The Deconstructionist’s Instruction Manual

this is a poem

it is a poem about how to read poems

the way to read a poem

about deconstruction

is through an act of deconstruction

i have demonstrated this process

in other poems about deconstruction

now i will make my instructions

explicit

then you will know what you are ignoring

first

deconstruct the title

the title is obliquely referential

but is in most cases a joke

perhaps not a ha ha joke

but an Existential Humour Club type joke

(see appropriate poem)

second

deconstruct the first line

it won’t be hard — it only means what it says

but it is a warning/hint/signpost

it tells you what is ahead

that this poem will be part of a series

that will attempt to tie knots in your mind

third

deconstruct the second line

it won’t be hard either

it is the headline to the poem

it telegraphs the meaning

it is the last clue you get

but be warned, it may be a head fake

fourth

read the body of the poem

i can’t help you much with this one now

some of the poems are serious

others are not

it’s up to you to decide

each poem analyzes something to do

with the act of poetry

and what meaning i can derive from it

i am The Midnight Deconstructionist

and I am dismantling myself

for your benefit

and not merely for money and fame

you will notice

that there are themes and even phrases

that are common to two or more poems

other than the first line

this is deliberate

it serves to tie the poems together

the overlap is both deliberate

and a result of my (literally)

obsessive thinking

those are the general instructions

now a brief history

deconstruction

is the act of close reading

such that

the parts of the text

(we are talking about text, after all)

are individually dismantled

examined and interpreted

every drop of significance

every iota of meaning

is to be drawn from each word

the word is the basic block

there is nothing to be drawn from letters

letters are merely squiggles

with traditional intent

deconstruction was never really invented

it grew out of a form of criticism

called New Criticism

which was not new at all

and is even less so now

it purports to ignore

the circumstances of writing

and assign meaning only to the text

it often celebrates form over content

this is why deconstruction is superior —

because it emphasizes the whole enchilada

it is also related

to the scientific methods

of reduction

the splitting of a problem into sub-problems

to make understanding the whole easier

and emergence

the interpretation of sub-problems

to make conclusions about the whole

i use the terms loosely

as befits a poet

analyze that, and you have hooks in my eyes

this series is complete as it is

but it is not finished

as long as i write

i will find new aspects of myself

and my writing

which deserve further analysis

it will never be finished

until i am finished

and the Ride of the Midnight Deconstructionist

ends with the horse’s death

and even then

i may live on

in the flogging that will ensue

finally

i wish you to also notice

what i’m sure you’ve already noticed

that this is the final poem in the series

and it’s too late now

this is mean of me

and representative of poetic analysis

it is a comment on the obscurantist nature

of poetry criticism

i have been no help at all

however

you have my permission

to go back to the beginning

and start over

let me give you a hand:

this is a poem

it is a poem about you starting over