



The Sovereignities of Invention

Matthew Battles

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Matthew Battles does not write stories that move, develop or unfold. He creates worlds that hiss, snap, and rattle, and decorates them with objects that brood in black, glassine silence, or crumble into dusty revelation. Characters are left to grab at scraps of reality sent whipping about them at hurricane force. Ideas "run faster than memory can sieve them from the flow," leaving vaporous reverie to fill the vacuum - dogs populate trees, demolition men bear holy forgeries, and a slick dark box siphons off synaptic vibrations.

The thrill and anxiety of the Uncanny is the engine of this debut collection by rare book librarian and cultural critic Matthew Battles. He invents a new Creole, one that combines the baroque grandiosity of 19th century industrialist with the sleek grandiosity of the 21st technologist. Traversing musty libraries and austere technology conferences, Battles quietly but ruthlessly discloses the beauty and grotesquerie of our present times, our infatuation with the New and our nostalgia for the Old both lovingly depicted and then slowly roasted on the spit.

In "The Dogs in the Trees," man's best friends deliver an enigmatic rebuke. The protagonist of "The Sovereignities of Invention" is enthralled by a gadget that plumbs the depths of the stream of consciousness. In "The Manuscript of Belz," a librarian ponders the glamor of the book and the bloody limits of cultural experience. And "the Gnomon" seeks in Internet culture the same dark energies limned by Poe. Each story within "The Sovereignities of Invention" waits, still, dark and deep, to yield its unique shock of uncanny truth - the only choice is to dive in.

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