



The Persistence of Vision

John Varley

Download now

Read Online →

The Persistence of Vision

John Varley

The Persistence of Vision John Varley

Contents:

The Phantom of Kansas (1976)

Air Raid (1977)

Retrograde Summer (1975)

The Black Hole Passes (1975)

In the Hall of the Martian Kings (1977)

In the Bowl (1975)

Gotta Sing, Gotta Dance (1976)

Overdrawn at the Memory Bank (1976)

The Persistence of Vision (1978)

The Persistence of Vision Details

Date : Published November 1st 1984 by Berkley (first published February 1977)

ISBN : 9780425073001

Author : John Varley

Format : Paperback 320 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Short Stories, Fiction

 [Download The Persistence of Vision ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Persistence of Vision ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online The Persistence of Vision John Varley

From Reader Review The Persistence of Vision for online ebook

Oscar says

El presente volumen incluye cinco relatos, entre ellos los tres que me faltaban por leer del original y no venían en 'La persistencia de la visión':

En el salón de los reyes marcianos (*)**, donde un grupo de astronautas en Marte sufre un percance que los obliga a permanecer en el planeta hasta la llegada de ayuda. El relato trata de las interacciones entre ellos, y el descubrimiento de la extraña raza marciana. Buen relato.

El fantasma de Kansas ()**, donde la protagonista se entera del robo de memorias de su banco, y del asesinato de algunas de sus copias. Interesante.

Incursión aérea (*), donde unos extraños humanos hacen su aparición en pleno desastre aéreo en una especie de rescate. Muy flojo.

Verano retrógrado ()**, donde el protagonista, en Mercurio, recibe la llegada de su hermana procedente de la Luna, y al poco sabremos de sus secretos familiares. Flojo.

El paso del agujero negro ()**, donde los protagonistas, un hombre y una mujer, mantienen una relación holográfica, pese a estar separados millones de kilómetros. Flojo.

Bondama says

This Hugo and Nebula Award winning short novel is one of the most eye-opening and emotionally rendering works that I have ever encountered in a lifetime devoted to reading. Do NOT miss this one.

Erich Franz Linner-Guzmann says

A very interesting story. And I think that is one of the main reasons why I liked it so much. And when I say interesting, I mean weird, strange just very odd. It is about a commune where the people are deaf and blind and how they all get along with one another. John Varley does a great job at describing the community and how they all live. A fantastic tale, but like I said very odd indeed.

Cristina says

This is a nice little compilation of John Varley's early short stories. If you don't know who John Varley is, you should know a few things. First, he's one of those classic 70s and 80s sci-fi writers who tackle those ubiquitous "science fiction" issues that still define the genre today: artificial intelligence, the role of computers in humanity, and societal issues. When I read the collection, I was struck how elemental sci-fi used

to be--how authors used to *truly* explore how technology affected humanity. I was left wondering how sci-fi had become a more gimmicky genre nowadays. But I digress.

John Varley is an unusual writer in hard sci-fi for two notable reasons. First, he has an affinity for female protagonists, a nice change of pace from the usually male-dominated genre. All of his female characters that I've read so far are *real*--John Varley has little use for female archetypes. Second, he deals, either indirectly or directly, with sexuality in his writings. In all of the stories I've read, our human sexual urges are interweaved into the story in a very natural and non-patronizing way. Varley definitely espouses a more sexually liberated society (hey, the dude was in the Haight-Ashbury district in its heyday, so I guess we can't blame him!) but he always acknowledges the difficulty of achieving such liberation.

Now, on to "The Persistence of Vision," the titular short story (and the final one in the book). The other stories are often good, sometimes even very good, but this one is the one you should *definitely* read. It won the Hugo and Nebula awards for a reason.

The story starts off with the simple premise of a middle-aged drifter put on the unemployment roster once again in the depression-prone America. He decides to hitchhike his way from Chicago to California, passing through the famous communes of New Mexico. When he comes upon a walled-off settlement in the remote countryside, his curiosity is piqued. When a Native American tells him that the commune is full of deafblind people, the legacy of a Rubella outbreak in the 60s, the man decides to meet them.

What he finds is a sort of utopia, one painstakingly designed for the deafblind, not adaptations of sighted or hearing habits. Their language is a fully tactile one that requires so much bodily contact that people become so well attuned to one another that they become ... well, read and you'll see. Varley exhibits a great amount of sensitivity to the deafblind, often pointing out well-thought-out details. (Such as the deafblind having to learn nearly everything from books, not from anyone else ... and the problems within the solution.)

Varley writes in his signature plain and unpretentious style, which adds credence to the seemingly preposterous idea (I speak as someone who actually *is* deafblind. And trust me, a community of the deafblind would be hard to set up.) The unnamed drifter describes the community--called Keller, a rough translation--as an outsider, but he isn't judgmental or critical. He simply wants to understand, which makes him a good narrator in this case.

The one quibble, and I always seem to have one, is that the narrative gets clunky and choppy at times. The narrator sometimes jumps back and forth between explaining the backstory of Keller and the story at present. This isn't the smoothest story in terms of technique, but the content of it is definitely worth reading.

Erik Graff says

While "Overdrawn at the Memory Bank" is good, "The Persistence of Vision" is extraordinarily good.

Although set in the near future, "Persistence" has no other science fiction elements. The story is about a vagabond moving from one countercultural community to the next in the southwest, then ending up to stay quite a while with one qualitatively different than the rest. On land leased from the Navaho, this community was set up by several dozen deaf-blind persons who had grown up institutionally together after a fictional rubella outbreak. Granted money by the government after a series of law suits initiated after they reach their majority, they are able to hire professional help and acquire the land and equipment they need for a self-

sustaining community. Established when the protagonist arrives, his entry into the community is facilitated by the fact that their children, the eldest of whom is now thirteen, are hearing and sighted.

I dated and eventually wed a hometown girl who was going deaf when I met her and had become completely deaf by the time of our marriage. Consequently, I learned American Sign Language, Signed English and enough hand-to-hand method to be able to speak to deaf-blind persons. Thus, Varley's tale made some immediate sense to me, particularly as the protagonist is just beginning to adapt to the world of the deaf-blind.

The world of these people is one of total, body-to-body communication whereby secret keeping and deception are impossible and interactions occur three-dimensionally between people. We, the protagonist learns, are the cripples, our reliance on denotative languages and logics lacking a dimension while allowing not only social but self-deception. Lines that bound our lives intertwine in theirs, including sexual and gender lines.

This novella not only made me think very critically about my personal limitations but inspired me to some enthusiasm about untapped human potentials.

Barry Saiff says

Excellent collection of stories. The title story is one of the greatest works of short fiction ever written. It is the story of a group of people who lack sight, vision, and hearing. It depicts how they communicate and relate, and the organic culture they create based upon their own lived experience. It will enrich the soul of any reader. Reading this story is like travelling to another planet, where humans understand things we mostly forgot sometime during childhood.

Thom says

Quite a good collection of stories; one of them later expanded into the novel (and later film) *Millennium*. My favorites were *In the Hall of the Martian Kings* - which felt like Weir's *The Martian* only with Martians! - and the title story *The Persistence of Vision*. A very creative compilation, and well recommended.

Kat Hooper says

In a post-apocalyptic near-future, a middle-aged drifter roams from commune to commune in the Southwest United States. Each of these groups has its own culture and he stays a while at each, doing whatever he needs (e.g., going nude, praying, chanting "Hare Krishna") to fit in while he's there. This works well for him — he stays fed and sheltered and moves on when he's ready for a change of scenery.

But when he comes across a walled-in settlement in the middle of Native American land, he finds that he can never fit in because the group who lives there are the adult descendents of women who contracted rubella while pregnant. All of these adults are both deaf and blind, though their children are not. At first the drifter is fascinated by the ways they've developed to get around their "handicap," but soon he learns that, in their community, he's the one with the disability because he will never be able to understand their language — a

language that is a lot deeper than mere spoken words could ever be.

As someone who spends a lot of time thinking about perception, I was fascinated by a culture that can't see or hear, and I enjoyed the parts of the story that dealt with how the group overcame their obstacles. Also, the idea that communication without the masks of fake facial expressions and deceptive body language could be more informative than the "normal" methods is appealing. We get a lot of information about someone's internal state through visual and auditory cues and it's hard to imagine that tactile methods could compensate for missing this input, but John Varley is suggesting that people who are born blind and deaf might develop these sorts of paranormal abilities when normal sensory input is lacking. It is true that some people who are blind or deaf have sensory abilities that seeing and hearing people don't have, or at least never realized they have (e.g., blindsight, echolocation). Perhaps Varley's idea isn't so far-fetched.

The Persistence of Vision, which won both the Hugo and Nebula awards, will make you think. It will make you consider what kinds of wonderful abilities might be unmasked if you lost some of your "normal" abilities. Would it be worth the price?

I listened to Peter Ganim narrate the audio version produced by Audible Frontiers. It was a great production and I'm pleased to see so many Hugo- and Nebula-awarded stories in their catalog.

Lea says

A wonderful thought experiment any student of the senses and ethnographic writing will love. It's amazing how well it aged- written in '78, it had eerily accurate descriptions of the current economic depression. Parts of it made me uncomfortable- probably one of the best features of the book was the author's ability to honestly translate the complex emotions of stepping outside one's own culture.

Carol Gleason-rechner says

Interesting speculation by a wildly inventive author writing in the 1970's, but I found the male middle-aged protagonists lusty after mostly naked pubescent girls, um, well, creepy, yeah that's it, creepy.

Jade Aidan says

"they wouldn't even recognize a concept as poisonous as a homosexual taboo" (Varley 261). This book is a sexual revolution era collection of science fiction. Each story is more interesting and insightful than the last, and the human condition is explored through bizarre circumstance, and futuristic possibilities. A world in which death is not entirely necessary, and bodies, features, and sexes can be changed on a whim is explored. Today's problems in a futuristic setting, along with new, futuristic problems are the central elements of the book. I would say that this is one of the best books that I have ever picked up, and I would recommend it to anyone and every without a second thought. Many of these concepts are so radical and strange, that they have stood the test of time, and remain radical and strange after decades.

Peter Tillman says

Varley's first collection, when he was writing stories at white heat. 6 of the 8 stories are from his "Eight Worlds" universe. The Jim Burns cover art is for "Retrograde Summer," on Mercury. Overall, not as good as I remembered them, except as noted. 3.5 stars.

- Introduction (The Persistence of Vision) • essay by Algis Budrys. This has already repaid my reread time. Budrys was an uncommonly astute critic. He writes, regarding forewords and afterwords, "A story that needs to have words said about it, is a story that does not contain all its own right words."

- The Phantom of Kansas • [Eight Worlds] • (1976) • novelette. Hugo nominee, 1977. Fox, a composer of weather symphonies, is being stalked by a serial killer -- of herself. Fox-4 is determined to survive, and is writing her masterwork. Very strong story, an easy 5+ stars. You can read it here, <https://varley.net/excerpt/the-phanto....> Varley writes about his unsold screenplay here, <https://varley.net/nonfiction/varleyl...>

Sample:

"I felt thirty meters tall with lightning in my hair and a crown of shimmering frost. I walked through the Kansas autumn, the brown, rolling, featureless prairie before the red or white man came. It was the way the real Kansas looked now under the rule of the Invaders, who had ripped up the barbed wire, smoothed over the furrows, dismantled the cities and railroads and let the buffalo roam once more. ... The Kansas disneyland has two million head of buffalo and I envisioned up to twenty-five twisters at one time. How do you keep the two separate?"

All this plus a great, teary, romantic ending. And the CC turns out to be a big softy. What a great story!

37 • Air Raid • (1977) • short story. Hugo & Nebula nominee, 1978. Filmed as "Millenium." Story online at <https://www.baen.com/Chapters/9781625...> Not reread, but it's a unique & very cool story. Don't miss!

51 • Retrograde Summer • [Eight Worlds] • (1975) • novelette. Nebula nominee, 1976. Life on Mercury. Clone sisters visit the quicksilver grotto. Eh. 3 stars or less. I used to like this one, but the Suck Fairy has come by....

71 • The Black Hole Passes • [Eight Worlds] • (1975) • novelette. Romance at a distance, between two observers on the Ophiuchi Hotline, out beyond Pluto. Then the titular event.... I used to like this one, but it hasn't aged well.

96 • In the Hall of the Martian Kings • (1977) • novella. Hugo & Ditmar nominee, 1978. This is a **wonderful** story, starting with a tragedy, which leads to a great discovery, and evolves, seemingly by accident, into the first successful Human colony on Mars. Except it's not really an accident... A classic, 5+ stars. So much better than "The Martian"! This might be my favorite Varley standalone.

137 • In the Bowl • [Eight Worlds] • (1975) • novelette. Nebula nominee, 1976. Um. I think I'll let you read James Nicoll's comments on this one (link in Comment 3). OK story, icky ending. Suck Fairy, again!

168 • Gotta Sing, Gotta Dance • [Eight Worlds] • (1976) • novelette . Hugo nominee, 1977. Barnum & Bailey, a symb pair from the Rings, stop in the studio to record their music. Good story, 3.3 stars.

197 • Overdrawn at the Memory Bank • [Eight Worlds] • (1976) • novelette. Good story, though not as good as I remembered. 2.5 stars.

227 • The Persistence of Vision • (1978) • novella. Won the Hugo, Nebula & Locus awards. Finally! Not reread, and I've never much liked it. But you should read it, and decide for yourself.

This and "Blue Champagne" have the core of the classic Varley shorts. It's probably easier to find the 2004 reprint collection, "The John Varley Reader" TOC: <http://www.isfdb.org/cgi-bin/pl.cgi?3...> --a fine omnibus too.

[Story notes from my 2018 reread.]

Viktor says

I last read this when I was 15 or so. At the time, all the hippy nonsense and weird, 70's sex stuff was -- ahem -- "thought-provoking", but now it's just hippy nonsense and weird 70's sex stuff. You know. Sex with clones. Sex with plants. Sex with children. Yep. If there's a young girl in a story, rest assured she will offer herself sexually to the older protagonist.

It's a shame, because most of this book and most of each story is terrific. YMMV.

Jamie says

The title piece, *The Persistence of Vision*, 1979 Hugo and Nebula award winner for best novella, is a beautifully written tale of a wanderer who discovers an enigmatic, isolated desert community for the blind and deaf. More speculative fiction than sci-fi, reminiscent of Theodore Sturgeon. There is however a VERY disturbing thread of the story concerning a sexual relationship between the main character, a 47 year old man, and a 13 year old girl. Although consensual, and considered acceptable within the society the author constructs, which is primitive in many ways, having shed modern socio-cultural norms, it's of course an absolutely abhorrent notion.

Ric says

These stories are from the early *Varley*, circa the *Gaia* series (Titan being one of them), way before the more recent *Thunder* and *Mars* books, with the author at the **peak** of his creative genius (IMHO). I like his work primarily for the way he paints **striking and memorable images**: the explorers trapped in the bowl, the blind-deaf-mutes having a meal. The title story is worth the effort if you only have time or patience to read just one. But then, like cinnamon licorice sticks, you won't be able to stop at just one.

CuriousLibrarian says

This is a really solid collection of sci-fi stories. I only wish the order had been tweaked, as the first two stories were too similar, and almost put me off the collection before I got to the *really* good stories.

I liked "In The Hall Of The Martian Kings" and "The Persistence of Vision" best from this collection.

The first is about a small group of people stranded on Mars after an accident trying to figure out if they can survive until a rescue attempt can be mounted (some 7 years later at the earliest). But then the planet starts to adapt to them being there, which is really ominous. I like the way this story examines group dynamics, but it is *not* the focus of the story.

The second explores a Utopia community of deaf-blind people from the perspective of a man who can see and hear who comes to live with them. In this one the point really is the group dynamics. And there is less outsider bias to this story than one would expect, especially given the era it was written in.

One weirdness of virtually every story in this collection is sex. Varley presents some odd sexual situations with no discussion of emotional impact or anything of that nature - simply presents them within the story and moves on. And some of these situations really bear thinking about, like having sex with your clone. It was just strange that these situations came and went without comment.

Overall a great collection, and I would heartily recommend this collection to fans of hard sci-fi who like their characters to have lots of interactions with one another, and are not all focused on the tech.

Mike Moore says

A mixed bag. Some of the stories are interesting, but the details are almost uniformly silly ("we don't have to worry about infection anymore, because we sterilized the earth") and the narratives tend to feel locked into inevitable courses. Varley's stories fall into that brand of speculative fiction where the resolution and the premise are identical, so once you realize what's going on in any given story there's nothing left for him to say.

The author is obsessed with physicality, and the most interesting as well as the most banal elements of his stories deal with the body, presence and communion. Sex is prevalent in every story, but is curiously unexamined even when dealing with behaviors that would seem to deserve a little extra consideration (I don't think that an author should blithely posit that 12-14 year-olds be considered sexual peers of people in their 40s without a little bit of exposition). Varley is also deeply invested in ideas of the Noble Savage (in various forms). All of this leads to a repetitive quality in many of the stories here, as even stories that seem on the surface to be completely different ("The Persistence of Vision" and "Gotta Sing, Gotta Dance", for instance) end up exploring the same themes in much the same way.

Lois Tucker says

John Varley is extraordinary at the short story. Blue Champagne, Ophiuchi Hotline, Millennium, Persistence of Vision (what are the rest? include all of them) all the 70's short story collections hang together to form a sci fi world that's progressive and connected and feminist.... I loved them. Check out ALL his short stories. Skip the novels.

I read A LOT of classic sci fi, hundreds on hundreds of books in the 70s, and these are my favorite, plus some of Heinlein's.

Olethros says

-Desde las ideas, abrumador y original para su tiempo.-

Género. Relatos.

Lo que nos cuenta. Seis relatos de Ciencia-Ficción, escritos entre 1975 y 1978, todos publicados previamente en dos conocidas revistas de género y uno de ellos multipremiado, con tres relatos menos que la edición original (vaya usted a saber la razón), que tratan temas tan dispares como los efectos de determinados tipos de música a través de la tecnología, las consecuencias de un accidente en una colonia en Marte, el manejo de un incidente por el cual la conciencia de un hombre queda separada de su cuerpo, la vida en una comunidad de ciegos, mudos y sordos, la búsqueda de unas extrañas joyas minerales de sorprendentes propiedades y otro incidente entre conciencias de un mismo individuo.

¿Quiere saber más de este libro, sin spoilers? Visite:

[http://librosdeolethros.blogspot.com/...](http://librosdeolethros.blogspot.com/)

Oscar says

‘La persistencia de la visión’ es una recopilación de relatos de ciencia ficción de John Varley, que mezcla ideas filosóficas y especulativas, con temas emocionales. Teniendo en cuenta que estos cuentos datan de la década de los setenta, resulta extraordinario el saber hacer de Varley para adelantarse en ciertos temas relacionados con el ciberpunk y la posibilidad de duplicar mentes y almacenarlas en ordenadores.

Estos son los seis relatos incluidos en esta edición de Orbis:

La persistencia de la visión (****), donde el protagonista, en su personal peregrinaje, se encuentra una extraña comuna de sordo-ciegos. Interesante relato donde sobresale la concepción del lenguaje.

En el cuenco (***) , donde el protagonista, de viaje en Venus en busca de unas extrañas piedras, entabla amistad con una niña, Ascuá, que acabará ayudándole. Bueno, sin más

Cantad, bailad (***) , donde conocemos a una extraño simbiote de vegetal y humano que busca ayuda con su nueva composición musical. Normal.

Perdido en el banco de memoria (***) , donde el protagonista, que había introducido su mente en un felino como entretenimiento, se entera de que han perdido su cuerpo y no puede regresar. Buen relato.

En el salón de los reyes marcianos (***) , donde un grupo de astronautas en Marte sufre un percance que los obliga a permanecer en el planeta hasta la llegada de ayuda. El relato trata de las interacciones entre ellos, y el descubrimiento de la extraña raza marciana. Buen relato.

El fantasma de Kansas (**), donde la protagonista se entera del robo de memorias de su banco, y del asesinato de algunas de sus copias. Interesante.

