CYBERPUNK SCIENCE FICTION IN WILLIAM GIBSON'S *NEUROMANCER*

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Abstract

Speculative fiction is a world that writers create, where anything can happen. It is a place beyond reality, a place that could have been, or might have been, if only the rules of the universe were altered just a bit. Speculative fiction goes beyond the horror of everyday life and takes the reader into a world of magic, fantasy, science. It is a world where you leave part of yourself behind when you return to the universe as we know it, the so-called real world. The issue of technology and its integration into society is a major pillar of most science fiction; however, it is not an essential feature of cyberpunk. The concepts of cyberpunk literature are futuristic, but technology is not prevalent in the literature. This paper analyses how cyberpunk involves in literature, and how William Gibson used this theme cyberpunk in his novel *Neuromancer*.

Keyword: science fiction, themes, cyberpunk, etc

Speculative fiction defines the best in humanity: imagination, and the sharing of it with others. It is also important to note that speculative fiction refers to a group of genres and not a particular medium. Fictional works of all forms art, literature, film, graphic novels, video games, etc are found that employ these non-realist genres to explore features of our reality through new and imagined worlds. The wide variety of media in which speculative fiction can be found serves as a testament to the genre's popularity and adaptability to various creative purposes. Science fiction refers to various genres of literature and film featuring some fictitious element based on real or hypothetical science and technology. Generally, science fiction is set in the future, but some set in the modern day but still prominently feature science and technology as a theme. Science fiction themes are related to science, technology, space and the future, as well as characteristic plot or settings include; Apocalyptic and post- apocalyptic science fiction, it is a sub-genre of science fiction in which the earth's technological civilization is collapsing or has collapsed. Then Bio-punk science fiction, it centers on genetic engineering and biotechnology, bio-punk uses both cyberpunk elements and post-modernist prose to describe a typically dystopian world of biohackers, man-made viruses, mutation, designer babies, artificial life form, bio-genetic engineering, human-animal hybrids and bio-genetically manipulated humans. Then cyber-punk science

fiction, it uses elements from hard- boiled detective novel, film noir, Japanese anime and post- modernist prose to describe the nihilistic, underground side of a cybernetic society.

Cyberpunk, a science-fiction subgenre characterized by countercultural antiheroes trapped in a dehumanized, high-tech future. Cyberpunk is a subgenre of science fiction that tends to focus on a "combination of low-life and high tech. It belongs to science fiction dealing with future urban societies dominated by computer technology. The word *cyberpunk* was coined by writer Bruce Bethke, who wrote a story with that title in 1982. He derived the term from the words *cybernetics*. The genre first emerged in response to the dramatic changes occurring in the late 19th and early 20th century. Still, the earliest science fiction writers told stories set thousands and even millions of years in the future, in order to envision social and technological change.

Cyberpunk science fiction tells stories of near future just several decades away, instead of the distant future. This near future is predictable according to the present situation. Cyberpunk science fiction embodies implosion in terms of its story contents and writing, which shows that all kinds of boundaries-cultural, biological and technological-are merging, even including the one between reality and virtuality. It borrows elements from modem fiction, post-modem fiction, traditional science fiction, popular culture, making itself a new imploded sub-genre. The theme of personal technology, of the fusion of machine and body, runs through cyberpunk fiction. Cyberpunk works are often described as "high-tech low-life" is hackers, rockers, and other cultural rebels, clinging to a cult of individualism in a culture characterized by corporate control and mass conformity. The Cyberpunk world is a futuristic world that is incredibly high-tech, but it is also a dark and bleak world. Science is a key feature of Cyberpunk—technology and its perfection, specifically in regards to virtual reality, are at the core of this sub-genre. The science becomes very detailed—cybernetics, prosthetics, cyborgs, and the internet. Cyberpunk Science fiction stories explore the changing relationship between humanity and computer technology. In Cyberpunk stories technological advances go hand-in-hand with social decline. Characters often take a backseat to technology, or at least exist on the same level as technology in Cyberpunk stories. Cyberpunk works share a pessimistic and dystopian view of the future.

Science Fiction writers are capable of producing good and fashionable art from. They are strongly in favour of the marvelous and the uncommon. Their writings clip our imagination and faster the spirit of reason. Science Fiction texts are often set in the future, in space, on a different world, or in a different universe or dimension. Science Fiction writers often deal creatively with the darker side of human behavior, a perspective that researchers do not always explore. An American-Canadian writer, William Gibson is the father of Cyberpunk. *Neuromancer* is his novel that is particularly significant. In this novel the term cyberspace is coined. William Gibson is key to the literary movement for his 1984 novel *Neuromancer* which is seen as the quintessential cyberpunk text. It was Gibson's debut novel and the beginning of the Sprawl trilogy, Winner of the Hugo, Nebula, and Philip K.

Dick Awards, *Neuromancer* is a science fiction masterpiece, a classic that ranks as one of the twentieth century's most potent visions of the future. Set in the future, the novel follows Henry Case, a washed-up computer hacker who is hired for one last job, which brings him up against a powerful artificial intelligence. *Neuromancer* tells the story of a "cowboy" called Case who "jacks in" to his computer in order to commit information crimes in the "matrix". This involves a physical connection between Case's brain and the computer hardware which then allows his consciousness to interact seamlessly with the landscape of the matrix. Gibson's novel introduced the terms "matrix" and "cyberspace" while establishing some of the key concerns of cyberpunk literature and film, which include the consciousness of artificial intelligence, the use of human bodies as computer hardware and the comparison between human consciousness and computer software. *Neuromancer* was the first fully-realized glimpse of humankind's digital future—a shocking vision that has challenged the assumptions about technology and reinvented the way we speak and think, and forever altered the landscape of our imaginations.

Cyberpunk is a genre that focuses on future societies where technology has advanced, but crime and corruption have as well. The story follows the experiences of Case, an out-of-work hacker who is contacted by a mysterious new employer called Armitage. Along with Molly, a mercenary cyborg, and a thief/illusionist named Peter Riviera, Case participates in a series of data thefts for their employer. Their first job has them stealing an electronic copy of the mind of McCoy Pauley, a brilliant hacker who taught Case a great deal of what he knows. They steal this electronic mind to help them in performing their next job. After that, the group must head to Freeside, an enormous space habitat in orbit around Earth. Freeside serves as a luxury resort and casino for the wealthy, and it is also the location of Villa Straylight, the home of the incredibly wealthy and powerful Tessier-Ashpool family. The group's second job is to break into the Villa Straylight and hack into Wintermute, a powerful artificial intelligence created by the Tessier-Ashpool family. In the end, it turns out that Wintermute itself was behind the whole scheme. Government regulations put careful restrictions on artificial intelligences to prevent them from getting out of hand, and Wintermute was using Armitage and his team to break those restrictions. This allows Wintermute to merge with another A.I. called Neuromancer, becoming a new, more powerful electronic being.

Neuromancer envisions the future as a place where humans and machines increasingly interact. Technology invades the human body in the form of grafts, implants, cloning, and carbon sockets which allow machines direct access to the body. Microsofts can be inserted directly into the body like computer disks, making the body in essence a programmable machine. Conversely, machines become more human as well. Technology provides the option of creating artificial "constructs" that recreate a person's intellect, image, and personality so that the person can "live" even after his/her death.

In *Neuromancer*, cyberspace is described as a

"graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data" (3.94).

In the novel's beginning, cyberspace's data is represented in the abstract forms we often consider data to take. Everything is geometrical and graphed like an old-school Atari video game. Then things slowly change. Wintermute pulls Case into his world, a world constructed on Case's memories. Everything looks, feels, and smells real even though Case knows it isn't. After all, they're his memories. Finally, Case is pulled into Neuromancer's world; a world not constructed on any of Case's memories but still looks, feels, and smells real none the less. Case says, "None of this [is] real, but cold [is] cold" (20.51).

Throughout *Neuromancer*, Gibson explores the question of what it means to be human and how technology affects and reshapes humanity. He approaches this question from several directions. He includes characters, such Dixie Flatline, who are dead but kept alive as digital constructs. Other characters, such as Molly, are surgically augmented. As for Case, his life is completely dependent upon technology. many cyberpunk characters have a nihilistic attitude toward life. Linda Lee is the best example in the novel. She is a drug addict and a computer-game devotee. She lives as if there is no tomorrow, and this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy when she is murdered in the opening scenes. Gibson's characters protect consciousness by numbing it through designer drugs, alcohol, or sex. The body is regarded as "meat," weak and vulnerable. Case's body becomes his own enemy, slowly being poisoned by implanted toxin sacs. Characters protect themselves from the pain of life by turning inward into the mind. Cyberspace cowboys even experience occasional brain death from their experiences in the matrix.

Here in this novel Gibson warns the society about the social networks and technology. Everything which is beyond its limit is good for nothing but leads us to disaster. In this novel he says this through some incidents,

"The Villa Straylight was a parasitic structure, Case reminded himself, as he stepped past the tendrils of caulk and through *Marcus Garvey's* forward hatch. Straylight bled air and water out of Freeside, and had no ecosystem of its own". (19.1)

The complicated inner-workings of Freeside make the Straylight's theft of its resources hard to notice. It allows those who run the technology to take what they want from those who access it. Like how Facebook and Google take the personal information of their users and sell it to ad agencies.

The cyberpunks have been the most powerful single influence on science fiction over the past two decades, an influence that is explained by their perceptive analysis of the cultural and social changes generated or threatened by "media in transition." cyberpunk encourages us to look at what we're doing today and consider how it may have dire consequences for

humanity tomorrow. The tech that we use today to communicate, store data, and do research could be co-opted into something far more sinister tomorrow.

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