

I Never Metafiction I Didn't Like

by John Olson

I like toast for breakfast. Doorknobs, too, though I prefer not to eat them. I like to curl my fingers around them, open doors, that sort of thing. You know? Like bolting the night shut. Or wearing it around one's wrist as an amulet. For instance, have you read *The Revolution of the Everyday* by Raoul Vaneigem? The contrariness of his vision has a sweetness and a joy that corresponds to the feeling one gets after taking an amphetamine. Or listening to "Light My Fire" by the Doors. This could be a story, and I intended originally to tell a story, but now I'm not in the mood to tell a story, I'd rather let a story tell me. That is to say, we all know the stories that have been told, stories with beginnings and ends, but what about stories that unfold in real time? Would you believe me if I said that at this very moment I'm riding a dragon over Pittsburgh? And the lights below are so glittery and bright it's hard to believe that at one time the sky billowed with the black smoke of steel production? Well, it's true. And the dragon's name is Tim. Go Tim! I shout, hitting his back lightly with a horsetail fern. You might find this a bit erratic, if not foppish and more than a little pixilated, but have you ever lived in a house in which the TV was going day and night? Remember the feeling of irreality? The flickering lights of the TV? That was my university. That was my education. And that's what I've been trying to say all along: if you want to get to know somebody, check out the glove compartment of their car. If you find a nickel-plated Colt .38 lying on top of a worn copy of *King Lear*, you'll know who you're dealing with. If I were you, I'd just sit back and daydream and look out the window. Because really, isn't that what fiction should be? A quiet ride in the country with a persistent feeling of dread stirring in the wheat fields and clouds? And then it happens: the clouds thunder, the sky cracks open, and down it comes: rain so hard you

can barely see the taillights of the truck ahead of you. And you hope this person driving the car is prudent and wise and not feeling too self-destructive or despondent. Because that person might be desperate. And hard. And it might be you.

