

THE UTOPIAN CODE: CYBERSPACE AS A DEMOCRATIZATION OF TECHNOLOGY

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William Gibson's 1984 novel, *Neuromancer*, declared cyberpunk as a fully realized science fiction subgenre that reverberates into the current time. The text follows a hacker, Case, who was recruited by an artificial intelligence program, Wintermute. The AI plans to release itself into cyberspace or the matrix; a virtual reality separate from the cruel outside world of the novel. Case joins a veteran soldier, Armitage, an assassin-like agent, Molly, and other morally ambiguous individuals in a novel that pushes the boundaries of the 1980s culture. In addition to this, *Neuromancer* also represents postmodern architecture in the form of the text's urban cityscapes, but also through the virtual reality of cyberspace. Each location relays a strained relationship between humanity and technology. The development of the 1980's information technology along with the growth of the personal computer was believed to be a harbinger of a shifting paradigm. Paweł Frelik's article, "Silhouettes of Strange Illuminated Mannequins: Cyberpunk's Incarnation of Light," examines the ocularity of light pertaining to cyberspace's visual aesthetic. Frelik defines *Neuromancer*'s technological equipment as a gateway to cyberspace which is where global information is made concrete in the form of neon light. I will take up this technological gateway as defining cyberspace to be an information utopia. The construction of data into concrete light establishes the freedom a tangible identity can occupy in a world where physical limitations have no relevance. I will integrate this with a postmodern architectural and literary theory. Sabine Heuser's text, *Virtual Geographies: Cyberpunk at the Intersection of the Postmodern and Science Fiction*, examines the representation of postmodern architecture in relation to cyberpunk. She defines "double coding" as communicating not only with the public, but with a concentrated minority consisting of learned professionals working in the industry. Heuser's text declines to apply this theory to *Neuromancer* as she explains double coding is too binary to be useful, but Gibson's spatial descriptions allow for a coded

interpretation into the purpose of each temporality: cyberspace and reality. By using double coding, I will utilize this architectural concept to examine *Neuromancer*'s representation of neon lights as concrete fixtures of data which liberate a person's identity. Therefore, this situates the dichotomy of cyberspace as a utopia and the cityscape as a dystopia in order to capture the zeitgeist of the democratization of technology (the relinquishment of computers from the elite to the masses).

Double coding is described as a technique in post-modernism that relays multiple meanings not only to intrigue the masses, but also to appeal to learned professionals on an artistic level. Charles Jencks, in his article "Postmodern and Late Modern: The Essential Definitions," defines postmodernism

as doubly coded, one-half Modern and one-half something else (usually traditional building) in its attempt to communicate with the public and a concerned minority, usually other architects. The point of this double coding was itself double... Thus the solution I perceived and defined as Postmodern: an architecture that was professionally based *and* popular as well as one that was based on new techniques *and* old patterns (Jencks 33-34, sic)

Double coded messages usually inhabit two different spaces, one of which can relate to individuals who have knowledge of the artistry while simultaneously engaging on a popular level. Heuser's text describes Linda Hutcheon's concept of double coding as on the level of rhetoric that indicates political attitudes inherent within this coded language which denies closure and the process of a "dialectic in the postmodern" (qtd. in Heuser 60). There must be a political attitude present in order to signify a truly double coded message. Heuser also explains the dialectical process as requiring distinct binary oppositions that cannot combine or coexist (60). The term is a key trait in postmodern architecture and literature. In architecture, the appeal to

postmodern work is that the art can excite professionals who know how difficult and amazing the specific structures are while also combining these polarized politics. In addition, postmodern architecture allows the masses to see the appeal, but the audience must recognize both levels of engagement. Frederic Jameson declares that viewers of postmodern works must “see all the screens at once, in their radical and random difference...” (76). Thus, two screens are not the only layered messages; there are many.

In the spirit of its name, double coding also consists of multiple meanings and multiple texts all at once to inspire a different point of view on the architectural or literary text. Postmodern architects “use popular *and* elitist signs in their work to achieve quite different ends, and their styles are essentially hybrid” (Jencks 37). This develops into an in-depth and encased dimension where postmodern artists establish a different understanding of implicit themes. This process of coded meanings reveals how the “overloading of cultural meanings in postmodernity impacts upon the psychic space of the subject as disorientation, discontinuity and fragmentation” (Elliott 20). With postmodern works, viewers and readers experience this disorientation as it arrives from diving through these multiple messages. This can come about through architecture or other forms of art such as literature or painting. When talking about Carol Maria Mariani’s postmodern painting, *Costellazioni del Leone* (1980-81), Jencks states that there is a series of different cultural texts laid over one another as a commentary indicative of myth structures and irony (Jencks 41).

Irony is an incredibly important feature that seems to stem from the modernist movement into the postmodern one. As a fundamental aspect in the modernist period, irony is argued by Umberto Eco as essential because it “draws on the duplicity of laughter to carry out its attack on metaphysics” (Di Martino 138). This theory carries a different weight in *Neuromancer* as the

novel is not humorous. The situations of the characters, the duplicitous worlds, and binary positions of technology give an ironic tone to Gibson's writing. In addition to this, there is a split between the modernist movement of idolizing mechanics and mechanical structures. Dani Cavallaro's text, *Cyberpunk and Cyberculture* examines these tones in how "[n]either Gibson's cyberspace nor the material buildings and streets presented in his fiction abide by the rules of modernity, where the machine is often idolized as a means of fabricating mathematically pure, inorganic environments" (144). The use of irony in Gibson's work displays how he separates himself from the literary movement before him. The layers of meaning and ironic metaphor formulate *Neuromancer* as a text founded in postmodern principles. Thus, double coding should apply to the novel.

Heuser's text examines the architecture, descriptions, and environments found in a multitude of cyberpunk texts, including *Neuromancer*. The author considers double coding for Gibson's work, but she comes to a negative conclusion on the applicability of the theory. Heuser finds that "[u]ltimately, the notion of double coding proves too binary to be useful beyond the theoretical constraints and concerns of architecture" (Heuser 65). I find this odd as further in *Virtual Geographies* the author declares the double coding of objects through metaphor and rhetoric as "an inherent quality of the information space of virtual reality..." (Heuser 76). My understanding of this passage is that double coding can be applied to the language implicit in describing cyberspace. I seek to define this coded understanding as the overlaying of different meanings, understandings, and appeals of postmodern double coding is explicit in the entirety of *Neuromancer*. Postmodernists understand there is an absence of definitive meaning while offering rules to make sense of the world (Di Martino 148) exactly as Gibson does through his management of technology. The real and digital world descriptions imply a layering of different

outlooks. This also applies to the place of technology in Gibson's novel. As Paweł Frelik describes in his article on the representation of light, the crucial elements of cyberpunk are the visual imaginings of electrically powered futuristic spaces, both virtual and urban (82). One place is hindered by physics and material laws while the other is encoded data and neon columns of information.

The cyberspace or matrix constitutes the novum of the work. A novum is described as critical in science fiction as "the formal element that generates and validates all elements of the text, from alternative reality to plot, characters and style" (Moylan 57). Quite unlike some current writers, Gibson represents technology in a positive light. Sebastian Groes's article, "Information Overload in Literature," examines how more current works present "a hostile attitude" to the digital objects even though his research reveals new technology is a benefit (1495). Thus, cyberspace as a technological novum reveals a different outlook than other literary texts. One could say that cyberspace is closer to the definition of the novum. The novum may be defined as "[mediating] the material, historical possibilities and the subjective awareness and action engaged with those possibilities" (Moylan 58). The entire existence of the matrix in *Neuromancer* perpetuates this concept continuously through every reference. In addition to providing an oppositional code to the real world, cyberspace constitutes a universe with limitless possibilities. To further my point, I want to examine what makes up the pixels and animation that came to define this virtual location.

Cyberspace is made from information and symbols made into a visual element that gives it a physical and material texture. Case experiences his return to the matrix in the terms of "silver phosphenes boiling in from the edge of space, hypnagogic images jerking past like film compiled from random frames. Symbols, figures, faces, a blurred fragmented mandala of visual

information” (Gibson 52). These specific modes of data have a concrete fixture within the matrix. Some cultural theorists believe that technology and reproduction disintegrate the “aura” of a text (Allen 176), but here the digital universe constructs an alternative reality through the reproduction of information, in this case a “mandala of visual information.” This concept points back to Frelik’s argument surrounding the true appeal to the cyberpunk’s and *Neuromancer*’s visualization. The influence of cyberpunk’s legacy arrives from how the visual aesthetic “frames extended narratives while in others...it remains the primary mode of delivery, unconnected to any consistent plotting” continuing to state that the optics are the genre’s “most enduring legacy” (Frelik 81). With lines that describe cyberspace as “silver phosphenes,” “hypnagogic images,” and “blurred fragmented mandala,” the appeal to the imagination is easy to see. Abstract structures of information and data construct a visuality that also connects on the linguistic element. Even Gibson’s sentences ascribe themselves to an easy optical image. These descriptions become the precipice for how this mini-universe functions.

In cyberspace, the intangible gains ground as a concrete surrounding. This entices individuals to accept this false world as reality. Jean Baudrillard describes science fiction hyperreality as decentring “situations, models of simulation, and then to strive to give them the colors of the real, the banal, the lived; to reinvent the real as fiction, precisely because the real has disappeared from our lives. A hallucination of the real...” (311). This idea of hallucination is incredibly important as Gibson speaks about the matrix as a hallucinatory experience. I will analyze this later on, but I intend to focus now on how simulation becomes a tangible and physical experience. Cyberspace is a realm that allows individuals to become connected to the data which constitutes programs and computers. These theoretical terms gain a physicality due to descriptive rhetoric. Roland Barthes describes literary intertextuality as being unable to separate itself from

“any relation to language,” and how this “language never ceases to accompany discourse, holding up to it, as it were, the mirror of its own structure” (241). The structure in *Neuromancer* always finds a relation to the real world. This relationship consistently follows some surreal elements, sometimes even mystical. Each entry into cyberspace reveals a further entrenched world that describes the fringes of human experience. Most of this language, as I will further explain, refuses to remain within the limits of real-world physics.

With the overload of sensory information that cannot exist outside of cyberspace, the digital dimensions allow fluid movement through its guidelines. During the hack into Sense/Net, Case “withdrew the line through the library ice. [The virus] whipped back into his program, automatically triggering a full system reversal. The Sense/Net gates snapped past him as he backed out, subprograms whirling back into the core of the icebreaker as he passed the gates where they had been stationed” (Gibson 67). Case flies through cyberspace, and ignores the solidity of the world around him. The universe is translucent. Even though his identity is his own—a constructed human being—he is transparent to other structures, such as the ice, the gates, and the subprograms. He can move freely without the hindrance of a physical body. Even the virus experiences motions like this. The Chinese program

overwhelmed the fabric of the matrix, triggering hypnagogic images. Faint kaleidoscopic angles centered in to a silver-black focal point. Case watched childhood symbols of evil and bad luck tumble out along translucent planes: swastikas, skulls and crossbones, dice flashing snake eyes...It took a dozen quick, peripheral takes before he had it, a shark thing, gleaming like obsidian, the black mirrors of its flanks reflecting faint distant lights that bore no relationship to the matrix around it (Gibson 183).

This description becomes otherworldly to the already incoherent cyberspace. The virus finds itself relocating the possibilities of a world which has reshaped how humanity can experience their universe.

Though this digital realm is completely distant from reality, technology allows for a comprehensive experience of a world constructed by information and code. Cavallaro describes the immersion of the virtual experience where Case

can actually experience the realistic feeling of inhabiting that world...The user of virtual reality receives images and impressions from various mechanical devices attached to the user's body, to provide the impressions of sight, sound and touch...Gibson's cyberpunk takes virtual technology several steps further by positing the possibility of a direct neural connection between the human brain and the computer (Cavallaro 27-28).

This point is very interesting as a user could experience a completely unengaging encounter if that individual could not feel these actions. Case moves through all this. He physically maneuvers himself in every action as he obtains a body that defies regular movement. Thus, the actions he takes follow a liberation of the body. Cyberspace produces a surreal, almost deity-like law of movement that individuals can utilize freely. One could fold entirely if he or she desired.

This is complicated again by Gibson as he gives nonvisual entities a singular anatomy. Certain codes, viruses, and programs become another structure in this amalgam of symbols. These inanimate objects perform this through descriptions of bright, distinct colours and patterns. Gibson describes the actions of the virus, Kuang Grade Mark Eleven, stating that the program "was filling the grid between itself and the T-A ice with hypnotically intricate trceries of rainbow, lattices fine as snow crystal on a winter window" (Gibson 203). The rainbow element

becomes further grounded in the world through more descriptive words. This language emphasizes the distinct visuality of the digital world. Gibson comments that there were “rainbow tints gradually dominated by the green of the rectangle representing the T-A cores. Arches of emerald across the colorless void” (Gibson 206). These descriptions are ethereal, and there arises a world that contains marvels outside of the human experience. Somehow, the depiction of a world structured on information provides an abundance of expressive structures. These are manifested through neon pigments that form an unambiguous visual.

Once again, I return to the definitive optics. These visuals are the defining descriptions of light that stand for a world which imbues itself with an otherworldly essence. *Neuromancer’s* impactful aesthetic contains a “variety of recurring icons, emblems, and even color palettes, [but] the most emblematic cyberpunk visuals revolve around *incarnations of light*, understood both as a visual phenomenon and a form of energy, including neon light (on our naked skin or otherwise)” (Frelik 81). Most of this can be attributed to the matrix as every structure is embedded with a form of dazzling markers. It is a world full of vivid imaginations. At times, this becomes difficult to inhabit as the human sensorium has an understandable limit. The democratized and translucent media of digital worlds assumes to provide accessible information, but the abundance of information can often be indecipherable (Groes 1481). Cyberspace is connected to the outside world strictly for visual reference. Neon structures, light fixtures, and everything else that comes to describe the matrix initiates a revelatory experience far outside what reality can give. It becomes a place only expressed through surreal fantasy.

Gibson describes cyberspace as an unreal universe structured by these lines of code and the laser representations. The alternative architecture gives range to a variety of different laws. A passing screen relays the history of the virtual world defining it as “[a] consensual hallucination

experienced by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation....A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexities. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data” (Gibson 51-52). Right from the beginning, the digital world is defined as a “hallucination.” Hallucinations have room for a wide amount of different perspectives, and these previous descriptions leave the understanding of how this world works in the mind of the reader. Anything is possible as the abstract visualizers contextualize into the concrete. When analyzing Jacques Poulin’s *Volkswagen Blues*, Graham Allen notes that the postmodern work combines the literal and textual journey while imprinting real-world places inside a textual map simultaneously (175). Similar actions happen in Gibson’s work as every movement inside cyberspace revolves around an ethereal, real-world experience. These maintain the matrix’s strong tangibility. Frelik comments on how “*Neuromancer* establishes light as the immaterial ‘body’ of cyberspace through the constant recurrence of luminescent metaphors... These repetitions prominently establish glaring urban lighting as the novel’s visual signature” (Frelik 84). Neon lights, which are cityscape lights, are the foundational objects of cyberspace. Already the urban reality gains another, digital world which relies on optical representations. Hallucinations become the foremost reality expressed through light structures.

The immaterial light of cyberspace reverts onto itself from rhetoric designed to relay a mystical reaction. Postmodern work is composed by turning back on itself through internalized technological knowledge (Elliott 21). Gibson’s system relies on an out-of-body connection in relation to a coded world. Since the rise of computers occurred during the publication and conception of *Neuromancer*, the language can be viewed as being a part of two distinct cultures: hacker and hippie. In more specific terms, one would need to have experienced a hallucination to

comprehend Gibson's visuals while also incorporating how computer codes can obtain a physical embodiment. As Roland Barthes declares, "for no one can produce a narrative without referring himself to an implicit system of units and rules" (Barthes 238). It seems the system for the matrix relies upon an intermingling of experience. The human sense can react through imagination, but the abstract principles from both cultures combine through the light visualization. These hallucinations and constructs become tangible as most everyone can comprehend the image of city lights.

The entirety of visualized data, free mobility, ethereal viruses, and hallucinatory light situate cyberspace as an addictive space that constantly entices participants to return. When restricted from cyberspace, Case would "see the matrix in his sleep, bright lattices of logic unfolding across that colorless void...But the dreams came on in the Japanese night like livewire voodoo, and he'd cry for it, cry in his sleep, and wake alone in the dark...trying to reach the console that wasn't there" (Gibson 4-5). He longs for a return. The world outside him, the one he experiences in his daily life, lacks the impact and influence of the digitized environment. Baudrillard speaks about how overcoming physical references results in "[r]eality, as an internally coherent and limited universe, [which] begins to hemorrhage when its limits are stretched to infinity. The conquest of space...promotes either the de-realizing of human space, or the reversion of it into a simulated hyperreality" (311). The dissolution of real-world constructs, such as time, mobility, and space, operates on a different definition of reality. As an example of postmodernist literature and postmodern culture, this limitless world cannot be reduced, and it becomes a pluralistic experience unmarked by spatial or temporal meaning which completely immerses a person in the experience (Elliot 98). Case cannot escape the appeal of this world where hyperreality, total immersion, and innumerable experiences occupy the cyberspace environment.

Gibson presents qualities of postmodernism through the representation of technology. These boundaries between humans and machinery lose grip on the distinct separations of one and the other. Jameson declares how postmodern representations of computers as well as televisions present an implosion compared to previous interpretations of industrial mechanics (79).

Neuromancer marks a distinct change in the relationship humans have with technology. Science fiction “typically foregrounds human action *against* a background constituted by its technology, [but] this blurring of once clearly defined boundaries makes cyberpunk a particularly relevant form of science fiction for the post-industrial present” (Hollinger 45). The obscure distinctions between science and humanity formulate the matrix as a world beholden to repeat returns. Case could continuously experience different encounters every time he enters cyberspace, and he probably does throughout *Neuromancer*. As he is restricted or unable to enter cyberspace at the start of the novel, he cannot return to his addictive world. Case lost an aspect of himself being separated from this digital world which displays the physical world as a place of hopelessness. Reality fails to excite his existence. Cyberspace becomes necessary for survival.

This recurring connection even inspires an outlook towards the real world as a compartment to, and of, this computational universe. The real-world only serves to remind Case of the digital one. As he is chased, Case believes it is “like a run in the matrix. Get just wasted enough, find yourself in some desperate but strangely arbitrary kind of trouble, and it was possible to see Ninsei as a field of data, the way the matrix had once reminded him of proteins linking to distinguish cell specialties” further describing that this physical world was “data made flesh” (Gibson 17). Case’s world finds meaning in how it is representational of the digital one. The compounds of light, through viruses, programs, data, and information, is what he perceives as his reality. This supplanting of worlds represents another aspect of postmodernism. Anthony Elliott

in his text, *Subject to Ourselves : An Introduction to Freud, Psychoanalysis, and Social Theory*, speaks about how postmodern culture replaces “authenticity with copies, reality with images” (19) similar to how Jameson describes the act of pastiche as “a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody’s ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists. Pastiche is thus blank parody...” (Jameson 65). Allen again reiterates this definition when referring to how certain news reports substitute the actual event which relays the simulacrum as the reality (Allen 177). It only seems natural for the postmodern context to situate the hallucinatory realm as one that infects the real world. The physical universe loses the appeal to one that is incredibly different. Case has an addictive relationship with cyberspace finds which becomes the recurring reference of the outside world. The computational world as reality seems to be an aspect of the cyberpunk genre.

Urban landscapes reflect how computers and the digital age occupy an escape as users consistently seeking to live in cyberspace. Cities in *Neuromancer* are setting that is devoid of any hope, and crime effects every turn in the hollowed out and grey streets. Every character is searching for their own sense of place inside this oppressive cage. This emphasis on an urban dystopia became the style of cyberpunk texts which many are influenced by Gibson. When talking about the first shot in the film *Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence*, Frelik mentions that the cityscape “coloring and perspective make it possible to look at it as a motherboard of some huge computer whose massive computing flops (floating point operations per second) result in heat express as light –in other words, a visualization of Gibson’s collapse of two realms in *Neuromancer*” (90). These two realms subjugate the real world against the digital one, but one provides constant reference to the other. In the cultural milieu of the 1980s, computers and the

internet were emerging as this escape from the world. Gibson perpetuates this through the matrix as he focuses on the virtual world to accompany its own realized space. In fact, cyberspace depends on the subjective environment where “[t]he ‘natural’ or ‘real’ is one style or idiom among many and is subsumed by the virtual, because, when it frames the ‘real’, it becomes merely one virtual world among many: it functions only *as if* it is real, thus foregrounding the conventional aspect of what is taken for real” (Heuser 77). Physical reality becomes an extension of the virtual. This digitized universe becomes a realm of infinite identity. It is a place where people become entrenched in a liberated existence. Cyberspace is an unrestricted universe.

The return to cyberspace involves a freeing of identity, and the area becomes an extension of the human conscious. Upon his return to the matrix, Case is described to be “laughing, in a white-painted loft, distant fingers caressing the deck, tears of release streaking his face” (Gibson 53). He experiences a cathartic relief as he finally can enter the world that he believes he belongs in. Case becomes whole. Cyberspace is his place of reality which locates itself inside an astonishing application of the human senses. Even though the matrix is a representation of abstract data, it “still seems to be happening inside the human sensorium, regardless whether information is fed into the operators’ brains or some part of their subjectivity becomes exported into networks” (Frelik 85). This relation is developed in the pages that follow his return as he relays the simstim experience. Simstim is when a person is dialed into the point-of-view of another person. In comparing simstim and the digital world, Case declares “the cyberspace matrix was actually a drastic simplification of the human sensorium, at least in terms of presentation, but simstim itself struck him as a gratuitous multiplication of flesh input” (Gibson 55). This passage reveals a distaste towards the physical form, but it also confirms that cyberspace amplifies the human sensorium. With Case’s return to cyberspace, Molly’s physical

actions become banal. The matrix becomes a place for an experience that is not confined by one's body. Anyone can feel their physicality being released.

The matrix turns into a realm where a multitude of worldviews can coexist in a place drastically separated from the real-world. Postmodernism allows numerous positions of identities that opens other experiential opportunities of the world (Elliott 7). Cyberspace is a pluralistic universe, and one that welcomes personalities of all kinds. Case exists almost entirely in cyberspace because he can freely move inside and around it. The relationship to technology reiterates how the matrix accepts individuals. Identities, viewpoints, and personalities begin to define this place as a democratic world. This is very similar to more postmodernist assemblages of alternative and different viewpoints. The postmodern reality "may sometimes be an achieved new and original way of thinking and perceiving; more often it takes the form of an impossible imperative to achieve that new mutation in what can perhaps no longer be called consciousness" (Jameson 75). As Jameson indicates how various viewpoints add to the human consciousness, the digital world appears to be a prime opportunity for this representation. Even viruses have their own individuality. All of cyberspace relieves its inhabitants from the constrictions of the real world. Limitless possibilities and forms of personality have room to exist. Gibson perpetuates the idea of a neon illuminated universe that welcomes all while maintaining unrestricted mobility and a liberation of identity. Seems quite like a utopia.

This flowing universe truly situates itself as something otherworldly and grander than the physical world. It makes reality ambiguously bland, and thus, cyberspace attains a utopian image contrasted against the outside world. I will analyze the juxtaposition further on, but I wish to examine how the matrix exists as a utopia. Case can discover his identity in this digital world as it defines who he is and who he can be. He found comfort when he "jacked into a custom

cyberspace deck that projected his disembodied consciousness into the consensual hallucination that was the matrix” (Gibson 5). As he lost his virtual world, he lost himself. The return to cyberspace indicates how Case aligned himself with his own existence. He describes his first return as “[t]his was it. This was what he was, who he was, his being. He forgot to eat... Sometimes he resented having to leave the deck to use the chemical toilet they’d set up in a corner of the loft... Its [Cyberspace’s] rainbow pixel maze was the first thing he saw when he woke. He’d go straight to the deck, not bothering to dress, and jack in... He lost track of days” (Gibson 59). The digital world was his essence. Case became who he was, or at least who he believed himself to be, when he was inside cyberspace.

As I have stated, the liberation of identity confirms that the matrix occupies a mystical realm. This allows individuals to interact with a limitless body. Baudrillard states that science fiction utopias are “a radically different universe... wherein transcendence is represented in all its depth, even unto its subconscious structure; but, in all cases, the separation from the real world is maximal-it is the utopian island in contrast to the continent of the real” (Baudrillard 309). This concept of juxtaposition and transcendence is reflected in Darko Suvin’s article, “The Time Machine versus Utopia.” Suvin declares that the utopian genre is defined through fundamentally different locations which provide reference and comparison to each respective realm (“Time Machine versus Utopia” 344). Since the urban city reflects cyberspace, along with the drastic variation in how physics work in each place, it becomes clear that the matrix allows for a utopian space. Identity, worldviews, and mobility have a world that provides complete and total freedom to become whatever they want.

Though Suvin’s interpretation of utopias fits the framework I seek to utilize, the author speaks specifically against applying this to Gibson’s work. When discussing the possibility of a

utopia in *Neuromancer* in his article, “On Gibson and Cyberpunk SF,” he states “[n]either the tough-guy lyricism of erotics nor the excitement of cyberspace, acceptable and even fine as they undoubtedly can be, seem to me finally satisfactory as utopias. Both, it will be noticed, are deeply socialized but still privatized utopias—or in fact utopian surrogates” (“On Gibson” 45). Suvin specifically speaks about the impossibility of cyberspace occupying a transcendental realm, and he believes the matrix is a “utopian surrogate.” This statement defines the digital world as a representation of the real, or more particularly, as a copy of a utopia. Since cyberspace relies on producing copies of copies (a total, addictive simulacrum filled with hyperreal information structures), I believe the descriptions of this space engineer a place free from the trivial inconsistencies of the outside world. The physical and virtual coded references are indicative of this statement. Thus, cyberspace is a refuge from *Neuromancer*’s harsh reality.

As a safe space, the matrix allows an anti-hierarchical universe that poses an oppositional component to what most individuals define as reality. Postmodern locations reduce ideological positions and old worldviews by simultaneously representing multiple identities without any central authority connecting them (Elliott 98). The city and cyberspace present two different worldviews that are pitted against one another. As the virtual world presents an unrestricted universe, the outside world fails to maintain itself as a reference point. Since Gibson’s rhetoric only describes the matrix through mystical, ethereal language, cyberspace also cannot truly relate to the physical world. Both worlds refuse to support each other. Janez Steble’s article, “New Wave Science Fiction and the Exhaustion of the Utopian/Dystopian Dialectic,” discusses the difference between modern “and the past forms of the utopian and dystopian literature is that the former include within themselves a dialectical opposition between the utopian and dystopian striving...” (98). Though this juxtaposed position is represented in *Neuromancer*, Gibson also

refuses to give each their own sway. Cyberspace is a liberated world and the real-world is a decrepit universe, but neither can truly stand out from the other. Thus, the language used for both are multi-coded, and at times, they refer to each other while remaining completely distinct.

The freedom of identity is the key factor that completely contradicts the experience of each realm. Identity is fluid not only for the humans, but for all entities that exist in cyberspace. These individuals have a boundless ability to become anything they desire. They also experience divided personalities as an immutable reality. In describing who he is, the AI that hired Case explains the mistake

in confusing the Wintermute mainframe, Berne, with the Wintermute *entity*...I, insofar as I *have* an 'I'...am the one who arranges things for Armitage...what you think of as Wintermute is only a part of another, a, shall we say, *potential* entity. I, let us say, am merely one aspect of that entity's brain. It's rather like dealing, from your point of view, with a man whose lobes have been severed (Gibson 122-23)

Wintermute even describes himself as split, and hence brings about a schizophrenic definition of his essence. Postmodernism complicates identity and theory as it levels hierarchical structures in a pluralistic method that declares "culture is heterogeneous" (Elliott 18). The AI occupies this free world by dividing his consciousness in multiple parts. Both exist as separate pieces of an entity, and they only combine at the end of *Neuromancer*. They are many parts of one being, yet they are still separate individuals. This splitting of self becomes apparent even in the digitized personality of hackers. During a conversation with Case, the hologram program of Dix recognizes his friend before being restarted. Then, the program finds a dissolution in recollecting a conversation that only happened moments ago (Gibson 75). These passages represent how one "must deconstruct the human/machine opposition and begin to ask new questions about the

ways...technologies 'interface' to produce what has become a *mutual* evolution" (Hollinger 56). Once again, the coded boundaries between humanity and machinery are blurred. The opposition between these two forces, which was a staple in modernist culture, combines to construct a new type of human identity; an unreachable entity of Wintermute and a psychotically unstable program based on a person. Cyberspace confutes the separation between worlds, and the space provides its inherent creatures with the same freedom as people.

Contrasted to the real-world, individuals confined to strictly existing outside cyberspace have a refracted sense of self. Their altered state perpetuates a chaotic psychosis towards their own self-understanding. Armitage's personality is described as how one can "twist a man far enough, then twist him as far back, in the opposite direction, reverse and twist again. The man broke. Like breaking a length of wire" (Gibson 204). Even Case's first lover, Lisa, is described in a hopeless and depressive state. He describes how "[h]e'd watched her personality fragment, calving like an iceberg, splinters drifting away, and finally he'd seen the raw need, the hungry armature of addiction" (Gibson 9). These two individuals find themselves outside the freedom of cyberspace. They cannot grasp their situation, and hence find themselves in an existential universe that fails to satisfy them. Armitage cannot find himself, and he is in dissolution about his circumstances. Lisa attempts to rob Case, and she concludes her story dead in an alley. It seems the physical world lacks any semblance of grounding the people that exist in it. Ironically, as cyberspace is limitless, it grounds identity whereas the real-world defined by laws and reality lacks this anchor.

The matrix occupies a decentering component to the world that subverts how identity is represented outside of it. By blurring the separation from humans and machines, *Neuromancer* "radically decenters the human body, the sacred icon of the essential self, in the same way that

the virtual reality of cyberspace works to decenter conventional humanist notions of an unproblematical ‘real’” (Hollinger 46). This comes about through the abundance of sensory information as the expansion of human consciousness destabilizes the real world. Reality has no firm basis as it is presented to be a subdivision of the matrix. The overstimulation of the digital age corrupts the individual’s mentality which causes a loss in identity, individuality, and society with a formation of a new human nature (Groes 1483). In addition to this, the virtual world demolishes the moral depth of human character that fragments the self in a world instilled with extreme isolation (Gergen 106). The sense of fragmentation is key to postmodern works. Along with a double coded atmosphere, *Neuromancer* presents a world that shatters identities while also presenting an alternative universe that aids in sustaining them.

Psychic disunity is key to Gibson’s immoral characters that leads to an overall dystopian imagery. The condition of shattering the self deconstructs the subjective individual (Elliott 34-35), and “[i]f negotiating the complexities of multiplicity becomes normalized, so does the conception of mind as moral touchstone grow pale” (Gergen 103). A corrupt system seems to plague the entirety of the outside world. Harmful outlooks are not limited to individuals, but the entire physical reality obtains an eery and negative personification. The world outside of cyberspace is a destructive wasteland with cities too confined and brutal to provide any hope. This sharp contrast between worlds situates a dystopian/utopian juxtaposition relevant in how each are coded together. Postmodern double coding arrives through how these two worlds are polar opposites.

The atmosphere of the real world even situates itself in the blank emptiness of nonexistent cyber descriptions. The opening line of *Neuromancer* states “[t]he sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel” (Gibson 3). A coded message here defines the world

as related to technology. This relationship, however, is to the empty space of a blank environment. Specifically, this sentence relates an experience that maintains consistency through every comparison of the physical world to cyberspace. This feeling of greyness continues with other descriptions. Night City is defined through “the neon shudder of Ninsei, the sky was that mean shade of gray. The air had gotten worse; it seemed to have teeth tonight, and half the crowd wore filtration masks” (Gibson 16). A cursing revelation of how the world exists (and literally breathes) in a line that maintains how the physical world is devoid of colour. The rhetoric is quite different from the neon, bright, and hallucinatory language used to define cyberspace.

The references to empty, grey, and nonexistent spaces connotes a world devoid of any positive outlook; a starkly different atmosphere from the tone around the matrix. In postmodernism, intertextuality is dominant because there is a nonexistent “access to reality” (Allen 177-78) which is evident in *Neuromancer* because the urban cities are “grounded in dystopian representations of the present and the impending future, and in much older structures of power and knowledge” (Cavallaro 151). The combination of both previous and future worlds presents a universe where technology has shaped everything. When looking at the modernist movement, the impact of industrial machinery is evident. As a future possibility, cyberspace provides a countering viewpoint on how mechanics can reimagine what is possible. Human evolution in *Neuromancer* examines how “technology confronts the individual as impersonal...and the ongoing psychological dilemma of discriminating between the real and the superficial, the inside and the outside, the authentic and the inauthentic, is broken down into random signifiers and codes” (Elliott 117-18). Gibson represents how technology reinterprets the world, and the matrix is an outlet for reengineering that reality. When a world filled with light exists on the fringes, cities lose their shine.

With this technology, the lines between which universe is dominant (the real or the virtual) cultivates new experiential interpretations. The first line of the book uses technology to make the natural world a metaphor between the genuine and the simulacrum (Hollinger 44). Through this depressive atmosphere, readers can find hope within the digital world. The matrix attracts even the viewers of the book with beautiful language and mystical descriptions. These narrative devices present what Steble defines as finding “new meanings and values in the supposed imminent conflagration of our planet – destruction becomes a source of revival” (93). The revival in *Neuromancer* comes through cyberspace as it obtains this ethereal quality. This space, in a world so distant from reality, utilizes experiences of mysticism as a reference point and visualizer. When describing David Foster Wallace’s works, Groes states that “[t]he fictional world that is created in the imagination does not necessarily have its origins in our shared world: the signs which readers habitually constructs into an imagined world are not necessarily connected to signifiers in the world ‘out there’” (1493). The ambiguous elements that perpetuate cyberspace come from experiences that cannot be put into words. All of this creates a world that stands out amongst the savage and dystopian outside world. Double coding juxtaposes these two universes against one another to introduce the technology’s positive action. This coding also displays how technology reshapes humanity.

There is a lack of understanding between the tangible and hallucinatory descriptions. That gap represents how postmodern works present spaces that cannot be understood. Symbolic signifiers are used to create difference in comprehension to increase “uncertainty to a point that meaning becomes diffused and includes chaos and that not the inherent meaning of the symbolic vehicle but the willfully improved perspective reigns absolute” (Hoffmann 20). Hallucinations and mandalas are hard to recognize as well as describing a very loose bodily mobility. Add in

information as light structures, and the matrix has descriptors that create an amalgamated space. This gap in representation leads to readers being able to imagine this world in whatever way they can. With these attributes as a framework, cyberspace exists solely inside the unknowable. Yet, this gives it a concreteness that is quite different from the real world. There is a stark contrast between these two atmospheres as the outside world is devoid of any hope.

The absence of optimism spills out in the characters' understanding of the world through their lack of knowledge surrounding familiar environments. As Molly led Case through the Sprawl, he "looked around the deserted dead-end street. A sheet of newsprint went cartwheeling past the intersection. Freak winds in the East side; something to do with convection, and an overlap in the domes. Case peered through the window at the dead sign. Her Sprawl wasn't his Sprawl, he decided" (Gibson 47-48). It appears the world can be experienced in a multiplicity of ways. The lack of understanding forms an empty space of geographical knowledge. Gibson displays how there can always be more to a place even though the city is known by the individuals. Groes explains that one's knowledge of the surrounding world is conditional on one's subjectivity (1482). The transference of information into a knowable reality becomes difficult due to the destabilizing factors of the digital world which is brought about by a destructive environment (Groes 1482). Groes uses climate change as an example, but a claustrophobic city with death around every block may apply as well.

Gibson's work finds itself within the canon of cyberpunk. The genre usually employs the dystopian reality to its own ends. *Neuromancer* and other novels use a landscape "choked with the debris of both language and objects; as a sign-system, it is overdetermined by a proliferation of surface detail which emphasizes the 'outside' over the 'inside'...indeed, the shift in emphasis is from a symbolic to a surface reality" (Hollinger 51). When comparing both surfaces of the

cyberspace and the urban space, the two display remarkable contradiction. The virtual world exists as a grounded and stable world whereas the real universe is in chaos and discord. The matrix's ambiguous rhetoric provides readers an opportunity to incorporate their own ideas. One cannot do that with *Neuromancer's* cities. Even Case cannot recognize a location he has lived in for many years. The outside environment appears everchanging, and lacks the cyberspace's grounded base.

This dystopia is not strictly limited to the environment as even human interaction contains a theme of death. The sense of business contained "a constant subliminal hum, and death the accepted punishment for laziness, carelessness, lack of grace, the failure to heed the demands of an intricate protocol" (Gibson 7). This may sound like a throw-away line meant to encode a degree of atmosphere, but this gains tangible reality later in the text. As Molly is escaping from her heist, "bodies were piled three deep on the barricades. The hollow thumping of the riot guns provided a constant background for the sound the crowd made as it surged back and forth across the lobby's marble floor" (Gibson 68). The world truly is a lifeless universe that repeatedly returns to death. Case, Molly, and the reader experience the dystopian outlook that is intricately woven through *Neuromancer's* language referring to the cityscape. That life can be cast aside in such harrowing blows instills the cynical outlook. Only cyberspace can reclaim the hope the inhabitants desperately desire.

Through these descriptions, the real-world retains a tendency that emphasizes a nihilistic perspective. In *Neuromancer*, suffering is commonplace, and for one to live in reality requires one to suffer existence. The physical world contained "a kind of ghostly teenage DNA at work in the Sprawl, something that carried the coded precepts of various short-lived subcults and replicated them at odd intervals" (Gibson 59). With the inclusion of DNA, this line hints at an

inherent quality. The world cannot escape suffering and hopelessness as it lies in the setting's essence. This also bleeds out. An already suffering world does not only confine pain to its environment; the people in the world also experience pain. Case describes how he was "[s]trapped to a bed in a Memphis hotel, his talent burning out micron by micron, he hallucinated for thirty hours. The damage was minute, subtle, and utterly effective" (Gibson 6). The result of an overabundance of digitized time revealed "a certain relaxed contempt for the flesh. The body was meat. Case fell into the prison of his own flesh" (Gibson 6). He rejects the physical world, and his connection to it.

Gibson presents a response that highlights the impact technology has on humans, their society, and their own minds. Groes speaks about two types of responses to information overload in literature; one is a humanist perspective which presents "the novel as an ordering device that restores the chaotic world back to order... Yet, there are also radical, experimental forms of literature that mimic informational streams and accelerate chaos in order to investigate the effects of interference and distraction upon the human mind." (1486). Through his negative descriptions of the physical world, Gibson ascribes to the interaction between information technology and humans. This presents a positive light where reality's chaotic elements are only relieved inside cyberspace. By representing the real world as one that constantly deprives one's humanity, Gibson reveals a viewpoint on how technology can create a solid basis for reality. The matrix is more real and honest than reality. Thus, *Neuromancer* displays how the virtual world strips the real world of any positive attributes.

The difference between dystopia and utopia occur within a dissonance of identity. The personal disruption is brought by the connection between cybernetic technology and physical reality. In describing the floating city, Case "knew that sunlight was pumped in with the Lado-

Acheson system whose two-millimeter armature ran the length of the spindle, that they generated a rotating library of sky effects around it, that if the sky were turned off, he'd stare up past the armature of light to the curves of lakes, rooftops of casinos, other streets....But it made no sense to his body" (Gibson 125). This place occupied a space where technology and reality met. The environment is entirely artificial, yet Case recognizes that he cannot understand the setting without the technology that maintained this façade. In this environment, technology is overlaid with reality. The two become interchangeable. A key aspect of postmodern fiction concerns "the existence of autonomous worlds..." (Hoffmann 18), and *Neuromancer* tackles this along with Western society's uniform understanding of technology which results in shattered "subcultures" of identity (Gergen 101). Case fails to comprehend the artificial and the real in his surroundings. He loses his grounded base which could possibly be brought about through continuous returns to the matrix. What actually occurs is the virtual reality blurs the boundary between both universes. Digital possibilities exist in the real, and Case is unable to accept that harmony.

The dissolution of worlds is a postmodern component which distorts the separation of subjective realities. Jameson defines the metaknowledge of inside and outside realities as emotion is "projected out and externalized, as gesture or cry, as desperate communication and the outward dramatization of inward feeling" (61). Case loses his understanding of the world through the synchronization of advanced machinery and organic reality. This falls in line with how the shifting technological mentality of the 1980s undermines the self as a moral figure (Gergen 103). Gibson's undermining pressure is maintained through a realm of free identity in contrast to a constricting reality. Subjectivity becomes the only method to experience utopia. By escaping to cyberspace, the physical world loses its tangible hold as the only reality, and there arises a universe that perpetuates a liberated subjective self. For *Neuromancer*, the concept of

identity recognizes the changing paradigm of technology from the modernist to the postmodernist society (Hollinger 49) which is representative of the 1980s. The relinquishment of technology into a mass marketed tool derives a keen sense that the cultural gears are shifting.

A sense of a reshaping cultural milieu is evident throughout the novel's descriptions. Case, in his drug-fuelled perspective, marks the changing view around technology. Suvin describes Gibson's matrix in connection to this paradigm:

An abstract logic and cultural ecstasy is hidden beneath this hardboiled technical vocabulary, a yearning to get out of the dinginess and filth of everyday life...More prudently and plausibly, cyberspace can be seen as a landscape simulation...of the mathematizable data fed into all the corporate computers, into which his hustler heroes plug by means of cranial jacks (extrapolated from present-day military experimentation) ("On Gibson" 44)

The way Suvin comments on the applied references of coding and hacking culture is very important to my argument. With "technical vocabulary" that describes the "mathematizable data," *Neuromancer* displays how this computer culture was interlaced within the actions, worlds, and representations of characters. It seems the 1980s computer culture cannot be separated from cyberpunk. The coded messages reflect this relationship. Case displays the shift in technology that personal computers brought about. The matrix pitted against reality displays the rising zeitgeist of information technology.

The dystopia and utopia balance demonstrates a world on the edge between falling apart and instituting a newfound era of change. When describing Night City, Gibson describes the location as "a deranged experiment in social Darwinism, designed by a bored researcher who kept one thumb permanently on the fast-forward button. Stop hustling and you sank without a trace, but

move a little too swiftly and you'd break the fragile surface tension of the black market; either way, you were gone, with nothing left of you but some vague memory..." (7). A grounded and physical city seems to be balanced unsteadily on the verge of disaster. Ironic in how cyberspace appears as a fully functional world without these intricate social issues. This delicate equilibrium represents a form of irony consistent in postmodern works. Writers of postmodern fiction prevent their characters from making a clear decision on two conflicting points, often by obscuring these easily defined polarities (Di Martino 141). At the same time, Gibson employs a world on the edge of destruction while supporting a universe of boundless hope. The utopian concept can be described as "a formal inversion of significant and salient aspects of the author's world, an inversion which has as its ultimate purpose the recognition that the author (and reader) truly live in an axiologically inverted world" (Suvin "Time Machine Versus Utopia" 345). The disordered, physical world already maintains this decrepit, unethical spot. There is disorder in having such disparate universes accessible by the same people. As a postmodern genre, cyberpunk differs from previous science fiction writing. Usually, the genre breaks down the autonomous realms of humans and machines whereas previous work sustained how both were unable to assimilate (Hollinger 44). Thus, one could see the dichotomous combination of these worlds as representing one that allows for liberation whereas the other hinders it. Since the two mingle together, the *Neuromancer* universe could fall into either.

Gibson's universe is fundamentally a hopeful one. Cyberspace provides an area aimed at bettering the physical world. What comes with the "potential technological transcendence is the anxiety and disorientation produced in the self/body in danger of being absorbed into its own technology" (Hollinger 45). I argue that there comes a sort of hopeful utopia out of this destructive universe. The matrix is a call for a new technological boom. This new technology

could provide a refuge from the horrors of the natural world. Steble comments on how a wide variety of science fiction authors, including Gibson, created “tales of human revival and hope” (94). *Neuromancer* is no different. This comes to a head as Wintermute seeks to claim his own identity, and the construct becomes a liberated being that traverses through cyberspace. Before this argument, I would like to look at how specific coded messages lead to the exhilaration of a new paradigm that culminates with Wintermute.

Due to this connection between utopia and dystopia, Gibson employs the expert analysis of double coding as instituting the elite and low-class sensibilities into one universe. Freeside is defined as a multiplicity of different locations as Gibson explains it “is [a] brothel and banking nexus, pleasure dome and free port, border town and spa. Freeside is Las Vegas and the hanging gardens of Babylon, an orbital Geneva and home to a family inbred and most carefully refined, the industrial clan of Tessier and Ashpool” (Gibson 103). The author references Babylon, Las Vegas, and Geneva, and he also speaks of places with questionable integrity and places with perfect integrity. Here, Gibson combines two cultures. Scum and proletariats both exist in this world. This is an example of how Jencks describes double coding can merge oppositional elite and mass-produced qualities while also connecting old and new (34). Gibson utilizes contemporary technology to confront social issues. This technique not only leaves room for a variety of inspirations, but now *Neuromancer* contains all these inspirations. From the avant-garde to the disgusting, the novel is a combination of economies.

The multilayered coding is representative of further connections between the concrete and the abstract. Barthes comments that there is no unit of meaning that is completely understandable without a system it falls within as even words must “be integrated into the sentence” (242). As has been stated, Gibson reinterprets the 1980s computer culture. The dual pronged attempt to

relate human and machine is an example of a culture that is stuck between two coded influences (Hoffmann 14). This is apparent in Allen's consideration of two photographers, Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn. These individuals combined cultural codes and intertextual methods in order to display "the ideological nature of modes of communication" which, in their case, relied on state power (Allen 174). In Gibson's case, the ideologies are the relinquishment of computers from the elite to the masses. *Neuromancer* represents a step towards a globally connected universe through online compatibility. The novel can only be understood through referencing computer culture as cyberspace gains its entire essence through information technology. This foreshadowing to the current age today is reminiscent of the author's ability to capture the cultural zeitgeist.

By representing both old and new, elite class and lowly culture, Gibson combines the modes of communication to reach a prophetic connection. He literally foretells the future by connecting the modern to the postmodern. Jameson argues that the connective "frontier between high culture and so-called mass or commercial culture, and the emergence of new kinds of texts infused with the forms, categories and contents of that very Culture Industry..." (54) establishes a key component of postmodernism. Suvin himself comments on the connection between these cultural attitudes. He remarks that *Neuromancer* displays how "the punk tradition meshes with the high-tech of the '80s, in particular with the burgeoning of modern computerized communications; in Gibson, their world is discreetly and very reasonably extrapolated into new drugs and hologram games, and mainly biotechnics which come to provide their new software" (Suvin "On Gibson" 42). The representation of these two cultures arise in the confines of both the real world and the digital. Cyberspace is a place where technology runs rampant, and the cityscapes are where human bodies are left to rot. This reflects the high culture of computers and the low culture of

punk. Both find a place in *Neuromancer* as they reconcile the codes between each respective culture. There is dirty, grimy filth alongside a utopian, neon free-space.

These urban and virtual monolithic structures represent a boundless potential that is derived from the architecture. Cavallaro describes these megacities as resulting from

a keen eye for the minutiae of setting and architecture and a concern with the multifarious ways in which these fragments coalesce into various compounds: the all-engulfing structures of multinational economies, the corporate identities of subcultural groups and, of course, the system of the matrix itself...Cyberpunk thus suggests that space is not necessarily *either* sealed *or* boundless but rather *both* sealed *and* boundless at one and the same time (Cavallaro 138).

With an eye on how these environments feed off one another, both universes also present a limited space and an opened space. Each provides a constricting world that refuses an easy escape, but they also allow others to switch between one and the other. Thus, the real and virtual world allow people to escape these cultures.

This economic juxtaposition is also evident in the more common descriptions of the environment and buildings. In describing The Jarre, Gibson notes the scene is defined by “a dated, nameless style from the previous century, an uneasy blend of Japanese traditional and pale film, as though the bad nerves of a million customers had somehow attacked the mirrors and the once glossy plastics, leaving every surface fogged with something that could never be wiped away” (9). There are plastics and century-old aspects. This is noteworthy as plastic objects clearly find a home in Case’s age, but the Japanese traditions also feel as though they belong in this world. Both eras of design, though they may seem contradictory, are indicative of the

economy. There is poor and rich. It seems impossible that these two cultural objects can coexist in a futuristic world. By combining two distinct aspects of the economy, Gibson reveals an ironic beauty to *Neuromancer*'s setting and environment. The use of irony appears to be a starting point "to define the politics and the poetics of late capitalist society with relation to modernism" (Di Martino 138). Capitalist components are represented in how these two economic classes are connected. One can purchase the cheapest, mass-produced objects in addition to the expensive, architectural artifacts.

The low and high class connect further together in their critique of technologies. These two cultural sensibilities display another format of double coding that presents a postmodern tone. Gibson's physical world contains "the notion that burgeoning technologies require outlaw zones, that Night City wasn't there for its inhabitants, but as a deliberately unsupervised playground for technology itself" (11). The economic dynamic reveals the burgeoning tangents that technology brings. The objects inject the world with a reshaping version of itself. Cyberspace is this place in which technology reforms society. Gibson reveals how double coding is meant "to emphasize contextual and cultural additions to their inventions" (Jencks 41). It is not strictly a utopian world against a dystopian world; the text involves a critique on how technology has shifted the current world, and what it will lead to. This embrace of technology came to signify a different culture in the 1980s. In Umberto Eco's novel *Name of the Rose*, the text raises awareness of the forces that reshaped and continue to shape the Italian identity (Di Martino 153). Gibson seeks the same observation in *Neuromancer*, but he aims to interpret computer culture. He performs this by imagining a world where codes, information, and digital realities have a tangible component in real life. That means that these symbols which would only appear on screens now constitute the environment. Technology in *Neuromancer* is intertwined with the world.

The reexamination of computer culture signifies the paradigm shift in the digital revolution as computers began to appear before the masses. This shift in the cultural milieu noted a “sidelining” of the humanities as an ideology (Groes 1483). This stance reflected a political view that lay the importance of the novel’s universe on technology. Gibson’s view is postmodern as “an implicitly or explicitly political stance on the nature of multinational capitalism today” (Jameson 55) which suggests that cultural “ambiguity and discontinuity cannot be straightened out, that social and cultural organization cannot be rationally ordered and controlled” (Elliott 7). Gibson never reconciles the utopian technology and a dystopian reality, but he poses the dynamic nonetheless. Part of this comes from the glorification of computers, and another sense is that he may not know the answer himself. In the 1980s, the foretelling of the influence computers would have on the world was preconceived by Gibson. He recognized that these new technologies would have a lasting impact far into the future.

This outlook becomes evident in how the author reenvisioned the relationship cyberspace has to the world. Previously in this paper I spoke about how cyberspace classifies the real world. I seek to discuss how the two make the entire holistic universe ambiguous. Cavallaro speaks about how cyberpunk notes the isolated parts as “it simultaneously stresses that what is ultimately most tantalizing is not the individual detail itself so much as the unimaginable complex assemblages to which the detail alludes” (136). As the relationship has been defined, the connection between how technology can impact society is clear. This representation also arrives through the interactions between Case and his contemporaries. They begin to define the utopian and dystopian juxtaposition as the two universes acquire a personal storyteller. Cyberspace and computers gain a specific interpreter in Case to display Gibson’s vision. *Neuromancer* is not some basic utopia; the text warns against the limitations in every future that seeks to define

ideological systems that can perceive absolute realities (Hollinger 53), in this case that technology and reality are separate.

The combination of these two forces in one realm situates how cyberspace is not only a plot device for the narrative; this world also questions whether technology can be harmful or helpful. Steble analyzes world building as science fiction authors use “advanced technology to further the plot of their story, it is almost inevitable that this piece of technology will have ramifications on a social scale. It is up to the author to imply or explicitly state whether some device or invention turns out to be a benefit to society or a complete hazard” (95). This question is never answered. Gibson neither provides a clear-cut definition nor a detailed answer on the consequences of technology; he simply presents a situation. This situation reflects what this new technology could become. Through cyberspace, Gibson releases a mirror that examines the relocation of high-technology to low-technology; the change in how supercomputers lost their exclusive spot for the elite, and began to move to the masses.

This interaction between technology and the world displays the hybridity that functions in representing the changing paradigm for computer technology. Double coding reveals a democratic relinquishment of technology which obtains a reputable function as the combined AI becomes sentient and, almost, all-powerful. As *Neuromancer*, the AI, attains autonomy, the being describes itself as “[t]he lane to the land of the dead. Where you are, my friend... Neuro from the nerves, the silver path. Romancer. Necromancer. I call up the dead. But no, my friend... I *am* the dead, and their land” (Gibson 247-48). The AI returns to a kind of utopia, and this place appears to exist in a virtual world. Once again, the technological aspect to *Neuromancer*, the text, provides a new area to explore and liberate one’s identity. The reference to the dead implies an afterlife like tone which culminates as *Neuromancer* declares “I am the

dead, and their land.” The code has literally assimilated and combined with the virtual reality. Allen states that postmodern writers juxtapose incompatible codes which produces “a radical questioning of the available forms of representation and thus the available modes of knowledge within culture” (184-185). The idea that AI’s can obtain more power than their creators is a subversive tactic that came to define cyberpunk and the endpoint of computer technology. Gibson’s portrayal of Neuromancer and the AI’s other personas reveal what Jencks believes all postmodernists maintain: some kind of “irony, parody, displacement, complexity, eclecticism, realism,” or any other contemporary narrative aspects (34). In fact, the reference to “the dead” and the combination of various other personalities indicates this new AI really contains all these qualities. The program is a unique being arising out of technology (irony), and a manmade object obtaining close to omnipotent power (parody). There is an afterlife out of cyberspace (displacement), an integrated persona out of various AI personalities (complexity and eclecticism), and a questioning of how technology will impact the world (realism).

This descriptive rhetoric displays the gaps between the opposing forces of reality and technology as Neuromancer resides in this space. Gibson’s language captured the imagination through evocative descriptions, and these in turn established the visuality of cyberspace which defined cyberpunk (Frelik 84). By connecting the afterlife with coded programs, *Neuromancer* establishes a coded narrative that came to define the genre it started. This language produces easy visuals to the unobservable cyberspace, and this comes through the references to mystical experiences. The connection between virtual and urban spaces can be described as an oppositional element which appears to “frame reality in terms of a digital apparatus with basic binary ON/OFF options, combinations and disjunctions which may seem to rationalize space. What is all too easy to forget about binaries is that there is always a *gap* between ON and OFF,

that there is inevitably an *interval* between 0 and 1” (Cavallaro 140). The gap comes from describing information as hallucinations. Descriptions such as these again cycle through Neuromancer’s proclamation of being “the land of the dead.” The AI recognizes this gap, and they represent a representation of what can exist in it. When data gains a structure, it may also gain an identity. The relinquishment of technology into the masses perpetuates how computers themselves attain an autonomous persona. Neuromancer, Wintermute, and this new AI are paramount to the shifting terms of how technology affects the society that constructs it, and in this case, that is used by it.

Gibson presents the political viewpoint that technology has reshaped the world. In fact, *Neuromancer* is a text which has already formed a new society. Case is unable to even tell the real from this fiction. Maybe neither can the readers. Jameson comments on postmodern works as presenting “a new systemic cultural norm and its reproduction, in order to reflect more adequately on the most effective forms of any radical cultural politics today” (57). In the 1980s, the radical politics were computers. The culture recognized this tool was rapidly becoming accessible to many individuals. By using cyberspace as a utopia, Gibson marks that the fiction of an advanced technological future was on the way. The simulacrum of science fiction was becoming the real. Baudrillard even comments on this shift:

Models no longer constitute an imaginary domain with reference to the real; they are, themselves, an apprehension of the real, and thus leave no room for any fictional extrapolation—they are immanent, and therefore leave no room for any kind of transcendentalism. The stage is now set for simulation, in the cybernetic sense of the word...for all kinds of manipulation of these models (hypothetical scenarios, the creation of

simulated situations, etc.), but now *nothing distinguishes this management-manipulation from the real itself: there is no more fiction* (Baudrillard 310, emphasis not added).

Cyberspace marked a turn towards a world that embraces technology, and one where computers dominate. Gibson recognizes this shift through *Neuromancer*, but he only presented a possibility. It just appeared to be correct as the world we now live in seems out of the literature that came before. The genre of cyberpunk is a call to a world that has been irreparably shaped by computers. In Case's case, *Neuromancer*, the AI, is a mark to a brighter future within the revolution of computer technology. Once everyone can access a life changing technology, the tool begins to develop its own personality. *Wintermute* started what *Neuromancer* finished as the AI resides in a space that seemed so polarized but became the same.

The legacy of cyberpunk comes from the influence that computers have on the world. In retrospect, it seems obvious that such a mechanical development would drastically reshape society. The literary texts associated with the genre reveal “an overwhelming fascination, at once celebratory and anxious, with technology and its immediate—that is, *unmediated*—effects upon human being-in-the-world, a fascination which sometimes spills over into the problematizing of ‘reality’ itself” (Hollinger 45, sic). This paper has displayed how the complication of reality comes about. Though this reveals how the simulation has transformed reality, there is ample evidence in our own history that this is true. There are always many worlds in our imaginations, but the utopian commentary is a means for reflection where the simulacra provides an impassible universe without any external penetration (Baudrillard 312). Cyberspace came to define the world of computers, and *Neuromancer* came to define a future possibility. One that is close at hand. Cyberpunk has attracted readers, viewers, and audiences for decades with its constant presentation of technology that grows out of control. Our current society is reminiscent of this

world that blurs fact and fiction. Gibson said it himself: “Night City is not a place one returns to, artiste...” (272), and yet, audiences have constantly reexamined.

Cyberpunk has arisen into the mainstream culture through video games, television shows, and cinematic films. One must remember that this entire movement began with Gibson and with *Neuromancer*. One of the qualities that makes this transfer between media is the genre’s ubiquitous visuality. Cyberspace is this representation, but the legacy belongs to what this space signifies. In a world dominated by computer technology, the impact that the 1980s had on society is incredibly evident. Gibson captured this ideology, and he presented a future that closely aligns with the current age we live in. In hindsight, his predictions are obvious. The recurring elements of cyberpunk draw people into its evocative future. This is brought about through the juxtaposition of a utopia and a dystopia. Gibson only thought of the technological world as an escape. What needs to be remembered is that *Neuromancer*’s vision of a digital utopia will constantly be remembered and invoked as information technology continues to develop. Hopefully, a cyberspace like environment will present itself in the near future. Hopefully.

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