



How I Solved a Literary Mystery and Learned to Play Kickass Tennis while Coming to Grips with the Disorder of Things

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FIRSTHAND

How I Solved a Literary Mystery and Learned to Play Kickass Tennis while Coming to Grips with the Disorder of Things By Keith Gandal

Firsthand is an exploration—both suspenseful and comic—of the creative process in research writing. The book takes the reader through the ins and outs of a specific research journey, from combing through libraries and archives to the intellectual challenges involved with processing information that contradicts established ideas. More fundamentally, it addresses the somewhat mysterious portion of the intellectual process: the creative and serendipitous aspects involved in arriving at a fruitful research question in the first place.

Keith Gandal combines this scholarly detective story with a comic personal narrative about how a midlife crisis accidentally sent him on a journey to write a research monograph that many in his profession—including at times himself—were dubious about. While researching how Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Faulkner faced their forgotten crises of masculinity, Gandal discovers that his own crisis is instrumental to his creative process. Incorporating stories from Gandal's comic romp through the hyper-competitive world of middle-aged men's tennis, adopting pitbulls, and discussing Michel Foucault, *Firsthand* gives readers an inside look at how to acquire accurate knowledge—about the world, about history, and about oneself.

Keith Gandal is Professor of English with a Joint Appointment in American Studies and Creative Writing at The City College of New York.

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