

Dan Piepenbring, 'Staff Picks: Conduits, Cockroaches, Colored Paper,' *The Paris Review*, April 14 2017

the PARIS REVIEW

Staff Picks: Conduits, Cockroaches, Colored Paper

By The Paris Review April 14, 2017

THIS WEEK'S READING

Constance DeJong's novel *Modern Love* turns thirty this year, and it's out in a striking new facsimile edition from Primary Information and Ugly Duckling Presse. The book comes kicking and screaming from a vortex of polyphony. Its two hundred pages wander from the downtown New York of the seventies to India to Oregon to Spain in the time of the Armada; it declaims on everything from Elizabethan fashion to the joys of cohabiting with cockroaches, with a long passage that's straight-up science fiction. All of this should induce vertigo, or at the very least whiplash; instead the novel enshrouds the reader in a kind of patchwork quilt, comfortable even as it frays at the edges. Seemingly frenetic, *Modern Love* is ordered with great care; beneath its constant digression it settles into a ruminative, almost stately pace, encouraging capacious feeling on anxiety, sex, death, and work, often all at once. "I'm fanatical about sequence," DeJong told *Bomb* recently, "and how sense and meaning can be made from a system of order that isn't recognizable as alphabetical, chronological—one that has a different mechanism to the structure. That has always been fuel for my writing, and it has never gone away." —**Dan Piepenbring**

MODERN LOVE

CONSTANCE DE JONG

**STANDARD
EDITIONS**