main points into the ground (e.g., we need to be needed, and receiving e-mail gratifies that need). But his closing "manifesto for a slow communication movement" could fuel an e-mail rebellion, and his tips on how to slow down are sensible and mostly doable, except perhaps for the most hard-core e-mail addicts. *(Oct.)*

Consequential Strangers: The Power of People Who Don't Seem to Matter... but Really Do

Melinda Blau and Karen L. Fingerman. Norton, $25.95 (256p) ISBN 978-0-393-06703-3

While, as the authors state, "practically every article and book, every therapist, and every relationship guru in the media focus almost exclusively on 'primary relationships,' " there is a dearth of attention paid to individuals' secondary—or tertiary—connections: the butcher, the dry cleaner, the proprietor of the bodega where we shop daily. Transient individuals, friends of friends and their acquaintances play critical roles in our lives, say Baby Whisperer Blau and Purdue professor Fingerman. These people have access to resources intimates might not and can challenge our belief systems. This book is especially cogent today when so many unemployed are relying on social networking contacts on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, where "friends" most likely aren't part of an inner circle, but could know of a job not publicly advertised. Anecdotes, television, scholarly studies and Blau and Fingerman's own experience—they were "consequential strangers" who first met via telephone—illustrate the importance of individuals we often take for granted yet who enrich our lives in ways not immediately noticeable but that could prove highly significant. *(Oct.)*

Booklife: Strategies and Survival Tips for the 21st-Century Writer

Jeff VanderMeer. Tachyon (IPG, dist.), $14.95 paper (326p) ISBN 978-1-892391-90-2

[Q&A]

PW Talks with Barbara Ehrenreich

Irrational Exuberance

Ehrenreich digs up the dangerous delusions at the heart of the positive psychology movement in *Bright-Sided* (*Reviews*, Aug. 10).

Do you think positive thinking will ever take hold in non-Western societies?

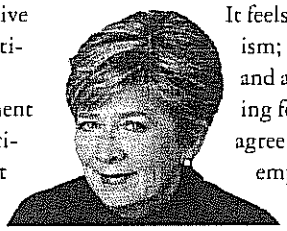
This is an American phenomenon with deep roots. There are some European antecedents, but the Americans really had a positive thinking *movement*. Positive thinking is a reaction to all the repression in our early history, but it's still rooted in Calvinism. The answer today is to discipline yourself; those who can't are the new "sinners."

Juxtaposing *Dancing in the Streets* with your latest, it seems natural that the repression of collective pleasure is connected to how happiness has become individualized.

I appreciate that connection. We have lost the techniques and the spirit of collective joy—everyone's in a prison of self and the mindset is, if you have a problem you can fix it if you just change your own mind.

What do you think about the role of science in the positive thinking movement?

I have a Ph.D. in cellular biology, and I like to think of what I do as a "bullshit detector": as soon as I latch on to a problem, I look up the research—I'm not intimidated by it. Positive thinking was rooted in mysticism and religion until the positive psychology movement gave it the imprimatur of science and the legitimacy that comes with empirical real relationship has been shown.



What did you think of the "hope and change" messages from the Obama campaign? Were they tapping into the positive thinking attitude?

I couldn't get on the hope bandwagon—my Obama bumper sticker said "Change." But in practice, Obama is a realist. He's not projecting the same kind of vague hope that we had with Clinton or even with Reagan, who talked about "Morning in America."

Given what you say about Oprah, do you think she'll invite you on the show?

I've been on Oprah twice, and the second time, I talked back to her. She was saying that poor women just have to think positively, and I disagreed. She's fascinating, but there's no escaping that she's done a lot to promote this line of thinking that we can pull ourselves out of poverty with our attitude. I take Larry King to task for the same thing, so yes, I think I have destroyed my opportunities for public appearances.

But the *Daily Show* called me!

You take the reader on a journey that's often personal and certainly not always comfortable. Where do you want people to end up after reading this?

It feels funny calling for realism; it's sort of flat and boring and almost worse than calling for hope. But I want us to agree that we share the same empirical world. It's not very exciting (certainly not