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**The Lifespan
of a Fact.**

**John D'Agata,
author.**

**Jim Fingal,
fact-checker.**

"A fascinating and dramatic power struggle over the intriguing question
of what nonfiction should, or can, be." —Lydia Davis



How negotiable is a fact in nonfiction?

In 2003, an essay by John D'Agata was rejected by the magazine that commissioned it due to factual inaccuracies. That essay—which eventually became the foundation of D'Agata's critically acclaimed *About a Mountain*—was accepted by another magazine, but not before they handed it to their own fact-checker, Jim Fingal. What resulted from that assignment was seven years of arguments, negotiations, and revisions as D'Agata and Fingal struggled to navigate the boundaries of literary nonfiction. What emerges is a brilliant and eye-opening meditation on the relationship between "truth" and "accuracy," and a penetrating conversation about whether it is appropriate for a writer to substitute one for the other.



John D'Agata is the author of *About a Mountain* and *Halls of Fame*, and editor of *The Next American Essay* and *The Last Origins of the Essay*. He teaches creative writing at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, where he lives.

Jim Fingal worked for several years as a fact-checker at *The Believer* and *McSweeney's*, where he worked on the titles *What Is the What*, *Surviving Justice*, *Voices from the Storm*, and others. He currently lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he designs software.

Author photograph by Margaret Strother
Cover design by Ben Wiseman



W. W. NORTON
NEW YORK • LONDON
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"This is a profound, comic, and ultimately elegiac experiment in collaborative prose. Both the author and the fact-checker come off as brilliant, obsessive, brave, stubborn, rigorous, principled, and messianic. A febrile intensity rises off the page; two dudes, locked together in a heady plot, their mutual adventure offering a delectable suspense, like Hitchcock's *To Catch a Thief* or *Strangers on a Train*. Will the doppelgängers slay each other? Will imagination triumph over pedestrian reality? Why are facts so hard to fit into a lyric sentence?"

—WAYNE KOESTENBAUM

"A singularly important meditation on fact and fiction, the imagination and life, fidelity and freedom. Provocative, maddening, and compulsively readable, *The Lifespan of a Fact* pulses through a forest of detail to illuminate high-stakes, age-old questions about art and ethics—questions to which the book (blessedly) provides no easy answers."

—MAGGIE NELSON

"Ever since his first book, John D'Agata has been a crucial articulator of the possibilities of the essay. In his new book, *The Lifespan of a Fact*—which is by far his funniest, most furious, most unfettered, and possibly his most indispensable—D'Agata conveys more fully than he ever has before his vision of the slippery nature of existence, the deep unknowability of things, the beautiful facticity of 'nonfiction,' and the fictionality of 'fact.' Anyone who cares about the nature and the future of the essay should read this book."

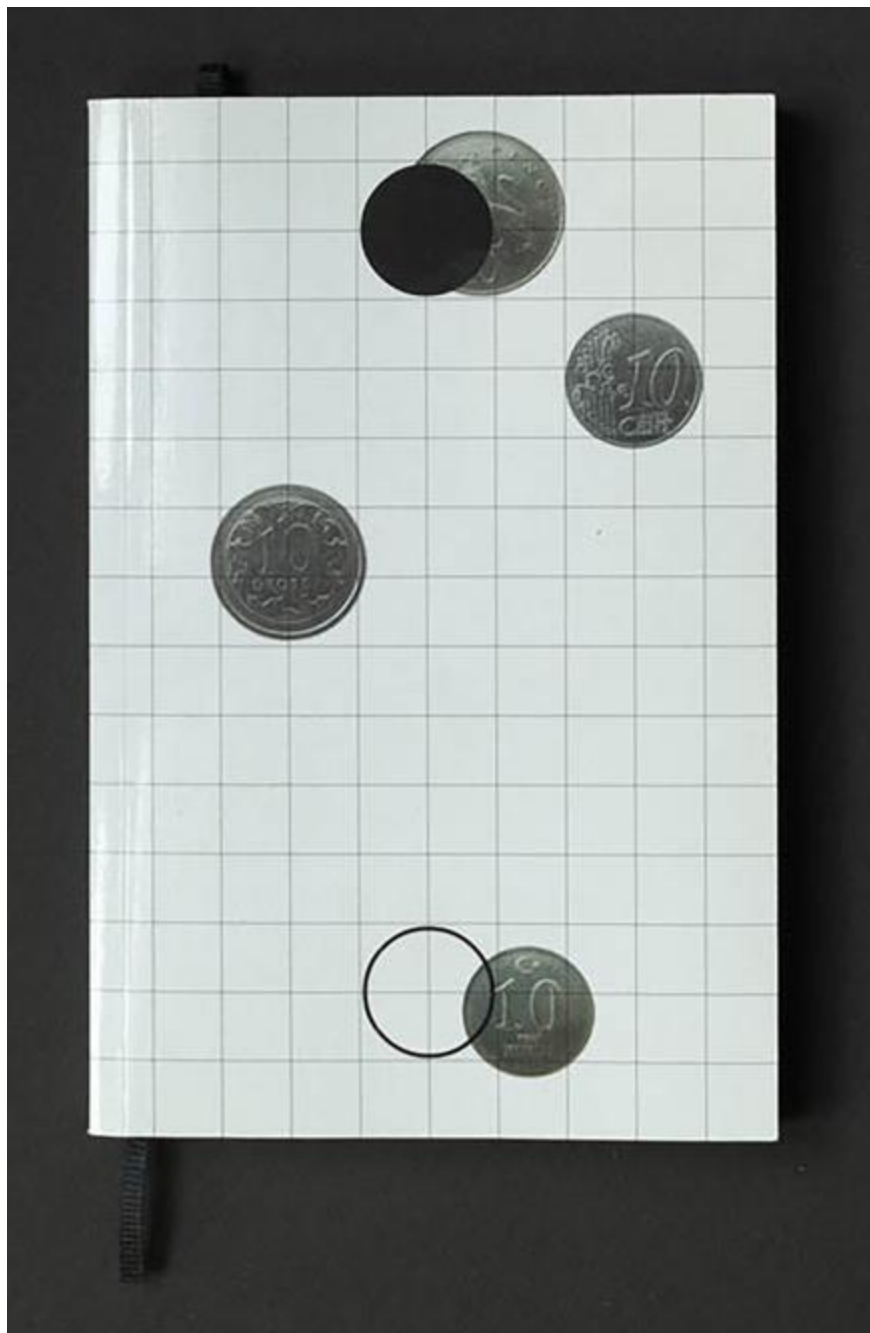
—DAVID SHIELDS

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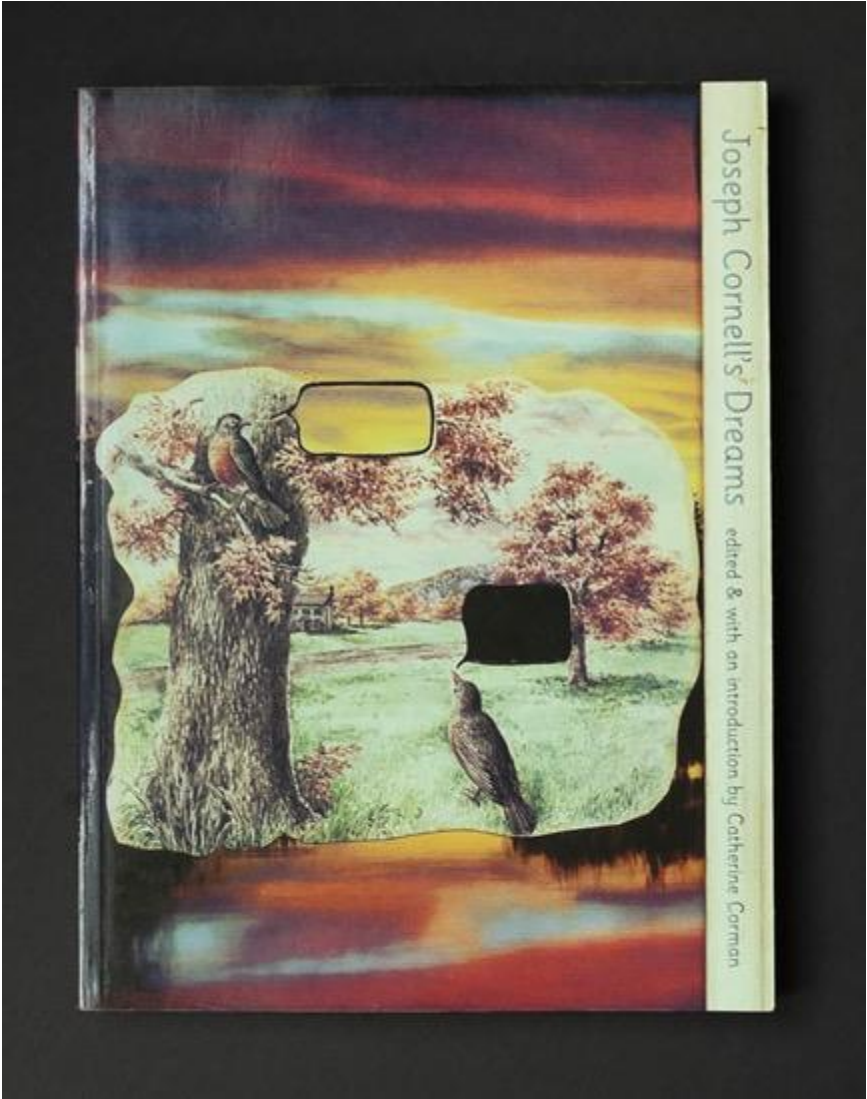
Organising in the Anthropocene Aslak Aamot Kjærulff & David Hilmer Rex. A Strange and Hopeful Proximity Isobel Cairns & Abby Cunnane. Protest in Aotearoa Louise Menzies, Alex Monteith & Amy Howden-Chapman. New New Lynn Joe Hoyt & Jym Clark. These are the Voices Voicing Dissent Bidy Livesey, Michelle Ngamoki, Dayle Takitimu & Jos Wheeler. Teaching as a Way to Care for the Earth Katie Bachler, Scott Berzofsky & Hugh Pocock. Dialogues with Tomorrow Dugal McKinnon & Sophie Jerram.





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Joseph Cornell's Dreams
edited & with an introduction by Catherine Cornman

Joyce Cornell

(1903-1972) is known for the oniric quality of his art and films. Some of our greatest poets have worked to describe the strange power of his boxes, toy-like constructions whose playfulness and humor are anchored in a profound melancholy and loneliness. "Slot machine of visions," wrote Octavio Paz. Cornell himself is said to have enjoyed children's responses to his work best; perhaps because nothing prepares one for viewing a Cornell box, other than paying attention to one's dreams.

Catherine Corman has combed through Cornell's voluminous diaries, now in the care of the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art, in search of the artist's own dreams. What she found are flashes of images and short, enigmatic narratives of illumination — the verbal equivalent of Cornell boxes. As she writes, "The dreams are not derived from waking life, but appear as if by chance. Cornell spends the day eating pastries and riding a bicycle. Falling asleep on the couch is like pulling the lever of the slot machine of visions. Images of naiads, lambs, and the ocean appear."

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IN PRAISE
OF SHADOWS



Jun'ichirō Tanizaki

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Literature

ISBN: 0-918172-02-0

\$7.95

IN PRAISE OF SHADOWS

This eloquent, though sometimes perverse, essay on the Japanese sense of beauty by one of the most articulate of modern Japanese novelists is something everyone interested in Japan should read. I shall certainly recommend it strongly to all my students. The publishers of this book have given us a little gem.

Edwin McClellan
Yale University

I read the piece with absolute delight. Tanizaki captures in an amusing, flowing commentary on architecture, drama, food, feminine beauty, and many other aspects of Japanese life the uneasy mixing of two clashing aesthetic traditions based on differing technologies. He makes clear his own love of the softer, quieter, more shadowy, older aesthetic tradition and his pain as it is challenged by the brighter, more garish products of Western technology.

Edwin O. Reischauer
Harvard University

Leete's Island Books



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**Crow with
No Mouth**

Ikkyū

FIFTEENTH
CENTURY
ZEN MASTER

VERSIONS BY
Stephen Berg



Zen master Ikkyū Sojun (1394-1481) was a Japanese monk-poet-calligrapher-musician who celebrated erotic love and attained satori upon hearing a crow call. Appointed headmaster at Daitokuji, the great temple in Kyoto, he lasted nine days before denouncing the rampant hypocrisy among the monks. He invited them to look for him in the sake parlors of the Pleasure Quarters.

"Ikkyū scandalized the Zen community of his day and is likely to scandalize some readers even now – his short poems are simultaneously bawdy, abrupt, vulgar, and reverential... It is impossible not to love the velocity and variety of his verse." – *The Philadelphia Inquirer*

"A deeply sensual man, Ikkyū had little patience for the fussiness of monastic life and ritual... What is especially appealing about Ikkyū's poetry is the way his sensuality infuses his Zen sensibility." – *American Book Review*

"Stephen Berg is exactly the right poet to have translated these poems."
– Hayden Carruth, *The Hudson Review*



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Calligraphy by Ikkyū; front cover.

"Do no evil," back cover, "Do much good."

\$14.00 / POETRY





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24/7

LATE CAPITALISM AND THE ENDS OF SLEEP
JONATHAN CRARY

"The 24/7 phantasmagoria of digital exchange impresses the commodity deep into the body's tissues, leaving only sleep as a partial respite.

Jonathan Crary updates Marcuse's *One Dimensional Man* with a vigilant critique of the totality of the seemingly eternal present of this pseudo-world."

McKenzie Wark, author of
The Spectacle of Disintegration

"Crary's polemic against the demands of 24/7 capitalism brilliantly illuminates the devastating effects of our changed temporality. Enjoined to constant productivity, we consume ourselves, our world, and our capacity collectively to imagine a common future. This is a crucial commentary on the format and tempo of contemporary life."

Jodi Dean, author of
The Communist Horizon





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