

Rose's comments about FRAMESHIFTS

Here's a book handmade, self-published, and guaranteed to draw you into the shifty world of a charismatic biochemist and evangelistic trash man named Avery Crawley, who draws a theocratic cult around him by preaching,

**“All things on earth shall wholly pass away¹
as grazing aphids from the milkweed green,
or obsidian beetles from the dark,
ten-legged lines from ever-fingering touch,
or icon from belief, or firefly swim
of stars through leaves from awe, or hope, or love.**

**“Men in their shallow grids, worn tracks of love,
slick chutes and passages for get-away,
insular housings, marked lanes to swim,
marked meadows to enjoy, and lawns for green,
reach out and feel the cool degrading touch;
look in, through a chink, at the seething dark.”²**

So he preaches, Avery Crawley, the Supreme Prophet of the Salvage. The Salvage cult uses corporate law, federal funding, and genetic engineering to become one of the first regions to secede from a federation exhausted by foreign wars and inept attempts to reclaim the eastern seaboard from a rising ocean. Fairall, a small Northern Virginia community, becomes the center of the Salvage, with its Board of Faith and Practice, its own currency, not unlike Berkshares, and its own mercenary army. It's all in the book.

Here's a book of books: *FRAMESHIFTS*, a book of shifting frames of attention, shifting frames of reference, shifting genres, scenes, and characters, written before there was a *Shift Network* to command an “evolutionary shift of consciousness” to a “more enlightened society built on principles of sustainability, peace, health, and prosperity.”

Here's a work of folk art, an “art created by people who live below the level of historical scrutiny.”³ Except that I'm still here. So scrutinize. **An unhinged biochemist**, preaching the end of the world through global warmth of greed and coolness of our attention to what most concerns us, leads believers to create an inland community away from the flooded east coast—a kind of apocalyptic work-study program of green better living through habitat restoration and the genetic control of behavior.

Here is a book of books, a collection of stories making a novel that shifts back

¹ As the Peace Alliance describes the efforts of Stephen Dinan, author of *Radical Spirit*.

² *Frameshifts*

³ Roger Butterfield, 1983

and forth over two centuries. Admiring other writers, like Vonnegut, Bellow, Ellison, M.C. Beaton, Alistair McLean, Ray Bradbury, W.H. Auden, W.C. Williams, and Madeleine L'Engle, the author has made for you a book of stories.

- FRAMESHIFTS is for you, a reader who loves being lost in a strange territory;
- FRAMESHIFTS is for you, a reader open to a path that twists through mysteries, suspense, philosophies, poetry, history, military escapades, dramatic dialogues, letters, lectures, adventure, fictional memoirs, science fiction, dystopias, and political intrigues..

Whether you're interested in whodunit, a lost missile launch code, the sinister results of the petty politics of town councils and school boards, genetic engineering gone awry, or a utopian reform of agriculture and society that seems almost *too* perfect and complete, like

“ants, able-bodied, wholly/ certain of their ranks, wholly/ intent to pivot, filing through the grass.”⁴—**then *FRAMESHIFTS* is for you.**

Where does it come down? Where do we come down when we land from our wild rides on wild weasels, submarines, and drones? Where do we settle from the endless round of greed from drop to drop, from storms and rains and droughts that will not stop? How did we get this far along? Whose shopping, whose gorging to obese conditions, consuming till we consume each other and ourselves, whose votes, whose choice of weapons, terms and blindfolds gave permission? Avery Crawley, the Supreme Prophet, puts it this way:

“In those days before the flood they were eating and drinking and giving in marriage and they did not know until the flood came and swept them all away. You hear that? We are living in deficit times. Appetites and pride have outstripped resources. But Correction is coming. Correction and Re-alignment.”⁵ **So the Supreme Prophet preaches.**

But how did it happen? As usual—the way it always happens. We were going about our business, quietly signing contracts, doing lunch, making deals, taking classes, and, ignoring warnings not to lose the pieces as we tinkered.⁶

“Upon our privacies/ depend all legacies./ By minute degrees/ we shaped the world with ease.”⁷

In no time at all we moved from Leavitt town to downtown, from Tea Pot Dome to Tin Balloon to Tea Pot; from pop-top ozone hole to stop-gaps, clotures, senate rules, and executive orders. The wounds gaped while Avery Crawley preached of a world where “wealth *still* accumulates and men *still* decay.”⁸

⁴ Frameshifts

⁵ Frameshifts

⁶ Aldo Leopold

⁷ Frameshifts

⁸ Oliver Goldsmith's “Deserted Village” (modified)

“All things on earth shall pass away,” he’d say.
“Of course, many should!
Your wastes are curdling in the sea;
They seep from aquifers and drains.

“They tangle fur and beaks and brains,
Yet you feel none of this.
Your middens fill with goods unsold,
Your streets with sleepers in the cold.

“All things on earth shall pass away
And none of you will notice—
Feelings and dreamings die together
While you eat seed corn in warm weather.”

From all reports, he left the city
Years before the floods,
Taking his family back to Fairall,
And became a trash collector.

But there was more: Some followed him.
Saving and preservation
Of all kinds became their mission.
The Salvage operation grew.

Rectortown, the county seat,
Annexed Fairall, grew rich
And made Crawley Supreme Prophet
Of its Board of Faith and Practice.

Amused by the superstition
That transformed politics
Into municipal religion,
He used his title to advantage.

Warning of future floods far worse
Than those they had escaped⁹

So here is FRAMESHIFTS—a book for you. Hand-made, self published, passed through the filter of grief, and pain which even in sleep “cannot forget (but) falls drop by drop upon the heart, and in our despair, against our will, (brings) wisdom to us.”¹⁰ Perhaps this book is a kindness for you—for “what wisdom can you find that is greater

⁹ *Frameshifts*

¹⁰ Aeschylus

than kindness?”¹¹

However, it is no sermon, screed, tract, self-help book, or manual of arms. It is a book of **stories**—a history and a vision, but also a story, given because “the nectar of life is sweet only when shared.”¹² and because the stories that we tell each other can imprison us or free us from delusions by “widening our circle of compassion.”¹³

So, for you, I have selected and connected words, characters, lines, actions, sequences. Also for me. It is how I imagined, discovered and learned. Finally, I finished, giving you the discovery. Here is **FRAMESHIFTS**, a novel in two volumes comprising eight linked stories about an imaginary region of Northern Virginia in the current and next centuries. Each story is a different kind of discovery, each a different genre, each a different journey, each with a slightly different cast of characters:

Stories about a quiet deal made by a city councilman unaware of the lethal consequences; about a young Air Force officer’s choice between career and corruption; about how the suicide of a young gay teacher draws friends and enemies into a tangle of betrayals; about the slander, Joe-job, and murder of an activist; and stories about a strange, theocratic community, its technology, and its Supreme Prophet.

What I have finished begins your discovery.

“What it becomes is like a touch
each shares, but each unequally,
the giver, who would gain too much,
the taker, who gives sparingly.”¹⁴

I mean that it is also a soul work, a work of faith—faith in readers, faith in proving and probing what one imagines in order to realize it.

Thank you and *Good reading!*

Richard L. Rose

¹¹ Rousseau

¹² Adam Miciewicz

¹³ Einstein

¹⁴ *Frameshifts*

FRAMESHIFTS, PART ONE: PROBLEMS WITH AUTHORITY

- The quiet deal made by a city councilman to win re-election leads to his murder and draws retired newsman Harry Pettiford back into public controversy in the small Northern Virginia town of Holburn between Arlington and Alexandria. Prodded by his friend, reporter June Brightman, Harry learns more than he wants to know about the councilman's love life, business ties, and the lethal intentions of a small terrorist group.
- A young Air Force officer, Dan Connors, chooses between his career and uncovering the corrupt deal that is about to result in the launch a nuclear missile off the Korean peninsula. His race to get at the truth in time to prevent the launch endangers more than his career.
- Like a rope snaking across the deck behind a sinking anchor, the suicide of a gifted young teacher at Wando High School entangles friends and community in the coil of betrayals that drew him down. Fellow teacher Ed Lashley discovers that his young colleague has left him holding the rope.
- Unraveling the reasons for the slander and murder of a respected biologist and social activist from Holburn University, Harry Pettiford, recently hired as Police Information Officer for the local Sheriff's Office, becomes inescapably involved in the politics of campus life and the activities of a growing theocratic and technological cult in Fairall, a town west of Holburn.

FRAMESHIFTS, PARTS TWO AND THREE

- Henry Randall, a lecturer from Holburn University, confronts the Supreme Prophet of the Salvage cult in Fairall upon discovering that the cult's beliefs are based on a skewed version of his own class notes. This cult leader, Randall's former student, a charismatic former biochemist named Avery Crawley, promises his followers safety from the increasingly violent tornadoes sweeping the country. Henry is initially impressed by the fact that Crawley is able to deliver on his promises, but then learns that the Salvage cult is Crawley's unhinged genetic experiment to control the behavior of a population.
- Irene Brooks, a young history professor and librarian, returning to Fairall to dispose of her mother's property, is put under house arrest by the Board of Faith and Practice, leaders of a theocratic cult preparing to repel the invasion of its independent region by a federal government weakened by foreign wars and failing efforts to control flooding along the east coast. After months of writing and interviewing other prisoners to occupy her time, she escapes into a forest preserve as the regional conflict flares.
- Disagreements arise between the leaders of Fairall's Salvage cult over the use of their genetic weaponry on outsiders invading from the states surrounding their Salvage and whether to believe the prediction by its Supreme Prophet that the whole region would soon be flooded by a devastating storm.
- While she was held prisoner by the Board of Faith and Practice and wandering in the forest of the Foxglove Preserve, Professor Brooks wrote a corrected version of the exploration of the Louisiana Purchase, a poetic vision of the sustainable culture that Crawley's Salvage tried to establish.