

# Word Balloon

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Most times a vertical word balloon floats before him. The balloon looks like a distended variant of his tongue made from white sausage or maybe blank paper in the space on which he is drawn. Words crowd into it like he's an 18th century cartoon. They tumble. They jostle and somersault, a roil & boil that enacts the confinement of the space they're in.

He cannot see the words directly, only from below or at an angle. Mostly he reads their shadows.

Words flash and disappear even when he is not thinking of anything. He watches and wonders whether they obey the whims of another.

Sometimes he tries experiments. He gathers himself up and says peculiar sentences.

"There is a green rectangle. There is an interior frame of white lines."

When he does, versions of each flash shadows around him. It is as if he moves through a box that is normally invisible because it is continuously present. The shadows of words reveal the walls of the box. He wonders about this information, whether it is better to know or not to.

When he stops saying sentences the flashing resumes its scatter.

Other times he wonders about the conventions that govern word balloons. He thinks: Maybe in the 18th century there wasn't much room so they had to be long and thin and slipped in between features. Or maybe tiny stories once told secrets and secrets had to be written on strips of paper that could be spooled up and hidden in the quill of a pen.

At times from the bottom of the balloon he sees a thread. Each one appears to run down his throat. He bites down on it. If he bites down long enough the word balloon disappears. Every time he relaxes they come back.

