

**Through my repeated attempts to repair  
the window, I have developed pneumonia**

RDH and SDL

As Thomas Richards argues in *The Imperial Archive*, the drive towards observation and "record" is a fixation that ultimately leads to entropy and delirious paranoia. RDH and SDL's *Through my repeated attempts to repair the window, I have developed pneumonia* seems to play on this condition and expectation. Thus their fabricated office acts as a scene of absence which calls into question the befuddled personalities of a culture predicated to the bureaucratic paper-trail of accountability.

On first appearances the office suite operates as a scene within a narrative that is only partially disclosed by the tilting. Hence the broken window acts as a solvable axis within the perplexing scene of disappearance. For what the viewer is left with are simply the remnant details of an entropic moment of departure: a broken window, a vacated office complete with procrastination paper darts, knocked over rubbish bin, recent calculations and plots, a video sur-text escapading that down-by-the-river getaway or kidnap adventurism and a self-reflexive note written by the absent protagonist with which we're expected to piece together the trail. Apart from this video text which does suggest something sinister, the rest of the clues point towards a hemmed-in frustration, a perplexed self-implosion at the failure to mend the window.

We find another hint of this self implosion in the acronyms of RDH and SDL. This accretion culture of atomisation which is so induced by the isolated performance of cubicles and official business comes flummoxing out in the very first admission of the protagonist's note: 'I have been making lots of friends at work. I am always busy and there are lots of people around'. This is all just too sad. It's a sort of bad-faith admission that acknowledges a sort of whirl-pool-world of fake sincerity and benign adulation. Hence this culture also seems to seep through into the fabric of the mystery.

Taking on the arduous task of missing files and irretrievable data, the protagonist is lost in a moment of befuddlement and constant self re-fashioning. Desperately trying to cling to the mimetic paper-trail of representation for meaning, the protagonist finally loses the grasp on reality and escapes into dream:

*There have been a number of intrusions recently in spite of using code extractors, anagram solvers and a binary calculator. I sometimes dream Mongol warriors crash through my bedroom window. Through my repeated attempts to repair the window, I have developed pneumonia.*

This of course creates the problem with which we began. For the fact of the matter is that the window in question is hardly that sur-text anymore. What had first seemed such a concerted effort to fix a broken window now seems directed at some sort of research opportunity gone astray. Thus the window stands in more as a permanent reminder of reality than a hindering intrusion. The repeated efforts of our protagonist no longer read as strenuous activity but rather a constant submission to deferral and 'I'll do it later' mentality. So what we're left wondering is the very scene of absence, in which we're reminded about obsession's grip and grasp on subjects all too prey to fantasies of self.

**The Soda Squirrel**

RDH & SDL

Image: Jess Johnson

