Narrating Demons, Transformative Texts

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Rereading Genius in Mid-Century Modern Fictional Memoir

DANIEL T. O’HARA
To Jonathan Arac, Paul Bove, and Donald Pease:

Brothers!
The separable meanings of each word . . . are here brought into one. And as they come together, as the reader’s mind finds cross-connection after cross-connection between them, he seems, in becoming more aware of them, to be discovering not only Shakespeare’s meaning [in Venus and Adonis], but something which he, the reader, is himself making. His understanding of Shakespeare is sanctioned by his own activity in it. As Coleridge says: “You feel him to be a poet, inasmuch as for a time he has made you one—an active creative being.”

—I. A. Richards,
Coleridge on the Imagination (1934, 1960)
Brand X

I have always been in love with Brand X. As a kid I’d see those commercials with the brand name TV set right beside Brand X: The crystal clear picture next to the snowy one—which to me was really more starry—the way it looks in your head after hitting your elbow. Who’d ever want to buy a product like that? Which is partially why I’ve loved Brand X.

But my father may have expressed the better reason best: “Brand X lets you tinker with it”—to repair, to improve—as though endlessly customizing.

But Zenith (the best set then) once it went it went all at once—as with a model atomic flash—nothing like Brand X: Trying out both, we made the perverse choice.