

AN EXCERPT FROM  
**a modern way to**

**DIE**

**PETER WORTSMAN**



**A MODERN  
WAY TO  
SMALL STORIES &  
MICROTALES** **DIE**

by  
PETER WORTSMAN

SECOND EDITION



**PELEKINESIS**

NEW YORK † LONDON † SYDNEY † LOS ANGELES

*A Modern Way to Die* by Peter Wortsman

SECOND EDITION

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Prefatory note by Hubert Selby, Jr. used by permission.

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## **A Prefatory Note by the late Hubert Selby, Jr.<sup>1</sup>**

A MODERN WAY TO DIE is a fantastic book and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I have never read anything quite like this, but my enjoyment was due to more than just novelty, it was a response to marvelous writing, wonderful craft, and the breath of imagination. I guess the modern way to die is in bits and pieces, little slices here and there, unknown and unseen parts severed, dismissed and/or ignored until there is, at best, a shadow, but more often the hollowness of our current "civilization." I am not trying to analyze this book, or the writers intent, its just that some of these thoughts come to mind as I think about this book and what it has awakened in me. But, for me, the most important element of the book is that it is so enjoyable. [...] It certainly deserves as wide an audience as possible, and I hope it gets what it deserves.

[Wortsman] is an excellent artist. This book did not simply come from some imaginative place, but obviously demanded great skill and a lot of work. Wortsman succeeded so well in his craft and art that it reads "artless" and "spontaneous", which to me is the highest of compliments. [...]

I wholeheartedly hope Wortsman gets the future his art so obviously deserves.

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1 This prefatory note is drawn from a letter written on October 2, 1991, by the late Hubert Selby, Jr. to Thomas Thornton, former managing editor of Fromm International Publishing, upon the latter's request for a few lines to quote on the back cover of the first edition of *A Modern Way to Die*. Selby so splendidly grasped the essence of the book, and responded so eloquently, that on the author's request, his remarks are reproduced above almost in their entirety, with the kind permission of his widow, Suzanne Selby. As his friends well know, Selby was averse to apostrophes, among other points of punctuation deemed burdensome by him. His punctuation preference has been maintained here.

“Wortsmann hang[s] with the masters. . . . Dozens of dangling avalanches for people with dreamer’s block.”

—A. Scott Cardwell in *The Boston Phoenix*

“A fantastic book . . . . Marvelous writing, wonderful craft, and the breath of imagination. . . . [Wortsmann] succeeded so well in his craft and art that it reads ‘artless’ and ‘spontaneous,’ which to me is the highest of compliments.”

—Hubert Selby, Jr., author of *Last Exit to Brooklyn*

“Wortsmann achieves a level of spontaneity and accessibility—even within his most formal creations—to which most writers can only aspire.”

—David L. Ulin in *The Los Angeles Reader*

“The best short-shorts successfully wedge a large impact into a small space, as do Peter Wortsmann’s stories.”

—*The Bloomsbury Review*

“Wortsmann displays a savage descriptive edge, precise and crucial, that is as natural as it is canonically reminiscent of the pan-European urbanism of such writers as Robert Walser and Robert Musil.”

—Anthony Abbott in *American Bookseller*

“Peter Wortsmann, in the light of day, seems able to connect the power of the dream narrative to conscious language to create unique works that walk a curious line between fiction and poetry.”

—Russell Edson

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