



# The Absolution of Roberto Acestes Laing

*Nicholas Rombes*

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"Like a cross between Paul Auster's *The Book of Illusions* and Janice Lee's *Damnation*, *The Absolution of Roberto Acestes Laing* is at once smart and slyly unsettling. It is expert at creating a quietly building sense of dread while claiming to do something as straightforward as describe lost films—like those conversations you have in which you realize only too late that what you actually talking about and what you think you are talking about are not the same thing at all. With Rombes, Two Dollar Radio deftly demonstrates why it is rapidly becoming the go-to press for innovative fiction."

—Brian Evenson

"This hallucinatory and terrifying secret history of film is so meticulously researched and gorgeously written that I wonder if, in fact, Nicholas Rombes has uncovered a lost trove of works by David Lynch, Orson Welles, Antonioni and Jodorowsky somewhere in the California desert. *The Absolution of Roberto Acestes Laing* is post-modern noir at its best: beautiful and nightmarish by turns. I read it late into the night and couldn't put it down."

—Elizabeth Hand

"Suffused with the best elements and obscure conspiracies of Bolaño, Ligotti and speculative fiction, Rombes' work gnaws away at the limits of what a novel looks like. Through the writing of films that never existed, it finds a space at once eerily familiar and entirely of its own."

—Evan Calder Williams

In the mid-'90s a rare-film librarian at a state university in Pennsylvania mysteriously burned his entire stockpile of film canisters and disappeared. Roberto Acestes Laing was highly regarded by acclaimed directors around the globe for his keen eye, appreciation for eccentricity, and creativity in interpretation.

Unsure at first whether Laing is a pseudonym or some sort of Hollywood boogeyman, a journalist manages to track the forgotten man down to a motel on the fringe of the Wisconsin wilds. Laing agrees to speak with the journalist, but only through the lens of the cinema. What ensues is an atmospheric, cryptic extrapolation of movies and how they intertwine with life, and the forgotten films that curse the lost librarian still.

**Nicholas Rombes** teaches in Detroit, Michigan. He is author of *Ramones* from the 33 1/3 series and the book *10/40/70*. His writing has appeared in the *Believer*, *Filmmaker Magazine*, the *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *n+1*, and the *Rumpus*.

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