



# Relatives

*George Alec Effinger*

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## **Relatives** George Alec Effinger

Ernest Weinraub, Ernst Weinraub, Ernst Weintraub—three slightly different versions of the same name, the same man. Each incarnation of Weintraub/Weinraub inhabits a slightly different version of our world: Ernest Weinraub lives in a maddeningly overcrowded New York, a hellish near-future world where sanity and life are imperiled by a nightmare of pollution, overpopulation and manic power games played by the six despotic men who rule Earth; Ernst Weinraub is a poet and an intellectual who lives in a decadent world in which America has never been colonized, Europe and Asia are crumbling, and Africa has only one populated city, a world where drink, drugs and sex reduce human being to little more than animals and a man feels himself being sucked under with all the others; Ernst Weintraub, an idealistic revolutionary, lives in a world in which the Allies lost the First World War to “Jermamy” and people are forced into a terror-ridden underground existence as tyranny rides roughshod over man and civilization.

The single factor uniting these startlingly different worlds is Weinraub/Weintraub. But even he is molded and distorted, it would appear, by the various environments and societies, and his problems seem entirely different in each of the three worlds. Yet, as the book progresses, both he and the reader learn that neither time nor place matters—every person must sooner or later make certain basic decisions.

RELATIVES is a novel about personality and about duty, chiefly one’s duty to the state. The Weinraub/Weintraub variations are carefully orchestrated so that each tells the same story while presenting vastly varying reasons for a single outcome. Once having experienced these three powerful visions of an individual’s interaction with society, one is compelled to consider, and reconsider, the foundations of moral and social responsibility.

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