



transgress

TRANSGRESS

v1n1

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LITANY OF TRANSGRESSIONS

PROLOGUE: Transgression

4

FICITION: Texting the Apocalypse
by Dale Bridges

6

ESSAYS: In the Shadow of the Master:
Two Tributes to Ray Bradbury

8

LIVE FOREVER
by Stephanie Train

THE MOONLESS SLEEP
by Vince Darcangelo

PHOTO ESSAY: Visions of the High Park Fire
by Grace Hood

16

FICITION: Sticky
by Heather Tribbett

24

ENSUING CHAPTERS: July
by Vince Darcangelo

34

EPILOGUE

38

Prologue

Transgression

by Vince Darcangelo

My favorite stories are the ones that make you say, “What the hell is really going on here?” Stories that instill the reader with the fragility of the protagonist, reveal the eggshell cracks of existence and the frayed nerve endings of gray matter. For Poe, it was the ever-present tug of madness at his waistcoat. For Lovecraft, his personal demons manifested as Elder Gods.

Both men made use of the unreliable first-person narrator, what I consider the most powerful voice in fiction. Reality changes when seen through another’s eyes. With the third-person perspective, the writer is drawn to resolution, and the reader infers reason, cause-and-effect, static personality traits and

behaviors. Character A does X, because character B did Y, which led to the unveiling of a long-held Vatican conspiracy.

This is the manufactured narrative of history, perhaps the most unreliable narrator of all.

But the first-person POV... this is the reality of now, unfiltered, raw. To paraphrase Sartre’s Pre-Reflective Cogito: It’s the verb without a subject—or put another way, it’s life without all those annoying nouns getting in the way.

Poe used it to infuse his anxiety within others and lure them into his shadows. What makes him the greatest horror writer of all time is not the blackness of his deeds, but rather that the thoughts and implores of his protagonists make their actions seem reasonable. Lovecraft achieved a similar effect in his own fashion. The Great Cthulhu notwithstanding, the real horror of his vision was existential: No matter

the incantation, whether the horror came from beyond or below, the thing that often trips the narrator’s wires is the realization that he brought it on himself, either through ritual, through misdeed or by simply asking too many questions.

Fittingly, the narrators seldom die in Lovecraft’s stories. They go mad. Death isn’t scary. The true terror is to go on living following a horrific revelation.

Enter *Transgress* magazine.

This publication aims to follow in the tradition of Poe and Lovecraft, wherein traditional narrative structure is blindfolded, dosed with psychedelics and left in the woods. I’m not talking about experimental, post-modern, post-structuralist, meta-beta sub-textual magical realism. I’m talking about transgressions: to subvert the ordinary, to strive beyond the average, to twist and exploit the familiar into an alien landscape.

When people talk about transgressive fiction, the usual names that come up are Chuck Palahniuk, Irvine Welsh, Charles Bukowski, George Bataille. Yes, yes, yes and hell yes. But also think J.G. Ballard, Anthony Burgess, Ryu Murakami, Bret Easton Ellis, Iain Banks and early Ian McEwan. These are some of our favorite authors, and authors that are transgressive in nature, even if they don’t fit snugly into the genre of transgressive fiction.

If you’re still not clear about what qualifies as transgressive fiction... you’re not alone. It’s not a genre identified by tropes, but rather illustration. Nabakov’s *Lolita*, for example, in which the author acclimates the reader to Humbert’s twisted stirrings. Bataille’s *Story of the Eye*, which eroticizes suicide and sacrilege. Do some research on American publisher Grove Press. Reread *Crime and Punishment* with a keener eye.

So that’s that.

Now, what defines *Transgress* magazine? We’re not sure. We’re not sure if we’ll ever be sure, frankly. For now, it is a monthly digital publication featuring myself and some awesome writers that I know. The goal is to hone our craft and share our literary subversions with those who share a common interest.

And now, on to the transgressions...

Texting the Apocalypse

by Dale Bridges

hey sara.
hey kelsie.
u hear bout the end of the world?
yeah. bummer.
i know right?
right.
fire and brimstone.
yeah. brimstone smells like ick.
totaly.
BTW, ricky sutton talked 2 me 2day.
no way.
way.
THE ricky sutton?
yeah.

no way.
way! way! way!
cool. just a sec. my parentz r totally
freakin out bout the zombies.
yeah. this apokalips is lame.
tell me bout it. yestrday my bro got
fed to The Beast.
the cute bro or the 1 w zits.
cute.
oh. sorry.
its k. i get his room.
score.
i know.
did u see the skirt jenny wore for the
genocide?

i know. totaly 2009.
yeah, i was like, That skirt is totally
2009!
good one.
right?
hey. gotta go. my stupid mom wants
me to join a cult with her.
which 1?

the 1 that werships a pole with a
photo of tom hanks on it.
cool. the tom hanks pole cult is the
best. suzie is a membr.
sweet. see you in hell.
totaly.

Check out more of Dale Bridges' writing at www.dalebridges.org.

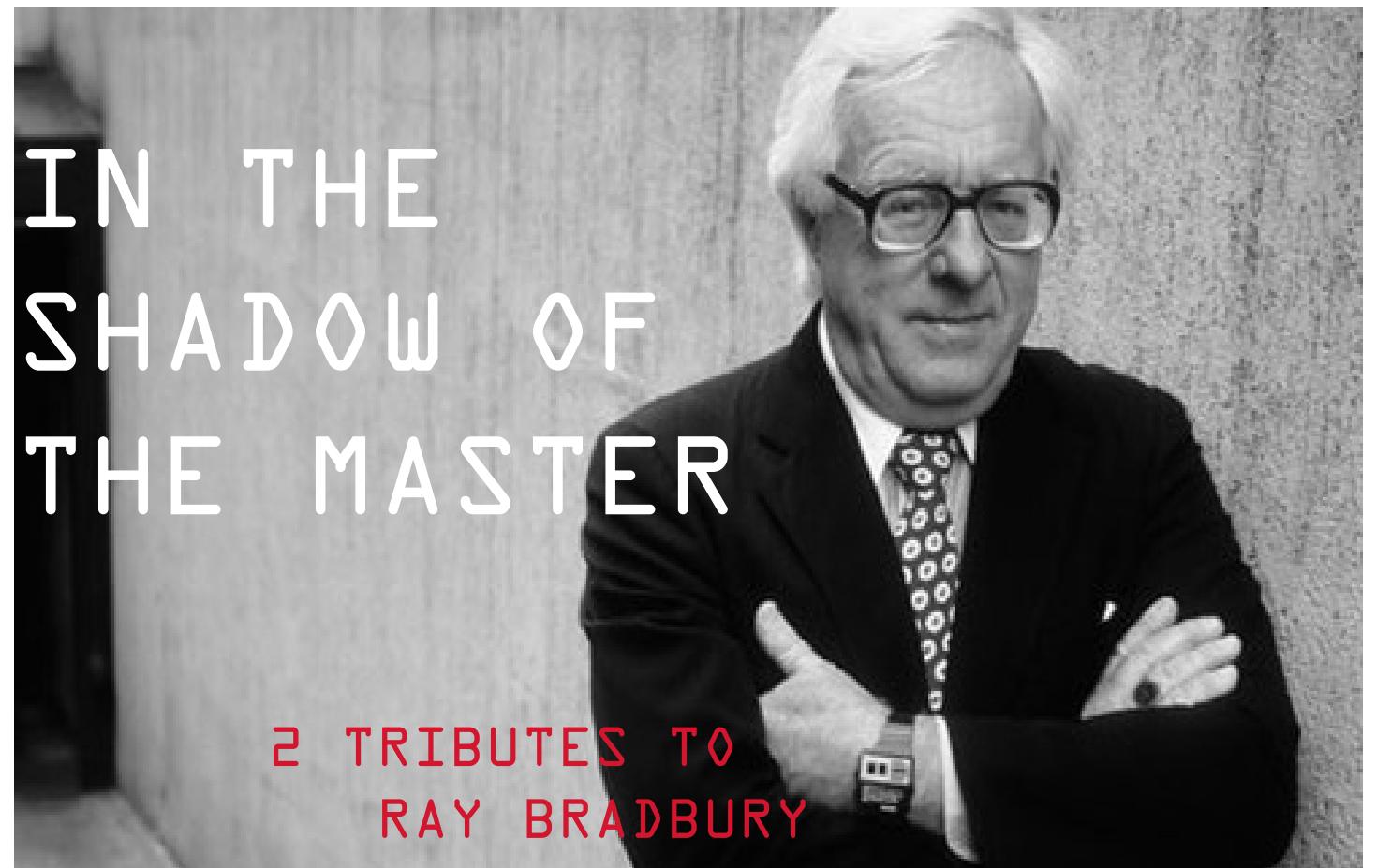
Had enough of the "Misfit"?
**Try Connor O'Flannery's
“A Good Man is Hard to Find”**



Pleasure Quill

**“It’s safer than picking up men on
backcountry roads.” --Grandma**

Dale Bridges



LIVE FOREVER

by Stephanie Train

When you are young, you dream big. There is a memory I have. I was seven or eight and I was spending the night at my cousin's house. She and her two sisters showed me this game where they would walk around the edge of their waterbed and try not to fall into the middle (hot lava or shark-infested waters). As we maneuvered the wooden frame, pocked with scratches and Crayola, I said, "I'm going to be an author."

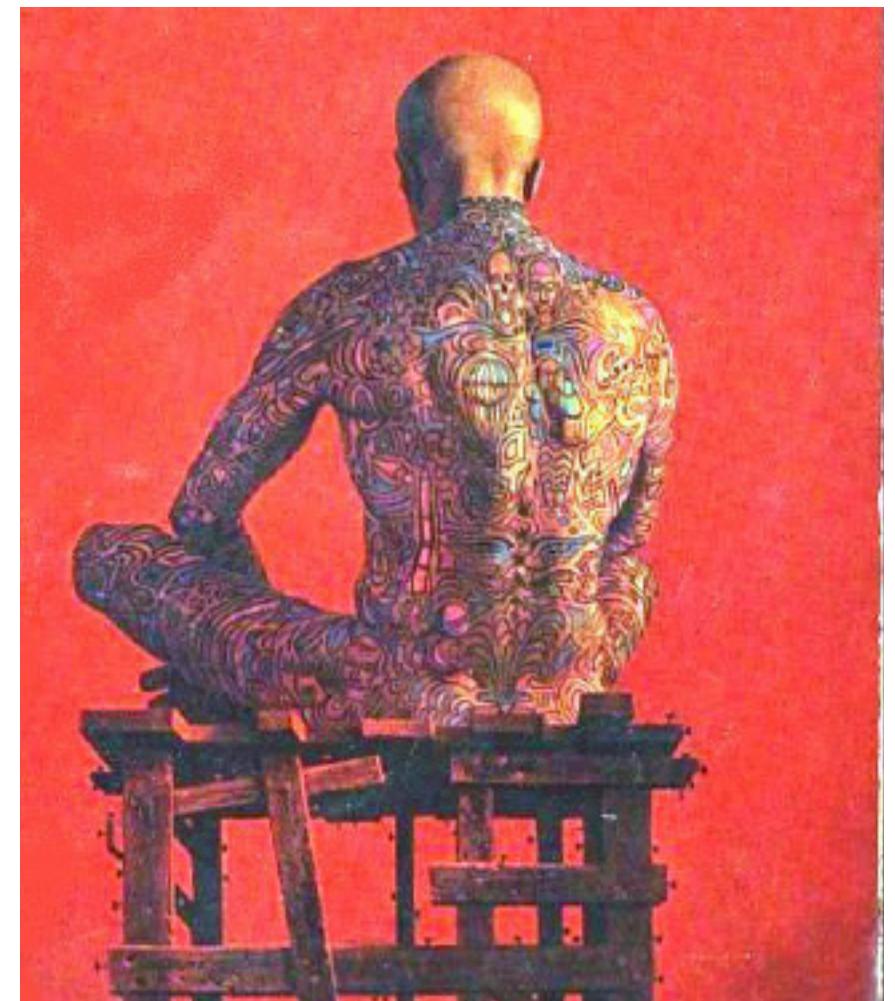
I don't know what prompted me to say that, but I did. "I'm going to write books." My cousins, being the stalwart dreamers they were (and still are), said, "That sounds pretty good. OK."

As you grow, people begin to shine a bright, ugly light on your dreams. Namely adults. They pat your head and say, "Hey, that's cute that you want to be an author, but let's think about doing something else. How about becoming a secretary? Boy, you sure can type fast!"

Ray Bradbury was one of the only adults that told me it was okay to dream big. I never met the man or talked to him personally. But he spoke to me through his writing. He was my very first muse.

The first story I read of Bradbury's was "The Dwarf." I found an old, ratty copy of *The October Country* in a pile of my parents' old books. "The Dwarf" was about a little person who worked in a carnival. After he finished the long day, he would go into the house of mirrors and find the one mirror that made him look tall and thin, or, in his eyes, normal. As many stories like this go, someone found out about his mirror and chose to play a cruel prank. That story broke my heart and delighted me all the same.

The Illustrated Man came next, followed by *R is for Rocket*, and *S is for Space*. I consumed Bradbury at an alarming rate. His stories took me to the edge of my imagination, whether it was a married couple hiding in the recesses of our past, a lone astronaut jettisoned from his craft, hurling toward Earth's atmosphere, or a little girl on Venus who talked endlessly about the sunshine, only to be locked away when it finally appeared.



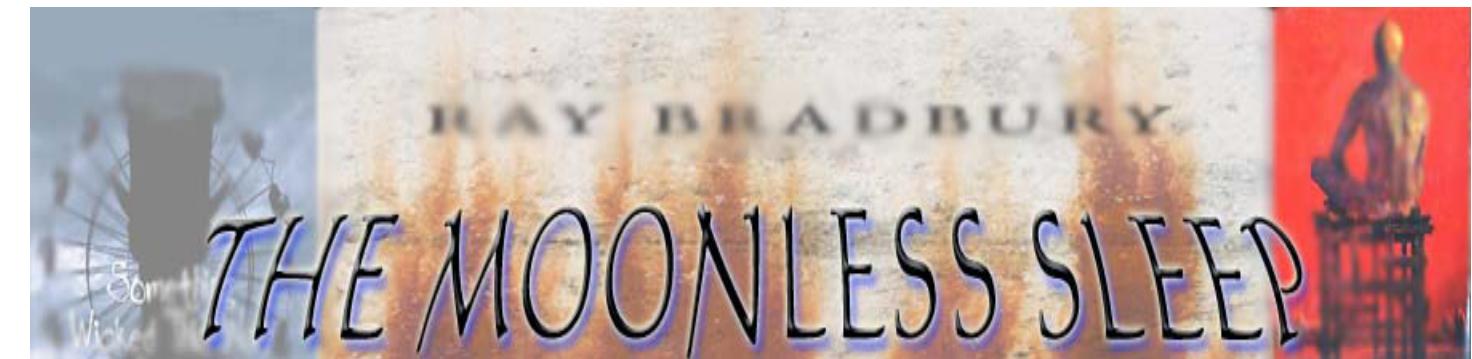
When I first read “The Veldt,” I felt that spark return. Me. An author. Yes, this is what I want to do. Bradbury spoke to me through that text and I’ll never forget what he (and Mr. Electrico) told me: “Live forever!” He found the dreamer in me, gave her a cup of espresso, and put her to work. As for “The Veldt,” the passage that grabbed on to the front of my shirt and gave me a sound shaking is here:

And here were the lions now, fifteen feet away, so real, so feverishly and startlingly real that you could feel the prickling fur on your hand, and your mouth was stuffed with the dusty upholstery smell of their heated pelts, and the yellow of them was in your eyes like the yellow of an exquisite French tapestry, the yellows of lions and summer grass, and the sound of the matted lion lungs exhaling on the silent noontide, and the smell of meat from the panting, dripping mouths.

When someone dies, we’re told to let that physical part of them go. What are left are all the memories, “as fragile, as wondrous, as vulnerable, as lovely as life itself.” Bradbury showed me the railyards, boxcars, the smell of coal and fire from his youth, things that others found ugly. He taught me how to remember the smell of fresh-cut alfalfa on my grandfather’s farm, the light warbling of the ditch near that old apple tree, where I found shade on many summer afternoons. He reminded me of apricot trees that I used to climb, using pieces of rainbow-colored rope to drape in its branches, hoping the birds would mistake them for snakes and leave the fruit alone. He reminded me of swing sets that took my feet into the pink-and-purple skies, and of wildfire lining the sides the mountains, creating a row of orange “V”s along the dark, rainy northern sky.

Today, I’m reminded: Live Forever. To me this means writing. This means putting pen to page, or fingers to keyboard. Above all else it means remembering who I am and that it’s time to make some more memories.

Check out more of Stephanie Train’s writing at www.stephanietrain.com, where this essay originally appeared.



by Vince Darcangelo

Blae on, ye dark carnivals, with the steam-wrought thunder of a midnight train! Gather ye lunatics, barkers and graveyard melancholics along the autumn midway! For Cooger and Dark’s Pandemonium Shadow Show has come for its maker. And sadly, under the Big Tent of terrestrial existence, the Time Carousel spins only one direction. There will be no unwinding of the years. No flip-page fountain of youth. No restoring the burnt ashes to books.

On Tuesday, June 5, Ray Bradbury—master of the grimly fantastic—died at the age of 91. He left behind hundreds of stories, novels, screenplays, teleplays and nonfiction works, spanning 1947’s *Dark Carnival* to last month’s essay, “Take Me Home,” in *The New Yorker*.

Bradbury enthralled a long-ago generation with the possibilities of space travel and the terror of a foreseen dystopia. The man’s got a Hollywood Star, an Emmy, a Pulitzer special citation and has had a moon crater and a freaking asteroid named in honor of his work.

So here’s to one of the true giants of American literature: A bittersweet slug of dandelion wine. Drink hearty, my friends.

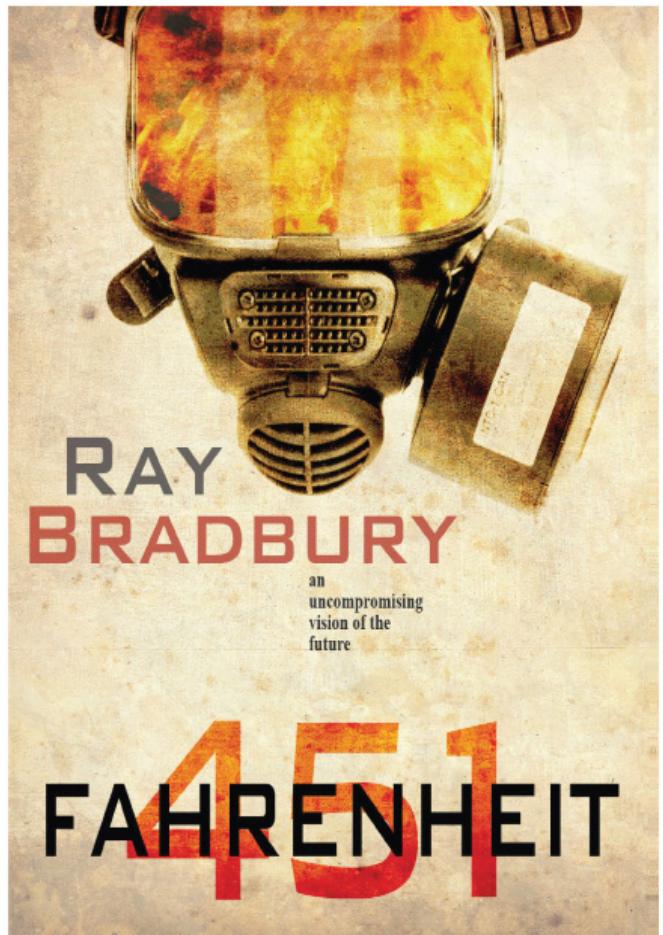
Growing up a horror fan in the 1980s, I worshipped the holy trinity of Poe, Lovecraft and King. But there was always space on my bookshelf for Bradbury. It began during summer vacation—1984 or ’85—when HBO broadcast *Something Wicked This Way Comes*. I watched it every chance. I memorized every scene, every line. I still see the smoke of the train, feel the tickle of the tarantulas

under the sheets and tighten with unease recalling Mr. Dark littering the library floor with the torn pages of Jason Robards' life. I identified with young Will Holloway—the nervous, homebound boy who preferred travels of the imaginary and literary variety over the untamed severity of Jim Nightshade.

So began my infatuation with carnivals and the leitmotif of illusion, midway facades and the bittersweet escapism of the roadside attraction. It's probably why I find carnivals appealing in art and depressing in real life, sort of like a dive bar during the day.

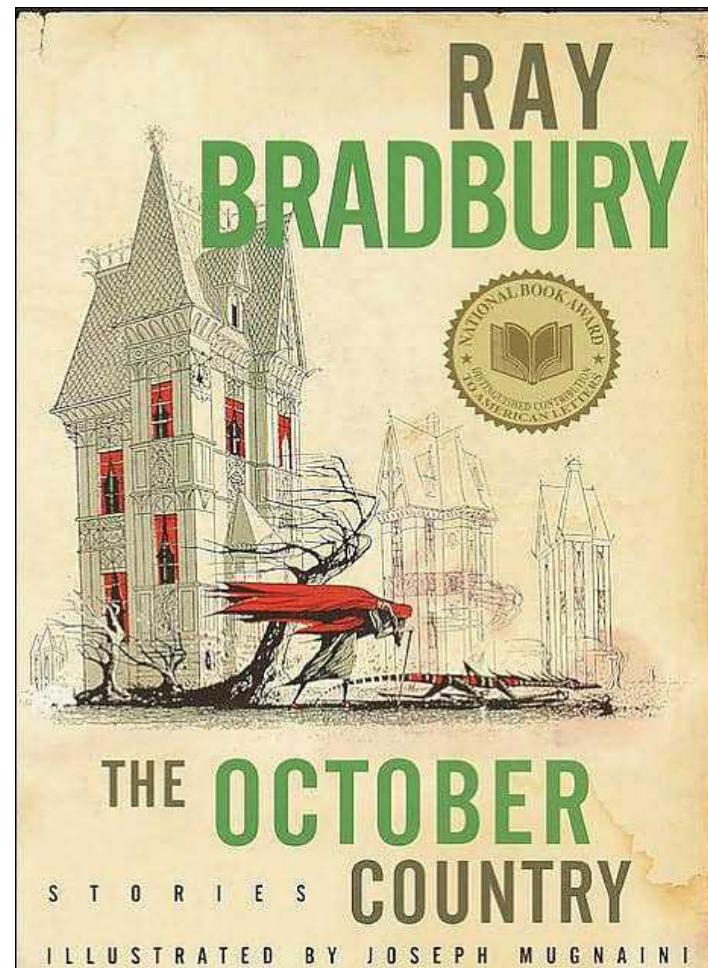
Something Wicked This Way Comes chilled me as a child, then moved me to tears as an adult when I recognized the undertone of melancholia in the narrative. I re-read it in my thirties and realized it was not so much the story of two boys, but rather the story of the father. The old man. Jason Robards in the safety of his library, puffing a pipe in a long-gone American pastoral.

Fahrenheit 451 rallied me as an angry young man, and still rumbles in my blood, much the way the dystopian works of Vonnegut continue to invade my thoughts nearly every



day. We read "A Sound of Thunder" in elementary school, and I still feel the quiver in the back of my neck when we came to the end. And can anyone with an iPhone not consider "There Will Come Soft Rains" as prescient as it is brilliant?

Perhaps my favorite Bradbury work is *The October Country*, a stripped-down version of his story collection *Dark Carnival*. Even now, "The Crowd" is as haunting as ever, "Homecoming" is still creepy as hell, and I was so enamored that I once penned a prequel to "The Wind" as part of my creative writing



thesis at Penn State.

Of all the dark treasures in *The October Country*, none affected me more than "The Scythe," a treatise on the life cycle that feels appropriate in the wake of Bradbury's passing. In the story, a Dust Bowl family breaks down on a dead-end street, starving and desperate. They discover a farmhouse whose owner has died, deeding the property—rich with wheat and livestock—to whomever discovers his corpse.

Of course, there is a tangled string attached. The twist is not a huge surprise, but the story's power

comes from the author's philosophizing on the nature of life and death. Trapped in a *Twilight Zone* dreamscape, protagonist Drew Erickson refuses his grim duty... and reaps an equally grim fate:

... and still they lived, caught halfway, not dead, not alive. Simply—waiting. And all over the world, thousands more just like them, victims of accidents, fires, disease, suicide, waited, slept just like Molly and her children slept. Not able to die, not able to live. (209)

Though best known for his fantastic vision and plotting, there is much to admire in Bradbury's craft. The deceptive modesty of his prose, disguising his poetic bent. His command of flow and revelation. The comforting familiarity of the most unreal environs. How did he do it?

I've been asking that question for a few decades now, but still no luck. His book on craft, *Zen and the Art of Writing*, is one of the most inspiring writing primers ever penned. But like a great magician, Bradbury is just as mysterious whilst revealing his secrets.

I was fortunate to meet the author in June 1999. Bradbury spoke at the Chautauqua Auditorium in Boulder. He discussed his cinematic approach to writing. He said that people sometimes asked him how to adapt one of his stories into a film, a query at which he expressed disbelief. To paraphrase, he answered: Read it from one page to the next. “Page one, scene one.” Write as if you’re making a movie, he implored the aspiring authors in attendance.

Other tips centered on when to write that first novel (Don’t even bother until you’re thirty) and how (by threading together a series of short stories). Short fiction is rough waters for a young author—even someone of Bradbury’s talent. In the early days, he met with publishers who liked his writing, but ultimately turned him down: Call us when you’ve got a novel, they told him. Nobody wants to read short stories.

Undeterred, Bradbury got the last laugh. He repackaged and repitched those rejected story collections as the “novels” *The Martian Chronicles* and *The Illustrated Man*.

He offered other anecdotes and advice, but honestly, I don’t recall much of it. I was too enthralled with

his stories.

I was also shocked by his appearance. For years, he’d used the same photo on his book jackets: a kindly, slim, frost-haired middle-ager. That was my image of him until he hobbled onto the stage, heavyset and a decade or so older than his picture. Throughout the talk, the altitude played hell with his breathing. His hair was shaggy and unkempt.

When the talk was finished, he was helped down a set of stairs to meet with fans. His legs were unsteady as he navigated the steps. An assistant held his left hand. In the right, he clutched a freshly cracked beer bottle. He held it steady and savored a long drink when he reached the small table where he would sign books. A pen in one hand. A beer in the other.

I thought: This is my kind of guy. This is my kind of writer.

I trembled as I approached the table.

Bradbury penned a new introduction to the 1996 edition of *The October Country*. It was fittingly titled, “May I Die Before My Voic-

es.” It refers to the muses that compel him to write—the daily imaginings that inspire his stories. To some, those voices would be a burden, a form of madness. For Bradbury, it was his *raison d'être*.

He closes his introduction with the breathtaking lines: “If some morning in the future I wake and there is silence, I’ll know my life is over. With luck, on my last day, the voices will still be busy and I will still be happy.” (viii).

I can’t say if the voices were still speaking to him on June 5, but I feel comfortable saying that Bradbury’s voice is as resonant as ever. More than half a century after the release of *Fahrenheit 451*, dystopian literature still tops the best-seller and box-office charts. The universe is as mysterious as ever, and we have yet to walk on Mars or time-travel to hunt dinosaurs.

For these reasons, his timeless visions will continue to enthrall. I will certainly die before Bradbury’s voice gives out, and I’m happy to think that there will come future generations that will be equally comforted and inspired by his words. His prose that rockets off the page, that transports the reader in

time, space, and can elicit moisture in the eye as effortlessly as a scream in the throat.

Bradbury’s gone, but his voice remains. To thrill us. To haunt us. To fill us with wonder. To remind us that we need not fear the voices in our own heads ever going silent. Because hopefully, surely, our voices will resonate beyond our meager, terrestrial lives.

For more of Vince Darcangelo’s writing, visit www.vincedarcangelo.com.

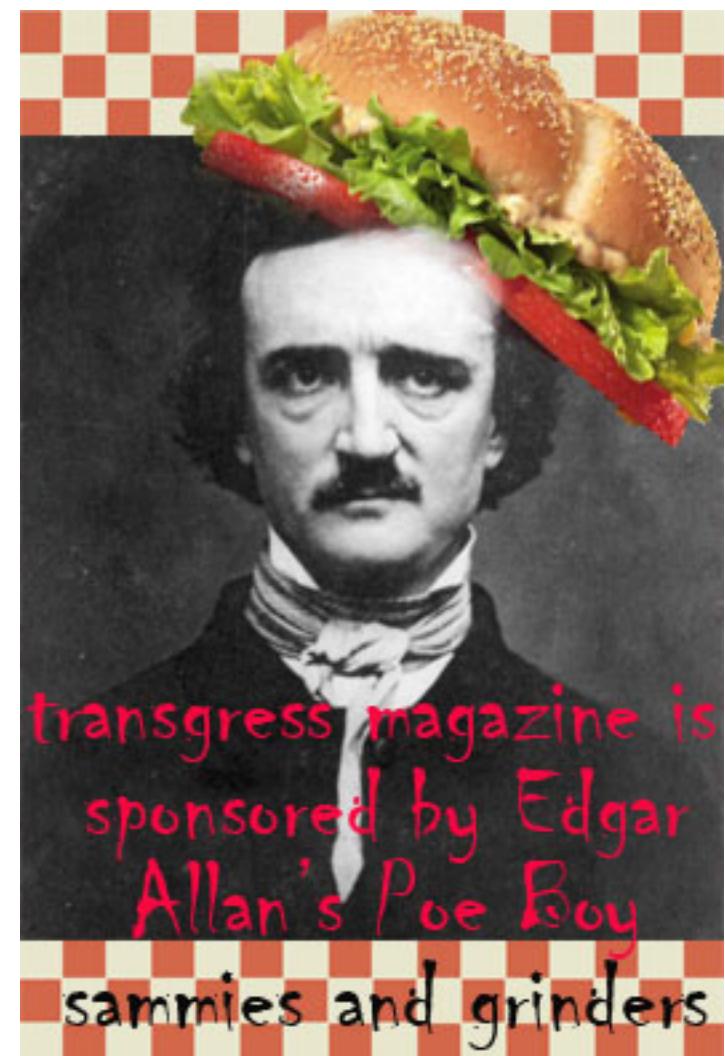




PHOTO ESSAY:
VISIONS OF THE HIGH PARK FIRE
BY GRACE HOOD

**"THIS WORLD . . . EVER WAS, AND IS, AND SHALL BE,
EVER-LIVING FIRE, IN MEASURES BEING KINDED
AND IN MEASURE GOING OUT."**

— HERACLITUS



An up-close look at a burnt hillside near Picnic Rock

On June 9, a lightning strike near Fort Collins set off the High Park Fire, at the time the most destructive wildfire in Colorado history. Grace Hood, of KUNC radio, has covered the fire extensively, documenting both breaking news and the personal toll it has taken.

Her photos capture the destructive power of flame, which the Greek philosopher Heraclitus deemed the primary element. Fire is a symbol of change, and Heraclitus believed that we do not exist in a state of being, but rather a state of becoming. The High Park Fire reminds us that we live on a dynamic, ever-evolving planet. And the natural forces that molded our landscape into what it is today continue to transform it into what it is becoming.

To learn more about the fire, download audio and video clips and subscribe to Grace Hood's podcast, visit www.kunc.org/people/grace-hood.



Driving along Highway 14 in Poudre Canyon, scorched hillsides prevail

Opposite Page (Top): This pit toilet, at a pull off along Highway 14, was completely demolished. Yards away, green grass is still growing inbetween panes of cement near the outhouse.

Opposite Page (Below): While the pit toilet didn't make it, a large wooden sign did.





Above left and right: The flames were visible all over the city, such as south Fort Collins, where these photos were taken.



Below: Twilight in a north Fort Collins meadow. A faint smoke plume wafts from the High Park burn area.



“EVERYTHING FLOWS, NOTHING STANDS STILL.”

HERACLITUS

“NOTHING ENDURES BUT CHANGE.”

Sticky

by Heather Tribbett

There are many ways to kill a mouse. The snap devices that warp the rodents into uncontained messes seem crude. The spin and destroy contraptions cost an ungodly amount. Sonic pulses appear as effective as a blind, clumsy cat and poison, aside from the moral objections, can leave rotting corpses stinking behind finished walls.

None of these options appealed to Flannigan. She stood for nearly a half hour in the aisle under the sign "Insecticide," reading labels and weighing possible outcomes before finally settling on glue paper lining a shallow, black tray. She wasn't feeling overrun by the little, grayish brown creatures yet. The mice in her house had only recently moved in.

They took up residence in the lower cupboards and drawers in Flannigan's kitchen. She found their evidence in tiny black pellets in the corners, between the boxes of wraps and plastic bags, and among her clean, folded towels. She was disgusted—thoroughly irritated for the entire week she had to wait for her paycheck to clear before purchasing the mouse eradicator. A perfect place for it sat back behind the trash can under the sink. Flannigan took it home, tucked it away, and checked it once before leaving for work.

No dice.

Second shift—the two-to-eleven schedule in the injection molding business—was the same as the first and third. Flannigan sat at one machine for the majority of her eight hours. The work was constant, repetitive, a cycle of minor activity: plugging in rough fiberglass plates, removing them after the press, clipping the nubs off the edges of



"What's that shit-eatin' grin for?" Teri stood on a ladder above Flannigan, pouring more material into her machine.

"I'm gonna catch some mice, unless they're already caught." Flannigan's fingertips tapped together in a sinister, undulating motion.

Teri shook her large, wind-burned face as she climbed down the ladder. Her round body was thick, powerful, and her straw-yellow hair lie straight, chopped short around her face. A bandana, tied Rambo-style across her forehead, was stained with sweat. "You up for a break? Let's go smoke."

Flannigan was almost finished with her first quota and a cigarette sounded good. She gave a shrug and fell in line behind Teri out the side door to the splintered picnic table.

"So, you got mice huh?" Teri asked.

"Yeah."

"You know, you kinda look like a mouse." Teri released a cackle and punched Flannigan in the arm.

the finished product, and plug, and pull, and clip, and plug, and pull, and clip. The end result was little, formed fiberglass pieces whose function had something to do with computers.

The machines hindered conversation with their clamoring, leaving Flannigan to her thoughts most of the time. She thought about her mice, visualized them scurrying about in her space, eating her food, soiling her belongings. She thought about their little feet sticking to the glue, unable to carry their gross little bodies around.

Flannigan scowled. She was well aware of her triangle profile; her pointy nose, steeply sloped forehead and receding chin. "Only when I turn sideways," she said bitterly.

"Aw, come on now," Teri said. "It ain't no thing. At least you don't look like a swollen pimple." She threw her arms out for Flannigan to behold.

Flannigan appreciated Teri's attitude, what she thought of as a fart-in-the-wind style. Heavy hours of labor in every kind of weather, not to mention the self-medicating, the herpes, the red meat and fried potatoes Teri freely disclosed of during breaks, had weathered her unkindly. Her personality was very much like the solid footsteps she took, the rise and fall, the kind of clomp that leaves a deep print. Teri's genuine-like quality was one reason Flannigan associated with her. She also liked that Teri wasn't one to put her work onto other people, ask for a few bucks here or there, or beg rides all over town, unlike the other idiots Flannigan worked with. Teri had never made Flannigan feel manipulated or taken advantage of.

"Yeah, yeah, whatever. Are you done with your quota?"

"Sure, yeah, it's done." Teri took

a drag. "You got plans tonight?"

Flannigan hesitated. She never saw her coworkers outside the warehouse. The distance felt safe, smart. The less she knew the better. When she was first hired on through the temp agency, an invitation was extended to her with a side note to bring her own pipe. When she said she didn't have one, she was told a light bulb would do. Flannigan did not inquire, nor did she attend. They still, occasionally, asked her to join them, but it was because they needed something. Teri had always taken care of her own stuff and never imposed herself on Flannigan before.

"Hey, Spacey McSpacealot, what're you doin' after work?" Teri snapped her fingers in Flannigan's face.

"I've got to go home," Flannigan said, deciding to maintain their civil and separate relationship.

"Got to, huh? Got to check yer mice?"

It seemed to Flannigan that Teri had taken some offense. "Well yes. It's an emergency, yeah? They could kill me with their pee," she explained of her own necessity.

"I could kill you with my pee," Teri cackled. "Listen, I just need a

ride home. Those fuckers took my license last week and Madge has been givin' me rides, but today she's sick, barfed all over the bedroom floor—thank God it was all on her side of the bed. I know it's no hangover. Her temp's a hundred'n two."

"I guess I could give you a ride," Flannigan said.

"Alright!" Teri cheered. "You're all right, Flannigan."

When the minute hand finally completed the eleventh hour, Flannigan had plugged, removed, and clipped nearly three hundred parts. She happily turned her machine over to the third-shift guy and started for her car, completely forgetting about Teri. She wanted to see about the trap.

Teri would not be forgotten, however. She was leaning against the silver, shiny sedan's hood with a cigarette in hand. Flannigan remembered and smiled as though she'd expected Teri to be there all along. "So, where to?"

Teri grinned back. "By the tracks, down south." Flannigan unlocked the car with the remote button. "Nice car," Teri said and jerked

the door open. "Smells new. Is it new?"

Flannigan grinned. "It's new to me." Teri moved to put her cigarette out on the pavement. "Don't worry about it," Flannigan assured. "I'm gonna have one too."

"Alright," Teri half sung and rolled her window down a crack. Flannigan fastened her seatbelt and looked at Teri expectantly. Teri fastened her belt.

The streets were wet, glimmering under the moonlit sky. The wan-ning crescent's light didn't hinder the stars. They flashed as brightly as ever among the thin, shadowed clouds. Flannigan loved the clean smell of spring. She inhaled deeply before lighting her smoke.

Traffic was sparse and all the lights down the main road were green. They rode in awkward silence until Teri began fiddling with Flannigan's programmed radio stations: public access and talk shows. "Did the stereo come with the car?"

"Yep."

"It's a pretty good one. Do you have any CDs?"

"No," Flannigan lied.

Teri humphed shortly in thought, reclined, and looked out

the window. "Whered you get it?"

"What?"

"The car?"

"Oh, well, my grandmother gave it to me. It was her town car."

"What's wrong with it?"

"Nothing. She upgraded. She said I should have it because I look better in grays than browns and rust. I think she just hated my other car."

Teri chuckled, her enormous boobs shook. "Nice grandma. I like her leftovers."

Flannigan liked the car, too. It was a difficult choice, whether or not to accept it. The condition of the car itself was not the only condition she had to consider. Her grandmother was crazy, all around crazy with strange expectations of the world and of those around her. She sought perfection in the whites of her furniture fabrics and the plush carpets that covered both floors of her beachside townhouse. All her tables were clear glass and brass. A tiny smudge possessed the power to evoke the crazier side within. Flannigan figured it was a strain of dementia. She hoped it wasn't genetic.

"Hey, uh, can we make a quick stop?" Teri flicked her butt out the window and rolled it up. "It's right

over there, two blocks. I left something."

Flannigan shrugged. "I guess so," she said, since it was just around the corner. Teri guided her into an alley and had her park behind a dark house.

"Come on with me. Wade's a cool guy. You're cool, right?"

"Cool? I guess I am."

"Damn right you are," Teri crowed, and hoisted herself out of the car.

Flannigan felt uncomfortable standing under the small awning over the back door. She felt intrusive. "Maybe I should wait in the . . ."

A thumping sound, someone bounding toward the door, startled her. The misshapen screen became apparent when the bright, naked bulb under the canopy lit up.

"Yeah, what?"

"I'm here to see Wade. He's in, right?" Teri asked.

The door popped open and a skinny man without a shirt stood in the way. Flannigan tried not to notice his tiny nipples pasted to his boney chest.

"Always," he said with a smile. He turned to Flannigan and pumped his bushy eyebrows a couple times.

"You're here to see Wade too?" Flannigan shrugged and nodded. The man's smile deepened and he stood aside.

The back door opened to a platform at the nexus of two flights of stairs. The one on the right led up. Flannigan followed Teri down to the left. The stairs were steep and narrow, wooden and painted green. She didn't touch the walls. A moldy smell, stale and pungent, saturated the air. The grimace was hard to resist, but Flannigan managed.

"Aye, Wade!" Teri shouted. "You up?"

"Teri? Sure, yeah, come on in."

Wade's room blushed a hazy bluish color that emanated from his computer screen. Flannigan stepped in and stood aside, behind Teri.

"What's up man?" Teri asked.

"Nothin', nothin'. Si'down. Make yourselves comfortable," said the squat, balding man over his shoulder. He was engaged in a digital battle.

A small couch sat against the wall opposite the bed, a mattress on the floor. It was messy. Blankets and sheets piled over the center made it look like a nest. Above the bed was a small window hardly big enough

for a cat to squeeze through. Wade sat in a swivel chair that squeaked loudly as he turned from his computer to meet Teri and Flannigan. He inspected them through a pair of thick lenses. "Sit, please."

Flannigan smiled politely and peeled her foot from the tacky carpet. She didn't allow her lip to curl in disgust as she made her way around the disheveled clothes strewn about among food delivery boxes. "Thanks," she said. Her grandmother might be crazy, but she knew proper behavior and had passed it on to Flannigan at an early age.

"This here is Flannigan. We work together," Teri said.

"Wade," he replied, extending a shaky hand. Flannigan shook it. He glanced at his computer.

"Have you bought the horse yet?" Teri asked, sitting on the couch while craning her neck to view the game. Flannigan sat on the other end of the couch, deep in a well-formed groove. She tried to be comfortable, failed, and scooted up on the edge leaning forward, arms on her lap.

"Naw." Wade swiveled back to the machine. He moved the mouse

around—click, click, click. “Still short. Looting the dead is a slow process.”

Flannigan understood then that Teri had been less than truthful about leaving something in Wade’s den. She could have kicked herself for not heeding her first instinct—to not give Teri a ride at all. Teri and Wade discussed the logistics of the world on screen for a good ten minutes before a tall, green and blue vial was produced. Flannigan politely declined, choosing to sit and pretend that all was normal and fine instead of causing a scene. “I have to drive,” she explained.

Wade emptied the chamber and asked through a thick cloud of smoke, “Your car electric?”

Flannigan shook her head. “Fraid not, but the gas mileage is good.” She blew the smoke away from her face.

He passed the pipe to Teri. “I’m designing an engine that runs on just water, just H₂ fucking O. I’ve got a buddy who knows about cars. We’re working together on this. I’m gonna change the world man,” he said, his magnified eyes widening and narrowing.

Teri was bobbing her head up

and down. “That’s fucking awesome.”

Flannigan wasn’t sure if she understood. “The car would need only water to run?”

“That’s right,” Wade said with pride. He leaned back in his chair, hands clasped behind his head.

“But, what moves the water?”

He circled his hands around in the air. “It’s a cyclical process. It’ll perpetuate itself.”

Flannigan frowned. “But, doesn’t there need to be something to initiate the cycle?”

“Yeah, there’ll be another source, but the amount of incoming energy would be significantly less than what we use now.”

Flannigan hesitated, not wanting to appear skeptical, but the design flaw seemed important to note, so she said, “Sure, but what about in the winter? Wouldn’t the water freeze?”

Wade sighed. Flannigan wasn’t sure if it was a sigh of pity for her ignorance or if he was just getting annoyed with all her questions. He ran his fingers back through the few, stringy, brown hairs on top of his head. “We’re still working some things out. I heard the Japanese are

already on this.” He took the vial back and hit it again.

“I have a cousin in Japan.” Flannigan was glad to have something seemingly relevant and completely off subject to contribute to the conversation.

Wade clapped his hands together, almost missing the palm-to-palm contact, and exclaimed, “Awesome! I’m going there one day. I’m gonna go to school there.”

“Yeah? What for?” Flannigan asked, more to be courteous than out of curiosity.

“I’ve got a wicked idea for a vampire game I wanna design. These aren’t going to be the traditional kind of vampires, not evil, you know? It’s gonna be a virus.” Wade gave a detailed description of a plot that sounded like a few television shows Flannigan had seen.

She kept Wade’s eyes and tried to appear interested, but didn’t say anything. Teri didn’t either. She was lounging back, her head propped against the top of the couch, staring at the crumbly ceiling. Gradually, Wade talked himself back to the computer and clicked a siren to death.

“Well, we gotta get goin,” Teri

said finally. “I gotta get home. Madge is sick.”

“Yeah, sure, uh . . .” Wade finished inspecting the virtual fish-woman for goods and pushed his chair back a bit. From under the desk, he pulled out a glass jar. Flannigan studied the lewd photos of naked women on the yellow stained walls as Teri and Wade exchanged confidence.

Wade stood. His legs bowed in at the knees and he shook as he swung them one at a time through the door. He used the walls for support. Teri and Flannigan followed him out. At the bathroom, Wade stopped and leaned against the wall to let them through.

“Good to see you again,” Teri said with a smile.

“It was nice to meet you,” Flannigan offered.

“Nice to meet you, too. Don’t have too much fun now.”

Flannigan was glad to be back in her car. The fresh air made her feel welcomed. Her clean, firm seat felt good. She felt empowered.

“Look, I don’t feel comfortable transporting illegal . . .” Flan-

nigan started once Teri was settled in.

“Bah,” Teri half barked. “Don’t worry. If we get pulled over, I’ll just stick it in ma’ cooter. Cops never look there.”

Flannigan hated feeling trapped, but she was in too deep. Kicking Teri out now could mean backlash at work, drama she didn’t need or want. She resigned, stuck to the cause. Better to just get Teri home, and never give her a ride again.

“We go way back,” Teri began, “Wade and me went to high school together. He married my sister’s best friend and they moved to Reno for a while. I stayed with them for a year.”

“Where am I going?”

Teri’s eyes widened. “Oh right! Go back to Main Street. It’s a little further south. By the tracks.”

Teri unfolded the story of Wade in rapid fact bursts. By the time they reached Teri’s house, Flannigan knew a number of intimate and disturbing details about the man: his MS and syphilis were working him over, his wife of twelve years had left him, and he was living on the government’s dime. His life had been a string of carnal pursuits,

some of which Flannigan had never heard of before, nor wished to hear of again.

Teri made Wade sound like an adventurer, “Sure, he made some bad choices, but he was exploring. You can’t judge a man for exploring.” Through most of it, Flannigan had merely nodded and drove, striving not to absorb too much.

Teri stepped out of the car onto the curb. “Hey, thanks for the ride.”

Flannigan smiled mechanically and waved goodbye.

Her ride home was plagued by a terrible feeling; not a pain, not sickness. More like an ache, but not quite. She carried it inside her house only somewhat aware of her surroundings. She dropped her keys on the table next to the door and her coat on the arm of the plush chair in the corner.

The feeling wasn’t sorrow exactly. She tried to accept it as pity, but that wasn’t right either. She walked through her clean apartment in the dark to the kitchen and flicked on the light. Water was in order. Flannigan watched it swirl into her glass, drifting on the heavy sensation, and

remembered the glue paper under the sink. The idea of a successful catch, of the accomplishment of subduing those dirty, little invaders, lifted her mood. She opened the cupboard.

What she saw was not what she had expected. Flannigan realized her fantasies of tiny feet stuck to the tray were foolish ideas. Three tiny bodies had fused with the glue from their noses to their tails. Their little chests pumped furiously.

Flannigan sighed with dismay and sunk her chin. She couldn’t just throw the mice away. Visions of them slowly starving to death would haunt her. Putting them into the freezer would still take too long. She didn’t have the heart to smash them with something blunt.

So Flannigan put on a latex kitchen glove and held down the glue tray in her bathtub as the water slowly rose. The mice didn’t scream. They squirmed a little, as much as the glue would allow. The bubbles were the worst part, those little breaths of air slipping from tiny mouths, floating to the surface, breaking free.

Contact Heather Tribbett at iamabetterdaisy@yahoo.com.

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ENSUING CHAPTERS

July Book Releases

Vince Darcangelo

July is a great month to catch up on all the great books you've had sitting on the shelf. And while we certainly encourage you to dig deeply into that backlog, our motto here at *Transgress* is that a good life is one long in years and longer on books—that way you never run out of books to read.

Or perhaps a more T-shirt friendly slogan would be (to paraphrase Bradbury): May my heart expire before my library card.

For that reason, it's always good to bring some fresh blood to the bookshelf—and in the case of these new releases, we're talking about blood in the literal sense.

JULY 2

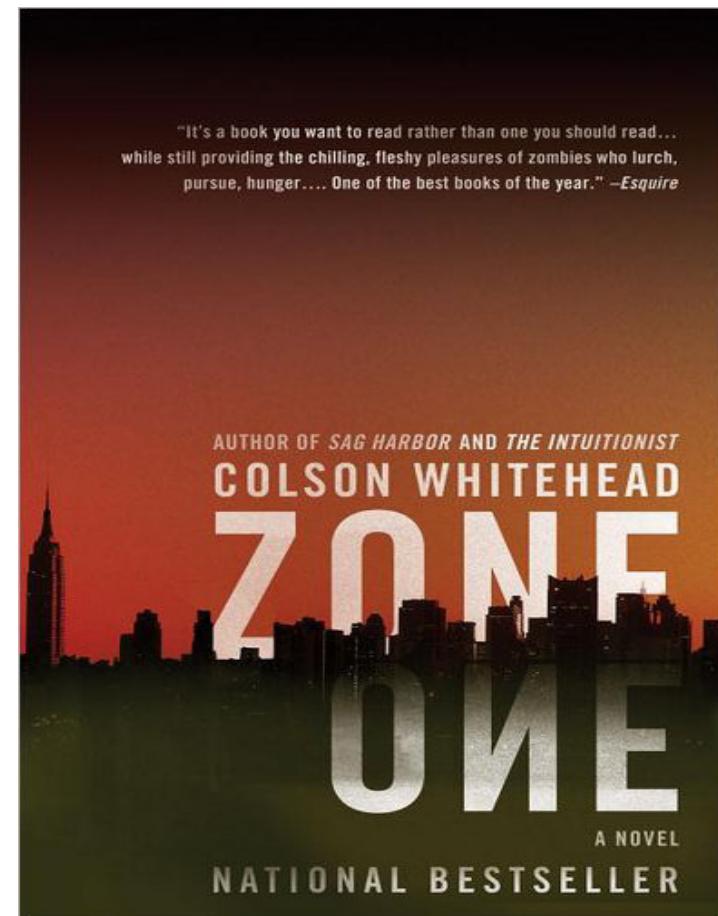
We're not entirely sure what to make of this, but it seems that **Rob Zombie** has a book coming out, a

preview for his much-anticipated film, *Lords of Salem*. Zombie fans have been waiting for a new original work for some time, following the disappointment of two money-grab *Halloween* remakes. *Lords of Salem* the film should be sweet, and a pre-release book of the same name would be icing on the cake.



Other notable releases this week include *The Nightmare* by Swedish thriller writer **Lars Kepler**. *The Nightmare* is the sequel to his international bestseller *The Hypnotist*, and it has already garnered raves in his native land. Keeping with the international theme, prolific Japanese author **Kenzo Kitakata** returns with his latest hardboiled thriller, *City of Refuge*.

Anthology fans receive an Independence Day treat with the July 4 release of *The Year's Best Dark Fantasy and Horror 2012*, featuring more than 500 pages of frights.



JULY 9

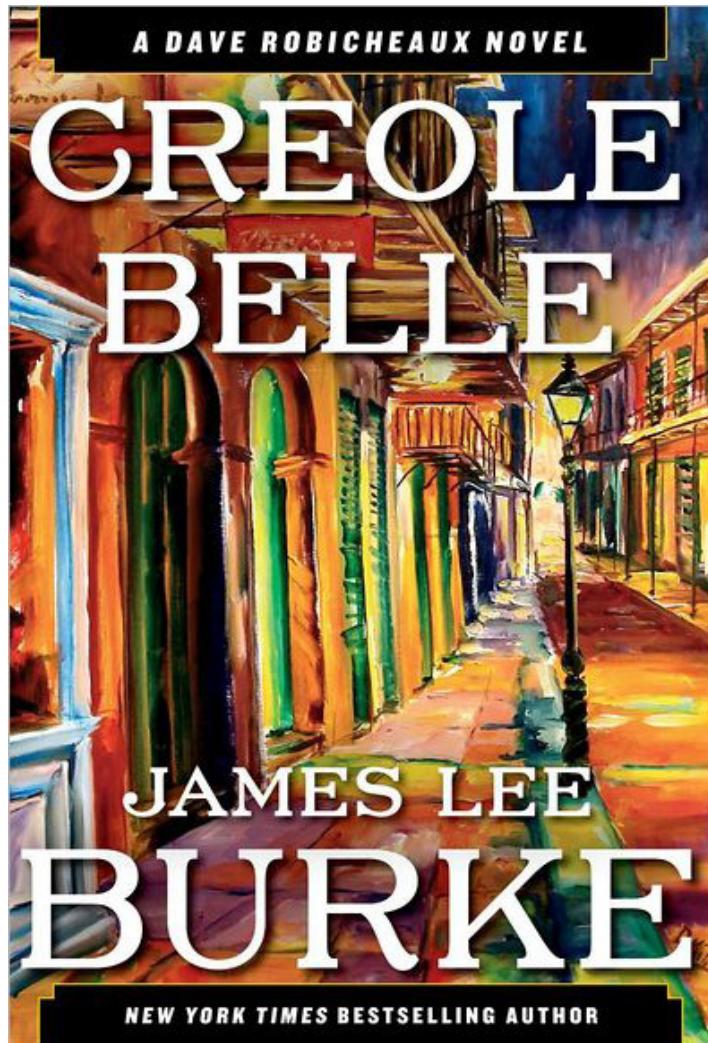
Upon its hardcover release, I was skeptical of **Colson Whitehead's** *Zone One*—a literary take on the zombie apocalypse. Having learned more about the author, however, I've added it to my “to-read” list. This isn’t a literary snob taking a cheap shot at genre. Whitehead has had a lifelong love affair with all things geek. His essay, “A Psychotronic Childhood,” (http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2012/06/04/120604fact_whitehead) should be required reading for all college English majors, and the paperback release of *Zone One* should make excellent summer reading for all you transgressors.

Shadow Show is a collection of stories inspired by and in tribute to Ray Bradbury, featuring work by Dave Eggers, Margaret Atwood, Neil Gaiman, Joe Hill and others. Speaking of **Joe Hill**, he has produced, along with artist **Gabriel Rodriguez**, the graphic series *Locke & Key*. The first volume, *Welcome to Lovecraft*, is being released as a special edition hardcover on July 10.

I am a huge fan of Russian novelists, and on July 15, renowned anthologist **Otto Penzler** presents the paperback edition of ***The Greatest Russian Stories of Crime and Suspense***. This compendium features such heavyweights as Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Gogol, Gorky, Pushkin and Nabakov. Some of the all-time greatest writers at their all-time grittiest. Sign me up.

JULY 16

The great James Lee Burke,



master of scene description, continues his Dave Robicheaux mystery series with ***Creole Belle***. In this installment, our complicated hero is fighting morphine addiction, personal demons and the ever-present Bayou bad guys. What makes Burke's novels so engaging is that his protagonists are vulnerable, troubled—more haunted than hunted. For Robicheaux, the past is as great an adversary as any criminal, and this makes him the most well-rounded literary figure in the mystery genre. I can't wait to see what Burke is cooking up for us this time.

Essayist **Jim Holt** reframes the big question of how we got here in ***Why Does the World Exist?: An Existential Detective Story***. This philosophical work of nonfiction noir calls a lineup as colorful as *The Usual Suspects* in this historic whodunit.

JULY 23

This week sees the paperback release of **Stephen King**'s magnificent counterfactual tome, ***11/22/63***. Concerning the JFK assassination, I was at first skeptical about this work of alternate reality. But King delivers one of his best-ever books—this one

about a small-town teacher discovers a time portal in the back of a burger joint. This book takes on issues of history and politics, but it is the human narrative that drives it. The result is an epic work as heartbreaking as it is harrowing.

In the academic arena, ***Spider Monkeys: The Biology, Behavior and Ecology of the Genus Ateles*** hits the shelves on July 26. This collection of published and previously unpublished research explores the secret lives of these adorable primates. Hey, it's a book about spider monkeys. How can that miss?

JULY 30

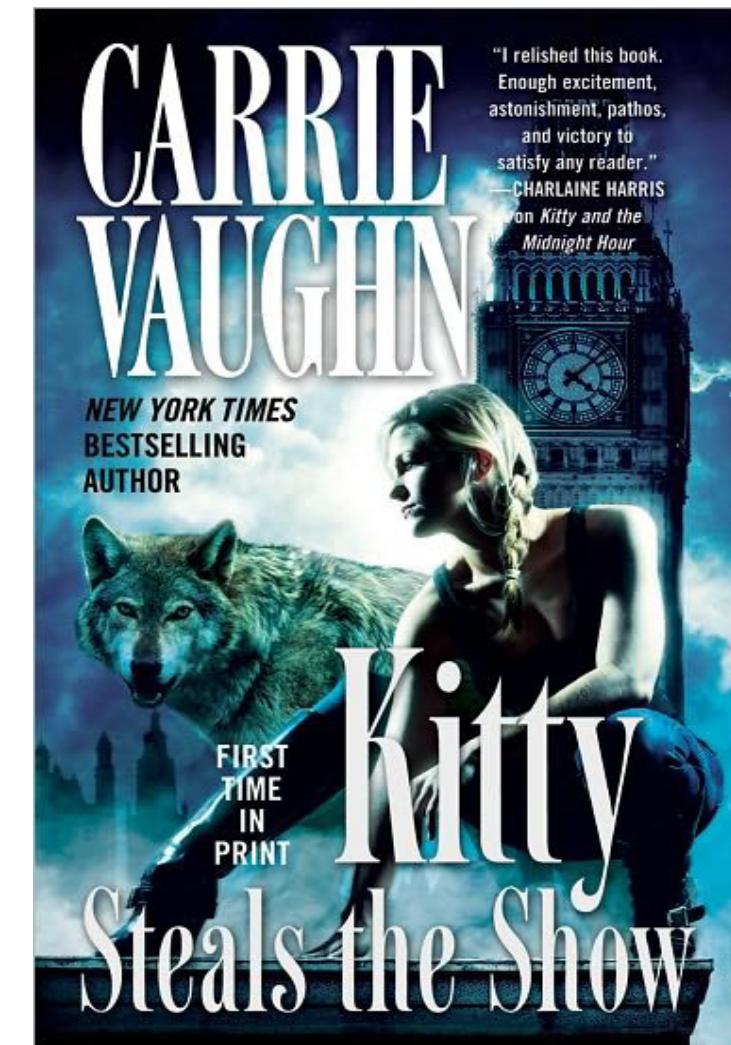
July finishes strong with ***Future Lovecraft***, a sci-fi take on the Cthulhu Mythos. The paperback edition comes out on Aug. 1, but Nookies can download their copy now for a mere \$3.99. Featuring a collection of up-and-coming horror and sci-fi authors, this anthology lends a fresh voice to familiar friends, such as Nyarlathotep (whom friends simply refer to as the Crawling Chaos).

Professor of religion **Richard T. Hughes** challenges popular misconceptions in ***Christian America and***

the Kingdom of God, which comes out in paperback on July 30.

Finally, Boulder author **Carrie Vaughn** closes out the month with the latest installment of her **Kitty** series, ***Kitty Steals the Show***. This time our hero is the keynote speaker at a paranormal conference in London. When a conference of vampires schedules for the same time, however, the ongoing struggle between the undead ramps up.

For weekly book news and reviews, visit <http://ensuingchapters.wordpress.com>.



Epilogue

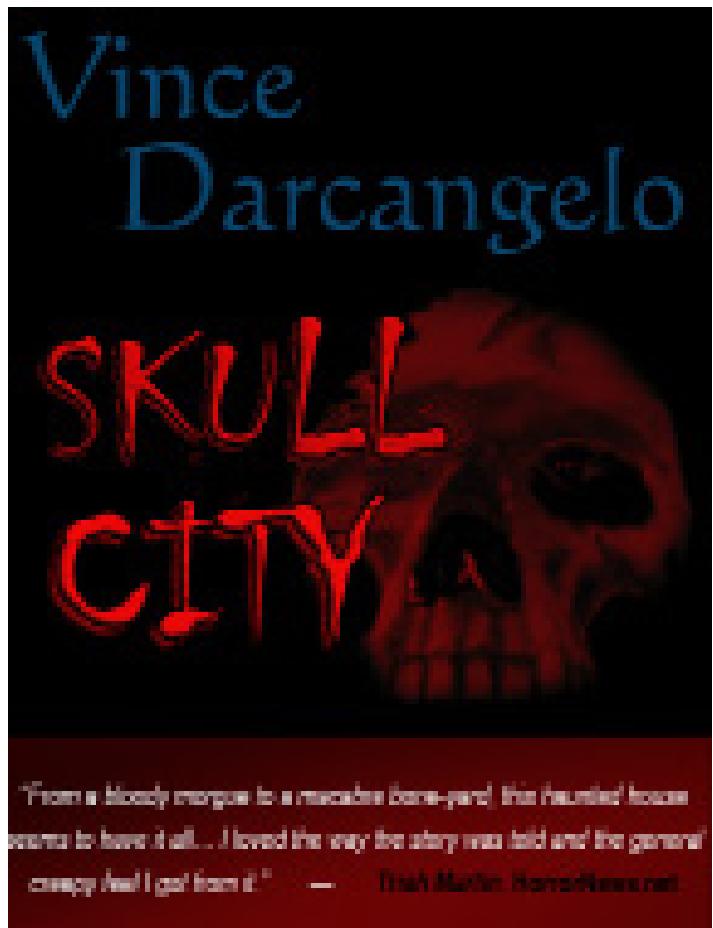
Thanks to all the awesome writers and gratitude to all our readers. We hope you enjoyed the debut issue of Transgress. For updates throughout the month, visit <http://transgress-mag.wordpress.com>, <http://ensuingchapters.wordpress.com> or the personal sites of our contributors:

www.dalebridges.org

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"From a bloody emporium to a macabre bone-yard, this haunted house seems to have it all... I loved the way the story was told and the general creepy feel I got from it." — www.human-torpedo.com

We also produce stand-alone ebooks from time to time, most recently the short story "Skull City." To download this story for free, visit [Smash Words](http://www.smashwords.com).

Issue #2 comes out Aug. 1. Until then, happy reading.

Transgress Magazine

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