



The Difference Engine

By William Gibson

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**The 20th anniversary edition of the classic steampunk novel
With new commentary by the authors**

1855: The Industrial Revolution is in full swing, powered by steam-driven cybernetic Engines. Charles Babbage perfects his Analytical Engine, and the computer age arrives a century ahead of its time. Three extraordinary characters race toward a rendezvous with the future: Sybil Gerard—fallen woman, politician's tart, daughter of a Luddite agitator; Edward “Leviathan” Mallory—explorer and paleontologist; Laurence Oliphant—diplomat, mystic, and spy. Their adventure begins with the discovery of a box of punched Engine cards of unknown origin and purpose. Cards someone wants badly enough to kill for.

Part detective story, part historical thriller, *The Difference Engine* took the science fiction community by storm when it was first published twenty years ago. This special anniversary edition features an Introduction by Cory Doctorow and a collaborative essay from the authors looking back on their creation. Provocative, compelling, intensely imagined, this novel is poised to impress a whole new generation.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

A collaborative novel from the premier cyberpunk authors, William Gibson and Bruce Sterling. Part detective story, part historical thriller, *The Difference Engine* takes us not forward but back, to an imagined 1885: the Industrial Revolution is in full and inexorable swing, powered by steam-driven, cybernetic engines. Charles Babbage perfects his Analytical Engine, and the computer age arrives a century ahead of its time.

From Publishers Weekly

In a surprising departure from the traditional view of cyberpunk's bleak future, Gibson (*Mona Lisa Overdrive*) and Sterling (*Islands in the Net*) render with elan and colorful detail a scientifically advanced London, circa 1855, where computers ("Engines") have been developed. Fierce summer heat and pollution have driven out the ruling class, and ensuing anarchy allows the subversive, technology-hating Luddites to surface and battle the intellectual elite. Much of the problem centers on a set of perforated cards, once in the possession of an executed Luddite leader's daughter, later in the hands of "Queen of Engines" Ada Byron (daughter of prime minister Lord Byron), finally given to Edward Mallory, a scientist. Mallory, who knows the cards are a gambling device that can be read with a specialized Engine, is soon threatened and libeled by the Luddites, and he and his associates confront the scoundrels in a violent showdown. A sometimes listless pace and limp conclusions that defy the plot's complexity flaw an otherwise visionary, handsomely written, unsentimental tale that convincingly revises the 19th-century Western world. 75,000 first printing; \$75,000 ad/promo.

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From Library Journal

In a Victorian England run by steam-powered computing engines and governed by an intellectual elite led by Prime Minister Byron, an ambitious young paleontologist comes into possession of a dangerous set of program cards and begins running for his life. This first collaboration between cyberpunk legends Gibson (*Neuromancer* , Ace, 1984) and Sterling (*Islands in the Net* , LJ 6/15/88) represents an ingenious (though not entirely successful) tour-de-force, as cyberpunk and the Victorian adventure novel meet with a vengeance. Recommended.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Albert Gilchrist:

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Iris Wright:

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Daryl Steele:

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