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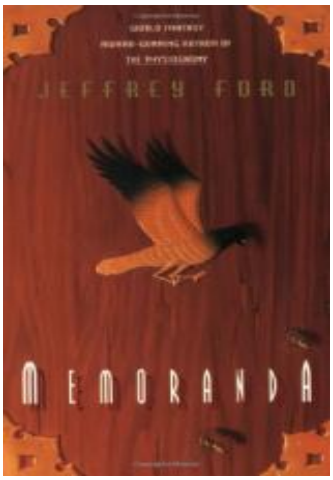
Memoranda

by Jeffrey Ford



About the Book

In the critically praised THE PHYSIOGNOMY, a New York Times Notable Book of 1997, Physiognomist Cley chronicled the fall of the Well-Built City, created from the mind of the evil Master, Drachton Below, and the inception of the independent city of Weanu. In MEMORANDA, Cley, no longer the Physiognomist but a humble citizen, realizes that the antidote to the sleeping disease that has infected the people of Wenau is locked in symbolic form in a new mnemonic "palace" in the sleeping Below's memory. With the help of a demon, Cley must venture into the city of Below to search for the symbolic form that holds the secret of the antidote. As he searches through the bizarre city, Cley falls in love, knowing full well that the lady is merely the symbolic representation of an idea and that he must lose her if his quest to save the people of Weanu is to succeed.

Discussion Guide

1. Discuss mnemonic devices you might use in the course of your day.

2. Do the fanciful ways that memory is discussed in the novel have any bearing on your own concept of the working of memory?

3. How would you describe the relationship between Below and Misrix?

4. Misrix tries to capture the story of the Well-Built City by collecting debris from the ruins. How do the objects in your house tell your story? If you weren't there to piece the tale together for an observer, would the be able to come close to the truth of your life by "reading" those objects?

5. Cley must find the antidote for the sleeping disease in Below's memory world. To do so, he must now determine meaning by reading the surface of mnemonic objects. How does that differ from his pursuits as Physiognomist First

Class.

6. Why is Anotine obsessed with "capturing the moment?"

7. In relation to how your memory really works, what kinds of processes might the Fetch and the Delicate represent?

8. Is Scarfinati's story to be taken at face value?

9. Discuss the relation between the mnemonic happenings in this novel and how they might be seen to parallel the concepts of virtual reality.

10. Is Cley's love for Anotine merely the return of his addiction or is it more than that?

11. Does Cley fail or succeed in his mission in MEMORANDA?

Author Bio

Jeffrey Ford is the author of **THE PHYSIOGNOMY** and **THE BEYOND**. He is the protege of the late John Gardner, author of the modern classic **GRENDEL**. Ford is a Professor of Writing and Early American Literature at a college in New Jersey.

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