

## *Erasure Poetry: A Found Art Form* by Franz Douskey

Erasure Poetry dates back to post World War I, and the madcap group, Dadaists, who morphed into Surrealists. Man Ray produced the earliest example of Erasure Poetry, circa 1923. It wasn't a movement.

Nor did it have a name. But it was regarded as belonging to the Surrealists: Dali, Bunnuel, Eluard, Breton. We don't see a progression toward Erasure Poetry until the mid-1960s, when George Hitchcock begins to include Found Poetry in his magazine: *Kayak*.

*Kayak* usually contained a number of fine poets, including W. S. Merwin, Charles Simic, James Tate, Ai and Margaret Atwood, to name a few. Found poetry became a brief movement and a number of anthologies were published.

Dana Murphy writes: "Erasure poetry is a form of 'found poetry'," which gives us an evolutionary process. Well-established poet, Heather McHugh writes:

*All poetry is fragment: it is shaped by its breakages at every turn. It is the very art of turnings, toward the white frame of the page, toward the unsung, toward the vacancy made visible, that wordlessness in which our words are couched.*

*(from "Broken English: What We Make of Fragments," in Broken English: Poetry and Partiality, Wesleyan University Press, 1993).*

Erasure Poetry is a wonderful form because it has no limits. One can copy a poem, a story, an ad, an obituary, then use white out to erase the words not needed. There is a wonderful anthology called NOIR, in which the writers use passages from various mystery writers (Agatha Christie, Nero Wolfe, Dashiell Hammett) and write eerie, odd poems.

One of the young proponents of Erasure Poetry, Travis McDonald, writes:

*The poetry of erasure is taking place all around us. Underneath the pavement, behind newspaper headlines, on paste-layered billboards and graffiti-laden walls, our communal landscape is continuously peeling away and papering over itself. Its very surface is a living thing in flux between dueling processes of decay and renewal, driven in the name of progress to adapt to the shifting contextual demands of culture or be replaced, removed, re-imagined. (from, "A Brief History of Erasure Poetics")*

Erasure Poetry is characterized by its informality, its accessibility and its ability to create the skills of observation, communication and self-expression. Erasure Poetry is endless and exciting, especially for young minds that need to develop concentration, communication skills and the beautiful pleasure and pride in creating something that did not exist and would not have existed without *them*.

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