



# Library podcast

## **Science fiction writer Samuel R. Delany, stops by to talk about his latest novel, 'Through the Valley of the Nest of Spiders.'**

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[00:00:40] My name is Misha Stone and I'm a reader services librarian. Welcome to the library and thank you for joining us. Before I turn the program over to Clarion West, just a few items of business, I want to thank the university bookstore and especially bookseller Dwayne Wilkins. I want to thank Clarion West, who is supporting and launching speculative fiction writers for decades. I'm pleased to be a part of the reading series and honor to host Samuel R. Delaney tonight at the Central Library. Also, I want to say a special thank you to the Seattle Public Library Foundation, who make so many of our free programs possible. And now I want to turn this over to Clarion West and Niecy Shaw.

[00:01:18] Hello. So, no, I'm not. Chip Delaney, I'm clearing West. And I wanted to say just a few things about clearing West because many of you here have not come to any other readings. So you might not know that Clearing West is a writing workshop organization. Currently, we're putting on a six week writing workshop. This is our 30th anniversary of doing that. And hey, we get to have Chip Delaney teach. And that's why he's here reading. We also do workshops in the spring and fall, and you can find out about those once we get them up on our Web site. OK.

[00:01:59] So Clearing West is really cool and so are all our sponsors. We're sponsored by artwork's Amazon.com for culture, the Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs, Potlatch, Susan C. Petree Fellowship and Fund, which sponsors Chip Delaney being here.

[00:02:20] We're also sponsored by Norwest Khan and we're also very grateful for the participation of the Seattle Library and University Bookstore. As I mentioned, it's our 30th anniversary and as a fundraiser we've put out a an anthology called Telling Tales. Some very, very kind gentleman just gave me a copy of the hardcover, which just came from the printers today. I think there are, what, four copies left. So if you're interested in the kind of stuff that

Clarion w produces through the graces of our lovely students, I'm going to get out of the way here pretty soon. The only other thing I want to mention is something called the right of fun. Again, this is something that many of you may not know about. What we do is we write and, you know, we write and we keep writing and we say we're gonna write this and maybe we submit that and we revise that. And when we do it, we ask for people to give money. So far, we've got three hundred and forty four writers, not all in this room. Some of them are in, you know, the Netherlands and Brazil and places like that. And we've got three hundred and forty two donors, which means we only need one hundred and fifty eight more. So if you'd feel if you feel like going to w w-w-what Clarion w dot org and checking out the right fund and giving us \$5 for somebody being a writer, I welcome you to do it. And with that I'm going to get away from this podium and let the really cool people come up here.

[00:04:00] First, we'll have Leslie Howell, who has been our workshop director for 25 years.

[00:04:09] Twenty seven years and she will introduce Chip. We'll finally get to here. Thank you.

[00:04:18] Thank you, Niocy. OK. We'll make this short. Welcome to the Fifth Reading and the Clarion West Writer's Workshops, 30th Reading Series, 30th anniversary. Reading through this, hard to believe that makes us all old effect.

[00:04:30] Chip Delaney taught at the first Clarion West and now he's teaching at the 30th Clearing West. I like that synchronicity. That is so cool.

[00:04:41] Every summer, Clarion West is proud to bring critically acclaimed writers to Seattle to each take a we teach a week of the workshop and give a reading for the general public. It is the fifth week of our bootcamp for writers, and the 18 extraordinary writers participating on this summer's workshop are soldiering on. They have written a short story a week for five weeks and are working on a sixth. They've been given personal advice and support from five instructors who are among the very best in the field a speculative fiction. They continue to push themselves and support each other in producing unique, fascinating work. It has been and continues to be an amazing summer of this 30th anniversary summer. Kudos to our hardworking, sleepless but brilliant 2013 clearing with students. Tonight, I'm very pleased to introduce this week's writer in residence, the brilliant Samuel R. Delaney. His eclectic artistic talents range from a history of playing violin and writing violin concertos to writing fiction, literary criticism and even a couple episodes of The Wonder Woman comic. Sam Delaney is one of the most important living science fiction novelists. His. He finished writing his first novel, The Jewels of aptera at 19 years old and published it when he was 20. His collection of awards includes the Nebula, the Hugo, the Stonewall Book Award, among others.

[00:05:57] His class conscious and post structuralist sensibilities are reflected in his science fiction Santas fantasy works such as the Million Plus Selling Dahlgren and the four volume return to and never on Cleaver's thing. While the lady has published a long list of classic science fiction titles, he's also written extensively on sexuality and society. His memoir, Times

Square read Times Square Blue, is a mix of personal history, urban geography and sexuality studies with New York City's working class man, both gay and straight, as its main subject. In 1993, he won the William Whitehead Memorial Award for a lifetime's contribution to lesbian and gay writing and recently won the Lambda Literary Foundation's Pioneer Award. His published memoir, Photographic Novels A Volume of Literary Fiction that I Love. Titled Iantis Three Tales. Now the author of 40 books plus Professor Delaney teaches English and creative writing programs at Temple University about science fiction. He has said science fiction isn't just thinking about the world out there. It's also thinking about how that world might be a particularly important exercise for those who are oppressed, because if they're going to change the world that we live in. They and all of us have to be able to think about a world that works differently. Please welcome Samuel R. Delaney.

[00:07:17] Well, thank you very, very much, Leslie. Thanks to the Petree Foundation, thanks to all the various organizations that have joined in bringing me here.

[00:07:30] The New Year, the Seattle Public Library and of course, Clarion, without which this wouldn't be happening. This is a really clarion is a wonderful and special institution. And I'm I'm always kind of awed whenever I come declaring the students work so hard. They are so talented and they're so just smart. And so it's a great pleasure to be a teacher at Clarion. And I always get the feeling that I get much more out of it than they do, quite honestly.

[00:08:07] At any rate. So here I am. Your favorite dirty old man.

[00:08:18] And my most recent novel is a novel is a long novel. It's about 800 pages long call through the Valley of the Nest of Spiders.

[00:08:32] And it's well, what do I need to tell you to set up the particular section that I'm going to read from tonight to everybody here? OK. Good. All right. The basic story is actually fairly simple. In 2000, in seven, seventeen year old Eric Jefferson Jeffers comes to a little town on the coast of Georgia called Diamond Harbor. He's brought there by his father, Mike, who is a welder, who works in Atlanta to stay with his mother, Barbara, who is working as a waitress at a diner in this foundering tourist trap tourist town on the coast of Georgia. And now there is some some not necessarily the most normal of situation or the most usually a normal in a purely statistical sense, most usual of situations. Eric's birth father was a white guy named Cash, and nobody, including his mother, knows Eric's father's last name. Later on, when Eric is about two or three, Barbara has married a black, has a black husband, Mike. And Mike is a welder in Atlanta. And they stay together for a good number of years. But by the time Eric is 17, they have divorced.

[00:10:01] And at some point, Barbara calls him to say, hey, I've got a great job. I would really like to take Eric for a while. They get along fairly well. So Mike drives Eric down to Diamond Harbor. Eric is a gay young man of 17 and has been sort of experimenting rather enthusiastically with public sex all over Atlanta. So he is fairly much he's fairly a function

acquainted with this. And when he gets to the Diamond Harbor, when someone has suggested there is a rather kinky rest, stop it the about 12 miles outside of Diamond Harbor. If you have nothing else to do, you might want to stop in there and see what's going on. So he gets his father to stop at the rest stop. He says, I just have to go in and use the John. Which is what he does. And he uses it for all sorts of things in the 18 minutes and 32 seconds in which he is inside. And while he is there, he meets a 19 year old young man named whose name is actually Morgan Haskell.

[00:11:13] And Morgan Haskell is the son of the local garbagemen. Morgan, when he was about 12 years old, decided he wanted a different nickname.

[00:11:25] And so in a rebellious sort of way, he decided that his nickname would be shit. And he sort of dared everybody to call them that. It's amazing what you can normalize. And by the time he is 19 years old, everybody calls him shittin. It's no big deal. He got the idea because everybody used to say, well, he Morgan's a rambunctious little shit.

[00:11:52] And so it occurred to him, well, you know, if that's what you're gonna call me, you know, you're gonna do the whole thing. And so that's why to go. Okay. Morgan and Eric meet.

[00:12:06] And they end up staying together and they stay together. They meet in 2007 and they end up staying together for the next 70 years.

[00:12:18] One of the reasons people always asking me, well, why do you want to write about something like that? And one of the reasons is because I have been together with my partner, Dennis Dennis and I have been together for 24 years now. And I wanted to write about relations that endure more than, you know, just the of the three or four passionate years that everybody makes the center of so many romances. Gay, straight doesn't matter. I wanted to put in what I knew about relationships that last. And so this is why I did it. However, the section that I am going to read is when they have been in when Eric has been Indictment Harbor basically for just three or four years, three and a half, almost four years. And he's now moved in with Eric with rather with Eric has moved in with shit and his father dynamite. And his father is fairly comfortable. With this whole arrangement for one reason, because his father is also gay.

[00:13:23] And the gay society, the gay community has been supported by and character who is offstage for this particular moments. A black multi-millionaire who's who has started a foundation to make to better the lives of black gay men in the area and has been doing this since the 80s. So shit and shit has kind of grown up in this this community. Eric is new to it all, but there they are, 19 and 17, and then it's three, three and a half years later. And so this is a section for after they have been there for three years.

[00:14:11] And because of the Kyle Foundation, that's the name of a lots and lots of black gay men live in the area and they're probably at this particular town. There are probably more black gay men at work doing the various jobs than there are straight guys.

[00:14:28] That's the way these things happen because there is this particular institutional support. So. Eric parked on the C Road Indian summer, moved through the pickup's window. Three cars and two trucks were parked across in the pull off where Randall was climbing down the poles. Staples Randall is somebody who is there.

[00:14:57] Their dispatcher in terms of the garbage work that they do every morning. However, Randall has taken a couple of month, weeks off to help put up some solar panels.

[00:15:09] Five young people watched and joke, three black women and a Latino guy whom he didn't recognize at all with no shirt.

[00:15:17] A scattering of jailhouse tats and kind of sexy because of it. And all within three or four years of Eric's age, below the swoop of wires and the size of a small door, a solar panel tilted toward the clouds up near the sun. High on the pole hung some kind of transformer and above that a light. Damn. One of the women said, I think we got them all up. That didn't take long. And one of the men that was a short three months. Seems like we put the first two up couple weeks back. But it was August when all the summer people was gawking at us. On every poll along three joining roads was a 300 watt generating panel. Eric had already grown used to them 20 feet up the 30 foot poles.

[00:16:15] Leaning into the day, Randall stepped back, looking up, then around. Well, why don't you all go to Fred's now, see you there. He turned and saw Eric in the truck. You go over to the S.S. office. I still can't quite, quite figure out why the foundation had to pay the company to let us install, but we still saved a little money.

[00:16:40] But, hey, I'll run you over. Good. Randall said. Then he called across his shoulder. I'll see y'all back at Fred's later. He strode across the road, opened the passenger door and pulled himself into the cab. I'll see over there, Ace. The shirtless Latino raised a hand and smiled as Randall climbed in with Eric and closed the door. He's pretty nice looking. Eric said. You ready? Sure. Randall cleared his throat. He's cute, but he's shot. Eric started the truck. Talk about a fast three months you've been here, how long? Two years, three.

[00:17:26] My God. Here in July 0 7. Patch just over three years. Randalls shook his head. He was a stocky black man from Arizona. I remember the first time Dynamite called me and said, he wants to start you on the Pyle plant. And I thought he had a black kid because I'd heard about your daddy. I guess everybody down here did. Then you and shit walked him. I was really surprised, but like you say, it's worked out pretty good. I was just 39 back then. Here I am. Forty three. But I've been kind of wondering how me and Ace are gonna do with just the two of us again. Eric was surprised. You guys are together. Randle looked around.

[00:18:12] At least I guess we are. We've been sleeping in the same bed, and I hardly wake up when he ain't down between my legs trying to suck me off. I don't come that way a lot, but if you don't mind, I sure don't. It feels good. I got him a Turpin system out of this real orgy they were having in there in the back, John. And he grinned and come on with me. But he was really enjoying all the guys at once. That's a taste I know only. Randall shrugged.

[00:18:39] Only we ain't been back there again. At least, I mean, a couple of times he got off by a cell for most of a day, and I figured maybe somebody gave him a ride up there. That's fine with me. And he always come back wandering into my place later. Makes me feel kinda of. Now if I could manage to get an hour more sleep at night, it'd be perfect. Randall chuckled. Well, Eric said, that sounds pretty good. How old is he again? Randall shrugged. Twenty nine. Thirty? Thirty one.

[00:19:16] Eric made a considering sound. Maybe he's getting ready to settle down. Randall made one back, Hey, Eric turned up the north road.

[00:19:26] You two want to come around next Sunday? I'm gonna be roasting some ribs. I can always put together another rack on the grill. We'll have some slaw and some corn on the cob with butter. That'll give you something to do. Not to mention some food that ain't your own cookin or clams. We've been eating at the lighthouse a lot. Yeah. I seen you in there a few times now. Well, hey, that's nice of you. Randall pulls his arm back through the window and joined his hands in his laps. The blue cuffs pushed up his dark four arms.

[00:20:01] You sure that'll be okay with shitting dynamite? Sure it will. Eric said you're always curious about new guys like Ace. That's Swin up ahead under the trees to the right. Eric Soares shit wandering in their direction. Well, they're shit now. Eric moved his foot from gas to break. We'll ask him. The pickup slowed.

[00:20:26] Randall sat forward and as Eric stopped, the truck opened the door. Shit stuck his head in. Well, this is a surprise.

[00:20:37] Then Hilton pulled himself up. Hey, boss, what are you doing in the truck with air? Come on now. Move over. Move over so I can get in. He squeezed. And now slam the door here. Are we gonna do with this fine looking old fella? We don't take him out in the woods somewhere. Lay him down in the leaves and trade off fucking him a second him till he comes like a damn 14 year old. You remember how I used to come when I with you and I was 14, I bet. Actually, I do.

[00:21:03] Randall chuckled. I still do it that way, too. Shit grinned and moved one leg over. Randal's a square kneecap pushing through the hole in his jeans.

[00:21:14] That's a real good thing I done inherited. And I don't think you ever been that you ever had this fella here yet. Erica's some good, not real enthusiast. Couple times with him and he'll have you. So he just you. So he just got to greet you. You got stiff and wrapped up. That's about how he got me doing it. And don't even talk about dynamite.

[00:21:33] Actually, Eric said, I just ask Randal's and his young fella to drop over for ribs and corn on Sunday. The road got slightly smoother if you and Ace aim for one o'clock. That'll be about when the first rat comes off the grill.

[00:21:49] Oh, he should sit. That sounds real nice. We can have some good food and a good orgy too. All of us together. Eric looks up a storm. We don't mind old farts like you and dynamite. And it sounds like a stone either. Randle laughed at. Shit. Do you think you could hold off on the orgy part? Ace is a little on the shy side, and that might be a bit much for him on a first meeting. Oh, don't worry about me. Shit slid his leg off, Randles. Somehow the knee of his jeans ripped further. Eric huerter. I'll break out my company manor's if you really want me to.

[00:22:32] Ahead on the left behind a scrap of lawn stood the rough out timber planks of the Diamond Harbour Chamber of Commerce Office.

[00:22:43] Two women from the Solar Panel Institute instant installation crew sat on the steps.

[00:22:50] Hey, Randall said, you can let me out here. My car's around the back. That's real nice, you guys. Hayes is probably inside. He likes that air conditioning they got in there. Next Sunday, we'll come over around one.

[00:23:03] Good shit. Sit. As the truck stop, Randle reached over for the door. Then after climbing in lap. Laughing.

[00:23:12] Oh, Randle. Come on. Stay on my lap a while. Give me one of them. Lap dances every tap. But body tells me you do so good.

[00:23:18] Oh, we. That feels nice. When you come over, you got teach dynamite had to that. Come on now. Let go of my ass shit.

[00:23:26] Let go of me. Let me out of here. Randall was down on the side of the road. See you this weekend. Laughing Shit. Pull the pickup door closed again. The truck began to move here. The road was shadowed with pines. So he gonna bring that Spanish fella who'd been staying with him over? Yeah. Eric's here.

[00:23:51] I think he's a little worried that he's ain't enjoying himself while he's around here as much as he might. So I just thought I'd be neighborly. He might have some fun. Yeah, some good ribs. Enjoying himself. Both Schitt's eyebrows rose. Enjoying herself is about all that

scrap scrawny jailbird. Do you remember last day off when I left you and dynamite alone at the cabin to have some of that there? Holiday Father Father-Son time the two of you like so much. And I went and hitched a ride to turbine's, where, as you know, I don't ever, ever go. I see. You know he's over there too. I had him three times in the front, John on the side, and then I just saw it behind the rear one before truckers who I was showing the way around the place and how we do back there. You don't have to worry about me trying to start up. Nothing raunchy with him out of the dump come Sunday.

[00:24:42] He already had him three ways. Go. So I think I can restrict myself to ordinary social intercourse cause I ain't got cause I ain't got curiosity ragging me on.

[00:24:53] I already know how good it is. Shit moved over the seat and dropped a hand on Eric's thigh. He should be pretty happy with all rantel vinegary and keeping him on what you'd call a short leash no more. And you and dynamite does me now. Why should I be even vaguely surprised? Eric laughed. You already had your dick about fellas. Turn it around, getting you a taste of it for all the rest of us. Oh, come on. You know, that's just who I am. That don't mean you ain't no one. Shit's rough hand move further over between Eric's legs. I'll bring you down to the truck stop with me next time. So he's there. You can gravitates to oh, that don't bother me shit. You know that Eric Hall on the Weald. I just open it. Don't bother Randle. He's a good boss man, feller.

[00:25:48] On Sunday morning, just after 12:30, Erik finished grading the carrots into the stainless steel bowl he held flatted on a folded towel on the kitchen table between the tool box and a pile of old magazines beside it.

[00:26:07] On the place he'd wiped pretty clean, a cabbage sat in two halves. Eric picked up one and began to draw it back and forth over the wire half of the vegetable grater which snowed white cabbage over the orange pile. Shit, you won't get Marnie's out the icebox. That little bowl with aluminum foil over it as some grated onion. You want to bring that over here too with it? Schorsch, it said. And you want that celery sauce to sell result too, don't you? That's right.

[00:26:41] Dynamite's step through the side door, Hey, I just slop some of your vinegar and hot peppers all over them, ribs outside on the grill. There's a smell and real good.

[00:26:51] Thanks. Eric said, I'll leave Ternium to you, though. Next time I touch him, Eric said, they're coming off. They're pretty much done. Outside a car, grunted and growled, nearing shit, said, I think our company's here. Then let's go say hello. Eric pulled off the tin foil and felt his eyes begin to water, dumped in the onions and ran the wooden spoon back and forth over the bowls bottom. Then through the slaw, tapping it on the edge.

[00:27:25] He turned to follow shit and dynamite out onto the deck to stand beside the grill near them.



[00:27:33] Against the wall stood a bag of charcoal on the table. Next to it stood a coffee can of barbecue sauce, in which leaned the handle of a brush over the tables. Boards, irregular splotches of sauce, made a trail from the can toward the grill. The car door of the dirty yellow dodge opened and Randalls slid out. He had on a new plaid shirt which made Eric aware that Dynamite was wearing a pretty spotty t shirt under his bibs. It had come out the dryer yesterday evening. Hey there, Antle Dynamite's it said. Good to see you, boss.

[00:28:17] Hey, guys. I know I'm a few minutes early, but I was sitting around by myself feeling antsy to finally I hill. Just come on over. If I'm in the way, tell me and I'll drive around and come back. Maybe I can run over and pick up something for you if you need it.

[00:28:35] No, no. I said that's fine. The ribs are done. You couldn't timed it better.

[00:28:40] You're always welcome, boss man. Dynamite said you want a beer. You boys go in and bring some that I know you ain't gonna have none. They got lemonade for them. Shit made it up this mornin fresh. You can have some of that if you want. Maybe later. Randle said no. I'll take the beer. Shit asked. Where's Ace? He won't want to know. Randall pulled a big pulled in a big, loud breath. It's just gonna be me today. Oh. Dynamite said I was looking forward to meeting him.

[00:29:14] Eric took a step back toward the kitchen, but because she did not, he hesitated.

[00:29:21] Dynamite asked. He come in later, sit down, sit down, boss man right here. Dynamite dropped his hand on the back of the bench.

[00:29:30] No. Randle said he's going ace. Left yesterday. I asked him if he didn't wanna stay around another few days. Just come on by and try out your ribs. But he said no, he won't get on. So I'll run him down to Durban's. And I'm damned if he didn't pick up a rod in ten minutes. Just walk around the back lot and ask in the Saturday regards if any harm would take him. I was gonna call you and tell you not fits for him. But it was funny. Once I got back home, I kept on thinking maybe he'd change his mind and come on back.

[00:30:06] It was like I was expecting him to walk through the front door, saying he changed his mind. Randall shrugged. But he didn't. Oh, dynamite repeated, taking longer to say it. Well, I guess that just means there's more for us. Eric said, I'm going in, get you that beer. He turned and walked over the deck.

[00:30:33] Come on up and have a seat. Then ribs, ribs do smell good. Randall said and started up the steps you doing with that vinegar sauce. That's kinda really like it's what I grew up on.

[00:30:44] The rest is all ketchup and sugar. I guess that's okay. But to me that a barbecue.

[00:30:50] Eric stepped into the kitchen out on the porch.

[00:30:54] Randall was saying, so you guys have been together three years now that some.

[00:31:00] A said since the solar panels were all up, he was gonna take all get a ride to Florida and spend the rest of the winter down there, I guess three months was all he could stand on my black ass. But I tell you, I'm gonna miss this little warm butt up against my belly every night.

[00:31:17] Eric went to the refrigerator, vaguely aware that shit had stepped into the kitchen behind him.

[00:31:24] Erik felt a little odd that the guest of honor had not come, but since Randall was there, it would probably be OK. Eric opened the refrigerator door and stood looking into the crowded shelves. Something grappled him from behind and whispered in his ear. Jesus! A cage of bone constricted around him. That's what it felt like. Erik reached up and grasped Schitt's forearm locked high across his chest.

[00:31:56] Shit whispered. Please, please, please, nigga, don't go. Don't decide you want to go to Florida or or Atlanta or any place like that.

[00:32:05] Eric tried to keep his balance because she'd had raised one leg and wrapped it all around in front of him.

[00:32:12] Hey, Dad, don't. Don't worry, I ain't. You sure? Yeah, I'm sure. Really? Yes, I am. Really, really sure. Would you get the plates and take them out there with the beer and give me five minutes to finish up Madame's coleslaw, please? Sure. You know, I'll do anything you want, anything ever asked me. We'll take the beard. Dynamiting franzl the lemonade for me and you. Schitt's. Grip loosened. Yeah. Take the glasses outside and I'll be out with y'all in five minutes. Hey, I wouldn't even know what to do if you left. Shit. Drew in a breath like randle's when he had stepped from the Dodge. I mean, what would happen? Well, for one thing, you wouldn't get no ribs. Come on now, go outside and take the plates and the beer and the lemonade. I'm gonna have to come back for that. Then get going.

[00:33:13] Eric turned to be surprised by Schitt's. Wide green eyes bright. Blinking rapidly, brightly. So Eric hugged him. And again, was surprised by the strength of the hug. Shit returned.

[00:33:41] Thank you very much.

[00:33:43] Some months ago, I had the pleasure and the honor of reading together with Junot Diaz at the Philadelphia Free Library and Juno was reading from his new book, which is a cool, wonderful collection of stories. If you haven't read it, you should really take a look at it. The title

of which is This is How You Lose Her. And I thought I should really call my reading that night. This is how you keep him and Eric and Eric and should do keep each other for 70 or more, almost 70 by almost 80 years together. So that's the stats. A little bit of the story of shit, dynamite, which other shit.

[00:34:30] And Eric, they don't. What can I say? They read the book eventually become science fiction, although it becomes science fiction very slowly because it does move 60, 60, 70 years in the future and it starts in 2007. So the first four or five years are not science fiction.

[00:34:53] And although as a friend, as somebody one of the reviewers said a couple of years ago after the book first came out a bit ago when the book came out in 2012.

[00:35:03] Well, we're into we're into 2013, which is by this time the book is science fiction, but it's not anymore because 2013 is almost over. So this is the problem of near-future science fiction. But the book does the book I think of the book as is basically a science fiction Sci-Fi and fiction novel, though it takes some time for that. I'm going to read there. I've had another book that's come out. I'm going to read you a much shorter piece. It's just it's just a little Judas Priest, little taste. The book is called Phallus. Oh, thank you. And I'm just gonna read a very little bit of it. That's not even 10 minutes long. It just gives you a sense of what's going on in some of the book.

[00:35:57] But conceit is that the book is a what would you say?

[00:36:06] It's the conceit is that it's a pornographic novella that possibly was written in the 18th century or the 17th century. Possibly it was written in 1969. But nobody is really sure. So there are arguments both ways. And it has been since upsized on the Internet in the early days of the Internet. And because it was a university, an early university Web site in the days of the media committ Meese Commission, all the explicit sex has been admitted.

[00:36:43] So I thought. Oh, OK.

[00:36:49] In the course of the book, it's set during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian back in the second, second century A.D..

[00:36:59] And the site of the book is in her Margulis, which is the place where the Emperor Hadrian was when his favorite of the time and tenuous was murdered. And so that's the historical center. What the story and the plot turns around.

[00:37:22] However, we have to graduate students Binkie and filice, who are friends of the person who is in upsizing the text, and they are constantly inserting little comments about what they're both. All three of them are great fans of the original novel. They just think it's really just a hoot. And they also think that it's rather hot. But they have to get by with an abridged edition.

So here we go. And so I'm going to basically read you a small section of the novel and one of thinkis footnotes.

[00:37:58] And Randy Petterson is the name of the man who is in upsizing the book.

[00:38:07] So it's there is a page break. And after this prologue, the second chapter for me, the opening of the novel proper begins. That's Randy Petterson writing. And he's quoting directly from the novel now tugging up it's he then slosh pushing them down. Spindrift win- swung and swirled above continuous discontinuity, flux and swell scumball with foam and nudged by evening slant light through all the colors of glass. A bit of wood slid turning toward pilings. Slowly, WPO going and shifting skin then slid away. But not so far. Another hump smash to foam along its crest and become wave arched, spooning, repetitious motion marking and orderliness.

[00:38:55] In this absolute irresponsibility shattering Shorewood Back to Randy's commentary about which harkening back to the introduction surely the last time for many, many pages and prompted only by the OED. I make one comment.

[00:39:12] Potcoin Not before 1921, the invention of the pogo stick.

[00:39:19] Phyllis. Footnote Phyllis is responsible for this fact. Thanks again, Phil..

[00:39:26] At any rate, we are in a storm at the haemophilus stocks on the day of the September equinox. Quote, A turning point as holy for rituals in the east. As for any western Sacramento, despite the wind and rain, the rebels of the city's titular D.O.T. F-off fill her MA palaces Main Street as streets and squares with processions, chanting and prayer. Quote from the novel again, though, whose totem is the Ebers, the inventor of writing and letters, crops and dice, architecture and astrology.

[00:40:02] He is the bull among the stars who, at the behest of Martin the sun toppled, babbles grand tower and tour tongue from tongue into the mutually incomprehensible array of human languages, even as his own breath imparted life to all things living unto cuil and Kalmus, unquote.

[00:40:26] Back to Randi's synopsis in the warm and grare Egyptian rain. So far, no one he's asked has been able to tell near Ptolemy's where to find the temple he seeks. He is looking for the temple of a name was God. Again, quote, If a God has no name, what sort of God can he be? One man asks him, urging him to join in force celebrations, unable to see his true object.

[00:40:54] However, near Thomas has found himself deviled by nameless dissatisfactions as he walks along the waterfront to wander up this deserted alley or down that empty back street.

[00:41:07] Quote from the book again directly. A new city never appears bigger or more confusing than on the day one encounters it. Besides the Roaring Nile and we're back at Randi's synopsis near, Thomas sees a naked youth walking up from populace's rainy ducks. Even poor before me at Ptolemy's can ask the fellow if he knows of that elusive holy site, the well-hung, handsome youngster. Perhaps a year or so younger than our narrator tells me, Tolliver's, that he is from the city of Affinia in Asia Minor, and makes clear he is of is of a randee disposition all near Ptolemy's can remember of Perfidia is that quote I'd heard it was very near Syria where I had spent my last three years. And of course, that the elegant Petronius had once been proconsul there as well. It was the home of some dancer Sapo had been smitten with nearly a thousand years before. None of which told me much about the youth standing of the rain splattered Bordes before me. End of quote. Back to the synopsis.

[00:42:16] Under the peppering drops, the young fellow explains that in search of sexual adventure, he has slipped free of an older lover, leaving him behind at the city's central celebration.

[00:42:30] Quote from the book again. But who is he? I asked Droplet speckle shoulders shrugged. No one really above his green green eyes. Big Jim. Jim! Flashes flickered as lightning flickered over us.

[00:42:45] Doesn't he satisfy you? Oh, very well. He is elderly, kind, was masterful and handsome.

[00:42:52] Yet there is always something missing, I suppose, at the core of even the most ardent love, something making those of us with a certain restlessness of soul seek further, want more yearn to explore beyond all we are given.

[00:43:09] I chuckle and like a grumble from a discontented God. Thunder above her moralists obliterated it.

[00:43:17] Back to the synopsis at the EU's suggestion, he and Nir Ptolemy's take refuge in a dockside warehouse profanely near Ptolemy's decides he will have to put aside his patron's commission long enough to take some pleasure from this grim gray town under the ceilings, dripping beams in a corner, on a corner pile of straw. They have sex. It goes on for several gloriously explicit pages. Indeed, for the pulp of both of the chapter with passionate new acrobatic and exhausting quote, though I thought it then and have often seen as I have never written it down until today. The boy made love like a man condemned to die within the hour, who wished to wrench every gram of ecstasy from the ad.

[00:44:09] End of quote. Spend it last in fragrant straw with a boy in his arm near Thomas closes his arms. There is then a footnote. We'll skip it for just a moment. Might he be able near-poor near? Thomas wonders with later conversation to locate a commerce screen in this

impassion, to feeb, to more than touch, to grasp, hold or even determine the outline of what it was that had so far seemed absent in our encounter near Ptolemy's drifts to sleep here.

[00:44:45] This is the footnote, Binkie writes, Having read through and been somewhat loathed by the prologue chapters, Loki's Sexual Encounters. Randy, the first time I passed from there into near Thomas's love making with a young Athenian Athenian.

[00:45:02] The effect was that the effect was as if the book went into Technicolor and simultaneously opened into the three screens of Able Glances Napoleon 1927, complete with surround sound. In those eight pages, all five of the senses are appeal to half a dozen times. Here are the differing heats of palm genital flesh in her arm and nape. The second fingers slipped across the rooked foreskin, which was excitement's pre leakage. The straws roar when you throw your at the side of your face onto it. How the passing tongue flexes pressed to a thumb knuckle feel the odor, the tastes of two male bodies hammering hard behind someone else's ribs during orgasm, hammering yours times Hef's shifts in weight, and in Totnes, the slap of belly slick with skin, sweat and rain. A Diffie ram of rising and resonating intensities. I know you couldn't quote it. Can't describe it.

[00:46:06] It had to be cut. Still, it was one of my yes, great first time reading experiences in one way. I'm glad you didn't try to recreate it in another. Well, when I read your synopsis and reached this part, the bottom fell out of my belly as it might have had a rounded roadways bend, expecting to see a mountain menacing silver clouds to find instead a graveled waste to the two to the ball horizon.

[00:46:40] Randi, again, thanks, Becky. Thank you.

[00:46:51] So that will give you some idea what the dirty old man who's been doing these last few years. Are there any questions or is there anything anybody would like to ask about anything at this point? I can't believe there is a question that I haven't received at one particular point or another.

[00:47:09] The gentleman with the beard and the long hair. Yes. And the glasses. And the blue shirt. The question was, is there more of fellows than is included in the in the book? Well, there are two editions now felt this is the first edition and the second edition is about a third again, as long. And that's this edition. This is a it says it has enhanced and revised edition.

[00:47:39] The Fallows has been enhanced and revised. So there you go.

[00:47:45] And it is about a third. The actual text, the part devoted to the text of the novel is about a third longer and I think it works better. I never stop revising, you know, just because a book is published, that's no reason to just compromise it.

[00:48:01] I still go on trying to make it better. OK.

[00:48:05] There was a question over there. Somebody did ask.

[00:48:08] A couple of people have asked me where I got to where I got the idea for through the valley of the nest of spiders. And I told you, part of it comes from the fact that I my own central relationship has been. Now, you know, lasted more than two dozen years. And I expect it will probably I don't expect it to break. I don't expect myself to go and find out that, you know, that we have broken up. It's conceivable thing. Stranger things have happened. But at this point, I'm fairly comfortable with the relationship, and I think Dennis is pretty comfortable with it, too. And I wanted to write about that kind of comfortable relationship where I got the idea originally for the whole thing.

[00:48:49] It's one of the first ideas for a novel I ever got.

[00:48:53] Well, before I wrote my very first novel, The Jules of ARPDAU back in 1962 or 60, 61 or 62 when I was about 18 vote. The line was Vladimir Nabokov and Pale Fire the Big the great poem that starts the the novel off. One of the couplets is in 1958, Hurrican Lolita swept from Florida to Maine. And because Lolita was a runaway best seller in 1958, GNEP Nabokov was interviewed and was interviewed by I think it may have been Playboy. And so I read the Nabokov interview with Playboy and the interviewer said, well, how does it feel to have written such a shocking novel?

[00:49:42] You know, a shocking novel about a love affair between a 12 year old girl and, you know, and an adult man.

[00:49:49] Isn't that you know, wasn't that be rather straight? And Nabokov said there's nothing shocking about that and there's nothing shocking about Lolita at all.

[00:49:57] He said, if you wanted to write a really shocking American novel, what you would do is write about an interracial couple who got together, had children. They grew old together. They never had trouble with drugs or the police. Yeah, their children grew up to be doctors and lawyers and what have you. And they grew to a ripe old age together, still as in love as they ever were with their children and grandchildren around them. Now you write that, and that will be the truly shocking American novel.

[00:50:35] And I thought what a brilliant idea and I thought I someday I would like to write that. Well, one day I realized I was over 60 and I thought, if you ever going to write that, you better start now because you don't have a lot of time.

[00:50:52] So I sat down and I wrote about this interracial relation with Eric and shit, Eric and Morgan, who were going to blast, you know, they were. But only it's a gay relationship because that's the kind of relationships I've been in. That's what I know. And so I wanted to write. Use that as the material to write about it. And so I wrote about this and they you know, and they do,

you know, and the story carries them until they're in their 80s and indeed in one of those in their 90s. And that's the way it goes. And then the you know, the life comes to an end because that's what happens. And so that's what gave me that's really. But that was really what gave me the idea was Nabokov's comment in that interview that I read when I was 18 years old, which I could never get out of my head.

[00:51:45] Yeah. Yeah. Anything else anybody would like to ask about? Yes. The guy in the black T-shirt.

[00:51:52] It's always been my thought that the longer a book is, the simpler the basic structure should be that if you've got a small book like Palace Palaces, very complex and very convoluted, what have you. That's because it's only like a hundred and twelve pages long. And I think 112 page novella can be invalidated. And what have you. And to have different layers where as a big long book it can have different layers, but you have to be more subtle about it.

[00:52:23] And the basic story has to just carry you straight through.

[00:52:27] And so basically we start with Eric on the morning that he goes down to Diamond, you know, Dark Diamond Harbor, his father gets him up. And, you know, it's time to go down Diamond Harbor. And we just take him on to the time. And then that's the last time we see him. He's coming.

[00:52:44] I won't tell you because that was that's I call. I think that's called a spoiler. And we don't want we don't want that.

[00:52:50] But it goes on to the you know, to the to pretty much the end of his life. Yeah. So that's you just. And you just try to put it all in. And you say, you know, okay, what do I. What haven't I shown? What do I need to show now? And you just keep asking that question. And so then you put that in.

[00:53:07] It's a book that a couple of reviewers have said it's a very hard book to read. Nothing happens in it. Apple has absolutely no plot.

[00:53:18] And it took me three whole days to read all 800 pages. You know, I don't know. There's something something seems to be going on. You know, let's see the gentleman directly up from me. I haven't the vaguest idea who it is. What's one of the things I've always felt, however, is that there's you know, we live in a country with 300 million people roughly at this particular time. They've got to be 150000 who are more or less interested in what I happen to be interested in this afternoon, you know? So that's my finger. That's my audience. You know, the audience, the people who are interested in what I happen to be interested in. And it seems to work because the books stay in print. I said somebody we were going to. Yes, my friend. And the second again.



[00:54:05] Well, of all, with all due respect, I don't know whether I think the more is the way to do it. I real I look at that story and I although I think there are things in it that I like. I think the politics of that story is troubled. TRUGLIO Troubled.

[00:54:19] I really do it. This is the only thing I can say.

[00:54:23] This is a story that's written before Stonewall. You know, it's for two years of story. Stonewall is sixty nine. This is written in 66. This is a story that was written three years before Stonewall and you did them. The world that we live in today was just hard to even imagine.

[00:54:41] And so it's you know, I had people still are interested that story because of one award.

[00:54:53] I think, you know, and often is the case, often the stories that are the most popular are not the most are not the ones that are the most radical. I think there's something very, very conservative about that.

[00:55:06] And that's because I was a kid, you know, and I was, you know, and I was perfectly happy to sort of fall into, you know, because I'm gay. Isn't it tragic? You know? You know, I wasn't tragic.

[00:55:22] It was delightful. But I didn't think I didn't know. It never occurred to me. Get away with saying that. And so I you know, it never occurred to me that I should try saying.

[00:55:34] I mean, I had just gone to Europe and I had taken to I basically been with two straight friends, two straight male friends, and they had a wonderful time because I was a faggot.

[00:55:48] You know, basically they I I the my first night in Paris, I went out and picked up this black guy who was masturbating in the Tuileries Gardens outside of the loooooove who took me back to his his apartment. He was a medical student from Senegal. He was an African medical student from Senegal. Had a wonderful time. And I told him I was traveling with two friends and he said, once you bring them over for dinner tomorrow. And so I said, OK. And I when I went the next morning, when I went back to to see Bill and Ron, I said, oh, by the way, I know I met an interesting guy last night. And he said, why don't you come? You want to come over for dinner? Oh, how did you meet somebody, you know, who you know? What do you say? Well, he was jerking off in the Tuileries. And so anyway, but I basically I am. So we went over there and we got some wine and we had a very nice we had a lovely time. And these guys, were they they a bunch of his African friends would get together and cook and they would have a sort of communal dinner and they cooked a leg of lamb to die for which they served on the best China.

[00:57:03] And so, you know, I've ever seen. You know, they and we sat in a tiny little room that wasn't much food. The space was not much larger than this table. And we sat all around the edge to over there, to over there. Eight of us at this table, which was a piece of plywood, which we balanced on our knees. And, you know, and. And Bernard, you know, slapped up a great big table cloth, which looked like for a moment it was like a sail carrying us off to never, never land and fell down over the table. And we you know, and we tucked it all under it. And we had the most wonderful dinner and everybody had a great time. And there was one little guy who was one of the people who'd done all the cooked and done the cooking, who gotten very, very intrigued with our Canadian guy who was travelling with us, who I don't think he'd ever heard of gay people. You know, I got to see this again. This is way before Stonewall. And, you know, and so this guy would sit and was sitting next to Bill and every which way he put his arm around Bill's shoulder and Bill would smile and what have you.


[00:58:07] Kind of. Yeah. And and what have you. And finally, we went after a wonderful evening, which we all had. Bill had a great time. Ron had a great time. I had a great time. And we went home back to our hotel. And the first thing Ron said, they were gay, weren't they? You know, and you know. And I said, yeah, and and Bill's bill said, Gay. What's that? Boy, was that fun.

[00:58:39] And so that was and we had weed. That was the thing. And you know and I think, you know and then I went home and I wrote this lugubrious story about the tragedy of being a burglar. You know about it before. And and not only that and won an award from the you know, from the science fiction writers of America. And every once in a while, I thought, why didn't you write a story about somebody, you know, going to Paris and being, oh, it turned out that Bernard, by the way, was an actor, was a real life African prince.

[00:59:13] His mother was the queen of a tribe. So not only did we get to go to dinner with a wonderful with and read some wonderful people, but we had we were we were wined and dined by an African prince. You know, how many times has that happened to you, you know? And he just happened to be gay. And it was wonderful. So but I mean, I wondered.

[00:59:35] I used to think after a while, I think, why didn't I write about that? You know, because that was what my life was like. You know, my life was not terribly lugubrious. And I think and I thought, well, it just it never occurred to me that there was no there was no model for that. You know, you didn't. You didn't. Yeah, that's what happened. But it's not it was not you know, it it takes a remark that takes a remarkable about remarkable amount of energy and and something inside. And maybe it's not energy, but to just talk about what you actually do, what actually happens to you, especially when lots and lots of people are telling you that that's not what you're actually doing. Actually, you're very sick, you know. And not only that, you know what you're doing. One doesn't exist to it's illegal. And three, you know, it's pathological.

[01:00:28] You know, of course, I had a very good dinner. I didn't. I don't think that Rose. I don't think that leg of lamb was pathological. I think it was downright delicious. You know, and



so did two straight white guys. But you know what? I don't know. So there you go. I want to thank you for such an interesting bunch of questions.

[01:00:58] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.

