

each cell—starting at the tip of an axon, zipping to the edge of a dendrite—until, having felt their way across one body, the signals pause for a moment before they leap onto the next, breaching the tiny void that separates us all.

What the neuron teaches us is that every new thought requires a leap of faith.

JOHN D'AGATA

SEE: MATLIKE

NEVÈRYON

NEVER'S YON:

TANGENTS OF UNDISENTANGLED

MODULARITIES INFORMALLY REMARKED

A friend interrupted my labors and took me off through city streets to a bookstore: the entryway was a glass-walled cubicle, into which one descended by any of three narrow, steep metal stairs. As I descended the central set (the other two at right angles to it), just inside the store before me was a short woman or girl with a friend or guardian: the girl raised one hand in a gesture that levitated a small object, which rose into the air and hovered there, a bauble or jewel or silvery device. I paused briefly before this quiet spectacle, and then, along with my friend and others entering, walked around her and her guardian and into the store beyond.

In one room a table full of books was framed on three sides by bookcases, an arrangement often seen in convention dealers' rooms, and I immediately spied, on the top shelf of the far wing, a line of books by Samuel R. Delany. I pointed them out to my friend, and was about to move on when I realized that one of the items was not what I had at first thought it to be. With growing excitement I pulled the wide slipcase down from the shelf and discovered that it housed a five-volume critical study of Delany's four-volume fantasy series *Return to Nevèryon*. The first, second, and fifth volumes were tall, wide hardcovers covered in vinyl instead of cloth or paper – reminiscent of the Encyclopedia Project's second volume,

though not as wide. The third and fourth volumes were small trade paperbacks, about the trim size and thickness of an Oxford Very Short Introduction. Exclaiming excitedly over these books, I removed the first volume: the title was appropriately convolute, and I noted with astonishment that the copyright year given inside was 1975 – four years before the publication of *Tales of Nevèryon*, the cycle's first volume. It was almost as if K. Leslie Steiner had colluded with the study's authors to commence the critical project in advance of the existence of the object of study, which seemed wholly appropriate to me. In the event, when I began flipping through that first book, I discovered that it was a highly sophisticated version of a "flip art" book, with both pages of each spread covered with minutely colored, finely detailed art, so that tracking all the rectos as you flipped through produced one set of moving images, and tracking all the versos produced another. And indeed it worked equally well in both directions, regardless of whether the book was upside down or downside up – the art was symmetric, or intelligibly asymmetric, in all directions. Complex landscapes flourished and defloresced, metamorphosed from desert into jungle into ocean and back again, cities grew and fell, the chaos of pure imagery rarefied into the arid march of symbols and alphabets, texts slowly cohered from incoherence and subsided back into it, and, from another angle, essayed the same progress in the inverse: here, not here, here again.

RON DRUMMOND

SEE: ANAMORPHOSIS; BOOK; LETTER;
PARALLEL; RUSS, JOANNA; STEREOTEXT

NEWBORN

Dad once told me his vision of hell.

He said he had the vision when he was sleeping in his car in the hospital parking lot the night I was born. He was twenty-four.

A few minutes after I came out screaming, he went down to the billing office and asked how much I cost. The clerk told him, and he fled.