Verse* - 1991.

Samuel Beckett (Ed. Dirk Van Hulle) *Company Etc.* -2009.

Terry Jones, *The Curse of the Vampire's Socks* - 1988