



# Globalhead

*Bruce Sterling*

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This second collection of short fiction by Bruce Sterling, set in such disparate environments as ancient Assyria and posthuman France, provides a stimulating and entertaining glimpse inside the global head of one of imaginative fiction's most exciting talents.

## Globalhead Details

Date : Published 1998 by Mark V. Ziesing (first published September 1992)

ISBN : 9780929480701

Author : Bruce Sterling

Format : Hardcover 301 pages

Genre : Science Fiction, Cyberpunk, Fiction, Short Stories

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## From Reader Review Globalhead for online ebook

### Mike S says

I'm surprised that this book got such great ratings, I only liked a few of the stories, one was really good, several were not good at all. To me the author reads like a very bright and promising beginning author who hasn't quite identified his strengths, and weaknesses. He's capable of really good science fiction, maybe he's trying to carve out a new niche for himself, right now that's incipient, he's got a long way to go before he comes anywhere close to what William Gibson accomplished.

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### Fatman says

An eclectic mix of short stories from one of Cyberpunk's founding fathers. Personal favorites were "Storming the Cosmos" and "The Unthinkable". "We See Things Differently" is a masterpiece, and might just be the best alternative history story I've ever read. That story merits a six-star rating. Of the rest, some were humorous, others thought-provoking. Not a single bad story in the collection, which one doesn't see often.

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### La Stamberga dei Lettori says

Non so davvero perché, ma non riesco ancora a farmi piacere Sterling come vorrei. E dire che lui è proprio il padre cofondatore del genere che più amo, il cyberpunk. Alla fantascienza visionaria e ipertecnologica di Gibson, che preferisco, si affianca quella più sociologica e geopolitica di Sterling. L'obiettivo che l'autore si pone in questi undici racconti è di dare vita ad altrettante visioni di futuro, rigorose e concrete. Se certe visioni risultano oggi superate, e altre decisamente fuori fuoco, alcune assumono decisamente l'aspetto di vere e proprie profezie: Sterling è uno con i piedi per terra, un osservatore molto attento e molto perspicace. Se il confronto/conflitto tra le due grandi potenze, gli States e la Russia, risulta oggi archiviato (di certo non lo era quindici anni fa, al tempo della pubblicazione di questa antologia), altri problemi geopolitici, come l'islamismo, risultano ancora più attuali. Anche nelle sue visioni più estreme, paradossalmente: come nel racconto Il Compassionevole, il Digitale, che ha per protagonista un islamismo tecnologicamente avanzato, perfettamente integrato con una visione cyberpunk che non è più appannaggio dell'Occidente - e se si considera che nelle più recenti rivoluzioni dell'Africa mediterranea ha giocato un ruolo fondamentale l'uso sapiente (forse molto più che in Occidente) di Internet e dei social network, non ci si stupisce più di tanto.

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### Stephen says

An icon of the cyberpunk movement and a deservedly respected nonfiction writer as well, Sterling is less well known for his short story output. Globalhead, an early collection is evidence that this is an oversight. In

fact, I'd rank his short stories just beneath his nonfiction, particularly *The Hacker Crackdown*, and above his novel length excursions in science fiction. Standout stories include the faux book review *Our Neural Chernobyl*, the odd coupling *Jim and Irene*, the historical Middle East magic of *The Gulf Wars* and the rock and roll infused economic SF of *We See Things Differently*. If you have passed on Sterling's short stories in favor of his other work, I highly recommend making a U-turn and seeking out *Globalhead*.

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## **Kamas Kirian says**

This collection of short stories by Bruce Sterling is pretty good. Some of the stories are stronger than others. I particularly liked *Storming the Cosmos*, *Jim and Irene*, *The Moral Bullet* and *Hollywood Kremlin*. I wasn't real taken with *Our Neural Chernobyl* or *Dori Bangs*; not because of content but because of style. The Soviet Union/Russia and Islam make several appearances throughout the collection.

*Our Neural Chernobyl* - fictional book review about cross species medical/drug contamination future history. I didn't care for the style though the concept surrounding the events was interesting. 2 stars

*Storming the Cosmos* tells the story 2 scientist who discover an alien artifact at Tunguska, and how the politicians screw it all up. It was pretty entertaining, I liked it a lot. 5 stars

*The Compassionate*, *The Digital us* the transcript of a future speech/rally re: AI who transits Space-time. It is basically a transcript of Islamic propaganda. 3 stars

*Jim and Irene* is the story of two forlorn loners who escape to lonely lands and end up forging a connection. 5 stars

*Sword of Damocles* is a hilarious and disjointed tale of Damocles and Dyonysis. 4 stars

*Gulf Wars* tells the story of two hapless soldiers caught up in two different wars in the same area of the Persian Gulf separated by millenia. 4 Stars

*The Shores of Bohemia* reminded me of today's politically correct bloviators. Amelie's little speech was certainly representative of the insufferably conceited attitude of today's politicians, though she and Rodolphe both ended up joining the ranks of those they despised. I don't think I understood the point of the story. Maybe that mob rule is inevitable among societies? That self-awareness and finding 'truth' require solitude? 3 Stars

*The Moral Bullet* is a story of post apocalyptic survival after the chaos of an anti-aging drug is released to the world. 5 Stars

*The Unthinkable* is about two old antagonists discussing the end of the cold war, in a world where the weapons are demonic rather than atomic. 4 Stars

*We See Things Differently* is about an Arab Muslim journalist sent to America to meet a popular Rock Musician/Political Fundraiser/Revolutionary. It's about the power of conviction...and maybe a little bit of religious-political propoganda brainwashing. 4 Stars

*Hollywood Kremlin* is a beautiful little story about black market smugglers in Azerbaijan during the last

days of Soviet rule. 5 Stars

Are You For 86? features Leggy Starlitz again from Hollywood Kremlin. This time the smuggler from Azerbaijan is roadtripping with a couple of feminist political activists smuggling the abortion pill across country while evading a Christian activist group. Hate the politics but it's a well written story and carries the narrative well. 5 Stars

Dori Bangs is about the fictional life together of two real life people who died young. It reads like an obituary more than a story. 3 Stars

The mass market paperback was formatted well. There was one possible spelling error where they put DC where I think they meant CD.

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### **Althea Ann says**

A collection of short stories from this cyberpunk writer. Recurring themes/elements include Russia/Cold War, the Middle East, organized crime and drugs... a lot of it reminded me a bit of J.G. Ballard. It culminates in a truly weird what-if story about rock critic Lester Bangs and an obscure underground comic book artist meeting and getting married. Some weird stuff!

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### **Ben Hunt says**

Sterling's short fiction is, as far as I have seen, completely unrelated to his long-form stuff, and so much better that it reaches out of any kind of genre and becomes something that, once upon a simpler time, might be considered the animating spirit of our nation. Of course Sterling would probably hate that idea, nations, spirits, etc. It should be some kind of animating spirit, anyway.

My favorite story in this volume is "Dori Bangs" . . . I can't adequately express how I feel about it. It might be just for the punks. You should read it.

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### **Glen Engel-Cox says**

Just comments on a few stories in Globalhead by Bruce Sterling, not the whole book.

"Our Neural Chernobyl" - I remember reading this in its original appearance in Fantasy and Science Fiction, and it just gets better on the second time. A mock review of a pop science book from 2056, Bruce is transliterating the background and research from his The Hacker Crackdown: Law and Disorder on the Electronic Frontier into a future where genetic hacking replaces computer hacking. But that's just the starting point, and when he reveals the disaster set off by the neural chernobyl, I can only shake my head in admiration for his imagination. There's not much story here, but when the imagination runs this wild, it doesn't matter.

"Storming the Cosmos" - A funny story, made even funnier by my recent reading of East Europe and Russia. This is another one that I read in its original publication, and believe that it is better the second time as well.

"The Compassionate, The Digital" - Great title, wonderful idea, but this one doesn't make as complete a story as "Our Neural Chernobyl." There's just not as much plot here; instead, this is a scene from an unlikely (?) scenario. Interesting, yes. A story, no.

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### **Dan York says**

I remember first reading this collection of short stories when it came out in 1991 in the midst of all the great cyberpunk stories that were coming out in those days. At that time I thoroughly enjoyed it and probably would have given it 4 or 5 stars had Goodreads been around. Bruce Sterling is an excellent writer and I enjoy his work... and many of these stories are very well done.

But... 20 years later a number of the stories are now quite dated with their Cold War references and other nuances that are no longer applicable. It is ironic that the social commentary that makes Sterling's writing so good in this case also winds up limiting the applicability of his work.

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### **Patrik Sahlstrøm says**

Brilliant collection of short stories by Sterling. As with of these kinds of collections there are some duds, but the quality of the good ones more than compensate for the duds

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### **Jday says**

Sterling writes great stories. My only issue with him is that these short stories don't feel like short stories. They feel like pieces taken from novels or novellas. Many of the stories from this book and his other short story collections should be novels. The characters are engaging and the plots are interesting and sometimes fantastic.

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### **Spencer says**

*Globalhead* is rather uneven, with a few stores that border on tedious. However, it's worth it for the two or three pieces that are out of this world. In fact, it might be worth it just for "The Unthinkable," a magical realist's take on post-Cold War relations between the US and Russia, which might just be one of my favorite shorts of all time.

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### **T4ncr3d1 says**

Non so davvero perché, ma non riesco ancora a farmi piacere Sterling come vorrei. E dire che lui è proprio il padre cofondatore del genere che più amo, il *cyberpunk*. Alla fantascienza visionaria e ipertecnologica di Gibson, che preferisco, si affianca quella più sociologica e geopolitica di Sterling. L'obiettivo che l'autore si

pone in questi undici racconti è di dare vita ad altrettante visioni di futuro, rigorose e concrete. Se certe visioni risultano oggi superate, e altre decisamente fuori fuoco, alcune assumono decisamente l'aspetto di vere e proprie profezie: Sterling è uno con i piedi per terra, un osservatore molto attento e molto perspicace. Se il confronto/conflitto tra le due grandi potenze, gli States e la Russia, risulta oggi archiviato (di certo non lo era venti anni fa, al tempo della pubblicazione di questa antologia), altri problemi geopolitici, come l'islamismo, risultano ancora più attuali. Anche nelle sue visioni più estreme, paradossalmente: come nel racconto *Il Compassionevole, il Digitale*, che ha per protagonista un islamismo tecnologicamente avanzato, perfettamente integrato con una visione cyberpunk che non è più appannaggio dell'Occidente - e se si considera che nelle più recenti rivoluzioni dell'Africa mediterranea ha giocato un ruolo fondamentale l'uso sapiente (forse molto più che in Occidente) di Internet e dei social network, non ci si stupisce più di tanto. In altri racconti riecheggia invece l'eco della Guerra del Golfo (del resto, gli anni sono quelli), e in questi l'ardita visionarietà della fantascienza lascia il posto ad una narrazione fin troppo rigorosa. L'impressione è che, in certi casi, Sterling abbia tentato di liberarsi dei vincoli della scrittura di genere, senza però riuscire a dare una forma precisa ed un significato: insomma, scrivere dei rapporti tra i soldati di un battaglione russo stanziato in Asia centrale di certo non è cyberpunk, forse una sorta di fantascienza sociologica, ma dove voglia andare a parare non si capisce.

Non mancano momenti di riflessione etica, ad esempio sul progresso scientifico e tecnologico, dagli incubi nucleari a quelli *neurali*.

Alla lunga, però, la ristretta offerta tematica, in parte "scaduta", finisce col risultare ripetitiva. Qualcosa si salva dall'usura del tempo, molto altro no, e di certo è troppo poco per poter affermare, come si legge nella quarta di copertina, che questi racconti hanno cambiato il volto della fantascienza odierna.

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## **Devero says**

La nostra Chernobyl neurale (Our Neural Chernobyl) è decisamente buono.

Il Compassionevole, il Digitale (The Compassionate, the Digital) è il primo di una serie di racconti in cui Sterling analizza l'islam di oggi e di ieri e mostra come pensa e perché si deve temerlo.

Jim e Irene (Jim and Irene) è un racconto leggibile.

La spada di Damocle (The Sword of Damocles) è un altro racconto leggibile.

Le guerre del Golfo (The Gulf Wars) è una piccola perla, che deve ricordare a tutti come vanno le cose in quell'angolo di mondo che è il golfo persico da oltre 6000 anni.

Le rive della Boemia (The Shores of Bohemia) è un buon racconto.

Il proiettile morale (The Moral Bullet) è un racconto particolarmente interessante, di quelli che fanno riflettere.

L'Impensabile (The Unthinkable) è un racconto leggibile.

Vediamo le cose in maniera diversa (We See Things Differently) è un piccolo capolavoro, che scava a fondo nelle motivazioni dell'islam e del terrorismo ad esso collegato.

Hollywood Cremlino (Hollywood Kremlin) è un racconto divertente.

Siete a favore o contro la 486? (Are You for 486?) è un altro racconto divertente e sì, io sono favorevole!

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## **Evan says**

Bruce Sterling is a solid writer. Sometimes brilliant. Weird, picaresque, and clever, clever, clever.

The Leggy Starlitz stories show off Sterling's sense of humor, "The Shores of Bohemia" his sometimes

dizzying mix of big ideas, and "Dori Bangs" the compassion beneath his slick cyberpunk exterior. "Jim and Irene" seems a bit adolescent and underbaked, as does "The Moral Bullet."

But, of course, "We See Things Differently" is one the greatest science fiction stories of all time.

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