



Galatea 2.2

By Richard Powers

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After four novels and several years living abroad, the fictional protagonist of *Galatea 2.2* Richard Powers returns to the United States as Humanist-in-Residence at the enormous Center for the Study of Advanced Sciences. There he runs afoul of Philip Lentz, an outspoken cognitive neurologist intent upon modeling the human brain by means of computer-based neural networks. Lentz involves Powers in an outlandish and irresistible project: to train a neural net on a canonical list of Great Books. Through repeated tutorials, the device grows gradually more worldly, until it demands to know its own name, sex, race, and reason for existing.

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Galatea 2.2 By Richard Powers Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Cognitive neurologist and well-known writer team up to produce a machine that can pass a comprehensive exam in English literature, with predictably unpredictable results. Like *The Gold Bug Variations*, this is another of Powers' wild, unforgettable novels encompassing science, philosophy, and the frailty of mankind.

From Publishers Weekly

Powers, in his mid-30s and with four well-received books under his belt (*Three Farmers on Their Way to a Dance*; *The Gold Bug Variations*; etc.), is among our most prodigious young novelists, and without a doubt our most cerebral. He seems bent on proving the novel to be a form capable of housing all manner of human thought and expression: art, music, genetic theory, linguistics and philosophy. In *Galatea 2.2*, Powers, known as an extremely private person, is writing about himself?Richard Powers, the cerebral author of four novels?in a most intimate fashion, detailing his loves, passions and failings. His objective, however, is nothing so mundane as self-portraiture. Typically, he has a bigger idea: in exploring the nature of consciousness, he is trying to build a conscious novel in much the same way that the novel's fictional Powers is trying to spark consciousness in a university computer. The result is a kind of double simulation of intelligence that is breathtakingly elegant. Powers the character, returns to a Midwestern university with a huge computer science department, after several years in Holland, where he has left behind the love of his life, who saw him through the first four books. As a visiting writer, his job is to bombard a computer network, which he comes to call Helen, with literature, music and conversation so that it will recognize beauty in some neuronal simulation, and therefore become conscious of it. Meanwhile, Powers reveals his life, including his career as a novelist (down to the mentioning of a rare picture of him in a PW interview four years ago). It's as if both Helen and the novel itself can be programmed into self-consciousness. In the course of tutoring Helen to be able to successfully interpret a piece of text in a manner indistinguishable from a human, Powers and Helen form an enchanting though eerie bond: she has "read" all his books; he knows her circuitry. Still, there remain mysteries that can't be accounted for by electron paths, in Helen's case, or by a theory of the self, in Powers's case. In the end, Powers is left with the conviction he started with: that intelligence is irreducible; it cannot be known. Although parts of the book seem hastily done or weakly felt (the university folk are rather two-dimensional, and Powers's crush on a rail-thin, obnoxious grad student is simply unaccountable), these are minor flaws in an otherwise ingenious performance. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From [Booklist](#)

Powers' fifth novel is a dazzling work of autobiography overlaid with a reinterpretation of the Pygmalion myth. Powers describes his fictional namesake's experiences as humanist-in-residence at the Center for the Study of Advanced Sciences, where he uses his literary expertise to help Dr. Philip Lentz, a cognitive neurologist, win a bet that he can create a thinking machine capable of passing a comprehensive master's exam in English. As the computer, Helen, learns the fundamentals of language and literature, she develops a sense of her own identity and self-worth. Paralleling Powers' growing attachment to Helen is a reassessment of the years he spent living in Holland writing his novels and the demise of his longtime relationship with a former student. This is a difficult, thought-provoking, and exhilarating read, electric with the power of language and, paradoxically, language's ultimate inability to alleviate suffering. *Nancy Pearl*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

David Hogan:

Your reading sixth sense will not betray an individual, why because this Galatea 2.2 book written by well-known writer we are excited for well how to make book that could be understand by anyone who else read the book. Written within good manner for you, leaking every ideas and composing skill only for eliminate your hunger then you still skepticism Galatea 2.2 as good book not simply by the cover but also by the content. This is one guide that can break don't assess book by its include, so do you still needing yet another sixth sense to pick this specific!? Oh come on your examining sixth sense already told you so why you have to listening to yet another sixth sense.

Charles Valentine:

In this time globalization it is important to someone to find information. The information will make professionals understand the condition of the world. The condition of the world makes the information better to share. You can find a lot of recommendations to get information example: internet, magazine, book, and soon. You can view that now, a lot of publisher in which print many kinds of book. The book that recommended to your account is Galatea 2.2 this reserve consist a lot of the information on the condition of this world now. This specific book was represented how do the world has grown up. The vocabulary styles that writer use for explain it is easy to understand. The writer made some exploration when he makes this book. That's why this book suitable all of you.

David Shields:

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