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## REVIEWS



### RUTH DRAPER: SELECTED MONOLOGUES

*Ruth Draper: Selected Monologues* is a 2-CD collection of the celebrated character sketches of the queen of early-twentieth-century one-woman theater. Ranging from the hilarious to the delicately affecting, the monologues are united by Draper's consummate skill. In each of the nine sketches, she assumes the personality, accent, and occasionally the languages of one fabulously imaginative character and speaks in her voice. Since these are true monologues, no other characters' voices are present, but Draper's performances are evocative enough that the plotlines of the sketches flow gracefully, and the characters themselves are so charming and inventive that the odd lack of any other voices is easily forgotten. The most unambiguously funny sketch is "The Italian Lesson," in which Draper plays a WASP housewife, ostensibly attempting to appreciate Dante but continually interrupted by her exhausting social demands. "A German Governess with a Class of Children," in which the anxious teacher attempts in vain to control her unruly charges, oscillates wildly between hilarity and heartbreak. Draper's work is most stunning in last three monologues, "Three Women and Mr. Clifford," which feature the ever-silent Mr. Clifford's personal secretary, wife, and mistress. As each sketch weaves more layers into the story, the listener is caught up in its pathos. Draper's ability to suggest so much with only her voice is astonishing; and her comic timing is impeccable. These CDs are perfect for any aspiring performer (Lily Tomlin and Tom Waits are among her vocal admirers), and for anyone who has ever had to take a long, boring train trip (trust me). The disks are on sale only (as far as I know) at [www.drapemonologues.com](http://www.drapemonologues.com).

— POST

### ALAN'S ORIGINAL HUMOR ARCHIVE

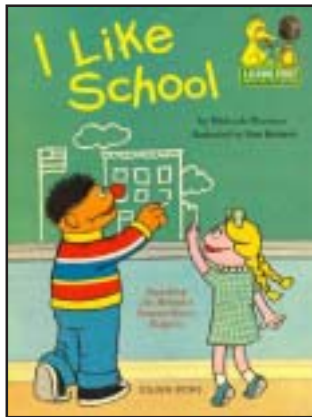
<http://www.aaaugh.com/meiss/humor.html>

Before the advent of professionally-created sites like *The Onion* and *Modern Humorist*, humor on the Internet consisted largely of jokes, amusing anecdotes, and funny lists which were posted on Usenet newsgroups, university FTP servers, and primitive, text-only web pages. Most examples of classic Internet humor have been copied and forwarded so many times that their authors are no longer known, but one great Internet humorist, Alan Meiss, avoided anonymity by archiving all of his work at his web site, *Alan's Original Humor Archive*.

Meiss's best material was popular enough to be posted in many other places, so some pieces at this site will be familiar to avid web surfers. In particular, Meiss's list of "Fifty Fun Things to Do in an Elevator" is a Net classic (Fun Thing #45: "Announce in a demonic voice: 'I must find a more suitable host body'"). Other especially hilarious pieces include lists of rejected Dr. Seuss titles (e.g., "Son of Sam I Am") and reasons not to buy a used sofa (e.g., "The owner seems reluctant to actually sit on or touch it himself"), as well as the "Shift Key FAQ," a snarky example of nerd humor.

Meiss's writing is not uniformly amusing—some pieces, like "Winston Steele: Police Detective with Broccoli Stuck in His Nose," are simply lame. The general lack of polish noticeable in even the funniest pieces further suggests that Meiss would have benefited from some editorial guidance. But the funny material so overshadows the mediocre spots that *Alan's Original Humor Archive*, which has not been updated since 1995, nevertheless remains one of the most entertaining sites on the web.

— FABRICANT



**I LIKE SCHOOL**  
by Michaela Muntean

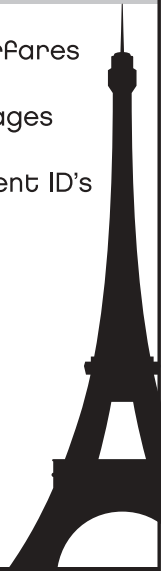
Michaela Muntean's *I Like School* is nothing short of stunning. Featuring a typical day at the Muppet-filled Sesame Street School, the book offers an immense opportunity to learn, if you don't know what a "window" is. Furthermore, the book jacket amiably insists that one does "not have to watch the television show to benefit from this book." Such egalitarianism! Stolen from the Chebeague Island, ME library, *I Like School*, which was due April 6, 1998, features somewhat warped pictures of all your favorite *Sesame Street* characters, including Big Bird, Cookie Monster, Grover, that big angry-looking blue guy, and my personal favorite: the Count. As these characters go about their school day, they engage in emotionally revealing dialog: "I like school," "I like my teacher," "I like my table and chair," and so on. The symbolically loaded repetition of "I like" is broken only by Cookie Monster's assertion, "Me like snack time," bringing the book to a heart-wrenching climax. Meanwhile, Oscar the Grouch lends the story moral ambiguity, stating candidly that he likes "to make a mess." And it is clear upon close inspection that, although Big Bird "like[s] story time," Bert is actually sleeping right through it. You wouldn't expect that of Bert! *I Like School* is truly revealing. In addition, an element of magic surrounds the "I like to build with blocks" storyline, which features a perfectly curved bridge built out of square blocks. What could this mean? Can Muppets operate on a plane that transcends normal physical laws? A charming aspect of *I Like School* is that it presents such existential questions sans analysis, forcing the reader to exercise his or her own intellectual capabilities. *I Like School* would make a great gift for a loved one or even a small child. Go steal it from your library today.

— POST

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