Contents

Introduction. Approximations, Apologies, Acknowledgments 1

- 1. Inrage: A Lenny Bruce Joke and the Topography of Stand-Up 11
- 2. Nectarines: Carl Reiner and Mel Brooks 28
- 3. Analytic of the Ridiculous: Mike Nichols and Elaine May 50
- 4. Journey to the End of the Night: David Letterman with Kristeva, Céline, Scorsese $\,$ 68 $\,$
- 5. Scatology: Richard Pryor in Concert 83
- 6. Skirting, Kidding: Ellen DeGeneres and Paula Poundstone 104

Notes 125

Works Cited 139

Index 145