

ACADEMY LEADER

William Gibson

"Ride music beams back to base."

He phases out on a vector of train whistles and the one particular steel-engraved slant of winter sun these manifestations favor, leaving the faintest tang of Plavers Navy Cut and opening piano bars of East St. Louis, this dangerous old literary gentlemen who sent so many of us out, under sealed orders, years ago ...

Inspector Lee taught a new angle

Frequencies of silence: blank walls at street level. In the flat field. We became field operators. Decoding the lattices. Patrolling the deep faults. Under the lights. Machine dreams. The crowds, swept with con ... Shibuya Times Square Piccadilly. A parked car, an arena of grass, a fountain filled with earth. In the slow fall to dawn. Alongside night. In the Hyatt caves. In the hour of the halogen wolves ... The hour remembered. In radio silence ...

Just a chance operator in the gasoline crack of history officer ...

Assembled word cyberspace from small and readily available components of language. Neologic spasm the primal act of pop poetics, Preceded any concept whatever. Slick and hollow — awaiting received meaning.

All I did: folded words as taught. Now other words secrete in the interstices.

"Gentlemen, that is not now nor will it ever be my concern ..."

Not what I do.

I work the angle of transit. Vectors of neon plaza, licensed consumers, acts primal and undreamed of ...

The architecture of virtual reality imagined as an accretion of dreams: tattoo parlors, shooting galleries, pinball arcades, dimly lit stalls stacked with dampstained years of mens' magazines, chilli joints, premises of unlicensed denturists, of fireworks and cut bait, betting shops, sushi bars, purveyors of sexual appliances, pawnbrokers, women counters, love hotels, hotdog stands, tortilla factories, Chinese greengrocers, liquor stores, herbalists, chiropractors, barbers, bars.

These are dreams of commerce. Above them rise intricate barriers, zones of more private fantasy ...

Angle of transit sets us down in front of this dusty card table in an underground mall in the Darwin Free Trade Zone, muzak-buzz of seroanalysis averages for California-Oregon, factoids on EBV mutation rates and specific translocations at the breakpoint near the c-myc-oncogene ...

Kelsey's second week in Australia and her brother is keeping stubbornly incondo, doing television, looping Gladiator Skull and a new Japanese game called Torture Garden. She walks miles of mall that could as easily be Santa Barbara again or Singapore, buying British fashion magazines, shoplifting Italian eye-shadow; only the stars at night are different. Southern Cross, and the Chinese boys skim the plazas on carbonfiber skateboards trimmed with noon. She pauses in front of the unlicensed vendor, his face notched with pale scars of

sun-cancer. He has a dozen cassettes laid out for sale, their plastic cases scratched and dusty. "Whole city in there," he says, "Kyoto, yours for a twenty." She sees the security man, tall and broad, Kevlar-vested, blue-eyed, homing in to throw the old man out, as she tosses the coin on impulse and snatches the thing up, whatever it is, and turns, smiling blankly, to swan past the guard. She's a licensed consumer, untouchable, and looking back she sees the vender squinting, grinning his defiance, no sign of the 20 Dollar coin ...

No sign of her brother when she returns to the condo, She puts on the glasses and the gloves and slots virtual Kyoto ...

"Once perfected, communication technologies rarely die out entirely; rather, they shrink to fit particular niches in the global info-structure. Crystal radios have been proposed as a means of conveying optimal seed-planting times to isolated agrarian tribes. The mimeograph, one of many recent dinosaurs of the urban office-place, still shines with undiminished samisdat potential in the century's backwaters, the Late Victorian answer to desktop publishing. Banks in uncounted Third World villages still crank the day's totals on black Burroughs adding machines, spooling out yards of faint indigo figures on long, oddly festive curls of paper, while the Soviet Union, not yet sold on throwaway new-tech fun, has become the last reliable source of vacuum tubes. The eight-track tape format survives in the truck stops of the Deep South, as a medium for country music and spoken-word pornography.

The Street finds its own uses for things — uses the manufacturers never imagined. The micro-tape recorder, originally intended for on-the-jump executive dictation, becomes the revolutionary medium of magnetisdat, allowing the covert spread of banned political speeches in Poland and China. The beeper and the cellular phone become economic tools in an increasingly competitive market in illicit drugs. Other technological artifacts unexpectedly become means of communication ... The aerosol can gives birth to the urban graffiti matrix. Soviet rockers press homemade flexidisks out of used chest x-rays ..."

Fifteen stones against white sand.

The sandals of a giant who was defeated by a dwarf.

A pavillion of gold, another of silver.

A waterfall where people pray ...

Her mother removes the glasses. Her mother looks at the timer, Three hours. "But you don't like games, Kelsey ..."

"It's not a game," tears in her eyes, "It's a city."

Her mother puts on the glasses, moves her head from side to side, removes the glasses.

"I want to go there," Kelsey says.

"It's different now, Everything changes."

"I want to go there," Kelsey insists. She puts the glasses back on because the look in her mother's eyes frightens her. The stones, the white sand: cloud-shrouded peaks, Islands in the stream..

She wants to go there ...

"The targeted numerals of the ACADEMY LEADER were hypnagogic sighs preceding the dreamstate of film."