

UGC MINOR PROJECT SUMMARY

Name of the project

POST-MODERN AMBIENCE AND MOTIF IN CYBERPUNKK: A STUDY OF WILLIAM GIBSON'S NEUROMANCER AND BRUCE STERLING'S SCHISMATRIX

The two texts for analysis, "Neuromancer" and "Schismatrix" provide a world where all theoretical markers of post modernism appear in flesh. If the markers of post modernism are determined to be a world of techno-science, of simulacra, of increasing capitalism where humanity and human life is reduced to insignificant nothing, multiplicity of experience, then, both the texts fulfil each of them point by point.

'Neuromancer' is set in Chiba city, Japan, a world which is completely urbanised. Nature is over-run or destroyed ('ecocide'). In fact, the novel begins with these descriptions: 'the sky above the port was the colour of television, tuned to a dead channel' ----- beautifully signifying the extent to which technology has penetrated human life where we are unable to think beyond our own technological experience and so any imagery, simile or metaphor would be restricted to the same. William Gibson, throughout the novel successfully delineates such imagery to create the environment of total technotopia. In fact, it is expressed directly once through the main character Henry Case himself –"there were countless theories explaining why Chiba City tolerated the Ninsei enclave, but Case tended toward the idea that the Yakuza might be preserving the place as a kind of historical park, a reminder of humble origins. But he also saw a certain sense in 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' (pg 11). With artificial Freeside, nature is totally transferred to a different domain in the novel. The same ecocide is presented in Bruce Sterling's post-apocalyptic 'reality' in Schismatrix. In fact, what Gibson started with "Neuromancer" was given a beautiful continuation by Bruce Sterling in his Schismatrix. The 'ecocide' and technological experiments of Neuromancer would very logically pave way for the post-human world of the Schismatrix. Earth is by now here is deserted and the story revolves round the power-struggle between artificial habitats built in the solar system. In fact, the entire novel presents a sort of colonisation of the Solar System with locations like – Mare Serenitatis Circumlunar Corporate Republic, a lunar colony; Zaibatsu-a large space station; Circumsolar Asteroid Worlds, a station built in Asteroid Belt and so on.

The cyborg, in the process of making, in Neuromancer is completed in Schismatrix. All the characters in Neuromancer are medically transformed-Case was punished by his earlier employer by damaging his central nervous system with a mycotoxin and his new employer has given him a new pancreas and a new liver. In fact, his body remains open to medical experimentations and he doesn't mean much to others as an individual except as a machine to get the work done. Molly too has extensive cybernetic modifications including retractable 4cm double edged blades under

her fingernails which can be used like claws, an enhanced reflex system and implanted mirrored lenses. In this urbanised world any resistance or opposition is not possible because of the supreme hegemony of the controlling system as Baudrillard has pointed out on the post-modern condition. In fact, none of the characters in the texts show any desire or attempts to change or oppose the situations. All the characters are in cut throat competition: the economically powerful characters are trying to overpower the other competent forces or the protagonists are struggling and manipulating to their best to survive in a violent and indifferent world.

These cyborgs in the novel automatically lead to post-human characters of *Schismatrix*. The main character Abelard Lindsay is a mechanist, born in “a two hundred-year-old artificial habitat orbiting the earth’s moon” i.e. a lunar colony. Kitsune remains an entire eco-system comprising of her skin and body parts. She reveals herself-“.... They took my womb out, and they put in brain tissue. Grafts from pleasure center, darling. I am weird to the ass and the spine and the throat, and it’s better than being God....” (pg.34). Vera Constantine is another important character in the novel who is cloned from genetic material of Vera Kelland-the Aristocrat who committed suicide in defying the Republic.

The complex worlds that these two texts have created are truly marvellous and opened up possibilities for the future which actually today are happening in reality especially with the creation of the postmodern “subject”- the cyborg i.e. the cybernetic organism is the crossbreed of human and machine. The image of the cyborg remains truly post-modern as its identity as a creature simultaneously organic and machinic remains ambivalent and inherently plural. The advancement in science and technology has made the image of the cyborg a reality, which was once a creature of fiction. Even today many perceive a cyborg only as a science-fiction character that are beautiful fusion of human and machine as we have seen with the characters of “Neoromancer” and “Schismatrix”. But the experts firmly believe that the cyborgs are no longer unreal life fictional characters today but flesh and blood reality, walking and living among us. From grandparents with pace makers to astronauts in space, cyborgs are multiplying among us creating a cyborg society. In present days, the process of cyborgization starts from the womb through life to the end of life. Our advancing technologies do promise that one day we will be successful in creating creatures from ourselves that cannot be even classified as humans. However this symbiosis of technology and our lives has been hailed differently by different post-modernists and none can ignore the imagination and contribution of William Gibson and Bruce Sterling in this regard.

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