

## Virtual Sibilliance, High Fidelity Hiss

In 2019, Remedy Entertainment released a supernatural action video game called *Control*. In the game, an insidious aural force dubbed “The Hiss” invades and corrupts the headquarters of a secretive agency called the Federal Bureau of Control (FBC). “The Hiss” manifests sonically as a disjunctive earworm, a looping incantation that the infected can’t help but utter over-and-over ad infinitum as they float aimlessly amidst the Brutalist architectures of the game environment. Never written, only heard: “The Hiss” is as mysterious as it is pervasive.

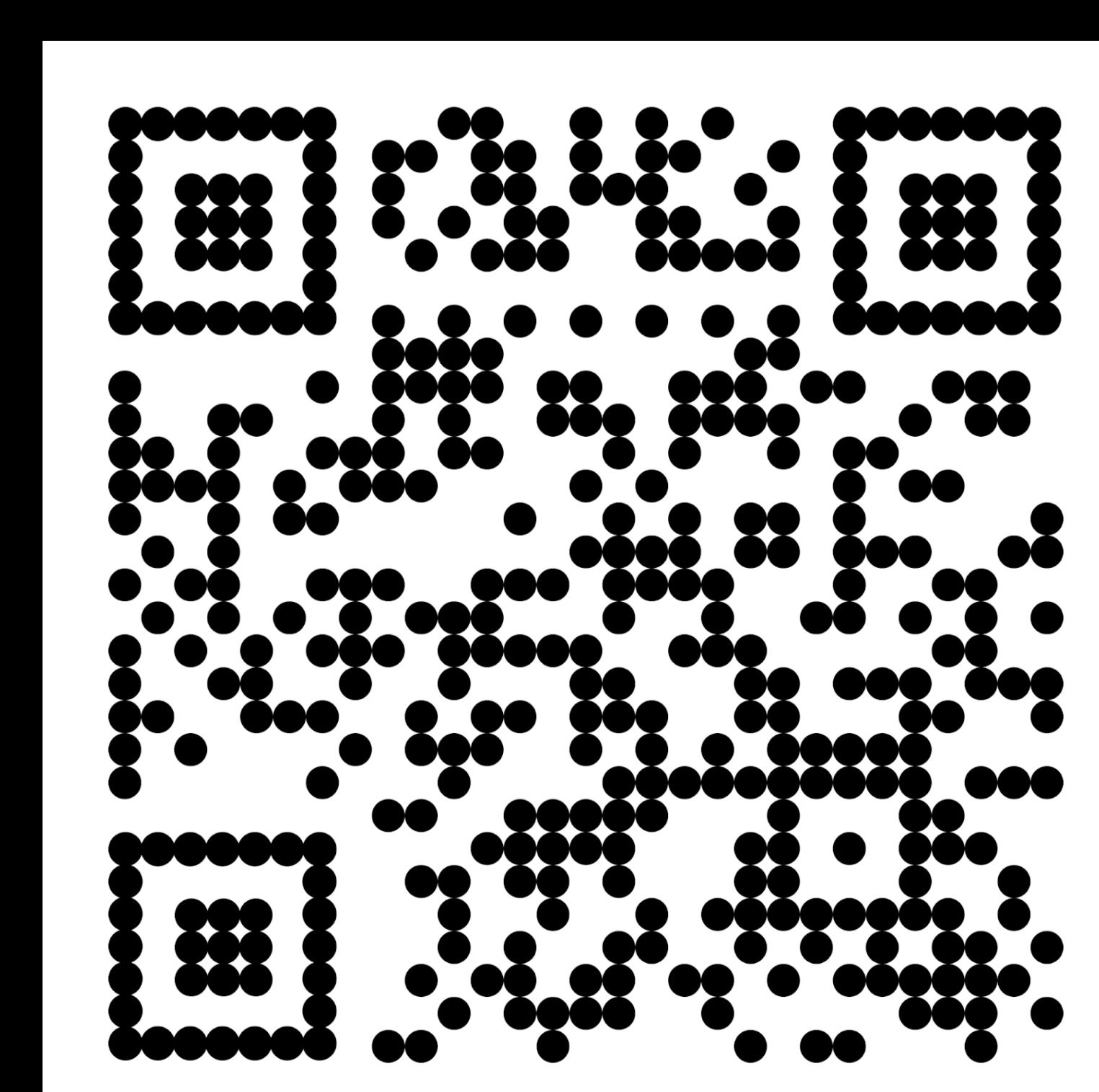
Playing *Control* subjects the user to the tune of this self-declared “Dadaist” poem’s layered refrains for dozens upon dozens of hours on end. Well into these repetitions, I realized that I had, indeed, heard this one poetic work in all its variants with more frequency and continuity than any other poem in my life. A fact that also rings true, surely, resoundingly, for the other 10 million players of the game. In this way, it might not be outlandish to propose that “The Hiss” is perhaps the single most popular work of aural poetry ever released. But what does it say?

Pure performance: neither textual document nor official transcription of “The Hiss” exists. Instead, fan transcriptions intermingle with speculative readings online. Taking this as a cue for *writing listening* in the following composition, I’ve re-disarticulated the cut-up bricolage by transcribing the poem in fragmentary form. I’ve returned “The Hiss” to its constituent parts in order to explore these fragments in more detail. This transmutation aims to be as adaptive as the incantation itself: to afford manifold layers of resonance while creating the conditions for each individual fragment to echolocate differentially in new configurations.

The linked installation of “The Hiss” features spatialized text, 3D positional audio, and an open-source collaborative virtual writing environment for further experimentation in Mozilla Hubs XR. Here, “The Hiss” remains open to all potential engagements with its glittering remnants hovering in space. Nothing hisses with quite the same register as Web 1.0 GlowTxt GIFs leaking creakily out of high-fidelity graphic processors. Here, unlikely arrangements and unexpected configurations might surface within the looping murmurations of “The Hiss.” Images of the installation featured here are invitations for further play. As much a writing environment as a transcription or composition, the work—much like “The Hiss” itself—calls for new modes of activation and response.

<https://hubs.mozilla.com/Z652Nj4/the-hiss>

Danny Snelson  
6.9.22





you are a worm

through time

the thunder song

DESTARTS YOU

HAPPINESS COMES

white pearls

but yellow and

red in the eye

through a mirror

INVERTED IS MADE RIGHT

leave your insides

by the door

push the fingers

through the surface

INTO THE WET

you're always been

the new you

you want this

TO BE TRUE

WE STAND AROUND YOU

while you dream

you can almost

HEAR OUR WORDS

but you forget

this happens

MORE AND MORE NOW

YOU GAVE US

IN YOUR REGULATIONS

The permission

we wait

IN THE STAINS

THE WORD THAT

describes this

IS REDACTED

repeat the word

the name

of the sound

IT RESONATES

in your house

after the song

time for applause

we build you

till nothing remains

the egg cracks

and the truth

will emerge

OUT OF YOU

YOU ARE HOME

you remind us

of home

you've taken your

BOSS WITH YOUR

BOSS WITH YOU

all hair

must be eaten

under the conceptual reality



behind this reality

YOU MUST WANT

THESE WAVES TO

DRAG YOU AWAY

*after the song*

*time for applause*

this cliché is

death out of time

breaking the first

*the second the third*

the fourth wall

the fifth wall

floor; no floor

YOU FALL

how do you

SAY "INSANE"

HURTS TO

be happy

an earthworm is

a tune you

CAN'T STOP HUMMING

in a dream

"BABY BABY BABY YEAH"

just plastic

*nothing to worry about*

so safe and

HA HA FUNNY

the last egg

breaks now

the hole in

your room is

a hole in you

you came

and we let

you in through

the hole in you

you have always

BEEN HERE

the only child

A COPY OF

a copy of

orange feet

A COPY

THE PICTURE IS

you holding

the picture

WHEN YOU HEAR THIS

you will know

you're in

new you

you want

TO LISTEN

you want

to dream

you want

to smile

*you want*

to hurt

*you don't want*

to be





you want  
to have  
the hole in  
the floor  
is a dream  
be happy  
say insane  
cant stop running  
a hole in your wall  
just plastic  
all bathroom is  
nothing to  
you want so soft and  
in a dream  
to have  
the hole in  
the floor  
is a dream  
be happy  
say insane  
cant stop running  
a hole in your wall  
just plastic  
all bathroom is  
nothing to  
you want so soft and  
in a dream  
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under the sea

the night

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LOVE IS



OF

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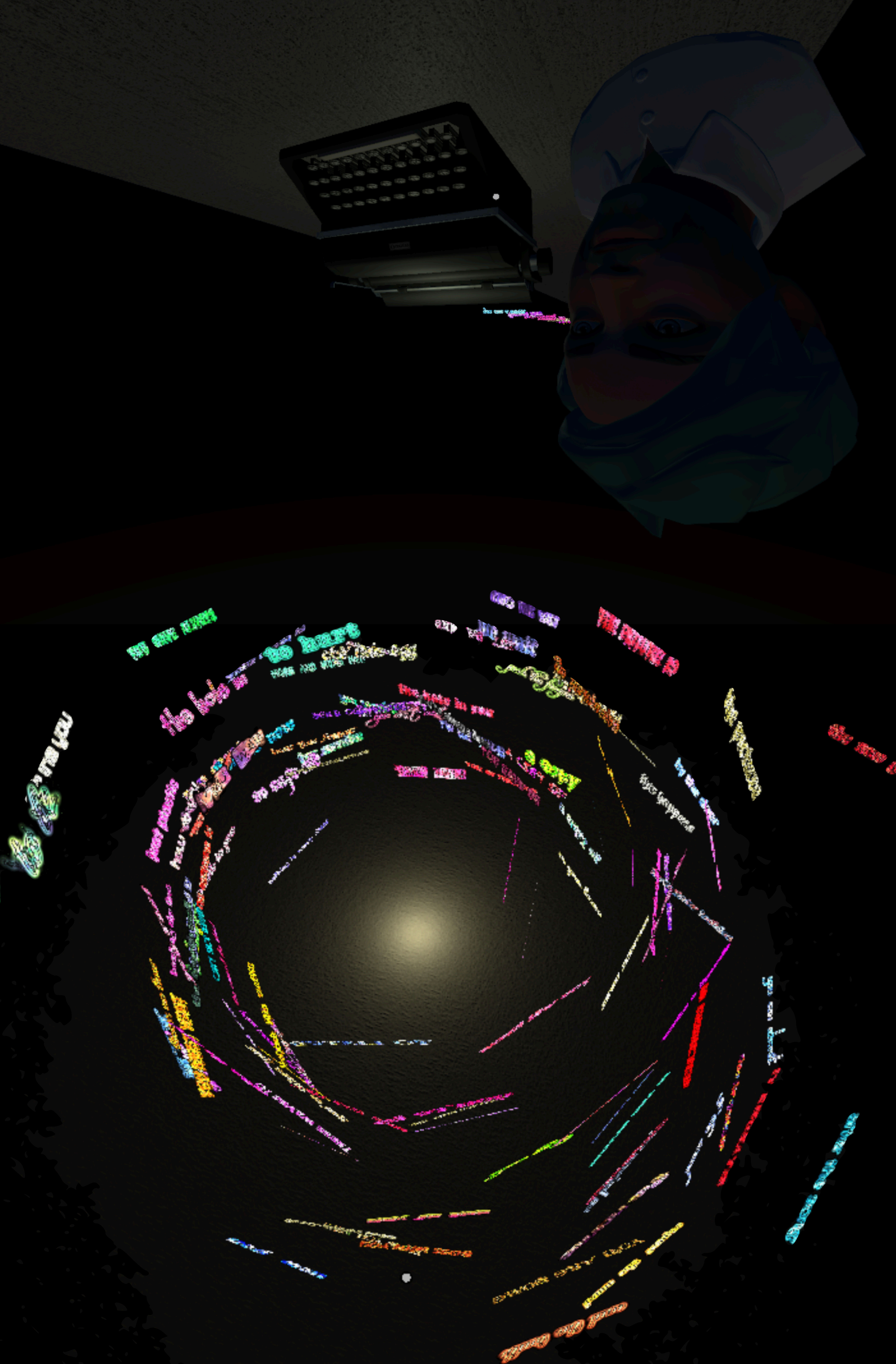
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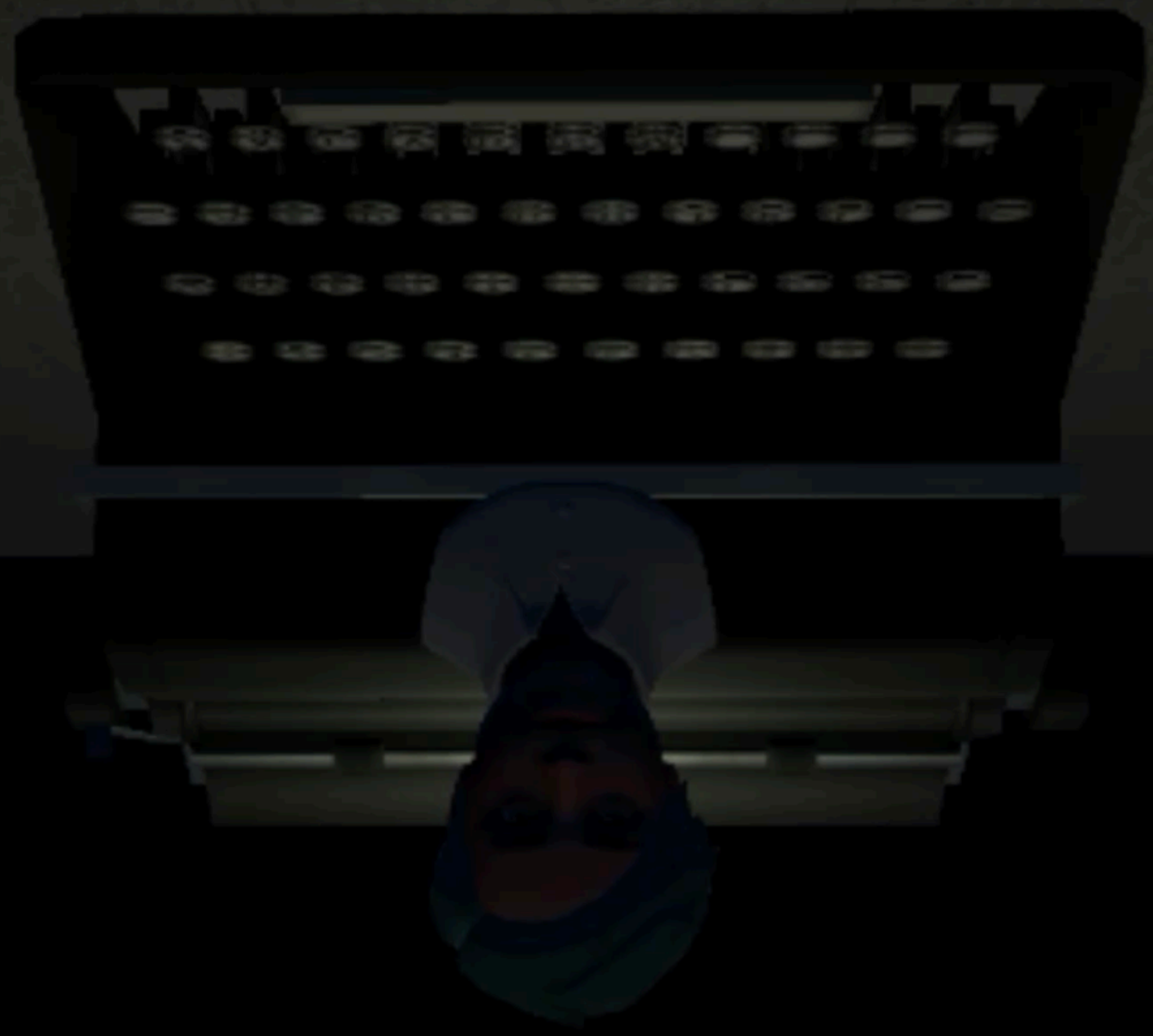






you will know TO LISTEN you're in you FALL after the song  
the words that YOU ARE HOME of home you're taken your  
the name we build you behind this reality  
IN THE STAINS and the truth LOSS WITH YOUR THESE WAVES TO YOU MUST WANT  
repeat the word OUT OF YOU all hair under the conceptual reality  
will emerge the fifth wall must be eaten  
you remind us BOSS WITH YOU new you death out of time  
the egg cracks DRAG YOU AWAY time for applause  
WHEN YOU HEAR THIS you want  
this this in a





*push the fingers*

through the *smoke* you are

Let

the only child

INTO THE WET

the

YOU GAVE US *inverted*

we wait

by the doc

A COPY OF

TRUE

this happens

IN THROUGH

a COPY a COPY OF





the end of the world

the end of the world

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the end of the world

repeat the word  
till nothing remains

of the sound  
you remind us