

Excerpts from an Experiment with Shakespeare

0 year Experiment Date

It is beyond an honor to receive this test from the Ministry of Curiosity. With the success of my Experiment Derived from Molyneux's Problem (If a blind man knows things by the touch of them, such as shapes, would he be able to recognize them by sight? Answer: Not without assistance). I can only assure that the Ministry's faith, funding, and honored gift of immortality will not go un-wasted. I shall prove or disprove this theorem in quick succession. I have bought the Monkey; I have bought the typewriter; now all that awaits is Shakespeare or the lack thereof.

.005479 year ED

We have reached an impasse rather earlier than hoped. The Monkey typed thirty A's before quitting and resigning the device as a hefty nutcracker. Worse, the interns have developed a poor rapport with the simian, and now we must pay for both a new typewriter and Young Phi's medical bill. Shame they couldn't save his toes, and the new ones will cost us a small fortune. I will go before the Ministry with a proposal for slight "Modifications."

.16667 year ED

Despite complaints of itching, the Monkey seems to enjoy its new brain. He should; I understand the donor was very optimistic by nature. We have given the Monkey a new typewriter and told it to type whatever it wanted. Although hesitant at first, that expensive brain of his soon decided to go for it. We have given him books on grammar with the hopes that his writing will be somewhat legible.

1 year ED

The Monkey has penned two poorly written erotic novels (*Jorje's Big Banananana* and *Eerotik Advvanchures of a Yung Orangyutan*.) Despite horrible grammar, spelling, plotting, and character development, the Monkey does seem to be grasping the concept of metaphor and foreshadowing. The passage where "Jorje" must choose between the sultry, flexible gibbon and the tender, supportive gorilla with a thing for tire swings was particularly full of social commentary with regard to Objectivist Individualism. Although the Bard was, ahem, "bawdy," I

feel the Monkey is barking up the wrong tree, much like the Young Orangutan's incident with the Koala Bear.

6 year ED

I had to tell the Monkey today that he had to give up the ghost on his memoir. I don't know where he even came up with the idea to write one, seeing as he spends all day in a clean white room with a typewriter. He grew a bit upset, saying I had no artistic soul. He said he wanted people to understand him, that his life with its small triumphs (convincing me to give him a stick of gum) was worth telling. He is now quite moody, chewing my gum with venom in his eyes. Oh well, I knew this would be a slow project when I accepted it. Hopefully, the Monkey snaps out of it. I don't want to suffer through another self-pitying bit of poetry. God, if Shakespeare had not written sonnets, I'd Taser the Monkey for trying. I mean, how do you rhyme "Tailless cat" with "Tossing poo"? I sent it to a few poetic journals for evaluation, and they assured me that it was poor enough to win a special category in their annual competition: "Torturer's Pick." I understand the winner is actually read in a torture chamber to break the subject's will to live. I guess that it's progress.

53 year ED

The Monkey has not touched his typewriter for five weeks. Some of the interns are getting nervous since Chief Scientist Laser has undertaken Schrodinger's Cat and is already publishing interesting treatises. All we have is a collection of essays: "Cat Really Does Rhyme with Poo: Letters to a Fascist." When asked why he abandoned writing, the Monkey said it was as if a block was in front of his creative output. The Interns, amazingly, spent six minutes debating surgical techniques to remove the blockage in question. To work in the Ministry of Curiosity does require a certain literalness of thought, but there is a line between literal and imbecile.

Oh well, this too shall pass.

70 year ED

It has been seventeen years since the typewriter became quiet, and bloody Tom Laser has proven the bloody damn cat doesn't die unless a person has an IQ higher than three (and people say *my* research is corrupted due to mental realignment.) What's more, the Ministry asked when the project will see results. I told them that the nature of the experiment would require perhaps millennia to find a result.

It became very quiet.

They told me that funding would not last that long.

In fact, it would only last until 200 years ED. After that, the project would be disbanded.

Stunned, I could only nod when the Ministry offered me an invitation to Laser's award ceremony. Apparently, many people think he's the Dominion's sexiest bachelor.

I won't tell the team; best to let this debacle run its course. I see this as completely fair because they, in turn, have not mentioned Tom's award.

75 ED

With a mere 125 years to finish the project, there is no time to coddle the Monkey and his muse. After much consideration, we have given him a laptop computer with wireless. Many people believe the Bard was "inspired" by outside sources. It is hoped that the internet coupled with our hints of "You know what's fascinating? Scottish history. All the Macbeths and Macduffs and the murdering of kings to ascend to the heights of power only to fall to insanity, and death is fascinating! Someone should write about that! Or King Henrys IV through VI!" will tip him off. We wait with bated breath.

75.50579 ED

I think for my next experiment, I will test whether or not online games steal a man's soul, for it has certainly left a mere husk of our Monkey. The once-moody ape has become a zombie that only requires nachos, energy drinks, and diaper changes. When I ask how the writing is going, it grunts vaguely and returns to killing pixilated foes. In response, I have tossed out the computer. The typewriter has returned, and the Monkey has begun to write again.

True, these are graphic descriptions of what he would do to my elbows, but at least he's writing again.

114 ED

The Monkey has completed his fantasy epic. I'm not much of a fiction fan, but even I can see that it's moronic. I mean, does this magical realm of Cri'snichtk have a shortage of vowels? For example, how do you even pronounce Hngs'ajgvn-i- stnsoigb'hk? He's thinking of making it a trilogy. I asked if the next one might center on, say, a Midsummer Night, but he confidently told me that in Cri'snichtk they do not use the Julian Calendar. Instead, they are using one with

thirty-two months split into six seasons, each month split, as well, into seven mini-months called Blts. The Monkey asked if instead, it could be a MidFreepinlock Night. I told it not to bother.

116 ED

An email says some man named Hugo wanted to give the Monkey something in regards to his new science-fiction novel. I deleted the message. I will not be fooled by another scammer.

150 ED

A mere fifty years separate us from the deadline. In desperation, I have analyzed the great writers of the past: Poe, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway for signs of that mysterious spark of genius. What separates a laureate from a hack? What mysterious key opens the floodgates of inspiration?

Pouring over the results, I think I have finally discovered the secret of the muse. Could it be so simple, so obvious? All these great writers had one thing in common, one uniting thread for anyone to unearth.

They were alcoholics. Our Monkey must get drunk.

152 ED

The alcohol is worse than the online game. At least, then he stayed still. But what's the point? The team found out about the end of funding and how this experiment will be marked as incomplete, worse than a failure. They were understandably upset that I had not told them eighty years ago. Now, on their permanent records for all employers to see will be a century-and-a-half long exercise in fruitless exercises. They left me alone in the facility.

Late that night, I walked into the Monkey's room. Taking a seat on the antiseptic bleached floor, I stared at the walls. I couldn't help but think. Over the past century, I had something of a life. My marriage fell apart, I attended my great-granddaughter's birthday, and I saw almost everyone I loved die in front of me or else grow old. I have not aged a day. My grandson and I could have shared a birthday. But sitting there, looking at the wall, empty as the experiment it contained, I suddenly realized how much I had. What was it like to live in this room for 152 years without a bed, with only a typewriter? Could I be happy, knowing there was a world out there I could never be a part of? Should I be jealous that the Monkey was shielded from pain or pity it for never feeling the loss of love?

Something was held in front of me; it was a glass of whiskey that shone like embers. I looked to my left to find the Monkey offering it, an empathetic smile on its face.

For the first time, I talked to the Monkey. As the whiskey drained away, I finally told it what we should have told it from the start – its purpose in life. The Monkey was silent for awhile, then told me it knew why the experiment wasn't working. Something amazing, something beautiful could not be produced randomly in a lab because it was never random to begin with. A balding, bisexual genius took up the quill and crafted every sonnet and soliloquy from the soul with deep feeling. He had a vision that he wept blood to attain. Every meter was weighed with a pound of flesh.

I thought, and realized it was right. I felt no better hearing it, but in my soul's secret cell, I knew it to be true.

To the Ministry of Curiosity,

I write to inform you that I have decided to resign from the head of the Shakespeare Experiment. I understand Uruguay is hiring a new Proactive Paradox Disabler in their National Space and Time Association. I want to say that it was an honor and have no regrets in my pursuits. The only other thing I ask for is my Monkey, for nostalgic reasons.

Best of luck sirs,

Professor Benjamin Planck, ex-head of Existential Affairs

P.S. Kiss my ageless ass.