

Ten Books That Have Stuck with Me Off the Top of My Head as I Make Them Up, #2

by Dan Kelly

#2 *The Typewriter Inside You* by Harmon Gentle—I found this one at a garage sale when I was 15. Intended as a manual for sharpening one's typing skills, by the third chapter it became obvious that Mr. Gentle's sanity had slipped, and that rather than mastering the typewriter he envisioned himself communing with it as its prophet. Advisements to view the keyboard as a whole, rather than hunting and pecking were soon supplanted by rants about monstrous extradimensional beings that altered and tried to enter our reality through typos. To Mr. Gentle touch typing was a sacrament on par with transubstantiation. As one types, the type bars manifest thoughts, dreams, and book reports through embedded ink, the cheerful tapping of the keys a mechanical Gregorian chant to keep evil at bay. White Out, by the way, is a device not of correction but exorcism—an opaque holy water with a euphoria inducing scent that prevented the typo creatures from entering this world through accidental blasphemies, excoriations, and improper use of its/it's.

I wish I still had my copy of the book, but a hooded figure came to my house one dark fall night and offered to exchange my word processor for an Apple II...but only if I included the guide as part of the package. I hesitated, imagining I saw insect-like hairs penetrating this "person's" cloak, but I was overcome with a

stronger desire to play Oregon Trail that evening. Handing over the guide, the hooded figure snatched it, issued a chittering laugh, then vanished into the Toyota Corolla he'd parked in front of my house and drove away. I made the right choice...right?

