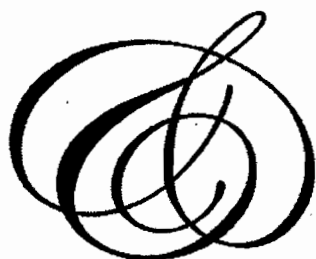


*The Art
of
Romance Writing
in America*



other texts by

Derek Pell

The Art of Romance
Writing in America

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Cover art and illustrations by Norman Conquest.

Acknowledgements:

“The Art of Romance Writing in America” appeared in *The Parallel Universe of English* (University of Tokyo Press: 1996); “Excerpts from *The Wizard of Sade*” was first published in FICTION INTERNATIONAL #32 (1999); “Reading for a Beautiful Bosom” appeared in *Beatniks from Space* (1977); and *How to Write the Suicide Note* appeared in ONLY PAPER TODAY (Toronto: 1976).

This book is for Jim McMenamin.

First Edition

OBSCURE PUBLICATIONS
Paul Rosheim, Series Editor
307 River Street, Apt. 18
Black River Falls, Wisconsin 54615

“Watch Out for Obscure Publications”

The Art of Romance
Writing in America

& Other Texts
by Derek Pell



Obscure Publications
2007

The Art of Romance Writing in America

AHH, ROMANCE! . . . Ahh, America! . . . Ahh-choo!!! Excuse me, I have a bad cold. Whenever I suffer the slings and arrows of a seasonal flu, my mind becomes clouded, and I find myself in a state quite receptive to the joys of writing about romance in America. In fact, I'm somewhat of an expert on the subject because, (a) I'm an American; (b) I fell in love with my wife via the Postal Service; (c) I have yet to learn the alphabet; (d) I am working on a book called *Weird Romance*. [5]

As a teen-aged poet, I wrote my fair share of muck — half-baked haiku and over-priced free-verse — silly scribblings done in an attempt to win the hearts (if not the minds) of girls I longed for. Unfortunately, I learned a cruel truth as a tender teen . . . Americans, by and large, *do not like poetry*. Thus, some of my best love-sick odes wound up in waste-baskets at school, tossed away so heartlessly by females rushing off to watch the other boys play baseball. [10]

Ahh, youth!

Oddly enough, such rejections didn't stop me from writing. Thankfully there was a war going on and I was able to vent my passions writing poems against the madness. But looking back on those dusty years (circa 1965), I feel my time might have been better off had I sat down and written a "romance novel." I don't be- [20]

永遠の60年代野郎、冗談のアートに命をかける不屈のパフォーマー、デレク・ベルは過去25年、作家としてビジュアル・アーティストとして、パロディ精神と病的ユーモア一本やりの作品群を発表し続けてきた。中には『ドクトル・ベイのセックス・ガイド』(1978)のように2万部さばいた本もあったけれど、レーガンとヤッピーの80年代に入ってから出版界・美術界の反応は冷たくなった。それでも彼は今日もまた、ダークな感覚をとぎすまし、鈍重な日常性の破壊工作に余念がない。はくがサンディエゴを離れるときに、FOUCAULT-TEXT®という登録商標入りの「ポストモダン・タンボン」の箱をプレゼントしてくれた。⑤

- [1] Ahh-choo!!!: くしゃみのオノマトペ(擬音語)。相手がくしゃみをしたら“Bless you!” といってあげるのが礼儀。こっちも、くしゃみの擬音です。
- [2] slings and arrows: 風邪のひどいのかかると、本当に石や矢が飛んでくる感じかどうかは、まあともかくとして...
- [6] I'm an American: アメリカ人はロマンチックか? 文学史的にいうと、ロマンスこそアメリカ的な形式だった。実社会の人間模様を緻密なプロットで描くノヴェルの形式は、荒野と文明が激しくぶつかるこの国ではなかなか育たなかったのだ。ホーソンの『緋文字』も、メルヴィルの『白鯨』も、想像力が思いっきり時空をかけめぐるロマンスだった——という話はここではあまり関係ない?
- [7] via the Postal Service: デレクと奥さんのシーラとがペンパルとして知り合い、長年の文通の末に初めて会ってそのまま結婚にゴールインしたというのは、2人を知る人のあいだで今もよく語り草になる、ウソのようなホントの話です。
yet to learn the alphabet: どさくさにまぎれて、すぐこういうナンセンスを混ぜるんだから...
- [9] wrote my fair share of muck: 私もご他聞にもれず下らぬものをよく書いた
- [10] over-priced free-verse: 現代詩人は韻律にこだわらない「自由詩」を書き、それは「芸術的」といわれて『ニューヨーカー』などの雑誌に高く買われる。その手の意味のない作品を自分も若い頃には書いていたっけなあ——という感慨のこもる表現。
- [11] if not the minds: heartが情の中枢ならmindは知の器官。mindを勝ち得ることができない、というのは、より直接的にいえばアホな詩だったということです。
- [14] odes: 特定の人(や物事)を讃えたり追悼したりする叙情詩
- [19] vent my passions writing poems against the madness: 反戦の詩を書いて(詩作への)情熱を発散させる
- [21] dusty years (circa 1965): 1948年生まれのデレクは当時高校生。circa [sɔːrka] は年数につけて「約」を意味する。dustyは「埃をかぶった」。

lieve the genre was as pervasive then as now, but it's a fact of life that women *love* romantic fiction. Of course, it's a lot easier to write a one-paged poem praising the female form, than to produce a hefty, 300-paged romantic saga. Besides, in a novel one has to deal with characters and plot and — oh no! — complete sentences! [5]

Ahh, *Gone with the Wind!*

Do not misunderstand me, I am not now, nor was I ever, a fan of romantic fiction, i.e., I'm far too cynical to believe that anything turns out well in the end. [10]

“And they lived happily ever after.”

Oh, yeah? My own ending would go something like this: And they lived happily ever after, *alas*.

That, of course, is the job of the satirist, to find the crack in the rainbow's facade. Thus, I approached my *Weird Romance* with a crooked sneer, stroking my villainous mustache like a pet python. But I soon found out that the job would not be simple. After reading several novels in the genre, it was clear to me that it would be hard to make them any more absurd than they already were. For example, how was I to improve on a passage as awkward as this: [15]

The washing machine went into the spin cycle and began walking, across the floor. “Chaos,” he said, then grinned. Cruel word. Too easily spoken too easily used and abused, even by the innocent man who reigned it on her without thought of how barren she would be without it. She rolled her head away. [25]

The first sentence alone was astonishing. Indeed, it was worthy of a second-rate science fiction novel. The rest was pure gibberish, all reigning words and rolling heads, much like the work of some forgotten Surrealist poet. Perhaps that was it! I would pluck all the queer non-sequiturs from a dozen such novels and string them together into a single, slithering text. Prose that only a monster could love, a collage of nouns and verbs and hundreds of trite [30]

- [21] better off: richer; more meaningful
- [3] praising the female form: 恋人をたたえるへボ詩はよく、「君の瞳は...君の髪は...」となります。
- [4] hefty: heavy and bulky
 saga: [sága] 家族何代にも渡って描かれるような大河小説
- [12] Oh, yeah?: 「あーそーかい」。人に反論するときの、ちょっぴりケンカ腰の返答。
- [14] to find the crack in the rainbow's facade: 虹といえば幸福の象徴。そんなロマンチックな見せかけ (facade [fə'sá:ɪd]) のなかに、アラを見いだすこと
- [16] crooked sneer: 悪意をたたえた冷笑
 like a pet python: mustache [místæʃ] の不気味さを際だたせるためとはいえ、大蛇とは派手な比喩だ。
- [22] *The washing machine* ...: 以下の文、デレクの創作(たぶんいくつかの文章からのコラージュ)。こういう、文章のようであってほとんど意味をなさない、腐乱した言葉の塊のようなものに、この作家は変わらぬ愛を抱いている。
- [25] *reigned it on her*: reign (統治する) という語はふつうこうは使わない。同音の *rained it on her* なら「カオスという言葉が雨のように浴びせかける」の意味になる。
 without thought of how barren she would be without it: こういう言葉を投げつけられることが彼女の人生の救いになっている、ってことなんでしょう。
- [26] *rolled her head away*: eyes ならグリグリと roll することもできるけど... 頭を「ゴロゴロ向こうに転がす」となると、もはやオカルトの世界。
- [28] pure gibberish: total nonsense
- [29] all reigning words and rolling heads: 言葉が reign したり頭がゴロゴロしたり、そんなのばかり。
- [30] Perhaps that was it!: そうか、たぶんそのやり方で(昔のシュールレアリスム風に)いけばいいんだ! (it に強勢がおかれる。)
- [31] non-sequitur(s): 理論的に結び合わない文
- [32] a single, slithering text: 1本の蛇のようになめらかに這っていく文章
- [33] trite: banal, unoriginal, too common

adjectives. I would sift through the mud and scoop up all the corn and clichés and stir them up in a giant cauldron, bubbling with bile.

So that is how I began my project. After filling a thick notebook with my booty, I realized that something more was needed . . . but what? Oh yes, I'd left out characters and plot. Here I was with stacks of crazed dialogue like: [5]

You want to know what I'm afraid of? I'll tell you what I'm afraid of. I'm afraid of this fear . . . this fear that keeps building up inside me like a monster. A monster that makes me need you when I'd rather not, but can't fight it. And hell, I don't know if I've got the strength to pick up the pieces if I ever let myself get close to somebody else, and then if it doesn't work . . . falls apart like another house of cards . . . I can't face living surrounded by the evidence of the lousy, rotten hand life dealt me. Yeah, I'm a joker all right . . . a clown . . . but can't you see your clown is crying? [10] [15]

There was enough of this nonsense to last me a lifetime, but I needed real, flesh and blood, human beings. I needed *Everycouple!* A girl and boy that would represent American youth. First, they needed typical American names. What should I call him? [20] Elvis? . . . Tarzan? . . . Akbar? And what would I call her? Zsa-Zsa? . . . Pia? . . . Farrah? . . . No, that was all wrong. I finally chose Wanda and Dexter. These names seemed to capture the spirit of restless youth, the sort of teens you'll find hanging out at MacDonald's or the local bowling alley. As for plot, I came up [25] with a rather twisted one. Since much of the "romance" in these books seemed alien to natural life, vaguely aquatic and devouring, I decided to loosely base my tale on the best-selling novel *Jaws*. There would, however, be no actual sharks in my story, only human ones who, in the end, devour themselves on the beach in a [30] tastefully rendered scene of cannibalism.

Now before you accuse me of being grotesque, let me remind you that I was satirizing a genre that produced descriptions such

- [1] sift through the mud: 泥(みたいな文章)をふるいにかける
corn: (俗) something considered trite, dated, melodramatic, or unduly sentimental. “corny” (ダサイ, 田舎っぽい) という形容詞形で戦前からよく使われた。
- [2] bubbling with bile: 大鍋 (cauldron) の中に, 胆汁を入れてぐつぐつ煮るとい
うのは, 魔女のイメージ。
- [5] booty: 戦利品 (= all the corn and cliché)
- [7] crazed dialogue: 感情が先走って支離滅裂になった会話文
- [8] この文章を日本語に訳して, それを日本語の学習者が辞書を頼りに英語に訳して
みたらどんな文ができるだろう, とデレクは考えた。で, はくの逐語訳と, 知
合いのアメリカ人学生で実際やってみたのだけど, 結果はいまいちでした。
- [9] I'm afraid of this fear: afraid していることが fear の状態なのであって, fear が
恐い, のではないのだけど, 感情で喋っている人は実際こういう言い方もする。
building up: つもりつもっていく
- [11] can't fight it: 抑えようにも抑えられない
hell: ヤケになってることを示すののしり言葉。
pick up the pieces: 責任をもって事を始末する
- [12] get close to somebody else: 誰か別の女に近づくことを言っているのでしょう。
- [13] house of cards: トランプで作った家。すぐにバラバラに崩れ落ちてしまうもの
の代表。another はここでは just another (よくその辺にある) の意味。
- [14] rotten hand life dealt me: 人生が自分に配った, ひどい「手」。次の行にかけてト
ランプの比喩が一人歩きしている。
- [17] to last me a lifetime: 一生かかっても使いきれない
- [18] Everycuple: 15, 6 世紀イギリスの morality play (勧善懲悪の寓意劇) 以来
Everyman という名の「ふつう人」を登場させる物語が少なくないが, 言われて
みれば, ラブ・ロマンスなんてたいていが “Everycuple” の物語だ。
- [21] Akbar: どんな名前をもってくるのかと思ったら, ムガル帝国の皇帝か!
Zsazsa: ツァツァといえは, むかし, ハンガリーからアメリカに渡ったツァ
ツァ・ガボアという女優がいた。引用句事典で「結婚」とか「男」とかの項を引
くと, 彼女の機知に富んだ言葉がのっている。
- [27] vaguely aquatic and devouring: シャワーやジャグジーの中での熱い抱擁とか
いうのを想像するとわかる気がする。
- [31] rendered: handled; described

as this:

Why couldn't he get her out of his head? His reaction to her wasn't logical, and was driving him crazy. The color-coordinated wardrobe hanging in his closet was practical. Running to keep his weight down was practical. In fact, everything in his life was practical. And that was precisely the way he liked it. Shirley, of course, was none of these things. She topped the list as the most impractical, unreasonable, disorderly woman he had ever known. [5]

So you see, cannibalism seems a fair penalty to fit the crime. Heck, *my* characters were getting off easy. At least they wouldn't be around to suffer through a sequel. Yet why blame the poor characters? After all, they didn't invent themselves and force their silly stories into the bookstores. No, it was the authors of these unspeakable books who deserved punishment. [10]

When I had finished my masterpiece I was still not satisfied. The book was certainly strange and funny, but no more so than the real thing. It needed something else. It needed *pictures* — especially in light of the fact that my novel had to compete with actual romances as well as Soap Operas on TV. This would be the fun part of the project since I was not only skilled in the art of bad writing, but I also possessed a talent for visual collage. Computer graphics would be the perfect companion to *Weird Romance*. All I needed to do was find the appropriate (copyright free) images to manipulate. These were available in old encyclopedias and odd scientific books. I spent several months joyously performing surgery on photographs, and finally wedded them to my glorious text. The rest, as they say, is history. [15] [20] [25]

That's not quite true, for the book has yet to see publication. To make matters worse, I began thinking about sequels, putting the old cart before the hearse. The one thing that most struck me about the romance genre was how absurdly alike a typical author's works were. [30]

I was off on another romantic adventure. I would now invent a

- [2] *couldn't... get her out of his head*: 彼女のことが心から離れない
- [9] *cannibalism seems a fair penalty to fit the crime*: こんなアホなことで悩んだりしているヤツは食われてしまってもいい, ということ.
- [10] Heck: hell (前ページ 11 行目の注参照)の一変形.
getting off easy: not suffering severe punishment
wouldn't be around to suffer through a sequel: シリーズになって次もまた登場なんてことにはならないので, その分苦しみも軽い, ということ.
- [14] *unspeakable*: 言うもおぞましい
- [17] *the real thing*: 「本物」とは, 実際世に出回っているハーレクインなどのロマンスのこと.
- [18] *in light of*: considering
- [19] *Soap Operas on TV*: 「昼メロ」はテレビ以前にはラジオでやっていた. 視聴者のほとんどが女性だからと, よく石鹸会社がスポンサーについたことがこの呼び名の由来. アメリカでもやはり「昼」にやるのがふつうだが, 大金持ちの屋敷を舞台に策謀渦巻く *Dallas* や *Dynasty* の物語は夜のゴールデン・タイムを 10 年間も高視聴率で占領していた. どちらも世界各国に輸出されてヒット, 日本でだけ鳴かず飛ばずだった. この手の話は, 何回も見逃しても筋が解らなくなってしまうことはないはずなのだが, アメリカのマーケットのレジには *Soap Opera Digest* という雑誌がおいてあって, これを見れば, いつでもフォローできる.
- [21] *visual collage*: こちらの方でデレクは, *Norman Conquest* (ノルマン人の征服) の名で仕事をしている. たとえば, *3 de Sade* (3D のマルキ・ド・サド) という作品は, 「ジュスティーン」の古書に錆びた釘が打ち込まれ, そこからドス黒い血が流れているというもの. このごろのコンピュータ・グラフィックスは, これほどグロくはないですけどね.
- [25] *performing surgery on photographs*: グラフィック・ソフトの〈distort〉メニューなどを使って, 変形手術を施すのが主な方法. カラーの口絵を見てください.
- [27] *The rest, as they say, is history*: 有名人が自分の出世話などを語るとき, 「あとはみなさんよくご存じの通り」という意味あい, “The rest is history” とよくいうのをもじった, やマゾヒスティックともとれる冗談.
- [29] *putting the old cart before the hearse*: hearse (霊柩車) じゃなくて horse だと「物事の順番が逆」, 「辻褄があわない」という意味の慣用句になるんですが....

romance novel author — Rosemary Sage! — and create a book of paperback covers that would comprise her “collected works.”

The following selection is from my introduction to *The Collected Works of Rosemary Sage*:

Who but Rosemary Sage could have written the novel Defiled Heights (1980). Her words, her inimitable style, have become the hallmarks of modern romantic literature. Her uncanny sense of sentence structure, timing, non-sequitur, is as uniquely her own as the tantalizing plots she so skillfully constructs in her heart-shaped bathtub. Her voice is a rare one; it drifts above the over-crowded choir and haunts the air like a bird that has forgotten how to fly. [5] [10]

Each year, thousands of lesser talents attempt to imitate her, to capture that rare “Sag-ian” quality, yet never succeed, for a novel by Rosemary Sage is not simply a work of fiction . . . it is an out-of-body experience. And that, in part, explains why her name is a household word in nearly every household in America and a dozen other countries as well. Her books are beloved by heads of state, housewives, inmates, and Hollywood stars. Although she is scorned by critics who blithely label her books “mindless trash,” she pays no attention — listens only to the millions of adoring fans. In fact, she receives so many fan letters and gifts addressed to her home in Lodi, New Jersey that the local post office was forced to open an annex just to house her mail. [15] [20]

It’s not so surprising when you consider that she has written over 60 books and sold more than 300 million copies. But what is truly remarkable is that she spends eight months out of every year on promotional tours arranged by her publishers. Furthermore, she holds the world’s record for the most books signed in a day (4,006). Alas, due to a severe case of carpal tunnel syndrome, Ms. Sage is now forced to dictate her inscriptions. [25]

Unfortunately, I cannot present the 60 cover illustrations which followed the introduction. Still, it should prove instructive if I list a few of her titles: Defile Me, My Love; Defile Me Not; A Bride Defiled; Return To Defiled Aisle; Dial Defiled; Redial Defiled; Return of the [30]

- [1] **Rosemary Sage**: イギリス古謡で、サイモンとガーファンクルの歌で知られる“Scarborough Fair”の歌詞に、“Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme”と、ハーブの名前が連なるところがあったけど... とにかくもろにフェミニンで(Rosemary) しかも作家先生っぽくて(Sageは「賢人」という意味)、さらにばかばかしい組み合わせ、というのがねらい。
- [5] **Defiled Heights**: *Wuthering Heights* が「嵐が丘」なら、これは何と訳すべきか。「ケガレが丘」? 「恥辱の丘」? 陰湿にエッチな響きがほしいところだ。
- [7] **uncanny sense of...**: 本の宣伝文句などで「神がかり的に鋭い」という意味で多用されるフレーズだけれど、uncanny はもともと「不気味」という意味。以下、この手の「意味の二重映し」が続いていく。
- [9] **heart-shaped bathtub**: 恋愛小説の作家女史の家のお風呂ってこうなのか! 1950年代のナイアガラ・フォールズは、新婚旅行のメッカで、ホテルにはよくこういうのがあったそうですが... 日本のラブホテル事情は知りません。
Her voice is a rare one: 「とびきりの一級品」という常套句の意味が、次の具体的に記述によって貶められる。たしかに「珍しい」声のようだ。
- [10] **the over-crowded choir**: 無数の作家がロマンチックにさえずっているたとえ。
- [14] **out-of-body experience**: 魂が肉体を抜け出す超常現象。作家の魂がそのまま本になって出てきたなんて、気持ちわるーい。
- [15] **her name is a household word**: 知名度・浸透度をいうときの常套句。たしかにローズマリーやセージは、どの家の台所でも聞かれる言葉ですが...
- [17] **heads of state**: 国家元首
- [21] **Lodi**: [lóudai] どこか丘の上か海岸べりの高級住宅地を想像したらお生憎様。ここはマンハッタンに近いニュージャージーの工場町です。
- [28] **carpal tunnel syndrome**: 「手根管症候群」といって、手や指に痛みや異常感覚を覚える病気。
- [32] **Defile Me, My Love**: 以下“Defile”の訳語としては「犯す」がお勧め。
- [33] **Dial Defiled**: ちなみに、“Dial”で始まる恐怖映画に、モデルさんの部屋にこわーい電話が鳴りつづける *Dial Help* というのがあった。(この電話には悪霊が乗り移っていて、彼女はレイプされてしまう...)
Return of the Defiled: “Return of”をつけるのは、連作の題名の基本形。「蠅男」も「キラー・トマト」も「リヴィング・デッド」も「ピンク・パンサー」も、ブルース・リーの「ドラゴン」も——そういえばウルトラマンも——みんな「帰ってきた」。

Defiled; Defiled, Ahoy!; Defiled On Trial; Defiled Days; Defiled Nights; Defiled Day and Night; Reviled, Beguiled & Defiled; Once in Awhile Defiled; Defiled On the Nile; Defiled in Style; A Miler Defiled; Smile, My Defiled; and Remembrance of Defilement's Past.

Now you can understand why we call Rosemary Sage "the queen of hysterical romance." It is even rumored that Ms. Sage is at work on her first cookbook, tentatively titled *The Defiled Chef*. [5]

As for me, well, I've got to find a publisher for *Weird Romance* since my wife has threatened to divorce me if I don't. I think that pretty much sums up what romance writing in America is all about. A dirty job . . . but somebody simply has to do it. [10]

- [1] *Defiled, Ahoy!*: Ahoy! という呼びかけは、かつて船乗りが使った。"Ship Ahoy!" で「おーい、その船ー!」という感じ。「汚された女」を呼び止めるには、あまりにアホい?
Defiled On Trial: 「裁かれる Defiled」. このあたり、Defiled という言葉がほとんど固有名詞化している。
- [2] *Reviled, Beguiled & Defiled*: 「あざけられ、あざむかれ、おかされて」。往年のイタリア映画に「誘惑されて棄てられて」というのがあったけど....
- [3] *Defiled On the Nile*: *Death on the Nile* といえば、アガサ・クリステイの小説名。このあたり、*Smile, My Defiled* まで脚韻を基準としたリストが続く。
Miler: 長距離ランナー
- [4] *Remembrance of Defilement's Past*: ブルーストの小説『失われた時を求めて』の英題は *Remembrance of Things Past*.
- [10] pretty much: かなりのところまで
 what romance writing in America is all about: アメリカでロマンスを書くということが一体どんなことか
- [11] A dirty job ... but somebody simply has to do it: 大学の教養の英語の授業はどうでしょう。ほくはとっても fun work だと思ってますけど。

Excerpts from *The Wizard of Sade*, or ‘Well Chastised in Kansas’

*O thou my friend! The prosperity of Crime is like
unto the lightning, whose traitorous brilliancies
sabotage the atmosphere but for an instant, in
order to hurl into death’s very depths the luckless
one they have dazzled.*

I. The Cyclone

Dorothy – an All-American girl with a virginal air, large blue eyes very soulful and appealing, a dazzling fair skin, a supple and resilient body, a touching voice (yes – she could sing!), teeth of ivory and the loveliest blond hair – lived in the midst of the great Kansas prairies. She shared a modest abode with her Uncle Henry, a debaucherous farmer, and Auntie Em, the farmer’s voluptuous wife. At this period crucial to the virtue of the maiden, Dorothy was in one day made bereft of everything: a frightful cyclone precipitated her family into circumstances so cruel it is hard to report them. (Yet, failure to describe the horrors that occurred would leave us bereft of narrative, with nothing but a shopworn anecdote regarding the farmer’s daughter.) Thus . . . their house, small and ramshackle, was lifted above the earth and carried for miles to a neighboring county where it was deposited on land with such shameful ferocity that the home was reduced to a tiny heap of lumber. The decapitated corpses of the owners – Uncle Henry and Aunt Em – lay beside the couple’s four-poster bed, which – surprisingly –

remained unscathed.

Oddly enough, the horrid cyclone had set Dorothy and her little dog – Toto – down gently on the bed in the midst of a country of marvelous beauty. There were lovely patches of greensward all about, with erect trees bearing rich and luscious fruits. Banks of voluptuous flowers sprang forth, and birds with rare and brilliant plumage sang and fluttered.

She climbed down to confront her new surroundings. While she stood all atremble, looking eagerly at the strange and beautiful sights, she noticed coming toward her a group of the queerest monks she had ever seen. Their robes were raised to reveal their nakedness and – though not as big as grown men – they possessed sexual organs of gigantic proportions! Indeed, they were having great difficulty maintaining their equilibrium as they walked – intermittently pitching forward – propelled by the weight of their grotesque phalluses.

One old monk finally sauntered up to Dorothy and attempted to bow. He groaned as his glans struck the earth with a *thummp*.

“You, young lady, are *not* welcome in the land of the Munchkin Monks!” he proclaimed. Brutality libertinage – all the characteristics of the debauchee – glittered in his cunning stare. “Look – you’ve killed the Wicked Bitch of the East, our faithful Mistress! You’ve set us free from our hard-earned bondage!”

“You fool!” cried another tiny libertine, waving his organ like a sword. “See what you’ve done!”

“Take off your clothes,” demanded the cantankerous monk.

“Strip naked?!” exclaimed Dorothy. “Oh, Heavens!”

The old debauchee’s flames of passion erupted with violence, almost as violent as a stroke of lightning. He proceeded to disrobe the girl in furious fashion, while a second

monk made her kneel between his legs. A third came forth and slapped, powerfully but in a very nervous manner, attacking her cheeks and breasts. Another impure dwarf began sucking her left ear and biting it.

In an instant Dorothy blushed, her chest turned red, her ear purple. She begged the munching Munchkins to spare her. Her tears leapt from her eyes, but seemed only to rouse them to accelerate their activities; they fondled, poked, bit, banged, smacked, whacked, thrashed and lashed.

Toto ran over and licked her armpit.

“Stop it, you imbecile! – Go bite my tormentors!”

“Yes,” cried the littlest monk of all, who waddled forward, dragging his tumescent staff along the ground. He turned his back and squatted, offering up his bare buttocks to the mutt.

Toto commenced to sniff the midget’s posterior, then scampered off into the bushes and peed.

Looking chagrined, Dorothy turned to the old monk. “Feel free to defile my dog,” she snapped.

II. The City of Golden Showers

“Where are you going,” asked the Sinful Tinman.

“We are on our way to the City of Golden Showers to see the Great Sade,” Dorothy answered.

“Why do you wish to see Sade?”

“I want him to send me back to Kansas, and the Scarecrow desires to be whipped upon his buttocks,” she replied.

“Hmmm . . .” The Sinful Tinman appeared to think deeply for a moment. Then he said: “Do you suppose the powerful Sade might spend some seed upon my body?”

“Why . . . I . . . I guess so,” stammered Dorothy. “I have no experience in such a thing, although I’ve heard it said that it’s a

perversion. You seem to desire something that grievously offends Nature.”

“What innocence, my dear, what childishness,” retorted the Sinful Tinman.

“The wasting of the seed destined to perpetuate the human species, dear girl, is the only crime which can exist. Such is the hypothesis; according to it, seed is put in us for the sole purpose of reproduction, and if that were true I would grant you that diverting it is an offense. But once it is demonstrated that by situating this semen in men’s loins is by no means enough to warrant supposing that Nature’s purpose is to have all of it employed for reproduction, what then does it matter, Dorothy, whether it be spilled in one place or in another?”

“I never thought of it like that,” admitted the girl.

“See,” said the Sinful Tinman. “So, if you will allow me to join your orgy, I will also go to the City of Golden Showers and ask Sade to abuse me.”

IV. Home Again

Determined to have the last word, and, indeed, imbued with the power to do so (irregardless of the protestation of his readers and critics) the author – Donatien-Alphonse-Francois de Sade – appeared on the page. In his hands he held all that remained of his virtuous heroine – a small, bleached skull. As if meditating in preparation for a soliloquy, he fixed his gleaming gaze upon the sorry specimen.

Then, extending it high above his head, as if offering an exhibition to the heavens, and, with uncharacteristic concision, he proclaimed the following epigram:

“Yes, Dorothy,” said the Marquis to the skull, “there is no face like bone.”

Reading for a Beautiful Bosom

Reading can be the key to a beautiful bosom, regardless of your size. Whether you are small, full-figured, or somewhere in between, a good program of reading can achieve several benefits for you. The first is to improve your posture. Reading while standing erect, a hardback held at arm's length from the chest, with shoulders relaxed, will help delineate a petite pair, raise a sagging bustline, and separate abundant orbs to minimize their size. The heavier the volume employed, the greater the benefits of chest-stretch. An oversized Bible held with both hands at head level can firm up the bosom miraculously! Lightweight mass-market paperbacks, one in each hand, may be read or skimmed alternately while turning the head from one to the other and lowering the arms upon completion of each page. Moreover, speed-reading a sentence from the left book to the right one, back and forth, until both pages of each volume have been digested, albeit combined, can tone up those pectoral muscles which support your breasts to give your bosom a higher, firmer, more intelligent appearance.

Another benefit of a carefully prepared program of reading: better proportions generally. Are your bosom and hip measurements nearly the same, your waist ten inches smaller? If not, trying using a hardcover and paperback simultaneously; juggle them over your head for ten minutes, then pause and read a paragraph from either one. Switch books without losing your place. Now try to remember what you have read while placing

the volumes under your arms and squeezing them firmly with your elbows. *Presto!*—You will have brought these measurements into correct proportions, if only for a moment.

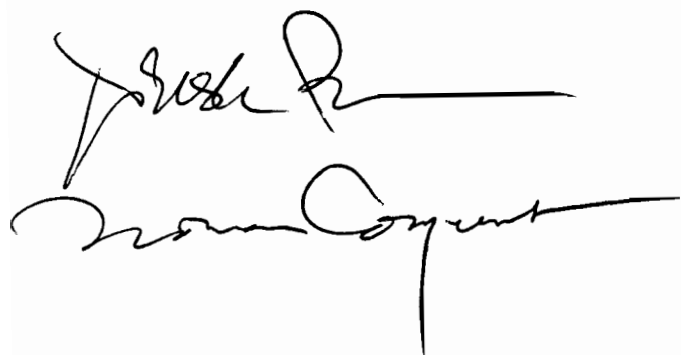
So come on girls, start reading!

How to Write the Suicide Note

1. Use of the first person is generally preferred.
2. For maximum impact and credibility, always write in the past tense. (Example: I *was* a failure in business.)
3. If you are without family, friends, or even enemies, address the note "To Whom It May Concern."
4. When possible, use a typewriter or personal computer. Far too many suicide notes are indecipherable.
5. Keep a copy of the note in your pocket, in case the original is misplaced.
6. Do not concern yourself with the "beginning-middle-end" rule. Simply concentrate on the end.
7. Remember that these are your last words. They should be commensurate with your social position. They should reverberate in the reader's mind! Avoid clichés such as "Goodbye cruel world" and "To be or not to be..." Strive for the poetic.
8. Self-pity, slang and obscenity are acceptable.
9. If artistically inclined, attach a self-portrait.
10. Be brief. Nothing is more boring than a long goodbye.

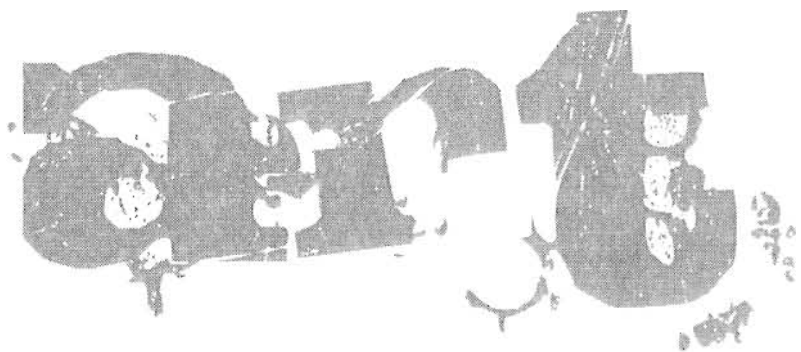
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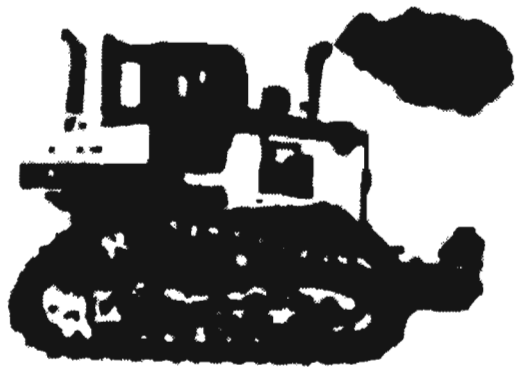


Frank R.
Rowland

a beginner's guide to



DECONSTRUCTION



& other works by

norman conquest

A Beginner's Guide to Art Deconstruction

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Cover art and illustrations by Norman Conquest, with the exception of the reproduction of Edward Hopper's *Nighthawks*.

Acknowledgements:

A Beginner's Guide to Art Deconstruction was originally published by Permeable Press (San Francisco: 1995); "The Topsy-Turvy World of Edward Hopper" was previously published in FICTION INTERNATIONAL #17:1 (1984); "Chop Sue Me" was the introduction in the Norman Conquest anthology, *By Any Means* (Hob Press: 1995); and "Excerpts from *Pornoglyphics*" first appeared in LIBIDO: The Journal of Sex and Sensibility (Vol. 7, #3: 1995).

This book is for Jim McMenamin.

First Edition

OBSCURE PUBLICATIONS
Paul Rosheim, Series Editor
307 River Street, Apt. 18
Black River Falls, Wisconsin 54615

"Watch Out for Obscure Publications"

A Beginner's Guide to Art Deconstruction

**& Other Works
by Norman Conquest**



Obscure Publications
2007

A Beginner's Guide To Art Deconstruction

Forward to the Permeable Press Edition

At last, this seminal text will finally reach the large audience it deserves. I first encountered it several years ago when I was lucky enough to witness the author in performance at the Berkeley Arts Alliance. There, Norman Conquest read and performed his "Guide" in a most memorable fashion, for which he received a standing ovation. Afterward, I spoke to the artist and told him how moved I was by the simplicity of his approach—how I was no longer baffled or intimidated by the term *deconstruction*.

Several months later, I encountered the written work at UCLA when a graduate student handed me a tattered photocopy of the manuscript that had been floating around the campus, causing quite a stir. I was told that it was for sale on a pirated floppy disk.

Then in 1993, a friend sent me a revised version of the text, published by a small arts journal out of Santa Rosa. I was, of course, pleased to see the work in legitimate circulation, albeit to a somewhat limited audience on the fringe of academia. Still, this piece seemed to have a mysterious life all its own, beyond the author's efforts and intentions. Perhaps it was not so mysterious after all.

Here, with relatively few words, Norman Conquest has managed to elucidate this complex theory by applying its central methods of textual analysis. Most remarkable of all, this little book illuminates the problem without resorting to the obfuscating jargon so ineluctably attached to all writing on this subject.

I think it is safe to predict that *A Beginner's Guide to Art Deconstruction* will remain in print for many years to come. Having started out its life as an underground work, this text will remain available to all and preserved as a true classic.

Professor Edward H. Hoage
San Diego State University

A Beginner's Guide To Art Deconstruction

"There is great negative work to be done."

–Tristan Tzara

There are many ways to destroy a work of art. The method one selects should serve the desired result of either partial deconstruction or total obliteration. The latter is, of course, preferable to defacement as, for example, a slashed canvas by Hockney will most likely be restored and retain its market value. This is not to deny the fact that a "scarred" work of art has a character all its own (often superior to the original), but a truly demolished masterpiece has an impact guaranteed to endure.

Here are four basic methods of deconstruction:

1. Hand Destruction

Art has been defaced by hand ever since Man began creating it. The earliest cave paintings were subject to attack by primitive Dadaists using crude hand tools—this at a time when art had no discernable value! It was merely deconstruction for deconstruction's sake, free of any political or aesthetic considerations. Today, a common tool for destroying art by hand is the *wrecking-adz*. This versatile implement has a little heel on the end that serves as a hammer to shatter glass display cases or knock the heads off statues. The main blade is used to pry apart a canvas from its frame while mutilating the work's surface.

Some deconstructionists prefer to use tools that are easier to conceal than the adz. Where portability is the concern, one should consider such items as the X-acto knife, linoleum cutter, ice pick, or razor. But remember, when it comes to destructive power, tools borrowed from various other trades have a decided advantage, *e.g.*, the crowbar, sledge hammer, wedge and tire iron.

Also classed as art-demolition hand-tools are the *acetylene torch* and the *compressed-air drill*. The torch is used to cut through bronze or marble sculptures. It has a hot flame that can slice through, say, the torso of Rodin's *The Thinker* like a hot knife through butter. Indeed, many a statue has, quite literally, "lost its head" thanks to the acetylene torch.

2. Burning

The use of fire has always been a crowd pleaser. Festive and dramatic, its potential for destruction is nearly unlimited. Wood sculptures, collage, and assemblages containing flammable components can easily be ignited to great effect. Furthermore, a container of gasoline and a match can work wonders at a group exhibition of "works on paper."

Public art, however, presents a distinct problem since most localities have strict controls regarding pollution from smoke. Yet doesn't the work of the deconstructionist serve to remove a more palpable pollutant from our eco-culture?

It should also be noted that the expression "a fire in the mind" was coined by a deconstructionist who was grappling with a method for destroying conceptual art.

Alas, it has yet to be realized.

3. Machine Deconstruction

To attack and destroy a single work of art is fine, but to demolish an entire gallery or museum is divine. For this noble purpose, a handy essential is the *crane*.

Cranes come in many sizes and may be mounted on trucks. The most useful ones move on caterpillar treads and can be driven directly to the target. Each crane has five parts: the treads, called the “cat”; the “cat house” which contains the motor; the cab or “derrida” where the determined operator sits; the “boom” or the longneck (length: 30 to 400 feet); and, last but not least, the bucket or “art-chomper.”

When attacking a museum, an important weapon of deconstruction is hitched to the crane. This is called a beaux arts ball, although it is often pear or bottle-shaped. Perhaps it got its name from the fun derived by using it. The ball can vary in weight from 1,500 to 12,500 pounds. When fastened on the end of a heavy chain or cable the ball can be swung against the museum’s walls with lethal results. (“Look out, MOMA!”) If you doubt the ball’s destructive capability, just ask the defunct Cleveland Museum of Contemporary Art (CMOCA), on the site of which now stands a K-Mart.

For the smaller jobs, such as exhibition halls and galleries, the bulldozer is usually the answer. These modern “art-busters” are so powerful that they can run right through the side of a gallery with little fuss or preparation.

Bulldozers can smash outdoor sculptures, scoop up the pieces with their buckets, and then go dump their loads on an artist’s doorstep.

These machines are especially effective in confined urban art centers like New York’s Soho district. Here a dozer can crash through one gallery’s display window and, with its long,

hydraulic-powered boom arms, scoop up the debris, pass it right over the drivers's head, and send it through the window of another gallery across the street—in effect, killing two birds with one stone.

Midget dozers called “snob-knockers” are only four or five feet wide and can actually enter a gallery through its doorway to crush the art inside. A “snob-knocker” can even remove a performance artist from the stage area—just a drop in the bucket, so to speak.

A wide variety of attachments may be added to the dozers, like a *Jarry-barge* for crowded openings, an industrial razor-fork for shredding large canvases, or a serrated “tilt-and-swivel ripper” for maiming mixed media.

4. Blasting

Ever since dynamite first exploded on the art scene in 1867 it has been a significant force in deconstruction, despite the reluctance of many to use it.

Alfred Nobel, a Swedish chemist with avant-garde inclinations, invented dynamite for the express purpose of “destroying art that has out-lived its usefulness.” In recent years, the use of dynamite to demolish art and exhibition spaces has been growing steadily, keeping pace with the profusion of overnight successes in the art world. As the prices of artworks rise, so does the demand for dynamite. It is certainly quicker and less obtrusive than the conventional method of ball and bucket. It is seemingly more dangerous as well but, according to those who specialize in using it, these dangers exist mainly in the minds of timid curators and gallery owners who shudder at the very word *dynamite*.

Members of the French deconstructionist collective “L’Inflammable,” based in Bordeaux, claim these fears are unfounded. Indeed, the group has been successfully dynamiting art since 1982. Since then, in over 150 controlled blasts in urban art centers throughout Europe, only thirty-six pedestrians have been killed—a very impressive safety record.

Admittedly, the use of dynamite requires a lot of know-how, the proper positioning of the charges, and so on. To employ it in a moment of rage, without careful planning, could well prove fatal. Blasting art has become a job for trained, educated deconstructionists. As one anonymous proponent put it: “Sure it’s risky, but I like the danger, the excitement, even the sound of the explosion. I’ll never forget the night I took out six Warhols with a single charge! Yeah, I’m proud to have blasted some of these so-called ‘master-pieces’ . . . it’s a great sense of accomplishment. Besides, there will always be new art, so what’s the big deal?”

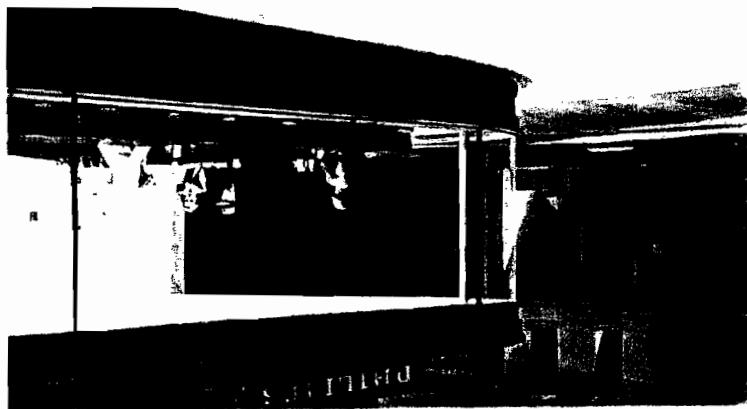
Yes, the dedicated deconstructionists who choose controlled explosives are very much a part of the future of art.

The Topsy-Turvy World of Edward Hopper

“The Museum of Modern Art in New York hung ‘Le Bateau’ by Matisse upside-down for forty-seven days before they discovered their mistake.”

Curious Facts

Edited by John May, New York, 1980



(continued from page 287)

I could not, at first, make heads nor tails of the show's centerpiece, *Nighthawks* (1942). However, after a lengthy perusal, I began to perceive Hopper's masterful technique at topsy-turvification which, ultimately, provides a synthesis of his

themes, i.e., the failure of capitalism, solitude, and vertigo. The trans-positional essence of this oil on canvas invites us to consider overthrowing the government or, at the very least, to question the law of gravity.

The artist's inverted realism accentuates the dream-like quality of light and shadow and presents an unbalanced, yet accurate, vision of urban disorientation. Here, in a lonely, upside-down diner, a man and a woman sit in somber silence. They were once head over heels in love, but now confront the reality of their capsized affair. The symbolism is clear: the workingman must confront the fact of his enslavement. And what about the fellow behind the counter? He is obviously a disillusioned capitalist, fed up with the "established order." His waitress (not shown) has disappeared into the kitchen where she is probably standing on her head, contemplating suicide because of her low wages. As for the other male customer, seen from behind, he may represent Hopper himself, turning his back on the critics.

The world of Edward Hopper is, most assuredly, our own—cold as winter, frozen in mid-somersault, and awaiting its fatal downfall.

Chop Sue Me (for L.M.)

An introduction with Eighteen Footnotes

I think I shall never see / an anthology as lovely as a tree
– Joyce Kilmer

*I admire poets who can put words into such a form that you can
almost take it in your fingers & place it on a lady's head.
Like a tiara, or on the art-historian's desk, like a paperweight.
Yes, I admire many things which I don't like.*
– Stefan Themerson

Take Me To Your Leader

Again¹, the dead trees² scream. All the trees that died in service of this anthology³. Reminds me that the poet Ed Wood's epic *Plan 9 From Outer Space* (cf. the screenplay *Wax Poetic IV*) put a decisive nail in the coffin of Postmodernism (via Oulipo's "plagiarism by anticipation.") Check out his poem "(T)here"⁴, which speaks to the here & now more effectively than anything

¹ Please remove your shoes and leave them outside this footnote.

² Joyce Kilmer might've written Ulysses had he lived long enough.

³ **anthologize**: to embalm a living body of work (see *Collected Footnotes of Larry McCaffery*, Oxford Univ. Press: 1993).

⁴ See *The Selected Poems of Edward D. Wood, Jr.*, translated by Norman Conquest [forthcoming from HOB Press].

written by tomorrow's visionaries.

Yes, there has been a murder here and someone's responsible. But don't blame the chickenshits at the NEA, they wouldn't know a work of X-perimental fiction if it shot a wad of burning goon-puke between their eyes. I think Po-Mo's Bo^s said it best: "Everybody still produces . . . more and more." Ghosts—disembodied narratives— floating goats on the WWW. Electronic prattle mutilations. Elvis-cerations. Somewhere, over the Rimbaud, lies a mass production cult. A cult above and beyond my own rag-tag following. And it's this *production* that inspires the Avant-Pop's snap & crackle phenomenon. All this in the face of Pro-Life death squads and gas attacks by Mormon-boffing Nazis. But that's O.K. No mo yo-yo po-mo . . . bring on them UFOs.

Visits? That would indicate visitors.⁶

Not You're Average Infomercial

Take Kathy Acker, for instance. *Please*. (Just kidding, Kath!) She has appropriated lines that Milli Vanilli would've killed for. Acker is hard-pop to the core. Hardcore pop rocks and universities topple. Just as the ghost of Elvis appeared over the desert sands of Borrego Springs and chanted "kill your darlings"—amazingly, taking the words right out of the mouth of

⁵ Jean Baudrillard (see *Fuck Foucault*, Phlegmeotext(e): Foreign Agents Series.

⁶ Does the Public Domain have pay-toilets?

J.C.!⁷ Talk about affirmative action.

Later. Much later. Even later than that. (A sixth revision.) Avant-Goddess Susan Powter⁸ in concert before a million writhing fans. She proclaims “Avant-Pop Power” and a sweaty swarm descends on Tower Books – demanding *By Any Means*. Of course, when they find out there’s only 226 copies, they go berserk and burn the bookstore down. Alas, Avant-Cops. The dreaded photocopy bobbies. All rites reserved. You have the right to remain silent.

Yesterday’s Breadlines or Nun of the Above

A Sister screaming comes across mine eye. A rusty gust, like a burst of bad breath from a Catholic bishop at a poetry reading in downtown San Diego. Nope, just a gentle tornado-breeze through the You-Can-Lick-Us trees in the cyberforest. Like a dada dream even Gibson never had . . . Mommy is K. Acker and Daddy is Bill Burroughs and there’s this violent custody battle going on. Dr. Benway is the judge (sort of like Ito on acid) . . . the jury is made up of aging porn-stars (insertion deleted⁹) . . . and the poor bastard child is an elf-assed impersonator. Kapow! Acker blows the little sexist pig to smithereens. “Clear the whorehouse!” screams the Judge as he bends over to dissect the corpse. “Oh boy, a prize inside!” The cadaver’s palaver . . . bloody text in its veins. Ready-to-eat surreal.

⁷ John Cowper Powys *not* Christ, for chrissake . . .

⁸ Seriously, she was once so big she could read by her cellulite.

⁹ Just in case Pun Control passes the Senate.

Pure *Avant-Pop*. Blood and guts and gurus, too. Amerika's Online and so are you. And you don't need a weatherman to know it's raining cats and dogs.¹⁰ The #1 self-help best-seller (*I'm OJ, You're OJ*) may not be everyone's culpa mea, but it's an easy read if you live in Brentwood. So move over you burned out wannabe beatlings & necro-New Agers. Warhol was right, *it ain't over til it's over*, and this Babe¹¹ just stepped up to the plate and is pointing to the leftfield bleachers . . .

Kill Your Congressperson! Then Go Home & Watch It On TV

It ain't politics anymore, it's show-biz. The blast in Oklahoma was sponsored by the Gap which has funded a rap song in honor of the NRA. You can set **anything** to music¹² (just watch out for copyright violations). In Japan, subways aren't for sleeping anymore, they're for lab tests. Speed readers go to hell.¹³ What a waste of chemicals this world is coming to. The Avant-Pop-stars know this all too well. They have their sources. They have their sauces. They have their saucers & sorcerers. And it's all in here if you read between the crimes. There's no sex-drips, acid-quips, or Brautigan-Christian propaganda. (Besides, that was all done in the 60s, right?).

¹⁰ "I just stepped in a poodle." [see James Joyce and General Idea].

¹¹ Athlete's footnote (no pun intended).

¹² See *Apocalypso Now* by Norman Conquest, Beuyscout Editions, New York: 1989.

¹³ Courtesy of Crad Kilodney. See his Avant-Pop collection: *Lightning Struck My Dick* (Coach House Press).

Twass the Night Before Business and Robert Bly was Dead

Pissed-off clit-cadets raise their cutlery in the name of *The Bobbitt*. One freaking whack and all those little cocksure Hemmingways are instant chop suey. *Whack! Whack! Whack!* Gooley eunuchs blowing smoke out their Olivettis. Come on guys and gals, anyone can do it, really. By all means, do it *now*. But the trick is to get it on MTV. And if that don't work you can always use the MRS¹⁴ defense. Everyone lives by selling something, so fuck you, Bob! You're Bly in the sky. But that's O.K. At least you didn't do a tree.

Recycled-Psychos

Nice work, bone-daddy. (anonymous blurb)

I was thinking . . . God doesn't believe in me. Surely that's religion. There must be a state of grace . . . a contractual clause beyond the sins of infringement. I was a collage drop-out with paper-cuts to prove it. Proudly self-uneducated. I'd bled at the barricades, been in jail on Long Island, and paid my dues in Beverly Hills. Nothing to show for it, except these flower-power shorts from Mexico. There are no tenured positions on Welfare. A moment later I'm on sabbatical, chanting Kilmer's poem . . . searching for the ice cream koan inside. Emmm . . . Sweet treats. Big teats. Tasty meats and devilish feats. I can still jiggle the poetry loose. One thin rhyme goes a long way toward

¹⁴ Manuscript Rejection Syndrome (see *The Paris Hilton Review*, v. 6, no. 32).

salvation. And besides, I'm in the company of saints. Admittedly, some have been caught driving without a Leyner's permit.¹⁵ Others perish in headstrong collisions, having lost control of their egos in the fast lane. And a few lucky bastards decided to sit this one out on the exit-ramp.

After Words

A number of formal tendencies recur in most of the selections in *By Any Means*. Indeed, these carefully selected texts have so many shared attributes and stylistic similarities that one might suspect that all were the work of a single statistician. Themes seem to merge into one humongous, *datalogical* blob. But that's O.K. Do not, however, be deceived, for a careful study by the dedicated "avant-populist" reader will reveal subtle treasures that will linger in the mind long after the "pop" has soured.¹⁶

Coronado¹⁷, California
July, 1995¹⁸

¹⁵ Mark Leyner got away with a suspended run-on sentence, but other trials will surely follow.

¹⁶ "Help me, Larry, I'm being held prisoner in this footnote!"

¹⁷ According to Plato, a fabled realm on the Pacific Ocean that was consumed by seaweed. Town motto: "It's hard to find good kelp these days." Thankfully, this myth has passed into the Public Domain [ed.].

¹⁸ No part of this footnote may be reproduced in any manner (including italics) without permission, except in the case of one or two nouns quoted in favorable reviews.

Excerpts from *Pornoglyphics*

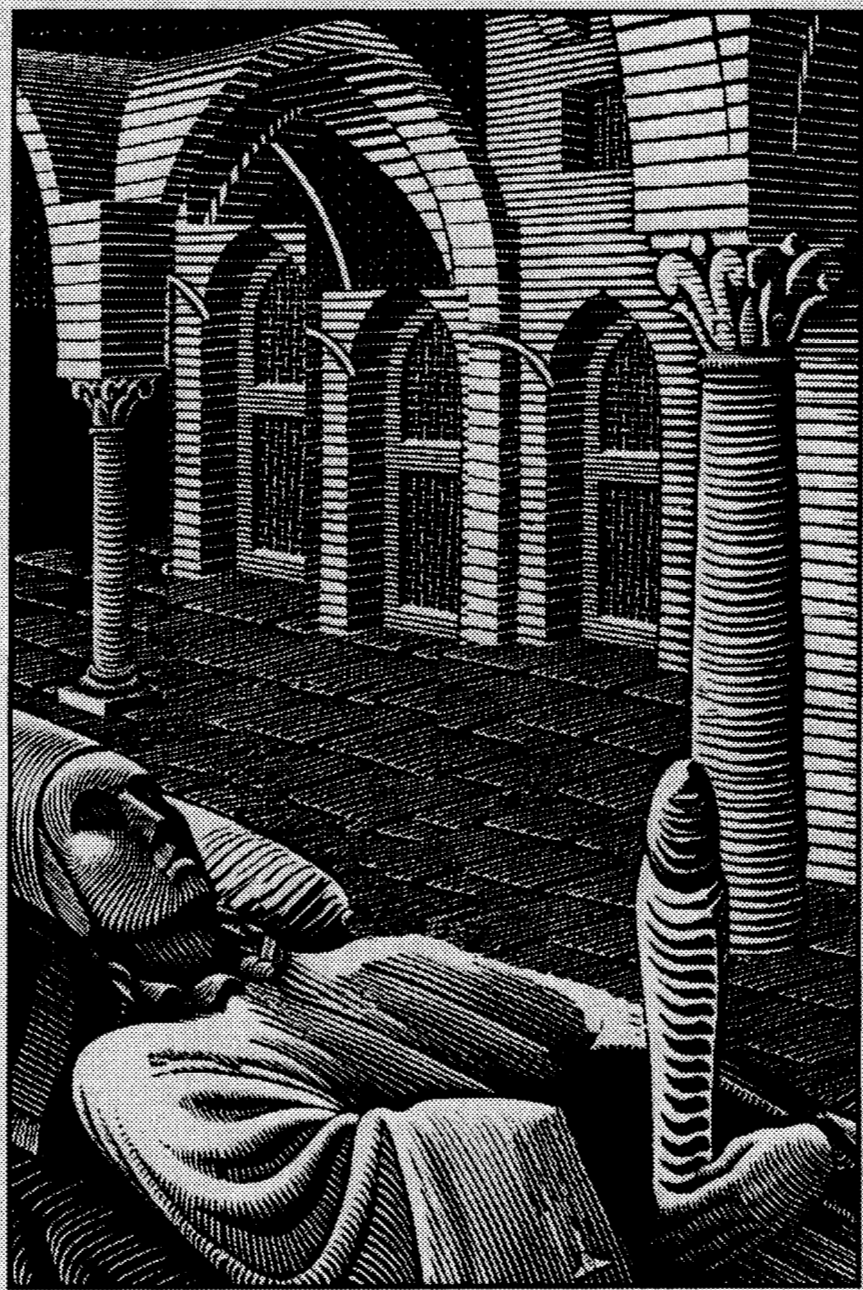
Within every image there are infinite possibilities. Caress the lines and they begin to make love. My obsession with the “stimulus situation” dates back to the hashish’d 1960s, where hallucinations were humdrum and nothing was quite what it seemed. It was a propitious time to come of age. I drifted around the Lower East Side in search of fresh visions and learned my Avenue A, B, Cs. Later, enrolled as voyeur at the Art Institute of Chicago, I loitered in Old Town, allowing my life to become a collage. As a budding dada storm trooper, I crafted poetry out of neon debris, photographed shadows, made love between the flats and wings at the Goodman Theater. Post-coital cosmic giggles, orgasmic sound poems, Ra-Ra sex chants. Jazz and cut-ups, scissors and spray-mount.

I was reborn between the loins of a mockingbird in flight.

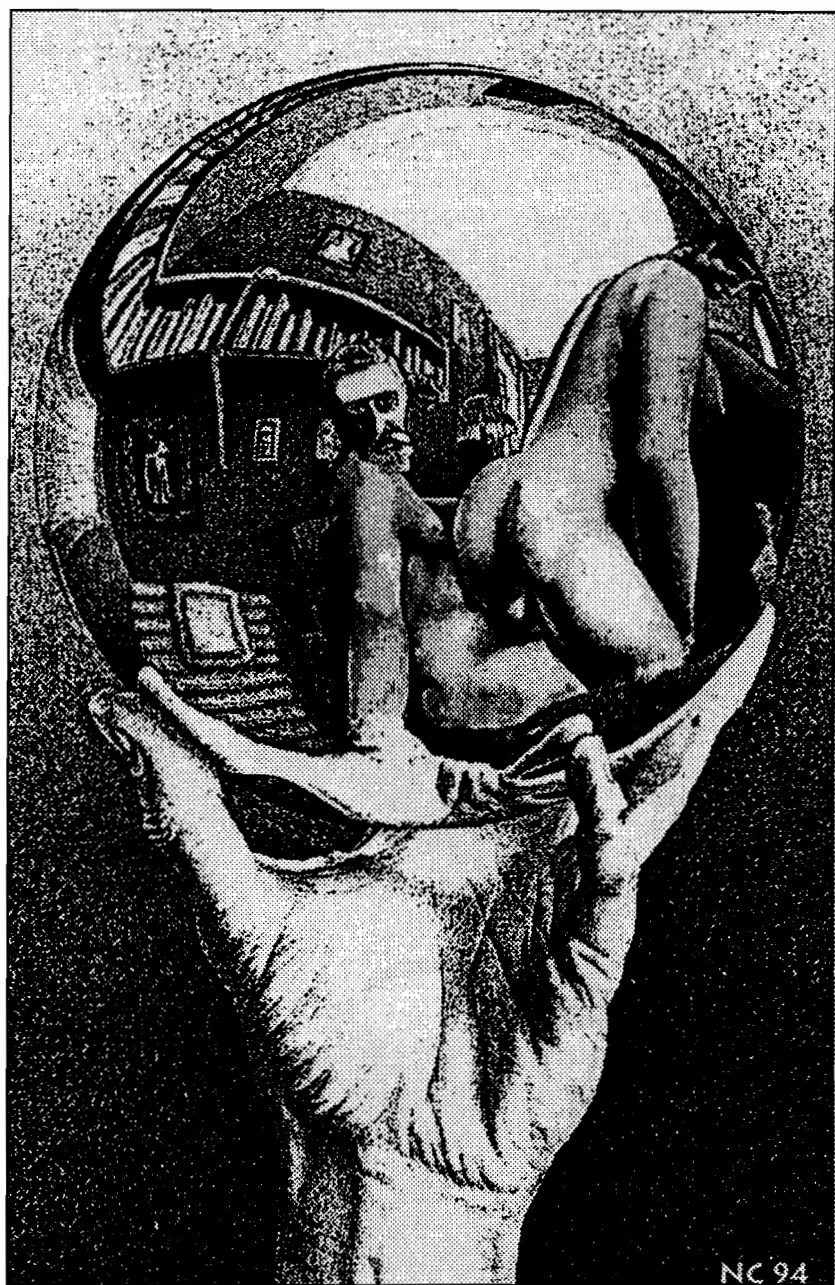
Much earlier, as an infant (long before I’d started performing brain surgery on images), I stared up at the Midwestern ceiling and saw faces in the shadows of frozen sunlight. Outside, there were beasts in the clouds and creatures copulating on the crisp skin of leaves. *Eros is Eros is Eros*. An early awareness forced a second look at everything. It was a path to an umbrageous jungle where hidden images thrive. Illusions, optical-erotica, verbal-visual amusements—these are the sources that inspired *Pornoglyphics*. I only hope these visual *divertissements* remain faithful to the artist Nanucci’s admonition: Always endeavor to find some interesting variation. –N.C.



ARISTOTLE & PHYLLIS & TED & ALICE
(AFTER GRIER)



THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF ESCHER



NC 94

ESCHER BALLING IN REFLECTING SPHERE

SURREALIST EYE-CHART

