

reader hits the "Enter" key, the story continues with Harley and a friend resuming their conversation as Veronica leaves. But if the reader instead selects certain words highlighted in the text—for instance, "another table"—the story takes a different path, following Veronica as she goes to wait on another customer. Or if the reader chooses "Veronica," the narrative leads to a bedroom scene between Veronica and Harley.

Victory Garden is a "hypertext novel," part of a growing new genre called "interactive literature." Kendall, who teaches interactive poetry and fiction at the New School for Social Research in New York, says that more and more writers, including some established ones such as Thomas M. Disch and Robert Pinsky, have been trying their hands at interactivity.

"The new electronic literature breaks the bonds of linearity and stasis imposed by paper," Kendall contends. "In digital form a story can draw readers into its world by giving them a role in shaping it, letting them choose which narrative thread to follow, which new situation or character to explore. Within a 'page' of poetry on screen, words of lines can change continually as the reader watches, making the text resonate with shifting shades of meaning. Written work can 'improvise,' altering its own content every time it's read. With its power to mix text, graphics, sound, and video, the PC can

extend the ancient interdisciplinary traditions of writing."

Electronic publishing is currently a booming field, Kendall notes, with hundreds of novels, stories, and poems available on CD-ROM. The vast majority of these works originally appeared in print, but interactive literature is growing. Many locations on the Internet's World Wide Web, he says, now contain hypertext fiction and poetry.

The writer "who really opened up the electronic frontier to serious writing," Kendall says, was Michael Joyce. His hypertext novel, *Afternoon, a Story* (1990), "requires the reader to unravel interwoven strands of narrative to make sense of the story. The reader's efforts parallel the struggle of the story's main character to learn whether his son and estranged wife have been killed in a car accident." The *Washington Post Book World* called Joyce's work "a noteworthy piece of recent American fiction, genre considerations aside."

Electronic literature has not yet been widely accepted by the reading public, Kendall concedes. But that may change, he believes, when "an inexpensive paperback-sized computer with a screen that matches the readability of the printed page" arrives on the scene. "Then," he predicts, "the electronic publishing boom will begin in earnest."

Stephen Foster's High Art

"Sound and Sentimentality: Nostalgia in the Songs of Stephen Foster" by Susan Key, in *American Music* (Summer 1995), Sonneck Society for American Music, P.O. Box 476, Canton, Mass. 02021.

Stephen Foster's many immensely popular songs, from "Beautiful Dreamer" to "My Old Kentucky Home," are rarely considered much more than sentimental, albeit artfully constructed, crowd-pleasers. In Foster's day, however, argues Key, a graduate student in musicology and ethnomusicology at the University of Maryland, College Park, no rigid barriers separated high and low culture, and Foster's ballads were much esteemed in refined circles.

In the first half of the 19th century, improvements in transportation and manufacturing stimulated the growth of a sheet music industry. By the Civil War, publisher

Oliver Ditson boasted thousands of popular ballads, instrumentalized for voice and piano.

Inspired by the strongly egalitarian sentiments of the day, many American parlor music composers "sought to provide music for everyone," Key says. Their favorite device was "the portrayal of bittersweet emotions stimulated by the contemplation of something lost." Most often, as in Foster's "Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair," an idealized past was juxtaposed with an alien present; but sometimes, as in "Old Folks at Home," an idealized "far" and an alien "near," or, as in "Beautiful Dreamer," an idealized night and the "rude world" of the

day, were used.

For Americans in the throes of change—first with the advent of Jacksonian democracy, then with the westward expansion and sectional conflict that led to war—the nostalgic songs of Foster (1826–64) and others were a tonic. But they were “cultivated” as well as popular, Key points out.

“The romantic notion that music could transcend earthly limitations and lead to a better world,” she writes, “was conflated with the sentimental notion that people who bought and sang this ‘better’ class of music could somehow acquire more refinement, taste, and gentility. For one short historical moment, mass appeal was seen as complementary to moral



elevation.” Reformers used the sentimental ballad to advance such causes as abolition and temperance.

Gradually, however, “absolute instrumental music from the European symphonic repertory” came to be most highly valued, Key says. By the end of the century, “music’s aura of idealism and moral improvement was dispensed from above—in the highest achievements of fine-art music—and from abroad, principally Ger-

many.” As an 1891 contributor to the *Atlantic Monthly* lamented, “Song-singing finds it hard to stand its ground against the musical culture which insists upon the highest artistic excellence or nothing at all.”

OTHER NATIONS

Russia and China, Partners Again?

“Russia and the Far East: Working toward a Serious Partnership with China” by Peter Ferdinand, in *Transition* (Sept. 1995), Open Media Research Institute, 1201 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russia pursued a pro-Western foreign policy, and its relations with China cooled. Lately, however, there has been a noticeable warming, reports Ferdinand, director of the Centre for Studies in Democratisation at Britain’s Warwick University.

At first, he notes, Chinese leaders scorned Russian president Boris Yeltsin as the “gravedigger” of communism. And Yeltsin “acted as if Japan were Russia’s highest priority in the Far East.” Courting the Japanese and their money, he tried to resolve the Russo-Japanese dispute over the Kuril Islands, which the Soviet Union had seized after World War II.

By 1993, however, Moscow and Beijing were in a new mood, Ferdinand says. The West’s failure to provide Russia with what it considered adequate economic aid prompted it to reconsider its westward tilt. At the same time, “the revival of Russian nationalism among State Duma deputies undermined Yeltsin’s attempts to secure better relations with Japan,” the analyst writes,

because it impeded a resolution of the Kuril Islands dispute.

Beijing, meanwhile, had come to terms with the end of communism in the former Soviet Union. Deng Xiaoping and other Chinese leaders were reassured by the Yeltsin government’s willingness to abide by the Soviet Union’s border agreements. The collapse of the Soviet Union, Ferdinand observes, “shifted the balance of forces across the Sino-Russian frontier to China’s favor, with the People’s Liberation Army nearly twice as big as the Russian army.” Russia no longer can confront China with military pressure “from the north, the south (Vietnam), and the southwest (India), as the Soviet Union attempted to do in the 1970s.”

In 1993, Russia and China signed five-year agreements on military cooperation and technology. Hundreds of Russian scientists have since moved to China to work in the Ministry of Aeronautics. Russian sales of weapons and equipment to China have increased, reaching a reported \$2–\$3 billion in 1994.

As China’s strategic importance to the West