

Whoa! Collection

Bizarre stories, web culture, and outright lying.

Mark Dery

1999

Contents

Bugging Out	3
Deadly Childhood	4
Flipper Goes Postal	6
It Takes Guts	8
The Post-Modern Gothic	9
Exquisite Corpses	9
Head Trip	11
What Makes A Day Trader Crack?	11

Bugging Out

Insects have infested popular culture

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If Kafka's Gregor Samsa awoke "from uneasy dreams" in the late '90s, he'd find pop culture, rather than himself, transformed into "a gigantic insect" — or, more precisely, into a gigantic insectary, overrun by six-legged omens of millennium. In the twilight of the 20th century, the insect archetype looms large in the pop unconscious. Bugs are everywhere, from the kiddy-friendly whimsies in *Antz* and *A Bug's Life*, to the extraterrestrial pests who are upstaging Whitley Streiber's little gray men in the uneasy dreams of millennial culture. Bald proctologists from Zeta Reticuli are giving way to the B-movie vermin in *Men in Black* and the mandible-gnashing arachnids in *Starship Troopers*.

Outside America's cineplexes, in the real world, alien "contactees" are beginning to report close encounters with bug-eyed monsters like the "Insectoid Queen of the Universe" who did the nasty with a "bespectacled young man," as mentioned in a 1997 issue of *UFO Magazine*. "No statistics are available yet," noted writer Jan Hester, "but more and more, praying mantises are showing up in the reports that feature beings other than Grays."

The alien invasion landed in 1996, when scorpion-like E.T.s saved the militia movement a fortune in ammonium nitrate by nuking the White House in *Independence Day*. That same year, kids' TV teemed with the not-so-creepy crawlers in *Santo Bugito*, *Earthworm Jim*, and *The Tick*. In 1997, MTV witnessed a vogue in bug-themed videos such as "Fly" by Sugar Ray, "Greedy Fly" by Bush, and the cockroach-infested "Breathe" by Prodigy.

The lower life forms have wormed their way into high culture as well, via novels like Bernard Werber's *Empire of the Ants* (1998), whose unlikely protagonist is the 327th male laid by the queen of a colony of Formica Rufa ants. In her new book of photographs, *The Illusion of Orderly Progress*, Barbara Norfleet offers, for our delectation, staged tableaux starring dead bugs: a grasshopper demagogue inciting an insect mob, two gleeful-looking tarantulas hanging some longhorn beetles.

So, what's bugging us? Most obviously, it's a millennium thing. Insects put a mythic face on the unknown — in our case, the coming century. With their multifaceted eyes and obscenely working mouthparts, bugs are made-to-order bogeymen. The word "bug" derives from the Middle English "bugge," meaning terror, ghost, or hobgoblin. Swarming insects speak to us of social disintegration and the madness of crowds, like the frenzied mob in *The Day of the Locust*.

Then, too, the winged things that darken our mental skies, like the pestilential insects of Old Testament plagues, signal a world out of balance. Now, however, na-

ture's equilibrium is threatened not by an angry god but by global warming and the destruction of natural habitats.

Or worse: Insects are harbingers of nuclear winter, "mound builders and gravediggers of the fin de siècle...the archetypal survivors of the holocaust," in the words of the cultural critic Hillel Schwartz. Insects can tolerate radiation levels that would kill most living things, a fact mythologized in the Cold War fable known to every baby boomer: A cockroach was supposedly the first thing moving at ground zero in Hiroshima.

But maybe we should read our millennial portents less literally. Freud suggested that dream imagery often involves visual puns; perhaps the insects scuttling across our inner movie screens are unconscious attempts to exorcise our fears of "bugs" of other sorts: the microorganisms in toxic McMeat, the brain-eating Ebola virus, or software glitches like the Millennium Bug — termites in the foundations of a world built increasingly on zeros and ones. The rising specter of the insect may give shape to vague anxieties about the ever-smarter, ever-smaller technologies multiplying all around us. One day, we're told, the super-smart descendants of today's Web-crawling "spiders" and insect-like robots may challenge our position as big-brained lords of all we survey.

Meanwhile, a Darwinian struggle of another sort is taking place, even now. The power relations of post-industrial capitalism invite us to interpret our visions of insects as a metaphor for the emerging social order. Those drunk on the nectar of the New Economy, like the laissez-faire futurist Kevin Kelly, like to talk about wired workers networked into a corporate consciousness, or "hive mind"; of corporate "devolution," of "embracing the swarm." But to the downsized and the perma-temped, free-market parables about the joys of the hive ring false in a world increasingly stratified into low-wage drones and a Queen-Bee knowledge elite.

Speaking of parables, *The Wall Street Journal* recently noted that the office-furniture manufacturer Steelcase had installed a huge ant farm in the lobby of its New York offices. "Work is dramatically different than it used to be," an employee explained. "For more people, work and non-work are blending. Ants live to work, and work to live." Welcome to the ant farm.

Deadly Childhood

Kids, alienation, and amorality

Source: <gettingit.com/article/32>

Date: September 13, 1999

Little innocents are an endangered species. Fanned by tabloid TV's grim fairy tales and exploited by everyone with a political axe to grind, Boomer fears are fueling the apocalyptic belief that we're witnessing childhood's end.

Eaten hollow (the story goes) by media-fed cynicism and moral decay, contemporary America is somehow causing the premature death of childhood. United in their kill-your-TV mediaphobia, liberal intellectuals such as Neil Postman, who exhibits a congenital allergy to mass culture, are singing from the same page as neo-conservatives like Michael and Diane Medved, who see the Mark of the Beast on Judy Blume's forehead.

In *The Disappearance of Childhood*, Postman — a McLuhanite to the bitter end — argues that childhood as we know it is an invention of print culture, and that the media bombardment of our post-literate culture is making children alienated and amoral beyond their years. Here as in *Poltergeist*, TV is the soul-eating maw of Hell. Likewise, in *Saving Childhood: Protecting Our Children from the National Assault on Innocence*, the Medveds lay the blame for America's supposed slouch toward Gomorrah at TV's doorstep (although sex education, condom distribution in schools, and babysitters with pierced noses get frowny faces in the cosmic grade book as well).

Postman and the Medveds aren't the only ones piling sandbags around the embattled notion of childhood as a time of wide-eyed wonder. Bad dreams about murdered children and killer pedophiles trouble the nation's restless sleep.

In the early episodes of the TV series *Millennium*, children were the frightened face of family values in a world whose center cannot hold. The lead character's five-year-old daughter was a pre-Raphaelite moppet whose sole function was to gambol through the gathering gloom, her radiant innocence a beacon to the serial killers hiding under the bed. The opening montage evoked the siege mentality of the nuclear family in the '90s, the catchphrase, "Wait... Worry... Who cares?" hovering menacingly over the profiler's home, a yellow and gold Victorian.

The house looks a lot like the neo-traditional houses in Celebration, the Disney planned community whose town seal is a ponytailed girl riding her bike past the proverbial picket fence, a playful pup nipping at her tires. Equating small-town America with carefree childhood, Celebration's promo video beguiles nesting Boomers with sunlit visions of a "place that takes you back to that time of innocence."

Of course, every philosophical absolute demands a counterweight; in cultural politics, as in physics, there's no such thing as a free lunch. Boomers' insistence on seeing children through the soft-focus lens of nostalgia for the Wonder Years of their own childhoods is counterbalanced by their demonization of teenagers. Most of the 2,000 adults polled in a 1997 survey by Public Agenda, a nonprofit policy group, believe that America's youth are undergoing a "moral meltdown"; two-thirds of the respondents described today's teenagers as "rude," "irresponsible," and "wild."

Dripping pheromones and oozing cool, teenagers force the hope-I-die-before-I-get-old generation to confront the grim truth that Monoxidil and Viagra are now its drugs of choice and Mick Jagger looks like a stand-in for Don Knotts, circa *Three's Company*. Today's teens must be sacrificed (metaphorically, at least), lest they displace the eternal adolescent every Boomer sees in the mirror — especially when he or she is zipped into leathers for a rumble with the other weekend Hell's Angels from the office. Thus the

proliferation of social controls such as teen curfews, school uniforms, mandatory drug tests, and McCarthyite anti-drug programs like D.A.R.E. Youth, “next to the criminally institutionalized, have fewer rights than almost any other group in society,” contends the cultural critic Andrew Ross.

Widespread perceptions of today’s youth as a nest of vipers fly in the face of the facts: According to a 1997 study by the National Center for Juvenile Justice, those youth who are violent are no more so than their predecessors of 15 years ago, nor are they younger (Op-Ed hysterics about little killers notwithstanding).

“In the past two decades, our collective attitude toward children and youth has undergone a profound change that’s reflected in the educational and criminal justice systems as well as in our daily discourse,” writes Annette Fuentes, in *The Nation*. “‘Zero tolerance’ is the mantra in public schools and juvenile courts, and what it really means is to be young is to be suspect.” Just in time for its midlife crisis, the counterculture has exchanged its founding myth — Oedipus slaying his father and laying his mother — for the story of Kronos eating his own kids.

The Boomer demonization of all teenagers as baby-killing prom-goers and school-yard shooters is no less fanciful in its own grim way than the idealization of little children as Baby Gap angels. Obviously, it’s high time that thirty- and fortysomethings grew up, already: in 25 years, at least 20 percent of America will be over 65, and a quarter of that slice will be over 85. The Boomer love-hate relationship with today’s teenagers is deeply rooted in their proprietary attitude toward adolescence and their jarring sense of obsolescence.

Perhaps, by casting out the demons of youth envy, the generation that invented youth culture will reinvent old age. A few role models (admittedly from pre-Boom generations) wait in the wings: the arch, effortlessly elegant Paul Bowles, cooler than God at 88; the magisterial, sharp-tongued Louise Bourgeois, suffering no fools at 87. Our consumer society has worshipped at the altar of eternal youth since its beginnings; early in this century, a cosmetics evangelist exhorted her sales team, “We are going to sell every artificial thing there is... And above all things it is going to be young — young — young!” Overturning this cultural logic would be a truly radical act. Then, and only then, would the Boomers’ endless childhood be over.

Flipper Goes Postal

New evidence of violent tendencies in dolphins

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Flipper needs an image consultant. Apparently, the frolicsome ambassador of an aquatic wonderworld has a dark side. “Evidence Puts Dolphins In New Light, As Killers,” declared an article in the science section of *The New York Times*.

Dolphins evidently kill for sport, slaughtering harbor porpoises in droves by bludgeoning them with their beaks and savaging them with their sharp teeth. They murder baby dolphins for no known reason, and attack humans eager for interspecies bonding. “I literally ripped my left leg out of its mouth,” said one would-be Woman Who Swims With Dolphins.

The news of our flippered friends’ less-cuddly aspects will doubtless come as a shock to the, er, pod people who worship them. Dolphins figure in the New Age imagination as guardian “Angels of the Sea,” midwives of our Inner Child’s rebirthing, and patron saints of little innocents, preferably chronically-ill or retarded. They’re portrayed as wise, highly evolved aliens, mythic kin to the otherworldly water sprites in the movie *Abyss* or the luminous, numinous E.T.s in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. With their interspecies telepathy and collective pod consciousness, they’re messiahs and martyrs, embodying New Age/Christian visions of universal oneness and infinite bliss while suffering the depredations of Homo sap with sad-eyed equanimity. At www.dolphin-synergy.com, Daniel McCulloch, who hosts the page Synergy Dolphin Experience, writes, “Like wise elders, they make their huge, loving souls available for us to blend with, if we are capable of being that deep.”

Pilgrims in search of aquatic beatitude might even get lucky. According to McCulloch’s Web site, an anonymous seeker in her 50s “had a powerful ‘lucid dream’ in which a Man-Dolphin came to her in the most intimate way. She awoke the next morning feeling more highly sensual than she had in years. In the next days, she had very close encounters, especially with one dolphin that she was convinced was the one in the dream.” Is that your rostrum, or are you just glad to see me?

From now on, though, New Agers looking for midlife epiphanies may choose not to bond with these natural-born killers. But beyond that obvious conclusion, Flipper’s fall from grace has other lessons to teach. The moral that springs immediately to mind, in a postmodern moment when Netgeeks e-mail marriage proposals to Lara Croft and Sony markets a creepily lifelike robo-pup named Aibo, is that not all nature is brought to you by Disney’s Imagineers. This is the lesson we were supposed to have learned from those Fox TV shockumentaries where wild animals maul humans who mistook them for theme-park attractions.

Another lesson we were supposed to have learned, in our age of “transgressed boundaries” and “potent fusions” (as the postmodern theorist Donna Haraway put it), is that the philosophical firewalls between all the old dualisms are crumbling. Nature and culture are increasingly intertangled, both literally, as with auto emissions and global warming, and figuratively, as with the psycho weather that mirrors our chaos culture.

Thus, the grim news, reported by the *Times*, that even “sea life has its own incidents of child abuse and massacres” makes zeitgeist sense. When mere anarchy is loosed upon the world, how can we expect the reassuring SeaWorld dualism of Good Whale/Bad

Shark to hold true? Disaffected teens are gunning down their high-school classmates, day traders are going postal — why not dolphins?

Besides, there was always something suspicious about that smile. The scariest psychopaths, from Travis Bickle to Jack Torrance, are always the ones with the forced grins. Much of the media commentary on dolphins' dark side has noted our all-too-human tendency to romanticize wild animals, especially "playful" ones with permanent "smiles."

Americans seem to harbor a special fondness for these cetaceans with upturned mouths, an affection that makes sense in light of our reputation in lugubrious Old Europe for compulsive smiling. And, as with the dolphin's false grin, the American smile conceals the killer inside, in our case the sociopathology of a nation awash in guns, rotten with wealth and power, and sublimely indifferent to the sufferings of its underclass. "Just because dolphins have a smile doesn't mean they're nonaggressive," says a scientist quoted in the *Times* article. They *are* just like us, after all.

It Takes Guts

Making art out of body parts

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The body and its politics have been an abiding theme in contemporary art since the 1960s, and an extreme few have used actual bodies — their own — as the raw material of their work. But even Chris Burden's 1974 autocrucifixion on a Volkswagen beetle pales in comparison to the increasingly Gothic body art of the '90s, from the ritual bloodletting of postmodern primitives like Ron Athey to the one-man Inquisition of Bob Flanagan, a self-styled "super-masochist" who nailed his penis to a board and called it art.

Flanagan, who died of cystic fibrosis in 1996, once toyed with the sick-funny notion of installing a closed-circuit TV camera inside his casket, thus enabling spectators to witness his final performance: the decay of his mortal remains.

Taking up where Flanagan's fantasy leaves off, a handful of artists, entrepreneurs, and pop-culture bottom-feeders are transforming human remains into fetish objects for the Gothic imagination. In 1997, the British designer Alexander McQueen sparked controversy by allegedly incorporating human bones, teeth, and other body parts into Givenchy's Autumn-Winter collection. "Human Body Parts May Be Latest Paris Couture Craze," a Reuters headline screamed.

The Post-Modern Gothic

The gap between our technological culture and our psychological nature seems to widen with each passing day. Dolly's cloning and the Human Genome Project take place against a backdrop of ethnic cleansing and schoolyard shootings. Just as the Victorian reaction to the Industrial Revolution was bodied forth in Gothic novels like *Dracula*, the future shock we're experiencing in the wake of the computer revolution — escalating media bombardment, runaway social change, and the seemingly vestigial nature of our bodies in an ever more virtual reality — is registered by the Postmodern Gothic.

Despite the culture's attempts to sell us bottled optimism, from Clinique's Happy perfume ("Wear It and Be Happy") to *Wired*'s zero-forehead "optimism" meme to the New Age vacuity of the angel craze, the Gothic, back from its 19th century grave, confronts us at every turn.

"During the last decade of the century (and millennium), horror plays a central role in American culture," writes Mark Edmundson in *Nightmare on Main Street: Angels, Sadomasochism, and the Culture of Gothic*. "A time of anxiety, dread about the future, the fin de siècle teems with works of Gothic terror."

Not only is the Gothic alive and well in all the obvious places — Anne Rice novels, Wes Craven movies — but its shadow is creeping across our culture's "apparently nonfictional forms" of discourse as well, he asserts. "On broadcast news, in the most respected daily newspapers, on TV talk shows," writes Edmundson, "the Gothic mode is ascendant."

He sees the risen specter of the Gothic in the tabloid treatment of the Nancy Kerrigan/Tanya Harding episode as "a Gothic tale of opposing twins," in the nightly TV news that is increasingly "a sequence of shock footage, a collection of horror shorts," and in the media's racially charged portrait of O. J. Simpson as a Dr. Jekyll who lost control of his darker self.

Even that theory-clouded redoubt of high culture, the art world, has had its fling with the Gothic. A 1997 exhibition at Boston's Institute of Contemporary Art, "Gothic: Transmutations of Horror in Late 20th Century Art," included Abigail Lane's wax mannequin of a comely young corpus delicti half-buried in a mound of earth, Zoe Leonard's photo of the preserved head of a bearded woman, and Gregory Crewdson's staged photo of a leg overgrown by writhing vines and punctured by large, brutal thorns — an unforgettable outtake from an imaginary Hitchcock movie.

Exquisite Corpses

More Gothic still are the tabloid tales of Gunther von Hagens and Anthony-Noel Kelly. Von Hagens, a professor at the University of Heidelberg School of Medicine, is the inventor of "plastination," a Norman Batesian process in which cadavers are preserved by removing the water from every cell and replacing it with molten plastic.

Museumgoers at a 1998 exhibition in Mannheim, Germany, were fascinated and repulsed by the “Figure with Skin,” a flayed corpse carrying his skin draped over one arm, and “The Runner,” his outer muscles blown backward, off his bones, in the anatomical equivalent of speedlines. The good doctor’s insistence on referring to his exhibits as “anatomical artworks” proved especially troublesome, stirring memories of Gothic monsters like the deranged artist in *Mystery of the Wax Museum*, whose sculptures turn out to be cadavers dipped in wax. “He who styles human corpses as a so-called work of art no longer respects the importance of death,” said the Catholic theologian Johannes Reiter.

Tell it to Anthony-Noel Kelly. An abattoir worker-turned-artist, Kelly was convicted in 1998 of smuggling up to 40 human body parts from the Royal College of Surgeons in London. Unknown to the art world, his sculptures incorporated gold- and silver-coated casts of corpses and body parts. “Those who treat the bodies of the recently deceased as though they were canvas and oils,” railed *The Times of London*, “are reducing reverence for the human.”

Perhaps. But whatever else they may be, Kelly and von Hagens are true sons of the zeitgeist. As the curtain falls on the 20th century, our collective thoughts turn naturally to death — in the figurative sense, meaning the death of the old bedtime stories about Truth and God that the postmodernists call “master narratives,” and in the literal sense, as the baby-boomers who thought they would stay forever young confront mortality in the bathroom mirror.

As in Gothic novels, the body is the screen on which we project our bad dreams. Christoph Grunenberg, who curated “Gothic: Transmutations of Horror in Late 20th Century Art,” notes that the postmodern Gothic often takes the shape of “formless, horrendous, shocking images of mutilated and rotting bodies with limbs covered in boils and wounds,” of disjoined body parts uncannily “transformed into nightmares.”

Diseased or dead, malformed or monstrous, the vile bodies of Gothic fiction began as nightmares inspired by the Reign of Terror. The genre’s first flowering, in late 18th-century England, was an artistic response to the French Revolution, whose rampaging mobs and guillotined heads floated through the dreams of English novelists. A shudder of body horror ripples through the Gothic canon, from *Frankenstein*, whose man-made monster’s “yellow skin barely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath,” to Poe stories like “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar,” whose coup de grâce is the disintegration of the main character into a “nearly liquid mass of loathsome — of detestable putridity.”

Even so, at the same time that the Gothic sought to exorcise visions of the madness of crowds, it liberated the irrational terrors and perverse desires repressed by the Age of Reason. The medieval past that gave the Gothic its name stood simultaneously for the barbarous, superstition-shrouded times the Enlightenment was leaving behind and the unreasoning, primitive impulses that Freud would one day call the Id — an uncanny double of the conscious self, like the doppelgänger of Gothic fiction, to which the Romantics were irresistibly drawn.

Head Trip

The Gothic is still with us in the age of gender reassignment and computer viruses because, as J.G. Ballard observed, we've brought the "diseases of the psyche" — "voyeurism, self-disgust, the infantile basis of our dreams and longings" — with us, into the Cyberspace Age. "Despite McLuhan's delight in high-speed information mosaics," he notes, "we are still reminded of Freud's profound pessimism in *Civilization and Its Discontents*." The postmodern Gothic conjures up the diseases of the psyche and millennial anxieties haunting our visions of a future so bright we've gotta wear shades.

Thus, the frozen head in the cryonic vat, a fixture of pop-science fantasies, is just a guillotined head in high-tech guise. Like us, 19th century scientists speculated that consciousness might survive decapitation. In an attempt to revive them, they jolted freshly severed heads with electricity, transfused them with dog blood, and shouted into their ears. In millennial America as in Disneyworld, the Carousel of Progress and the Haunted Mansion are never far apart.

What Makes A Day Trader Crack?

Market volatility takes on a whole new meaning

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In these days of excess volatility and irrational exuberance, the madness of crowds is all around us. On the front page or the nightly news, "crowd" means working-class mob — stampeding soccer fans crushed to death against a riot-control fence.

But the upper class has its own, somewhat more sublimated forms of mob violence and mass manias. The financial markets are a killing field for the tasseled-loafer crowd, governed by fear, fads, and greed.

Another, more solitary madness is "day trading," the high-risk online gambling brought to the nation's attention by Mark O. Barton, the chemist-turned-day trader who shot nine people dead in two Atlanta brokerages before killing himself. Day trading, in the typically understated language of one how-to bible, is "the church of what's happening now." Calling it a People's Temple for would-be Warren Buffetts might be more accurate. Thousands have quit their jobs to chase the bull-market mirage of instant millions conjured up by day-trading firms and the media. Working in public boutiques or out of their homes, they gamble on the minuscule, minute-by-minute fluctuations in a stock's price. Day traders can make small fortunes — or lose their shirts — in a single day.

Most take a bath. A report on public day trading released by the North American Securities Administrators Association noted that 70 percent of “public traders will not only lose, but will almost certainly lose everything they invest.” Mark O. Barton hemorrhaged approximately \$105,000 in 15 days of trading at Momentum Securities. When he bottomed out, Momentum’s manager told him he’d have to ante up more cash to keep playing. He wrote a check for \$50,000, which bounced. The next day, Barton returned with another kind of payback: a Colt .45 and a Glock 9 mm. Observing that “it was a bad trading day and ... going to get worse,” he opened fire.

Archaeologists of amok culture have been hard at work excavating the deeper meanings of Barton’s act. Pundits have made much of the note he left before he went on his shooting spree, with its fulminations against “this system of things” and “the people that greedily sought my destruction.” His Oedipal father-fixation has been eagerly dissected by our therapy-group culture.

The depth psychology of the hysterical male is a hot topic these days. By contrast, the yawning income gap and socially corrosive envy that haunt the Long Boom are about as sexy as Bob Dole’s public confessions of erectile dysfunction. Obviously, it took more than income inequality to pull Barton’s pin. Still, his tale of ordinary madness sheds light on the hidden costs of the New Economy.

The media air is thick with tales of twentysomethings whose IPOs have made them overnight millionaires. At the same time, the U.S. has the most unequal income distribution of any advanced industrialized country.

The financial markets are exacerbating that gap. Thanks to the highest levels of stock-market valuation in over a century, the top five percent of American households, who own 94.5 percent of all individually held stock, are getting richer than God. “One thing the financial markets do very well,” notes Wall Street commentator Doug Henwood, “is concentrate wealth.” Day trading is a carny-barker come-on to the rubes, a get-rich-quick scheme to beat a “system of things” that usually sheds its grace only on those born into the old-money plutocracy.

John Skiersch, a former nightclub show manager, was seduced into day trading by a firm’s populist pitch: “They said, ‘Where else are you going to make hundreds of thousands of dollars a year without going to medical school?’” As always, it’s the working poor and the middle class living beyond their means who need to believe in lotteries and sweepstakes and all the other miracle medallions and healing cloths that capitalism offers the rabble, to fan their hopes and keep them docile.

And, as always, the odds are stacked in the house’s favor. The managers of day-trading firms (“the people that greedily sought [Barton’s] destruction”?) collect their commissions whether you win or lose, and give you the bum’s rush when you’re tapped out. “In the end,” says Skiersch, “you realize that you’ve been had, that it was all a con. I know [day traders] who said they were going to kill themselves and that they were going to kill someone else on their way out.”

Evidently, those defeatists hadn’t read “The Mental Aspect of Trading” by day-trading evangelist Linda Bradford Raschke. “Everyone is capable of being a success-

ful trader if they truly believe they can be,” exhorts Raschke. “You must believe in the power of belief.” The power of positive thinking is the predictable answer to her rhetorical question, “If you’re a trader just starting out, where do you find the initial confidence to pull the trigger?” Barton had an answer of his own.

Mark Dery has written about new media, fringe thought, and unpopular culture for The New York Times Magazine, Rolling Stone, The Village Voice Literary Supplement, Suck, and Feed. His collection of essays, *The Pyrotechnic Insanitarium: American Culture on the Brink* was published by Grove Press in February, 1999.

The Ted K Archive

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Whoa! Collection

Bizarre stories, web culture, and outright lying.

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