



Singular Pleasures (American Literature (Dalkey Archive))

By Harry Mathews

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The subject of this unique book of short fiction is masturbation, a practice both universal and virtually taboo. In sixty-one vignettes, Mathews records the imaginative varieties of this solitary activity in prose that is playful, intimate, urgent, quirky, and humane.

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Singular Pleasures (American Literature (Dalkey Archive)) By Harry Mathews Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Kirkus Reviews

The singular pleasures of Mathews's (Cigarettes, 1987, etc.) title are in fact only one pleasure, and that one is the--well, the pleasure of masturbation. Here are sixty-odd (publisher's count) tiny pieces, one or two almost a page long, most only a paragraph or just a few lines, describing various people--well, doing it. Those various people are very various, from kids to old fogies, of all sexes, nations, places, needs, and callings, some alone, some with like-minded company. Some of the vignettes are silly, some exotic, some satiric, some erotic, most poetic, some neutral, and some--a few--touchingly lovely. The point seems to be--well, let that be determined by those who choose to ponder it. The illustrations by Francesco Clemente aren't lubricious at all, but (usually) slight, charming, and as ephemeral as a--well, as, say, a falling leaf. --
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Review

Harry Mathews is a playful, precise writer, a modernist with a singular sense of humor, a stylist whose subject matter often seems irrelevant next to the beauty of his language. -- *Michael Perkins*

Like seeds of closeness, like some always penultimate leisure to make it up out of an alphabet of selves, these glimpses yield a gentle, conspiring privacy. -- *Joseph McElroy*

Quietly, with gentle and all-embracing humanism, these prose poems refute the taboos. . . . As a literary device the focus on that singular moment inspires Mathews to bravura feats of compression. . . . So that brief as these glimpses are, they're more than character 'sketches.' You see something more like a whole person in the snap of Mathews' shutter. -- *John Strausbaugh, New York Press, 4/28/93*

Singular Pleasures is wonderfully shocking and a joy to read, and gives a new meaning to reading for pleasure. -- *Alexander Laurence, Cups , 9/93*

There is nothing pornographic, in the strict sense, about Mathews' text, since it does not seek to arouse the reader: its tone is cool, humorous, and affectionate. His intention is to leave us deeply impressed by the ingenuity, tenacity, and inventiveness with which humans in all places and at all ages have pursued their own pleasure. He succeeds completely. -- *John Ash, Artforum, Summer 1993*

About the Author

Born in New York in 1930, Harry Mathews settled in Europe in 1952 and has since then lived in Spain, Germany, Italy, and (chiefly) France. When Mathews published his first poems in 1956, he was associated with the so-called New York School of poets, with three of whom (John Ashbery, Kenneth Koch, and James Schuyler) he founded the review *Locus Solus* in 1961. Through his friendship with Georges Perec, he became a member of the Oulipo in 1972. The author of six novels and several collections of poetry, recent publications are *THE NEW TOURISM* (Sand Paper Press, 2010), *Sainte Catherine*, a novella written in French (Editions P.O.L, 2000), *The Human Country: the Collected Short Stories* (Dalkey Archive Press, 2002), *The Case of the Persevering Maltese: Collected Essays* (Dalkey Archive Press, 2003), *OULIPO COMPENDIUM* (co-edited with Alastair Brotchie; Atlas Press and Make Now Press, 2005), and *My Life in CIA: A Chronicle of 1973* (Dalkey Archive Press, 2005).

Marie Chaix was born in Lyons and raised in Paris, and is the author of nine books. *The Summer of the Elder*

Tree, a memoir and meditation on the theme of separation, and her first book in more than a decade, was published in Paris in 2005, and will appear from Dalkey Archive Press in 2013.

Clemente was born in Naples, Italy. He is an artist. He divides his time between New York, Rome and India.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Della Bailey:

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