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POSTMODERN ORIENTALISM

William Gibson, Cyberpunk and Japan

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ABSTRACT

Taking the works of William Gibson as its point of focus, this thesis considers cyberpunk's expansion from an emphatically literary moment in the mid 1980s into a broader multimedia cultural phenomenon. It examines the representation of racial differences, and the formulation of global economic spaces and flows which structure the reception and production of cultural practices. These developments are construed in relation to ongoing debates around Japan's identity and otherness in terms of both deviations from and congruities with the West (notably America).

To account for these developments, this thesis adopts a theoretical framework informed by both postmodernism as the "cultural dominant" of late capitalism (Jameson), and orientalism, those discursive structures which produce the reified polarities of East versus West (Said). Cyberpunk thus exhibits the characteristics of an orientalised postmodernism, as it imagines a world in which multinational corporations characterised as Japanese *zaibatsu* control global economies, and the excess of accumulated garbage is figured in the trope of *gomi*. It is also postmodernised orientalism, in its nostalgic reconstruction of scenes from the residue of imperialism, its deployment of figures of "cross-ethnic representation" (Chow) like the Eurasian, and its expressions of a purely fantasmatic experience of the Orient, as in the evocation of cyberspace.

In distinction from modern or Saidean orientalism, postmodern orientalism not only allows but is characterized by *reciprocal causality*. This describes uneven, paradoxical, interconnected and mutually implicated cultural transactions at the threshold of East-West relations. The thesis explores this by first examining cyberpunk's unremarked relationship with countercultural formations (rock music), practices (drugs) and manifestations of Oriental otherness in popular culture. The emphasis in the remainder of the thesis shifts towards how cyberpunk maps new technologies onto physical and imaginative "bodies" and geographies: the figuration of the cyborg, prosthetic interventions, and the evolution of cyberspace in tandem with multimedia innovations such as videogames.

Cyberpunk then can best be understood as a conjunction of seemingly disparate experiences: on the one hand the postmodern dislocations and vertiginous moments of

estrangement offset by instances of intense connectivity in relation to the virtual, the relocation to the “distanceless home” of cyberspace. As such it is an ever-expanding phenomenon which has been productively fused with other youth-culture media, and one with specifically Japanese features (anime, *visual kei*, and virtual idols).

PREFACE/ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In addressing the representation of Japan in the works of William Gibson and the expansion of cyberpunk into a global multimedia cultural formation, an approach that relies in part upon a configuration of “postmodernism” in the engagement with a particular cultural problematic, requires at the outset some preliminary explanation or even justification. In *Theorizing Culture* the authors outline their commitment to finding a “fresh approach to theorizing cultural forms, practices, and identities” as a project that can only be achieved by “looking beyond the limitations engendered by the troublesome word ‘postmodernism’” (Adam and Allen xiii). They find widespread concern over postmodernism that extends well beyond the charge that it is “a politically conservative form” (xv) resulting more often than not in the “view-from-nowhere” which is found to be indicative of much postmodern cultural theorizing. Moreover, they note analytical categories such as “representation” are in the process of being “slowly displaced into the academic dustbin” (xiii).

Postmodernism may have become “everybody’s favourite *bête noire*” but it has served the “function of shifting the paradigms in cultural studies” as well as doing the kind of work which “inevitably provokes controversy and protest” (McRobbie 1-2). This thesis is informed by Fredric Jameson’s analysis of postmodern culture as “the logic of late capitalism” and cyberspace as the new infrastructure of postmodern capital, which resonated with the cyberpunk movement’s own understanding of where the new cultural and political subjectivities of the information age were to be found, and epitomized by the figure of the computer hacker. In the fluid cyberpunk world of “teeming and shifting signifiers” (Sponsler 628), postmodernism in particular has been able to “develop a critical vocabulary which can take this rapid movement into account” (McRobbie 4) and map the deeper mutations of technologically-mediated subjectivities. Although postmodernism may not quite be the “breath of fresh air” it once was, it still allows cultural critics to shift their gaze away from the search for meaning in the text towards the “sociological play between images and between different cultural forms and institutions” (McRobbie 4).

As well, the thesis considers postmodernism in conjunction with Edward Said's formulation of orientalism, the Orient as a construction of the West. This allows for the questions to emerge around issues of representation that specifically concern Japan, the "complicated exception" to the Middle and Far Eastern countries in Said's phrasing, leading to a consideration of racial and cultural difference in a global and polyglot context. As Rey Chow points out, "cross-cultural and cross-ethnic transactions have become not only a daily routine but also an inevitability" (*Protestant Ethnic* viii). Yet the conversation on cyberculture has been directed away from questions of race. The thesis recognizes the continued importance of looking carefully at "the specific and ineluctable issue of representation in cross-ethnic situations" (50) which arise out of postmodern paradigms. This applies to renewing the focus on the practices of representation (the signifier) in order to gain clearer understanding of racial and cultural differences. In the global commodification process, for instance, Chow counsels that what is often being transacted is "so-called ethnicity, which is understood in the sense of an otherness, a foreignness that distinguishes it from mainstream, normative society" (22).

There is much to be said, then, for "opening discussion out, taking risks with our ideas, for exercising our disciplines, taking them for a walk and exploring the points at which they seem to reach a limit" (McRobbie 2). Exploring some of these limits in terms of postmodern society, re-examining the notions of racial difference reinscribed as cultural diversity and pluralism, and the cultural commodification of Otherness are among the ideas "exercised" in the chapters that follow.

In my view, there is much insight to be gained from looking at instances of cross-cultural representation as offered in the work of cyberpunk writers such as William Gibson. Produced on the cusp of the revolution in personal computers, and at the threshold of the emergence of a digital, mobile, connected world, the explosion of the Web, Gibson's fiction has much to commend it. Gibson recalls in the 1990s how the cyberspace in his early novels "isn't really something that people are using on a day-to-day, mundane basis" which is where "the really interesting penetration is, with these emerging media" (Interview, Sandbox 1996). In looking at how notions of race are shaped and challenged by new technologies such as the Internet, Gibson's representational innovation of cyberspace provides singular examples of, as Chow has

argued for cultural studies, “a field in which representations of our others are a regular and unavoidable practice” (*Protestant Ethnic* 54). The point of interest is “how stereotypes are or can be reproduced, the special relation they have with graphicity, the potential cultural transactions they mobilize, and the lingering questions of power that ensue therefrom” (61).

Taking up one link in particular which postmodern orientalism is well-placed to engage, the “new world of the visual image where culture is dominant” (McRobbie 3), there are overlapping concerns here for cyberpunk: in reading Gibson’s novel *Neuromancer*, it has been noted, the “primary register is a visual one” (Myers 898). Two brief examples from some recent cultural material highlight this dominance of the visual, and the postmodern orientalism that characterizes it. The director Guillermo Arriaga (commenting on Tokyo as one of three critical locations for his recent film) notes: “Just one single image gave me the idea for what was to be later transformed into the Japanese tale of *Babel*”; this became one of a set of “apparently unrelated” images which afforded him “a justification for filming and exploring a possible story of different types of insufficiency – absence and loneliness – in one of my favorite cities for its mystery and contradictions” (qtd. in Hagerman 202).

Moreover, a recent best-selling techno-thriller like Robert Ludlum’s *The Bourne Supremacy* shows how portable and adaptable this material can be. The opening of the novel has a “cyberpunk” setting, Hong Kong’s Kowloon Walled City, and provides a suitably garish street slum cum bazaar location for a brutal assassination. The film version transposes unproblematically this orientalist scene to exotic India (the chaotic street scenes of New Delhi are juxtaposed with the transcendental tranquility of a beach at Goa). What strikes me is the resilience of these particular stylized evocations which recur, even though they are manipulated, and how the power differentials in the very deployment of such stereotypes remain muted.

My approach in the thesis, drawing on the term “reciprocal causality” describes uneven, yet mutually implicated cultural transactions at the threshold of East-West representational relations. In doing so I am mindful of my own position in relation to this material as a long-term resident of Japan. Ethnicity is not a static space occupied by ethnics who are, somehow, always already there, but also a relation of cultural politics

that is regularly enacted by a Western (“Americanized”) audience, which is complicit in the construction of such ethnicity. At the same time they are the sites of productive relations that should be reread with the appropriate degree of complexity.

The thesis has been the culmination of a long and arduous process. Much of the writing has been done in two countries, New Zealand and Japan (where I have lived for a number of years), and oftentimes the space in-between. Progress has at times been slow, almost crab-like; the research experience could be likened to a pair of ragged claws scuttling across the sea-bed in search of answers to a very eclectic set of questions. As a result, a number of significant debts have accrued over the years.

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INTRODUCTION

Taking as its point of focus the works of William Gibson, this thesis explores the expansion of cyberpunk, generally considered a sub-genre or type of science fiction which first came to prominence in the mid-1980s, into a broader cultural formation. In particular it examines the representation of racial and cultural differences with specific reference to Japan, which underpins much of Gibson's writing. This has received little critical attention or detailed scrutiny to date, a gap that this thesis attempts to fill.

This marks an intervention in ongoing debates around Japan's identity and otherness, in terms of both deviations from and congruities with the West (notably America), the West being a universal point of reference for a new global (social) space, the so-called New World Order, much of the "rhetoric" of which, according to Edward Said, has been "promulgated by the American government since the end of the Cold War – with its redolent self-congratulation, its unconcealed triumphalism, its grave proclamations of responsibility." Said's position is unequivocal: "No American has been immune from this structure of feeling," he contends, and its most damning characteristic is that it has been used before "with deafeningly repetitive frequency in the modern period by the British, the French, the Belgians, the Japanese, the Russians, and now the Americans" (*Culture and Imperialism* xvii).

The inclusion of Japan within this imperialist paradigm points to some of the difficulties this thesis will encounter, a country that was subsequently occupied by US (American) forces at the end of World War II, and then rose in the 1970s to become an economic powerhouse throughout the next decade, at once challenging American power while at the same time becoming further enmeshed in the American New World Order. Naoki Sakai reminds us that "the name 'Japan' ... reputedly designates a geographic area, a tradition, a national identity, a culture, an ethos, a market, and so on" ("Modernity" 95).¹ Thus, establishing and accounting for the centrality of Japan in Gibson's work involves a number of complex interrogations of "Japan": an imaginary place, or perfect "floating" signifier, as promoted in Roland Barthes' *Empire of Signs* or

¹ Japanese names throughout the thesis are written in Japanese order, surname first. Thus in Naoki Sakai, Naoki is his family name, and Sakai his first name. In the case of Japanese Americans, the Anglo American order is followed, for example Lisa Nakamura.

Chris Marker's film *Sans Soleil*; a geo-historical entity, associated with a long-established Western habit and tradition of "hallucinating Japan" that can be traced back centuries; and more recently, in the sense that, as the world becomes "more visible and observable, it has also become largely symptomatic" (Chow *Protestant Ethnic 2*), a simultaneous site of advanced technology as an achievement of capitalism and a locus for the projection of symptomatic anxieties on the part of Western writers. For each of these instances, the figuring of "Japanese space" has repercussions, I will argue, for critical accounts of cyberpunk generally.

William Gibson is the writer most visibly associated with cyberpunk, although the other cyberpunk group members at the start of the movement, Bruce Sterling, John Shirley, and Rudy Rucker, also contribute in different ways. Much critical discourse on cyberpunk devolves around Gibson's "star-status, without considering the significant differences that other cyberpunk writers have contributed" (Heuser xxxi). While taking this into account, the focal point of this thesis remains Gibson's fiction, in particular his acclaimed debut novel *Neuromancer* (1984) since it features Japan, even though the author had yet to visit the country then, and short stories from the landmark collection *Burning Chrome* (1986), as well as a more recent novel, *Idoru* (1995).

Following the success of *Neuromancer*, cyberpunk accreted fresh meanings and applications. It became an ever-expanding term for an edgy artistic or cultural practice ("edge" is a key term in the cyberpunk lexicon) concerned with computers and/or relationships between technology and the body. Etymologically the compound cyberpunk derives from *cyber* – cybernetics, computer networks (cyberspace), and cyborging technologies; *punk* – punk rock, and the socially excluded, often criminal, characters living in the (urban) ruins and in the shadow of multinational capital, hustlers and hackers.

The "cyber" features and implications have garnered and continue to accrue a great deal of attention, in line with the proliferation of digital technology and the imprint of its distinctive hypertextual patternings and configurations on our physical and mental cyborg lives. These developments shift notions such as "cyberspace," a term Gibson is credited with inventing, and it must be emphasized, a "representational innovation for which his work has become famous" (Myers 887), towards utopian outcomes. Gibson has

pointed out the inevitability that someone would have been writing fiction about virtual reality but has queried whether “the punk side of the equation would have come into it” (Van Belkom Interview). The “punk” side of the equation has proven less attractive, less amenable to, perhaps less stable in relation to the imaginings of cybercultural enthusiasts. Perhaps this is one of the reasons Gibson has subsequently distanced himself from the label of cyberpunk; for his part Bruce Sterling also notes he has never been entirely happy with “this literary label – especially after it became a synonym for a computer criminal,” pointing out he is “not a hacker of any description” (*Hacker Crackdown* 149).

While not neglecting cybercultural features and ramifications, it is in relation to the “punk” side of the equation that this thesis takes its initial stance. The notion of “punk” is contentious from the outset, evident at the science fiction conventions where cyberpunks first exhibited themselves, and requires significant broadening and contextualising. Gibson himself notes he had only “paused to observe, as an age-designated non-combatant, the phenomenon of punk rock” (“Source Code” xvii). A recent definition of cyberpunk appearing in an edited volume on the Wachowski Brothers film *The Matrix* (1999) points to some possibilities; cyber is defined much as you would expect, but the term “punk” has been characterized as “the relationship of the authors to popular culture” (Kapell and Doty 191).² It is in this arena of popular culture that many of the approaches adopted in this thesis find a basis. If, as the interview I conducted with Tatsumi Takayuki suggested, in the context of cyberpunk in Japan, the Japanese wouldn’t understand the “mentality of punk,” this broader context of popular cultural transactions provides a suitable framework for investigating this topic further.

In this thesis I engage with two contested critical concepts, as signaled in the thesis title, “postmodernism” and “orientalism.” Cyberpunk’s postmodern scene, the flow of people, goods, information and power across international boundaries, is theorized in Fredric Jameson’s work on postmodernism as the cultural logic of late or third stage multinational capitalism, fully explicated in *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of late Capitalism* (1991).³ Importantly, Jameson finds cyberpunk to be a significant manifestation of this, the “supreme *literary* expression if not of postmodernism, then of

² See Kapell and Doty, *Jacking In to the Matrix Franchise* 191.

³ Hereafter this work will be referred to as *Postmodernism*, with citations provided in parentheses in the text.

late capitalism itself” (419). In my view Jameson’s work is eminently suited for this thesis. His thought moves along “a wide range of intellectual positions and disciplinary frameworks” and his writings “encourage and even enforce inter- or cross-disciplinary thinking” (Hardt and Weeks 1).

Moreover, this postmodern scene, a global array of disjunctive flows, specifically encompasses Japan: the multinationals, for example, are depicted as Japanese *zaibatsu*. In Gibson’s short story “New Rose Hotel” which I discuss in detail in Chapter One, the *zaibatsu* are the “multinational corporations that control entire economies” the blood of which is “information, not people” (*Burning Chrome* 103). The narrative revolves around the figure of the Eurasian, “an ectoplasm, a ghost called up by the extremes of economics” (115), a ghost of the “new century,” but a “ghost” nevertheless. This is the site of a bipolar East-West exchange, characterized by various strands of orientalist discourse, as theorized in Edward Said’s celebrated work on how the Orient is a construction of the West. Said points out that scarcely any attention has been paid to the “privileged role of culture in the modern imperial experience” and the “extraordinary global reach” of nineteenth and early twentieth-century European imperialism which “still casts a considerable shadow over our own times” (*Culture and Imperialism* 5). Said finds a wide variety of “hybrid representations of the Orient now roam the culture” (*Orientalism* 285) which have had and continue to have wide repercussions.

This thesis tries to “get beyond the reified polarities of East versus West” and in a “concrete way attempt to understand the heterogenous and often odd developments” (*Culture and Imperialism* 41). By exploring a number of particular theoretical positions and terminologies, my intention is to work toward highlighting the dynamic of reflexivity inherent in postmodern orientalism. The notion of *reciprocal causality* is the term I draw upon throughout this thesis. This term is highlighted in Michael Real’s book on media and culture, *Exploring Media Culture*, although Real does not develop the term. My own emphasis, following Real, is how “media and culture interact in reciprocal causality, a ‘system’ perspective rather than the disputed ‘causal’ perspective often applied to media’s relation to culture” (1). Moreover, according to Real, “system reciprocity” provides a context for exploring the development of personal and social identity. This means structures are not only constraining but enabling, and those social structures

enable subjects to act. This allows, for instance, in the final chapter of this thesis, an understanding of Gibson's evocation of cyberspace to emerge as both enabling/being enabled by Orientalism.

Reflexivity is a loaded term, and mainly provides a starting point for working towards a position that is not occlusive or peremptory. For, as Donna Haraway has noted, although reflexivity has been much recommended as a critical practice, her suspicion is that “reflexivity, like reflection, only displaces the same elsewhere” and thus provides a way of “escaping the false choice between realism and relativism in thinking about strong objectivity and situated knowledges” (qtd. in Bell, *Cyberculture Theorists* 126). Jameson has suggestively remarked that the interrelationship of culture and the economic is “not a one-way street but a continuous reciprocal interaction and feedback loop” (*Postmodernism* xiv-xv). The notion of interactions which can be continuous and reciprocal is an attractive one; it fits well with the notion of “reciprocal causality” which I deploy in this thesis.

Because of the pervasive influence of technology, in this sense, reciprocal has further come to mean a complex dialectic, as Katherine N. Hayles argues, that makes terms such as “pattern” and “randomness” not so much opposites as complements or supplements to one another. Each helps to define the other, each contributes to the flow of information through the system, “system reciprocity.” Similarly, causality implies more than serial, causal connections; the notion of “double refraction” captures this elusive back-and-forthness that characterizes recent cultural (and virtual) interactions: the here and there, on all sides, the “no there, there.”⁴

More specifically, the notion of reciprocity is central to this thesis as it provides a supple framework for the “augmented and enlarged concept of cyberpunk science fiction” (T. Foster xi) which I wish to develop in the following chapters. Although cyberpunk was first recognized in the mid 1980s as a literary movement, it was subsequently marked by its cultural diffusion over the following decade, and became an ever-expanding term that connected with a wide range of cultural practices. The

⁴ This point can be usefully compared to Donna Haraway's notion of “diffraction,” described as “a metaphor for the effort to make a difference in the world” (qtd. in Bell, *Cyberculture Theorists* 126). Diffraction patterns “register interference, how things are changed in interaction.” It is an oppositional practice “in which we learn to think our political aims from *the analytic and imaginative standpoint* of those existing in different networks to those of domination” (127).

developments that accompany this diffusion (after Foster) I wish to emphasize concern: the representation of racial differences and the incorporation of issues of gender; global economic flows and spaces structuring the production and reception of cultural practices; the expansion of cyberpunk into an audio-visual multimedia configuration from print fiction. Moreover, in my view, these augmentations can be usefully understood as constituted in the field of popular culture which now readily includes Japan, such as Japanese anime, for example the cyberpunk inflections of *Ghost in the Shell*.

Jameson's reference to a "feedback loop" also links the notion of reciprocal interactivensness to new technologies and the information age (as in information feedback loop, or circuit). A cybertext, for instance, "must contain some kind of information feedback loop" (Aarseeth 19) such as a "cybernetic feedback loop between the text and the user, with information flowing from text to user (through the interpretative function) and back again (through one or more of the other functions)" (65). It reminds us that "a technological model has been usurped by a cybernetic model" (Druckrey 19).

Accompanying these developments are the inscriptions of a "new subjectivity," or technologically-mediated subjectivity (the rise of new paradigms of subjectivity and embodiment which centre on technology). Now, more than ever before, "different strata in our society have converged in their passionate interest in the image, in representation, in the very process of mediation and simulation" (Sobchack *Screening Space* 236). The visual image, the problematics of representation, and how to account for "mediated" forms of subjectivity in the electronic age are thus core concerns of this thesis; the fact that "our society" in much critical commentary on cyberpunk refers unequivocally to Western culture further underlines the appropriateness of an engagement with and extensive discussion on orientalism in these debates.

The wider significance of postmodern orientalism, then, if we can think that "post" does not only indicate sequentiality or polarity, lies in the awareness that, as Homi K. Bhabha notes, the "epistemological limits of ethnocentric ideas are also the enunciative boundaries of a range of other dissonant, even dissident histories and voices." The examples given of such dissenting voices are "women, the colonized, minority groups, the bearers of policed sexuality" (4-5). My intention is not to align or characterize the Japanese exclusively in relation to any of these particular groups, but to recognize

that there are a number of boundaries or borderlines that need careful unraveling, and to work with these concepts that revise the simple polarization of the world into East and West, self and other, albeit in a flexible way. As Chow reminds us, ethnicity is not a “static space” occupied by ethnics who are already there, but a “relation of cultural politics” that is regularly enacted by an audience.

At the same time it also means recognizing limitations in the deployment of both “postmodernism” and “orientalism” as concepts. Jameson’s notion of “postmodern hyperspace,” for example, opens up new possibilities for thinking through spatial metaphors and for coordinating oneself in postmodern space. But a lack of dynamism has been noted with this evocation of space. Jameson proclaims we are in the midst of “a prodigious expansion of culture throughout the social realm, to the point at which everything in our social life – from economic value and state power to practices and to the very structure of the psyche itself – can be said to have become ‘cultural’ in some original and yet untheorised sense” (48). Again, the totalizing tendency inherent in “our social life” is restrictive; it is related to, as has been remarked, the lack of emphasis on racial differences and gender, and the absence of a personal, reflective space. Addressing Jameson’s key work *Postmodernism* it has been asked how is it possible to present “a full-length account of global postmodernism without considering issues of gender and race” (Leitch 128). Moreover, Jameson does not explicitly factor into his project of dialectical analysis any space for “personal and collective prejudices, interests, blindspots, or values” (Leitch 130).

Said provides the functioning of a complex dialectic by means of which a modern culture continuously constitutes itself through its ideological constructs of the exotic. As has been pointed out, Said’s position tends towards being monolithic and totalizing, and emphasizes dominance and power over cultural interactions. This is evident in the unidirectionality of his approach and cultural differences are repressed in the service of a hegemonic agenda. His concern is with the hegemonic forms (and texts) of high European culture, and how the Western canon produced a literary Orient. This demands a unified East/West identity at the origin of history. The West created its own identity by establishing the difference of the Orient. Although Said makes room for personal

reflection, gender is not an issue, and he is unable to view women as active participants in colonial expansion, as Reina Lewis has uncovered in *Gendering Orientalism*.

If there is one particular flashpoint or lightning rod which this thesis returns to, a particular bogeyman that it wrestles with, it is the problem of representation, which brings together and yet complicates discussions of postmodernism, orientalism, and cultural imperialism in equal measures, as will become apparent throughout the ensuing chapters. For Jameson, “cognitive mapping” is a useful strategy for dealing with representation, totality, and in representing the unrepresentable. Edward Said falls back on the 3-dimensional metaphor of the theater to explain his idea of representation: “The idea of representation is a theatrical one: the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined. ... In the depths of this Oriental stage stands a prodigious cultural repertoire” (*Orientalism* 63) which “nourishes” the European imagination. Timothy Druckrey’s summation in the introduction to *Electronic Culture* is percipient in this regard:

If there is a common denominator within the divergent discourses of postmodernity, it is the concept that a system of scientific visualization and any totalizing model of the “real” world or its representations cannot be put into place, even while the stability of representation is alternately established and disestablished by the continuing social effect of either the image ... or information. (19)

The problematic of representation, that representation can never have a mimetic relation to reality, I find applies to both Said’s characterization of orientalism as well Jameson’s explication of postmodernism. This is in line with modernism’s rejection of the idea that it is possible to represent the “real” in any straightforward manner. Representation is not an act of mimesis or copying of the real but an aesthetic expression or conventionalized construction of the “real.”

With this in mind, this thesis investigates the representation of Japan in cyberpunk, exploring the shaky orientalist foundation that supports it, and the effects of new technology and the psychological consequences (paranoia, schizophrenia, euphoria) played out in Orientalist fantasy and fetishism. These factors do not efface representation,

but do require us to radically revise and alter our conceptions of representation, its scope, how we locate and represent others, how we represent ourselves to ourselves, how we conceive the connections among our subjective, personal experiences and the abstract and impersonal forces of a global system.

1. Postmodernism

The first critical concept I draw upon in this thesis is postmodernism, the meaning of which has been and continues to be energetically contested. The questions raised in the introduction to Hal Foster's landmark collection of articles on postmodern culture published in 1984 still seem relevant: "Is it a concept or a practice, a matter of local style or a whole new period or economic phase? What are its forms, effects, place? How are we to mark its advent? Are we truly beyond the modern, truly in (say) a postindustrial age?" (*Anti-Aesthetic* ix). Some have defined postmodernism as a break with the aesthetic field of modernism; others engage the "object of post-criticism" and the politics of interpretation today. Some, like Jameson, detail the postmodern moment as a new, "schizophrenic" mode of space and time. Others, such as Jean-Francois Lyotard frame its rise in the fall of modern myths and "grand narratives" of progress and mastery.

My theoretical guide here is Fredric Jameson, for whom postmodernism refers to a particular sociocultural condition shaped by multinational capitalism, American media culture and commodity fetishism. Jameson has been termed the "theorist supreme" of postmodernism, and finds the fundamental task of postmodernism is "coordinating new forms of practice and social and mental habits ... with the new forms of economic production and organization thrown up by the modification of capitalism – the new global division of labor – in recent years" (*Postmodernism* xiv). Here we can tentatively see the relevance of this statement to the rise of new (or seemingly new) global labor practices in Japan in the 1980s. Most importantly, Jameson finds, as I have noted, the interrelationship of culture and the economic is not a "one-way street" but made up of continuous reciprocal interactions.

In this thesis at different points I will be engaged with postmodernism primarily in terms of Jameson's work, for example "depthlessness" in Chapter Five. Jameson has

noted the concept of postmodernism itself is not merely contested but also “internally conflicted and contradictory” and every time it is used, “we are under the obligation to rehearse those inner contradictions and to stage those representational inconsistencies and dilemmas; we have to work all that through every time around” (*Postmodernism* xxii). There are particular representational dilemmas posed by postmodernism and, as we shall see, by orientalism, which I will discuss. Before doing so, I will identify some of the salient features of postmodernism.

The first chapter of *Postmodernism* is an enlarged and expanded version of Jameson’s famous essay from the mid-1980’s which described two of postmodernism’s significant features – pastiche and schizophrenia – and later in this introduction I focus on a particular part of this original article which appeared in Hal Foster’s collection. The other elements of Jameson’s book, which include chapters on architecture, space, video, and film, for example, elaborate on these formative categories.

Postmodernism, the dominant ethos of the late twentieth century, has been identified by Jameson as starting in the immediate post-World War II years, when multinational corporations began to control the world’s economic and cultural systems and the driving force behind social organization became the perpetual consumption of goods. Even our experience of space and time, argues Jameson, has been transformed under postmodernism. Time has collapsed into a perpetual present; everything from the past has been severed from its historical context. In its pathological form this collapse resembles the schizophrenic’s inability to sustain a coherent identity. Gibson’s cyborg Johnny Mnemonic, a memorable cyberpunk character with a prosthetic implant in his head to store information in data form, exemplifies this postmodern predicament, perhaps more familiar in traditional renderings as the “idiot/savant.” Jameson characterizes postmodern space as bewildering and disorienting, a pastiche of disconnected artifacts. In the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles, for example, it is difficult to get one’s bearings. This bewildering use of space is the architectural equivalent to the logic of multinational capitalism (where corporate control is mystified by a labyrinthine tangle of subsidiaries and interlocking networks).

In Jameson’s terms, then, postmodernist culture can be identified by, for example, its attention to surface style (in contrast to depth), its lack of emotional affect, and its loss

of any sense of historical continuity. A particular focus of this thesis will be on postmodern depthlessness. The traditional perception of “depth” as a structure has been challenged by various forms of “simulated” space, such as flight training programs and video games. It is exemplified by the flatness of the television and computer screens that pervade our lives and encourage a flattening of all perceptual experiences. The notion of psychological depth no longer characterizes late-twentieth-century human beings. Vivian Sobchack expands on the new depthlessness of lived experience, noting how our depth perception has become “flattened by the superficial electronic ‘dimensionality’ of movement experienced as occurring on – not in – the screens of computer terminals, video games, music videos, and movies like *Tron*” (230-31). Our experience of spatial contiguity has also been “radically altered by digital representation” (*Screening Space* 231). What Sobchack terms “electronic dispersal” has dislocated and fragmented our sense of “place” and disseminated a “new world geography” (232) that politically and economically defies traditional notions of spatial “location.”

Sobchack argues that the postmodern features identified by Jameson, the new depthlessness, the weakened historicity, the new emotional tone, and the new relationship to the “new” (whether technological or biological) “constitute the features of a new SF aesthetics, one representative of the changed values and logic of late capitalism” (253) evident and variously foregrounded in American science fiction films of the 1980s. An important observation can be logged here, as a prelude to the following chapters. Cyberpunk fiction is often considered a type of science fiction, and I will take up the intersection of science fiction and the postmodern in the next chapter. Suffice to say, Sobchack’s finding that “the new SF film brings postmodern logic to visibility” (244) directs our attention to the dominance of the visual, at the same time as it reminds us of the dominance of “American” SF films.

Cyberpunk fiction, then, might at best be considered as an “intervention” in science fiction, and critical emphasis directed to what constitutes this appeal of the visual; the “strong visual connotations” of Gibson’s writing, which “lead critics and fans to cite the look of various films as a visual representation of the world described in the novels” (Fitting 296); the “dense eyeball kicks” of cyberpunk fiction that Rudy Rucker describes.

As has been noted of the film *The Matrix*, “It’s a visual object, and much of its meaning must reside there” (Clover 13).

The Dense Eyeball Kicks of Cyberpunk

Jameson finds cyberpunk fiction to be the supreme “literary” expression of postmodernism, and late capitalism itself. Jameson made this declaration in a footnote, lamenting the absence of a chapter on cyberpunk in his book. A full investigation of cyberpunk has not been undertaken by Jameson, but he does subsequently return to cyberpunk towards the end of *The Seeds of Time*, where he discusses cyberpunk in terms of “dirty realism” under two headings: as a sequel to (nineteenth-century) naturalism, and as “a symptomal representation of the end of civil society” (150). A recent article by Jameson has as its focus Gibson’s novel *Pattern Recognition* in the chapter “Fear and Loathing in Globalization” in Jameson’s *Archaeologies of the Future*.

For Jameson, the relation between cyberpunk and postmodernism as elaborated in *The Seeds of Time* is that cyberpunk offers a promising starting point for his definition of dirty realism, because it is urban, and it has the characteristics of a “new reality-intensification” (150). One of the headings under which Jameson discusses cyberpunk is its affiliation with an older literary tradition of naturalism, the late nineteenth century French novel, with its depictions of the “forbidden spaces” of the new industrial city, and the urban criminal (male) and the prostitute (female). Jameson argues these particular representations of society have given way in cyberpunk to a youth culture made up of urban punks, for example, and in which “city space is no longer so profoundly marked by the radical otherness of the older moment.” In fact a knowledge of what used to be called the streets can be useful for survival in the “unimaginable spaces of corporate and bureaucratic decision ...of postmodern society and culture” (152). Jameson provides a more philosophical account of this “social and spatial development” in terms of the end of civil society itself in late capitalism. This development has brought with it two new kinds of space: the space of work (seemingly public, yet owned by private individuals) and the space of the street.

It is not hard to build a case for cyberpunk as exemplary of postmodernism, utilizing the framework Jameson proposes. Cyberpunk thus emerges in the latter half of

the 1980s and the early part of the 1990s as a textual expression of “the postmodern condition” at the turn of the millennium. Novels by Gibson, as well as by other cyberpunk writers such as Bruce Sterling, Pat Cadigan, and Rudy Rucker seemed especially accurate in their imaginative representations of life in the context of advances in technoscience and global mediatization. Gibson’s cyberspace was seen as an imaginative representation of the new postmodern social consciousness identified by Jameson, as well as a convincing construction of the kinds of *virtual* realities that are increasingly perceived to be replacing our usual cognitive patterns or more conventionally mediated experiences of the material world.

There are two related aspects to Jameson’s characterization of cyberpunk that I wish to comment on here: one concerns cyberpunk fiction as a “literary” expression of postmodernism, which directs our attention to the textual dimension, cyberpunk as an aesthetic, the instabilities of aesthetic representation, Japan as “signifier.” The other aspect is cyberpunk as an expression of late capitalism, cyberpunk’s relation to the emergence of a new socioeconomic order (the “socio-spatial dialectic”), multinationalism, cyberpunk as an institution of cultural production. In both instances, and in the relation of these aspects to each other, Japan is problematic, a complicating factor that needs further explication.

A Perfect Floating Signifier

In the first instance, cyberpunk can certainly be considered in literary terms, as the first encounter with cyberpunk is in the form of fiction, novels and short stories. However I do wish in this thesis to extend or move outside the literary paradigm and thus widen the parameters to include manifestations of (global) popular culture. Although Jameson was among the first to identify a significant postmodern implosion, namely the blurring of the distinctions between “high” (literary, modernist) culture and the products of “low” (popular, generic) culture, including such frequently denigrated forms as science fiction, for the most part he cites cyberpunk within a literary tradition. However, in terms of popular culture, cyberpunk has since become “a kind of prosthesis, a portable interface of narrative and iconic features that has been productively fused with other youth-culture media and genres” (Latham 237).

Considered strictly as literary expression, though, cyberpunk was a “quantum leap in ... textural imagination” (Simmons Interview) and manifests all “the fragments, the incommensurable levels, the heterogeneous impulses of the text”; Jameson includes here the notion of “textuality” whereby “works” can now be “reread as immense ensembles or systems of texts of various kinds, superimposed on each other” (*Postmodernism* 77). Moreover, if we are to think of cyberpunk in terms of formal literary or textual characteristics, two of postmodernism’s significant features are immediately relevant, which I will develop in some detail in this thesis, one concerns collage (pastiche or bricolage in postmodern terminology), and the other schizophrenia (used by Jameson in a descriptive not diagnostic sense) indicating a breakdown of the relationship between signifiers. In Gibson’s view, everything he wrote was to some extent collage, “meaning, ultimately, seemed a matter of adjacent data” (“God’s Little Toys” 118).

In this postmodern framework, the depiction of Japan in cyberpunk fiction is bound up with the problematics of “textual representation of otherness (and, of course, representation in general) which cannot but depend on the absence of what is represented” (Forsdick 194). Especially, Japan is the “perfect floating signifier” as Scott Bukatman describes it in his book *Terminal Velocity*. Bukatman’s supporting example is Chris Marker’s film, *Sans Soleil* (1982) which presents contemporary Tokyo as a science fiction metropolis. Dislocated both spatially and temporally, Marker’s alienation is conveyed through an evocation of the “surfeit of signifiers, signs for which Marker can only guess at possible referents” (25). A similar sense of Japan is to be found in Roland Barthes’ *Empire of Signs*. According to Gibson, Japanese culture is “coded” in some wonderfully peculiar way and displays “a sort of fractal coherence of sign and symbol.” Commenting on the London branch of the Muji department store, Gibson finds “it calls up a wonderful Japan that doesn’t really exist. A Japan of the mind” (“Japan’s Modern”).

Bukatman finds Marker’s film further maps Tokyo onto the field of the media-spectacle. Tokyo exists as “pure spectacle,” as a proliferation of semiotic systems and simulations which increasingly serve to replace physical human experience and interaction. Bukatman’s interest here is in tropes which recur in contemporary science fiction and discourse regarding the media (postmodern science fiction). Interestingly, in a book in which cyberpunk plays a pivotal role, Bukatman does not take up the issue of

Japan and cyberpunk. What I wish to restore to this discussion is the orientalist aspects of such mappings as they are relevant to cyberpunk and the representation of Japan.

Both the features of postmodernism identified here, the “transformation of reality into images, the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents” (*Cultural Turn* 20) derive from Jameson’s influential article “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” an “oft-cited, oft-contested, but indispensable essay on postmodernism” (Bukatman 31). This essay, to take an example close at hand, “critically informs both the structure and emphasis” (236) of Sobchack’s chapter on postfuturism in *Screening Space*. Towards the end of Jameson’s article an illustrative example can be found that has particular relevance for this thesis, which I will now consider in some detail.⁵ In order to give a concrete example of how the breakdown of the signifying chain works concerning schizophrenia, Jameson quotes in full a late twentieth-century poem by San Francisco Language poet Bob Perelman, entitled “China,” to substantiate the points he has made concerning postmodernism. Some selected lines of the poem are: “We live on the third world from the sun. Number three. Nobody tells us what to do. ... Run in front of your shadow. ... The train takes you where it goes. Bridges among water. Folks straggling along vast stretches of concrete ... And the flag looks great too. Everyone enjoyed the explosions. Time to wake up. But better get used to dreams” (121-22).

Jameson finds Perelman’s poem to have “adopted schizophrenic fragmentation as its fundamental aesthetic” (*Postmodernism* 211). His point is that what might seem a desirable experience (of the schizophrenic) – an increase in perceptions, a libidinal or hallucinogenic intensification of the familiar – is felt as loss, as “unreality.” Whether this new experience is attractive or terrifying, the signifier becomes ever more vivid in sensory ways; a signifier that has lost its signified has thereby been transformed into an image. Noting that the poem indeed captures some of the excitement of the New China, following the long subjection of feudalism and imperialism, Jameson finds however for the most part such “global meaning ... floats over the text or behind it” (122).

⁵ There are a number of versions of this essay. Originally delivered as an address to the Whitney Museum of Contemporary Arts in the fall of 1982, it first appeared in a collection of essays on postmodern culture edited by Hal Foster. It reappeared in an expanded and revised version as “Postmodernism: or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism” in 1984 for the *New Left Review*. Another revised version appeared as a chapter in Jameson’s book *Postmodernism*. I generally draw on the first version of the article in this thesis, since in essence the key points concerning Perelman’s poem have remained unchanged.

Jameson then discloses the “structural secret” of the poem, which he finds has little to do with that referent called China. For the “represented object is not really China after all.” What happened was that the poet happened to be strolling through Chinatown and came across a book of photographs with idiogrammatic captions in a stationary store. The “new sentences” of the poem are *his* captions (in English) to those pictures. Their referents, then, are another image, another absent text; and the unity of the poem is no longer to be found within its language “not *in* the text at all but outside it” (123). Jameson posits here a visual parallel to the dynamics of photorealism, the objects of which are not to be found in the “real world” either, but were themselves photographs of that real world “now transformed into images, of which the ‘realism’ of the photorealist painting is now a simulacrum” (*Postmodernism* 213).

This example has a number of applications for this thesis, primarily in terms of the representation process, and the dominance of the visual, the problem raised by the nature of the “new textuality itself, which, when mainly visual, seems to have no room for the interpretation of the older kind” (*Postmodernism* xv).

Although unremarked by Jameson as such, what strikes me here is the orientalist nature of the encounter between critic, poet, and poem in terms of representation, even as the postmodern looks for “shifts and irrevocable changes in the *representation* of things and of the way they change” (ix). Jameson notes the poem “has little to do” with China, is “not really China”; the Chinese characters are “dead letters” to the poet. Yet he still finds the poem does seem “to capture something” of the new China, even if the route is circuitous (an American poet in Chinatown, a bookshop, a book of photographs, captions in a foreign language). I want to ask how, or under what terms, is representation of “China” possible here? Accounting for this gap in all its complex interplay is a particular task of this thesis, because it takes us to the heart of Orientalist discourse in a postmodern context.

Substituting “Japan” into the inverted commas (“China”), we can then begin to pose questions concerning how in *Neuromancer* Gibson has similarly constructed a fictional Chiba City, based on an actual place in Japan, yet imagined without Gibson ever having set foot in the country. If we accept Jameson’s formulation, it seems to me that Gibson has also adopted a kind of postmodern “schizophrenic fragmentation” as a

fundamental aesthetic in his depiction of Japan in cyberpunk. Furthermore, after Gibson made a number of short visits to Japan over the intervening years, we find in a later work that the habit of “hallucinating Asia” persists, in the imagination of the cyberspatial Walled City in the novel *Idoru*, which is primarily indebted to a visual (oriental) source, the compelling photographs taken by Miyamoto Ryuji of Kowloon Walled City, on the outskirts of Hong Kong. Gibson comments that “the Walled City continued to haunt me, though I knew no more about it than I could gather from Miyamoto’s stunning images” (Preface, *Idoru*).

This photographic example supports the depiction of cyberspace and further highlights how the textual representation of otherness, of fantasmatic space, cannot but depend on the absence of what is represented. The preeminent vehicle for the “original” exchange is visual (photography). The stability of representation is alternately established and disestablished by the continuing effect of images. What can be added is that, if during the postmodern era, space undergoes a mutation into what Jameson deems “hyperspace” and the “natural landscapes, village settings, organic communities, city grids, and colonial outposts of earlier times give way to unrepresentable, bewildering spaces that render experience and the life world unmappable” (Leitch 119), these new spaces in cyberpunk fiction still depend on neo-imperialist structures. The depiction of cyberspace, for instance, as I discuss fully in the chapter on cyberspace, is from the outset embedded in and inseparable from Orientalized notions of walled cities. Nang Harm, for example, in 1860s Siam (Thailand) was a walled city, where mostly women (needed for the harem) and children were held captive inside. It functioned in many ways as its own city, and at the same time was an “elaborate and absolutely unique world” (see Anna Leonowens’ *The Romance of the Harem* xviii) inaccessible to Westerners and to almost all Siamese as well.

Multinationalism

I will now turn to the second instance from Jameson’s discussion of cyberpunk in *The Seeds of Time* which requires further comment, cyberpunk’s relation to the emergence of a new socioeconomic order, as an expression of third-stage capitalism, and the complicating factor, the placing of Japan within this paradigm. Postmodernism is a

periodizing concept whose function is to correlate new features in culture with a new moment in capitalism. Jameson's belief is that the emergence of postmodernism closely "replicates or reproduces – reinforces" this new moment of late consumer or multinational capitalism. He further argues that formal features in many ways express the deeper logic of a particular social system, "our entire contemporary social system" (*Cultural Turn* 20).

As a periodizing concept it is recognized recently that there has been a fundamental shift in global economic organization. The contemporary global moment is an intensification of the forms and energies of capitalism. Jameson distinguishes three epochs of capitalist expansion, from the beginning of the eighteenth century to the present global international postmodern phase (since the Second World War). The three epochs of capitalism are: market capitalism, characterized by the growth of industrial capital in largely national markets (1700-1850); monopoly capitalism, which is identical with the age of imperialism, during which markets grew into world markets, organized around nation-states, but depending on the fundamental exploitative asymmetry of the colonizing nations and the colonized who provide both raw materials and cheap labor; and, most recently, the postmodern phase of multinational capitalism, which is marked by the exponential growth of international corporations and the consequent transcending of national boundaries.⁶ Overall, this recent "moment" dates from the postwar boom in the US in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Subsequently the 1960s became an important transitional period in which neocolonialism, computerization, and electronic information were set in place.

The postmodern condition marked by multinational (late) capitalism seemingly dovetails well with the rise of Japan as an economic powerhouse notably from the 1970s and throughout most of the 1980s, and with Jameson's view concerning shifts of "modes of production" – ways of producing commodities and structuring the economy – the shift, for instance, from a feudal to a capitalist mode of production. The triumph of the commodity (of global capitalism) can be linked to a more comprehensive commodification than ever before, and the fragmentation of contemporary life. As

⁶ Ernest Mandel proposed three comparable economic revolutions governed by revolutions in power technology: the steam engine; the rise of electricity and the combustion engine; and recently, the development of nuclear and electronic technologies.

Gibson's novels have envisioned, or the tidal movement of the investment markets shows, cyberspace extends within the limits of multinational capitalism, from Japan to Europe. This would seem to fit with aspects of a "Japan that is somehow the 'end of history' in store for us – and Japanese space, now obscurely valorized by our own anxieties" (Jameson *Seeds* 156).⁷

But if Japan somehow fits into the kinds of postmodern paradigms set forward by Jameson, do they at the same time enforce misplaced notions of "progress" and "the future" onto Japan and the Japanese? Homi K. Bhabha's concept of hybridity, for instance, undermines the idea that people living in different spaces, for example, nations (or continents) are living at different stages of progress. Does this paradigm contribute to the sense of Japan as *only* an economically and technologically advanced (futuristic) nation governed by responses that can only vacillate between admiration or anxiety? Moreover, as I consider in the next section, how appropriate really is this notion of a "postmodern" Japan? Some of these ambivalences can be detected in the conception of multinationals.

Third stage capitalism has "consolidated multinationalism's position so that virtually every corner of the globe is being successfully colonized" (McCaffery, *Storming* 5). Sobchack also notes that new electronic technology has "spatially dispersed capital while consolidating and expanding its power to an 'everywhere' that seems like 'nowhere'" (233). The electronic proliferation of multinational capitalism has increasingly concentrated and centralized control over the world as a marketplace, but that center now appears "decentered – occupying no one location, no easily discernible place. Where is OPEC? IBM? AT&T?" (*Screening Space* 234). Sobchack finds that (in 1975) these multinationals seemed "pervasive, threatening and disturbing," whereas a decade later they seem "merely normal" (234). We can add a further point: where are they now (in 2007)? And we can include here Japanese companies: Sony, Toyota, Toshiba. Sobchack queries whether traditional orientation systems can help us

⁷ Alexandre Kojève made the observation about Japan having "experienced life at the 'end of history'" in a famous footnote to the revised edition of his *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* after a trip to Japan in 1959. Kojève predicted the interaction between the West and Japan (inaugurated by the West in the form of imperial expansion) would "result in the 'Japanization' of the West." On the one hand the observation suggests a condition of "post-history" successfully reached by the Japanese, but it also posits Japan as "the last stage of a social model envisaged first by the modern West" (Miyoshi and Harootunian xii).

“conceptualize, comprehend, describe, or locate” multinational corporations of this type and size. The “‘multinationals’ (as we have come to familiarly call them) seem to determine our lives from some sort of ethereal ‘other’ or ‘outer’ space” (234).

Cyberpunk fiction is also concerned with depicting multinationals, the multinational corporations that control global economies, “a world dominated by technology and the corporations that control it” (Brummett 97). Cyberpunk writers adopt the term *zaibatsu*, which refers to Japanese multinational companies. Commenting on the *zaibatsu* in Gibson’s work, Darko Suvin finds they are “well symbolized by the Japanese name *and* tradition of *zaibatsu*,” the “ruthlessly competing corporations” which are “the power-systems dominant in our 1980s world.” The stereotype is one of Japanese companies as “ruthless” competitors and features in much 1980s commentary on Japan. Suvin situates this in relation to “Japanese feudal-style capitalism” which he finds is “an analog or, indeed, ideal template for the new feudalism of present-day corporate monopolies: where the history of capitalism ... has come full circle” (“On Gibson,” italics in original).

In cyberpunk fiction, then, the *zaibatsu* perhaps encapsulate the shift to third stage multinational capitalism, when in fact the *zaibatsu* are in some senses a relic from a time before World War II. The true *zaibatsu* were enormous economic empires totally controlled by a single holding company and/or family. They were broken up by the US Occupation authorities after World War II and have never reappeared in anything like their original form.⁸ They were gradually replaced by six major industrial and banking groups, the *keiretsu*.⁹

However, the term *zaibatsu* has a well-established context in popular fiction about Japan, and is associated with a particular kind of narrative, for example intergenerational sagas, as in the Robert Standish novel *The Three Bamboos* (1954), which links the fortunes of Japan since the mid-nineteenth-century to the plans of a great *zaibatsu* family to rebuild its own power and, at the same time, to make Nippon the greatest and most

⁸ Prestowitz concurs that the formation of the four great *zaibatsu* (Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, and Yasuda) controlled much of Japan’s economy until 1945, and the “introduction of antitrust laws by US occupation officials has not prevented continuance of the trend in the postwar period” (293).

⁹ The six modern groupings are Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, Fuyo, DKB, and Sanwa. The term *keiretsu* frequently appears in media journalism. It implies a collection of companies allied with each other for some common purpose, but not necessarily single ownership, like a cartel.

powerful nation in the world. The narrative typically spans five generations of one Japanese family, the Furenos, from their impoverished samurai beginnings to a fifth generation member who pilots the first dive bomber at Pearl Harbour. It contributes to the fixed image of the entire country as a single corporate entity bent on world economic domination, of Japanese business conglomerates as a super-efficient interlocking elite of big business and government known as “Japan Inc.” In Gibson’s “New Rose Hotel” the Hosaka zaibatsu is a global, multinational organization, spawning a “massive infiltration of agents” (135) into governments and countries around the globe.

Postmodernism and Japan

More generally, however, a number of difficulties arise with the assimilation of Japan within this kind of framework. One concerns the projection of a Japan which now suddenly signifies a scene or space that is postmodern. It is not uncommon to read statements such as “Japan just *is* the postmodern” and I think this is probably what Gibson means when he states “Modern Japan simply *was* cyberpunk. And the Japanese knew it and delighted in it” (“Future Perfect” 48). Yet, we need to keep in mind the view, as has been suggested, that “postmodernism is a Western event” (Masao and Harootunian vii).¹⁰ And by the same token, it can be noted the Western discourse on postmodernism is also haunted by a certain “Japan.”

One outcome of this problematic is that Japan is then figured as a more complete version of a Western model, which would sustain the role played by Japan and the Orient as suppliers of recognition so necessary for Western identity. The positing of Japan’s identity in Western terms in turn does much to establish the centrality of the West as the universal point of reference. On the other hand, because capitalism has also been able to develop powerfully in non-Western societies such as Japan, some analyses of contemporary Japan show that the subject formations of late capitalism no longer coincide with either the modern, European subject of the Enlightenment, or even the postmodern, American subject. Referring to the philosophers of the Kyoto school and the

¹⁰ See Masao Miyoshi and H. D. Harootunian, *Postmodernism and Japan*. A number of the articles explore the status of resistance in the critique of modernity and what constitutes the relation between the modern and the postmodern.

period of the 1930s and early 1940s, Naoki Sakai perhaps offers a way out of this impasse when he notes:

Japan did not stand *outside* the West. Even in its particularism, Japan was already implicated in the ubiquitous West, so that neither historically nor geopolitically could Japan be seen as the *outside* of the West.... in so far as one tries to speak from a position of *us*, the putative unity of either the West or Japan, one would never be able to escape the dominion of the universalism-particularism pair. (113-114).¹¹

Compounding this difficulty is that when any consideration of Japan's postmodernity is yoked to the larger discussion concentrating on Japan and the West, it means confronting the question of the modern in the construction of Japan's postmodern "scene." That is, the meaning of the modern as the Japanese have confronted it since their society was transformed in the image of Western wealth and power.

Yet this raises again the question, which Anthony Giddens considers at the end of his book on modernity, that it is "universalizing," namely is modernity a Western project? (*Consequences* 174). And he finds that for the main part the answer is yes.¹² This finding has larger ramifications for this thesis, for one of the fundamental consequences of modernity is globalization, a topic which I take up and develop in the next chapter. Helpfully, Giddens points out that what is fundamental to the dynamic character of modernity is reflexive knowledge. Thus the radical turn from tradition intrinsic to modernity's reflexivity signals a break, not only with preceding eras, but also with other cultures; yet it also results in the spread of the reflexivity of modernity that can

¹¹ Naoki argues that the insistence on Japan's peculiarity and difference from the West embodies an urge to see the self from the viewpoint of the other, and establishes the centrality of the West. In his view "universalism and particularism reinforce and supplement each other; they are never in real conflict; they need each other and have to seek to form a symmetrical, mutually supporting relationship by every means in order to avoid a dialogic encounter which would necessarily jeopardize their reputedly secure and harmonized monologic worlds" ("Modernity" 105). This is explored in more detail in Chapter One concerning global flows.

¹² Giddens has also raised a number of important objections to the concept of "post-modernity" and offers an alternative position, "radicalized modernity." For a table of comparisons, see *The Consequences of Modernity* 150.

“override cultural differentiations” (176). This notion of reflexivity is compatible with the term I have adopted for this thesis, “reciprocal causality.”

Perhaps the most relevant aspect of all this is the “displacement” of modernism in what we now call the postmodern era, and exactly how this modernism is displaced. Rey Chow considers this very point in *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*, a book of essays which offers a critical strategy for approaching questions of otherness and other societies and which I draw upon throughout this thesis to structure my debate. Although Chow’s field of research and interest is China, the conclusions I find are pertinent to this thesis. Chow’s approach here is to understand modernity as pertaining to the increasing “technologization of culture” (55) in terms of visibility (the visual as a kind of dominant discourse for modernism) which brings to light problems that are inherent in social relations and representations of race and gender. The visual, and the issues Chow concentrates on, as I have indicated, are an important component of this thesis. Most importantly, Chow notes modernity needs to be seen as a force of cultural expansionism grounded in the (Eurocentric) West. This brings me to the second key concept governing this thesis: orientalism.

2. Orientalism

Another contentious and hotly debated term central to this thesis derives from Edward Said’s landmark book, *Orientalism* (1978). Said’s book is a study of how Europe constructed a stereotypical image of “the Orient.” Far from simply reflecting what countries of the Near East were actually like, “Orientalism” was the discourse “by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient” (3). Since Said’s analysis, Orientalism has revealed itself as a model for the many ways in which European strategies for knowing the colonized world became, at the same time, strategies for dominating that world.

Said’s book is divided into three main parts. In the first part, Said establishes the field of Orientalism, a discourse stretching over two centuries and which still continues into the present. In this section he also deals with the question of representation, around figures of Oriental despotism, sensuality, modes of production, and Oriental splendour.

The second part of the book is an exposition of Orientalist structures. This amounts to a tradition of knowledge established by a wide range of nineteenth-century writers that allowed them textually to construct and control the Orient, a rendering visible of the Orient. This especially served the interests of the colonial administration. The third part is an examination of modern Orientalism, the British and French variety, and more recently, American Orientalism, enacted as Said sees it through foreign policy. The constitution of a geographical entity called the Orient and its study called Orientalism “realized a very important component of the European will to domination over the non-European world” and made it possible to create not only an orderly discipline of study but “a set of institutions, a latent vocabulary (or a set of enunciative possibilities), a subject matter, and finally ... subject races” (Said *World* 222).

Under these terms, and not surprisingly, since Gibson had never visited Japan when he wrote it into cyberpunk, there is much orientalist discourse to be found in cyberpunk fiction, both from the old-fashioned “imperial romance” type, adventure stories which are no longer ours, and newer instantiations in relation to technology and media. An engagement with Said’s work provides a deeper understanding of orientalism in cyberpunk.

Yet, as with postmodernism, a number of difficulties surface in reading cyberpunk as exemplary of Said’s argument. One concerns specifically the placing of Japan, the other more generally postmodern culture. According to Said, for Western citizens living in the electronic age, the Orient has drawn nearer, and is now “less a myth perhaps than a place crisscrossed by Western, especially American, interests” (26). Said finds one aspect of “the electronic, postmodern world” we find ourselves in is that there is a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed through television, films, and media.

Yet although stereotypes persist, it is possible I think to place a different focus and emphasis, towards cultural interaction rather than solely on a one-way transaction between different cultures. Another aspect of this is what constitutes this “electronic” world, referring to Jameson’s point that cyberpunk’s innovations are realized within a predominantly “visual or aural postmodern production.” Generally, book culture informs Said’s *Orientalism*, and little attention is given to visual culture, and the impact of various visual media influential in cyberpunk (comics, videogames, MTV, television) and

later Japanese *anime* (animation). When asked about the Japanese settings in his work, Gibson replied that *Terry and the Pirates* had more to do with it than anything. Whether this may refer to Milton Caniff's comic strip (a specific form of multi-media text and image) or the television series (broadcast in the late 1950s), Orientalism in the era of technoculture needs to take these kinds of developments into account.

Terry and the Pirates

Milton Caniff's comic strip provides some clues as to how Orientalism might be approached in cyberpunk. An example of overt Orientalism, the comic strip by Milton Caniff is full of stereotypical representations of the Orient. Young Terry Lee is at large in the exotic Orient encountering opium, the Eurasian April, and the Dragon Lady, the name of an alluring yet villainous Asian woman, stereotypes which for the most part Gibson does not indulge in his own writing.¹³ (Or so I thought, but in writing this thesis I have become more clued into the tenacity of some of these characterizations, for instance the Eurasian, the commodity of drugs and Asia, which do find their way into his fiction.) Edward Said notes of Kipling's *Kim*, it deals with "a masculine world dominated by travel, trade, adventure and intrigue" (Said 12). This is also the world of archetypal (British) American heroes versus Oriental villains, such as in the fiction of Sax Rohmer, who reputedly said he was able to make his name on Fu-Manchu because he knew nothing about the Chinese.

The following points can be made. *Terry and the Pirates* offers instances of "cross-ethnic representation," the "specific and ineluctable issue of representation in cross-ethnic situations" (*Protestant Ethnic* 50). Moreover, Chow reminds us that the "act of stereotyping is always implicated in visibility by virtue of the fact that the other is imagined as and transformed into a (sur)face, a sheer exterior deprived/independent of historical depth" (66). How do stereotypes produce their effects? To answer the question, it is necessary to discuss the function of "graphicity" in cartoon strips. Finally, there is a

¹³ *Terry and the Pirates* debuted on October 22, 1934, and was an immediate success, running until 1946. The Dragon Lady became the model of Asian intrigue and beauty for decades, and the phrase generally took on the meaning of a domineering or belligerent woman. Many of Caniff's "Orientalized" comic strip characters such as Dragon Lady, Madame Shoo Shoo, and Burma were painted on the noses of aircraft in service in the Far East; a novel entitled *April Kane and the Dragon Lady* was published about wartime heroism and the Yellow Peril. Caniff is admired for his cinematic sense of composition, intricately woven plots with exotic settings, and "characters" such as Singh-Singh, and the Eurasian called April.

potted, geo-historical (imperialist) dimension in *Terry and the Pirates*. These points can be usefully discussed in relation to cyberpunk and Orientalism under two headings. One concerns Said's concept of "imaginative geography"; the other is "American Orientalism" (Said's term) from the Second World War onwards, highlighting America's contradictory fascination with Asia (and Japan in particular).

First, the geographical needs to be given special attention, I think, in cyberpunk with its complex interplay of imaginative, virtual and psycho-geographies. Since many East Asian countries were not territorially colonial possessions, we need to keep in mind Chow's caution that there is a need to disavow positivistic thinking around the limited notion of "geographical captivity" (*Writing Diaspora* 7) in the physical sense. The kind of texts Gibson writes challenge the whole sense of the "location" from which they come, and threaten the sense of national boundaries. "No maps for these territories" is the title of a documentary on Gibson. These maps of the world have less to do with the conventional geography of mountains, rivers and so on but are based instead on the consuming virtual reality of economic and financial power, "new world order" versions of neocolonialism.

The second concern is the recent imprint of American orientalism, noticeably since World War II. France and Britain "no longer occupy center stage in world politics; the American imperium has replaced them" (*Orientalism* 285). Said maintains that the established legacies of British and French orientalism were adopted and adapted by the U.S. and nowhere is this better reflected than the manner in which these legacies are manifested in American foreign policy. The latest stage of orientalism corresponds with this displacement; for despite the shifting of the centre of power the discourse of orientalism remains intact, and the Arab Muslim has come to occupy a central place within American popular images: "Since World war II ... the Arab Muslim has become a figure in American popular culture" (*Orientalism* 284). Said's elaboration of this shift focuses on the representations of Arab culture in the last part of *Orientalism*. However, there are points of relevance for this thesis. Orientalism has been successfully accommodated to the new imperialism. The Arab world today, according to Said, is "an intellectual, political and cultural satellite of the United States" which is not something in

itself to be “lamented,” but the “specific form of the satellite relationship, however, is” (322). This observation is pertinent to some aspects of the Japan-America relationship.

Moreover, the United States was not a world empire until the twentieth century, but as Said notes, during the nineteenth century it was “concerned with the Orient in ways that prepared for its later, overtly imperial concern” (293). Concerning the Arab and Islamic Orient, cultural domination is maintained “as much by Oriental consent as by direct and crude economic pressure from the United States” (324). An important contributing factor is consumerism in the Orient. The region is “hooked into the Western market system” (324). One of the important consequences is that the Western market economy and its “consumer orientation” have produced a class of educated people directed to satisfying market needs. The result of all this is that there is “an intellectual acquiescence in the images and doctrines of Orientalism, there is also a very powerful reinforcement of this in economic, political, and social exchange: the modern Orient, in short, participates in its own Orientalizing” (325). This, I would maintain, is also a significant factor in the Japan-America relationship, but with certain qualifications.

Orientalism and Japan

Since the 1940s the United States’ “imperialism-without-colonies” has taken a number of distinct forms (military, political, economic and cultural), forms of imperialism with greater subtlety, innovation and variety. East Asia (as distinct territories) can be viewed in terms of U.S. foreign policy in the post-Second World War period, during which the older European Orientalism was supplanted by the emergence of the U.S. as the newest imperialist power with major military bases in countries such as Japan, and Korea.

Japan may never have been colonized, but it has been occupied, and here the issue of American military bases is worth pursuing a little further, as there are a number of perspectives to consider in practice. It is easy living in Japan to forget there are American bases, unless you happen to live right next to one. So what would seem a potent symbol of American imperialism may depend on whether you are near one, or derive an income from the base, or the person teaching you English happens to be from the base, or you are married to a serviceman. Open days on American bases for the general public can attract

tens of thousands of Japanese. At the same time, crimes committed by US servicemen attract national media attention and spark outrage.

A further parallel with the nineteenth century is instructive. Said notes that what is written and said about texts can amount to “a somewhat attenuated and highly implicit function of that earlier conquest.” To write today about Nerval and Flaubert, whose work depended so massively upon the Orient, is to work in territory originally charted by the French imperial victory, to follow in its steps, and to extend them into 150 years of European experience. The imperial conquest is a “continually repeated, institutionalized presence in French life” (*Culture and Imperialism* 35).

In Japan, under different circumstances, a legacy can be detected in the military base and what surrounds it has a certain milieu. During the American occupation following the end of the Second World War, John Dower noted that the marginal groups that electrified popular consciousness during this period came from three overlapping subcultures: the world of “the *panpan* prostitute,” the black market, and the “*kasutori* culture” demimonde which “introduced such enduring attractions as pulp literature and commercialized sex” (122). This demimonde was “a colorful and gritty environment ... bars, dance halls, and hole-in-the-wall eateries ... narrow crooked streets” (154). This was the milieu epitomized by the *panpan* or “woman of the night, women of the street, women of the dark” (132). Dower comments that photographs of these women remain among the most melancholy and evocative of this period: “the leaning figure in the dark, wearing a kerchief, handbag on her arm, often lighting or smoking a cigarette.” These tough, vulnerable figures, are also remembered for their bright lipstick, nail polish, and sharp clothes obtained from US military exchange posts. They became “inseparable from the urban nightscapes ... of postwar Japan” (132). They were part of the “mystique of American glamour and fashion” that made a spectacular impact at the time. The term evoked “ridicule, pity, compassion, exoticism and plain eroticism,” which Dower pinpoints as the “eroticism of defeated Japan” (137).

These kinds of marginal, overlapping subcultures are also a feature of cyberpunk, particularly in Gibson’s version of Chiba City and the Ninsei enclave inside it. The “black market,” for instance, even though GI’s roamed through it, was first and last for the Japanese, outlaw activities, and an economy where gangs played a major role. Do

these kind of subcultures reflect in microcosm certain aspects of American culture at large, or are they peculiar to Japan, and how might they overlap?

The other concern with Orientalism which this thesis explores is the placing or positioning of Japan within that discourse. Is it simply a matter of saying that although designed specifically as a critique of the Western study of West Asian civilizations, its main points are equally applicable to the study of Japan? Or does Japan occupy a special place in the discourse of Orientalism?

Like the rest of the Orient it has been seen as an exotic culture, admired for its aesthetics (geisha, gardens, architecture, *kabuki* theater, tea ceremonies), and feared for its “inhuman” martial traditions (karate, samurai, bushido, ninja, *kamikaze*) and more recently its economic prowess and sophisticated robots, Japan’s “robot future.” But Japan also differs from much of the Orient in two distinct ways. First, it was never colonized, so there is an anxiety that the West has no control over the past, present or future of Japan, particularly in terms of Western control (even though it has been “occupied”). Second, Japan was able to adopt, appropriate and transform Western technology, situating Japan in a “future” of some kind. This has produced a new variety of Orientalism (techno-orientalism) whereby Japan is not only located geographically, but also projected chronologically. It is located in the future of technology. It is this reinvented Japan which manifests strong links with postmodernism, and popular culture, and can be sampled in cyberpunk novels and futuristic movies (*Blade Runner*).

A Note on Racial Melancholia

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of the engagement with orientalism for this thesis in terms of Japan can be found in another illustrative example. Earlier I discussed an example from Jameson, Perelman’s poem “China” and the problem of representation in the context of postmodernism (the breakdown of the signifier/signified relation). In this case the focus was an artefact, a poem. This example concerns more the position of the writer in relation to the work.

At the outset to her book *Writing Diaspora*, Rey Chow takes up the example of an American sinologist who happens to be a professor in Asian studies at an American university. Again, the focus is “China”; but we can readily substitute Japanologist, for as

Said reminds us, and I thereby include myself, “Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient ... either in its specific or general aspects, is an Orientalist” (*Orientalism* 2). It seems this prominent university sinologist has become distressed that recent Chinese poetry is no longer “lost in translation,” in other words it is too readily translatable. It could have been written anywhere. Chow finds his disappointment is attributable to a kind of melancholia which characterizes the sinologists’s relationship with the beloved object, “China.” Moreover, melancholia is complicated by the presence of a third party – the living members of Chinese culture, who provide the sinologist with “a means of *externalizing* his loss and directing his blame” (*Writing Diaspora* 4).

This is not to say the sinologist is not insensitive to the injustice caused by Western imperialism and Western cultural hegemony, but to recognize that, whether posited in terms of a negative (directing his blame) or even a positive (Gibson on cyberpunk, “the Japanese knew it and delighted in it”) the presence of the “third party” always complicates the matter. Importantly, in both cases what is absent here is an account of the investments that shape the sinologist’s or the writer’s own enunciation. The elaboration and fortification of this kind of absence amounts to “the perpetuation of a deeply ingrained Orientalism” which, as Rey Chow has argued in the context of east Asian studies, “it is of some urgency to mobilize criticism of it” (3). In the following chapter, I offer a detailed account of my own investment, having lived in Japan for a long period of time, and offer an intellectual autobiography to register some of the perplexities of my own situation, a mediator of sorts, or occupying a mediating position. In Catherine Belsey’s phrasing, we need to be mindful of “the relativity of the place we speak from” (136).

This consideration opens up further avenues of approach which become particularly significant later in the chapter which deals with the fantasmatic aspects of cyberspace. Anne Cheng posits a theoretical paradigm of “racial melancholia” to trace a “dynamic of rejection and internalization” in order to comprehend particular aspects of American racial culture, such as the “dominant white culture’s rejection of yet attachment to the racial other” (xi) and the ramifications that such a paradox holds for the racial other.

In the “landscape of racial melancholia, the boundary between subject and object, the loser and the thing lost, poses a constant problem” (104). Cheng argues to remain complacent with the assumption that “racial fantasies are hegemonic impositions on minorities denies complexity on the part of the latter’s subjective landscapes.” Thus we need to keep firmly in mind how “raced subjects participate in melancholic racialization” (106). Once we introduce the “presence of fantasy on the part of not just the white racist but also on the part of the racialized, and once we uncover fantasy’s more intimate (even constitutive) function in the very act of self-identification” then “desire and fantasy do not necessarily align themselves on the same side” (110).

The “landscape of racial melancholia” plays itself out “not only in national formation but also in one of its expressions ... literature” (12), one place where “complex signs of cultural desire and unease” (15) come into play. Gibson provides textual instances where we might begin to work through the proposition that “fantasy and melancholic incorporation are constitutive of and fundamental to the formation of any racialized body” (106). Close analysis of the part played by fantasy in the “reflexive economy of racial-sexual projections and internalization” (108), for example, the various responses to David Bowie’s “China Girl” discussed in a later chapter (from the Japanese students’ engagement with the video to the Chinese-New Zealand woman appearing in the video) demonstrates the validity of this approach.

3. Postmodern Orientalism

Cyberpunk is orientalized postmodernism in that it constructs a global technospace of Byzantine complexity traversed by multinational corporate interests, and reveals some of the new forms of opposition (or reinforcement) they encounter. As well, it is postmodernized orientalism as the site of a bipolar East-West exchange, in its self-conscious and nostalgic reconstruction of a familiar neo-imperial scene. Gibson’s “New Rose Hotel,” a hard-edged story of corporate defection played out across the globe, in cities which are also recognizable as the imperial haunts of romantic thrillers (like Greene’s *The Third Man*) – Vienna, Morocco, and Tokyo – epitomizes this, a world simultaneously integrated and unstable.

As distinct theoretical concepts, postmodernism and orientalism, I have shown, raise some overarching questions and problematics which this thesis addresses. Can the illustrative examples and heterogeneous positions be brought together under the umbrella term “postmodern orientalism”? For the concepts share common ground, and intersect and overlap in a number of productive ways for this thesis. In the following chapters I attempt to do this. Before giving an outline of each chapter, some further observations can be made towards establishing how these two terms might be thought of as linked, and co-dependent, in line with the multi-strand methodological approach this thesis adopts.

To a certain extent this thesis is concerned with the destabilization of binary oppositions, and the unsettling of any complacent labelling, a task familiar to postmodernism and postcolonial cultural theory. Furthermore, as Rey Chow notes of the film *The Last Emperor*, in director Bertolucci’s response to China lies “a paradoxical conceptual structure that is ethnocentric.”¹⁴ It can be added this does not necessarily mark the dismissal of another culture as inferior, but does emphasize, as Chow has pointed out, “how positive ... feelings for the ‘other’ can themselves be rooted in un-self-reflexive, culturally coded perspectives” (*Woman and Chinese Modernity* 4). What this does is foreground the problem of “paradoxical” conceptual structures whereby oftentimes, as Gayatri Spivak has emphasized, “what is being produced is cultural explanations that silence others” (*The Post-Colonial Critic* 33).

It has been noted that debates on the relationship between postmodernism and postcolonialism (and we can situate orientalism here too) tend to polarize around questions of textuality. It has been suggested there is a fundamental incompatibility of postmodernist textuality and the lived realities of the postcolonial, or really neo-colonial experience.¹⁵ The nature of these two major categories, postmodernism and postcolonialism, is still very much a subject of debate, and “their intersections and divergences are going to require lengthy and careful delineation” (Williams and Chrisman 13-14). I take my particular stance from postmodern textuality and explore the

¹⁴ Chow cites from an interview with Bernardo Bertolucci, in 1987, where the film director recalls his visit to China: “For me it was love at first sight. ... I thought the Chinese were fascinating. They have an innocence. They have a mixture of a people before consumerism, before something that happened in the West. Yet in the meantime, they are incredibly sophisticated ...” (*Woman and Chinese Modernity* 4).

¹⁵ See Eleanor Byrne, “Postmodernism and the Postcolonial World,” *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism* 54.

intersections with orientalism. Moreover, Aarseth's discussions of textuality (in relation to cybertext) are informative on how to open up the "concept of text which is contested and unclear already" (41).

Thus text is not at all limited to the verbal text, as Spivak reminds us (referring to specifically to the work of Jacques Derrida and Jean-Francois Lyotard): "When they read actual verbal objects ... they like to show that those things are also produced in language." Yet when they claim there is nothing but text they are talking about "a network, a weave"; moreover, by stating that "we are effects within a much larger text/tissue/weave of which the ends are not accessible to us is very different from saying that everything is language" (25). Spivak extends an "invitation for the investigating subject to see that the projects are produced within a much larger textuality" (30).

I am keen to respond to Spivak's "invitation" and investigate further how such cultural explanations silence others, as well as understand what constitutes this larger textuality. At the same time I am becoming aware of the ways in which dialectical thinking can be an effective tool "founded on a notion of the fundamentally unstable, contradictory, interdependent, and mutually transformative relations between 'subject' and 'object,' 'self' and 'other'" (Williams and Chrisman 11).

My intention, then, is to seek out and uncover "mutually transformative relations" and this takes a number of forms in this thesis. As I will be at pains to show, a reflexive dynamic or reciprocity is always a possible outcome in cross-cultural transactions. For instance, Chow has described the importance of understanding the process whereby "Westernized Chinese students come to terms with themselves both as objects and subjects of 'seeing' China" (31).¹⁶ This insight is I think very much applicable to Japanese students in "seeing" Japan.

Asian Billboard

In order to substantiate this point, a brief example is warranted here, since it highlights one particular methodological strategy employed in this thesis. The science

¹⁶ This can be contrasted with Said, who writes more pessimistically and with not much leeway for mutually transformative relations, about "cultural images of the Orient supplied by American mass media and consumed *unthinkingly* by the mass television audience," a result being the "paradox of an Arab regarding himself as an 'Arab' of the sort put out by Hollywood" (*Orientalism* 325, emphasis added).

fiction film *Blade Runner*, released in 1982, is considered exemplary of postmodern film, and an indelible part of the cyberpunk canon. It has also been cited for its “oriental” images, making this film a candidate for detailed scrutiny in this thesis, which I undertake by asking first, what is cyberpunk about the film. Here the words of one of the stars of the film, Sean Young, as the replicant Rachel, are prescient; “I didn’t approach [*Blade Runner*] as science fiction. It’s a romantic thriller, like *Casablanca*. But instead of Africa, we’re in the future” (qtd. in Sammon 125). As well, what in fact constitutes its Orientalness, besides the director’s aim that he wanted it “to look like – well, Hong Kong on a bad day”? (Mann 32). If there is a clear piece of “Japan” in the film, however, it is to be found in the spectacle of a giant media screen on the side of a skyscraper, dubbed the “Asian Billboard” scene. A composite shot, the advertisement features the face of a “geisha girl” holding up a pill and swallowing it, backed by graphics, a snow-covered mountain, and Japanese ideograms. Director Ridley Scott wanted a scene of geisha girls “doing unhealthy things.... smoking, taking drugs or whatever” to continue with the “oppressive feeling throughout the landscape” (Sammon 242-3).

Yet a Japanese student of mine responds in a particular and subtly different way. The student first refers to the scene by what it advertises, “Kyoryoku Wakamoto,” a digestive medicine made by a Japanese manufacturer, and assumes this is what the “geisha girl” is putting in her mouth (perhaps missing the drug connotations of the scene, i.e. pill popping, and identifying a medical product that a Western viewer could not). The student is puzzled as to why the “geisha girl” is smoking (“I’ve never seen one smoke”); or finds somehow the girl in the advertisement doesn’t seem like a “real” geisha from Kyoto, except for the white powdered face; then wonders why foreigners are interested only in “geisha girls.” Commenting on another Oriental scene in the film in which Harrison Ford visits a noodle bar, the student notes that he uses chopsticks correctly, but doesn’t understand why he is eating sushi in a noodle bar. Moreover, noting that the Japanese spoken seems authentic (is it?), the origami is folded well (origami happens to be a key signifier in the film), the student concludes: “I feel tense when Japanese appear on the screen, I’m thankful the Japanese is accurate.” The overall impression garnered by the student, however, is that there is something strange about this depiction of Japan: (“zentaiteiki ni ‘Blade Runner’ no naka nihon wa henna da ... tadashi ku nai”).

A Japanese columnist, Ishida Kaita, writing for the *Daily Yomiuri* newspaper recalled how when he watched the original film *Blade Runner* 25 years ago in Tokyo, “he didn’t feel such an affinity on the theater’s screen and the city beyond the theater’s exit doors” but reviewing the latest director’s cut of the movie recently was impressed by the “2019” Los Angeles cityscape “which looks just like the Tokyo I see now – at the end of 2007.” The opening scene bears a “strong resemblance to the ‘look’ of contemporary Tokyo” and he adds the fictional downtown could have been filmed in Shinjuku’s Kabukicho district. This response, in his article “Tokyo reality catching up with *Blade Runner*” would seem to be the reverse of Western viewers of the movie.

I examine the implications of all this in more detail in a later chapter. If Said has raised a whole set of questions related to “How does one *represent* other cultures? What is another culture?” (325) my emphasis, as I noted earlier, is on how the third party complicates the matter. These kinds of responses can open questions as to what is involved in the representation of another culture, especially when that representation is viewed by members of that culture, and how to account for them.

Chow concludes that “identificatory acts are the sites of productive relations that should be reread with the appropriate degree of complexity,” to be found both in the identification with the ethnic culture and in the “strong sense of complicity with the ... processes that structure those imaginings in the first place” (*Woman and Chinese Modernity* 27). In my view, recognition of the above process is an important first step in the direction of uncovering a reflexive dynamic, a reciprocal causality. The key points for emphasis here are “come to terms with,” “productive,” and “mutually transformative relations.” At strategic points I interpose responses by Japanese students, colleagues, and informants, including an interview I conducted with Tatsumi Takayuki, plus various materials from Japanese sources where appropriate. In this I am guided by Chow’s work, which features an extremely effective and judicious use of anecdotes and the like, culled from family, friends, students, colleagues and acquaintances, to reinforce certain points; witness the use of her mother’s response to Bertolucci’s film about China (*Woman and Chinese Modernity* 24). Elsewhere Chow has noted “anecdotal information does not really constitute any concrete source of scholarly evidence” yet finds such stories manage to “convey some sense of the reality of which they partake” (*Protestant Ethnic* 16).

Chapter Summaries

Chapter One “Postmodern Orientalism” formulates a working definition of the term “cyberpunk” from which to strike out, and further develops the theoretical perspectives of postmodernism and orientalism. Postmodernist textuality in cyberpunk is explored in terms of bricolage, an eclectic pastiche of borrowings and fragments, following Gibson’s admission in “God’s Little Toys: Confessions of a Cut and Paste Artist” that everything he wrote, he “believed instinctively, was to some extent collage” (118). This extends to his use of multiple literary codes, the appropriation of the conventions of several popular genres (including science fiction) within one novel. There are allusions to high culture, but more pronounced is the “pluralist, hybridized, cross-cultural coding” that, according to Joseph Conte, lends a novel like *Neuromancer* its “resistance to convention” (210). Much cyberpunk content is drawn or “remixed” directly from the field of pop culture. This tendency, I argue, has its roots in the influential multimedia experiments of avant-garde American pop culture (audio-visual rock music) in the late sixties and early seventies. In this context, the “resistance to convention” can be further explicated in terms of a cultural (rock) formation as advocated by Lawrence Grossberg.

Orientalism is the other significant concern of this chapter. Turning to my own position in relation to this field of research, I provide an intellectual autobiography to clarify my own position, how encounters both personal and textual have been influences. Said counsels that Orientalists are among those “not always sensitive to the dangers of self-quotation, endless repetition, and received ideas” (“Opponents” 142) that the field encourages. In order to rectify this, I focus on Said’s *Orientalism* (1978) a work which, taking into account the numerous revisions and critiques it has provoked, still provides the most fruitful starting point from which to engage with these issues, specifically Said’s notion of “imaginative geography” and the emergence of an identifiable strain of American orientalism from the post World War II era onwards.

The chapter then concludes with a detailed analysis of Gibson’s short story, “New Rose Hotel,” as a way to sum up the features of postmodern orientalism that I have been foregrounding. This story exhibits the key strands of postmodern orientalism that

govern this thesis, notably the characterization of multinationals as Japanese *zaibatsu*, and the ambivalent figure of the Eurasian. Not science fictional in any obvious way, the work requires a different approach. This takes the form of an unraveling or unpacking of the term “estrangement” across a number of diverse tracks: the familiar “cognitive estrangement” of science fiction criticism, the influence and alienated spaces of *film noir*, and the glimmerings of a countercultural otherness at the centre of the story. What is conveyed here is a compelling sense of postmodern dislocation (on a corporate and global scale), a series of vertiginous moments of estrangement rendered as otherness primarily through a number of exotic locations: the Narita airport capsule hotel in Japan, the Djeema El Fna marketplace in Morocco.

Chapter Two “Cyberpunk and Drugs” considers the topic of drug culture, the “great dominant experiences of drugs and schizophrenia” which characterize the world of the postmodern and mark a major shift in “the dynamics of cultural pathology” (Jameson *Postmodernism* 14). The cyberpunks were the first generation of writers to have grown up immersed in technology, pop culture, and “the values and the aesthetics of the counterculture associated with the drug culture” (McCaffery *Storming* 12). The drug of choice in cyberpunk narratives is amphetamine or “speed.” There are clear congruities between the consumption of drugs and the epistemology of cyberpunk, as Gibson’s *Neuromancer* demonstrates.

However, drugs and Japan is an odd alliance. As has been pointed out, drugs constitute one of the major industries in the United States, and drug addiction is a predominantly twentieth-century Western notion, compared with Japan where drugs have a different cultural profile altogether. This chapter then explores what appears, on the surface, to be an *incongruity* between cyberpunk and drug culture, whereby in cyberpunk fiction Japan (Chiba City) and the Orient more generally is made to be the fictional capital of drug culture, or at least a key location for its representation.

What is perhaps the most striking characteristic of addiction discourse is its close historical association with Western discourses of the “Orient.” There is a history of fiction writing which associates drug culture, drugs and drug problems with Orientalist themes, and much of this initially stems from associations with opium and the Chinese.

Thomas De Quincey's classic nineteenth-century text *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* provides a set of revealing parallels with cyberpunk fiction, and requires a more flexible methodological approach which I adopt in order to engage the wider socio-economic implications of drugs as global commodities, the role of imperialism, and figurations of race which persistently associate the quintessential Western entity with Oriental paradigms in paradoxical ways.

Chapter Three "Cyberpunk and Rock Music" is an exercise in cultural history in which I intend to trace numerous sources, primarily pertaining first to David Bowie, and then Lou Reed, in order to locate origins for the peculiar mixture of direct references to punk rock music, and orientalist echoes. In his own words Gibson had been "looking for ways to import as much rock-and-roll aesthetic into science fiction as possible." My emphasis on a particularly postmodern form, rock music, is a response to Gibson's startling comment, how he wanted to revitalize science fiction as though David Bowie and Lou Reed were writing it.

By punk what immediately comes to mind are the music and antics of The Sex Pistols era in the mid-1970s. Thus the punk side of the equation needs to be traced through to its origins in order to explain the specific and peculiar shape they take in cyberpunk fiction, at the same time bearing in mind different stances within the cyberpunk group. John Shirley, for example, is a "genuine punk" compared with the others. However, what emerges is that sources turn out to refer to a very Western and primarily cultural experience of the 1960s and 1970s, around particular figures: Andy Warhol, the Velvet Underground, David Bowie, and Lou Reed. This is a different constellation of influence to what one might expect. The complex coming together of these disparate influences point to a particular set of manifestations: shocking, outlandish, transgender, drug-obsessed (and this is where the previous chapter provides a useful framework), and dominantly countercultural.

The connections with Japan are explored in terms of how they might have been influencing the types of popular images and use of "Japan" and "Japaneseness" as signifiers in the words and projected images of (punk) rock artists. David Bowie's "China Girl" provides an apposite example of what this chapter is concerned to explicate. His

contact and fascination with Japan and the Orient has resulted in number of influential crosscultural transformations in forms such as music (*visual kei*), film, and fashion (Kansai Yamamoto). A particular focus is music videos, which exemplify postmodern strategies, and allow for distinctions to be made between visuals, lyrics, and musical structure. The example I consider is “China Girl.”

What, then, do these associations of cyberpunk with the rock music of David Bowie and Lou Reed mean when read back in the context of Japanese culture? In my view, the American-derived glamorizations of street-life (drugs, hustlers, and by association, outlaw hackers), even hardcore punk rockers, in other words, the American as “other,” are inextricably bound up with the fast-paced technologization of a part of the world which relies on spectacular (visual) images for the sustenance of commodity culture. This process is bound up with forms of cultural imperialism, although this term can be employed, as Keith Negus observes, as a “useful concept for understanding the world-wide movement of music” without assuming that it refers to impacts on culture, but to “the *processes* and struggles through which dominant power is asserted” (*Popular Music in Theory* 164).

Chapter Four “The Cyborg and Prosthetics” marks a significant shift in the thesis in order to concentrate on postmodern technologies which have come to define cyberpunk, in particular the cyborg, and, in the chapter to follow, the representational innovation of cyberspace. The term cyborg was coined in 1960, but it had been a staple of science fiction since the 1920s, and had taken a new position in the popular imagination with films like *Terminator* (1984) and *Robocop*. It is in this realm that Japan is most visible, synonymous with high technological achievements, as it emerged as a technology superpower in the 1980s. The postmodern scene quickly became a Japanese one: the flow of people (tourists), goods (high tech), information, and power (yen) across international borders, in particular American ones, created admiration and trepidation in equal measures among Western nations. These cyborgs generally communicate anxiety for the future. Yet they already exist; it is a future we already inhabit.

This chapter examines the figure of the cyborg (following Donna Haraway’s distinctions) to determine the ways in which cultural and racial difference (and gender)

are implicated with new technologies. One feature of cyberpunk is the way oriental characters, for instance the “Yakuza assassin” in Gibson’s short story “Johnny Mnemonic,” which together with the film *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995) is a source text for this chapter, use specific weaponry and fighting techniques: weapons are posited as extensions of their bodies, as opposed to separate technological aids. This is in contrast to Johnny himself, also a cyborg implanted with a prosthetic device, but one which enables him to upload large amounts of data directly in to his brain and, as the film version makes clear, work in the service of those groups resistant to the machinations of a pharmaceutical multinational.

This example of postmodernised orientalism confirms that although there has been much academic discourse around the hyper-masculine white man/machine cyborg, but less attention has been given to racial issues, in particular East Asian characters. Here a comparison with Japanese attitudes to and conceptions of robots in society is useful to point to some of the divergences between American and Japanese ways of thinking about this particular technological invention, for instance, Japanese love their robots (e.g. *Repliee*) and Westerners fear them (e.g. *Terminator*).

There is also a shift in focus from cyborgs, to a promising area for investigation, prosthetics. My concern is with the prosthesis as a material production (mechanical body parts are now routinely used for human organs, joints and limbs), a trope, and a theoretical concept. In my view prosthetics fits well with many of cyberpunk’s preoccupations, and at the same time highlights a fundamental ambivalence in cyberpunk, whereby the prosthesis functions as both augmentation and replacement.

Cyberpunk enthusiastically explores boundary breakdowns between humans and computers, but gender boundaries are treated less flexibly. There are unconventional representations compared with more traditional depictions of gender identity. Lise in “The Winter Market” takes on the transgendered, countercultural forms of otherness I identified in the chapter on music. But even if binary oppositions based upon gender become a manifest reference to the very dualisms that the cyborg challenges, cyberpunk narrativity tends to begin with the assumption that bodies are always gendered and always marked by race. This seems to hold for even recent synthetic “creations,” such as the virtual idol in Gibson’s novel *Idoru* (1995).

Chapter Five “Cyberspace and the Virtual Orient” is directly concerned with cyberspace, a term first employed by Gibson as a neologism to designate a new type of alternate reality or fictional world while writing the short story “Burning Chrome,” a place where information is exchanged between computers. His initial term was “infospace” but he discarded it in favor of cyberspace, which has subsequently found wide application in other domains of discourse, coinciding with the expansion of the Internet.

This chapter considers cyberspace from a number of perspectives, which I have been developing throughout this thesis. Although as I noted earlier Gibson said he eschewed classic science fiction in writing about technology, there is a sense in which Gibsonian cyberspace is an extrapolation and thus resembles a computer-generated virtual reality environment. Yet it is also very much a fictional landscape, constructed from language, the effects being the products of language and the imagination. The rhetorical strategies employed are discussed in terms of postmodernism (cyberspace as a world of postmodern simulation) and orientalism (cyberspace as fantasy).

It has been suggested by N. Katherine Hayles, a foremost critic on the posthuman, that “cyberspace represents a quantum leap forward into the technological construction of vision” (“Virtual” 269). Thus Gibson’s achievement, according to Hayles, is based on “literary innovations that allow subjectivity, with its connotations of consciousness and self-awareness, to be articulated together with abstract data” (268). One of these concerns point of view which in cyberspace does not emanate from the character, but literally *is* the character, and therefore does not imply physical presence. The second innovation concerns how cyberspace is “created by transforming a data matrix into a landscape in which narratives can happen” (269).

Specifically, cyberspace is marked in relation to issues surrounding the body (disembodiment), the city (urban space, architectural forms), and technology. The landscape is a distinctively Asian one. In each of the above categories I look to tease out the “oriental” connections: the urban spaces in *Neuromancer* are represented on the one hand, by an incongruous juxtaposing of Chiba City (Japan) and Detroit, the home of the American car industry. The cyberspatial Walled City enclave in *Idoru* owes much to a

notion of oriental walled (“forbidden”) cities, such as Kowloon Walled City, a prime example of the “residue of imperialism” in Said’s terminology and one of the key points about cyberspace, access. Then there is the deployment of exotic architectural forms, the mandala, for instance, and the practice of origami, as well as the notion of the “dance of data” from Eastern mysticism.

In many movie versions of video and computer games, for example, the audience is presented with a markedly fictional, exotic space, a space that can be understood as corresponding to the cyberspace in which the games are played; a space which is most definitely signaled to be oriental in nature. Thus cyberspace is often presented as a kind of virtual orient in which the “tourist” can be freed from western rationalism and taste the “mystical essence” of the East (and *The Matrix* would seem to offer pertinent examples of this). Interestingly, Japanese cyberpunk *anime* often conforms with this version of cyberspace, for instance in the displacement of the “orient” to Hong Kong, a city full of “visual noise” (see Nozaki et al.) in Oshii Mamoru’s *Ghost in the Shell*.

Chapter One: Postmodern Orientalism

We're each other's fragments ...

(William Gibson *Burning Chrome* 42)

In this chapter Gibson's representation of Japan is analyzed within the proposed framework of postmodern orientalism, and in relation to the key issues identified so far: the commodification of race and cultural difference; the formulation of postmodern spaces and forces in relation to multinationalism; and the broadening of cyberpunk into an audio-visual multimedia formation with express links to the countercultural late sixties. I also provide a more detailed examination of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, with a focus on my own positioning with respect to Japan and the Orient. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Gibson's short story "New Rose Hotel" which displays specific features of postmodern orientalism, notably the characterization of multinationals as Japanese *zaibatsu*, and the ambivalent figure of the Eurasian. Not science-fictional in any obvious way, this story poses interesting questions about "estrangement" in cyberpunk, the "alienated spaces" of *film noir*, and the glimmerings of countercultural otherness in the Djemma El Fna bazaar at the centre of the story.

1. Cyberpunk Lives!

Slick, technical, cerebral, down-and-dirty, coolly scientific, heteroclit, comical, polyglot: the multifarious and divergent worlds of cyberpunk. Cyberpunk first emerged as a prominent literary movement in the mid-1980s, gaining impetus and credibility primarily through the fictional output of William Gibson. However, the death of cyberpunk was announced soon after, and confirmed with the appearance of Billy Idol's "multimedia" album *Cyberpunk* in the early 1990s, which turned it into "something silly," according to Gibson. For some writers, like Charles Stross, this marked the time "cyberpunk stopped being cool and started being funny" (191). Yet it was around this time that a feature article on cyberpunk appeared in *Time* magazine, hailing it as a new computer and technology-inspired "counterculture ... surfing the dark edges of the

computer age” in terms of “virtual sex, smart drugs and synthetic rock’n’roll” (Elmer-Dewitt 36).¹ Frequent sightings of cyberpunk have been reported ever since, in everything from music raves, to cybergoth clubs, in films like *The Matrix*, and at Japanese *anime* conventions.² The movement, it would seem, has mutated beyond its bounds.

Thus cyberpunk lives on, a mutant and resistant formation. It now holds a rather “anomalous space” in critical debates because of its punk qualities which appeal to the would-be academic rebel and “the über-contemporary sexiness of its language and style” (Gillis 3). In this context, cyberpunk can be further understood as providing an epistemological language or emotional structure for debates concerning the body, the city, and developments in contemporary technology, and to give voice to concerns contained within both modernity and postmodernity.

Fredric Jameson notes cyberpunk “has touched a nerve, struck a chord ... of crucial symptomatic importance in the postcontemporary political unconscious” and shaped our imagination through the accumulation of “various fantasy pictures ... of the global system we blindly inhabit.” As I noted in the introduction, Jameson discusses cyberpunk as “a sequel to naturalism, and as a symptomatic representation of the end of civil society” (*Seeds* 150). Subsequently, he finds cyberpunk is a promising starting point for his definition of “dirty realism,” because it is urban, and thus part of a tradition that can be traced back to French naturalist fiction of the nineteenth century, and because its nightmares are on the point of becoming a new reality.

Jameson cites cyberpunk within a literary tradition, although noting there are “enormous structural and ideological modifications” (*Seeds* 151). In addition, it is now possible to discern first-, second-, and third-generation cyberpunk writers. The core group of first-generation cyberpunk writers comprised William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, John

¹ See Philip Elmer-Dewitt, “Cyberpunk!” *Time* 58-65. The article is placed in the technology section, and features graphics from the magazine *Mondo 2000*, as well as a lexicon of cyberpunk terminology.

² Concerning cyberpunk and rave culture, see Sunaina Maira, “Trance-Formations: Orientalism and Cosmopolitanism in Youth Culture,” Davé, Nishime, and Oren, *East Main Street* 13-31. The cybergoths dance to Electronic Body Music and Futurepop, wearing huge boots, wild hair extensions, goggles, cybernetics, and body modifications in clubs called Slimelight and Cyberkid (www.cybergoth.org.uk). Gibson wrote the preface to the book *The Art of the Matrix*. For Japanese anime, see Jane Chi Hyun Park, “Stylistic Crossings: Cyberpunk Impulses in Anime,” *World Literature Today* 60-63. On Japanese manga, Gibson has commented: “the manga influence on my work has been by osmosis for the most part and through manga’s impact on the world’s pop culture” (Interview, Rapatziko 219).

Shirley, and Rudy Rucker; the expanded circle might include among others Lewis Shiner, Greg Bear, and Pat Cadigan, all of whom became prominent in the 1980s. The only woman writer “officially” associated with this group, Pat Cadigan, who describes herself as “an accidental cyberpunk,” is considered to be one of the most significant, and overlooked, writers of cyberpunk texts.³

Gibson’s fiction still remains the focal point, and most discussion of cyberpunk tends to devolve into a discussion of *Neuromancer*. This novel, which readily attracts phrases such as “pathbreaking,” “seminal,” and “a paradigm text” was published in 1984 to considerable success, winning the Hugo, Nebula, and Philip K. Dick SF awards.⁴ It sparked the cyberpunk movement along with the companion volumes, *Count Zero* (1986) and *Mona Lisa Overdrive* (1988), and a collection of short stories entitled *Burning Chrome* (1986). An anthology of cyberpunk writing, *Mirrorshades* (1986), with an enthusiastic and influential preface by Bruce Sterling, also appeared around this time. The term “mirrorshades” refers to The Mirrorshades Group, an early moniker for the group since they were decked out in mirrorshade sunglasses and black leather jackets. According to Bruce Sterling, mirrored sunglasses were a Movement totem since the early days of 1982 “preferably in chrome and matte black, the Movement’s totem colors” (ix).

Second-generation or “post-cyberpunk” texts include Neal Stephenson’s *Snow Crash*, and are marked by “feminist and queer appropriations of cyberpunk conventions,” for example, Richard Calder’s rewriting of Gibson to emphasize “fetishistic sexual and racial investments in technology” (T. Foster xv). One can add the fiction of Jon Courtenay Grimwood, particularly *NeoAddix* (1997) fiction which has been described as “shocking post-punk.” Third-generation or so-called “post-dotcom” writers, according to Foster might include Charles Stross, Greg Egan, and Ken MacLeod, although in my view Egan is borderline, for he considers himself a writer of “hard science” fiction. Central

³ Pat Cadigan, subsequently designated “the Queen of Cyberpunk,” is certainly the only woman writer who has been regularly associated with cyberpunk, particularly the “second wave” of cyberpunk – written mainly by women which moves “beyond nihilistic anxiety into a new oppositional consciousness” (Baccolini and Moylan 3). That Cadigan contributed the introduction to the recently published *The Ultimate Cyberpunk* collection may signal a recognition of her cyberpunk credentials.

⁴ The Hugo (Gibson, 1985) is a Science Fiction Achievement Award in honor of Hugo Gernsback initiated in 1953 and decided on by amateurs or fans. The Nebula (Gibson, 1984) is given by the Science Fiction Writers of America. The Philip K. Dick SF Awards (Gibson, 1985) was founded in honor of that writer who died in 1982. The latter two categories are voted on by different categories of professional readers.

cyberpunk concerns in novels such as *Quarantine* and *Permutation City* are reinvented to fit into a more scientifically rigorous framework. Stross sees himself as part of a third generation in the cyberpunk “dialogue,” a generation for whom it is no longer necessary to “romanticize cyberspace” (qtd. in Foster xv). This last comment suggests two corollaries: one is the centrality of the concept of cyberspace in cyberpunk; and the other, that earlier conceptions of cyberspace, a term Gibson “invented,” are romanticized to some extent (and, I will argue, orientalist).

One of the far-reaching contributions of cyberpunk, in relation to new technologies, is this influential concept of cyberspace.⁵ Gibson’s novel *Neuromancer* makes an early distinction between the virtual and the physical which, “[i]n the early days of the digital revolution ... were imagined as separate realms – cyberspace and meatspace” (Mitchell 3). Gibson’s “cyberspace” is now a commonly accepted figure and has been influential in terms of “spatial characteristics, metaphors and imagery in new media” (Lister 222). Yet “despite the frequency of its deployment, the term ‘cyberspace’ is slippery and potentially problematic” (Newman 109). Chapter Five of this thesis offers a full analysis of cyberspace.

Although the cyberpunks were initially a movement within science fiction associated with such writers as Gibson, they also “showed increased awareness of the role of media and global capitalism in shaping contemporary life” (Jenkins et al. 23-24). Bruce Sterling recalls in *The Hacker Crackdown* it had a strong following among the “global generation” that had grown up in a world of “computers, multinational networks, and cable television” (146). Their outlook tended to be “morbid, cynical, and dark” and by the late 1980s, had attracted the attention of gaming companies.

In order to pursue these distinctions further and work towards a broader perspective for cyberpunk, my springboard is the “augmented and enlarged concept of

⁵ Gibson’s creation of cyberspace is considered the author’s major contribution to the cyberpunk genre. Newman, for example, writes: “Coined by William Gibson in his novel *Neuromancer*, though developed in ... and modified by a range of ‘cyberfiction’ authors, the term originally referred to the literally immaterial, intangible datascape created by, and accessible via, a network of computers” (109). Certainly the concept of cyberspace was sketched out in earlier stories; but some, like Steven Lisberger, the director of *Tron* (1982) a groundbreaking film representing in parallel physical and virtual spaces of computers and which “arguably set a powerful representation of cyberspace for many ... before they read Gibson” (Kneale 216) have noted the earlier circulation of this term; and for others cyberspace as “a term and a concept seems to have been invented by Bruce Sterling, but to have gained wide currency with the publication of William Gibson’s *Neuromancer*” (Roberts 169).

cyberpunk science fiction” (xi) set out in Thomas Foster’s book *The Souls of Cyberfolk*. Generally, Foster’s categories include the following: the expansion of cyberpunk into a multimedia cultural phenomenon from early 1980’s print science fiction; the “incorporation of issues of gender, queer sexualities, ethnic and racial differences”; and “global economic flows within the conventions established by fiction like Gibson’s” (xi). Working with these categories, it is possible to gauge how cyberpunk has become “a kind of prosthesis, a portable interface of narrative and iconic features that has been productively fused with other youth-culture media and genres” (Latham 237).

My own discussion builds on Foster’s categories selectively, albeit in a different order and with different emphases. Specifically, it pertains to the role of “Japan” and Japanese culture in the formation of cyberpunk, a neglected area in cyberpunk studies. Thus I am less concerned here with situating cyberpunk in existing critical debates on cyberculture than in generating a new contextualization for cyberpunk and Japan that might extend to accommodate cross-cultural and countercultural elements and features.

First, issues of race are primarily those that pertain to representations of Japan and the Japanese, although, as will become apparent, this is imbricated in conceptions of China (Chinatown) and the Chinese, and various threads of Asian culture. Edward Said’s work, in particular *Orientalism* (1978), will provide the framework for investigating these directions further. Moreover, we need to understand what constitutes the wide variety of *hybrid* representations of the Orient which Said notes roam global culture.

Second, as Foster points out, cyberpunk narratives demonstrate “the coimplication of processes of globalization and localization” (204). In my account globalization and global economic flows (and spaces) within the conventions of cyberpunk fiction factor Japan and the Pacific Rim firmly into the global equation. At the same time it is more than just a matter of specific Japanese allusions, or broad figurations of “Japanese space,” as Jameson describes it. Even Sterling’s global paradigm, the “global awareness” and wide-ranging point of view that cyberpunk writers strive for does not capture the full extent of the engagement with Japan.

Third, concerning cyberpunk’s transformation from 1980s print science fiction into multimedia, my focus is twofold, in line with Jameson’s assessment that Gibson’s “representational innovations” occur within a “predominantly visual or aural postmodern

production” (*Postmodernism* 38). One focus is the multimedia (audio-visual) experiments of avant-garde American pop culture, especially in rock music, from the late sixties and early seventies; the other concern, related to this, is the evolution of videogames (and cyberspace) and the emergence of an MTV generation. From this perspective Gibson’s literary project can be seen as a response to and reflection of the impact of digital technologies, particularly between the printed page and the new paradigms of cybertext (the focus on the user). These innovations include similar developments and inflections in Japanese culture.

In the broadest sense pop was the context in which a notion of the postmodern first took shape and the most significant trends within postmodernism have challenged modernism’s relentless hostility to mass culture. A particular focus of this chapter is the relationship between cyberpunk and popular culture. It has been suggested that debates on postmodernism “possess both a positive attraction and a usefulness to the analyst of popular culture” (McRobbie 13). As such, they offer “a wider, and more dynamic, understanding of contemporary representation” and a consideration of “images as they relate to and across each other.” Postmodernism deflects attention away from a singular scrutinizing gaze and replaces it with “a multiplicity of fragmented, and frequently interrupted ‘looks’” (13). Multilayered pop has never signified within one discrete discourse, but instead combines images with performance, music with film or video, and pin-ups with the magazine form itself. There are other complex relations which include its place within the world of commodities, and its audience (consumers, readers, and viewers).

If there is a particular theme or emphasis that ties all these threads together, it is the global flow of visual culture, the ways that images travel in the contemporary context of globalization and diverse media convergence. This concerns how images change meaning when they move between cultures, the role of the Internet and new media, and the challenges these developments signal for thinking about models such as the local and the global. In order to focus and refine these distinctions, I will now look at each of the selected categories in more detail in the following section: racial and cultural difference, globalization, and multimedia.

The Fluidity of Race

Homi K. Bhabha notes in the introduction to *The Location of Culture* that the move away from primary conceptual and organizational categories such as race, class and gender has resulted in an awareness of the ultimately unstable subject positions that inhabit any claim to identity in the world. Bhabha stresses the need to “think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences” (1). These are “in-between” spaces that initiate new signs of identity. How are subjects formed in these interstitial spaces, or “in excess of, the sum of the ‘parts’ of difference” (2)? How do “strategies of representation” come to be formulated where “the exchange of values, meanings and priorities may not always be collaborative and dialogical” (2). Moreover, the borderline engagements of cultural difference which may as often be consensual as conflictual also “realign the customary boundaries between the private and the public, high and low” (2).

Firstly, as far as cyberpunk is concerned, there is the issue of ethnic and racial differences, with a particular emphasis on recognizing “the fluidity of race in its cultural and popular incarnations” (Davé, Nishime, and Oren 9). The authors of *Race in Cyberspace*, for instance, note that “academic work on cyberspace has been surprisingly silent around questions of race and racism” (Kolko et al. 5). They also note the newness of scholarly work in this area, and how the “conversation on cyberculture” has been directed away from questions of race. They find there is very little scholarly work that deals with “how notions of race are shaped and challenged by new technologies such as the Internet” (8). Lisa Nakamura, pointing out that race has often been a neglected aspect of cyberculture theory, finds that Foster’s book on cyberpunk (*The Souls of Cyberfolk*) remedies the gap. As the title suggests, in its reference to W. E. B. Du Bois (“the souls of black folk”), it is primarily concerned with African American culture and “black cyborg characters.” However, although there are discussions of stereotypes concerning Asia therein (in particular with Richard Calder’s fiction, and the work of the Japanese graphic artist Hajime Sorayama) in my opinion there is still a gap, which concerns the role of Japan in cyberpunk.

Japan is William Gibson's "core subject matter" according to fellow cyberpunk Rudy Rucker. And the answer to the question addressed to Rucker in his book *Seek! Selected Nonfiction* by a correspondent, as to why he doesn't write about Japan himself, because Gibson already has, and "he's done it so well ... So I'm resisting the notion of writing about Japan" (16), underlies an assumption that Japan and cyberpunk share common ground.

One of the areas in which Dani Cavallaro's book, *Cyberpunk and Cybercultures: Science Fiction and the Work of William Gibson*, has been found to fall short, by a reviewer in the *Library Quarterly*, is that it does not explore cyberpunk's "powerful fascination with Japanese culture" (387). Finkelstein finds this issue particularly relevant to any analysis of Gibson "given the ambiguous response of the West in the early 1980s to a perceived economic and cultural threat posed by this successful foreign competitor, whose products (cars, electronic goods) and visible acquisition of American cultural industries (film studios, music companies) at one point seemed poised to undermine North American cultural and economic hegemony."

Finkelstein notes that "Going Japanese" was not seen as a good thing. He states that "Gibson's appropriation of this issue was part and parcel of a dark vision of future humanity circulating during the period" (387) in which key cyberpunk works were written. This vision relates to specific anxieties about Asian economic power and U.S. vulnerability, as Japan became the world's largest creditor nation in 1985. Palumbo-Liu has argued that it was the arrival of Asian money and investment, particularly on the West Coast of the United States in the 80s and 90s that forced the US to "adapt somatically and psychically"(qtd. in Feng 158). As one character in Brett Easton Ellis's *American Psycho*, Harold Carnes, opines: "Face it ... the Japanese will own most of this country by the end of the '90s" to which the protagonist Patrick Bateman replies, "Shut up, Carnes, they will *not*" (386).

In a sense, these anxieties are nothing new, and they qualify somewhat Finkelstein's view that Gibson's texts are "clearly rooted" in the 1980s. Asia has been present in the American popular imagination from the onset of European settlement in the Americas: "desire and revulsion are the dialectic that defines America's cultural engagement with Asia" (Lee, Foreword xii). Moreover, Americans have long imagined

the markets of Asia to be the answer to periodic crises in the economy. In the early 1980s the videogame market in the U.S was rescued by Japanese initiatives, but by 1990 Nintendo went head to head with Sega, and controlled 80% of the US market. At the same time, the “racial Other” has continued to be “marked as indelibly foreign” underscoring “America’s contradictory fascination with Asia” (Lee xi-xii). For, as Lee notes, performed Chineseness, Oriental-themed parties, and artifacts of the exotic are one thing, but Asian settlers in America, for instance, are another thing altogether. This might also apply to Japan’s economic rise in the 1980s and its unwelcome reception in the United States.

Specifically, as Jameson notes, but relying heavily on literary analogy, in films like *Blade Runner* (1982) or in Gibson’s novels “the now obligatory Japanese reference also marks the obsession with the great Other, who is perhaps our own future rather than our past, the putative winner in the coming struggle – whom we therefore compulsively imitate, hoping that thereby the inner mind-set of the victorious other will be transferred to us along with the externals” (*Seeds* 155). It is “therefore Japan that is somehow the ‘end of history’ in store for us – and Japanese space, now obscurely valorized by our own anxieties, would seem to share in the general fascination” (156).

Gibson himself has stated: “I’ve always lived in Vancouver ... a Pacific Rim City with a lot of interaction with Japan” (Rapatzikou Interview 219). This means predominantly tourism, business and immigration from the early twentieth century. *Neuromancer*, as does Gibson’s work generally, offers a wide range of particularized references to “Japan” and Japanese commodities, places, and people that fill out this “Japanese space.” There are recognizable Japanese products, ‘real’ (Kirin draft beer, Hitachi pocket calculators, Sony monitors, Honda cars) and appropriated or made-up (Nikon eye transplants, Hosaka computers). A number of Japanese place names also figure strongly in *Neuromancer*, both “real” (Chiba, Tokyo, Yokohama, Harajuku, Shinjuku, Shiga) and “imagined” (Ninsei, the Chatsubo, Baiitsu).

Throughout the novel the Japanese themselves are depicted as neurosurgeons and genetic experts, sarariman (salaried workers), Yakuza, and an assortment of unnamed extras and bit players (shopkeepers, women behind terminals, Japanese girls and boys); they also comprise “the crowd” phenomenon, such as “The crowd ... mostly Japanese.

Not really a Night City crowd. Technos down from the arcologies” (51); people converse “in Japanese.”

This brings a complicated mechanism into the discussion, the stereotype as a representational device. Rey Chow builds on Jameson’s delineation of the stereotype as “an encounter between surfaces rather than interiors” and provides an approach to the issue through the notion of “cross-ethnic representation.” In particular Chow is interested in “how stereotypes duplicate and imitate and what they can tell us about the negative acts that are often attributed to them ... and the assumptions that support such attributions.” I discuss two specific instances of this (the Eurasian, and the Yakuza Assassin) in the thesis.

Thus, rather than only “reading cultural representation for their positive or negative (authentic or inauthentic) portrayals” (and part of this thesis investigates whether this distinction is possible with cyberpunk) I also want to consider the ways in which “these representations function to reiterate, challenge, transform, and/or create cultural norms” (Davé, Nishime, and Oren 8). As Bhabha reminds us, the “terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively.” The representation of difference must not be “hastily read as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition” (2). According to Shilpa Davé, race is “a social construct, a mass fantasy in which we all participate, yet it persists as a constant material force as well as a visceral and lived reality” (Davé, Nishime, and Oren 7-8).

In conclusion here it can be noted that recently, as Robert Lee observes, there has been “a decisive turn toward foregrounding Asian Americans as agents in the production of popular culture” (xiv). In other words, in an era of globalization, Asians and Asian Americans are becoming ubiquitous in American popular culture both as producers and consumers. Globalization has resulted in massive immigration from Asia to North America, and it has been accompanied by intensified transnational cultural practices and cultural hybridities in societies around the world. Thus “race and its cultural meanings remain at the core of globalizing media flows and their local receptions” (Davé, Nishime, and Oren 7). This leads to the next issue raised by Foster and central to the concerns of this thesis, that of global economic flows.

Global Economic Flows and Spaces

Globalization, the name given to the complex relations which characterize the world in the twenty-first century, according to Anthony Giddens, is “political, technological and cultural, and economic” (*Runaway World* 10). It refers to the relentless flow of capital, commodities, and communications across boundaries. At its simplest, according to Bell, globalization refers to the phenomenon of increased international communication, travel and trade, and the spread of different cultures across international and ethnic boundaries. It must be noted at the outset globalization is a contested concept made up of both theoretical and ideological strands, and the “astounding paradox, uncertainty, and irreversibility of the patterns of global emergence” (Urry 12).⁶

Globalization is often taken to mean international *economic* integration. Some commentators thus distinguish between globalization and economic globalization. Globalization in a broad and neutral sense “denotes the phenomenon of increasingly swift and global flows of goods, information, people, services, cultures/subcultures ... and the accompanying deterritorialization, i.e. the emergence of ‘supranational social spaces’.” By contrast, economic globalization denotes “recent advances of Western transnational corporations across the globe, particularly in the last three decades” and the rise of “neo-liberal economic thinking, the liberalization of capital movement and free trade,” as well as phenomena such as “‘McDonaldization’ and growing income inequalities within and between nations” (in George and Page 161-162).

The economic phenomena collectively referred to as globalization are, in summarized form, “the shift to flexible accumulation, the compression of time and space through changes in transportation and communications, [and] mobility of capital and labor” (Lee xiv). Especially, under the impact of new electronic media, “time-space compression” has brought into close contact images, meanings, ways of life, and cultural practices which would otherwise have remained separated.

Bearing in mind, then, that globalization is a “complex set of processes ... that operate in a contradictory or oppositional fashion” (12), and mindful of the distinction

⁶ Urry notes there are five theories of globalization: the structural notion; flows and mobilities (-scapes); as ideology; performance (not so much a cause of other effects, but an effect); and complexity (networks).

between globalization and economic globalization, there are three themes which repeatedly surface, according to Anthony Giddens. One is that globalization essentially advances the interests of the United States and other Western countries. Many of the most visible cultural expressions of globalization are American. Another is the role of big corporations, in other words, multinationalism. Yet another theme concerns “world inequality” (xxi), particularly the inequalities between rich and poor. I will briefly outline the issues related to each of these distinctions, and draw out some parallels with cyberpunk and Japan. To varying degrees, cyberpunk, particularly that of the Gibson variety, reflects these themes, showing an increased awareness of the role of media and global capitalism in shaping contemporary life, and incorporating “Japan, cyberpunk’s strongest network outside the U.S. mother node” (Elmer-Dewitt *Time* 37).

One dominant view of globalization has been to see it as a process of homogenization, that is, the reduction of the world to an American “global village.” The majority of products originate from the US. But the “global economic status of Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, and especially Japan certainly problematizes any straightforward idea of globalization as Americanization ... ‘modernity (or perhaps postmodernity) may perhaps in future be located more in the Pacific than the Atlantic’” (Morley, qtd. in Storey 129). To this list we can now add China and India. Moreover, it should be noted that Americanization is neither a uniform nor a unifying phenomenon. Contextualizing Americanization means analyzing it in relation to other processes, such as democratic modernism or new American cultural imperialism. This is particularly so in terms of the transfer of “American culture” (goods and symbols) to other countries; other countries have taken up and transformed these influences.

Concerning multinationals, McCaffery has commented on the global movement away from local, nationalistic sources of economic and political control toward multinational ones. He finds the expansion of capitalism into its third stage has consolidated multinationalism’s position to such an extent that almost every corner of the globe is “being successfully colonized by, for example, American popular culture” (*Storming* 5). This sentiment finds a clear expression in cyberpunk fiction, for example, in the huge multinational corporations known as Japanese *zaibatsu* that rule the world. In

an interview in 1989, Terry Gross asked Gibson about the role of multinationals in his fiction and he replied:

I think I originally may have gotten that from Thomas Pynchon's view of the Royal Dutch Shell Company in *Gravity's Rainbow*, which is the first time I realized that there were companies that could operate on both sides of the Second World War and merge seamlessly afterwards and still, you know, these are entities outside national boundaries and that always fascinated me. I think multinationals in a sense are like evolved life forms. (Interview, Terry Gross)

There is also a concern with the all-pervading influence of specifically pharmaceutical conglomerates in the film version of *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995).

The extremes between rich and poor are also a feature of the cyberpunk world order. A locus of such extremes in a Gibson short story is the marketplace at Djemaa el Fna, "thick with jugglers, dancers, storytellers, small boys turning lathes with their feet, legless beggars with wooden bowls under animated holograms advertising French software ... bales of raw wool and plastic tubs of Chinese microchips" ("New Rose Hotel" 108). Jameson deems this "the *Blade Runner* syndrome" (157). By this he means the "interfusion of crowds among a high technological bazaar with its multitudinous nodal points, all of it sealed into an inside without an outside, which thereby intensifies the formerly urban to the point of becoming the unmappable system of late capitalism itself" (*Seeds* 157). Thus Los Angeles seems to have migrated to the other side of the Pacific Rim.

The idea of a First World that is neatly demarcated from a Third World no longer makes binary sense in cyberpunk. The First World can be found in the Third, and vice versa. This is conveyed in the depictions of environmental damage on a global scale, figured in the trope of garbage (*gomi*) or trash. The Sprawl is essentially American and stretches from Atlanta to Boston in *Neuromancer*. But Tokyo Bay is part of it: "[t]he last Case saw of Chiba were the dark angles of the arcologies ... the black water and the drifting shoals of waste" (54). Asks the narrator in a rhetorical question in the short story "The Winter Market": "Where does the *gomi* stop and the world begin?" (119). For the

most part, however, the configuration that emerges has more to do with the global social problems of the West. Yet Japan, it would seem, has an important role to play in the elaboration or extrapolation of these concepts.

The canonical features of cyberpunk identified above in the context of globalization readily include, in fact depend on the representation of Japan. It could be countered, why not Korea's multinational *chaebols* in place of Japan's *zaibatsu*; or India's trash problem (a good case for developing an aesthetic of garbage) rather than Japanese *gomi*? Even Gibson's later novel, a meditation on celebrity *idoru* set in Tokyo, might have been set in Thailand (as exemplified in Richard Calder's "post-cyberpunk" works). The "black clinics" of Chiba may be prescient of medical tourism, but the destination for such treatment might well be India and Thailand, not Japan. But in all these cases, Japan and Japanese culture is at the global epicenter. This is because, according to Gibson, if you are of the opinion, as he is, that "all cultural change is technologically driven, you pay attention to the Japanese." Furthermore, "Japan is the global imagination's default setting for the future ... they live in the future" ("Japan's Modern").

The interest here is in the ambiguous (global) role Japan plays in cyberpunk. On the one hand, as Morley and Robins point out, "Japan has become synonymous with the technologies of the future – with screens, networks, cybernetics, robotics, artificial intelligence, simulation" (169). On the other hand, as Giddens notes in a new preface to his book *Runaway World*, globalization has a "dark side." Besides the rise of global terrorism, "world-wide networks involved in money-laundering, drug-running and other forms of organized crime, are all parts of the dark side of globalization" (xvi). Manuel Castells has described the global criminal economy as the "perverse" face of global capitalism and has pointed out that criminal networks are probably in advance of multinational corporations in their decisive ability to combine local identity and global business. Thus the Japanese Yakuza in Gibson's short story "Johnny Mnemonic" are "the world's wealthiest criminal order ... so powerful that it owns comsats and at least three shuttles ... a true multinational" (8), controlling the world's data banks.

A widely-held view of cyberpunk is that it "sketches out the dark side of the technological-fix visions of the future" (Featherstone and Burrows 3). Japan is both a

place of technological enchantment and a lightning rod for the adverse effects of globalization. The future here means technological advancement, but it comes with global social problems. Or does it? Is it enough to account for Japan by saying that what were once regarded as “territorially bounded social problems now have a global dimension” (George and Page 200)? The question remains, then, to what extent are those social problems depicted in cyberpunk and which include “Japan” really part and parcel of a predominately Western vision? A case in point is the traffic and use of drugs, the ultimate commodity as William Burroughs famously put it, and an integral part of cyberpunk fiction, a topic which I take up in chapter two.

Vic George reminds us: “In theory all cultures can appear on the world’s cultural stage and transmit their traits across the globe. In practice, it is mainly western culture in general and American culture in particular that is beamed across the globe today” (21-22). Japan presents something of a paradox. It is frequently described as a nation that is technologically advanced (even if as expert imitators, or bent on economically conquering the world) yet culturally nonmodern.

In summary, globalisation “is led from the west, bears the strong imprint of American political and economic power, and is highly uneven in its consequences” (Giddens *Runaway World* 4). As well, a consideration of the ebb and flow of both homogenizing and heterogenizing forces, and the simultaneous interpretation of the global and the local is paramount. Concerning this, the work of Arjun Appadurai is useful (global flow according to “-scapes”), as it provides an alternative to the traditional model of one-way cultural flow, allowing us to see the complex directions and scope of the global circulation of images and texts.

Multimedia (Sound + Vision)

The global circulation of images draws attention to the transformation of cyberpunk from a literary movement into a multimedia cultural phenomenon. In terms of the “multimedia revolution,” 1984 (the year Gibson’s *Neuromancer* was published) was an important year for the development of multimedia (personal computers). Cyberpunk writers began to use computer-generated worlds as their settings even if, as Gibson has admitted, they did not understand computing.

Foster is concerned with examples of multimedia responses to the original cyberpunk movement in order “to capture the generalization of cyberpunk beyond the limits of print science fiction and into a multimedia cultural formation” (xxix). My focus is more on audio-visual media and cultural performance practices that were formative in cyberpunk.

How do we define multimedia? Mayer finds the term “conjures up a variety of meanings ... as a “live” performance (sitting in a room where images are presented on one or more screens and music or other sounds are presented using speakers); as an online lesson (sitting in front of a computer screen that presents graphics on the screen along with spoken words from the computer’s speakers). A definition of multimedia would be “presenting both words (such as spoken text or printed text) and pictures (such as illustrations, photos, animation, or video)” (Mayer 1). Another definition might include “watching a video on a television screen while listening to the corresponding words, music, sounds.”

There are, I think, two noteworthy aspects of multimedia that have a direct bearing on cyberpunk in terms of visual media and practices of cultural performance. One pertains to music and can be found in the environment of The Factory of Andy Warhol, from the late 1960s, but particularly influential in the 1970s. The “live” performances of the “multi-media assault” (liner notes) that was Warhol’s Exploding Plastic Inevitable, for example, with film projected onto the Velvet Underground and Lou Reed, wearing shades and dressed in black, in concert. Gibson has noted that for him personally, *Neuromancer* had a soundtrack: “*Neuromancer*’s sort of like a Velvet Underground album.” Recalls Gibson: “I had been a lonely Velvet Underground fan since day one” and adds that they were one of the only groups at the time “who captured what was going on right then.”⁷ This topic, (subversive) punk and rock music in the formation of cyberpunk, is explored fully in chapter three. As Sterling notes, cyberpunk comes from “the realm where the computer hacker and the rocker overlap” (*Mirrorshades* xi).

⁷ Interview, Edo Van Belkom 1998. Elsewhere Gibson has commented: “*Neuromancer* was fueled by Joy Division, old Velvet Underground albums, Lou Reed, lots of Steely Dan and there’s textual evidence scattered all through it and Patti Smith too. It had a soundtrack for me” (See interviews at www.addict.com and with the Sandbox Webzine).

McCaffery has noted the importance of the interaction between genre science fiction and the avant-garde (a viewpoint shared by Tatsumi), and finds examples of aesthetically radical science fiction exhibiting many of the features associated with postmodernism as early as the mid-1950s and early 1960s. This was followed in the 1970s and 1980s in the blurring of the boundaries of science fiction and postmodern experimentation, the breakdown of genre boundaries and the separation of pop art from serious art.

Another perspective concerns the evolution of the video game, an “audio-visual spectacle.” Interviewed, Gibson is asked about his inspiration for his cyberspace idea:

I was walking down Granville Street, Vancouver’s version of “The Strip,” and I looked into one of the video arcades. I could see in the physical intensity of their postures how *rapt* the kids inside were. It was like one of those closed systems out of a Pynchon novel: a feedback loop with photons coming off the screens into the kid’s eyes, neurons moving through their bodies, and electrons moving through the video game. These kids clearly *believed* in the space games projected.

(*Storming* 272)

Here Gibson, a late twentieth-century flâneur, comes across the arcade, an amusement parlor located in a seedy part of the city, perhaps, following Jameson, in one of those “forbidden spaces of the new industrial city” (*Seeds* 151) that so mesmerized nineteenth century readers of naturalistic novels. Inside the author finds a new multimedia technology of sound and vision: a coin-operated machine, the videogame console (a prototype for the Ono-Sendai Cyberspace 7 deck in *Neuromancer*). What attracts Gibson’s attention is the electronic participation of the kids who “stood at the consoles” marking a new age in human-machine interfacing. It requires new skills from the participatory culture, hand-eye coordination for example. Success, as James Newman notes in his book on videogames, leads to Gibson’s “joystick riding super-cowboy” status.

Newman concludes that “space is a unifying theme of all videogames” (107). In particular, he finds cyberspace provides a useful frame within which to discuss the space

of videogames. Some cyberspaces are “designed to simulate ‘geographic’ space ... others are not” (109). Part of the pleasure of videogames involves the “transformation of geography itself” (114). Conversely, I would also find that the space of videogames is useful for an understanding of cyberspace, and the ways geography is employed in cyberpunk, Japanese “spaces” which I discuss in detail in Chapter Five.

Videogames “create ‘worlds’, ‘lands’ or ‘environments’ for players to explore, traverse, conquer, and even dynamically manipulate and transform” (Newman 108). The engagement with the videogame simulation as a puzzle demands that the player ‘thinks like a computer.’ This phrase, according to Newman, conjures the imagery of cyberpunk discourse in its apparent “technological determination and anthropomorphism”; it is useful in capturing the sense in which the player is engaged in “looking beyond or behind the audio-visual presentation of the gameworld” (25).

Thus, videogames bring together computing, narrativity, and graphic art. By offering the equivalent of spatial stories, gameworlds present sites imbued with narrative potential. McCaffery notes Gibson’s cyberspace idea “creates a rationale for so many different ‘narrative’ spaces” (272). One such narrative ‘space’ provides the main storyline of *Neuromancer*. The protagonist Case, not unlike Gibson on Granville Street in Vancouver, comes across the twenty-year-old Linda Lee in a tough part of Chiba City, Japan, early on in the novel:

He’d found her, one rainy night, in an arcade ... Under bright ghosts burning through a blue haze of cigarette smoke, holograms of Wizard’s Castle, Tank War Europa, the New York Skyline ... her face bathed in restless laser light, her features reduced to a code. (15)

Linda Lee reappears in one of the last scenes, on the beach (Case is now in cyberspace imagining all this) and the “the emotional crux of the book, its center of gravity” according to Gibson. It is a scene which shows “how distorted everything has become from several different perspectives” (Interview, *Storming* 280). This character is instrumental in bundling together these various perspectives. On one level Linda Lee is a participant in the narrative, caught up in a world of drugs, warning Case of danger. On

another level, Linda morphs into a code: “Her dark hair was drawn back, held by a band of printed silk. The pattern might have represented microcircuits, or a city map” (17). Although the cyborgian Molly Millions will steal the limelight, as Case’s future partner in computer hacking, it is the ‘virtual’ entwinement with “Miss Linda Lee” (11) that structures key parts of the novel. Unlocking the identity of this character, positioned as a kind of avatar, is a concern of this thesis.

Cultural Formations, Conjunctures, Reciprocities

Cyberpunk’s importance is that it experienced a sea change into a more generalized cultural formation. Foster draws on Lawrence Grossberg’s use of the term “cultural formation,” defined as how “a set of cultural practices comes to take on an identity of its own which is capable of existing in different social and cultural contexts” (qtd. in Foster) to account for the elaboration of cyberpunk beyond the boundaries of science-fiction texts to visual media and cultural performance practices. In contrast to “notions of genre, which assume that such identities depend on the existence of necessary formal elements,” a cultural formation is a “historical articulation or organization” of cultural practices (69-70). The question is how certain cultural practices, “which may have no intrinsic or even apparent connection, are articulated together to construct an apparently new identity” (70). According to Foster, who finds that Bruce Sterling’s cyberpunk vocabulary of “integration” functions as a popular version of “articulation theory,” argues that this resulted in cyberpunk “provid[ing] a popular framework for conceptualizing new relationships to technology” (xvi).

Genre needs to be addressed in more detail, which I consider in the final section of this chapter (and here Ken Gelder’s work on popular fiction will prove useful). Bruce Sterling has pointed out that cyberpunk is a “natural extension of elements already present in science fiction” (*Mirrorshades*). Which elements, we can ask? It derives from a new set of starting points, “not from the shopworn formula of robots, spaceships and the modern miracle of atomic energy” (Preface *Burning Chrome* xi). Sterling contends that cyberpunk has arisen within the science fiction genre, “it is not an invasion, but a modern reform” (*Mirrorshades* xiii). In an interview, Gibson remarked: “The original cyberpunk impulse was to shatter genre, to operate across borders of genre. The impulse

was violative, transgressive, and ... fun. We felt, with some justification, quite subversive.”⁸ Which genres, we can ask?

What becomes apparent is that cyberpunk is an “intervention” in science fiction, and the cyberpunk “impulse” is very much to “cannibalize and reconstruct in a classic postmodernist way” (Ross *Strange Weather* 146). Writers like Gibson could adeptly “appropriate a whole range of contemporary cultural material, a seemingly indiscriminate collage of borrowings, a world made from the fragments of other worlds” (Sponsler). One of the things that makes Gibson’s work so effective is the way he can take very “disparate elements and weave them together” (Sterling Interview, *SF Eye* 35). And to do this effectively, one needs to be, in the words of John Shirley, “culturally online.” This means mainly access to and familiarity with, and immersion in popular culture, contemporary youth lifestyles, and music. Shirley has stated his own interest was “finding ways to felicitously fuse incongruous genres” and he was influenced by music “which juxtaposed seemingly disparate music types into one overall sonic experience” (99), i.e. punk rock. Thus my concern especially in Chapter Three with the “rock formation” to explore these links further.

Generally, Foster’s project is to recontextualize cyberpunk as an “intervention” in the definition of the human, and in a set of other posthuman discourses and speculative cultures. Cyberpunk is “an intervention in and inflection of a preexisting discourse, which cyberpunk significantly transformed and broadened, providing a new basis for the acceptance of posthuman ideas in contemporary American popular culture” (xiii).

My focus is Japan’s role in the elaboration of this particular “mobile cultural formation” (xviii). However, in exploring this further, significantly my concern is less with the injection of posthuman ideas into contemporary popular culture via cyberpunk, and more with how American (and Japanese) popular culture formations have provided the springboard for the larger, sophisticated patterns that define cyberpunk. Lawrence Grossberg points out, in *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*, popular culture is “increasingly visible, not only as an economic force, but as ... one of the primary ways in which people make sense of themselves, their lives and the world” (69). In the mapping of popular culture formations, Grossberg notes:

⁸ Interview, Dike Blair 1995.

one must look elsewhere, to the context, the dispersed but structured field of practices in which the specific articulation was accomplished and across which it is sustained over time and space ... the formation has to be read as the articulation of a number of discrete series of events, only some of which are discursive ... Through such a mapping, one can understand not only the emergence of a particular cultural formation, but its possible transformations and deployments. (70)

Looking elsewhere, to the “dispersed” and “structured” field of cultural practices, I explore the transformations and deployments peculiar to cyberpunk with respect to Japan, and through the lens of popular culture. I would remark that the term “formation” seems to imply a certain amount of order and coherence. But the anthropologist Clifford Geertz reminds us, culture is a “a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit” (5). However, Grossberg’s term “conjuncture” is useful in developing the notion of a complex cultural formation. A conjuncture is a description of “a social formation as fractured and conflictual, along multiple axes, planes and scales, constantly in search of temporary balances or structural stabilities through a variety of practices and processes of struggle and negotiation” (Grossberg *We Gotta* 4).

Cyberpunk is very much a “pop phenomenon: spontaneous, energetic, close to its roots” and marked by its “willingness to carry extrapolation into the fabric of daily life” (*Mirrorshades*). In the introduction to *Hop on Pop*, a book devoted solely to popular culture in order to provide “a manifesto for a new cultural studies” (Jenkins et al.1), the authors takes up cyberpunk as an appropriate point of reference. Like the cyberpunks, they are “interested in the everyday, the intimate, the immediate”; like the cyberpunks, popular culture can be studied on its own terms. They characterize cyberpunk “as an intervention in SF” which showed the role of media and global capitalism in shaping contemporary social life. They note that, although cyberpunk has most often been considered a form of postmodern fiction (the subtitle of a recent study of cyberpunk is “at

the intersection of science fiction and postmodernism”) there is a need to pay attention to “subcultural resistance and appropriation.”

Popular culture should be understood as “configurations that are neither smooth nor always obvious” (1) and requires “a mindset that can handle such complexity and even contradiction.” It is the site of a “dynamic process – a zone of interaction, where relationships are made and unmade to produce anything from meaning to pleasure, from the trite to the powerful.” (There are three aspects to such a study of popular culture: as a product of industry, an intellectual object of inquiry, and an integral component of people’s lives.) Moreover, cultural studies has gone beyond the originary terrain of cultural studies and addressed various postmodern problematics; and popular culture, once the focus mainly of intersections of “high” and “low,” is now concerned with cultural identities, race and ethnicities, and global culture.

Thus, in dealing with the unstable and ever shifting terrain of popular culture, Shilpa Davé argues for a reconceptualization of popular culture through a consideration of cross-cultural influences and global cultural trends. This is because of recent developments in global immigration flows, accelerated cross-cultural mixing, and local changes within Asian cultural production outside and (increasingly) within mainstream popular culture. These changes are evident in the “new visibility of Asian film, music, video games, and anime” which have “thoroughly saturated the U.S. cultural landscape to become part of the vernacular of popular culture” (Davé, Nishime, and Oren 1). In conceptualizing Asian American cultural presence in a trans-Asia and dynamic context, the centrality of the popular, mainstream culture in understanding “the particular complexity of Asian American identity in a contemporary, increasingly global environment that often feels inflected with ‘Asianness’” (4) has been noted. That is, the pervasive popularity of Asian accents and influences within popular culture, particularly in the US.

From the above consideration of the Asian American experience, a number of corresponding points relevant to this thesis can be made: one is the “uneven exchange between popular and Asian American culture” (3); another concerns the ways in which Asian American identity has been transformed by the “increasingly porous boundaries between America and Asia” (5); then there is the phenomena of “counterflows.” All this

has “implications for traditional conceptions of both Orientalism and the opposition of the global and local” (5). We need to consider the ways in which Asians consume and rework images, and this applies no less to the topic of cyberpunk and Japan.

2. A Journey to the East

Stuart Hall has pointed out the need to write autobiographically “not in order to ‘(seize) the authority of authenticity,’ but in order *not* to be authoritative.” Hall offers parts of his story as “a way of illuminating not simply his own autobiography, but also the diasporic experience itself” (Morley and Chen 13).

My own Japan experience, which concerns East-West encounters, expectations, and reciprocities relevant to this thesis, is at the personal level and the institutional level. I first went to Japan in the mid-1980s, and, except for a 2-year break, have lived there ever since, a period of over twenty years. At the outset, I would stress the unevenness and contradictory nature of this experience, the strange irregularities which complicate any straightforward approach to the specific issues I have raised so far: namely, of race, globalization, and media flows. This outlook also frames the discussion on Edward Said’s *Orientalism* that follows. In this section I also background my interest in Gibson’s fiction. Finally, it may be, as Doreen Massey points out, “too easy for critical intellectuals to focus on questions of personal – internal – identity and memory, on the West and the cities in which the authors live.” Although in what follows I may also seem to be preoccupied or overly concerned with questions of personal identity, this is I think compensated for by an alternative focus, on the East and the city in which I have found myself living in for the last two decades, Tokyo.

The Institutional Dimension

Edward Said famously began his book on Orientalism with a quotation: “The East is a career” and I find my own story is no exception. My first encounter with Japan in the mid-1980s was motivated by the opportunity to take up a position in a university. Said qualifies his statement by adding that it meant “that to be interested in the East was something bright young Westerners would find to be an all-consuming passion” and

“should not be interpreted as saying that the East was *only* a career for Westerners.” Thus the “statement about the East refers mainly to that created consistency, that regular constellation of ideas as the pre-eminent thing about the Orient” (5). The correct focus is the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient (the East as career) “despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a ‘real’ Orient.”

Although this career opportunity presented itself unexpectedly, it was the catalyst that brought me face to face with a more “real” Orient than I had imagined so far. The recruiting person, a New Zealand teacher returning from Japan after seven years, and hired to sort out suitable candidates, hardly glancing at my CV on the table, informed me I would need a “sunny, patient personality” as well as the ability to keep myself interested and motivated in the teaching of English classes. This offer coincided with a growth in interest in Japan in the 1970s in New Zealand (at university level, Business Administration courses were tagged with Japanese language classes), and a difficult economic situation in the early 1980s. The higher profile of Japan around the Pacific Rim was beginning to percolate through.⁹ There was also the rise of “global English” or the “globalization of English” with advertisements for ESL teachers to earn what seemed at the time high remuneration in Japan. (Nowadays this has been largely supplanted by South Korea and China; the advertisements for Japan are specialized around JET programs and Nova language schools).

Since taking up the recruiter’s offer, meeting the Japanese professor responsible for arranging my position, then arriving in Japan, employment in the university system has been the mainstay of my work experience in Japan. From the mid 1990s a tenured position at Komazawa University in Tokyo, in the Department of English and American Literature (Eibeibungakuka), has provided economic support (including for this thesis, begun during a sabbatical period spent in New Zealand).

One first and lasting impression that has a bearing on this thesis, recapping the Gidden’s quotation earlier, was “the strong imprint of American political and economic power and culture” (4) on Japan. By this I mean American culture, either filtered through Japanese culture, or directly working with American foreign teachers in Japan primarily,

⁹ Vancouver, a Pacific Rim country experienced a tsunami of Asian investment over the last two decades. Gibson’s wife Deborah was engaged in teaching English to Japanese businessmen. According to Tatsumi, this is how Gibson gets access to “postmodern Japanese vocabulary” (“Waiting for Godzilla” 232).

when I first arrived – coupled with a strong expectation to act “American” (“Are you American?” is as commonly asked as “Where are you from?”), to exhibit American accents and gestures, use American textbooks in the classroom, and plug in to the students’ “knowledge” of American culture (i.e. American popular culture). There have been significant divergences over the last decade (the Korean boom, China, Australasia).¹⁰ But even now, “Tokyo serves up a substantial dose of American culture, particularly to its youth.” Sometimes it’s authentic, sometimes not. Less important than authentic American origin is “the whiff of American cool” (McGray 45).

Nowhere was this more apparent than the classroom environment, the first anecdote I will discuss. But in ways that were often contradictory, and even surprising. For instance, a student making a short speech to the class on the topic of movies had chosen *Pearl Harbor*. After recounting the aspects of the love story in impressive detail, the student turned to me and asked: “who are the Americans fighting?” This is not to suggest that Japanese students are uninformed about the Pacific War, or are unable to express it, but that information is mediated through movies (much attention was given by Hollywood to producing a muted and toned down version of *Pearl Harbor* to make it marketable in Japan) and music and other forms, and that the American perspective is a built-in component of this. For instance, how you “see” an actor like Keanu Reeves, associated with cyberfilms like *The Matrix* and Gibson and Longo’s *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995) depends on a mediated viewpoint to some extent: as a quintessentially cool American Hollywood star or an Asian American.¹¹

This positioning of America has repercussions for understanding race. A student writing a thesis on race relations proposed that “Japan is a racially homogeneous nation and there is no big problem about discrimination. But recently many foreigners have been visiting Japan and sometimes they make trouble here and there.” This is a common view. Yet this particular type of illogical perception is not confined to Japan or “homogeneous” nations. The *Strait Times* (Singapore) reported recently Auckland is caught in the middle of an “Asian” crime wave. That perception stemmed from a spate of news reports on

¹⁰ The list of universities that Komazawa University, for example, has exchange relations with at various levels, which began with two North American universities, now includes: France, Australia, China, and Korea.

¹¹ See Leilani Nishime, “Guilty Pleasures: Keanu Reeves, Superman, and Racial Outing,” Dave, Nishime, and Oren 273-91.

methamphetamine smuggling, prostitution, kidnap and murder. But while Asians make up 30% [sic] of Auckland's population, they account for only 6% of criminal offenders. "We have repeated this over and over again," said the spokesperson.

Similar kinds of "exchange" around perceptions of race take place frequently in the pages of the newspaper the *Daily Yomiuri*, such as a letter to the editor on supposed discrimination directed against a foreign teacher of English in middle school. A self-described "black" male replied (noting also his wife as Japanese) and, assuming the writer of the letter to be Caucasian, points out that some are more comfortable in Japan than their own country "if you accept you will always be a gaijin," and concludes, "Welcome to my world," the world of the minority. More letters to the editor followed, dividing into two well-established camps: "Racism in schools shows Japan refuses to change" versus "For some non-Japanese, this country is utopia" (30 March 2006).

Turning to music, in *Metropolis*, an English language magazine in Japan, we read that it is "obvious from a quick flick of the remote or radio dial, hip-hop is huge in Japan" (17) as promoters set about organizing an international hip-hop festival.¹² What kind of "hip-hop" is it? Authentic? It's "hip-hop with a different interpretation." Near the back page, in *Metropolis* mailbox, someone who has been visiting Japan for ten years was less impressed: "I have never experienced so much hostility as on this last and final trip. People were openly rude for no apparent reason ... Perhaps it was because I'm from the US or because I am African-American." His exhortation: "Open your eyes to all the hip-hop, dancehall and R&B, cornrows, afros, dreadlocks and braids. Why copy what you fear?" (60). In the same month Michael Jackson, a 1980s symbol of cool, on a promotional visit to Japan, can tell an adoring audience how kind they are, how much he loves them.

These kinds of transactions are never quite smooth, more often than not contradictory: the lines between American and "American" culture in Japan, between "cool" and "authentic" and "imitative," are blurred ones at best. As noted, Americanization is neither a uniform nor unifying phenomenon. My purpose in recounting these incidents is to show at the outset that, with language and cultural

¹² "Our group has a style that's very much characteristic of Japanese hip-hop. We are very Japanese in the way we do it ... our hip-hop is completely different from U.S. hip-hop, but it's still very much hip-hop. It's hip-hop with a different interpretation" (*Daily Yomiuri* 30 March 2006).

differences, interactions are more often than not, recalling Geertz, “strange, irregular and inexplicit.” In a country where *Little Black Sambo* remains a best-selling children’s book, and the film *Lost in Translation*, despite criticism of its stereotypical depiction of the Japanese, is a longseller at my local video store, and enthusiastically used in the class of one of my Japanese colleagues, speaking “for” or “against” Japan is fraught with difficulties. I don’t think it is useful to take up a position of “speaking for” Japan – and against Gibson as a writer who can only be understood within an Orientalist context, and thereby compiling a long list of Orientalist images in cyberpunk.

The next anecdote I want to consider concerns an academic conference, on visual-verbal forms and multimedia. At a conference in Los Angeles (on multimedia) on Visual Cultures I gave a presentation on anime to illustrate multi-media using different conjunctions of language (English-Japanese) and graphics. After the presentation, I was approached by a number of participants. One PhD candidate at an Irish University was baffled but excited by the images used in the presentation (a radical re-imagining of the crucifixion scene, from the Japanese anime *Neon Genesis Evangelion*) and wanted to get hold of such materials for tutoring Medieval Gothic classes; another participant, an art teacher from the Los Angeles region, wondered whether I could visit his school to teach the art form of anime!

There were also Japanese professors in the audience, one of whom had this to say: why do you show such violent anime? Which means, why are you choosing this art form to represent Japan? It is worth noting that, at that time, anime was not considered a worthy topic for academic study – and still isn’t in my own department, dedicated to teaching the English Literature canon from Chaucer to Faulkner. This was before anime had gained respectability and even government approval, as has recently been the case, when the then Foreign Minister Taro Aso endorsed Japanese popular culture, and anime in particular, as part of a strategy to market Japan globally.¹³ Another Japanese professor was more ameliorating: your role is that of a mediator. He further advised: on such occasions in the future you should present in tandem with a Japanese teacher.

¹³ Taro Aso, in a Government White Paper released by the Foreign Ministry, “will launch a new effort in cultural diplomacy, making use of the growing popularity of Japan’s pop culture, including manga, animation, and music.” Taro Aso is “an admitted manga buff” (*Daily Yomiuri* 8 May 2006:1).

I found myself oddly positioned, an expatriate New Zealander relaying the culture of another culture. Thus my position as a mediator, neither inside Japan, nor outside Japan; given the twenty years I have lived in this country, what does this mean?

An expatriate Japanese writing a column on crosscultural exchanges in the *Daily Yomiuri* newspaper described himself as an “insider outside,” which means “the insider’s knowledge of someone who was born and raised in Japan, and the outsider’s insight as an American-trained cultural anthropologist” (*Daily Yomiuri* 18 May 2006). Is this different to being an “outsider inside”? Are these demarcations useful? Edward Said located himself in what he calls an interstitial space (between a Palestinian colonial past and an American imperial present), an in-between space. Or is Stuart Hall’s “familiar stranger” a more accurate designation:

the experience of being inside and outside, the ‘familiar stranger’. We used to call that ‘alienation’, or deracination. But nowadays it’s come to be the archetypal late-modern condition. Increasingly, it’s what everybody’s life is like. So that’s how I think about the articulation of the postmodern and the postcolonial. Post-coloniality, in a curious way, prepared one to live in a ‘postmodern’ or diasporic relationship to identity. Paradigmatically, it’s a diasporic experience. Since migration has turned out to be *the* world-historical event of late modernity, the classic postmodern experience turns out to be the diasporic experience. (Qtd. in Morley and Chen 490).

In order to explore more fully what it might mean being a “familiar stranger” and to live in a “postmodern or diasporic relationship to identity,” I will now turn to a more personal note. For, it may be, as Hall theorizes, a case of how structural conditions (colonization and decolonization) come to shape one’s subjectivity. There is, then, a need to take into account such “neo-colonial structures.” To what extent did my experience in New Zealand somehow set the stage for my journey to and subsequent experience in Japan, creating that “constellation of ideas” Said refers to as being the “pre-eminent thing” about the Orient?

The Personal Dimension

Said points out the “internal consistency” of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient “despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a ‘real’ Orient” (5). This Orient is “a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (1). I can counter that the more mundane experiences that accumulate in the face of work, marriage, and children over a twenty-year period in an “actual” Orient modify this to a certain extent. But they don’t dispel the former “place” completely.

I had only begun to study Japanese a year or so before leaving for Japan. My intention, in line with the opportunity to teach at a university for two years, was to stay for that period. However employment opportunities continued to present themselves; and I got married in 1990 and settled down in Tokyo on a more permanent basis. We now have three children, and in a strange twist of fate, my family is resident in New Zealand for education purposes, while I continue to work in Japan, returning to New Zealand whenever possible.

Looking back, I’m not completely sure what constituted my knowledge and therefore expectations of the Orient before I arrived. But taking Clifford Geertz’s salient point in *Local Knowledge*:

The tracing out of the way in which our sense of ourselves and others – ourselves amidst others – is affected not only by our traffic with our own cultural forms but to a significant extent by the characterization of forms not immediately ours by anthropologists, critics, historians, and so on, who make them, reworked and redirected, derivatively ours. (8-9)

We can add novelists (like Gibson), musicians, graphic artists, and filmmakers to the list. What is “derivatively” mine with respect to Japan? There are perhaps four categories: fiction, art, music, and film. First, I would say I was “preconditioned” by an array of popular “Orientalist” novelists, such as Somerset Maugham, the short stories set in the Far East, *The Razor’s Edge*, and Hermann Hesse on India, *Siddhartha*. On reflection, Maugham’s Far East stories inevitably begin in a colonized space, on the

verandah of some European club which faces the sea; a native boy brings a tray of gin and bitters to the novelist and his white informant, a civil servant in spotless ducks and white shoes ready to make up a four for a game of bridge; the subsequent narrative then dwells on themes of misadventure, miscegenation, and moral decline (of the British character): “he had lived in the East a long time and his sense of honour was not as acute as it had been twenty years before.”

Then there were artworks, like *The Green Lady* by Vladimir Tretchikoff, hanging in the waiting room of a dentist in the suburban town where I grew up; and artifacts, the carved elephants from India on my grandfather’s mantelpiece.¹⁴ The painter Tretchikoff has also recorded his singular obsession with finding a model “to show how East and West could complement each other” (Tretchikoff and Hocking 128). Inevitably he found one, a Eurasian: “She was exactly what I had been looking for. Not European, not Malay, but that intricate blend of the East and the West, the mixing of blood which produces the most beautiful of the world’s women, the accident of birth which symbolizes the whole conflict of civilization” (128).

Another preconditioning influence is music. David Sylvian and the band *Japan* (“Life in Tokyo”) who, after an accidental encounter with the East, developed an almost mournful fascination with the Orient followed by their rapid embrace of Oriental sounds and culture. David Bowie’s long-standing preoccupation with the East and Japan is discussed fully in Chapter Three. In addition, there were the music media events, such as the saga of Yoko Ono, the Beatles in India.

Especially a stream of films, from the 1950s onwards: the Han Suyin romance made into a film, *Love is a Many Splendoured Thing* (1952), and *The World of Suzie Wong*; James Bond disguised by prosthetic make-up as a Japanese fisherman, donning a kimono and “marrying” a Japanese woman in *You Only Live Twice* in the 1960s; *Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence*, and in the 1980s, *Blade Runner* (1982). There is no doubt an element of fascination derived from these kinds of works that propels one to the East. It may be deep-seated. As has been suggested, the popular vogue of *chinoiserie* in earlier

¹⁴ See Wayne Hemingway, *Just Above the Mantelpiece: Mass-Market Masterpieces* (London: Booth-Clibborn, 2000). Tretchikoff was a best-selling print artist worldwide and the image of the Chinese girl, the “Green Lady,” as recognizable as the Mona Lisa and a print that is still one of the top three best-selling prints ever. Also known as “The Yellow Lady,” these green- and blue-skinned ‘Asian’ women framed many Australian living room walls, according to Alison Broinowski.

times marked a desire among those of a different disposition to be released from the pressures of a Christian society or a questioning of its Christian tenets.

However, I would not say that at any stage the East, or Japan was an “all-consuming passion” in Said’s sense of the phrase. But, running concurrently to the above, and pertaining more specifically to Japan, there was a dimly comprehended aesthetic quality stemming from pictorial sources (Buddhist temples, Zen gardens, art of the *Japonisme* type), translations in English of the literary works of primarily Yukio Mishima, and Kawabata Yasunari, and films often seen at film festivals (Kurosawa Akira). All this was compounded by a derivative or vicarious experience of Japan and the East through time spent in San Francisco. Exposure to a different language in the form of Japanese teachers, and exchange students, as I noted was minimal.

Thus, at the outset, Japan for me, would comprise mainly “lyrical notions of romance, melancholia, travel and escape” (Power 58) and these in sum are the hallmarks of classic Orientalist discourse, derived from mainstream and popular culture. The films I saw, the music I listened to, the books I read, the art I viewed – it’s not far removed from Oscar Wilde’s prescient observation of a century ago: “The whole of Japan is a pure invention – there is no such country, there are no such people.” Gazing upon the “Green Lady,” the figure represents an exotic, far-away country that most people dream of visiting but never will.

However I wouldn’t claim that the books, music, and films like *Blade Runner* (1982) sent me to Japan, as some do. But they played a part. Nor was I overly disappointed, as some are, that the Japan I eventually inhabited did not match any of these prior expectations. Whether or not Shinjuku is a street scene from *Blade Runner*, as Gibson remarked, is of little consequence when you live there, although it doesn’t mean I can’t appreciate the comparison. After twenty years, it is safe to say Japan is no longer a pure invention. There is less romance, the beings are not so exotic, the landscapes more familiar, and experiences more mundane. Another Japan has superimposed itself. I can watch Sofia Coppola’s film *Lost in Translation* with a certain amount of amusement and detachment. A Western-style postmodernized relationship (time and space compression) made more melancholic by being set in Tokyo, the night city *par excellence*.

Clifford Geertz in an essay entitled “Found in Translation” describes what culture explainers of all sorts claim they can do for us as “translation.” He finds that although “obviously much is lost in this, much also, if ambiguous and troubling, is found. The reshaping of categories ... so that they can reach beyond the contexts in which they originally rose and took their meaning so as to locate affinities and mark differences is a great part of what ‘translation’ comes to in anthropology.” Hall adopts the term “re-translation” (Morley and Chen 393). Culture is “to live with the tension of the two vocabularies of the two unsettled objects of analysis and try to read the one through the other, without falling into psychoanalytic readings of everything” (406). The trick is still, as Geertz notes, being able to see ourselves as “a case among cases, a world among worlds” (16).

It was in the mid 1990s that I was looking for books to review (a spin-off from connections in the university) on Japan for *The Japan Times*, and came across William Gibson’s *Idoru* (1995) in Kinokuniya Bookstore, Shinjuku. Reading it, and knowing nothing about Gibson or cyberpunk for that matter, produced a curious response (I was not one of those, like Rudy Rucker who, arriving in Tokyo for the first time, exclaimed: “It’s all so cyberpunk!”).¹⁵ On the one hand, it revived some familiar “lyrical notions” of a particular kind of Japan that I have described above, a Japan and an Orient that is “derivatively ours,” and that still can hold appeal. On the other hand, I was struck by how different this Japan was to the “actual” Japan I had been living in since the mid 1980s.

In the novel Tokyo is presented as the epicenter of a (Western) postmodern urban culture. As Giddens puts it, celebrity is a product of new communications technologies; so Gibson’s “idoru” is a meditation on this phenomenon, presenting an entirely virtual media star named Rei Toei, a mysterious “saucer-eyed” entity, adored by all Japan. But “She is not flesh; she is information ... Looking at her face would trigger it again; she was some unthinkable volume of information.” There’s even a famous rock musician called Rez, one half of the band Lo/Rez, on the verge of marrying her. But how is this possible, when she doesn’t physically exist?

¹⁵ Rucker writes: “On the street we get lost, gawking at the huge electric signs ... story-high electric letters that mean nothing to you. Pure form, no content ... I saw ... a solidly building-lined canal leading out to the Tokyo Bay, and I thought of *Neuromancer*” (208).

The novel posed a number of questions. Was I completely out of touch, living in a Tokyo suburb, with the global postmodern “high tech” Tokyo which Gibson’s novel portrayed in a consistently knowledgeable way? Is the novel a new postmodern reading and positioning of Japan, or familiar orientalism in a postmodern guise? Giddens has made the point that nowadays “in a globalizing world, where information and images are routinely transmitted across the globe, we are all regularly in contact with others who think differently, and live differently from ourselves” (4). Does this make Orientalism obsolete, or reinforce certain trends, like stereotyping? How does this impact on the way we receive and understand other cultures? Before considering these points in more detail, I will now turn to Gibson’s relation with Japan.

Default Settings: William Gibson and Japan

Gibson has stated clearly that he had never been to Japan when he wrote *Neuromancer*. Subsequently he has made a number of short visits beginning in 1986. He has written and commented widely on Japan in different platforms, like newspapers, interviews, and feature articles. As Geertz notes, particularly in the modern (postmodern) world, “very little that is distant, past, or esoteric that someone can find something out about goes undescribed and we live immersed in meta-commentary” (9).

The novel *Idoru* (1997) completes a particular cycle on Japan that began with *Neuromancer*. Set in Tokyo, Gibson’s novel deals with the phenomenon of stardom and the world of virtual idols, and offers some interesting insights into the relation of technology and representation, the formation and identity of “virtual constructs,” and the increasingly blurred lines between popular and literary works. In the middle of the novel, the protagonist Colin Laney finally comes face to face with Rei Toei, a virtual idol adored by all Japan: “If he’d anticipated her at all, it had been as an industrial-strength synthesis of Japan’s last three dozen top female media faces” (229). However, he discovers that this idol was nothing like that:

Her black hair, rough-cut and shining, brushed pale bare shoulders as she turned her head. She had no eyebrows, and both her lids and lashes seemed to have been

dusted with something white, leaving her dark pupils in stark contrast. And now her eyes met his. He seemed to cross a line. (230)

Subsequently he finds the “eyes of the idoru, envoy of some imaginary country” (230), that she is a sort of hologram, something “generated, animated, projected” (231) which absorbs images and data into itself, a data flow. Looking into the idoru’s face, Laney discovers “she is not flesh; she is information ... an Antarctica, of information (232). Later he recognizes that her only reality is “the realm of ongoing serial creation”. She is described by another pop star as “Entirely *process*; infinitely more than the combined sum of her various selves. The platforms sink beneath her, one after another, as she grows denser and more complex” (267).

Yet are these “idoru,” the wholly lifelike “synthetic performers” of Gibson’s more recent cyberpunk fiction qualitatively different from, say, the Oriental creations of Gustave Flaubert in the nineteenth century, such as Salammbô and Salomé (based on the famous Egyptian dancer and courtesan Kuchuk Hanem) from Orientalism’s cultural repertoire (see Said *Orientalism* 187), or Princess Fatima (a character from the *Arabian Nights*) in Hermann Hesse’s *The Journey to the East* in the twentieth century?¹⁶ Even the aforementioned paintings of Tretchikoff would seem apposite: “the most striking girl I had seen in Java. She was Eurasian, about my height with fine black hair to her shoulders ... But what riveted me to the spot were her eyes, jet black and with pupils so big ... She was looking straight at me” (Tretchikoff and Hocking 126).

How, then do we finally account for Gibson? First there are Japanese products, places and people “scattered” throughout his work. In particular, the Eurasian, a hybrid of sorts that has a firm footing in imperial and colonial discourse, is also a prominent figure in Gibson’s fiction. Moreover, when interviewed by Larry McCaffery and asked about the “dance of data” metaphor in *Neuromancer*, suggesting “a familiarity with the interactions between Eastern mysticism and modern physics,” Gibson replied he was

¹⁶ The protagonist of Hesse’s novel (which ranges freely across space and time) sets out on a specific Oriental quest: “My own journey and life-goal, which had coloured my dreams since my late boyhood, was to see the beautiful Princess Fatima and, if possible, to win her love” (10). This takes on a more generalized significance, which is consistent with the logic of orientalist discourse identified by Said: “For our goal was not only the East, or rather our East was not only a country and something geographical, but it was the home and youth of the soul, it was everywhere and nowhere, it was the union of all times” (24).

aware “the image of the dance was part of Eastern mysticism, but a more direct source was John Shirley who ...wrote me a letter that described the thing about proteins linking” (*Storming* 273-74).¹⁷ McCaffery notes that Gibson employs this metaphor of the “dance” for everything “from the interaction of subatomic particles to the interactions of multinational corporations” (15). Perhaps Gibson, like Hesse before him, found “in Eastern thought more room for his imagination” as one of his biographers put it, in order to reframe age-old binaristic quandaries such as reality/illusion, or life/death.

At the same time, as Darko Suvin notes: “Gibson’s views of Japan are inevitably those of a hurried if interested outsider who has come to know the pop culture around the Tokyo subway stations of Shibuya, Shinjuku, and Harajuku.” Yet Suvin also maintains “there is a deeper justification, a geopolitical or perhaps geoeconomical and psychological logic” (*Storming* 353). It is this logic that I will now consider through closer attention to the work of Edward Said.

3. Said and Orientalism, Cyberpunk and Orientalia

Said’s book *Orientalism* is a study of how Europe constructed a stereotypical image of “the Orient.” Far from simply reflecting what countries of the Near East were actually like, “Orientalism” was the discourse “by which European culture was able to manage – and even produce – the Orient.” Said has subsequently noted that “Neither the term Orient nor the concept of the West has an ontological stability; each is made up of human effort, partly affirmation, partly identification of the Other” (*Orientalism* xvii).

Referring to nineteenth-century academic Orientalists, Said outlines a number of recurring features: they were interested in the classical period of whatever language or society it was that they studied and not much attention was given to the “modern, or actual, Orient.” Furthermore, it was a “textual universe” made up of books and manuscripts. When a “learned Orientalist” did travel in the country of his specialization, it was more or less to prove the validity of the “truths” he had discovered beforehand. Finally, Orientalism gave rise to a “second-order knowledge” (52), a “free-floating

¹⁷ There were a number of books written in the late sixties and early seventies linking Eastern thought and Western science, with titles such as: *The Tao of Physics*; *The Dancing Wu-Li Masters*; *Stalking the Wild Pendulum*; *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*.

mythology of the Orient” that “derives from” among other things, “contemporary attitudes and popular prejudices” (53).

My approach is to focus and elaborate on two key ideas that I find relevant to this particular thesis. One concerns Said’s concept of “imaginative geography”; the other is “American Orientalism” (Said’s term) from the Second World War onwards, highlighting America’s “contradictory fascination with Asia.” Said has pointed out the “increasing misrepresentation and misinterpretation” of his book. Keeping this in mind, I want to consider a number of extensions and modifications in line with the three areas of interest I outlined at the beginning of this chapter: race, global flows, and multimedia. This comes under the umbrella term “postmodern orientalism.”

The first qualification concerns race in relation to the “electronic postmodern world” which Said finds reinforces stereotypes of the Orient. According to Said:

If the world has become immediately accessible to a Western citizen living in the electronic age, the Orient too has drawn nearer to him, and is now less a myth perhaps than a place crisscrossed by Western, especially American, interests. One aspect of the electronic, postmodern world is that there is a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed. Television, the films, and all the media’s resources have forced information into more and more standardized molds. (26)

Said concludes, so far as the Orient is concerned, “standardization and cultural stereotyping have intensified the hold of the nineteenth-century academic and imaginative demonology of ‘the mysterious Orient’” (26). Yet Giddens has made a similar point that “in a globalizing world, where information and images are routinely transmitted across the globe, we are all regularly in contact with others who think differently, and live differently from ourselves” (4). Although stereotypes and popular prejudices persist, it does not automatically follow that electronic media *only* perpetuate and reinforce stereotypes (a one-way model) or simply intensify Orientalism.

The second point concerns Said’s remark that representations of the Orient at large “vacillate between the West’s contempt for what is familiar and its ... delight in –

or fear of – novelty” (59). What marks the encounters between East and West is the “vacillations” whereby something “patently foreign and distant acquires ... a status more rather than less familiar.” Thus: “a new median category emerges ... that allows one to see new things, things seen for the first time, as versions of a previously known thing ... [It] is not so much a way of receiving new information as it is a method of controlling what seems to be a threat to some established view of things” (59).

It has been pointed out that Said largely omits the German school of Orientalists and their considerable impact on the field, since Germany was not a significant colonial power in the East; and he fails to mention “the strong feeling among many Orientalist scholars that in some respects Eastern cultures were superior to the West, or the widespread feeling that Orientalist scholarship might actually breakdown the boundaries between East and West” (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia70). My earlier discussion of Hesse’s work underlines the importance of taking this into account, as well as exposing the various instances of Orientalist discourses that support his representation of the East. Also Said’s use of the concept of discourse, which he readily admits is partial, emphasizes dominance and power over cultural interaction. I would like to return more emphasis to the “receiving” end of the transaction (the uses this information is put to by a particular audience or consumer group, for example) than only the “controlling” mechanisms. This even applies to stereotypes.

The third point concerns multi-media, reiterating Jameson’s point that cyberpunk’s innovations are realized within a predominantly “visual or aural postmodern production.” Citing Auerbach’s *Mimesis* as a benchmark text in literacy, Said remarks as follows: “Instead of reading in the real sense of the word our students today are often distracted by the fragmented knowledge available on the internet and in the mass media” (*Orientalism* xxvi). Generally, book culture informs Said’s *Orientalism*, and little attention is given to visual culture, and the impact of various visual media on reading habits. I earlier discussed the importance of videogames in any discussion of cyberpunk. Related to this, is the emergence of the MTV (Music Television) generation which takes “fragmentation, the plurality of signification, to new heights.” Music videos “exemplify the complex textual strategies that create the pastiche of current media culture.” Videos “knowingly appropriate other audiovisual media of all kinds, are self-reflexive and ironic

in their portrayal of stars and stories, use montage strategies, and intertextually cross-reference themselves” (Real 240). Orientalism in the era of technoculture needs to take these developments into account.

Imaginative Geography

Central to the emergence of the Oriental discourse is the imaginative existence of something called “the Orient,” which comes into being within what Said describes as an “imaginative geography” (58) which “legitimizes a vocabulary, a representative discourse peculiar to the understanding of the Orient that becomes *the* way in which the Orient is known” (Ashcroft 61). According to Said the “universal practice of designating in one’s mind a familiar space which is ‘ours’ and an unfamiliar space beyond ‘ours’ which is ‘theirs’ is a way of making geographical distinctions that *can be* entirely arbitrary” (*Orientalism* 54). Imaginative geography of the “our land-barbarian land” variety does not require that the barbarians acknowledge the distinction. “It is enough for ‘us’ to set up these boundaries in our own minds; ‘they’ become ‘they’ accordingly, and both their territory and their mentality are designated as different from ‘ours.’ Geographic boundaries accompany the social and cultural in expected ways. Yet, as Said points out, there is an “unrigorous idea” of what is out there. Thus “all kinds of suppositions, associations, and fictions appear to crowd the unfamiliar space outside one’s own” (54).

Moreover, Gibson notes: “And I got lucky with the geography. I didn't even know where Chiba was when I wrote *Neuromancer* – all that stuff about it being on a peninsula and across a bay came out of my head ... when the book came out. But then I got a map and there was Chiba – on a peninsula! On a bay!” (*Storming* 284-5). This statement echoes Hesse’s “something geographical” in its apparently random choice of setting. Gibson was still reassured when, upon checking a map, that what he had described actually conformed in some way to known geographical co-ordinates, the country of Japan; Chiba City is located near Tokyo. Elsewhere Gibson has stated *Neuromancer* evolved from the “bits of Japan” that he could observe in Vancouver, where he had moved from the United States at the end of the sixties. Further adding to the “geographical incongruity” (Sobchack), he also acknowledges the first-hand experience

of Istanbul as a tourist; the week or so he spent there while travelling around Europe in the early seventies, “had a big impact” (*Storming* 285).

Said notes that to use the vocabulary of Orientalism is “to engage in the particularizing and dividing of things Oriental into manageable parts” (*Orientalism* 72). The demarcation between Orient and West, Said argues, leads to smaller ones. Gibson is more specific about what came out of his head: Chiba City is “a fantasy of Detroit.” This reference is, I think, to an American city at a particular historical time, in the 1970s, as the locus of the American automobile industry suffered serious setbacks through competition with increased Japanese imports, and when the infrastructure of the city was under intense pressure (riots, drugs). This fantasy of dual cities also underlines the process whereby “the Orient acquired ... representations, each one more concrete, more internally congruent with some Western exigency, than the ones that preceded it. It is as if, having settled on the Orient as a locale ... Europe could not stop the practice” (62). And neither could North America, it seems.

Gibson concludes his discussion of the rationale behind the choice of Japanese settings with the claim: “it’s just a fantasy ... like nineteenth-century Orientalia.” Referring to nineteenth-century Orientalism, Said notes it produced “a kind of second-order knowledge – lurking in such places as the ‘Oriental’ tale, the mythology of the mysterious East, notions of Asian inscrutability – with a life of its own ... ‘Europe’s collective day-dream of the Orient’” (52). Gibson is well-informed on some aspects of Japan; but there is always the possibility that “second-order knowledge” will gain the upper hand in a form as volatile as the novel.

Is there a sense, then, in which cyberpunk can be conceived of as an imperializing movement? Taking up the example of Kipling’s *Kim*, Said notes the novel’s “rather loose structure based ... on a luxurious geography and spatial expansiveness” (43). The geography itself seems to be so open and available to freedom of movement, and a parallel could be made here with *Neuromancer* and the frontierless vision of cyberspace. According to Said, the novel *Kim* and imperialism fortified each other to such a degree that it is impossible to read one without in some way dealing with the other. Novels (and other art forms) create “structures of feeling that support, elaborate and consolidate the practice of Empire.”

In a more contemporary context, in a special issue of *Modern Fiction Studies* entitled “Postmodernism and the Globalization of English” Bérubé discusses the “global explosion in English-language literature.”¹⁸ He notes concerning global English language and literature: “contemporary writing is produced in a postnational, global flow of deterritorialized cultural products appropriated, translated, and recirculated world-wide” (qtd. in Bérubé 8). Postmodernism and postcolonialism can be seen as “epiphenomena of globalization itself.” Taking the example of De Lillo’s *White Noise*, it is suggested that to “understand contemporary literature as both artifact and agent of globalization “we need [...] to think about novels (and other cultural productions) depicting a globalized world not simply because we can show that art is ‘grounded’ in social circumstances, but because novels themselves may have a crucial role to play in the very process of globalization””(qtd. in Bérubé 10).

Can we then make analogies between *Kim* (Victorian British imperialism) and *Neuromancer* (postmodern American imperialism)? In the following section I will explore in more detail the role of American imperialism following the Second World War that is relevant to cyberpunk.

American Orientalism

Said shows how the creative writer’s consciousness was shaped by imperialist tendencies in nineteenth-century England and explores the unequal relationships of economic and political power that work behind myths of representations about the Orient which are integral to Western interests. He points out the close (institutional) link between the upsurge in Oriental studies and the rise in European imperial dominance during the nineteenth century. The East gets transformed into a discursive “Orient” by the dominant West in all imperial histories. In the context of recent geographical and political

¹⁸ “Postmodernism? Surely you mean Postcolonialism? No, I wanted to ask how theories of postmodernity might engage global literatures in English.” More broadly, his point is that in the long view, the “distinction between modernism and postmodernism will come to seem much less significant than – or will perhaps be subsumed by – the division of the [twentieth] century into periods before and after the global expansion of English-language literature” (3). World War II will serve as an ideological and temporal marker. There is a growing sense that ‘modernism’ and ‘postmodernism’ are “losing some force as useful organizing tools in literary study” (4). Stuart Hall’s concerns with “the formation of the nation-state and globalization of culture are now cited as the forerunners of the discourse on ‘postcoloniality’ which in certain respects has taken over and politicized the discursive space of the postmodern” (Morley and Chen 3).

upheavals there are new configurations and transfigurations of Orientalism. Britain and France and recently the United States are “imperial powers” (11).

Said notes, for Americans, the Orient “is much more likely to be associated ... with the Far East (China and Japan, mainly). The American understanding of the Orient will seem considerably less dense, although our recent Japanese, Korean, and Indochinese adventures ought now to be creating a more sober, more realistic ‘Oriental’ awareness” (2). Noam Chomsky underlines the point: “Three times in a generation American technology has laid waste a helpless Asian country. In 1945 this was done with a sense of moral rectitude that was, and remains, almost unchallenged. In Korea, there were a few qualms. The amazing resistance of the Vietnamese has forced us to ask, What have we done? There are, at last, some signs of awakening to the horrifying reality. Resistance to American violence and to the militarization of our own society has become ... a detectable one” (qtd. in Said 4).

It is useful to recall that Gibson, an American raised in a small Virginian town, followed the Vietnam-era migration of young people to Canada – but not to avoid the war. “I never got called up,” he says. “The people in the actual draft-evader community in Canada were really politicized. I was there to have fun.”¹⁹ He met Deborah, his future partner, in Toronto during the late sixties and moved to (her) hometown in Vancouver.

Thus, I would contend cyberpunk exhibits important links with all three conflicts, to varying degrees, most influentially Vietnam and its traumatic aftermath. It has been noted by James Gibson that an “examination of our experience in Vietnam – why we were there, why we lost, how we might have won – became something of a national obsession. During the 1970s and ’80s that defeat echoed through the American psyche, effecting multiple political and cultural crises ... We were denied our traditional post-war celebrations of the warrior, affirmations of our virtue and masculine power. Reagan’s election in 1980 signaled, to many, a return to the golden pre-Vietnam era of the 1950s. A \$2 trillion military buildup began, and once again covert action and military intervention were favored foreign-policy options in resisting the Soviet Union’s ‘evil empire.’ America refought Vietnam in films and pulp novels and paramilitary

¹⁹ “I more or less convinced my draft board that they didn’t want me; in any case they didn’t hassle me, and in 1968 I left for Toronto without even knowing that Canada would be such a different country. I wound up living in a community of young Americans who were staying away from the draft” (*Storming* 282-3).

magazines” (78). A number of highly regarded American novelists have “written repeatedly about American imperial adventures in Cuba, Vietnam, Central America and the Middle East” (McLure 1). One of these writers is Robert Stone, whose novel *Dog Soldiers* concerning drug dealing in the aftermath of the Vietnam War, was influential on Gibson’s *Neuromancer*.

Said informs us that “Psychologically Orientalism is a form of paranoia ... knowledge of another kind, say from historical knowledge” (72). Jameson makes a related point, noting cyberpunk narratives are “as much an expression of transnational corporate realities as it is of global paranoia itself” (*Postmodernism* 38). An illustrative example, concerning the Korean War and a particular strain of “high tech paranoia” relevant to cyberpunk, might be found in the film *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), where the soldiers are fighting “a war to extend the American frontier into the Far East” (Rushing and Frenz 123). The recent remake (2004) shows how relatively easily parts of it could be remodeled or made to fit a post-*Matrix* cyberpunk scenario, for example, brain implants in place of brainwashing.

The arch-villain of the piece is an Oriental, Dr Yen-Lo, a Chinese military psychologist, and the “hero” is Raymond Shaw, a captured and brainwashed American sergeant programmed to be an assassin who kills on command. The narrative is based on a political election in the United States, whereby Senator Johnny Iselin is to be propelled into power. The plot makes Raymond and Johnny antagonists, their fate controlled by Yen-Lo. Both Raymond and Johnny are dominated by their scheming powerful mother, who wears at one point a “Chinese kimono emblazoned with dragons ... ‘in the mode of wicked witches’” (Rushing and Frenz 125-6). Interestingly, in the movie version of *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995) there is a similar configuration, in the struggle between the Japanese “Oriental” villain, Takeshi, head of a global yakuza network, Johnny, a cybernetic data courier, and the maternal prosthetic voice of Anna, which “mediates” both characters from cyberspace.

Techno-Orientalism

The advent of a cybernetic courier with a chip implant in his head like Johnny Mnemonic brings us to an important juncture in our deployment of the theoretical term

Orientalism. The updated versions are “techno-orientalism” and “high tech orientalism,” terminologies derived from Said’s work which engage the economic “crises” of the 1980s, particularly between America and Japan, and have been advanced by as follows: Morley and Robins; Chun; Nakamura; and Park.

In their chapter “Techno-orientalism: Japan Panic” Morley and Robins conclude that it is through the “projection of exotic (and erotic) fantasies onto this high-tech delirium, [that] anxieties about the ‘importance’ of Western culture can be, momentarily, screened out” (169). A number of related arguments have followed, mainly concerned with the Internet and cyberspace, which I discuss fully in Chapter Five. For instance, cyberspace as “othered” space – the feminization of cyberspace (Chun 250); cyberspace as promoting “identity tourism,” which refers to the taking up of different (often racial) personas on the Internet (Kolko et al. *Race in Cyberspace*), and the Internet as becoming a fertile ground for “cybertyping” (Nakamura *Cybertypes*). Nakamura finds the stereotypes of Asianness deployed there are either martial arts experts and samurai, or sexualized, docile submissive “geishas.”

Concerning specifically cyberpunk and William Gibson, Lisa Nakamura finds that while “the genre of cyberpunk fiction has since expanded and been reiterated many times, one thing seems constant: when cyberpunk writers construct the future, it looks Asian – specifically, in many cases, Japanese” (62). Nakamura goes on to question how multicultural is this future and uncover how the boundary between “the past and the future [is] mediated by images of Japanese geishas, ninjas and samurai warriors” (63). When these images are used to establish a cyberpunk future, the result is “techno-orientalism,” a racial stereotyping. Nakamura finds it is *Blade Runner* that is found to have “legitimated its use for the genre it inaugurated” (64). This film is generally considered “a stunning visual expression of the cyberpunk world” (James 196) and cyberpunk the “literary analogy” (Jameson, *Seeds* 150). And “(w)hile the future in *Blade Runner* and *Neuromancer* appears to be Japanese, this is in fact a visual trope rather than a meaningful reference to any real or imagined Japanese culture” (62).

Nakamura’s emphasis on the dominance of *visual* tropes gives support to the position I have established in terms of the postmodern orientalism framework. But in my view cyberpunk works (films, novels, games) do not universally present the same

“Japanese” future, or even construct it in identical ways, as is suggested by Nakamura’s critique, particularly where *Blade Runner* (a film) and *Neuromancer* (a book) are concerned, and Gibson’s own disavowal of significant influence. The relationship between Gibson, the film *Blade Runner*, and cyberpunk is a vexed one. Gibson has confessed to being depressed when *Blade Runner* came out, because what he saw on the screen came achingly close to what he had been imagining in his head. What and how much Gibson saw, in particular of the Asian sequences in the film, and whether that had any bearing on cyberpunk needs closer examination.

There is also a significant conflation of Japanese and Chinese elements in both works that mitigates against any clear-cut differentiation of the two cultures. Differences are also apparent in the ways Japan is represented through the use of mediating images (the Asian billboard in *Blade Runner*), that is, stereotypes about Japan as the land of “cherry blossoms, Mount Fuji, the geisha – the old Western cliché of Japan” or “geisha, samurai and Mount Fuji” and we can add, “sushi.”²⁰ The use of traditional images, like “geisha,” in cyberpunk is infrequent or the emphasis remarkably different (like “ninja” or Sterling’s Geisha Bank).

More relevant to this thesis are the links to imperialism and colonialism. In *Cybertypes* Lisa Nakamura notes the “theatrical fantasy of identity tourism has deep roots in colonial narratives such as Rudyard Kipling’s ... Kim, who uses disguise to pass as Hindu, Muslim, and other varieties of Indian natives, experiences the pleasures and dangers of cross-cultural performance.” Kim is a child of the bazaars and rooftops of the walled city of Lahore and has a “gift for disguise” (41). Here we can compare a small but revealing scene, from cyberpunk, in the film *Johnny Mnemonic*, the twenty-first century data smuggler with sensitive information stored in a chip implant in his head. After uploading a massive quantity of data Johnny flees a scene of mayhem and carnage in the hotel room of a Beijing Hotel with the Yakuza in hot pursuit. In order to escape from the Yakuza, in the script Johnny “cross-dresses” as an Oriental traveling salesman “his gait

²⁰ Martinez notes the image of Japan can be traced back to Meiji Japan. Photo collections (i.e a visual source) were made “to satisfy foreign notions of the exotic Orient ... depict hara-kiri or show people in samurai armor ... many of the photos involved geisha.” Almost invariably, Mount Fuji served as a backdrop. This helped establish a perception of Japan as the nation of “Fujiyama, geisha, and hara-kiri” that stood for a long time.” On how photography has been used to document foreign culture, see Sturken and Cartwright, 103-4.

stiff, his shoulders sloped” and walks out unnoticed through the hotel lobby. As he walks out, “the trailing yakuza explode into the lobby.” He is a stooped, gray-haired old Chinese salesman, chopsticks sticking out of the pocket of his raincoat. Is this an instance of representation or a stereotype?

The challenging aspect of this debate is how the electronic postmodern world reinforces Oriental stereotypes. It would not be too difficult to round up the usual suspects, “ninja” and “samurai,” as examples of Orientalist discourse in cyberpunk. But I don’t think this approach accounts fully for cyberpunk’s fascination with Japan, how Japan is consumed by these writers and their followers, or for the many offspring in such domains as film, music, and feminism. Furthermore, Nakamura’s restrictive focus on oriental stereotypes in cyberpunk precludes in some way the recognition that the recovery and use of those particular images by various groups and interests (in this case, Japanese fans, translators, publishers, readers, critics) is also an important part of the process.

There is contested debate around one particular issue at the heart of the matter, what in fact constitutes a stereotype in the first place. According to Jameson, stereotypes are “pre-eminently the vehicle through which we relate to other collectivities; no one has ever confronted another grouping without their mediation” (“On Cultural Studies”). Even Said notes “domestications of the exotic ... take place between all cultures, certainly, and between all men ... But what is more important still is the limited vocabulary and imagery that impose themselves as a consequence” (*Orientalism* 60). Yet Scrase et al. contend in a chapter on globalization and Asia that “the common stereotypes of Asia (‘Asian’ values, ‘subservient women’) are found to be irrelevant when one critically studies the countries and peoples of Asia” (1).

Complicating the matter further, some Japanese critics have supported the Orientalism position (Ueno), reworked it (Tetsuo) or tried to dispense with it altogether (Tatsumi). Ueno contends “the techno Orient has been invented to define the images and models of information capitalism and the information society” (97). Tetsuo finds the proper focus is not so much the “liminal Other” but the place of culture in relation to technology within Japan (10). Tatsumi, both in the interview, and in his own critical work has used a number of positions (“post-” and “beyond-” Orientalism, counter-Orientalism,

Occidentalism, and recently “Japanoid”) all of which indicate an unease with the strictures of Orientalist debate.

Most recently, Park takes up the case of Gibson, in an essay entitled “Stylistic Crossings: Cyberpunk in Anime” to explore the “power dynamics in current cultural dialogues between East and West within the transnational production and reception contexts of popular media” (60). For, the naturalization of cyberpunk themes and motifs in both Hollywood science fiction films and Japanese anime has provided a “rich site for examining the ideological implications of stylistic exchange between Japan and the United States” (61).

4. “New Rose Hotel”: Cyberpunk and Estrangement

The final section of this chapter, taking Gibson’s short story “New Rose Hotel” as its point of focus, delineates specific features of postmodern orientalism that I have outlined. Gibson’s story is a hard-edged narrative of corporate defection played out across the globe in cities which are also recognizable as the imperial haunts of romantic thrillers (Vienna, Morocco, Tokyo), a world simultaneously integrated and unstable.

This particular story is exemplary of postmodern orientalism, in its depiction of a new form of multinationalism characterized by the Japanese *zaibastu*. In this particular version of the new world order, two industrial headhunters “adrift on the dark side of the intercorporate sea” (106) hatch a plot to lure a renowned Japanese genetics expert Dr Hiroshi Yomiuri from Hosaka, the world’s largest *zaibatsu*, to another company, Maas Biolabs GmbH, for a once in a lifetime payoff. The key to their success in this dangerous game of “corporate extraction” is a Eurasian, Sandii who, with her “dark European eyes” and “Asian cheekbones,” in a Chinese-knockoff dress from Tokyo, springs the trap that ensnares the Japanese doctor. Not surprisingly the seductive “Eurasian, half gaijin” named Sandii predictably, one might say even true to “form,” ultimately betrays them. Her mother is Dutch; her father is Japanese, a disgraced executive from the Hosaka corporation, the “biggest zaibatsu of all” (104). Unfortunately, the two headhunters had underestimated the global reaches of the Hosaka corporation. Thus the protagonist narrates in flashback the perverse sequence of events that brought him to the rented “coffin” of a Narita airport hotel, the New Rose Hotel, on the run and out of ideas.

Gibson's story exhibits some readily identifiable characteristics of what Jameson has termed "dirty realism" which I have already discussed in the introduction. This is cyberpunk's "family likeness" (151) with the nineteenth-century tradition of naturalism marked by urban settings and particular characters, the criminal (male) and the prostitute (female). However "New Rose Hotel" poses a fundamental question that now requires addressing, namely, what is science fictional about this story. Sterling enthusiastically described cyberpunk as "steeped in the lore and the tradition of SF" (*Mirrorshades* viii) and a "natural extension" (xiii) of elements within the science fiction genre. Yet, on reading a signature story such as "New Rose Hotel" the obvious indicators of science fiction are not present. I will turn to the notion of "estrangement" in order to explore this.

Darko Suvin, a Canadian critic who was brought up within the European tradition, famously defines science fiction as "a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment" (emphasis deleted).²¹ He goes on to add that estrangement "differentiates SF from the 'realistic' literary mainstream" (*Metamorphoses* 7-8) while cognition differentiates it from myth, the folk tale, and fantasy. According to Suvin, both science fiction and the utopian tradition share these two features. Suvin introduces another useful term, the *novum*. Science fiction is distinguished by "the narrative dominance or hegemony of a fictional 'novum' (novelty, innovation) validated by cognitive logic" (63). Thus "estrangement" means recognizing the *novum* and "cognition" means evaluating it, trying to make sense of it, and you need to do both to read science fiction.

According to Carl Freedman in *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*, science fiction is determined by "the *dialectic* between estrangement and cognition" (16). The first term refers to the creation of an alternative fictional world that, by refusing to take our mundane environment for granted, implicitly or explicitly performs an estranging critical interrogation of the latter. But "the *critical* character of the interrogation is guaranteed by the operation of cognition, which enables the science-fictional text to account traditionally for its imagined world and for the connections and disconnections of

²¹ In a footnote to his definition Suvin notes that he has changed the translation of "Verfremdung" as "alienation" into "estrangement," since "alienation" evokes "incorrect, indeed opposite, connotations: estrangement was for Brecht an approach militating against social and cognitive alienation" (7, footnote 2).

the latter to our empirical world” (17). Although Freedman finds that Suvin’s definition seems fundamentally sound and indispensable, he suggests two modifications: one concerns making a distinction between cognition and “cognition effect”; the other calls for “the dialectical rethinking of genre” (20). Thus it is “this basically Suvinian definition of science fiction as the fiction of cognitive estrangement – but modified so as to emphasize the dialectical character of genre and the centrality of the cognition effect” (23) that can enable further discriminations to be made. What distinguishes Brechtian estrangement, then, from the estrangements more familiar in texts marketed as science fiction is not that Brecht is more closely allied to literary realism but simply that he is “relatively uninterested in those specifically *technological* versions of estrangement” (22) that have traditionally figured in science fiction. Moreover, it can be argued “cognition and estrangement, which together constitute the generic tendency of science fiction, are not only actually present in all fiction, but are structurally crucial to the possibility of fiction and even of representation in the first place” (21-22).

My conclusion is that the distinguishing factor in cyberpunk texts is the deployment of what can be described as specifically postmodern oriental versions of estrangement. Gibson’s view of exotic cultures, predominately (but not only) Japan, functions as an estranging heuristic device which foregrounds particular aspects of monopoly capitalism. Although the New Rose Hotel is set in Japan, another central location of the story is Morocco, the marketplace at Djemaa el Fna. Marrakech places the story not only in the realm of the exotic, but a particular manifestation of it – the 1960s counterculture. In the 1960s it was an epicenter for Western tourists, drug-saturated rock musicians (the Rolling Stones in 1967, Crosby Stills and Nash) and hippie culture generally. I take up the topic of drugs in the next chapter.

The epicenter of Gibson’s short story is the marketplace at Djemaa el Fna, “thick with jugglers, dancers, storytellers, small boys turning lathes with their feet, legless beggars with wooden bowls under animated holograms advertising French software ... bales of raw wool and plastic tubs of Chinese microchips” (“New Rose Hotel” 108). Jameson deems this “the *Blade Runner* syndrome” (157), the interfusion of crowds among a high technological bazaar representative of late capitalism. In Marrakech “a heroin lab that had been converted to the extraction of pheromones” (108) is found for

the Japanese doctor. The narrator relates how he must “keep in touch with a Portuguese businessman in the Medina, who was willing to keep an eye on Hiroshi’s lab.” When he phoned, “he’d phone from a stall in Djemaa-el-Fna, with a background of wailing vendors and Atlas panpipes” (112). Such spatial dislocations and depersonalisation are a feature of the story: a bar in Yokohama, a beach in Kamakura, a department store in Ginza, a hotel in Tokyo, a marketplace in Marrakech, a restaurant in Vienna.

The disruptions take on a particular disparateness. Now in Japan, the plan hatched by the two headhunters suddenly unwinds (“One minute we were millionaires in the world’s hardest currency, and the next we were paupers”) and Sandii vanishes, a turn of events relayed by a series of telephone calls to an anonymous hotel in Tokyo, with the sound of pipes from the Djeema el Fna marketplace wailing in the background, over the “white static of a satellite link.” In this disparate and extreme situation, the representation of “Moroccan” space articulates the dynamic of capitalism’s cultural imaginary; and we can detect a new evocation of estrangement rendered as otherness.

The hotel room itself, even in films like *Lost in Translation*, is often the “scene” of a particularly Western predicament:

a coffin rack on the ragged fringes of Narita International. Plastic capsules a meter high and three long, stacked like surplus Godzilla teeth in a concrete lot off the main road to the airport ... I spend whole days watching Japanese game shows and old movies ... I can hear the jets, laced into holding patterns over Narita, passage home, distant now as any moon” (104-5).

So the protagonist awaits his fate, in “this country of mine, the land of my exile, the New Rose Hotel” (109). Like Case in *Neuromancer*, strung out in a cheap “capsule” hotel somewhere in Chiba City, it is the unmistakable imprint of the otherness of Japanese culture that gives the description of New Rose Hotel its particular resonance, and cyberpunk its edge.

Chapter Two: Cyberpunk and Drugs

Drug culture has always been associated with the other of the Occident.

(Jacques Derrida “The Rhetoric of Drugs” 36)

According to Jameson “the stimulus of drugs” in recent fiction is “still a preponderant, one may even say a metaphysical, presence” (*Archaeologies* 386). A number of contemporary studies of drugs and addiction undertaken from a cultural or historical perspective begin with the oft-quoted Nietzschean remark, ““Who will ever relate the whole history of narcotica? – It is almost the history of ‘culture,’ of our so-called ‘high culture’”” as cited at the beginning of Avital Ronell’s *Crack Wars: Literature, Addiction, Mania*.¹ Ronell’s project concerns the “‘almost’ – the place where *narcotics* articulates a quiver between history and ontology” and is concerned with the question of addiction, “a certain type of ‘Being-on-drugs’ that has everything to do with the bad conscience of our era” (3). The “our era” has a particular resonance for this thesis; as has been noted, “addiction is marked by the specificity of a culture: besides being a twentieth-century notion, it is also primarily (though by no means simply or entirely) an Anglo-American one” (Brodie and Redfield 4).

In particular the cyberpunks, according to Larry McCaffery, were the first generation of writers “who had grown up immersed in technology but also in pop culture, in the values and the aesthetics of the counterculture associated with the drug culture” (*Storming* 12). He further adds, but without elaboration, it is “no accident that speed is the drug of choice in cyberpunk narratives” (*Storming* 292). In fact cyberpunk fiction is a veritable pharmacopoeia of drugs, which is reflected in the marketing of cyberpunk books. The publicity for a work by a “third-generation” cyberpunk writer Charles Stross compares the author to an original member of the cyberpunk movement: “Bruce Sterling on speed? ... if you like Sterling, you’re gonna love Stross.” In the same blurb Cory

¹ See Ronell, *Crack Wars: Literature, Addiction, Mania* 3. The original quotation comes from Friedrich Nietzsche’s *Gay Science* (par. 86) and, according to Ronell, he was “the philosopher to think with his body ... [and] the one to put out the call for a supramoral imperative” (49). See also Alexander and Roberts, *High Culture: Reflections on Addiction and Modernity* v; and Brodie and Redfield, *High Anxieties: Cultural Studies in Addiction* 1.

Doctorow enthuses: “now that I’ve had a taste of Charlie’s writing ... I have to tell you that Charlie is better than drugs.”

Riding high “on the wavelength of amphetamine” the world around Case in *Neuromancer* vibrates with the speed he has taken.² He hits the streets of Chiba cranked up on speed, just another burned out, drug-addicted hustler on a midnight run through Night City. This preoccupation with drugs extends to other works by Gibson. Asked to present a key image for *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, Gibson comments in an interview: “it’s when Mona, who is quite clearly and abundantly a drug addict, completely through this book is very obviously a drug addict, when she is in a bar and sees her media heroine, Angela Mitchell, leaving some kind of Betty Ford-like detox or clinic” (Rapatzikou 229).

The gritty, down-at-heel desperateness of the cyberpunk drug world recalls Jameson’s definition of “dirty realism,” and the legacy of a nineteenth-century novelistic tradition determined to plumb “the lower depths, the forbidden spaces” (*Seeds* 150) of the new urban experience, which were then “disclosed to a horrified bourgeois readership in the form of perilous journeys and accounts of the pathetic destinies of the various underclasses” (151). Except, as Jameson points out, the naturalist underclasses portrayed as irredeemably other from ourselves has disappeared in cyberpunk, the disappearance of this category of otherness being one of the basic structural features of postmodernity. Urban punks, street hustlers, computer hackers, and corporate businessmen inhabit city spaces no longer marked by “terrifying specieslike difference.” There is now a “circulation and recirculation possible between the underworld and the overworld of high-rent condos and lofts” (152).

I would further argue that drugs can be considered a major catalyst for the kinds of transformations in social space that Jameson finds spells the end of the older “naturalist imaginary representation of society” (152). This in part explains why drugs are central to the cyberpunk project. According to Sterling, modern drug culture is

² Amphetamine (speed), one of the twentieth century’s most widely used psychoactive compounds, was synthesized in 1887. Amphetamines are a type of drug known as psycho-stimulants which artificially stimulate the brain. Its therapeutic class is central nervous system stimulant. Other drugs in this category include cocaine, ephedrine (which was first isolated in Japan in the 1880s) and ecstasy. Medical use began to grow in the 1930s, when amphetamines were prescribed for a wide range of medical conditions. Early localized epidemics occurred in the US, Japan, and Sweden. Extensive use by the military during the Second World War was followed by occupational use (truck drivers, students, and sportsmen) and as a party drug (mood enhancer).

“something that the cyberpunks studied, not because they’re all on uncontrollable drug trips ... but because it’s something that’s important that exists now.” He thinks it is “a topic that cyberpunks have discovered, that earlier SF writers have never considered – except Phil Dick, of course” (35).

There are clear congruities between the consumption of drugs and the epistemology of cyberpunk. The associations between cyberpunk and drugs are not easily explicable in terms of a single phenomenon, and involve a set of interrelated factors (cultural, psychological, and historical). This necessitates what might be called a cultural studies approach in this chapter intersecting several disciplines, although it is the literary emphasis that will be most often recognizable in the foreground. The correspondences between drugs and cyberpunk can be usefully categorized and discussed in terms of particular binaries which are familiar in cyberpunk works. These are: organic/synthetic, “real”/hallucinatory, and licit/illicit.

The first binary I will highlight is “organic” and “synthetic.” In cyberpunk fiction there is a predisposition towards synthetically produced smart drugs, super-drugs, and psychochemicals.³ These kinds of drugs can be understood to involve materially a high-tech product, which evolved from modern pharmaceutical chemistry. Drugs (like amphetamine) can be totally synthetic, or semi-synthetic, where natural products have been used as the starting materials for the synthesis. Cyberpunk’s emphasis on technological mutations frequently blurs the distinction between the organic and synthetic, by references to the adrenaline surge and “octagons [amphetamine] and adrenalin mingling” (*Neuromancer* 26). The molecular structure of amphetamine closely resembles a naturally occurring chemical nerve-impulse transmitter (noradrenaline); it mimics their chemical structures and behaviours so well that the brain’s receptors accept them as their own.

Amphetamine in particular has a “wide variety of structurally related analogues that can be synthesized” (Cole 14). Sterling notes, “many drugs, like rock and roll, are definitive high-tech products” and illustrates the point with the example of “lysergic acid

³ See the interview with R.U. Sirius at www.shift.com. R.U. Sirius, cofounder of *Mondo 2000*, notes that smart drugs (DMAE, deprenyl, hydergine) had a stimulant effect: “they definitely functioned as stimulants. And they were much more even in terms of how they would take you through the day than cocaine, or amphetamines.” Vasopressin is particularly singled out: “It was the one most like coke ... addictive and expensive ... William Gibson liked it.”

– it came from a Sandoz lab ... and ran through society like wildfire.” He further cites Timothy Leary’s dictum that personal computers were “the LSD of the 1980’s” and concludes “these are both technologies of frightening radical potential” and “constant reference points for cyberpunk” (*Mirrorshades* xi).

Drugs therefore can be considered as “the site of an allotechnology; technology’s intimate other” and concern “the right to drugs as well as the supplementary interiority that they produce” (Ronell 33).⁴ This leads to the second binary, “the spaces carved out in the imagination by the introduction of a chemical prosthesis” (Ronell 50) which produce a particular effect, often depending on contrasts between “real” and hallucinatory. These so-called cybernetic spaces are often demarcated in cyberpunk fiction by links with new technology, particularly those pertaining to the visual, such as holography, the holograms that illuminate Chiba’s Night City and enhance Case’s speed rush through it, for example, or the drug fiend Peter Riviera’s “holographic cabaret” in *Neuromancer*. Philip K. Dick’s influential novel *A Scanner Darkly* (1977) depicts holographic scanners and the like to capture the schizophrenic “effects” of psychopharmaceuticals: “Fred walked into the holo-cube, into the three-dimensional projection, and stood close to the bed to scrutinize the girl’s face” (172).

Cube-type holo-scanners in Dick’s novel are also the means by which surveillance on drug dealers is conducted, comprising audio (sound recording) and visual (scanning) components. The third binary concerns the vexed relation between licit and illicit substances and their uses. A large number of amphetamine-related products, for example, are controlled substances and therefore subject to drug control, through legislation imposed by international treaties, and implemented through domestic laws. As Cole notes, the analogues of amphetamines and “designer drugs,” or “molecules with tails” as Gibson describes them in the short story “The Winter Market,” have been problematic in this regard.⁵ In cyberpunk fiction drugs further mark out a zone, or interzone, a grey area where legal and illegal activities are not clearly demarcated. In

⁴ Ronell is referring to Ernst Jünger who wrote a manifesto on drugs. Bruce Sterling wrote an introduction to another of Jünger’s books, *Glass Bees*.

⁵ See Michael D. Cole, *The Analysis of Controlled Substances* 3. In the case of amphetamine this was corrected in the UK by amendments to the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 which named the specific compound. References were also made to ether and ester derivatives and to the stereoisomers of certain compounds so that designer drugs, for example, having the potential to become drugs of abuse, would thereby be included in the legislation.

Gibson's *Neuromancer* Chiba City is represented as an outlaw zone, a "magnet for ... techno-criminal subcultures" (13).

This chapter, however, will explore what appears, on the surface, to be an *incongruity* between cyberpunk and drug culture. As Sterling notes, the recreational drug culture is one of the major industries in the United States now, billions and billions of dollars, whereas in Japan "drugs are still essentially unheard of" (Tatsumi Interview *SF Eye* 35). Changes in cultural norms have led to some increase in use, and the reasons accompanying this increase at a local level has not gone unnoticed in Japan, as Mizutani Osamu's field work on drug use in the Tokyo area has uncovered. What is striking is that Mizutani takes his stance in relation to the West: "my view in the 1980s was that unlike in the United States, drug use in Japan would not spread among people in general" (76). He qualifies this by looking at increased drug use in the 1990s in the Tokyo region among youth. Yet in cyberpunk fiction Japan (Chiba City) and the Orient more generally is made to be the fictional capital of drug culture, or at least a key location for its representation. The characters caught in this drug world tend to be Western. The exotic (orientalist) setting becomes a location for Western projections and imaginings.

In Bruce Sterling's *Schismatrix Plus*, inside a complex called the Geisha Bank of a circumlunar *Zaibatsu*, for example, the protagonist Lindsay encounters an artificial creature, Kitsune. She was "of mixed Asiatic-African gene stock" and "her eyes were tilted, but her skin was dark" (32). He looks into her face: "Her dark eyes shocked him ... It was not human" (34). Then:

She undid her obi sash. Her kimono was printed in a design of irises and violets ... Lindsay scrambled forward and threw his arms around her. She slipped her warm tongue deep into his mouth. It tasted of spice. It was narcotic. The glands of her mouth oozed drugs. (34-5)

Asian figures and landscapes continue to excite the cyberpunk imagination with respect to drugs. This chapter looks closely at the representation of drug culture in cyberpunk fiction, and explores the extent to which this representation constitutes an Orientalist discourse. Generally, this concerns "the cultural representation of the West to *itself* by

way of a detour through the other” (Yeğenoğlu 1). Drugs and their representation in Gibson (and other cyberpunk writers, notably John Shirley, and also Bruce Sterling) reflect aspects of the postmodern occidental world and how it deals with those aspects of itself which it finds problematic. I consider how the representation of the Western self through detour manifests itself in this specific type of fiction, which grows out of a very occidentally located concern about drug use.

Writing on Drugs: Some Preliminaries

In developing this theme I take counsel from Derrida’s caution that one must distinguish carefully between “discourses, practices, and experiences of writing, literary or not, which imply or justify what we call drugs. There is not any *single* world of drugs” (27). There are significant differences between the texts of “drug” writers such as Thomas De Quincey and Charles Baudelaire, or more recently, William Burroughs, Hunter S. Thompson, and of course the cyberpunk writers themselves. Distinctions can also be made between those texts supposedly written “on drugs” and under the influence, and those which “call into question and wrestle with systems of interpreting drugs” (26). This distinction applies within the cyberpunk movement as well; Gibson’s depiction of drug cultures in his fiction can be compared and contrasted with the work of Bruce Sterling, for example his novel *Involution Ocean*, and John Shirley, whose lifestyle and battle with drugs, his “serious drug habits,” have been covered in his autobiographical writing. Moreover, in the case of Shirley, drugs are also an integral component of the punk rock music scene he inhabited.

Writing on drugs presents a number of challenges and problems in that a range of different discourses are drawn upon (medical, economic, sociological, moral, historical) as well as literary evocations and the documented experiences of individuals. As Derrida notes, “the concept of drugs supposes an instituted and an institutional definition: a history is required, and a culture ... an entire network of intertwined discourses, a rhetoric, whether explicit or elliptical” (20). Although this chapter intersects with several disciplines, the approach is predominantly literary, supported by textual analysis.

Avital Ronell’s critical work on drugs provides a suitable starting point in this respect, since her challenging book on drugs “goes the way of literature.” Taking Gustave

Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* as the main text, Ronell examines the "pharmacodependency with which literature has always been secretly associated" (11) and reveals how "the horizon of drugs is the same as that of literature" (59). Ronell finds literature is a "breeding ground of hallucinogenes" (11) and there is "textual communication" (29) between "drug" texts. Charles Stross' short story "Yellow Snow" provides a good example of this kind of communicative strategy, a brutally funny appropriation of key aspects of cyberpunk works, as in the opening: "Sometimes you have to make speed, not haste. I made twenty kilos and moved it fast. Good old dex is an easy synthesis but the polizei had all the organochemical suppliers bugged; when a speed stash hit the street ... [t]hey'd take a cut: my lungs, heart and ribosomes" (191).

The first part of this chapter examines the "scene of addiction" and traces the various references to drugs with a close reading of *Neuromancer*. Focusing on the social construction of addiction, it considers the depiction of a postmodern drug culture (the cycle of substance abuse, addiction, and detoxification) set against an orientalized backdrop. This emphasis further distinguishes Gibson's novel from more conventional representations of drugs in science fiction texts. In point of fact *Neuromancer* reflects closely recent trends (as stated in reports by the World Health Organization) in the use of illicit drugs; that is, a world or globalizing trend towards rising levels of substance use, an increase in the number of female substance users, a falling age of initiation into substance use (and here we can note the drug-addicted Mona in Gibson's novel *Mona Lisa Overdrive* is sixteen years old), and a growth in multiple drug use. I also draw on Ronell's term *toxicogeography* in order to highlight the interweaving of the medical and the geographical, of an urban, postmodern cityscape, whereby Jameson's new space of "the streets" has become "the streets of Ninsei," and the rehabilitation clinic the focal point of recovery. Case begins as a drug addict and concludes the novel drug-free.

The second part of this chapter takes the title "Figures of the Orient" and covers what is perhaps the most striking characteristic of addiction discourse, its "close historical association with Western discourses of the 'Orient'" (Brodie and Redfield 11). There is a history of fiction writing which associates drug culture, drugs and drug problems with Orientalist themes, and much of this initially stems from associations with opium. In his insightful study of the links between opium and instances of orientalization

in literature, *Pleasures and Pains: Opium and the Orient in Nineteenth-Century British Culture*, Barry Milligan notes how over the last two centuries in a number of Western cultures, “the pairing of various consciousness-altering substances and Oriental ambience” (3) has pervaded discourses about drugs.

Drawing on insights from Milligan’s work and methodological approach, which foregrounds literary criticism but also extends to embrace cultural studies, intersecting with a number of disciplines, notably history and sociology, I make parallels as to how the representation of drugs provides an example of postmodern orientalism in cyberpunk. Understandably, Milligan’s main focus is literary, with the spotlight on canonical productions, and grounded in literary criticism. As he explains, the books of Coleridge, De Quincey, and others of the period were widely read and powerful cultural forces. However, Milligan further notes the association of opium with “fantastic Oriental visions” is not easily explicable in terms of only a literary paradigm, but is instead “both stimulus and response to a set of interrelated historical, psychological, and cultural factors” (3) that requires one to take into account a number of linked issues. My own discussion of cyberpunk fiction finds it is necessary to widen the scope further to directly include the products of popular culture, and in particular countercultural phenomenon, such as rock music, some of the relevancies of which concerning drugs I will outline in this chapter, but of which I will offer a fuller and more detailed account in the following chapter. The relevance of an historical assessment of drugs to this topic can be further established with De Quincey’s work. It also allows for a particular orientalist constellation around notions of race, gender and nationalism that are pertinent to the issues of this thesis: the figure of the feminized victim who is unable to survive on the streets, the framework of an imperialist rhetoric.

The final part of the chapter returns to the late twentieth century and evaluates in more detail the incongruous juxtaposition of Japan and America in terms of drugs in a global context. Previously I pursued the notion advocated by Giddens that globalization is led from the West, reflects American political and economic power interests, and is highly uneven in its consequences. Japan presents a difficulty as both a site of technological prowess and a lightning rod for the adverse effects of globalization. For if by “the future” what is meant regarding Japan is technological advancement, then

seemingly it comes with global social problems. As Ronell notes, drugs have “globalized a massive instance of destructive *jouissance*” (59). But it is questionable whether it is enough to account for Japan by saying that what were once regarded as Western social problems now have a global dimension.⁶

A recent study “Globalization and Drugs” by Larry Harrison details the world trend towards rising levels of substance use, whereby “‘drug abuse’ is now a ‘global phenomenon’ which affects almost every country, although its extent and characteristics differ from region to region” (103). Japan is not mentioned as one of those regions by Harrison. This is not to claim Japan is untouched by the globalization of drugs as an economic phenomenon (as documented in the three known epidemics in stimulants that have occurred in Japan since the Second World War), but to note an important corollary: Harrison makes the point that, considering the acceleration of the globalization process during the past fifty years has been accompanied by “an exponential growth” in the numbers of young people taking drugs, a change in the use of intoxicants on this scale is “a cultural shift of seismic proportions” (103).⁷

Drugs: America vs Japan

Before moving on to examine cyberpunk texts in detail, I will now focus and summarize the key issues I have raised around comments made by Bruce Sterling, the “ideologue” (Tatsumi interview) and the “cyberpunk theoretician” (McCaffery 10) who has provided incisive commentary about drugs. As he explains in the foreword to John Shirley’s book, “drugs are an intriguing social and technomedical phenomena” (3). This remark suggests the transformation of products which have mostly been used as medicinal drugs into widely marketed commodities that are then used for pleasure or enhancement, for example, amphetamine. It also includes the application of new technologies in drug cultures, such as the introduction of the syringe as a delivery system for drugs, and more recently, developments in designer drugs. Sterling’s comment also

⁶ Carl Trocki proposes that “drugs became social problems only when they were moved out of their ‘original’ contexts to populations or nations which had not been habituated to their use, or when the availability, production or distribution of them was drastically changed” (xi).

⁷ Concerning the exponential growth of illicit drug use in the UK, Larry Harrison concedes the figures are staggering, from “around 350 people who were known to the British Home Office as being dependent on illicit drugs in 1958 to 43,000 forty years later” (103).

accentuates the social dimension of drug use (which gained wider visibility during the countercultural period of the sixties). In the author's note to *A Scanner Darkly*, evaluating the widespread social impact of the drug culture, Dick writes: "I am not a character in this novel; I am the novel. So, though, was our entire nation at this time" (277).

In the interview Tatsumi Takayuki conducted with Sterling in the very first issue of *Science Fiction Eye* in the mid 1980s, Sterling made the following remarks.⁸ As far as this thesis is concerned, they eloquently set out the main issues concerning cyberpunk and drugs, in particular its countercultural orientation, and specifically the formulation of a perceived incongruity between America and Japan when the topic is drugs:

The thing about the relation of cyberpunk and the transcendental vision, what I call visionary intensity, is something that you see in all the cyberpunk writers. It's essentially the sound of feedback blowing out the speakers: I'll show you God. And that's always been the payoff for the drug culture. Do X and it will put you in this heightened state. That's bound to have had its influence, especially in America. Even since the Fifties, but especially since the late Sixties. The drug culture is one of the major industries in the United States now, billions and billions of dollars. There are whole countries in South America propped up by drug use. Ronald Reagan and his minions at the drug enforcement agencies would wring their hands over this and say, 'Oh the pity, the horror, the dirty drug use.' And I know that doesn't cut much ice in Japan, where drugs are still essentially unheard of. (35)

There are a number of points raised here pertinent to this chapter and add to the distinctions I have made so far. The first point of note concerns the notion of a transcendental vision, the "visionary intensity" of cyberpunk, which is able to convey "the bizarre, the surreal, the formerly unthinkable" (Sterling *Mirrorshades* xii). Drugs as an agent for transcendence in this context would suggest the LSD-induced visions familiar from the countercultural sixties. Sterling's "I'll show you God" echoes a passage from Dick's *A Scanner Darkly* which recounts someone who "had seen God in a

⁸ "Eye to Eye: An interview with Bruce Sterling by Takayuki Tatsumi," *Science Fiction Eye* (1987): 27-42.

flashback after an acid trip” as a “shower of brightly colored sparks” (232). This intensity owes much to the eastern mysticism typical of writers like Hermann Hesse (which I discussed in the previous chapter), certain Beat Generation writers, Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg for instance, whose “transcendental” visions of the East combine drugs and mysticism, and the kinds of counterculture texts which linked eastern religions with “popular” physics in the 1960s and 1970s, such as Fritjof Capra’s *The Tao of Physics*. In Dick’s novel, the drug taker finds the “whole world was a living creature, wherever he looked. And there were no accidents: everything fitted together and happened on purpose” (232). As I will show, the representation of drugs in Gibson’s fiction is quite distinct; but even Case, on speed in the Jarre teashop, inspects the patterns of tiny scratches on the tabletop and “saw the countless random impacts required to create a surface like that” (*Neuromancer* 9).

The second point of note concerns America. As one of Don De Lillo’s characters in *White Noise* puts it, Americans “still lead the world in stimuli” (189). It was in the early twentieth century that the “specter of the drug addict began to loom large in American public consciousness and reform rhetoric” (Brodie and Redfield 3). It has been noted America seemed to have the narcotics problem contained in the 1950s. Drug addicts were rare, depraved creatures who might surface in stories like Nelson Algren’s *Man with the Golden Arm* (the main character is named Frankie Machine) but they did not haunt middle America. What wasn’t anticipated was the coming storm of the 1960s, when America’s youth rediscovered drugs ... as “vehicles to explore ‘inner space’” (Meyer and Parssinen 264).

Sterling’s timeframe is the second half of the twentieth century, which conforms to the period characterized by Said as one of American imperialism; his points of focus are the late Sixties, and the Age of Reagan, the period in the 1980s which saw “the Reagan administration ... hyping the drug problem to make political capital” (Meyer and Parssinen xi-xii). The fallout is that drugs are now ubiquitous in the Western American world. They have “destroyed promising careers, have impoverished families, and have turned neighborhoods into war zones in which rival gangs fight over markets and market

share with automatic weapons” (xii).⁹ Under the “impacted signifier of drugs, America is fighting a war against a number of felt intrusions” (Ronell 50), a “foreign substance” even if it should turn out to be homegrown.

This brings me to the third point I want to elucidate suggested by Sterling’s commentary. If “America’s drug crisis is a runaway train” (Maran 7) what is Japan’s case? Sterling’s assumption is that the topic “doesn’t cut much ice in Japan, where drugs are still essentially unheard of.” Gibson in his article “Tokyo Collage” is more skeptical: “I’ve been repeatedly told there are no illicit drugs in Japan” (42). The overriding assumption is that Japan is somehow drug-free. Donald Richie, a well-known film critic and longtime resident of Japan, notes by comparison with the West “Japan has only a minimal drug problem” (238).

Part of this assumption has an historical basis. The opium trade never got started in Japan, and the Japanese came to the opium traffic reluctantly. They drafted many treaties with the West from 1853 onwards, but remained firm on one: “opium was forbidden to be sold or used on Japanese soil” (Trocki 91). In 1895, it has been noted, “the Japanese population had little experience with the drug” (92-3). Trocki emphasizes that “At all times, and no matter what the level of political disturbances, the Japanese state was able to keep out opium. Thus one of the great contrasts between Japan and China in the nineteenth century” (89). Yet, in its later drive to graduate to a status equal to that of the European imperialist powers, it has been argued Japan itself became a drug-dealing country, seeking to profit from the export of morphine in the wake of the opium suppression movement.¹⁰

Sterling’s assumption about drugs in Japan requires further qualification. Drug use does occur in Japan, but its social meanings and effects are very different from those

⁹ See Mike Gray’s *Drug Crazy* which cites the case of Chicago and “the gang and narcotics activity that is devouring the city’s school system.” There is an ongoing struggle “to get the drive-by shooters, to get the narcotics away from the schools” (4). Parts of the city are described as an “open air drug market” (5); the guarantee is that you could “go anywhere in the city and buy dope within three or four blocks” (7).

¹⁰ Thus the twentieth century offers a different experience and contrary views regarding Japan’s experience with opium. As Meyer and Parssinen note: “Perhaps nowhere is the connection between drug trafficking and politics as intimately woven as in the case of Japan. The fifty-year history of this hidden industry mirrors Japan’s experience with industrial development in the modern age” (90). Imperial success forced Japan to reevaluate its opium policy. By the 1920s “the profits of this traffic would prove useful in financing Japanese adventurers and extending Japanese power” (112). It was the Japanese who embraced the colonial monopoly, claiming to be following the British example. In Japanese hands the institution “developed military applications” (85).

in America. Drugs are certainly not unheard of, as recent Japanese television programs on the club scene in Shibuya, and high profile cases of drug abuse (among primarily foreigners) in Roppongi, demonstrate. Mizutani's study on drugs among youth in Tokyo in the 1990s further demonstrates this point. Ahmad points out in Japan, amphetamines have been a problem for about six decades. Immediately after World War II, large quantities of intravenous methamphetamine stored for military uses were made available to the public, and has again reached epidemic proportions. Recently the term "third wave" has been used to describe stimulant abuse in Japan.¹¹

But the situation in Japan remains unlike the United States, where drugs are likely to be experienced as an intensely local problem involving families, schools, and communities. What is significant here is that, as Pickering and Stimson note, when 'epidemics' of stimulant abuse occur they are often "supply- and media-led" (1388). In Japan, the epidemic that followed the Second World War was caused by the dumping of large quantities of methamphetamine on the market, together with an aggressive marketing campaign: "When amphetamines were used by Japanese pilots ... (it was) considered socially beneficial. It was only when they started to be taken in excess ... that they were withdrawn from use as part of the fabric of everyday life" (1389). However, although there are similarities between the amphetamine epidemics (UN Review) as well as between the social profile of stimulant abusers (Pickering and Stimson), response to them took a markedly different turn in the 1980s, in particular between Japan and the United States.¹² Where the difference resides, as Mizutani's report suggests, is that although the "third wave" in Japan has serious, observable consequences among some youth, drugs have not become part of the "fabric of everyday life."

Cyberpunk writers like Gibson, however, continue to represent Japan, and the Orient more generally, in terms of a thriving drug culture. Case in *Neuromancer* high on amphetamine, on the streets of a fictional Chiba City has no problem sending "a brick of

¹¹ See Ahmad, 1878. Humeniuk and Ali note that two-third's of the world's 33 million amphetamine users live in Asia. Ahmad points out that recently crimes involving amphetamines have accounted for 90% of all drug-related crimes. Concerning the "third wave," it has been reported that the use of clandestine amphetamines and their analogues recently seen in Japan notes began in the early 1990s and spread throughout the country, mainly among juveniles.

¹² Another parallel might be drug-free China: the 1980s saw "a resurgence of trade with the West (after Communist anti-drug programs had been successfully implemented) ... Western-inspired fashions and rock'n'roll ... even opium" (Meyer and Parssinen 268).

Ketamine on its way to Yokohama.” From another perspective, it may also be the case that drug culture, and in particular the chronic social problems associated with it, is seen in Japan as primarily as a Western export (see fig. 1).



Fig 1. A recent anti-drug exhibition with the theme “yakubutsu ranyou wa dame zettai” in Futako-Tamagawa, Setagaya Ward, Tokyo, by junior high school students (age 11-13). English words feature prominently, although the exhibition does note drug use has been a problem inside and outside (kuni no naigai) the country.

1. The Scene of Addiction

I'd only been to Tokyo once before, but I knew as soon as I hit the ground, I'd be tapping into that main vein again, a dead-bang, sure-fire, king-hell rush. For me, Tokyo is like one long film trailer ... the pace getting quicker and quicker, the action more frenzied, leading up to sudden blackness.

(Anthony Bourdain *A Cook's Tour* 136)

John Clute has noted in his encyclopedia of science fiction that “the use of drugs, both real and imaginary, is a common theme in sf, notably in cyberpunk” (354).

Generally, drugs in science fiction can be found to be applicable in two categories; perception (a romantic belief that drugs could open the gates of perception; as a quasi-natural or at least organic method for altering modes of perception, bringing about distortions of perception; and as an agent for transcendence); and psychology (some invention, usually a machine or a drug, is invoked as a literary device to exert specific control over the substance of the psyche; machines and drugs as facilitating devices). Taking an illustrative example of the latter from Japanese anime, Otomo Katsuhiro's “Stink Bomb” is about a research assistant who accidentally takes an experimental drug that transforms him into a deadly biological weapon.

Although presenting reworked versions of drugs and drug taking in the cyberpunk idiom, generally Sterling's fiction does not depart radically from Clute's categories. In Sterling's *Involution Ocean* the main character's drug of choice, “flare,” is declared illegal, so the protagonist must head out on a dust whale ship in a crater to extract flare from the source. Flare is distilled from the oil of whale-like creatures which swim in the dust. This is a desolate (science fictional) world with a single habitable crater filled with near-fluid dust. There are overtones of science-fiction novels such as *Dune* (where the drug “spice” is the sought-after commodity) mixed with *Moby Dick* in the tale of an obsessed captain and an alien woman. The novel, in its depiction of drugs, is firmly fixed in the science fiction genre.

Even in *The Matrix* (1999), a film which has been credited with the revival of cyberpunk, the representation of drugs is in line with the science-fictional categories

outlined above. Given the choice between a blue and a red pill, Neo takes the red one to discover that humans have been reduced to the status of batteries, and their brains are hooked into a realistic vibrant dream world. He is just a body lying in a capsule, feeding the machine. Although drugs are thus central to the narrative, the habitual use of drugs in the film is not (mescaline is briefly mentioned at the outset but plays no determining role) and of a different order to Case in *Neuromancer*, as I will demonstrate in this section. Gibson's novel offers a powerful account of the scene of drug addiction. It does so by interweaving two narrative threads that run concurrently in the novel, to the point where they become indistinguishable from one another, and which gives to cyberpunk fiction in this instance its peculiar complexity.

The first strand is a conventional literary device. We recall Case has been poisoned with a toxic substance (mycotoxin) and this familiar plot device (as in a James Bond novel) requires its own unraveling and denouement. This drug is organic, but the technique is radical. In *A Scanner Darkly*, organic psychedelics are described: "Some mushrooms are toxic in the extreme ... red-blood-cell cracking agents ... there's no antidote" for mushroom toxicity (162). The source of these deadly compounds is outside the US.

The other complementary narrative thread is the working through of an addiction to a powerful synthetic street drug, "speed," which must be overcome. The second instance is more perverse, in that consumption is supposedly a matter of personal choice, and the assessment of the risks involved with ingesting this particular drug become a task for the individual. This is the modern phenomenon of drug addiction (or dependence). In (post)modern parlance the terms "addiction" and "dependence" are "virtually interchangeable and usually refer to a range of physiological, psychological, and social effects associated with the habitual use of certain substances" (Milligan 23). Durrant and Thakker note that although the term "dependence" is currently favoured in classification schemes, the older concept of "addiction" is still widely employed, and they use the terms "interchangeably" (29-30).

Drug dependence is "a complex bio-psycho-social phenomenon" (Harrison 103). The chief physiological effects are tolerance (the necessity for even greater dosages of the substance to produce the original effect), and the "withdrawal syndrome" (the onset

of pronounced and uncomfortable physical symptoms when dosages of the substance are decreased or halted). The depiction of Case's drug addiction in *Neuromancer* fits with twentieth-century models of addiction, which emphasize tolerance and withdrawal as factors that encourage continued and increasing use of "addictive substances."

Case uses the term "dependency" to describe his condition in both situations, the freeing from one dependency creating another. In the final analysis, to "get off drugs" as Ronell notes, the addict must "shift dependency to a person, an ideal, or to the procedure itself of the cure" (25). Hence the importance of, in that order, the "street samurai" Molly Millions who provides the necessary support structure, cyberspace (and the need to re-connect), and the process of being cured, which takes Case to the black clinics of Chiba.

The Streets of Ninsei

The opening chapters of *Neuromancer*, entitled "Chiba City Blues" offer a compelling account of the scene of drug addiction. Two blocks west of the bar where he just purchased a stack of pink 'octagons' from one of Zone's workers, Case, the protagonist of Gibson's *Neuromancer* threads his way through the night crowds in a sleazy part of Chiba City, Japan. To recap: he used to be one of the best 'computer cowboys' in the business, i.e. hacking into corporate systems, but it is no longer the case. For the last year he has been living (and hustling) in this part of the city, a narrow borderland and outlaw zone called Ninsei or Night City, hoping to find a cure in the nearby "black clinics" for the severe neural damage he sustained as punishment for stealing from his employers; subsequently, it has blocked his ability to experience cyberspace, a work prerequisite. Hope is fading fast. Alone at a table in the Jarre, a teashop somewhere in the heart of Ninsei, (with an espresso) he swallows one of the pills he bought, his first of the night, a potent octagon of dex.¹³

Case is addicted to "a totally synthetic product" (Emmett and Nice 46). Philip K. Dick offers some clues about the properties and genealogy of this particular drug group. "Methedrine is a benny, like speed; it's crank, it's crystal, it's amphetamine, it's made synthetically in a lab. So it isn't organic, like pot" (*A Scanner Darkly* 122). Most

¹³ Dex is short for Dexedrine® the brand name of dextroamphetamine sulfate (made famous in the title of the band Dexys Midnight Runners in the late 70s) although the band deny any connection.

commonly amphetamine is seen in the form of a “coarse crystalline powder” and the powder forms are sometimes seen in different colours, usually “pink or yellow and have normally been produced by crushing pharmaceutical amphetamine tablets” (Emmett and Nice 48). There are many varieties of amphetamine produced by the pharmaceutical industry for medical use in tablet and capsule form. These tablets are most commonly pink, white or yellow in colour.

The dex mounting through his spine, riding high on the wavelength of amphetamine, the world around Case vibrates with the speed he has taken. He hits the streets of Night City: yakitori stands, game(s) arcades, tattoo parlours, neon ideograms and holograms flash by. The rush soon gives way, and he moves quickly into a parallel world of hallucination and “dex-paranoia” (28). One-time lover Miss Linda Lee, weaves in and out of the periphery of his vision; there is the “sudden cellular awareness” (23) that someone is following him, a noir-like reflection caught while looking in a Chiba City shop window. Back to the bar, then out on the streets again, armed with a rented gun and a “cobra” amid delusions of persecution alternating with “octagon-induced bravado” (28). Case dry-swallows another dex: “the pill lit his circuits” (29). Finally alone in his capsule coffin room at a very cheap hotel, just before dawn, he pulls down the hatch. Friday night on Ninsei, it was like a run in the matrix, “octagons and adrenaline mingling with something else” (26). The “dense, eyeball kicks” of cyberpunk, as Rucker describes it, are very much in tune with speed.

There are a number of recognizable criteria herein which meet a diagnosis of drug addiction, suggesting that in this aspect the novel has some element of psychological realism.¹⁴ Generally there is evidence of tolerance, whereby increased dosages are necessary (Case’s “stack” of pink octagons); a physiological withdrawal state, or use of a substance to relieve or avoid withdrawal symptoms; and difficulties in controlling use. Furthermore, there is a neglect of alternative pleasures and interests, i.e. a great deal of time spent in activities necessary to obtain, to use, or to recover from the effects of substance abuse. Thus Gibson’s Case is a drug dealer: “All his nights down Ninsei, his nights with Linda ... at the cold sweating center of every drug deal” (181) and when they

¹⁴ Based on categories for substance dependence (Table 2.5) outlined in Russil Durrant and Jo Thakker, *Substance Use and Abuse: Cultural and Historical Perspectives* 28-9.

are successful transactions, could send large quantities of hard drugs like Ketamine on its way to Yokohama, or “designer drugs” such as pituitaries to a network of contacts.¹⁵

The mechanisms associated with drug use in terms of addiction or dependency are thus a feature of the text. The Oriental setting and ambience, however incongruous it may prove to be with respect to Japan, enhances these depictions.

The Drug of Choice

One particular drug dominates these opening chapters: they have all the hallmarks of an extended meditation on the use of and addiction to amphetamine. McCaffery has observed that speed is the drug of choice in cyberpunk fiction, although no elaboration is offered; the topic has yet to be dealt with comprehensively (for instance, why speed, and not heroin or “crack” cocaine, hashish or mescaline)? Elsewhere he refers to cyberpunk’s “crystal meth pacings” (23).¹⁶ Speed is certainly the first drug mentioned in Gibson’s novel, “the default drug, the bottom line”; it can energize and stimulate, enhancing performance and perceptions, and this is known as the “speed effect” or a “run.” Case swallowed an octagon (dex) and “rode the rush down Shiga to Ninsei ... He had calls to make, biz to transact, and it wouldn’t wait” (*Neuromancer* 29). But continuous doses of speed can lead their users into “a singular world of fragmentation, anxiety, paranoia, psychosis” (Plant 114).

David Muggleton in *Inside Subculture* explores (and critiques) how continuity of different elements in subcultures is achieved by the use of drugs, and notes how “a sub-cultural pharmacology” has been mapped out through “the symbolic role of particular drugs in certain subcultural groups.” Thus “[c]onsciousness-expanding drugs like acid and hash are homologically related to the countercultural concern with the exploration of

¹⁵ Ketamine (‘special K’ or ‘vitamin K’) is a rapidly acting anaesthetic that is used in veterinary surgery (and less commonly in human surgery). It produces dissociative and hallucinogenic effects, including ‘out-of-body’ like experiences, analgesia and amnesia. Too much ketamine can result in the user having bizarre experiences including near death experiences known as “falling into a k-hole.” Generally associated with the dance party scene, it is complicated to synthesise, and the required precursor chemicals are difficult to obtain, which generally restricts its manufacture to the legitimate pharmaceutical industry.

¹⁶ Methamphetamine (‘P’, ‘pure’ or ‘burn’) is a powerful psychostimulant whose pharmacological characteristics and effects closely resemble cocaine. Users sometimes go on binges (known as ‘speed runs’) where they use the drug continuously over several days without sleep. Crystal methamphetamine (“ice,” “crystal” or “shabu”) is the crystallized form of methamphetamine. It is made of large translucent crystals and is clandestinely manufactured in Asia.

the self, while barbiturates and amphetamines play only a marginal role, their typical associations being with other groups” (111). By inference, there are drugs more favourable to a punk aesthetic, such as speed. Thus citing a number of studies, Muggleton notes “punks were, more explicitly than the mods, adepts of amphetamines,” that “the drugs of consciousness restriction (...amphetamine sulphate) were the preferred pastime’ of punks” and “heavy barbiturate use among punks, suggests there is a symbolic fit between the destructive effects of this particular drug and the punk ideology of nihilism and despair.”

Certainly there are elements of this in Gibson’s cyberpunk fiction, but the ideology that accompanies depictions of despair and angst are balanced with the recuperation of Case socially, which restores the relation to cyberspace. At the same time it underscores the addictiveness of cyberspace, the long and complex links between addiction discourse and modern technology.

On closer examination, the opening of *Neuromancer* charts out a road map for a condition known as amphetamine psychosis, or “the horrors!”¹⁷ Case recognizes that he’d started to play a game with himself, “a very ancient one that has no name, a final solitaire” (*Neuromancer* 14). This drug-induced psychosis has a number of distinct phases, marked out by Case’s run through Night City: looking deeply through the surface of things, like the tabletop in the tea shop, noting “countless random impacts” (16); other people scrutinizing him; shadowy surveillance and the sensation of being followed; noises (voices) and colours which trigger delusions and hallucinations; obsessive behaviour. Linda Lee, who he first came across in a video game arcade, encapsulates much of this: “He closed his eyes, took a deep breath, opened them, and saw Linda Lee step past him ... And gone. Into shadow” (52).

¹⁷ Jon Savage notes the “development of amphetamine tolerance leads to larger and larger doses to maintain the effect... With an increased dose different effects are experienced: often irritability, suspicion, restlessness, overexcitement. Eventually a serious mental disorder resembling paranoid schizophrenia may ensue – the development of delusions and hallucinations of a persecutory nature, often linked with grandiosity, hostility and aggression” (citing Barbara Harwood’s homeopathic report on drug abuse, quoted in Jon Savage, *England’s Dreaming: Anarchy, Sex Pistols, Punk Rock, and Beyond* 192). Healey confirms that persons who use larger amounts of amphetamines over a long period of time can develop an amphetamine psychosis that includes hallucinations, delusions and paranoia. These symptoms usually disappear when drug use ceases.

There is a strong desire or sense of compulsion to use the substance in stronger doses. Later in the novel, Case (under an alias) readily accepts a hit of the powerful Betaphenethylamine, an amphetamine (Trimethoxybetaphenethylamine). Sometimes referred to as an upper, it is a derivative of mescaline. There is no denying its powerful impact:

The drug hit him like an express train, a white-hot column of light mounting his spine ... His teeth sang in their individual sockets like tuning forks, each one pitch-perfect and clear as ethanol. His bones ... were chromed and polished, the joints lubricated with a film of silicone ... waves of high thin static that broke behind his eyes, spheres of purest crystal, expanding ... (184).

The rush is like a “seismic fluid, rich and corrosive ... (his own blood) a distant rumbling in his ears ... Razored sheets of light bisecting his skull at a dozen angles ... He walked till morning” (184-185).

There is continued use despite clear evidence of harmful consequences both physical and psychological. So it is not long before Case, or what remains of him (his traumatized residue), lies strung out on a temperfoam mattress in a capsule coffin hotel in Chiba City, and it was “a long strange way home over the Pacific now” (11). He is a basket case. He is literally “coming apart at the seams” (40) as his friend and future partner, razorgirl Molly puts it. Japanese experts have left him broke and close to dead: “You’re suicidal, Case” (40) Armitage tells him, offering him a deal that would fix the problem, so he can once again enter cyberspace. It had seemed like nothing could ease the pain: “All the speed he took, all the turns he’d taken and the corners he’d cut in Night City, and still he’d see the matrix in his sleep” (11). More amphetamine-driven nights, more hunger, deeper addiction, and hallucinations:

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, curled in his capsule in some coffin hotel, his hands ... trying to reach the console that wasn’t there. (11)

The deal Case is offered by Armitage would certainly fix the problem, so he could again enter cyberspace. Drug addiction in cyberpunk can be understood as a conjunction of seemingly disparate experiences: the postmodern dislocation and vertiginous moments of estrangement rendered as otherness, countered by the promise of connectivity in relation to the virtual, the relocation in cyberspace (the “addictiveness” of cyberspace).

Black Clinics

In order to support his rapidly escalating, out-of-control drug habit Case has become a petty hustler, taking more and more risks in a kind of suicidal despair, when he is recruited by a mysterious employer who offers to have his damaged neural circuits repaired “strapped to his bed in a hotel room in Memphis for 30 hours” so that he can again enter cyberspace. This marks the beginning, as Myers notes, of the “recuperation of Case to a socially acceptable level.” Whilst he starts *Neuromancer* as “just another hustler, trying to make it through,” he ends it by having his criminal record erased, undergoing a “complete flush out” of his blood, and being in possession of a valid passport, as well as a large sum of legal money.

This city space, as Jameson reminds us, is no longer so “profoundly marked by the radical otherness of the older moment [naturalism]” (*Seeds* 152). There is now a circulation and recirculation possible. In the postmodern view, falling into the lower depths is not an irrevocable disaster; a “corporate comeback is possible and conceivable, something that would have been unthinkable and unrepresentable in the naturalist moment” (152). This particular detour is by way of the clinic.

When he first arrived in Chiba, Japan, “synonymous with implants, nerve-splicing, and microbionics,” Case had been sure he would find his cure for the mycotoxin poisoning he had suffered, either “in a registered clinic or in the shadowland of black medicine” (13). Later, in order to deal with some aspects of his drug dependency (“He couldn’t stop shivering”) Case returns to the clinic with Molly. He remembers the place from the rounds he’d made during his first month in Chiba: “The clinic was nameless, expensively appointed, a cluster of sleek pavilions separated by small formal gardens ... a sort of courtyard. White boulders, a stand of green bamboo, black gravel raked into

smooth waves” (40). A gardener (a robot crab) tends the bamboo. They are greeted by a technician who bows.

The serenity of the Asian (Japanese) garden motif contrasts strongly with the radical medical procedures carried out inside. At the same time the Oriental overtones evoke the high technology required but also contribute an element of “inhumanity.” They “replaced your fluid. Changed your blood, too ... a new pancreas ... new tissue ... lots of injections” (44). The new pancreas “frees you from a dangerous dependency” Case is informed. To which he replies: “Thanks, but I was enjoying that dependency.” This prompts the rejoinder: “Good, because you have a new one” (60). Fifteen toxic sacs slowly dissolving. Each one contains a mycotoxin. Do the job and I can inject you with an enzyme ... then you’ll need a blood change” (60). The reference to “blood changes” highlights the conjoined drug narratives that propel the narrative of *Neuromancer*: the “poisoned” individual searching out a cure; and the drug casualty undergoing treatment in a clinic or detox.

Besides the Gothic associations, the reference to blood changes indicates a curious corollary in cyberpunk. Cyberpunk as a group or movement was officially launched at the National Science Fiction Convention in Austin (Texas) in 1985, where there was a panel called “Cyberpunk.”¹⁸ In fact, Gibson was unable to attend. Rudy Rucker recalls how talking about cyberpunk without Gibson made them all feel a little uncomfortable. Quipped Bruce Sterling: “He’s in Switzerland getting his blood changed.”¹⁹ It is worth considering this innuendo further, since it taps into a potent pop culture myth relevant to the cyberpunk movement, and Gibson’s novel *Neuromancer*. The anecdote would seem to refer to seventies rock icon and drug casualty Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones; moreover, it suggests something vaguely vampiric, or futuristic and post-human, in keeping with the black leather jackets and mirrorshades of the group, the “down and dirty” edge the cyberpunks (particularly John Shirley) cultivated at SF conferences. If anyone should be in a rehab clinic, John Shirley would be a good candidate, and he has written candidly about his various addictions.

¹⁸ The panel at the National Science Fiction Convention comprised Rucker, Shirley, Sterling, Cadigan, and Bear. Steve Brown reports that Shirley and Gibson had first found themselves on a panel at a convention around 1980 or 1981. They soon after hooked up with the Texans, B. Sterling and L. Shiner.

¹⁹ See Rudy Rucker, *Seek! Selected Nonfiction* 315.

Keith Richards reputedly had full blood transfusions in Switzerland during the late 1970s to overcome heroin addiction. He had discovered that there was a clinic in Berne, Switzerland that specialized in an expensive but effective and painless three-day blood-cleansing cure. The treatment involved a haemodialysis process in which the patient's blood was passed through a pump, where it was separated from sterile dialysis fluid by a semi-permeable membrane. This allowed any toxic substances that had built up in the bloodstream, which would normally have been secreted by the kidneys, to diffuse out of the blood into the dialysis fluid. From this cure sprang the myth that Richards regularly had the blood emptied out of his body and replaced with a fresh supply.

According to his biographer, Victor Bockris, this "Dracul(e)an notion" (177) is one of the few elements of his image that Richards has gone to some pains to correct, but to no avail.²⁰ In fact Richards was frightened by the process because it meant being put to sleep for three days. Downplaying the event afterwards, Richards explained how the blood was changed "little by little so that there was no heroin in our bodies after 48 hours. There was no pain at all, and we spent the rest of the week just resting and building up our strength" (178). Richards' experience bears strong similarities with Case's predicament, Case is "strapped to his bed in a hotel room in Memphis for 30 hours" to recover, and forced to seek out a cure in a foreign location, the "black clinics" of Chiba City, which also happens to be a drug capital.

A Cyberpunk Toxicogeography

The countercultural link provided by the Rolling Stones suggests *Neuromancer* can be read as a pop culture rock casualty narrative familiar from the 1970s. Ronell's term *toxicogeography*, initially defined as "an imaginary place where literature could crash against its abysses and float amid fragments of residual transcendancy" (31), can be applied and extended to include the countercultural aspects of cyberpunk fiction described above. Ronell's point is that the literature of Romanticism "initiated the experience of its own substance ... obligating literature to map out a toxicogeography" (31). A number of points can be made concerning the characterization of drugs post-*Madame Bovary*. This concerns "the time the technological prosthesis became available

²⁰ On the connection between vampires and drugs, see Anna Powell, "Blood is the Drug" 143-62.

on the streets and drugs has become an effect of institution, convention, law” and drugs have “globalized a massive instance of destructive *jouissance*” (59).

The overt structure of *Neuromancer* is both geographical and medical. Geographically, the text traces a series of spatial (re)locations: the street, the hotel, the bar (in the novel the Chatsubo bar is the venue for buying drugs), and the clinic, to Memphis, to Chiba, to Istanbul and, ultimately, to the drug that constitutes its own peculiar landscape, amphetamine. The organization of the novel is also medicalized for each geographic locale is important in connection to the initial poisoning with mycotoxin, his medical condition, that leads to the hunger for speed and, in turn, to Case’s addiction and dreams “in the Japanese night” of cyberspace reentry. Thus, Case in “terminal overdrive” comes to view Night City as “a deranged experiment in social Darwinism” and the streets of Ninsei (the street itself came to) seem “the externalization of some death wish, some secret poison he hadn’t known he carried” (14).

The juxtaposition of urban locales contributes much to this toxicogeography. Gibson’s comment about the Japanese settings in his work was that he had formed “a fantasy about Chiba as a sort of Detroit.” Detroit, famous for the Motown label and rock music, and also the home of the American automobile industry, has been generally portrayed as a lawless zone, as represented in films like *Robocop*. Much of this anxiety is encapsulated in David Bowie’s song “Panic in Detroit” from the *Aladdin Sane* album released in the early seventies, and apparently written after an evening Bowie spent with Iggy Pop who told harrowing stories of his growing up in that city. The song is a postmodern pastiche or portrait of a lawless, urban American meltdown, juxtaposing images of violence and celebrity, concerned with emotional isolation, suicide and drugs. The final scene occurs in an anonymous room: “a gun and me alone . . . I wish someone would phone.” It’s an emphatically (post)modern predicament that reverberates through Gibson’s fiction: the protagonist of the New Rose Hotel; Case living in Cheap Hotel, capsule coffin hotels and the like.

Such descriptions take aspects of the modernist vision of the city and the kinds of experiences it dictates on its inhabitants, exemplified in high-modernist texts by Theodore Dreiser, for example, where in *Sister Carrie*, Hurstwood (via alcohol not drugs) comes to a dismal end in a small chamber somewhere in the forgotten depths of

New York City. There are also a number of significant precursors that derive from seventies rock music which link urban and social decay with drugs. I will discuss them briefly and separately here, as a prelude to the following chapter, which concentrates on rock music in line with Gibson's rock preferences, David Bowie, and Lou Reed, and adding Iggy Pop.

David Bowie's "Hunger City" is described on the cover of the album *Diamond Dogs* (1974) as a city "full of peoploids swarming across a crumbling post-nuclear holocaust city with atomic bomb-blasted skyscrapers of molten steel." This "concept" album was originally conceived as a rock musical based on George Orwell's *1984*. It ushered in an era of darker themes and paranoid emotional states replete with Gothic imagery. The drugs and low-life themes dominate the album, and it is the brazen drug-referencing that is most in evidence throughout: "snowstorm, freezing your brain" and "We'll buy some drugs." Another inspiration for the album was the half wild boys from *Clockwork Orange*, who have taken over the barren city that has fallen apart. Like the Lo Teks in Gibson's short story "Johnny Mnemonic" they live on the tops of buildings, or roam the streets using roller skates. According to Bowie, they were all "little Johnny Rottens and Sid Viciouses really ... In a way it was a precursor to the punk thing."

Lou Reed's album *Berlin* (1973), another concept album, is built around the story of the title song. Reed reportedly chose the setting of Berlin for the song because it was "a divided city." Berlin was a symbol for Reed. "It could be New York, too. It's just very straightforward and real ... Berlin's a divided city, and a lot of potentially violent things go on there. And it just seemed better than calling it Omaha" (qtd. in Roberts 50). The aim was to generate a kind of European atmosphere, a Kurt Weill/Brecht atmosphere which would suit the lyrics. It was going to sound "off"; it wasn't going to sound typically American. If the song "Berlin" projects Reed as a laconic, pensively smoking cabaret singer, intrigued by decadent Sally Bowles-style glamour (the character from Christopher Isherwood's novel *Goodbye to Berlin* that became a successful seventies film, *Cabaret*) then Reed's album ended up being anything but *Cabaret*. Loosely the narrative of a crumbling ménage à trois in an equally unsettled Berlin, it dealt with anxiety, obsessive jealousy, domestic (and other) violence, a mother giving up her children, suicide, and endless speed jags.

Iggy Pop's album *Kill City* (1977) included songs by Iggy Pop and James Williamson with uncompromising titles such as "Beyond the Law," "Night Theme," "Sell Your Love," "No Sense of Crime." The lyrics to the title song set the scene: "Well I live here in Kill City where the debris meets the sea/ It's a playground for the rich, but it's a loaded gun to me"; and continue, "The scene is fascination/ ... until you wind up in some bathroom overdosed and on your knees." A staple of protopunk and Detroit rock, this opening song paints a picture of a degenerate and dangerous metropolis, which brings to mind Frank Miller's seventies classic graphic novel *Sin City*.

McCaffery notes the postmodern spirit "in which familiar objects and motifs are placed in startling, unfamiliar contexts," for example, when Gibson "relocates hundreds of semiological fragments within the dissolving, surreal electronic night world he invents for his cyberspace trilogy" and thus "a new discourse is established, different messages conveyed" (15). Whether Detroit or Chiba City, the "biz" of drugs generates familiar messages, however, such as the need for armed protection when the merchandise is drugs. In *Neuromancer*, Case kills a number of people to survive. Case procures an exotically concocted gun from a Japanese named Shin, a "Vietnamese imitation of a South American copy of a Walther PPK, double action on the first shot ... It was chambered from a .22 long rifle ... simple Chinese hollowpoints"; as he made his way "down Shiga from the sushi stall" he could feel "the grips were moulded in a dragon motif."

When the drug dealers move into a neighborhood in the United States, it has been noted, the most significant change is the guns. In order to "protect their interests, the dealers bring with them a considerable amount of firepower" (Gray 5). A recent article in the newspaper confirms this. In London, reports *The Observer*, when "police investigate gun crimes, drugs are usually the first motive they consider." New statistics show "that the inextricable link between drugs and firearms is unlikely to disappear in the near future."²¹ Case, immersed in the world of drugs, also means a world marked by escalating violence. With a "cold intensity" that had seemed to belong to someone else, in the first month he had "killed two men and a woman over sums that a year before would have seemed ridiculous" (7). Thus the dissolving, surreal and "orientalized" Night City

²¹ *Weekend Herald*, Saturday, Sept. 9, 2006, B16.

also has its brutally mundane American aspects, when it comes down to the business of drugs, conducted on city streets.

By way of conclusion to this section, which has explored how a toxicogeography might be applied and extended in a discussion of the representation of drugs in cyberpunk, the “street” is a recurring locus of cyberpunk interest. An intimate knowledge of “the streets” can be useful for survival in the world of corporate and bureaucratic decision. In a recent article, “My Own Private Tokyo,” Gibson recounts a visit to Tokyo. Unable to sleep at the hotel, Gibson then heads out on a nocturnal stroll across to Roppongi, the “gaijin” bar capital of Tokyo. He notes it is not part of Japan, but a “multinational twilight zone,” recalling the fondness of cyberpunks for interzones. At the famous tourist crossing in Roppongi, he sees a woman (i.e. “streetwalker”) and supposedly witnesses a drug deal. Gibson: “I see her, a gaijin [foreign] hostess on her way to work in a bondage club. She makes a drug deal (or it may be an exchange of telephone numbers).” There is “a flash of white as their palms meet. Folded paper. Junkie origami” (118-119).

It is an emphatically masculinist reading of the event witnessed, that is “a reading that produces a cultural and psychic *density* for the male subject” which also becomes itself “a way of magnifying the visual object status in which the woman is cast” (Chow *Writing Diaspora* 63). And although this “woman” is gaijin or foreign, the backdrop ensures the drug deal has oriental overtones, as well as in the juxtaposed details (“junkie origami”). On closer inspection, then, the “multinational” interzone reveals itself to be one of those “paradoxical spaces” (for women) pointed out by Jenny Wolmark.

2. Figures of the Orient

Usually she was the artist. Today she was the model. She had on sweatpants ... and a Chinese jacket, plum-colored, patterned with blue octagons, edged in silver thread, that seemed to float among the lavender flowers ... (Ann Beattie, “Skeletons” 43)

The second part of this chapter examines the close historical association addiction discourse shares with Western discourses of the “Orient.” There is a history of fiction writing which associates drug culture, drugs and drug problems with Orientalist themes, and much of this initially stems from associations with opium. In his insightful study of the links between opium and instances of orientalization in literature in *Pleasures and Pains*, Barry Milligan notes how over the last two centuries in a number of Western cultures, “the pairing of various consciousness-altering substances and Oriental ambience” (3) has pervaded discourses about drugs. He finds the initial associations stem largely from Coleridge and De Quincey’s treatment of opium written in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

Milligan reports that opium carried strong associations with the Orient in British culture by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Milligan has noted of Coleridge, and De Quincey after him, their “life-long engagement with a fantasized version of the Orient” (46). In particular, De Quincey outlines hierarchical divisions between East and West, inside and outside (spatial divisions), self and other, “only to invert the hierarchies and blur the divisions in processes closely associated with the use of opium” (49). Consequently I find De Quincey’s *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1822; 1856) provides a singular and instructive example for this thesis.²²

Opium in particular, according to Carl Trocki in his book *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy* seems to be at “the bottom of that grab-bag of attitudes, prejudices and assumptions that Edward Said has called ‘orientalism,’ at least as it applies to monsoon Asia” (12). Milligan shows that the association of opium with “fantastical Oriental visions” cannot be easily explained in terms of a single phenomenon but is “both stimulus and response to a set of interrelated historical, psychological, and cultural factors” (3). As enumerated by Milligan, these factors also have relevance to this chapter and they include: the cultural consciousness of “the Orient”; encounters with the Orient (military, imperial, economic) that informed cultural products of the era; and attitudes toward drugs such as opium, and the circumstances of its use. While I am not advocating a substitution of “amphetamine” for “opium,” and “twentieth century America” for “nineteenth century Britain,” there are certainly a number of interesting

²² Hereafter referred to as *Confessions*.

corollaries that make a consideration of De Quincey's case and historical accounts of opium useful and necessary for understanding the incongruous pairing of amphetamine and Japan.

Primarily, the oriental associations that surrounded opium on "both sides of the Atlantic in the nineteenth century have persisted well into the twentieth" and particularly, these Oriental associations have become "so entrenched in American, English, and European cultures that they have attached themselves to other controlled substances with no discernible Oriental origins" (8), such as LSD. The cultural patterns involving opium and the Orient can provide, "if not quite a genealogy" (9) then an understanding for a number of attitudes towards drugs today.

Moreover, Milligan observes that almost all of nineteenth-century British writing about opium and the Orient "seems to have been produced by white men" (10) and finds a similar parallel in "the apparent restrictiveness of the male-dominated genre of imperialist adventure fiction" (11). This finding plays out in an interesting way with drugs and cyberpunk; most of the cyberpunk writers are white males. The exception is Pat Cadigan, but who has also written "drug" stories, such as "My Brother's Keeper" in *Patterns*, and interestingly takes up the theme of the Orient and drugs in an oblique way (when compared with Gibson) in one particular novel, *Tea From an Empty Cup*, which begins with a drug deal initiated by the Japanese character Hiro, the drug being a powerful "blue gel capsule" associated with experiences of virtual reality.

The concerns that are highlighted by nineteenth-century British cultural productions dealing with opium and the Orient are inextricable from matters relating to British territorial expansion (and the definition of "Britishness") in the nineteenth century. Therefore it is necessary to work to some extent with terms that are central in this case: imperialism, the Orient, opium, and national identity. Especially the adventure fiction of imperialism, and we can include *Terry and the Pirates*, raise issues of race and gender that are relevant to cyberpunk as the products of a male-dominated genre.

Imperialism refers to multiple and sometimes contradictory phenomena. In this thesis I rely on a more encompassing definition (after Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*) that can include many of the activities of Britain well before 1880. It can further be argued missionary and commercial activities as well as other cultural and

technological changes contribute to the domination of one nation by another, although, as has been suggested, the term “cultural imperialism” is a loaded one. Furthermore, colonialism is interwoven with imperialism. In terms of drugs, the main point concerns power relations with distant regions, and cultural productions that “both reflected and structured those interactions” (Milligan 17).

The Opium Empire

Since the discovery of America, Europe in particular, not to mention the Americas, had been swept by massive infusions of new drugs, including tobacco. At the end of the nineteenth century opium was thoroughly embedded in the political economies of every Asian state east of Suez. According to Trocki, it is “appropriate to think of all of nineteenth-century Asia, east of Suez, (with some qualifications about Japan) as simply the ‘European empire’” (11). It is clear that “the structure of European imperial control and the capitalist structures which were built upon it were intimately tied to opium” (Trocki xiii). The opium empire enabled the British to achieve their pre-eminent position in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Furthermore, the opium trade permitted the expansion of the British empire in Asia. It has been noted there was “a direct relationship historically, between the drive to bring Asia into the world trade system and the commodification of opium” (Harrison 110). Generally the nineteenth-century opium trade can be argued to have destroyed the integrity of social and political structures in China and Southeast Asia; yet it also helped to build and to finance the creation of new and alternative structures (opium revenues, for example, became an important part of regional revenues and regimes, the fiscal mainstay of the warlords and regimes that dominated China into the twentieth century). In this discussion it is important to bear in mind that opium was legal. Opium was a widespread and unremarkable part of daily existence in Britain for well over a century before the Pharmacy Act of 1868 restricted the right to sell opium and other “poisons.”

It was at a time when Anglo-Chinese relations were severely strained, by a growing sense of rivalry and mutual threat that Coleridge and De Quincey produced “opium-dream versions of China” and which “resemble the violent, mysterious, and demonic Orient of the Oriental tales at least as much as they resemble the serene and

beautiful Cathay of chinoiserie” (19-20). Milligan argues persuasively that these two writers significantly altered the traditional English conceptions of China and the Orient: they “merged the demonic and the serene” and replaced the escapism and external context of traditional Oriental tales with a “threateningly internal one” (19-20). In this way it can be argued that nineteenth century British fears and anxieties about opium and the Orient are “intimately linked to national identity” (28).

The Oriental Vice

The phenomenon of wide-scale recreational drug use may no longer be peculiarly Asian. To what extent was it ever truly “Asian”? Opium had been the partner of British colonialism since 1751 yet “Oddly enough, by 1900, opium was generally not seen as a British, or European problem. It was an Asian problem” (6). The Orient’s distinctive vice, in other words. There was some factual basis to this: when Eastern merchants and conquerors first came to Asia, the drug was already an item of commerce. Chinese and Southeast Asian users had begun to smoke the drug and “gave it a peculiarly Asian association” (6). But it was the Europeans who had changed the nature of the trade, into a drug used primarily for pleasure. In 1906 China was the leading market for narcotic drugs; smoking was considered a Chinese vice, yet the habit was not indigenous. It first came in foreign merchant vessels, and it was foreign countries that encouraged the twentieth-century restrictions. The British contribution was “the commercialization of opium.”

Thus the strange, one might say “paradoxical” progress of opium at the beginning of the twentieth century. Even though the entire imperial order in Asia was to some degree dependent upon opium reserves, Europeans themselves could adopt the attitude that opium was a weakness peculiar to Asians. Indeed, this idea became part of the virtual bedrock of the orientalist discourse. There are four main aspects concerning opium here that I think are relevant to this discussion: as a cultural practice; as a particular location or place (the “den” in Chinatown); its links with immigration (and diaspora); and its relationship with fiction and literature.

In particular, the cultural practice of *smoking* opium was singled out as “the most decadent, dangerous and depraved method of using the substance. A rather clear dividing

line, that separated the ‘Asiatics’ from the whites grew up around opium usage ... And, when the habit did appear ... in Europe and America it was seen as an aberration and something to be eliminated or at least delimited to local Chinese consumers” (136-7). It was not until the practice of smoking opium began to spread beyond the Chinatowns of London, New York, New Orleans and San Francisco, that opium came to be seen as a drug worthy of legal restriction. There were those who recoiled at the prospect of the “oriental vice” of opium smoking spreading amongst Christian Europeans (164-5). The stereotypes were predominantly of European dealers and Chinese users.

The overriding assumption, then, is that opium is Chinese in origin. The opium smoking ritual – lamp, pipe, bowl – is associated with the Chinese. But, as I have outlined, and Meyer and Parssinen emphasize, “Nothing could be further from the truth” (xv). Even in Dick’s novel, *A Scanner Darkly*, Bob finds Donna smoking opium (hash saturated with opium alkaloids) and asks? “You ever seen pictures of an old opium smoker? Like in China in the old days? Or a hash smoker in India now, what they look like later on in life?” Donna replies: “I don’t expect to live long. So what? I don’t *want* to be around long” (154-55).

As Milligan notes, the influx of Oriental immigrants in the 1860s meant that popular journalists and fiction writers began to portray London’s East End opium dens, with both delight and trepidation, as “miniature Orientals within the heart of the British Empire” (13) at the same time that it allowed audiences to see the instability of the market-driven aspects of the power dynamics of empire.

Furthermore, opium had not always been vilified by Americans. In the nineteenth century it was commonly regarded as a wonder drug, usually consumed as laudanum. Chinese immigrants, however, were perceived as distinctly more dangerous. They were not pitied but despised. “Alarm was the result of who the addicts were and the kind of drugs they were taking” (Meyer and Parsinnen 240-1). Sax Rohmer, celebrated author of the Fu Manchu novels about the “Devil Doctor,” *The Insidious Dr Fu Manchu*, writes how Shen-Yan’s is “a dope-shop in one of the burrows ... a center for some of the Chinese societies, I believe, but all sorts of opium-smokers use it” (27). There is a history of fiction writing which associates drug culture, drugs and drug problems with Orientalist

themes, because of the origins of opium, and associations with the Opium Wars of the nineteenth-century.

Confessions of an English Opium-Eater

It is the relationship between opium, and fiction and literature that is particularly revealing for this thesis. Specifically, I will take up the compelling work of Thomas De Quincey, seriously addicted to opium from 1804 (when first taken as a remedy for violent neuralgia) through to his final years. *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* is a work which demonstrates striking parallels and contrasts with cyberpunk concerning the representation of drugs, the Orient and “oriental” visions. The parallel offers insights into representations of racial difference, as in the startling encounter with the Malay, issues of gender (the figure of the lost, betrayed girl-child, an innocent outcast and victim, like the fifteen-year-old prostitute Ann of Oxford Street), and a global context for the commodity trade (concerning the “legality” of opium). De Quincey had no trouble procuring the drug (in the form of laudanum, an alcoholic tincture of opium), buying it over the counter without prescription in any chemist’s shop. And although the situation of an opium addict was different when he wrote his seminal work on the topic, he “did indeed share with other addicts of his own and our times the pariah temperament which makes such a life supportable, even preferable” (Hayter 7).

In literary terms, De Quincey’s work was steeped in the Gothic, and he is considered a “great Gothic writer.” Cannon Schmitt has argued De Quincey borrows “Gothic plotting in order to lend substance and shape to his experiences” (48). *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* can be described as “a Gothic autobiography – a text that organizes its material, the life and times of Thomas De Quincey, on the model of the Gothic novel” (48). In the Gothic narrative De Quincey found a useful way to represent not only the struggles of the self, but the travails and triumphs of the English nation as well. This double function of the Gothic is explained by a fatality at the heart of *Confessions* that inexorably binds De Quincey to the fate of the nation: his addiction to opium. Opium, the substance to which De Quincey turned for relief from pain and which eventually tormented as much as it soothed him, lay behind two of Britain’s most far-flung imperial conflicts, the Opium Wars with China (1839-42, 1856-58). De Quincey’s

writings on the subject demonstrate the uses to which such a gothicization of history and geopolitics might be put.

Eve Sedgwick identifies in De Quincey's writing a full catalogue of Gothic conventions – that includes “sleep, dreams, live burial, the unspeakable, [and] the sublime of privation” (44). Sedgwick finds (in keeping with her formalist reading of the genre) a primary dynamic structure dominated by the correspondence between two spaces: “within” and “without.” De Quincey's use of this topos highlights “tensions between the rhetorical topographic organization and the apparent psychological or phenomenological subject” (49). Schmitt's focus is not the search for the formal structure of “inside” and “outside,” but “for the promise of a paranoid narrative involving unjust and inexorable persecution” (50). So far reaching an effect did the genre have on his imagination that his writings constantly borrow from it in order to give form to his life, his ideas, and, in perhaps the strangest case, his understanding of international relations (between Britain and China).

Understandably, *Neuromancer* has been discussed as “gothic for our times.” The action unfolds in the labyrinthine networks of cyberspace, the place where the two computers synthesize is the Villa Straylight, a “Gothic folly” and Gothic themes abound: the prevalence of monsters, the pervasiveness of paranoia and narcoticized hallucination, the power of the technological versus the, at times, very human Case. In a study of Gothic motifs in cyberpunk Rapatzikou focuses on the visual and graphic quality of Gibson's fiction in relation to technology, in figures of physical decomposition, claustrophobic interiors, fragmentation and decay. In *Gothic Motifs in the Fiction of William Gibson* Rapatzikou is concerned with “the visual and graphic quality of Gibson's fiction in relation to technology ... drawing on decadent visualizations, graphic art, the grotesque, and architectural design” (xiii) which, it is argued is best understood through the cultural discourse of the gothic. The gothic quality is best emphasized by “the variety of visual motifs of physical decomposition, claustrophobic interiors, fragmentation and decay that characterize his settings and narrative descriptions” (xiv).

My own emphasis, however, is on what is characteristic of addiction discourse, its close historical association with Western discourses of the “Orient.” De Quincey took opium to relieve pain, but it soon became a necessity. It is the mind-altering effects of

opium addiction, how opium opened up new vistas of “divine engagement” that tantalize the modern reader, Dick’s “showers of colored sparks” (232). It has been pointed out by Schmitt that the overt structure of *Confessions* is “at once geographical and medical.” Geographically, the text traces “a series of spatial relocations: from home and family ... to London, to Oxford, and, ultimately, to the drug that constitutes its own peculiar landscape, opium.” The organization of the book is also “medicalized,” for each “geographic locale is important in its connection to the stomach ailment that leads to the initial need for opium and, in turn, to De Quincey’s addiction and dreams” (50).

I have adopted a similar construction, as well as deploying Ronell’s term “toxicogeography,” to compare Case’s medical and geographical journey in Gibson’s *Neuromancer*, drawing out the “oriental” rather than strictly Gothic associations and features to foreground the link between individual and national concerns, to demarcate a “self whose use of opium has called ... national and racial identity into question” (Brodie and Redfield 11).

Ferocious Malays and Girl-Child Waifs

One of the most striking aspects of De Quincey’s autobiography are the opium dreams, evoked through a “strange mélange” of Near, Middle, and Far Eastern imagery, the chinoiserie screens covered with pagodas and dragons, and detailing narrow secret rooms. Much of this was the result of visual reactions to the taste of his day in architecture, sculpture, and interior decoration. De Quincey’s text redeploys Gothic motifs such as claustrophobic interiors so as to “Gothicize” the orient and “orientalize the gothic.” These features are organized around racial difference, a sudden and unexpected encounter with a Malay.

The encounter with a “ferocious-looking Malay” (*Confessions* 63) lost in England’s Lake District who unexpectedly turns up at the door of De Quincey’s cottage “in Asiatic dress” gives rise to years of terrifying visions, “brought other Malays with him worse than himself” (64). This episode immediately precedes the opium dreams. The author pretends fluency in Eastern tongues to address him (actually speaking in Greek) but the Malay has no means of betraying the secret. The “Malay dream” is one of “tropical heat and vertical sun-lights” (81) which brings together all kinds of creatures

found in tropical regions, like reptiles and crocodiles. It includes pagodas, secret rooms, and burial “in stone coffins ... in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids ... amongst reeds and Nilotic mud” (82). It also specifies the nature of the danger posed by the Orient: “a pollution that amounts to deracination” (Schmitt 56). Throughout De Quincey presents himself as powerless in the face of persecution – either powerless witness to a woman menaced by some “shadowy malice” or himself a target of such malice. This dream lends substance to that shadow. These dreams not only continue the portrayal of De Quincey as victim, but also identify the Orient as the source of persecution.

The horror at the multiplicity of selves De Quincey experiences is tied to opium and dependence on the drug promotes a destabilization of identity in the subject. On the one hand the drug’s effect is to cut across or suspend the historical or organic continuity of the subject and institute in its place “a depersonalized and detemporalized machinery of imaginative production.” But, like the *pharmakon* that it is, opium also promises to avert such destabilization. Schmitt finds De Quincey’s emphasis on the exquisite order and harmony brought by the opium rapture is “an attempt to preempt any danger of dissemination and dissipation of the self through the contagious influence of the (feminine, proletarian, or oriental) Other.” The nature of this destabilization is quite specific, the fear of being “mixed with, taken for, indistinguishable from what cannot be – for De Quincey, what one must not be: an Oriental” (56). Milligan makes a similar point, that what is quintessentially English is “persistently associated with Oriental paradigms” and the British character is “paradoxically its own opposite, the oriental character” (48).

Thus the East, in the eyes of nineteenth-century Europe, was the special province of opium use, as suggested by the title of De Quincey’s work, which draws attention to the “English” opium addict. The anxiety surrounding addiction to opium concerns an insuperable bodily dependence on – and hence conflation with – a presence alien to the self but also, as Milligan emphasizes, alien to the nation. Milligan notes how powerful anxieties and desires surrounding opium can be attributed to the fact that not only was it “ingested” by British bodies, but it also had a reputation for altering the consciousness of its user. It is this dual force that prepares the ground for a cultural context in which to

interpret opium and its attendant transformations as various forms of foreign invasion which Milligan finds are imagined in nineteenth-century British culture as “simultaneously pleasurable and painful.”

The other encounter is with a waif. Covertly, De Quincey’s *Confessions* organizes itself around recurrent scenes of threat to a helpless victim – often female, always feminized – and the unavailing efforts of a would-be savior to provide aid. In most of the scenes De Quincey represents himself as an ineffectual Gothic hero: he repeatedly encounters a woman in danger whom he is unable to protect. For example, De Quincey narrates a dream-vision sequence in the final section of “The English Mail-Coach” (1849). Glad tidings have arrived in the form of a proclamation of victory at the Battle of Waterloo. As the vision unfolds, “it is unsettled by a Gothic feature” seemingly at odds with the triumph of a national victory; “victimized womanhood” (Schmitt 47). De Quincey discovers that the coach on which he rides is rolling through an immense cathedral. Suddenly “a female child” appears in its path. The coach does not slow in its progress, and De Quincey can neither stop it nor warn the child. Immobile, mute, and resigned to the inevitability of a collision, it would seem that victorious nationhood demands the sacrifice of a young girl.

The female victim or “Pariah woman” is encountered against the backdrop of a dark vision of London’s streets, a city whose terrors are so forceful that the text adumbrates them well before De Quincey’s actual arrival there, in the menace posed by certain architectural arrangements. De Quincey comes across there two young girls victimized by circumstance. One of these girls is a nameless waif with whom he shares poor lodgings and meals for a short time. The other, remembered with “far deeper sorrow” (23) is the London prostitute, Ann, “who had not completed her sixteenth year” (23). After spending months in London on the brink of starvation, surviving by means of Ann’s companionship and aid, they part ways through circumstance, but he is determined to find her on his return and include her in any success he might have. Despite days of searching, he is unable to locate her: “If she lived, doubtless we must have been sometimes in search of each other ... through the mighty labyrinths of London; perhaps, even within a few feet of each other – a barrier no wider than a London street, often amounting in the end to a separation for eternity” (38).

In Gibson's *Neuromancer*, a similar sacrifice is demanded, that of Linda Lee, found on the streets, inextricably tied to the drug world of Ninsei, and soon to meet a violent death in a nightclub. The descriptions position the character in terms of a victim. Her eyes are those "of some animal pinned in the headlights of an oncoming vehicle"; he "saw Linda Lee step past him ... eyes blind with fear; he sees her "thrown down at the foot of a concrete pillar, eyes closed ... One white sneaker had come off, somehow, and lay beside her head ... a face danced in the glare of a match, lips pursed around the short stem of a metal pipe. Tang of hashish. Case walked on, feeling nothing" (53).

In both Gibson's novel and De Quincey's text, the loss at first glance appears to be a free-falling melancholy. Schmitt finds this takes the specific (typically Gothic) form of "a structure of persecution" (53). It consists of three positions (persecutor, victim, and impotent onlooker) which corresponds closely to the sadist/masochist/voyeur triad familiar from Freudian theory. Frequently De Quincey's narrator looks on as women suffer at the hands of men. Yet his sympathy for victimized women often results in an identification with them so complete that he takes their place, suffering for them. This inhabitation of the position of feminized victim is crucial to De Quincey's portrayal of himself: the "English opium-eater is, above all, one who suffers" (54).

There are a number of female drug victims in Dick's novel *A Scanner Darkly*: Kimberley Hawkins, "The girl, half Chicano, small and not too pretty, with the sallow complexion of a crystal freak, gazed down sightlessly; "down ... the girl had a black eye and a split lip ..."(75). The windows of the small untidy apartment were broken. Shards of glass lay on the floor. She "seemed to be doing nothing more than shooting meth two or three times a day and turning tricks to pay for it. She lived with her dealer" (74). Another victim is Connie, the needle-freak, "skinny and lank-haired." This shifts the story of addiction from the realm of male heroism to that of female victimization. The opium addict is divided into spectator and victim, both women. Here "positing the existence of a dual (and female) nature within provides a strategy of disavowal that allows him the luxury of denying responsibility for his own addiction" (Schmitt).

Thus the potentially deracinating implications of De Quincey's drug habit are played out through the realization that he no longer has any hope of overcoming his opium habit. The dream represents permanent addiction as the imprisonment of a solitary

wanderer in a barren, twilight landscape; sleeping all day, walking all night, transmogrified by night and imagination. In a Shrewsbury hotel, after midnight, among “heart-shaking reflections” he has a premonition:

But now rose London – sole, dark, infinite – brooding over the whole capacities of my heart. ... The unusual dimensions of the rooms, especially their towering height ... threw me into the deadliest condition of nervous emotion under contradictory forces, high over which predominated horror recoiling from that unfathomed abyss in London into which I was now so wilfully precipitating myself. (195-6)

The dream of the city is also “an oriental one ... at a vast distance were visible ... the domes and cupolas of a great city” (184). Against this backdrop, Miltonic in scope, in the vision he sees the prostitute Ann again, after seventeen years: “Her face was the same as when I saw her last, and yet again how different! ... the tears were wiped away ... Her looks were tranquil ... and I now gazed upon her with some awe, but suddenly her countenance grew dim, and, turning to the mountains, I perceived vapours rolling between us; in a moment all had vanished; thick darkness came on” (84-5).

Milligan, in seeking to understand the “masochistic repetition compulsion” to keep using drugs, notes “an unconscious attempt to gain retroactive control of the disruptive experience and cancel its aftereffects” (68). These opium dreams, far from bringing De Quincey closer to “resolving a traumatic moment, instead force upon him the realization that there is no ordinary traumatic moment to relive, but rather a beginningless and endless trauma in which every attempt to separate English and Oriental, self and other, only further illustrates how unified they are” (68). De Quincey’s addiction “seems to be masochistically to enact over and over again a self-annihilation” (68).

Linda Lee’s death comes early in Gibson’s novel *Neuromancer*. Yet towards the ending of the novel, in a powerful moment of “virtual” reconciliation Case “connects” with Linda Lee in cyberspace, “in the construct of the beach.” It is uncanny, if we think of De Quincey and Anne, on the streets of London, maybe only the width of a street

separating them. As the “emotional crux” of the novel, as Gibson has commented (McCaffery 280), the scene derives its power from Case’s attempt to gain retroactive control of a disruptive experience, to somehow resolve a traumatic event that forecloses any kind of resolution.

3. A Global Narcopolitics

But I could not help thinking about that saucer-shaped tablet ... Tumbling from the back of my tongue down into my stomach. The drug core dissolving, releasing benevolent chemicals into my bloodstream, flooding the fear-of-death part of my brain. The pill itself silently self-destructing in a tiny inward burst, a polymer implosion, discreet and precise and considerate. Technology with a human face.

(Don DeLillo *White Noise* 211)

The historical survey of the relationship between opium and the Orient in the previous section demonstrates that in the case of Britain the emergent discourse of addiction was associated with imperialism, with “the foreign – especially Asian – ‘Other’” (Brodie and Redfield 3), for example, in stereotypes of the opium-smoking Chinese immigrant, and around issues of race and gender in De Quincey’s *Cofessions*. Milligan’s study confirms that there is “a dense network of interimplication spanning the development of addiction as a medical phenomenon, the rise of governmental control of opium sales, and the evolution of the medical professions in the latter quarter of the nineteenth century” (23). Furthermore, in order to create a drug epidemic, “the commercialization of drug production, trade and marketing” (Trocki xii) seems to have been crucial. This links drugs to the development of capitalism.

Harrison points out that there was a direct relationship between the development of world markets and the trade in addictive substances, implying a further relationship between globalization and “both the demand side and the supply side of the drug market” (102). Trocki has probed “the role of the drug trade in laying the foundation for European colonial structures in Asia, both economic and administrative” (xi). The historical

transformation of opium, for example, in the nineteenth century, from an exotic substance largely used as a medicine or occasional narcotic to “an intensively produced and widely marketed commodity” (xii). This is close, I think, to what, in an updated version, Sterling means by cyberpunks’ interest in drugs, as a social and “technomedical” phenomena.

Cyberpunk cynically exploits the grey area between drugs used for medical purposes and recreational use, supply and demand mechanisms, and the technological innovations which have turned pills and capsules into sophisticated drug delivery systems. Here the multinationals hold considerable power, for example in the “paranoid” narratives of all-controlling pharmaceutical corporations such as Pharmakom in the film *Johnny Mnemonic* taken on by lone individuals or outlaw groups; predictably, the main corporate villain in the film is a Japanese (played by Beat Takeshi). Drug epidemics occur when a society is suddenly swept by a wave of use, and abuse, of a newly introduced addictive drug. Large numbers of people are affected and the phenomenon is normally viewed as a sign of social decay or even collapse. The epidemic, alluded to in “New Rose Hotel” as meningial, takes a global dimension in the film *Johnny Mnemonic*, but concerns multinationals. In order to create a drug epidemic, the commercialization of drug production, trade and marketing is necessary.

Gibson’s novel reflects these recent trends in the use of illicit drugs; that is, a world or globalizing trend towards rising levels of substance use among young people. A United Nations report notes that “(i)n the ever-widening discourse on substance abuse, it is frequently asserted that the key problem of the future will be associated with what are commonly known as synthetic drugs” and for this an understanding of the role of the pharmaceutical industry is important. There is the ongoing struggle between ensuring drugs are available for medical and scientific purposes but “not for uses that compromise individual and public health” (1). The report acknowledges there is a “grey area” between these two propositions “and the technological innovation that is characteristic of our age appears to thrive within it” (3).

Amphetamine is a product of high technology, and therefore is tied up with “technological mutation” as Derrida characterizes it, the “numerous techno-economical transformations of the market place” (23), supply and demand. The “beeper and the cellphone become economic tools in an increasingly competitive market in illicit drugs”

(29). Mizutani makes a similar point about drugs in Tokyo. As Barton points out, the main point is that prescribed drugs find their way onto the street. Thus, (writing on cyberspace) in an article entitled “Academy Leader,” Gibson famously remarks ‘the Street finds its own uses for things.’

The economic relations symbolized in drug use are thus grounded on the status of drugs as commodities. As has been pointed out, drug use and commercialism are seen to be indistinguishable, a relationship that emphasizes the extent and influence of the commodifying mechanisms of late capitalism. Drugs ought to be seen as “major actors in the economic history of the world” (Trocki 8). Just as opium had a crucial role in the formation of the British empire and the creation of a global capitalist economy and the opium trade laid the foundation for the global capitalist structure, similar points can be made about drugs in the twentieth century.

The drug user is tied to social and economic relations in particular ways through the material function of the drug as a “substance,” a product, and a commodity. This now has to do with types of dealers (friends, family, gang members) and venues where illicit drugs can be purchased (clubs, the “street”), as well as trends in drug use, the emergence of new drugs, and the price and purity of illicit drugs. We recall in *Neuromancer*, Case is both a user and a dealer in Chiba, Japan, hoping to find his cure first of all in a registered clinic, but soon turns to the shadowlands of black medicine, i.e. the black clinics, before finding solace in the street world of illegal drugs, which seem to be readily available.

In a cyberpunk “manifesto” writer Bruce Sterling has deemed the theme of “mind invasion: brain-computer interfaces, artificial intelligence, neurochemistry – techniques radically redefining the nature of humanity ... of the self” (*Mirrorshades* xi) as even more powerful than themes of body invasion. These are transformations that potentially alter the structure of the brain. Cyberpunk often concerns the transformation of people into zombie-like creatures by means of products mixing “organic” stuff with synthetic material, thus the association of the themes of addiction and biotechnological transformation. In cyberpunk this can result from drugs related to extreme biotechnological makeovers, such as mutations of DNA. For example, Julius Deane in *Neuromancer*, “his metabolism assiduously warped by a weekly fortune in serums and

hormones,” visits Tokyo once a year where “genetic surgeons reset the code of his DNA, a procedure unavailable in Chiba” (20).

Thus, from the blurring of the line between organic and synthetic substances comes the disorienting effects of various additions and augmentations (Lise in “The Winter Market” is subsequently addicted to whiz, i.e. speed), the physical and psychological effects of super-illegal substances and ‘psychochemical’ drugs ‘– And in a world laced with pills and drugs, cyberspace a “consensual hallucination,” can seem like “a kind of superdrug” (Suvin “on Gibson” 355). Csicsery-Ronay has noted that cyberpunk is part of a trend in science fiction dealing increasingly with hallucination and derangement: “it collapses ‘hallucinations with realia’.” Narratives are constructed around “the literal/physical exteriorization of images representing the breakdown of stable ... perceptual, and conceptual categories ... Hallucination is always saturated with affect ... [and] creates its own ‘other’ reality” (189). In *Neuromancer*, Case finds that if you get “just wasted enough” then “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” (26). Part of this can be traced back to LSD-inspired transcendental discourses: Dick’s “I’ll show you God.”

But as Sadie Plant notes in *Writing on Drugs*, this presages the “digital, sampled, cybernetic world that came on line in the 1980s” (168) with the advent of “rave” culture and Ecstasy (which bears a clear chemical resemblance to amphetamine).²³ Plant notes:

Something of the spaces it opened up seemed to resonate with that other new dimension which had crept in with *Neuromancer*: cyberspace. Something of the precision with which it seemed to work, the vast expanses, the pixellated haze it seemed as though Ecstasy had been waiting for the age of intelligent machines.

Cyberpunk “anticipates a world in which drugs are enhanced or replaced by even more immediate and precise means of modifying brains and changing minds” (169). With the advent of “cybernetic” spaces “the hallucinations become consensual.... Spaces and

²³ Emmett and Nice note that amphetamine is a drug associated with young people and the rave/dance scene (10). The chemical structure of MDMA is very similar to that of the amphetamines, and it is for this reason that MDMA is occasionally referred to as a “psychedelic amphetamine” (Doweiko 193).

events once possible only through chemistry began to emerge on electronic nets, and all the diverse elements of drug-induced experience – addiction, stimulation, narcosis – have become ubiquitous in the postmodern world” (170).

Cybernetics was being superseded by the more sophisticated agents of artificial intelligence, but it had the lasting effect of retaining an essential distinction between human and machine. But before all man-machinic hybridizations, a technology of the human was already in place. The age of the chemical prosthesis had already begun. The chemical prosthesis which was “the real, insubstantial vehicle constituting the virtual” (Ronell 70). For Ronell, this indicates a “place where the distinction between interiority and exteriority is radically suspended, and where ... phantasmatic opposition is opened up” (72). This “phantasmatic opposition I will return to in more detail in the final chapter on cyberspace as the space of Oriental fantasy.

In this chapter I have considered the stimulus of drugs and the construction of addiction in a key cyberpunk novel, and traced the historical/cultural links to discourses of Orientalism in order to explore the relationship between cyberpunk, drugs and Japan. Ultimately, the largest drug profits are made within the United States at street-level sales, as the protagonist of *Neuromancer* Case knows only too well; on the street “he had calls to make, biz to transact, and it wouldn’t wait” (29) and it is a distinctly “American” street scene at base, once the Asianness has been stripped away. In America, it is unclear whether, on the one hand, the relations between the government, drugs, and traffickers are built into the American power structure, or on the other hand, are reiterations of historical patterns. Significantly, drugs have always been part of the music scene. In *The Road of Excess: A History of Writers on Drugs*, the author soon realized he was “writing from within a cultural space in which it is music, and not literature, that is the center of activity” (Boon 2). The following chapter engages a cultural space where music is of paramount significance, for cyberpunk has its roots in the countercultural ethos of both punk and rock music.

Chapter Three: Cyberpunk and Rock Music

I wanted to write like rock ‘n’ roll.

(Elizabeth Wurtzel *Prozac Nation* 360)

This chapter engages a cultural space in which music is the center of activity, for as Jenny Wolmark notes, “[c]entral to cyberpunk is its identification with the iconoclastic and countercultural ethos of both punk and rock music” (*Aliens* 109). I would also stress cyberpunk’s identification with *both* punk and rock music, but my emphasis will be the countercultural ethos of rock music, based on extensive citing of Gibson, who claims to have injected his writing with “invigorating doses of extrapolated rock and roll.”¹ This can be argued as well for other cyberpunk writers such as Pat Cadigan, and even John Shirley, for whom the attribution to punk makes most sense. The deeper and stronger influence underlying (punk and) cyberpunk, I will maintain throughout this chapter, is early seventies-style rock music.

Wolmark finds it is not surprising that “cyberpunk is strongly inscribed with the masculine, since the heroes of cyberpunk are drawn from the high-tech environment of hackers and rock music” (109). The main characters in cyberpunk narratives are the hackers, “transformed into street-wise rock ‘n’ roll heroes who wear mirrorshades and do ‘biz’ in the urban sprawl, dealing in designer drugs, information technology and stolen data, jacking into the matrix of cyberspace by means of implanted cranial sockets” (114). I will trace this under-explored relation between the hacker and rock music, and examine the high-tech, and urban “street” environment common to both. As Wolmark puts it, the transformation is one of hackers into rock and roll heroes; however, I will argue it is rather a case of the reverse perspective, that is, how the street-savvy heroes of rock culture are “transformed” into hackers, and thus become cyberpunk’s computer cowboys.

As John Shirley confirms, since it was “hard to get a story published in the sf field if it didn’t have a ‘sympathetic hero’” (*The Exploded Heart* 12) cyberpunk would soon fill the void with its own set of heroes (or antiheroes) drawn from the realms of popular culture and rock music, reaching an apotheosis of sorts in the computer hacker. In the

¹ See Interview, Van Belkom 1998.

words of Shirley, “the hacker and the rocker are this decade’s [sic 1980s] pop culture idols. Cyberpunk is very much a pop phenomena ... comes from the realm where the computer hacker and the rocker overlap” (50-1).

In pursuing this relation it is moreover necessary to consider what might be the relation of the “rocker” and rock music generally to aspects of urban culture (the urban sprawl of cyberpunk), and specifically “the street”? What are the common links, and what distinctions can be made? Wolmark suggests in cyberpunk “the rhetoric echoes that which is found in the narratives of detective and adventure fiction” (109). These particular echoes and associations between cyberpunk and the “mean streets” of hard-boiled detective fiction and *film noir*, which have been frequently commented on require further consideration. This is in order to discern and differentiate “the street” familiar from rock culture, and the countercultural period which was the locus of Gibson’s earliest formative experiences: “Everything I draw on in the sense of street realism comes from that period. That’s the only time I had any direct interface” (qtd. in Calcutt).²

I will argue that the “street culture of hustle and alienation” is vividly drawn from rock culture, which also marked is by “paradoxical spaces” regarding gender. Building on the findings of the previous chapter, one of the bonds between street-wise rock and rollers and cyberpunk’s computer cowboys, besides the fashionwear of mirrorshades and black leather jackets, is the illegal “business” of drugs; this entails criminality, and particular street-level operators (the dealer or pusher), as well as the mechanism of addiction. As I have argued in the previous chapter, cyberpunk fiction is concerned not only with designer drugs (and the cybernetic spaces they imply), but the whole spectrum of modern drug-taking and addiction. Central to my discussion of cyberpunk and rock music in this chapter, then, will be an examination of “the cult of the street,” and the gallery of figures that inhabit that environment (hustlers, speedfreaks, prostitutes, transvestites) and all familiar from certain forms of rock music, which Gibson tells us has been influential in cyberpunk: ““I’ve been influenced by Lou Reed, for instance, as much as I’ve been by any ‘fiction’ writer” (*Storming* 265).

² Recalls Gibson: “Going through that sixties countercultural thing was my formative experience” (Calcutt 88); as well “I’m a sixties guy in some ways, although I didn’t start producing anything until the late seventies. A lot of what I do must be tempered by that sixties thing, whatever it was” (from Andrew Calcutt’s transcript of an interview with Gibson, parts of which were published in *G Spot* magazine, now ceased, and quoted in Calcutt 93).

The sources turn out to refer to a very Western, and primarily countercultural experience of the 1960s and 1970s, around particular figures (Andy Warhol, the Velvet Underground, David Bowie, and Lou Reed). Some of these rock influences manifest textually in cyberpunk, through allusion to (or reworking of) song lyrics; an example I discuss in detail in this chapter is Gibson's short story "Burning Chrome." Gibson has stated that if you recognize that Linda Lee in *Neuromancer* is from a Lou Reed song ("Cool It Down") it adds to one's understanding of that particular character. Just what it adds, of course, is debatable, and highlights the problematic of lyrics in songs, which I engage with later in the chapter. The point is that the knowledge, derived from a particular rock context, is assumed to have relevance, and the indicator of a shared connection between a (Western) writer and reader.

Pat Cadigan's "Rock On" and "Pretty Boy Crossover" are stories set in a rock context; John Shirley's character Rick Rickenharp "wasn't a punk ... simply a hard-core rocker" (*Freezone* 144). The same could be said of Catz Wailen in *City Come A-Walkin'* which, according to Gibson is "less an sf novel set in a rock demimonde than a *rock gesture* that happened to be a paperback original" (Foreword *City* 2). On the whole, though, the influence resides in a diffuse but potent postmodern mix of character types, scenes, mood, affect, identification, and styles. Lawrence Grossberg calls this a "rock formation." A consideration of rock music in a broader postmodern context is taken up in the following section.

How do the musical antecedents to cyberpunk relate to the genre's orientalist aspects? The connection is not immediately obvious, but it can be demonstrated by tracing carefully back to the major influences on Gibson: Lou Reed, the Velvet Underground, and the "sodomasochistic vision" conveyed through songs like "Venus in Furs," drawing out the Orientalist discourse that subtly frames that particular text; and David Bowie, a performer who plays multiple roles and has extensive links with Japan. Bowie attempted "to broaden rock's vocabulary." Bowie recalls how he, along with similar-minded artists of the seventies, "were trying to include certain visual aspects in our music, grown out of the fine arts and real theatrical and cinematic leanings – in brief, everything that was on the exterior of rock.... I introduced elements of Dada, and an enormous amount of elements borrowed from Japanese culture" (qtd. in Pegg 273).

1. Postmodernism and Music

Postmodernism began to have an impact upon music and musicology when it became evident that a paradigmatic shift in thought was needed in order to find answers to the theoretical impasses that had been reached in several areas, such as changing audience and consumption habits, the breakdown in distinctions between serious music and popular, the advent of the “rock revolution,” and impact of technology. The time was ripe for postmodernism to offer a new theoretical perspective.

One of the distinctions Jameson draws between modernism and postmodernism in the article I have already discussed, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” is by listing artists who can be thought of as “postmodern,” for example, Andy Warhol. In music, Jameson finds John Cage and the “later synthesis of classical and ‘popular’ styles found in composers like Philip Glass and Terry Riley, and also punk and new wave rock with such groups as the Clash, Talking Heads and the Gang of Four” (“Postmodernism” 111). Jameson does not define or categorize what all these different artists have in common, except that taken together their art is the expression of a new cultural logic of capitalism. A distinctive feature of postmodernism being the erosion of the older demarcation between high culture and popular culture, Philip Glass and post-punk pop music can appear in the same list: “postmodern” artists deliberately draw on both traditions, marking the eruption of the popular into the realm of high art. For my purposes in this chapter, the Velvet Underground present an exemplary case of this crossover between pop music and the avant-garde, at the confluence of art into pop in the 1960s and early 1970s, merging “the harmonic dessication and contraction of single tones” (Connor 168) evidenced in the work of La Monte Young, with the attitudes and rhythms of popular culture.

In chapter one of this thesis I noted that I would chart cyberpunk’s transformation from 1980s print science fiction into a multimedia phenomenon, in line with Jameson’s assessment that the representational innovations in Gibson’s cyberpunk fiction occur within “a predominantly visual or aural postmodern production.” One approach I outlined for exploring the context for these innovations is to consider multimedia (audio-visual)

experiments from avant-garde American pop culture in the late sixties and early seventies, and later, the emergence of music video and MTV). But first, I will elaborate further on the notion of a “visual or aural” postmodern production.

With the enlargement of Jameson’s landmark essay cited above (reprinted as the first chapter of *Postmodernism*) the analysis of postmodernism is considerably expanded, although not specifically concerning music. Where Jameson does happen to discuss music, he finds that besides being a fundamental class marker, and which mediates our historical past, “the most crucial relationship of music to the postmodern surely passes through space itself... MTV above all can be taken as a spatialization of music” (299). Jameson’s tendency here is to understand music in terms of the dominance of the visual, and finds what MTV does to music is “the nailing of sounds ... onto visible space and spatial segments” (300). Thus:

Technologies of the musical, to be sure, whether of production, reproduction, reception, or consumption, already worked to fashion a new sonorous space around the individual or the collective listener: in music, too, “representationality” ... has known its crisis and its specific historical disintegration. You no longer offer a musical object for contemplation and gustation; you wire up the context and make space musical around the consumer. (*Postmodernism* 299-300)

As this passage suggests, technological developments in music, and perhaps the Walkman is an apposite example of a technology made to “fashion a new sonorous space” around the listener, need to be taken into account, as well as the new relationships which arise between music and the consumer. Thus, as we begin to form a context for postmodernism and music in terms of a visual or aural production, a number of interrelated strands can be discerned. These can be summarized as follows: the relation between the visual and the musical; the impact of the technological; and the diverse ways in which audiences consume music.

I will now turn to more music specific methodologies with which to advance the specific concerns of this chapter, rock music. How should we approach rock music as a form of popular culture? To what extent can terms derived from other modes, styles and

genres apply to rock? How can we relate music to literature when they appear to be different aesthetic modes? In order to work through these questions I will draw on two theorists in particular, Simon Frith and Lawrence Grossberg. My own approach takes something from each of these writers.

Simon Frith develops a comprehensive method for the study of popular music as cultural practice, that the study of music should comprehend text and performance, and social and psychological aspects, and importantly, the ways in which the audience uses the music. The key elements of his methodology are to be found in his book *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music*. Focusing on the listener, the consumer of music, Frith outlines two theoretical approaches currently in use: one concerns that what people listen to implies a connection between people's social and aesthetic values. This argument has been developed in terms of "homology," that is music "interpreted as a coded expression of the social aims and values of the people to whom it appeals" (62); Dick Hebdige's book on punk subculture exemplifies this. The other approach suggests that aesthetic theory must be related to an account of fantasy. Thus fantasy-based theories focus on "why a particular piece of music is appropriate for a certain kind of pleasure, on how it meets psychological needs" (63). Frith points out that "these approaches must be combined to make sense. ... must be defined both socially and psychologically" (63).

In music making and listening practice Frith identifies three particular social groups as important in the pop world: musicians; producers; and consumers. Concerning the consumer, Frith applies the two general principles cited above as follows: what listeners want is determined by who they are (this implies a connection between people's social and aesthetic values); and what they want is an effect of the nature of "wanting" (how music meets psychological needs). If consumers (of all ages) value music for the function it fills, then that "function" must be defined both socially and psychologically. Relationships between aesthetic judgments and the formation of social groups are obviously crucial to popular cultural practice, to genres and cults and subcultures.

Frith also has some interesting distinctions to make regarding song lyrics which are relevant to this chapter, since I offer a close reading of specific song lyrics. For taking up the lyrics of a song as the site of meaning is problematic, that is, as Grossberg argues, "the assumption that musical texts, even with lyrics, function by representing something

– meanings, ideas, cultural experience” (*Dancing* 30). Furthermore, one has to distinguish lyrics from visual communication and musical structure. Frith outlines the kinds of approaches and strategies that have been adopted to clarify this: on the one hand, treating the songs as literary objects which can be analyzed entirely separately from music; or as “speech acts,” words analyzed in terms of performance. Frith’s approach to lyrics (distinguishing words, rhetoric, and voice) is useful for the purpose of conducting a close textual analysis of the lyrics of rock music which reveal the contours of the particularly American countercultural experience, “the cult of the street” that cyberpunk latched on to (Lou Reed’s “Walk on the Wild Side”), and songs which perversely enhance certain orientalist associations and Western signifiers of the Orient (The Velvet Underground’s “Venus in Furs” and David Bowie’s “China Girl”).

The Rock Formation

Frith’s method can be usefully elaborated by adding Lawrence Grossberg’s concept of a “rock formation,” by which he means the patterns of meaning, identification and affect configured by and around popular music since the late 1950s.³ In the words of Grossberg, a pioneer of studies in popular music culture, this “formation” emerged in the 1950s to become the dominant cultural formation of youth (if not of the United States) from the 1960s until the mid-1980s” (*Dancing* 21). This phrase is meant to signal a “specific material, spatial, and temporal identity” based on the assumption that “rock’s identity ... and effects depend on more than its specific textuality or sound.” Thus, to describe rock culture as a formation is “to constitute it as a material – discursive and nondiscursive – context, a complex and always specific organization of cultural and noncultural practices that produces particular effects” (16). A rock formation brings together genres, media, and styles.

Grossberg further notes that to speak of a formation is also to constitute rock culture spatially. At the broadest level this rock formation is “a particular organization of *American* popular culture.” Thus it has “a temporal extension and boundary: it is a

³ In the glossary to *We Gotta Get Out of This Place* Grossberg defines affect as “the energy invested in particular sites: a description of how and how much we care about them” (will, mood, passion, attention). An extended definition can be found in the introduction to *Dancing in Spite of Myself*, where he notes that “affect is both psychic and material; it demands that we speak of the body and of discursive practices in their materiality” (13).

historical event and production that emerged at a particular moment” (17), an event which must also have the possibility of an end. And importantly for this thesis, Grossberg points out that the only significant continuity he discovered in the process of mapping out the conditions of the emergence of the rock formation is a certain “postmodern vector” operating at the intersection of the rock formation and everyday life in postwar America: “this vector is rearticulated into the popular logics of the rock formation ... where it defines the affectivity of the formation itself” (19).

Despite the widespread application of the notion of a rock formation to popular music studies, whereby “that formation has continued to speak as the dominant (whether or not it is) through the voices of many performers, critics, and scholars” (“Reflections” 39) in a recent article Grossberg conveys some misgivings he has with the state of popular music culture studies. The failures he finds mainly derive from the lack of a theory (as developed in cinema). Subsequently, there is no common vocabulary, and much that results is really the generalization of specific formations of popular music culture. Moreover, no political result has been forthcoming (in line perhaps with countercultural expectations for rock as a protest vehicle during the 1960s).⁴ Grossberg maintains the study of popular music poses almost insurmountable problems:

the meaning and effect of specific music always depend on its place within both the broad context of everyday life and the potentially multiple, more specific contexts or alliances of other texts, cultural practices (including fashion, dance, films), social relationships, emotional investments, and so forth. (“Reflections” 34)

He suggests we need to begin with the question of “how popular musical culture works – as culture (or discourse), as popular, as sound, and as music – along its various axes or planes of relation” (36).

⁴ Rock artist Patti Smith sums up this eloquently: “For me rock’n’roll all through the 60s was a true salvation. Growing up in rural South Jersey, I was estranged from culture. Rock gave voice to my problems, to my political ideas, and it was a major source of identification and structure. By the time I moved to New York in the early 70s ... [r]ock wasn’t engaged in social communication any more, it had become stadium-oriented, this showbiz lifestyle of limousines and cocaine and glitter. To me that wasn’t rock’n’roll ... I felt like the intimacy and the political voice – the revolutionary voice – of rock’n’roll was getting watered down ... The revolution is on, don’t sleep through it” (*Uncut* Dec. 2005, 123).

Despite Grossberg's disappointment, I find the notion of a rock formation useful for drawing together the multiple strands of music, images, forms of behavior, styles, drugs, and the input of fans. It formulates how rock emerges from and functions within the lives of those generations that have grown up in a postwar, postmodern context. As well it echoes "the aesthetic of postmodern practice"; rock music is "a particular form of bricolage, a uniquely capitalist and postmodern practice. It functions in a constant play of incorporation and excorporation (both always occurring simultaneously), a contradictory cultural practice" (*Dancing* 36).

This postwar, postmodern context, however, is predominately envisaged as an American one. If we want to understand how popular music culture works, and this point is supported by Negus in the introduction to his book on popular music, which he notes is based solely on articles written or translated into the English language, there is "a great need for Anglo scholars to engage in a systematic way with writings from outside this orbit" (5). Related to this, as Grossberg admits, is a tendency for "avoiding issues of gender and race" (*Dancing* 25).

Roger Beebe points out that rock as suggested by "the overwhelming and necessary reliance" in popular music studies on the notion of the "rock formation" is no longer simply a question of "pure musicality" (317). Grossberg does note that, by the end of the 1980s, the rock formation is more appropriately described as a "residual formation" rather than a "musical formation insofar as its center is defined as much by visual practices and commitments as by musical ones" (*Dancing* 21).⁵ In my view, further emphasis needs to be given to visual practices and in terms of cross-cultural vectors and "planes of relation." Accordingly, in the section on David Bowie, I add insights from Beebe, and also Keith Negus, who have given detailed accounts on how to analyse specific rock videos, and include reference to the Japanese "music" phenomenon of "visual kei."

Grossberg's view is enhanced by Beebe with an emphasis on engaging with the multiplicity of styles that characterize contemporary popular music. As Roger Beebe

⁵ Taking up the example of live performance and the visual image in his recent essay "Reflections," he asks: is there a new ratio between an emphasis on music and on the visual image? Has the quality of the visual image changed, presumably making it easier to overwhelm the music? How has the opposition between live performance and "packaged" visual appearance evolved/changed?

notes that up to now debates on the boundaries of rock have tended to highlight two pairs of binary oppositions (and their consequent exclusions) as the dominant tropes of rock discourse. These binaries are rock versus pop, where the focus is on “gender- and race-based exclusions predicated on an understanding of pop as a less-substantial form than rock” (4) and rock versus rap (racial exclusions). However the recent proliferation of musical styles and listening communities challenges any single coherence principle (even Grossberg’s influential and widely circulated formulation). Rock is now “a site of contestation marking the possible transformations of the musical and critical terrain.” What is required of the contemporary critic, according to Beebe, is to “attend to the multiplicity of styles that form the complex of contemporary popular music and to find ways of engaging with that multiplicity” (11).

Generally, rock music has a claim to be “the most representative of postmodern cultural forms ... in the fact of its unifying global reach and influence on the one hand combined with its tolerance and engendering of pluralities of styles, media and ethnic identities on the other.” The importance of rock music lies in the following:

in the potency of its amalgams with youth culture as a whole; with fashion, with style and street culture, with spectacle and performance art ... with film, and with new reproductive technologies and media – the most recent and obvious example being the rock video. (Connor 207)

Accounts of postmodern rock (or popular music) stress two factors related to this: firstly its capacity to articulate alternative or plural cultural identities; and secondly, the celebration of the principles of parody, pastiche, stylistic multiplicity and generic mobility. Connor cautions there is a “worrying ambivalence” (209) in some of the claims made for the expression of heterogeneous cultural experience in rock music. Yet I find the notions of multiplicity and heterogeneity helpful as a way of beginning to understand the influence of rock culture on cyberpunk, and in particular in the next section, following Hebdige, as a way of considering what constitutes punk.

2. Punk and Rock Music

In terms of music, cyberpunk is a melting pot of diverse and heterogeneous elements, and, as Featherstone and Burrows note in the introduction to a book dealing with cyberbodies and cyberpunk, “the themes first given expression in Gibson’s novels ... derive from a wide range of cultural antecedents” including the music of “the Velvet Underground, Patti Smith, the Talking Heads, mid-1970’s David Bowie, Brian Eno, Laurie Anderson and, crucially, the Sex Pistols and the Clash” (10).⁶ Such tabulated lists as this are often given without further explication, and the impression left is that “crucially” it was mid-seventies British punk that makes cyberpunk *punk*.

My overriding concern in this chapter is to explore the rock performers on this list, particularly Lou Reed, David Bowie, and the Velvet Underground. The difficulty that this section engages is the relation of these particular rock artists, which the cyberpunk writers value, to the punk music and antics typified by The Sex Pistols in the mid-1970s. Thus the punk side of the equation needs to be traced through to its origins in order to explain the specific and peculiar shape they take in cyberpunk fiction, at the same time bearing in mind different stances within the cyberpunk group.

As well I find this topic has not been adequately dealt with by commentators to date. Some of these studies relate cyberpunk to British and American punk rock of the mid-seventies (Clash, Sex Pistols, etc). At one end of the spectrum, then, there is the view that the mid-1970’s Sex Pistol’s style of punk defines cyberpunk. In Bell’s *Cyberculture: Key Concepts*, for example, it is noted: “Just as the English Punk Rock music explosion of the 1970s, with groups like The Damned and The Sex Pistols, ‘rejected’ existing society, cyberpunk condemns the way in which it thinks the world is heading” (49). Bell, citing McCaffery, that cyberpunk is a synthesis of technology and counterculture, finds the comparison “valid in some senses, but perhaps limited in others” noting that cyberpunk is “an intellectual critique of contemporary society at its best, whereas The Damned never really got beyond *Smash It Up* (1979).” McCaffery, who is in fact one of the few critics concerned to probe the popular music culture associations, notes cyberpunk “appropriated punk’s confrontational style, its anarchist energies, its crystal-

⁶ Featherstone and Burrows base their list on the fuller listing provided by McCaffery (*Storming* 382-3). For an even more detailed and eclectic list, see “Cyberpunk 101” which includes “dub music,” trance music, works by Holger Czukay, and bands such as Throbbing Gristle, and Sonic Youth.

meth pacings” (*Storming* 23).⁷ But still there is a too easy shuttling here of punk and cyberpunk, which raises a number of questions. Is cyberpunk confrontational in the same way as punk, as a movement? Does it share the same “anarchist” roots in the Situationist Internationale (SI) movement, for example? Is crystal-meth and its associated epistemology and style, the drug of choice?

At the other end of the spectrum (how *punk* is cyberpunk) it has been noted that “the connection to 1970s music is not always obvious in all cyberpunk works” (Heuser 30). In fact Freedman finds that “cyberpunk actually has little to do with punk” (195). He notes the “overall structure and feeling of *Neuromancer* and its successors bears almost no affinity to that of the Sex Pistols or the Clash and ... Talking Heads”; instead “cyberpunk displays a filiation to the much older tradition of hard-boiled detective fiction of the Hammett-Chandler type” (195). Notwithstanding Gibson’s stated aversion to Chandler (although it should be added that aversion need not negate influence), Freedman too readily dismisses the importance of punk, and popular music culture generally, turning to popular literary sources in detective fiction as an alternative. As I have noted, the comparison with the detective genre is a limited one, since cyberpunk, as Wolmark suggests, is not anchored in the same set of social and political perspectives. So, although “the street” of hard-boiled fiction and *film noir* is an important influence on cyberpunk, it is from rock music culture that “the cult of the street” takes on cyberpunk proportions. This is the urban street, trekked by the “solitary white man, hard-bitten, street-savvy” (Abbott 2), where “everything is cold and there’s drugs” (Pegg 304).

Punk’s “Hong Kong Garden”

Generally, punk comes from 1970s rock terminology and means young, aggressive, alienated, and anti-Establishment. With respect to cyberpunk, the term defines the perspective from which the fiction is generated at “street level” in a decaying urban environment that has “normalized anarchy.” The standard definition of punk is a musical style associated with British punk rock, specifically the Sex Pistols, a phenomenon that peaked in the mid-70s. This is the punk of “I am an anarchist, I am an

⁷ See Larry McCaffery, “Cutting Up: Cyberpunk, Punk Music, and Urban Decontextualisations,” *Storming* 286-307.

antichrist” and “God Save the Queen.” Some have argued that punk emerged from the working-class experiences of historically changing racial relations and economic pessimism (no work, no future, no meaning) in England. Others have rejected this view of its origins: the pioneering punk-rockers emerged out of a largely art school and “bohemian” context; there are situations in which punk functions in a largely middle-class context without any romanticization of the working class. Witness also the emergence of American punk bands in the mid-seventies.

Regardless of its origin, we can generally agree with Grossberg that “the punk apparatus was constituted by its foregrounding of the axis of postmodernity: it made rock and roll into its own postmodern practice” (*Dancing* 51-2). Connor questions the view that “a decisive postmodern mutation” (206) has taken place in rock music since punk and new wave. But punk was part of a larger set of possibilities emerging in the rock and roll culture, and it often functioned within them. Thus it could have its impact in the United States despite the fact that it was neither particularly visible nor popular, and it enabled a number of different alliances to emerge (such as hardcore, new wave, postpunk, and new music).

As Dick Hebdige has pointed out in a classic text *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, punk itself has a “dubious parentage” (25) and is a mix of unstable and heterogeneous elements, such as proto-punk, glam, and reggae. When referring to its British incarnation as a mid 1970s youth cult, punk is, according to Hebdige, an “unlikely alliance of diverse and superficially incompatible musical traditions” (26). There were strands from David Bowie, glam rock, “American proto-punk” artists, rock (from the mod subculture of the 60s), Northern Soul and reggae. Glam rock, for instance, contributed “narcissism, nihilism, and gender confusion” (25), and American (proto) punk offered “a minimalist aesthetic ... the cult of the Street and a penchant for self-laceration” (25); here we can already see some formative influences on cyberpunk.

Hebdige finds that punk’s endemic contradictions came from essentially antagonistic sources. David Bowie and the New York punk bands had pieced together from a variety of acknowledged “artistic” sources (the literary avant-garde and the underground cinema) a “self-consciously profane and terminal aesthetic” (27). These tendencies had begun to cohere into “a fully fledged nihilistic aesthetic” by the early 70s.

It was enhanced by Patti Smith's "rock poetry" performances which incorporated the work of Rimbaud and William Burroughs. British punk bands, however, Hebdige notes, remained largely "innocent of literature." Another of punk's contradictions is to be found in the "awkward and unsteady confluence of ... two radically dissimilar languages": reggae and rock. Although "apparently separate and autonomous, punk and the black British subcultures with which reggae is associated were connected at a deep structural level" (29).

This unlikely relation between rock and reggae highlights the need for recognizing "the fluidity of race in its cultural and popular incarnations" (Davé, Nishime, and Oren 9) which I outlined in chapter one. As I noted, rather than only reading cultural representation for their "positive or negative (authentic or inauthentic) portrayals" it requires a consideration of the ways in which "these representations function to transform, and even create cultural norms." Furthermore, there is perhaps another association to be noted here, which parallels the "awkward and unsteady confluence" of the reggae and rock cultures, which concerns Asia. Globalization has resulted in massive immigration from Asia to North America and other Western countries, and it is accompanied by intensified transnational cultural practices and cultural hybridities in societies around the world. For, as both punk and cyberpunk demonstrate, race and its cultural meanings remain at the core of globalizing media flows and counterflows.

In order to sum up this peculiar postmodern orientalism mix in punk rock music that would seem to provide an analogy to cyberpunk, I will now discuss a pop song by a supposedly punk band, Siouxsie and the Banshees, released in the punk heyday, called "Hong Kong Garden" in August, 1978 (their debut release). Lead singer Siouxsie had achieved a certain notoriety with the Sex Pistols and the early London punk scene. She often wore a gold-and-black Chinese dress, fishnet stockings, suspenders, bondage stilettos from Sex (Malcolm and Vivienne's shop), very theatrical eye makeup and "little swastikas on her cheekbones" (Paytress 32).

On the one hand, the song exemplifies one view of punk, as the work of pioneering punk-rockers who emerged out of a largely art school and "bohemian" context. They idolized Bowie, his "skinniness, the alienation, otherworldliness," the Velvet Underground, and Roxy Music. Severin, the other founding member of the band,

who took his name from the Velvet Underground song “Venus in Furs,” comments: “I found a picture for ‘Hong Kong Garden’ that I’d seen in a magazine. I thought it would be interesting to have an image of a girl hiding her face” (68). Such visual references (designed to enhance the Asian setting in the song, of “fields of rice” and junks which “float on polluted water”) combine with an obviously “Oriental”-themed music that structures the song and clichéd lyrics which strangely conflate Chinese and Japanese culture (“An old custom to sell your daughter/ ... Leave your yens on the counter please).

On the other hand the song could signal how youth culture must be reinterpreted as a succession of differential responses to the Asian immigrant presence, from the 1970s onwards, and reinforcing the view that punk emerged from the working-class experiences of historically changing racial relations and economic situation pessimism in England. According to Siouxsie the song was “mentally dedicated to my local Chinese takeaway in Chislehurst High Street, which opened when I was 12 or so and at a time when there were loads of skinheads around. I was so sorry for the racist abuse that the people who worked there used to get. I always wished I was Emma Peel and that I could beat the shit out of the skinheads” (Paytress 67). However, the tone of the lyrics (“Slanted eyes” and “a race of small bodies”) mitigates against this view. It could be that both positive and negative portrayals are conveyed through this particular song.

The song celebrates the postmodern principles of pastiche and stylistic multiplicity. In its most recent postmodern incarnation, the song appears at the start of the exotic Parisian masqued ball sequence in Sofia Coppola’s *Marie Antoinette*. At the same time evident is the song’s (very limited) capacity to articulate alternative or plural cultural identities. Echoing O’Connor’s caution of a “worrying ambivalence” (209) in some of the claims made for the expression of heterogeneous cultural experience in rock music, this ambivalence manifests itself through orientalist discourse.

Cyberpunk Rocks Out

I will now turn to look more closely at the relationships between the individual members of the cyberpunk movement and punk. Except for John Shirley, as I noted, the cyberpunk writers tend to distance them from the punk side of the equation. Gibson’s own comments are introspective in some ways rather than committed: “I became an eager

uncle to punk. I was one of those old guys who came and stood outside the door and grinned ... it was a very necessary housecleaning ... I don't know what you could say has come out of it but ... I don't think there's really been anything comparable since. There hasn't really been a new bohemia."⁸ Gibson's positioning "outside the door" suggests a certain reticence to embrace the punk subculture head-on: Mohawks, safety pins, bondage straps, boots, torn T-shirts, pogo-ing antics, and of course "gobbing." As I will maintain throughout this chapter, this is not the epicenter of Gibson's interest.

Pat Cadigan's "Rock On" also appeared in the *Mirrorshades* Anthology that launched cyberpunk writing. Cadigan recounts the inspiration for another rock-inflected story "Pretty Boy Crossover" in *Patterns*: Four and a half months pregnant, Cadigan ventured out with editor Ellen Datlow to a "punk" club in Manhattan where people could "pogo their brains out." In the bathroom she came face to face with "a very big punk re-slicking her hair spikes." To Cadigan's surprise, the punk said "When are you due?" Eventually Cadigan got tired and caught a cab back to Ellen's place, where she started the story. There is a similar distance to Gibson I think; both are positioned "outside the door." In Cadigan's short story the punk elements are reworked (the Club is called Noise; there is a "Mohawk" on the door) into a meditation on rock and the influence of video ("Do you want to be in a video, do you want to *be* a video?") and synthesizers.

John Shirley is perhaps the only member with a claim to "Genuine Punk" and whose case must be considered in this light. Shirley would certainly not be found outside the door, but inside. According to Bruce Sterling (and Steve Brown concurs) the archetypal cyberpunk writer was John Shirley, "the first and only punk science fiction writer in the world" (Foreword *Exploded Heart* 1). Sterling recalls that whereas he himself only listened to a lot of punk music, John Shirley "wrote, performed and recorded punk music ... had serious drug habits ... and writes ghastly horror stories."⁹ Gibson came across Shirley immersed in the late 70s punk explosion in 1977 "when he (Shirley) was into spiked dog collars" (280). Besides performing in a series of bands, he wrote a

⁸ Interview, Sandbox 1996.

⁹ See *The Exploded Heart*, 3. Steve Brown, editor of *SF Eye*, recounts his friendship with Shirley in his essay "Before the Lights Came On: Observations of a Synergy" (*Storming* 173-77), the title of which gives a good indication of his view on Shirley's role in cyberpunk. Brown recalls how Shirley had become immersed in the punk explosion. He had moved to New York and wrote songs and sang in a series of bands, such as the rock band Obsession and the punk rock band Sado Nation. He was the lead singer of a band called The Panther Moderns, described as a subversive network in Gibson's *Neuromancer*.

seminal novel, *City Come A' Walkin* (1977) to which Gibson later contributed a forward, that remains a key work (along with Sterling's *Artificial Kid*).

Shirley was certainly a fan of the Sex Pistols' variety of punk. But before the official emergence of punk, in the early seventies, as Shirley tells it, "I was a rock fan, of course, because that was where the energy and the Attitude was ... I was very much into the harder bands like the Stooges, the Velvet Underground and MC5 ... and a lot of Iggy Pop" (12). He also cites a wide range of other music: from Frank Zappa, and "Lou Reed solo stuff, always" (155), to the Blue Oyster Cult (a band for which he has also written lyrics). Shirley has stated his own interest was "finding ways to felicitously fuse incongruous genres" and he was influenced by music "which juxtaposed seemingly disparate music types into one overall sonic experience" (99). As Cavallaro notes in a study of cyberpunk, how "musical and literary cultures literally came together in cyberpunk is best exemplified by John Shirley, [o]ften dubbed 'the Lou Reed of cyberpunk'" (21-2; *Storming* 387).

The fiction published in *Mirrorshades* by Shirley underlines this, and his work doesn't differ significantly from the mainstream of cyberpunk in this regard. The excerpt published in the *Mirrorshades* Anthology, entitled "Freezone," concerns a character called Rick Rickenharp, one of the performers in an area known as Freezone, off the coast of Morocco, a necklace of "brothels, arcades, cabarets ... hookers and dealers." Rickenharp describes himself as a "rock classicist" and it is worth considering the description in detail, a cameo of the cyberpunk, and harbinger of the disruptive influence Shirley would have on SF conventions:

He wore a black leather motorcycle jacket ... worn by John Cale when he was still in the Velvet Underground. The seams were beginning to pop; three studs were missing from the chrome trimming ... the leather was second skin to Rickenharp. He wore nothing under it. His bony, hairless chest showed translucent blue-white beneath the broken zippers. He wore blue jeans ... genuine Harley Davidson boots. Earrings.... Dark glasses." (*City* 142)

But as the author points out, in case the reader draws the wrong inference, “Rickenharp wasn’t a punk. He identified with prepunk, late 1950s, mid-1960s, early 1970s ... He was simply a hardcore rocker” (144).

The social significance of Sex Pistols-style punk was debated from the outset of the cyberpunk movement. It is worth recalling there has been ongoing debate over what “punk” referred to, among the fledgling group of cyberpunk writers (and panelists) at a number of contentious SF conferences back in the 1980s. One participant tried to align the term with an earlier usage of the word, a 1950s-style American street “punk.” In terms of a definition of the word, there is a different emphasis between British and American forms. Yet even when this approach to punk is recognized as narrow, as by Heuser who adds that “in a wider sense, ‘punk’ in American colloquial language refers to a young person who indulges in semi-legal activities” (30), this does not widen our understanding of punk in cyberpunk. Early usage of the term ‘punk’ in American slang referred to a female prostitute and then, in the twentieth century, a male prostitute. More generally, it refers to a young criminal or street gang member (for example TLC lead singer Tionne “T-Boz” Watkins wrote a poem “Not a Punk” with the lines “violence can be the way for some/ ... cornered into gangs/ given little choice or none” (149).

The music artists Gibson usually cites as formative, even the Velvet Underground (and Lou Reed, David Bowie, Steely Dan, Bruce Springsteen, Patti Smith, Joy Division) are not particularly representative of mid 70’s Sex Pistol’s brand of punk. In fact there are no hardcore punk bands on Gibson’s list. Gibson has maintained that *Neuromancer* is sort of like a Velvet Underground album, not sort of like *Never Mind the Bollocks (Here Come the Sex Pistols)*.

Gibson has made a number of revealing comments about the importance of rock music in his fiction. His comment on the influence of Lou Reed is a striking admission, as is the equating with fiction writers. One of his more recent novels is named after a Velvet Underground song, *All Tomorrow’s Parties* (1999). The epigraph for *Neuromancer* was going to be: “Watch out for worlds behind you,” a line from a Velvet Underground song, “Sunday Morning.” In fact it is a misquotation (“Watch out, the world’s behind you”) which lessens the science-fictional inflection suggested in the pluralizing of “worlds,” and subsequently points to the slippery nature and position of

lyrics as a source of meaning in discussions of music. Featherstone and Burrows, for instance, find the “making and remaking of worlds” in cyberpunk is “graphically captured” (2) by this quotation.

Some of these musical references in cyberpunk fiction are cryptic, even bordering on arcane. For example, in the short story “Burning Chrome” there is a character with the name of a rock guitarist, Bobby Quine.¹⁰ Yet in his novels there is also a concern with mainstream rock; the imaginary group Lo/Rez in *Idoru* is based on U2. Gibson has also expressed interest in “dark rock” bands like Joy Division, and Goth (Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds).

Not that I am suggesting it is absolutely necessary to listen to the Velvet Underground in order to read cyberpunk. What is important here, and this is evident in Gibson’s comments on the Velvet Underground, or even his review of a U2 concert, is how pop criticism endeavours to establish a knowing community; the critic is, in this respect, a fan, with a mission to “preserve a perceived quality of sound ... to define the ideal musical experience for listeners to measure themselves against” (67). It is the championing not so much of music as of *a way of listening* to music: to “relate the music to its possible uses ... and to place it generically” (68). Thus Gibson’s preferences as a listener or consumer locate him in a particular audience. He puts a particular value on these artists. He buys their products. He discusses them, and finds them relevant and necessary to his fiction. If it is through consumption that contemporary culture is lived, then it is in the process of consumption that contemporary cultural value must be located.

Furthermore, what underlies all these preoccupations with rock music, in my opinion, is an express interest in various aspects of a recognizable genre of rock performance (aural and visual) which developed in the 1970s. This is summarized succinctly by Will Straw:

There developed in the 1970s a recognizable genre of rock performance (Lou Reed, Patti Smith, Iggy Pop, even, to a lesser extent, Rod Stewart) based on the integration of street wisdom, a certain ironic distance from rock mythology, and,

¹⁰ Robert Quine collaborated with Richard Hell and the Voidoids and was Lou Reed’s guitarist in the eighties: “Hell’s beatnik-Baudelaire moan and Robert Quine’s jittery, sensual guitar lines defined the ragged, arty sound of early NYC punk.”

in some cases, sexual ambiguity ... within relatively coherent musical styles and physical stances. The recurrence of black leather and 'rebel' postures in the iconography surrounding such music never resulted in its full assimilation in the more masculine tendencies of rock culture, since these motifs overlapped considerably with those of gay culture or involved a significant degree of intellectualization; but in North America, much of the original constituency for punk and new wave included people whose archivist involvement in rock centred on a tradition dominated by the Velvet Underground and East Coast urban rock in general. (378)

From the categories outlined here that are relevant for characterizing early seventies rock music culture, the following are germane to this chapter. This concerns rock performance as involving: street realism; an engagement with certain aspects of rock mythology; and sexual ambiguity. A pattern of sorts begins to emerge, an "affective alliance" in Grossberg's terminology, "a particular segment or articulation of a cultural formation; a configuration of texts, practices and people." Such a rock alliance will include "a variety of musics, images of style, forms of behavior and talk, styles of dance, drugs, fans, etc." (*We Gotta* 397). And it is, as Straw notes, by a tradition emanating from urban centers and dominated by one particular band, the Velvet Underground.

The Velvet Underground and "Venus in Furs"

According to Gibson there are ways in which *Neuromancer* is comparable to a Velvet Underground album. In this section I will pursue the implications of this statement in terms of postmodern orientalism. The Velvet Underground comprised Lou Reed, Nico, John Cale, Sterling Morrison, and Maureen Tucker (who had replaced Angus MacLise) and released four albums, notably *The Velvet Underground and Nico*. The name for the group supposedly came from the cover of a paperback book someone had found in a Times Square subway station bookshop. Although there were whips and chains on the cover, it was basically about "wife-swapping in Suburbia." It has been noted the name had little to do with "leather and whips ... but people thought it did" and their songs (like "Venus in Furs" written before they met Warhol) "reinforced the associations ... that in

fact we were trying to make some statement about being S&M. That was wholly accidental” (Zak 191). However they soon achieved notoriety in the 1960s as the group that sang about heroin, transvestites and sadomasochism.

According to McCaffery the Velvet Underground’s “brutally honest depiction of drugs, S&M, and desperation” has been a “seminal influence on the 1970s punk and the 1980s cyberpunk scenes” (*Storming* 20). This section provides further background on the Velvet Underground, in order to better gauge their influence on cyberpunk, particularly in terms of S&M. Some of the transgressive (and subversive) elements can be readily traced to a preoccupation with the “aesthetic” of the Velvet Underground and a romanticization to some extent of those who inhabited Warhol’s Factory.

A connection can be established between the aesthetics of the original group which made its debut in the mid-1960s, and the social “values” of the Factory environment of Andy Warhol that nurtured it. The music of the Velvet Underground, in Hebdige’s terms, can further be “interpreted as a coded expression of the social aims and values of the people to whom it appeals.” For the Velvet Underground the Warhol Factory provided “intellectual and emotional sustenance, new equipment and drugs,” according to Bockris and Malanga. We can apply Grossberg’s notion of a rock alliance in order to ascertain the scope of the Velvet Underground, a variety of musical influences, images, behavior, and drugs.

The core of the Velvet Underground sound can be traced to the tension between the classically-trained John Cale, and the streetwise, possibly more Pop-oriented Lou Reed. The result was a crossover between pop music and the avant-garde, three-chord rock’n’roll welded to the “thunderous drone of LaMonte Young’s soundscapes” (Doggett 36). Angus MacLise had initially brought a multicultural rhythmic approach, mixing in Oriental influences he had picked up in his Eastern travels (mainly India).

The music was supported by visual accompaniment in the form of slides or lights. The predominant images of style are black leather and shades. Reed, who had always worn black with the Velvets, accustomed as he was to having films projected onto him at Warhol’s Factory multi-media happenings, has continued with the practice throughout much of his career. It also has the imprint of Warhol, also in “thick black shades and a leather jacket – the garb of Brando or Dean and, after Andy, the image of the

rock'n'roller as well" (Hoggert 38). The "scene" was Warhol's Factory, a spacious attic at 231 West 47th St., a big loft where the walls were covered in tin foil, and mainly frequented by "all kinds of freaks, artists, dealers, celebrities, transvestites, drug addicts" and Andy Warhol hosting the guests: "Almost everybody ... was taking speed on a daily basis" (Zak 191).

Of specific interest are the "live" performances of the "multi-media assault" that was Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable, for example, included film projected onto the Velvet Underground and Lou Reed, wearing shades and dressed in black, in concert. The EPI, then, were a multimedia event and included film, dance, and various conceptual stunts, plus gaudy lighting effects. It included "expanded cinemas" combining movies and slide projections with poetry, live action, music, and other mixed-media "ritual happenings" familiar in the sixties. It was a multimedia event "that substantially changed the way people perceived rock music" (194).

The Velvet Underground played at various screenings of underground films. In 1965 they provided soundtrack music for new work by the underground filmmaker Piero Heliczer. One of his pieces was entitled *Venus in Furs*. The whole ensemble played in front of two movies being shown next to each other, the dancers in front of the band centerstage; among the featured songs was "Venus in Furs" which had prompted the debut of Gerard Malanga's whip dance. Some observers noted the "circuslike atmosphere" (Zak 7) of the performance. As one participant tells it, "We were on stage with bullwhips, giant flashlights, hypodermic needles, barbells, big wooden crosses.... You were shocked ... people shooting up on stage, being crucified and licking boots." For others, "this time there was a clear image of what the group was conveying" (Bockris and Malanga 46). Reed wanted a very sophisticated sound to go with the "very decadent S&M image that they were projecting" (Zak 38).

The song "Venus in Furs" narrativizes in a postmodern fragmented form a particular scene or fantasy, a night encounter between someone (assumed to be a man) named Severin, and an unnamed young woman, the "whiplash girl-child."

Severin, down on your bended knee
Taste the whip, in love not given lightly

Taste the whip, now bleed for me ...
Strike dear mistress and cure his heart

Severin, on bended knee, in an extreme rendition (or perversion) of the courtly love tradition, tastes the whip and kisses the boot. Severin, clearly named in the song, links it to the nineteenth century novel *Venus in Furs* (*Venus in Pelz* 1870) by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, his most famous novel.

Before we can go further, the problematic of lyrics needs to be addressed, as I noted earlier in this chapter. The lyrics of Reed's song are carefully crafted, and have been recognized to bring a new level of lyric writing, and vision to pop music. Roger Beebe points out it amounts to a methodological error to posit the lyrics as the ultimate location of the meaning of a song, and thereby "completely effacing the aural (i.e. the affective resonance of the driving beats, distorted guitars, and screamed vocals)" (318). He agrees with Grossberg regarding the refusal of lyrics as the site of meaning: "rock also provides some unique problems. Since it is difficult to maintain that the lyrics of rock are its most salient element (and its lyrics are often innocuous, ambiguous or unintelligible), its representation of specific morally suspect or antisocial activities cannot be taken as conclusive evidence of its social effects" (*We Gotta* 10).

According to Beebe, this error is compounded by a second one, which is alluded to in Grossberg's comments: the assignment of a fixed meaning to a fragmentary and elusive set of lyrics that sometimes even degenerates into nonsense. In general, the unintelligibility of the lyrics (polysemous lyrics) means they cannot be relied upon. But I would argue this is not the case with Lou Reed (or David Bowie). On the contrary a full investigation of particular lyrics adds much to an understanding of cyberpunk. Frith's chapter "Songs as Texts" is helpful in this respect. I have mentioned two obvious strategies: treating songs either as poems, literary objects which can be analyzed entirely separately from the music, or as speech acts, words to be analyzed in performance. Listening to the lyrics we hear: words, rhetoric (words being used in a special, musical way), and voices. Frith concedes that lyrics are central to how pop songs are heard and evaluated (and video: to find out what the words mean). Moreover, a song is a melodic

and rhythmic structure that is grasped by people through its words (words remembered in their melodic and rhythmic setting).

The heroines of Masoch are of particular types, exhibit a proud nature, muscular figure, imperious will and cruel disposition (the servant-mistress, the woman torturer, and the Oriental courtesan). Then there is the strange and oppressive atmosphere of Masoch's settings, as well as the importance of the theme of an encounter. The lyrics in Reed's song, a mix of imperatives and short, fragmented descriptions, echo this rhetoric in the encounter, the "streetlight fancies," and the costumes, and the figure of the "whiplash girl-child in the dark."

There are also demonstrable links in Masoch's work to Orientalist discourse. As Said has pointed out: "In the system of knowledge about the Orient, the Orient is less a place than a *topos*, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origin in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone's work on the Orient, or some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all these" (*Orientalism* 177). Said discusses Gustave Flaubert's "systematic and disciplined knowledge of Orientalia" (180). When Flaubert visited the Orient in the middle of the nineteenth century, he was "thoroughly steeped in aspects of European culture that encouraged a sympathetic, if perverse, vision of the Orient." This meant Flaubert was one of:

a community for which the imagery of exotic places, the cultivation of sadomasochistic tastes ... a fascination with the macabre, with the notion of a Fatal Woman, with secrecy and occultism, all combined to enable literary work ... (180)

Here we can begin to ascertain and evaluate the influence of the "sadomasochistic vision" of the Velvet Underground on the cyberpunk scene. As Deleuze notes, the art of masochism is the art of fantasy: "Fantasy plays on two series, two opposite 'margins,' and the resonance thus set up gives life to and creates the heart of the fantasy" (66). The performance sequence entitled "The Doll" in Peter Riviera's sadistic "holographic cabaret" is a compelling example in *Neuromancer*. Lise in Gibson's short story "The Winter Market" provides another instance of the working through of this vision which I

discuss in the following chapter on cyborgs and prosthetics. Another example is provided by Molly, the “street samurai” outfitted in “black boots ... tight black gloveleather jeans and ... a black jacket” who warns Case not “to fuck around with me” (*Neuromancer* 37). Among Molly’s cybernetic augmentations are surgically inset mirrorshades which seal her eye sockets, and scalpel blades beneath her burgundy nails (nails being an acknowledged fetish object). I consider this character in more detail in the following chapter on cyborgs. Importantly, her first encounter with Case is in an oriental setting, the capsule hotel in Chiba City.

3. Orientalism, Globalisation and the Transmission of Music

In this section I will look in more detail at the relation between music and the practice of Orientalism in a postmodern, globalizing context. Concerning specifically music, it has been noted that in spite of differences that developed over the years in Western representations of the East in music, successive Orientalist styles tended to relate to previous Orientalist styles more closely than they did to Eastern ethnic practices. Representation may rely more upon existing knowledge of Western signifiers of the East and not have much to do with the objective conditions of non-Western practices. Something new may even be brought into being, displacing and standing in for the Orient. Connor gives the example of Debussy’s incorporation of the structures of Indonesian gamelan music, but notes the way composers used such musical styles and influences tended to “confirm the self-identity of Western music, rather than providing occasions for its disturbance” (170-1).

I have already discussed a “postmodern” Western representation of the East in punk rock music, the Siouxsie and the Banshees song “Hong Kong Garden” which features a repeated Oriental music motif. The song in terms of both music and lyrics confirms the self-identity of Western music, but does also provide an occasion for a slight disturbance, in that the song signals a muted response to the Asian immigrant presence in the UK. A central term in understanding these particular changes (or displacements) is globalization. The main markets for popular music, for example, are in the United States, Europe and Japan, and the United States and Britain have in turn dominated the

production of popular music for sale in the world market. At the same time, though much smaller in terms of size, the markets in many of the countries outside the main markets are among the fastest growing in the world. These include countries in Asia. This process has been characterized as globalization, whereby new modes of global connection have been developed on the basis of a range of economic and political processes which in turn produce new modes of local attachment.

In such a globalizing context, patterns of cultural transmission can be classified into a number of types: cultural exchange, cultural dominance, cultural imperialism, and transculturation. In what follows I will be drawing upon these classifications, although I will continue to emphasize the uneven, contradictory nature of these developments. There has been a collapse of geographic distance and national boundaries which has allowed media to be integrated into the lives of people across geographic boundaries more smoothly and effortlessly. This has prompted on the one hand seemingly contradictory tendencies toward globally shared cultures, and on the other hand the rise of an abundance of local discourses and hybrid media cultures that defy categorization according to geography and nationality.

A useful and instructive recent parallel for exploring these contradictory (and reciprocal) tendencies further in relation to Orientalism and rock music can be found in the case of David Sylvian, pop star and lead singer of the band called Japan (formed in 1974, disbanded in 1982). According to Martin Powers' book *David Sylvian: The Last Romantic*, finding the band languishing in the late seventies, the group's management and publicists hatched a strategy to break the band globally. They realized that "if handled right, much could be made of Japan's name and image in the Far East" (34). So they came up with "a plan for Japan [the country] where there would be intensive press and pictures ... but no music – obviously the music wasn't right" (34). They figured that the kids who followed music in Japan were eleven to fourteen year olds and into Cheap Trick and Kiss. They weren't ready for the complicated sound of Japan.

The strategy worked brilliantly and a huge fan club was formed on the basis of this, as in the liner notes for *In Vogue* (re-released 1996): "Throughout the late seventies, still unable to find major success in the UK, the band were able to develop a strong following in ... Japan." When the band toured the following year, the fans "were already

in love with the *look* of the group” (Powers 34-5, emphasis added). From that point, the fans had to listen to the newly released album and “get to like it” (35). Continued success in the Asian territories would provide the band with a much-needed financial life-line.

This was matched by another related development, “the band’s rapid embrace of Oriental sounds and culture” (61) evident on the album *Tin Drum* (1981). The most striking aspect of the record was the fact that Japan used synthesizers and electronic percussion to emulate the native sounds of the Far East, (supposedly) “fusing new technology with ancient values” (57). I add “supposedly” here in the light of Chow’s point that ancestry should not to be thought of as continuous but accompanied by “displacements and destructions.”

The result is that in songs like “Ghosts,” the “alien-sounding keyboard textures” mostly achieved through programming synthesizers in the studio are combined with “lyrical notions of romance, melancholia, travel and escape” (58). Together with these lyrical notions, the hallmarks of classic Orientalist discourse, something new is produced, both standing in for the Orient (reiterating previous Orientalist styles) as well as generating new associations and hybridizations. The notion of hybridity here is informed by recent use of the term to mean “cultural creativity,” that is “the making of something new through the combination of existing things and patterns” (Nilan and Feixa 1). Hybridization can be thought of as a process of cultural exchanges and interactions between the local and the global, as well as a process of cultural transactions that “reflects how global cultures are assimilated in the locality, and how non-western cultures impact upon the West” (2). This extends to include the performative practices of cultural hybridity by young people in response to globalization.

Thus, at the same time that contradictory and reciprocal tendencies toward globally shared (musical and visual) cultures emerge, there is also the rise of local discourses and hybrid media cultures to consider, in other words the uses to which music is put in other cultures which can be difficult to categorize. For example, a music magazine in Japan called *Crossbeat* ran a cartoon entitled *8 Beat Gagu*, the name of a Japanese *manga* that traced the friendships and relationships among mainly British musicians at the time, and often featured a narcissistic and androgynous character called “David Sylvian,” and played on the ambiguities of his relationship with composer Sakamoto Ryuichi (he

features on a number of Sylvian's albums). This process is not dissimilar to perhaps how fans write stories which place the characters from different television shows in a variety of contexts and which allow the development of aspects of the original text that fans felt attracted to; for example some fans have re-written relationships in *Star Trek* (see for example Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*).

As well, in Inoue's book *Visual Kei no Jidai*, David Sylvian and the band Japan is cited as a formative influence on the phenomenon of "visual kei" in Japanese music. Visual kei (lit. "visual type") is a term usually related to Japanese rock music, referring to bands whose primary point of interest for their fans is their costume and appearance. Members (mostly male) wear striking makeup, style their hair in dramatic shapes, and wear elaborate costumes in bands with names like "X Japan," "Shazna," and "By-Sexual." Recently costumes worn by bands (and fans) have come from computer role playing games and *anime*. Importantly, visual kei is not a specific type of music, although most of the bands would be considered to play some kind of "rock" music.

Important in the discussion of music and Orientalism, and the cultural exchanges and interactions that characterize it, as the above examples indicate, is the increasing global flow of visual culture. Beebe has suggested that rock (as suggested by the overwhelming and necessary reliance in popular music studies on the notion of the "rock formation") is no longer simply a question of pure musicality; "rock music comes to us more than ever before with images attached" (317). This is not to say that the visual has not always been a necessary part of its apparatus (in performance, for instance). The 'image' was signified in the surrounding texts of popular music, such as album sleeves, newspaper and magazine articles, publicity photographs and descriptions of performers, all contributing to how audiences were encouraged to "imagine" the music built on visual codes already in circulation (Negus *Popular Music* 87). As well, photographs can also be seen as central elements in the production of Orientalism, or as examples of the ways in which Western cultures attribute to Eastern cultures qualities of exoticism. The capacity of the photograph to establish exoticism and enact Orientalism can be seen in the aura of "otherness" a rock artist like David Bowie managed to project, as I discuss in the following section.

But, as Beebe points out the advent of MTV (Music Television) “heralds a substantial extension and transformation of the relation between the visual and the musical” (Beebe 332). McCaffery in his interview with Gibson, for instance, notes there are “so many references to rock music and television in your work that it sometimes seems your writing is so much influenced by MTV as by literature” (*Storming* 265).

With this in mind, I will now turn to examine the primacy of the visual in rock music, in particular, the rock video, and another singular influence on cyberpunk, notably through an enduring relation with Japanese culture, David Bowie. Previously I noted Lisa Nakamura’s objection that cyberpunk presents a “visual trope” rather than a meaningful reference to any real or imagined Japanese culture. In the following section I explore the aspects of visual culture alluded to by Bowie – the borrowings from Japanese culture, like the designs of Kansai Yamamoto – to show that the Japanese elements in Bowie are not merely incidental.

This is not to claim that Bowie has somehow moved beyond a reliance on Western signifiers of the East. The video “China Girl,” besides being revealing about the ways in which the visual and musical interrelate in this postmodern form of video, is marked by orientalist discourse. Yet again the response of non-Western audiences (e.g. Japanese students), is instructive as to how these kinds of images are received.

4. On the Exterior of Rock: David Bowie and Yamamoto Kansai

Bowie’s music in the early seventies has been described as a “peculiar, camp mixture of makeup, science fiction, stagecraft and transvestism” (Sandford 95). I am especially interested in this period of albums, from *Ziggy Stardust*, to *Aladdin Sane* (1973) and *Diamond Dogs* (1974) whereby Bowie became commercially successful, obtained a real (global) audience and attained a measure of superstardom. By his own account, in retrospect Bowie saw himself as one of the “representatives of an embryonic form of postmodernism” (qtd. in Pegg 273); and later, like Warhol, “would achieve the status of a postmodern artifact.” In a series of “camp” incarnations (*Ziggy Stardust*, *Aladdin Sane*) Bowie achieved something of a cult status in the early 70s. He attracted a mass youth audience and set up a number of “visual precedents” in terms of personal

appearance (make-up, dyed hair) which, according to Dick Hebdige, created a “new sexually ambiguous image” for those youngsters willing and brave enough to challenge the prevailing stereotypes available to them at the time.

It was also during this period that the glimmerings of Japanese culture began to be visible in his output. Bowie asserts that he, and other glam pioneers (like Roxy Music) were trying to broaden rock’s vocabulary by including certain visual aspects in their music from what was considered to be “on the exterior of rock” (art, theater, film) as well as elements of surrealism and, in his case, copious borrowings from Japanese culture. Bowie’s unbridled fascination and contact with Japan and the Orient subsequently resulted in number of influential crosscultural transformations in a variety of media forms besides music: stage spectacle (*kabuki* and Noh drama), fashion (the designs of Yamamoto Kansai), films (*The Man Who Fell to Earth*, *Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence*), as well as television advertisements (“Crystal Japan”) and MTV videos, such as “China Girl.” Some of these evocations rely upon existing knowledge of Western signifiers of the East, or bring into being something new that “stands in” for the Orient, yet also generate new associations and practices of cultural hybridity.

The basis for some of these developments can be traced to the “visual drama of Glam Rock” (a specifically British form) and Bowie is considered one of the top exponents of that musical form. I have noted Hebdige’s point about glam rock being a constitutive element of punk. Glam raises questions of sexual identity in terms of uncertainty, anxieties, and change. Bowie and his followers were able to negotiate a space where an “alternative identity could be discovered and expressed” and thus “construct an alternative identity which communicated a perceived difference: an Otherness” (88-9). Hebdige finds Bowie’s entire aesthetic at this time was predicated upon the notion of escape: “into a fantasy past (Isherwood’s Berlin peopled by a ghostly cast of doomed bohemians) or a science-fiction future ... represented in transmogrified form as a dead world of humanoids” (61). This desired degree of “otherworldliness” in part derives from familiar science fiction sources, television programmes (*Quatermass* and *Doctor Who*) which furnish the ongoing “sci-fi” imagery and styles that inform his celebrated characters, Major Tom, Ziggy, Mr Newton in the *The Man Who Fell to Earth*.

At the same time Bowie's outrageous stage personas of this period (fluorescent hair, extreme makeup, and wildly bizarre clothes) also stemmed from his fascination with Japan. One of the biggest influences on the album *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders From Mars* came from Japanese culture, the hairstyle (first seen on the TV show *Top of the Pops* in the early seventies) appropriated from Japanese designer Yamamoto Kansai. Prefigured in song lyrics, "the screwed-down hairdo/like some cat from Japan," as Bowie recalls, it was "taken lock, stock and barrel from a Kansai display in *Harpers*. He was using a Kabuki lion's wig on his models which was brilliant red" (qtd. in Pegg 277).

The blurring of science fiction and Kabuki-style garments was a feature of Yamamoto's fashion show. The red hair, make-up and space age costumes made an indelible impression, "injecting a sense of exotic decadence and pantomimic ritual" (Pegg 273) into popular culture, as well as introducing elements of Japanese theatre forms, Kabuki and Noh drama, to a wider, Western audience. This exoticness was achieved by adapting images and styles made available elsewhere; and Bowie, although he appropriated elements of Japanese culture, did so at a time when Japan would have still been considered "incomprehensible," a rule-bound society made up of salaried workers.



Fig 2. Bowie in Japanese clothes designed by Yamamoto Kansai. The Japanese writing on the coat is purely for decorative (visual) purposes, an instance of graphicity in Chow's terms.

Subsequently Yamamoto Kansai presented Bowie with the traditional Japanese costume in New York during the second US tour and Bowie wore it during the Japanese tour. Yamamoto was then commissioned to create nine more costumes based on traditional Noh dramas. For his part Yamamoto has stated that he was intrigued by Bowie's unusual face, neither man nor woman, which suited his style of clothes for either sex, and the "aura of fantasy" that surrounds him. Yamamoto has also stated that, as a Japanese, he always seeks "the Oriental quality" within him. His use of flamboyant designs and colours lifted from more traditional forms, such as the kimono, traditional Japanese festival wear, and Kabuki theatre, has sometimes put him at odds with traditionalists in Japan, who maintain he is creating exoticism for the West. Importantly, he was the first Japanese designer to hold a collection show in London in 1971; his pop sensibility made possible the worldly transmission of Japanese culture in the 1970s.

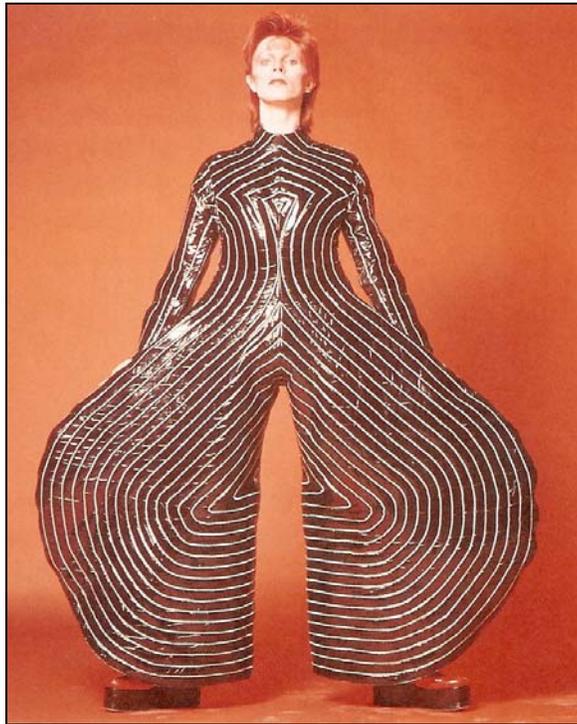


Fig 3. The title of this futuristic costume is "Spring Rain."

For Bowie, the outlandish costumes, make-up, mime, pantomime, commedia dell'arte, and Kabuki theatre "crystallized in a thrilling exploration of the artificial

relationship between performer and audience” (Pegg 272). In this “artificial” relationship can also be discerned the rudimentary outlines of new modes of celebrity culture through the activities of a star like Bowie, and the “aura of fantasy” that surrounds him. The Ziggy Stardust album draws attention to the importance of star imagery as a site of fictional construction. On one level Ziggy is about a rockstar (“I could make a transformation as a rock'n' roll star”). Bowie wrote about desiring stardom, and the songs themselves operate as a parallel enactment of the process that simultaneously launched Bowie himself as a major artist. Ziggy Stardust “pushed to new extremes Bowie’s fascination with the nature of celebrity” (Pegg 272).

Celebrity and the media are mutually constitutive. Celebrity is a media phenomenon, a resource created and deployed by a range of often interlocking media (press, films, television programmes) to which audiences respond in all manner of ways. Moreover, celebrity conveys, directly or indirectly, particular social values and definitions of sexual and gendered identity. Bowie is on the cusp of mediated celebrity, exemplifying the ways in which particular celebrities are produced, represented, and received. This is only achieved in the first place through the active construction and transmission of an image or persona that represents him. Gibson’s recent novel, *Idoru*, set in Japan, also is concerned with the enactment of rock celebrity in the age of media. An earlier short story, “The Winter Market” features a cyborgian character, Lise, who attains stardom and converts it into cybernetic immortality.

Aladdin Sane

Following the “demise” of Ziggy Stardust, David Bowie’s “love affair with Oriental culture” (Sandford 108) gathered force in 1973 with the creation of the Aladdin Sane character. Although immortalized by a red and blue lightning flash on his face, Bowie’s transformation included from the previous production “the same futuristic clothes (oriental now), and the same androgyny and perceived decadence” (108). It was the sleeve photo for *Aladdin Sane* which introduced perhaps “the most celebrated image of Bowie’s long career: the topless shot of the flame-haired singer, his downcast face sliced in two by a vivid red-and-blue lightning streak while an airbrushed tear glides down his collarbone” (Pegg 282).

To the fusion of rock music with science fiction, and appropriations of Japanese culture we can add pantomime. In the UK *Aladdin* has been a popular subject of pantomime for over 200 hundred years, since 1788, and although ostensibly based on Middle Eastern tales, the setting was invariably China, (i.e. London's East End Chinatown), and featured Aladdin as the son of a wealthy widow in Peking, Widow Twankey, a laundress. The album *Aladdin Sane* is a restatement of the pantomimic elements in Bowie's frame of reference: Aladdin, the epitome of British pantomime, the extravagant costumes and make-up, and a familiar conflation of Oriental elements, (Middle Eastern, Chinese, and Japanese) that I have argued constitutes postmodern orientalist discourse.

The character of Aladdin Sane was, as Bowie explained, "Ziggy goes to America" and the album supplants its predecessor's aspirational fantasy of America with the harsh reality that Bowie had begun to experience there, an "alternative world" permeated by violence: "just the look of certain places like Detroit really caught my imagination because it was such a rough city" (qtd. in Pegg 281). Detroit similarly caught the imagination of Gibson, who pointed out that his representation of Chiba City in *Neuromancer* was "a fantasy of Detroit." If we are looking for forerunners to the kind of "incongruous juxtapositions" that define cyberpunk, such as between America and Japan, and are most often located in the transactions between Japanese and American culture of the 1980s, David Bowie's musical output of this period is a strong candidate, as I have attempted to show, particularly in terms of the visual precedents appropriated from Oriental sources.

His enduring love affair with Asia (and Japan in particular), however, took a more predictable turn a decade later with the release of Bowie's rock video "China Girl," which I will now discuss in some detail to further draw out the conflicting or contradictory aspects of postmodern orientalist practices that have influenced cyberpunk.

Music Video and "China Girl"

Fredric Jameson has noted that every age is dominated by a privileged form or genre, and in the present period it is video. He believes that experimental video (i.e. non-narrative, avant-garde video) is coterminous with postmodernism itself. Postmodernism

“ceaselessly reshuffles the fragments of preexistent texts, the building blocks of older cultural and social production, in some new and heightened bricolage” (96). The videotext itself is at all moments a process of ceaseless, apparently random, interaction between elements. Music videos, a “postmodern medium” (Frith), also exemplify complex postmodern textual and montage strategies. The advent of MTV, as I noted, brought about a substantial extension and transformation of the relation between the musical and the visual.

Video became part of the day-to-day production and promotion of popular music during the 1980s. For some it trivializes the music; the construction of an image had become more important than the production of sound. Yet music has always been associated with performance and spectacle. The visual has always been present, in the surrounding texts of popular music, photographs for example. Video had not suddenly added images to music, but built on visual codes that were already in circulation.

Music videos work in a relatively coherent way to “frame” audiences responses to songs. One of the implications of this argument is that music videos direct audiences to certain meanings and not others. Thus music and images tend to direct attention to certain themes and issues and not others. Thus videos combine a complexity of musical, visual and lyrical meanings in a coherent way. There are additional mediations to consider, the context of reception, and the activities that accompany video consumption. Negus notes one of the characteristics of video consumption is that it involves an engagement with a cultural form that is subject to repeated viewing and listening (repetition); music videos are multi-layered; “meanings can be generated by various combinations and juxtapositions of visuals, lyrics and music” (*Popular Music* 93). What we get in many circumstances are bits and pieces that have been put together in a deliberately decorative and multi-layered way.

However this kind of detailed analysis of music video tends to assume an ideal viewer and listening situation. My focus, as I noted at the outset of this thesis in terms of methodology is the recurring problem which concerns how does a particular audience assimilate these meanings. This is of particular importance when considering a video such as Bowie’s “China Girl.” Recalling Chow, this is the importance of understanding the process whereby Chinese students, for example, come to terms with themselves both

as objects and subjects of “seeing” (and “hearing”) China, and is applicable to Japan. Identificatory acts are the sites of productive relations (identification with the ethnic culture, as well as the strong sense of complicity with the processes that structure those imaginings in the first place).

“China Girl” provides an apposite and influential example of what this chapter is concerned to explicate in the relation of cyberpunk and rock music. Originally produced and co-written by Bowie for Iggy Pop’s *The Idiot* (1977), “China Girl” was a huge international hit for Bowie when re-recorded for the *Let’s Dance* album (1983) in both the UK (number 2 on the charts) and the US (number 10). Iggy Pop’s original version is marked by a harder vocal, which emphasizes the forebodings in the lyrics about cultural imperialism. This element is in Bowie’s version, but the addition of an Oriental guitar motif and backing vocals softens up the song for its 1983 release. Bowie’s version is hardcore pop.

By adding some rather literal Chinese music motifs, the song on one level exemplifies the point already made, that Orientalist styles tend to relate to previous Orientalist styles more closely than they do to Eastern ethnic practices; representation relies upon existing knowledge of Western signifiers of the East. As producer Nile Rodgers attested, if “you call a song ‘China Girl’, it better sound Asian” (qtd. in Pegg 316). Even a radical Far Eastern reworking of the song by Bowie in 2003, with overlaid Chinese instrumentation including the plaintive ehru, a two-stringed bowed instrument, released in the form of a club mix, tends to confirm it as a Western song that “sounds” Asian, and little to do with Eastern ethnic musical practice. Of the video itself, Bowie explained that it was “a vignette of my continuing fascination with all things Asian. One thing that I’d been surprised by when I was in Australia was the large Chinese population ... so I based this whole piece of work around that particular community” (qtd. in Pegg 53).

Jameson has cautioned about “coordinating a narrativized visual fragment – an image shard marked as narrative, which does not have to come from any story you ever heard of – with an event on the sound track. Particularly in the postmodern it is crucial to distinguish between narrativization and any specific narrative segment as such; failure to do so results in confusions between ‘old-fashioned realistic’ stories and novels, and

putatively modern or postmodern antinarrative ones. The story is, however, only one of the forms narrative or narrativization can take” (300). Structurally “China Girl” is straightforward in terms of narrative organization. It depicts an uncomplicated “romantic” love affair between a white male (instantly recognizable as a suntanned, healthy looking David Bowie) and an Asian woman.

The song opens with the lyrical notion of escape and romance, “I could escape this feeling with my China girl/I feel a wreck without my little China girl.” The subject position “I” of the song is occupied by the singer, David Bowie, in a white suit holding a pencil-thin microphone, and supported by a backing musician (with an upright bass) giving the impression of a sophisticated cabaret singer. The face of a young Asian woman appears opposite Bowie. The scene moves to a Chinese restaurant where Bowie and the Chinese girl are eating a Chinese dinner. Her long “Oriental” fingernails are visible; he is shown to be cognizant of Asian customs, using chopsticks to eat noodles, and drinking from a small Chinese teacup.

Next, a colonialist scene is staged in the Australian outback, then Bowie, in the guise of the modern colonialist “stumbles into town,” this being Sydney, Australia, and Chinatown. He steps out into the street and throws a bowl of rice backwards over his head, and kisses the Asian woman who is now attired in an ornate Asian costume. There is a scene of the Asian woman’s bedroom, with a ceiling fan and Asian furnishings. A picture of Bowie in a soldier’s uniform stands on the dresser (perhaps from *Merry Christmas Mr Lawrence*). The couple embrace on the bed. Finally the video ends with a love-making scene on a beautiful “South Pacific” beach, Bowie and the Asian woman intimate in the waves, which parodies (if that is the right word) a famous scene from the movie *From Here to Eternity* (1953). The closing sequence generated press, and the video was subsequently censored.

The complexities in the video arise from its splicing together of geographical locations, and the historical time frames related to colonialism. Visually, an important element running through “China Girl” is that some of the scenes in the video are shot in black and white, others in colour. This highlights the clash of cultural perspectives, the ancient Asian values (traditional costume) and modern (Chinese restaurant workers). The easy-going and not so demure woman is transformed into a Westerner’s vision of an

exotic Chinese goddess. It highlights how “Asian ‘identities’ are split between paradigms of distant grandeur and recent deprivation,” as Chow notes, superimposing on “the misty lands of dragons, gods and goddesses” more recent historical memories of the racially discriminated, in this case restaurateurs, rather than laundry workers or gardeners. Thus “ancestry” is not continuous but “fraught with displacements and destructions” (*Writing Diaspora* 140).

If the video had better “look” Asian, then we can also ask how might it “look” to Asian viewers. A sample of responses from some of my students is revealing in this regard. Some students cannot identify the gold-haired man (Bowie), wonder what is in the bowl (rice, powder), feel uncomfortable when the Chinese girl pushes up her nose, or Bowie pulls his eyes to make them slanted; but many students note the Chinese girl is the focus of the video, and comment on her transformation into ethnic dress, her make-up, and strange fingernails. The drug connotations are not noticed. The drug subtext for the song has been suppressed, or displaced by/onto the visual presence of the Chinese woman. The original song “China Girl” was initially released by Iggy Pop in the late 1970s. The title “China Girl” is street slang for a certain kind of drug. The opening lyric therefore takes on a different connotation altogether: “I could escape this feeling with my china girl/I feel a wreck without my little China girl” (the song would suggest a need for drugs).

The comingling of cultural codes that constitutes the aural and the visual text of “China Girl” works to efface (or excuse) what would normally have been cast in strictly rock terms as a drug song, in line with the sentiment of the lyrics and title itself. The rationale behind this change can be traced to a point I made at the outset of this section, concerning David Bowie’s re-invention, the crafting of new, global pop identity for the MTV generation of the postmodern 1980s. At the same time this process was achieved under the guise of a cultural exchange with the East replete with Orientalist overtones. Asked what artist’s works he would like to own, Bowie replied: “I’d love that green Chinese lady by Tretchikoff. My Mum bought one in Boots and it was over the fireplace for years.”¹¹

¹¹ See <http://www.moby.com/Essays/html/david_bowie.html>.

On a positive note the Chinese woman can play herself (unlike say movies of the 1950s such as *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing*, where the Asian women are played by white actresses). However, in the video she is unnamed, designated as a “China Girl,” submissive in her relationship with the charismatic Bowie (a parallel could be made here to the star/fan relation). When she does speak in the video, it is through an act of ventriloquism or mimicry: her lips move, but it is David Bowie’s voice that speaks.

5. The Wild Side of Life: Lou Reed

This final section looks at the other important influence on Gibson and cyberpunk in terms of rock music, Lou Reed. According to David Bowie, Lou Reed is “the spirit of urban America from the mid-1960s – drugs, the art world, the star machine of Warhol’s Factory.” Lou Reed, “resplendent in black leather jacket and mirrorshades” (*Storming* 20) epitomizes early seventies rock performance, and “produced a remarkable body of work associated with the mythical street scene prowled by Gibson” (McCaffery 302) in albums such as *Transformer* (1972), *Berlin* and *Street Hassle* (1978). Reed’s acknowledged influences are William Burroughs, Nelson Algren, Hubert Selby, and Ginsberg’s long poem “Howl.”¹² He put themes common to movies, plays and novels into pop song format, most famously the song “Walk on the Wild Side.” If Bowie, like Reed, had always “proudly celebrated the cult of street life” (Sandford 8), it is Lou Reed who epitomizes the cult of the street. Notes Bowie: “He gave us the environment in which to put our more theatrical vision ... He supplied us with the street and the landscape, and we peopled it” (qtd. in Pegg 274).

An immediate problem such an analysis poses for this thesis is how to characterize and reconcile this mythical street scene, the cult of the street, and the work of Lou Reed in general, in terms of the Japan content in cyberpunk. By way of an incongruous juxtaposition cyberpunk brings together, on the one hand, a typically American “street-life” culture (emphasizing drugs) and heroic accounts of those who

¹² Concerning the influence of the Beats, in a recent interview in *Mojo* Reed says: “None of us were part of that. Allen, William Burroughs ... Were we actually involved with them? No, though there were a lot of cross-currents between movie people and writers and playwrights and music makers at that point. It was a real blending of these different kinds of artistic endeavours, and for the first time music – rock music – could be on an equal footing with them” (42).

inhabit it (“the hustlers and romantic low-lives”) which is at odds with or unavailable to Japanese audiences. As Tatsumi Takayuki has noted:

I don’t think most Japanese science fiction fans were familiar with Lou Reed or the punk movement ... they don’t understand the mentality of punk. (Tatsumi, Personal Interview)¹³

What, then, can be made of these associations and echoes when read back in the context of Japanese culture? Tatsumi’s response indicates the possibility of different approaches: one concerns the situating of cyberpunk in Japan as very much part of a Japanese science fiction tradition (although one can add, significantly influenced by American SF); another framework that is used to make sense of the circulation of images around the world is the concept of “cultural imperialism” which refers to how an ideology, a politics, a way of life is exported into other territories through the export of cultural products.

Cultural imperialism has been defined by Bell as “a process of domination whereby the most economically powerful countries in the world attempt to maintain and exploit their superiority by subjugating the values, traditions and cultures of the majority of poorer countries and replacing them with their own cultural perspectives.” This has predominantly been the USA and Western Europe, and dominant ‘Western’ cultural values associated with multinational corporations (the influence of US films, TV programmes and global news programmes). It has been argued that the dominance of the United States in the transmission of music represents a form of cultural imperialism.

Thus cultural imperialism is “an integral component of the perceived trends towards globalization.” Cultural products (images, sound, information) move across national boundaries with increased ease, primarily from cultural powers like the USA outward. In a globalizing world, images and logos can take on transcultural meanings. In other words this process is more complicated than the thesis of cultural imperialism

¹³ When I asked Tatsumi about punk in Japan, what would come to mind (in the context of cyberpunk), he first answered Lou Reed.

allows, and the complexities may be better understood through the concept of transculturation.

It is important to bear in mind, then, that critics who use the term “cultural imperialism” do not always take into account the complex movements of an image or media text’s flow, or the specific practices used by viewers to mediate and appropriate imported cultural products and images. Cultural difference may allow for a broad range of responses to images. Yet, as Keith Negus observes, cultural imperialism is a “useful concept for understanding the world-wide movement of music” without assuming that it refers to impacts on culture, but to “the *processes* and struggles through which dominant power is asserted” (*Popular Music in Theory* 164).

Both these processes (cultural imperialism and transculturation) need to be taken into account in the discussion of what “the streets” signify in cyberpunk and to those implicated by it. On the one hand, it may be, as Detroit-area native Dana Burton, and hip-hop promoter in Shanghai, observes (and this parallel would hold for Japan, particularly in the 1970s and early 80s): “This is China.... Glorifying street culture doesn’t translate. Here, it’s cut and dried. If you have a gun and you shoot someone, you’re going to be executed. You sell drugs, you’re gone.” On the other hand, as Ian Condry notes, staying with the same musical form, in Japan “hip-hop was never rooted in ‘street culture,’ but is better considered club music, which in 1980s Tokyo meant all-night discos” (170).

Cyberpunk latched onto a particularly American countercultural experience (the cult of the street). A compelling instance of all this can be found in Gibson’s short story “Burning Chrome.” One of the main characters in the story is Rikki Wildside, and a close textual scrutiny of the lyrics of Reed’s song “Walk on the Wild Side” demonstrate the influence of Reed’s work on Gibson. Also, as with the Velvet Underground song “Venus in Furs” discussed earlier, it shows the echoes and signifiers do not manifest themselves so much in the music itself as in the words of the songs and their associations.

“Burning Chrome”

A pivotal character in Gibson’s short story “Burning Chrome” (1982) is named Rikki Wildside, an accomplice of two hustlers who plan to “burn” the House of Blue Lights, a brothel presided over by Chrome, “as ugly a customer as the street ever

produced, but she didn't belong to the street anymore" (180), to hack into Chrome's account and reroute the money to their own in Zurich. One of the hackers is Bobby, a computer cowboy, the "thin, pale dude with the dark glasses," 28 years old, "rustling data and credit in the crowded matrix" and his partner (the narrator of the story) is Automatic Jack, who has a prosthetic arm.

When Rikki showed up Bobby was fading fast. He needed that one big score. He doesn't know any other kind of life "and all his clocks were set for hustler's time" and women "emblems, sigils on the map of his hustler's life, navigating beacons he could follow through a sea of bars and neon." The object of his fascination, Rikki becomes "a symbol for everything he (Bobby) wanted and couldn't have" (176). To Rikki he explains "the wild side, the tricky wiring on the dark underside of things" (175).

Rikki has eyes "somewhere between dark amber and French coffee" and wears tight black jeans "rolled to midcalf and a narrow plastic belt that matched the sandals." When her nylon bag opens, it spills "clothes and make-up, a pair of bright red cowboy boots, audio cassettes, glossy Japanese magazines about simstim stars." What does Rikki Wildside want most in the world? Blue Zeiss Ikon eye implants from Chiba City. It transpires that she earned the money for the eye implants working in the House of Blue Lights, where prostitutes are put into REM sleep during work.

Rikki is associated with not only the "wild side" but also (techno)fetishism. The story depicts an unsettling seduction scene in the loft one afternoon played out between Jack and Rikki (while Bobby is away on business) and centered on Jack's prosthetic arm. At the conclusion of the story, Rikki is on her way to Chiba City, buying in to the Oriental fantasy sparked by the desire for technologically advanced eyes. Jack "sees" her when he's trying to sleep "somewhere out on the edge of all this sprawl of cities and smoke ... brown hair streaked with blond" (174). It's hard to gauge exactly what Rikki is (boy or girl), her nails "lacquered black, not pointed, but in tapered oblongs" (177) sitting in a café wearing "huge black shades. Like Linda Lee in *Neuromancer*, Rikki signposts a

pop song.¹⁴ But perhaps Reed's song, "Walk on the Wild Side," offers more substantial clues about Rikki Wildside.

I have noted the countercultural sixties was the locus of William Gibson's earliest formative experiences, whereby everything he drew on in the sense of "street realism" comes from that period, when he had "direct interface" (Calcutt). It is this body of work associated with the "mythical street" that informs cyberpunk, a fascination with life on the streets played out in the context of rock music culture, the "wild side" of Reed's oeuvre. This mythical street also has been a staple of certain kinds of fiction, such as Nelson Algren's *A Walk on the Wild Side* (Perdido Street in New Orleans). As well, the Beat Generation writers, notably Jack Kerouac's *Tristessa* (Orizaba Street, in Mexico City, with its "crazy Saturday night drizzle streets like Hong Kong" (9)).¹⁵ Cyberpunk in its depictions of hustlers and urban street culture generally took possession of these available descriptions, I would maintain, through rock music lyrics.

The characters who inhabit Reed's lyrics resemble the bohemian and often anathematized types who were cast for the movies of Andy Warhol. Reed's most famous song is "Walk on the Wild Side" from the *Transformer* album, produced by David Bowie and released in 1972. Each verse of the song "Walk on the Wild Side" introduces a different character, for example Candy Darling, and the hustler Joe Dallesandro ("Little Joe"), characters who are a familiar part of street culture, the "wildside" figures that cyberpunk draws upon: the speedfreak, the transvestite, and the hustler.

Midnight Cowboys (Hustlers)

The definition of the hustler in American English, to "hustle," is: (i) to sell or obtain things especially unofficially or illegally; (ii) to work as a prostitute. In Nelson Algren's novel, the hustler is primarily the term used for a female prostitute. The

¹⁴ Rikki might be considered a forerunner of Linda Lee. Gibson notes in the interview with McCaffery that "Burning Chrome" was written before *Neuromancer*: "I had Molly in 'Johnny Mnemonic'; I had an environment in 'Burning Chrome.' So I decided I'd try and put these things together" (*Storming* 268). The unusual spelling refers us first to Steely Dan's "Rikki Don't Lose That Number." The "character" of this song has been open to various "sex-and-drugs" interpretations, namely a (boy) prostitute and the line "Rikki don't lose that number" (a reference to drugs). Other candidates from the 1970s are Rikki Sylvan (Nicholas Condron) of the goth band Rikki and The Last Days on Earth, and Rikki Nadir, the alter ego of Peter Hammill of Van der Graaf Generator.

¹⁵ In fact Kerouac's long poem "Mexico City Blues" may be a precursor for Gibson's "Chiba City Blues" the title of the first part of *Neuromancer*.

Dictionary of Slang notes that in the late nineteenth century it meant to work hard (selling goods). In the 1950s it came to mean to attempt to obtain drug customers, and in the 1960s, to offer a sale of drugs to someone. From the 1920s it has meant a prostitute of either sex; then a male prostitute. In a recent ethnography of the life trajectories of teenage and adult criminals (“hustlers”), “the hustlers ... are the drug dealers, the cocaine and heroin addicts, the street-corner alcoholics, the gang boys, the burglars, the violent men, the beggars and thieves, the flesh-and-blood street criminals who plague cities and crowd American prisons” (Fleisher 4).

The figure of the hustler interrelates with a number of cultural practices and it is necessary to consider this genealogy further. An early prototype for the figure is the poolroom hustler.¹⁶ The type began to appear in the 1890s around urban areas such as Chicago, Detroit and other cities, and was stigmatized to a certain extent. It can be noted that cyberpunk collapses the distinction between the two: the hustler Case in *Neuromancer* is a drug dealer and user at the same time as he, like Bobby in “Burning Chrome,” can take pride in his skill on computers.

Hustling differs from organized crime: basically, it is supplementing your income by living on your wits through knowing how to raise money without working formally; in Algren’s memorable phrasing, “trying to make an honest dollar in a crooked sort of way.” It “exists of the blind side of the law” (Hall et al. 352) and ranges from working the numbers (an illegal lottery) to selling stolen goods, prostitution and drug dealing. Stuart Hall further notes: “They are obliged to move around from one terrain to another ... hustlers are also the people who always know somebody, who can get things done, have access to scarce goods, who can ‘deal’ and service the less-respectable ‘needs’ of the respectable end of ... society ... they work the system; they also make it work” (352).

Hustling was made famous in the film *Midnight Cowboy* which made its appearance in the early 70s and included a segment shot in Warhol’s Factory. The film was duly dissed by the Warhol fraternity, rightly pointing out that they had been making films about “real” hustlers since the mid-sixties. Yet *Midnight Cowboy* is a watershed movie. It’s a Hollywood fiction, but there is one interesting aspect to the film, the role of

¹⁶ See Polsky, *Hustlers, Beats and Others* 43. The term ‘hustler’ for such a person and ‘hustling’ for his occupation has been in poolroom argot for decades, antedating their application to prostitute.

the “hustler.” Previously the hustler had been typified by Paul Newman’s pool player, but after *Midnight Cowboy* this hustler or “cowboy” sells his body as trade, and marks out an urban geography where the sex and drug markets overlap.

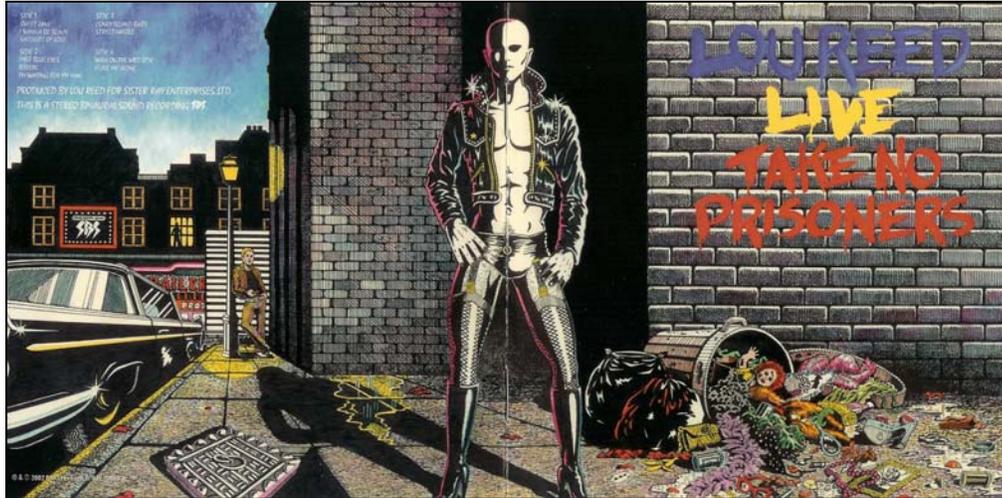


Fig 4. The cover of Lou Reed’s *Take No Prisoners* (1978)

The cover of Reed’s *Take No Prisoners* (according to one observer, marketed to S&M enthusiasts or punk rockers, or both) depicts a street scene with three figures in perspective that chart the evolution (and transformation) of the street hustler into the 1970s. In the background (far left) a figure stands at the window in silhouette. In the middle foreground (left) there is a blond haired “Midnight Cowboy” style hustler, leaning against a street lamp, harking back to the late sixties and early seventies, made famous in the film of that name. Centerstage on a garbage-strewn street (at dawn or dusk) is the more menacing late seventies version: black leather studded jacket, bare-chested, fishnet stockings and suspender belt, punkish, shaven-headed, shiny black leather high-heel boots. This urban hustler seems almost otherworldly, and even somewhat cyborgian.

Console Cowboys (Hackers)

Of course the main characters in cyberpunk narratives are also hackers, the “console cowboys.” According to Douglas Thomas, popular culture did not let the hacker phenomenon go unnoticed. In the early 1980s a new genre of science fiction literature emerged that began to color hacker ethos. Particularly the work of William Gibson and

cyberpunk fiction would give hackers a set of heroes (or antiheroes) to emulate. The world of cyberpunk portrayed a high-tech outlaw culture, where the rules were made up by those on the frontier – not by bureaucrats. It was “a digital world, where the only factor that mattered was how smart and talented you were” (xii).

Gibson’s *Neuromancer* can be read as a hacker narrative, which tells the story of Case (a street hustler dealing in drugs, not sex) as a computer hacker, who, after stealing from his employer, was neurologically damaged as a form of punishment or payback, damage that made his body no longer capable of interfacing with the computer matrix. As Thomas notes in his book on the topic, *Hacker Culture*, “the elimination of the technological is the greatest threat the hacker faces, and, not unlike Case’s employers, judges are fond of proscribing penalties for hackers that include forbidding them to access technology” (190).

The term “hacker” is highly contested, meaning different things to different generations.¹⁷ However, with the publication of books and films on hacker exploits, the image of the hacker became “inextricably linked to criminality” (xiv). The current image of the hacker blends high-tech wizardry and criminality.

Thomas points out “the hacker demographic is composed primarily (but not exclusively) of white suburban boys” (xiii). Thus the “typical” hacker is “a white, suburban, middle-class boy, most likely in high school ... self motivated, technologically proficient, and easily bored” (ix). This is in accord with Andrew Ross’s formulation: the “resexing of the neutered hacker in the form of the high-tech hipster who figures as the hard-boiled protagonist in many cyberpunk narratives.” Ross in *Strange Weather* identifies cyberpunk’s link with “hacker mythology” as “white, masculine, and middle class” which adds up to romanticized computer hackers: “splicing the glamorous, adventurist culture of the high-tech console cowboy with the atmospheric ethic of the alienated street dick whose natural habitat was exclusively concrete and neon.”

In this chapter, I have tried to show that the “hard-boiled” protagonist as “alienated street dick” is only part of the romanticisation process. As I began this chapter

¹⁷ A definition of hacker from the 1970s is an enthusiast for programming or using computers as an end in itself; in the 1980s, it refers to one who uses their skill with computers to try to gain unauthorized access to computer systems. One distinction used is “new school” hackers of the 1980s and 1990, the era of the personal computer, and teenagers, and “old-school” hackers: computer programmers from the 1950s and 1960s who entered the popular imagination not as hackers but as “computer geniuses” or “nerds.”

with Wolmark's point, that cyberpunk's street-wise heroes, strongly inscribed with the masculine, are drawn from the high-tech environment of hackers and rock music, the "rock and roll demimonde."

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to show that the "hard-boiled" protagonist as "alienated street dick" is only part of the romanticisation process. The "central heroic iconography" in cyberpunk is the urban cowboy, as Nixon reminds us, a figure that is itself "realized so strongly in Reaganite cowboyism" (142). It could be argued that the urban cowboy becomes a subcultural commentary on and subversion of the Reaganite cowboy. The active involvement of cyberpunk in the erosion of cultural boundaries has generated an assumption that it also constitutes a radical response to the political conservatism of the 1980s by "providing a language and metaphorical framework that will encourage the streets to speak." The street in cyberpunk is often posed not only as a site of the real but as an avenue of real knowledge and communication, in contrast to official information and its channels. In *Johnny Mnemonic*, the street plays a role in spreading knowledge that confronts systems of power. The streets are populated by those who have been oppressed, exploited, infected, and abandoned by the corporate technocrats who control the mediation of information from the security of their towering office/hotel complexes. The corporations are opposed by the LoTeks, a resistance movement risen from the streets: hackers, data pirates, guerrilla fighters in the info-wars.

The heralding of cyberpunk as a kind of avant-garde "movement" with its own manifesto has emphasized the implicitly radical sounding overtones of cyberpunk, which are based on "an appropriation of the language of dissent contained in the street-wise posture and vocabulary of both punk and rock and roll" (Wolmark 111). The radicalism of cyberpunk does not lie in the unmediated expression of political dissent but in its capacity to render with considerable precision "the sensuous surface detail of contemporary postmodern and post-industrial culture, through what Gibson calls the 'superspecificity' of the text" (Wolmark 112).

In this chapter I have examined in detail the musical (the ways in which music conveys meaning and can be analysed as a textual form) and visual elements of rock

music in relation to cyberpunk. These associations (the street-wise vocabulary of rock music) were then taken up by the cyberpunk fiction movement as key images and signifiers in their writing. Moreover, the punk rock side of cyberpunk, as I have argued, is entangled with orientalist discourse (“Venus in Furs,” “Hong Kong Garden,” “China Girl”), and post World War II Japan as a signifier of new versions of “otherness.”

In considering the topics of globalization and the transmission of music, I have referred to a number of patterns and concepts, such as cultural exchange, cultural imperialism, and transculture. The effects of these processes may be leading towards the creation of what Appadurai has called “mediascapes,” which tend to be:

image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality, and what they offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of elements (such as characters, plots, and textual forms) out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places. (35)

Thus it may be that we are witnessing the creation and expansion of mediascapes made up of a variety of elements which are used in alternative ways in different places by particular groups of people. Furthermore, such mediascapes would not be the product of one group or controlling organization, but involve complex negotiations and struggles around the placing together of different elements. The mediascape is like a landscape, in that it can be seen in different ways from alternative perspectives and is relatively open to different uses.

The two chapters that follow are generally concerned with such mediascapes, and the impact of technological developments, in particular the increasingly fragmented visual and virtual cultures of young people. Staying with the example of music from this chapter, it can be said the Walkman “fashion[s] a new sonorous space” (Jameson) around the listener, engendering new kinds of relationships between music and the consumer. Chow finds the Walkman influential in the strategy of “listening otherwise” which brings portability to the fore. It thus exemplifies how (young) people create their own cultures distinct from, embedded in, or in opposition to, the dominant cultures.

Chapter Four: Cyberpunk and the Prosthetic

I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives ...

(T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*)

With the signs of cybernetic systems all around, most of us can claim to be “in some way already ’borged through immunizations, interfaces, or prosthetics” (Gray *Cyborg Citizen 2*). The main focus of this chapter is the usage and implications of prosthetics in cyberpunk fiction, how the trope of the prosthetic is deployed as a way to figure increasingly complex human-technology relationships and interfaces. Taking into account the features of postmodern orientalism which have been identified so far, binaries and East-West distinctions are problematized to a certain extent by the notion of prostheticization.

It is not possible to explore this topic further without some investigation of the cyborg (“cybernetic organism”) which, as we now understand it, owes much to the groundbreaking insights put forward by Donna Haraway in the influential “A Manifesto for Cyborgs” (1985) jolting many out of their categorical certainties as it shifted the terrain of the debate about culture and identity in the late twentieth century.¹ Much has been written in response to and based on Haraway’s celebrated definitions and implications of the cyborg, set out in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*, the emergence of a “hybrid creature, composed of organism and machine ... compounded of special kinds of machines and ... organisms appropriate to the late twentieth century” (1).

Haraway situates the cyborg within the context of postmodern technoscience, especially biology, in which “comforting” modernist dualisms, such as organism versus machine, reality versus representation, self versus other, subject versus object, culture versus nature, are broken down. These breakdowns have implications for epistemology as well as ontology (and signification). Boundaries are not pre-defined, but “naturalize in social interaction,” that is, a specific and contingent set of interactions. Haraway’s perspective “stresses contingency and hybridity in the outcomes of networks” (Sofoulis

¹ The Cyborg Manifesto was first published in the journal *Socialist Review* in 1985. A definitive version appeared in the edited collection *Simians, Cyborgs and Women* (1991) under the title “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century.”

88). The distinctions and frameworks are still required reading for exploring postmodern and multiethnic themes. Above all, as Haraway notes, “postmodernist strategies, like my cyborg myth, subvert organic wholes ... the poem, the primitive culture, the biological organism” (152).

The figuration of these boundaries and breakdowns are of course an integral part of the cyberpunk project. Contemporary science fiction is full of cyborgs, “creatures simultaneously animal and machine, who populate worlds ambiguously natural and crafted” (149). Adding to the impact of Haraway’s *Cyborg Manifesto* was the growing popularity of cyberpunk. In the year before the *Manifesto*’s publication, Gibson had made a clean sweep of all the major awards with his novel *Neuromancer*, a work which explored “various states of cyborg being” (Sofoulis 97). Zoe Sofoulis finds the visions of Gibson and Haraway are already compatible through their “shared history of female-authored speculative fictions about biotechnologies and virtual worlds ... together with the real-world experiences of digital technologies, the Internet, and cyberspace expanding into education, workplaces, home, and the arts” (Sofoulis 98). Coming in conjunction with cyberpunk fiction and the personal computer revolution, the *Manifesto* was well placed to give some focus to “expressions of hope and fear about the emergent technoworlds” (Sofoulis 100).

In order to sound out the main themes, I will begin by looking at Haraway’s influential cyborg and the key premises: cyborg boundaries, “fractured identities,” the “informatics of domination,” and the notion of “women in the integrated circuit.” The “fusing” of the organic and technological, and the notion of cyborg boundaries and breakdowns (following Haraway) can be enumerated as follows: human and animal; animal-human (organism) and machine; and physical and non-physical. These categorizations are also highly relevant to opening up a discussion on prosthetics.

The first part of this chapter then looks at these cyborg boundaries in relation to the human-animal paradigm and occurrence of prosthetic devices in a number of illustrative examples. The first chosen example would not seem to be directly concerned with cyberpunk, Nicolas Roeg’s cult film, *The Man Who Fell to Earth* (1976), an adaptation of a novel by Walter Tevis. In my opinion this is an overlooked film as far as the cyberpunk canon is concerned (which tends to begin and end with *Blade Runner* in

the 1980s) and in the light of the findings of the previous chapter, the importance of rock music culture.

The film, ostensibly belonging to the science fiction genre, also departs from formulaic SF in various ways, and features David Bowie, who portrays an alien marooned on earth. In a key scene Bowie *performs* prosthesis (removing the plastic membranes from his eyes) to reveal his “alienness.” It also marks a boundary between human and animal. For his part, Bowie brings to the film a certain otherworldliness, and an ongoing fascination with Japan, appealing to a wider popular culture audience. Some further examples from cyberpunk (Automatic Jack and his myoelectric arm, Hiro in “Hinterlands,” and of course Johnny Mnemonic) show how prosthetic devices function in terms of the human/machine dichotomy in cyberpunk.

From a consideration of this scene, I am then able to contextualize and develop these examples in relation to prosthetic thinking, identifying two conceptual streams: evolution-by-prosthesis, and the body-machine model. These different sides of the debate are exemplified by two performance artists who have been closely linked with cyberpunk, Stelarc and Mark Pauline, showing tendencies towards utopian or dystopian frameworks, respectively. This first section concludes by accounting for Gibson and his engagement with “techno-Japan” and how Japan fits within this paradigm.

The second part of this chapter, taking a seemingly more ominous turn, is more concerned with what Haraway considers the world-wide “informatics of domination,” in which the cyborg is “the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism” (151). Gray finds that the main argument for regarding the postmodern condition as technoscientific rests on modernism, exemplified by modern warfare, and its postmodern development, the cyborg warrior.² He highlights two characteristics of postmodern war: first, a new level of integration between human-machine systems (soldiers and their weapons), and second, the rise of modern war “corresponds with the rise of the modern state and modern science, as well as the spread of Western colonial systems throughout

² See Chris Hables Gray, *Cyborg Citizen: Politics in the Posthuman Age*. Gray distinguishes between modernism and postmodernism as follows: the former label applies to “grand narratives that are either irrational (racism, nationalism, high art) or hyperrational (technoscientific progress)” (14). The elements ascribed to postmodernism are “a proliferation of different, even contradictory, factors (bricolage); a collapse of a universal belief in single explanatory systems and ideas (the end of grand narratives); and a recognition of the centrality of information and its subcategories (simulation, computerization)” (56). Gray argues that “war has kept many of its modern elements and so it is postmodern” (14).

the world” (56). It has further been suggested that “the evolution from hunter to cyborg in American myth is essentially the same as the progress from modernism to postmodernism in western philosophy” (Rushing and Frenz 11).

Against a background of war, such cyborgian figures can be understood in association with a particular phase of American Orientalism that marks a shift towards the postmodern paradigm. We recall in Chapter One, Edward Said’s hope that the recent Japanese, Korean, and Indochinese “adventures” of the American military in the twentieth century would create “a more sober, more realistic ‘Oriental’ awareness” (Said 2) among Americans, or even, as Chomsky stressed, produce “signs of awakening to the horrifying reality” (4) of the awesome destructive power of American technology, as well as to the ongoing militarization of American society. I have noted how cyberpunk exhibits important links with all three conflicts, to varying degrees (references to the Pacific War and Japan occur in Gibson’s fiction, notably “Johnny Mnemonic”). Thus I am concerned with occurrences of some related aspects of modern warfare in cyberpunk, and the orientalized figures of cyberpunk warriors such as “ninja assassins” and “street samurai.” Importantly, as Haraway emphasizes, “high-technology visualization technologies” such as computer-aided graphics, artificial intelligence software, and many kinds of scanning systems are critical to “the material means of conducting postmodern war” (*Simians* 225). In “military cultures, strategic planners draw directly from and contribute to video game practices and science fiction” (254).

The Yakuza Assassin, appears in both the short story and the film *Johnny Mnemonic*. An amalgamation of hybrid parts and prosthetic contraptions, this “killing machine” is marked by race, and thus not quite fully masculinized in “his” role as a kind of stealthy Asian Terminator. Oscillations around gender are further exemplified by the character of Molly in *Neuromancer*, a “street samurai.” These kinds of composite figures of “cross-ethnic representation” which exhibit new levels of integration between body and machine complicate even the notion of “cyborg hybridity” which is still to some extent predicated on a sense of organic wholeness and purity. Moreover these characters fetishize weaponry (the Yakuza Assassin’s prosthetic tip, Molly Million’s razorblade fingernails).

In the third section of this chapter, I take up another specific example of prosthetics in cyberpunk, the exoskeleton-wearing Lise in Gibson's "The Winter Market," a short story with "a sequence of conceptual collisions that constitute one of the more insightful explorations of Western technology and Western culture that the cyberpunk movement has had to offer" (Hicks 77). Besides its pertinence as to whether "embodiment ... is generally gender-coded in the paradigm texts of cyberpunk" (Foster 209), a close reading of this text raises another question: in a "technologically deconstructed body, where is gender located" (Balsamo 223); what happens to gender identity? In Gibson's short story, Lise is depicted by way of a lexical item "borrowed" from the Japanese language: *gomi*. This Japanese term, which generally means "garbage," brokers important (metaphorical and metonymic) links in the story between Lise, the prosthesis, and her becoming something that is "other." It can be characterized as orientalized postmodernism, the excess of garbage figured in the trope of *gomi* and personified.

Technological development has been conveyed not only through the power of weapons, but by the elaboration and intersection of technological systems throughout every aspect of social life. In the final section of this chapter, I consider the "virtual idol" or *idoru*, another Japanese term embedded in Gibson's text, which poses a challenge to the very notion of organic wholeness, with the construction of an entity that cannot be readily understood in relation to the sum of its parts (prosthetic or otherwise), already more "real" than real, already animated. A simulation in Jean Baudrillard's terminology, it moves the discussion beyond the concept of replacement and/or augmentation. Yet it is underpinned by social markers, gender and race – the "idol singers" of Japan – and thus underlines another aspect of international gendered and ethnic divisions of labour in the globalized economy made possible by new technologies. Lisa Nakamura has observed that chat-space participants who take on identities such as "samurai" and "geisha" constitutes the "darker side of postmodern identity," because the "fluid selves" they create are based on the most repressive racial and gender stereotypes through "cyberprostheses" (xv). If it can be said that there are clearly articulated racial stereotypes (rather than "representations") in dystopian works like "Johnny Mnemonic," can the same view be held for later (utopian) works like *Idoru*?

Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto

Before going any further with the prosthetic it would be useful to review some of Haraway's key insights on the cyborg. Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* is divided into five parts. The first section, "An Ironic Dream of a Common Language for Women in the Integrated Circuit" considers the various types of boundary breakdowns which give rise to the hybrid and ambiguous figure of the cyborg. Haraway notes that, by the late twentieth century in United States scientific culture, the boundary between human and animal has been thoroughly breached and "many people no longer feel the need for such a separation" (152). The cyborg "appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed" (152). The second distinction is between organism and machine. Late twentieth century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, "self-developing and externally designed," and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Another ideological space opened up by reconceptions of the machine and organism as "coded texts through which we engage in the play of writing and reading the world" is textualization. The transcendent authorization of interpretation is lost, but that doesn't mean there aren't alternatives. The third distinction concerns the boundary between the physical and non-physical. Overall, "organisms have ceased to exist as objects of knowledge, giving way to biotic components, i.e. special kinds of information-processing devices" (164).

The next section, "Fractured Identities," is concerned with cyborgs in terms of feminist theory, including the question of identities in multi-ethnic communities where essentialisms don't seem to work. Haraway cites the work of Chela Sandoval and her theory of "oppositional consciousness" which constructs a kind of "postmodernist identity out of otherness, difference, and specificity" (155) and is about "contradictory locations and heterochronic calendars, not about relativisms and pluralisms" (155-56). Sandoval's argument emerges out of the world-wide development of anti-colonialist discourse. As orientalism is "deconstructed politically and semiotically, the identities of the occident destabilize" (156). There is, in my view, a problematic aspect of this discussion, which contrasts First- and Third-world positions in terms of oppositional and

differential “fragmented and destabilized identities” which, for the purposes of this thesis, do not allow for a full contingency and reciprocity particularly with respect to Japan, which falls outside this categorization (Japan is not Third World) yet somehow locates itself inside an imperialist paradigm (the presence of American military bases).

The third section of the Cyborg Manifesto, “The Informatics of Domination,” looks more closely at the context in which cyborgs emerge, and includes a celebrated list of paired terms which contrasts key terms from modernity (and “white capitalist patriarchy”) with contemporary forms of technoscience. We are now in an emerging system of world order built of new networks. The new world order brings new dominations (and with it new resistances, as in the notion of an “oppositional consciousness”).

The last two sections of the Cyborg Manifesto examine the complexities of international gendered and ethnic divisions of labor in globalized economy under the title ‘Women in the Integrated Circuit.’ The actual situation of women is their integration/exploitation into a world system of production/reproduction and communication. The final section concludes with an exploration of cyborgs and other hybrid states in feminist science fiction and writings of US women of color.

The Trope of the Prosthetic

We live in a prosthetic culture, announces Gibson in the documentary film, *No Maps for These Territories* (2001). Recently the term “prosthetic” has become ubiquitous, perhaps as now the cyborg has become somewhat tired from academic overuse. This is less in its ordinary usage, as a specific material replacement of a missing limb or body part, than as “a sexy, new metaphor” that has become “tropical currency for describing a vague and shifting constellation of relationships among bodies, technologies, and subjectivities” (Sobchack *Carnal* 207). This is not to suggest at the outset the two terms, “cyborg” and “prosthesis” are readily interchangeable; the former implies “a self-regulating organism that combines the natural and artificial together in one system” (Gray 2), the latter a replacement or addition to an entity recognized as an organic whole, although where the prosthesis begins and ends is becoming more and

more difficult to delineate.³ Furthermore, as Gray points out, in many ways “the use of prostheses is a search for wholeness not of the human but of the system” (74).

Generally, the “cyborg” is a critical metaphor for the disappearance of the unified, organic human body into ever more complex relations with technology: silicon chip implants, prosthetic devices, and the modification of neural chemistry. Perhaps it can be said the trope of the prosthetic has been used extensively in recent theory as a way to further understand and interrogate these increasingly complex human-technology relationships and interfaces.⁴ Yet, critiquing an issue of *Cultural Anthropology*, whereby prosthetics is employed to “mediate a whole series of those binaries we know we need to think beyond” such as “self/other, body/technology ... first world/third world, normal/disabled, global/local, male/female, West/East” (Nelson, qtd. in Sobchack 208), Sobchack finds this is a “tall order” for a metaphor to fill (208).

Haraway has found that modern medicine is “full of cyborgs, of couplings between organism and machine, each conceived as coded devices, in an intimacy and with a power that was not generated in the history of sexuality” (150). How does the current fixation with prosthetic devices accord with prosthetics in practice generally? Gray has provided a tour of the human body from the head to the toes which shows how “prosthetic medicine” can reengineer humans.⁵ By the 1990s “powered prostheses” (self-powered cybernetic limbs) had become more effective. Sensors on or in muscles can pick up electromyographic signals and convert them to specific commands for the powered prosthesis. Gray makes the point that unlike artificial organs which try to “restore the natural organ functions to a level that permits the patient’s survival, new interfaces and

³ It should be noted that Gray offers a fairly broad definition of cyborg: “If you have been technologically modified in any significant way, from an implanted pacemaker to a vaccination that reprogrammed your immune system, then you are definitely a cyborg” (2). He further adds, that even if not in the technical sense, cyborg issues still impact you. Thus I would note that the demarcations between prosthesis and cyborg are unstable.

⁴ For a succinct definition of the term “prosthesis,” see Sarah S. Jain, “The Prosthetic Imagination: Enabling and Disabling the Prosthetic Trope” 32. Recent application of the trope is wide and varied. Sobchack provides a list which includes, for example, “prosthetic memory,” “prosthetic consciousness,” “prosthetic territories” (207-8) and there are a number of related combinations, such as “technology-as-prosthesis.” Also “writing as prosthesis” (McHale), “technology as prosthesis” and “cyberpunk as prosthesis” (Latham).

⁵ Gray’s tour begins with the head, the most advanced artificial implants are used for the ears to pick up sound waves. Concerning the eyes, researchers hope that work on artificial eyes will result in tiny cameras that supply visual information. One of the major sites for biomechanical interventions is the artificial heart, followed by artificial kidneys and livers. Moving further down the body there are literally millions of artificial joints implanted in hips, knees, ankles, elbows, and wrists.

prosthetic technologies have the potential for enhancing human abilities, not just restoring them” (75).

Generally, cyberpunk’s prostheses parallel these developments in prosthetic medicine, conforming in many respects to the contours and features of the organic body: eyes, arms, heads, even ears. In Gibson’s story “Hinterlands,” which takes as its theme the body’s penetration by technology, the protagonist Toby is so used to hearing the voice of his boss through a mechanical “bonephone implant” that he becomes somewhat unhinged when he hears his real voice: “It was strange to hear him acoustically, not as bone vibration from the implant.” This strangeness is given an added twist in that the name of Toby’s boss is Hiro, a Japanese name. Later in the story, “Hiro and I meld into something else, something we can never admit to each other” (73).

For cyberpunk writers, both literal and metaphorical uses of the prosthetic have long been favored. The very first page of *Neuromancer* features Ratz, his “prosthetic arm jerking monotonously” exhibiting a “Russian military prosthesis, a seven-function force-feedback manipulator, cased in grubby pink plastic” (9). As Sterling notes, a number of themes occur repeatedly in cyberpunk: “the theme of body invasion: prosthetic limbs, implanted circuitry, cosmetic surgery, genetic alteration,” and an even more powerful theme, “mind invasion: brain-computer interfaces, artificial intelligence, neurochemistry”; these are techniques radically redefining the nature of humanity, the nature of the self. Sterling asserts that for cyberpunks, technology must be “visceral” and “pervasive, utterly intimate. Not outside us, but next to us. Under our skin; often, inside our minds” (*Mirrorshades* xi). Thus in cyberpunk we find a proliferation of prosthetic arms, replacement eyes, exoskeletons and the like, prosthetic implants of varying degrees of sophistication, in tandem with radical hormone therapies, rejuvenation and cloning procedures, all of which can be both destabilizing to or reconstitutive of subjectivities and identities.

Although there are numerous examples of these kinds of prostheses in cyberpunk, however certain sites are privileged. In particular, arms – Automatic Jack and his “myoelectric arm” in the short story “Burning Chrome” springs to mind. This may be because “simple mechanical operations provide the most immediate figure for understanding prosthesis” (Wills 51). Other typical examples in cyberpunk are the

bartender in the film version of *Johnny Mnemonic* who has a “skeletal prosthetic forearm ending in namesake hooked pincers” (Script 40). Molly has retractable blades (razor nails) or claws in her fingers. A more perverse rendering is to be found in the Yakuza assassin in the short story “Johnny Mnemonic”: grown in a vat in Chiba City, he has had part of his thumb amputated and replaced with a “prosthetic tip” (6) which in turn conceals a deadly weapon.

Another prosthetic site favored by cyberpunks is eyes, a “fetishized commodity” (Lee 195). Molly Millions has mirrored glasses which were “surgical inlays” that sealed her eyes in their sockets; Rikki Wildside’s desire is for “Zeiss Ikon” eyes, a sought after commodity which can be procured from Chiba City, Japan (the place where radical surgeries are performed). Likewise, the blue eyes of Josef Virek were “inhumanly perfect optical instruments, grown in a vat in Japan” (*Count Zero*). Elsewhere there is an abundance of heavy sunglasses over “plastic eyes,” “antique eyes,” and the prosthesis in Tom Maddox’s story “Snake Eyes.” Other cyberpunk writers also feature eyes: the “visual mechanisms” in Bruce Sterling’s *Crystal Express*, which had been “thoroughly miniaturized by Mechanist prostheticians” (104) and other devices wired directly to the optic nerve.

Japan often features as the origin of these high-tech prosthetic products and implementation procedures. Chiba City is the location of implants, nerve-splicing and microbionics. Technological progress has been accompanied by “an ever stronger tendency towards the miniaturization of technical objects. The emphasis on miniaturized mechanisms also parallels what is commonly believed to be another “typically Japanese” achievement, miniaturization, which it has been noted “like their people and their Bonsai trees” is “widely believed to be a Japanese characteristic.”

An even more radical kind of prosthetic implant can be found in Gibson’s short story “Johnny Mnemonic.” Johnny has been “transformed by surgical means” to the extent that his head contains ““wet-wired brain implants’ into which he can upload directly through a cranial jack” (Springer 206). The term wet-wired has its links to “wetware,” which is cyberpunk slang for human beings and other animals (as opposed to computer “hardware” and “software”). What are these brain implants and what do they consist of? In the film script, three components are mentioned: “Silicon implants. Neural

overlays. Memory augmentation” (82). Silicon suggests something non-organic is being implanted in order to replace an organic part or extend its capacity, an augmentation in the positive sense. Thus the silicon chip implanted in Johnny Mnemonic’s head allows for increased information storage, thereby enhancing his work as a “mnemonic courier,” an elite agent who smuggles data on a global scale. Huge multinational corporations have taken over world rule and control the data networks and data smuggling is a subversive offence. But in order to carry data Johnny has forfeited some of his memory and cannot remember his childhood. The courier’s own interests are at stake: with the money he earns running these errands he wants to buy back his childhood memories. In this sense, the prosthesis functions as a kind of replacement.

The film version of *Johnny Mnemonic* allows the audience to “see” what the short story is unable to provide: a visual (albeit cinematic) rendition of this prosthetic device in operation. Seeing this device in action for the first time, we realize that Johnny is a partially cybernetic person, for “when fictional characters load software directly into their electronically wired brains, they also qualify as cyborgs” (Springer 20). The scene takes place in an elevator of a grand and opulent hotel in the “futuristic and bustling Beijing” (22), a contrast in the film to Newark. In the original short story, the setting is Nighttown, a prototype for Chiba City (Night City) in *Neuromancer*. The visual/special effect involves a “doubler” about the size of a deck of cards, made of transparent green plastic with gold circuitry embedded inside, with an LCD display at one end, and a short extension with a jack at the other. The insertion of a “probe tip” in the script is described thus in Gibson’s screenplay:

The Pemex doubler is narrow, flat, has a DIGITAL COUNTER DISPLAY on its side. He peels back his hair, exposing JACK behind his ear. Inserts PROBE TIP of doubler, causing a slight involuntary spasm. Numbers DECREASE on counter as elevator floor-numbers INCREASE. He’s relieved when it’s done, disposes of used doubler, composes himself. (9)

In Bisson’s novelisation of the film, it is a “male phone jack” and Johnny pushes back his hair over his left ear, exposing a small, surgically implanted “female phone

jack.” A “short sharp spasm of pleasure – or was it pain?” followed, and “turned his consciousness inward” (14). At the technological interface with the body, it is the prosthetic device itself which inaugurates and demarcates a distinction between organic and inorganic; and second, the technological properties of the prosthesis, its capacity to function ambiguously as both an instrument of augmentation (increased data load) and replacement (limited storage capacity) are brought into focus.

Revising Prosthesis

Vivian Sobchack, who has a prosthetic left leg, and counts herself among those who “actually [use] prostheses without feeling ‘posthuman’” (208) offers a critique from the standpoint of her own experience. Sobchack insists that it is not her aim to privilege autobiographical experience from the standpoint of the cultural other who has a real prosthesis as somehow more authentic than discursive experience, but rather to expand the tropological premises of the prosthetic: “I want both to critique and redress this metaphorical (and ... ethical) displacement of the prosthetic through a return to its premises in lived-body experience,” noting this will not be a direct return since “there is not only an *oppositional tension* but also a *dynamic connection* between *the* prosthetic as a tropological figure and *my* prosthetic as a material but also a phenomenologically lived artifact” (206).

Sobchack’s chapter, “A Leg to Stand On: Prosthetics, Metaphor, and Materiality,” draws on the findings of two other theorists, Steven L. Kurzman and Sarah Jain, and all of whom share a similar view on the need for redress. Sobchack outlines two major reservations with the current theoretical usage of the metaphor. Both are relevant to my discussion, although I will develop them specifically in relation to cyberpunk and within the framework of postmodern orientalism. The first concerns the metaphor of the prosthetic and its technological interface with the body “predicated on a naturalized sense of the body’s previous and privileged ‘wholeness’” (210). This issue of the prosthesis in relation to notions of organic wholeness has also been taken up by David Wills in the context of disability studies. Concerning an “organicist conception of the human body” (38), Wills notes in his discussion of disability and prosthetics that “there never was any organically integral subject; never such an entity that was not already imperfect” (39).

Sarah Jain also notes “(u)ltimately the trope turns on the problem of the ‘wholeness’ of the body and thus cannot but involve the questions of whose bodies are whole and how this wholeness is culturally determined and recognized” (47). Jain’s concern is “how a promising trope that might in some measure account for the technological extension of bodies can also take into account the variety of bodies and the social construction of abilities. Certain bodies – raced, aged, gendered, classed – are often already dubbed as not fully whole” (32). This raises a question particularly relevant to cyberpunk: which bodies are enabled and which are disabled by specific technologies?

Second, Sobchack points out that the theoretical use of the prosthetic metaphor (but I think this applies to cyberpunk fiction as well) tends to “transfer *agency* ... from human actors to human artifacts.” This transfer of agency

indicates a certain technofetishism on the part of the theorist. ... the human beings who use prosthetic technology disappear into the background ... and the prosthetic is seen to have a will and a life of its own. Thus we move from technofetishism to *technoanimism*. (211)

In sum, what Sobchack, Kurzman, and Jain together find problematic about the tropology of the prosthetic, in its attempts to describe “the joining of materials, naturalizations, excorporations, and semiotic transfer” (Jain 32) that go far beyond the medical definition, is its “inaccuracy as a metaphor,” and its tendency to “privilege and essentialize metonymic and oppositional relations that separate body and prosthetic” (215). We have to accept, based on arguments regarding prosthetics I have discussed, that the prosthetic functions vaguely as “an ungrounded and ‘floating signifier’ for a broad and variegated critical discourse on technoculture that includes little of prosthetic realities” (Sobchack). Yet, there is space, in my opinion, to consider “the specific figural differences and consequent relational meanings and functions that the prosthetic discursively serves” as apposite to the discussion of cyberpunk and postmodern orientalism. As Haraway reminds us, the postmodern formation stands “with its ‘anti-aesthetic’ of permanently split, problematized, always receding and deferred ‘objects’ of knowledge and practice, including signs, organisms, systems, selves, and cultures.” Thus

“‘Objectivity’ in a postmodern frame cannot be about unproblematic objects; it must be about specific prosthesis and translation” (*Simians* 248).

1. Popular Prosthetics

The silicon chip inside her head/Got switched to overload

(“I Don’t Like Mondays” The Boomtown Rats)

In this section I intend to consider specific cultural examples of prosthetics in cyberpunk fiction and related works, a David Bowie cult film from the seventies. These examples show prosthetic thinking fits well with many of cyberpunk’s preoccupations, in particular the concepts of “evolution-by-prosthesis” (La Barre), and the body-machine model. The different sides of the debate are exemplified by two performance artists who have been closely linked with cyberpunk, Stelarc and Mark Pauline.

The Man Who Fell to Earth

At the start of Roeg’s film, a plume of water in an American lake announces the fall to Earth of an Icarus-like figure, an alien (played by David Bowie) who has crashlanded here seeking a way to save his drought-stricken home planet. To finance the return trip to the wife and children he had to leave behind, the alien named Thomas Jerome Newton leaves the sagebrush desert for New York, where he founds a prosperous business empire, World Enterprises, by establishing patents on several remarkable inventions based on “alien” technology. World Enterprises becomes a huge multinational corporation. Newton returns to New Mexico, and a sleepy small-town hotel, where he takes up with the room-maid, Mary Lou, who takes on the role of his “human” girlfriend. The remainder of the film, which moves away from the SF premise, charts Newton’s downward trajectory, as he disappears into a haze of alcohol and drug addiction on the realization he will be unable to ever return to his home planet. This decline and fall is given poignance by the fact that the role is played by a “skeletal” David Bowie, a glam rock star also on the verge of self-destruction through drugs at that time.

This cult film of the 1970's exhibits some important aspects of postmodern orientalism. The interest of Roeg's film is that it is science-fictional; as the director notes, it is "a science fiction film without the hardware ... No dials! There are certain SF shots in it, but not done with a great deal of final expertise.... we paid attention to another kind of detail" (qtd. in Pegg 538). Yet it also appeals to a wider popular culture audience, such as rock culture, those who were interested in David Bowie, since this alien is portrayed by a seventies rock music icon. Director Nicholas Roeg was convinced Bowie was right for the alien lead because he was "slightly to one side of pop star" in his use of "disguises and dressing up" and had an "artificial voice" which was "English, but you couldn't tell exactly where from." The character of Newton seemed to Roeg an extension of Bowie (and it could be added that Bowie extended the character of Newton in popular culture). As well, notes Roeg, "I wanted it to have a very real sense of America, although it is certainly not about any one place."

In a key scene, Newton takes to the bathroom and slowly strips off his human façade. This requires removing synthetic earlobes, false nipples and hair attached to a porous sheet, and finally, in front of a mirror, the prosthetic plastic membranes from each of his eyes with a pair of tweezers, which caused anxiety among movie-goers at the time. In the Tevis novel the scene is described thus:

He blinked at himself with the eyes whose irises opened vertically, like a cat's. He stared at himself a long time, and then he began to cry ... tears exactly like a human's tears ... 'Who are you?' he said. 'And where do you belong?' His own body stared back at him; but he could not recognize it as his own. It was alien, and frightening. (98)

In this memorable evocation, the question of identity is framed around the "what is it"/"what am I" conundrum, and focuses on the moment of exchange, a transformation that harks back to animation scenes, such as Frankenstein, in which the audience perceive the first motions of the "creature." Here the prosthetic, recalling Sobchack, is indeed tropological currency for enacting a shifting relationship between body and subjectivity.

Accompanying this is the traumatic recognition that he no longer recognizes his alien form, he has assumed the human. “His own body stared back at him ... It was alien.”

In the novel, this scene is prefaced with an elaborate ritual. He pours some liquid from a bottle into “an empty bowl-shaped ashtray, of Chinese porcelain,” then “dips the fingertips of both his hands into the tray, as if it were a finger bowl. He held them there for a minute, and then took them out and slapped his hands together, hard. The fingernails fell on to the marble table with small, tinkling sounds.”

This thread of orientalism running through the novel (mainly China) is displaced to Japan in the film, where a subtle Oriental subtext has been added and developed in relation to Japanese culture: a kabuki scene in a Japanese restaurant, a lakeside setting with orientalist architectural motifs, and the climactic scene between Newton and his lover, Mary Lou, who is wearing a Japanese kimono. In the novel, Betty Jo is wearing an orange kimono, her hair in a silk babushka” (136). Upon emerging from the bathroom in his “natural,” cat-eyed form, a terrified Mary-Lou at first flees. But they are later reconciled. The displacement of Chinese elements to Japanese in the context of the seventies seems consonant and in tune with Bowie’s encounters that I discussed in the previous chapter, a commodified form of postmodern otherness.

The use of prosthetics (the lenses) enables a transformation to take place, but there is no transfer of agency, in Sobchack’s formulation, to the prosthetic device in and of itself. However it does show “metonymic and oppositional relations that separate body and prosthetic.” As well, although he is now “alien” and recognized as such, through the metaphorical connections with both animals (“like a cat”) and humans (he cries “like a human”), there is still the possibility that this alien is really an advanced form of human, measured on an evolutionary scale. The drought-stricken planet from whence he came is in fact Earth in the not too distant future.

At the end of the film Newton is forced to undergo all manner of clinical tests (X-rays, blood and lymph samples, recordings of brain waves) and even direct samples are extracted.⁶ In the final test, he is unable to get the plastic membranes, those lenses that have given his eyes a more human appearance, off his eyes. Thus he suffers the trauma of

⁶ Says Doctor Martinez in the novel: “God knows we’ve found you interesting. You have a rather far-fetched set of organs” to which Newton replies: “I’m a mutant – a freak” (143).

losing his “alien” eyesight, and thereby removing all hope of returning to his home planet. His humanity is sealed in. But this is no Tiresian seer or prophet, and he slides into a blizzard of alcoholic addiction and deeper levels of estrangement.

In sum, it has been argued that the anxieties surrounding prosthetic technologies (the future) in cyberpunk are quite different to those of earlier science fiction because its concerns are more complex and linked to real, recognizable trends. *The Man Who Fell to Earth* is prescient for cyberpunk in that it tests the boundaries of human-animal and human-other through the centrality of the trope of the prosthesis, in this particular case marking identity as a correlate to technology in a way that begins to move outside the confines of the science fiction genre.

Automatic Jack

There are examples in cyberpunk fiction which, although they concern the metaphor of the prosthetic and its technological interface with the body predicated on a naturalized sense of the body’s previous and privileged “wholeness,” extend or problematize this notion in various ways. For cyberpunk assumes a world in which endless body transformation, and the hybridity of humans and technology, is taken for granted. The silicon cybernetic implant in Johnny’s head allows for radical capabilities of information storage. At the extremity of “molecular sludge,” Josef Virek in *Count Zero* explains: “You must forgive my reliance on technology. I have been confined for over a decade to a vat” (25); the vat he inhabits “a thing like three truck trailers, lashed in a dripping net of support lines” (243) which he inhabits in some hideous industrial suburb in Stockholm. (The vat and his eyes were manufactured in Japan.) In cyberpunk fiction there are also examples whereby the prosthetic tends towards having a will and a life of its own, which, as Sobchack points out, marks the move from technofetishism to technoanimism.

An example of this is Automatic Jack’s “myoelectric arm” in the short story “Burning Chrome.” In one part of the story Jack is working late, his “arm off and the little waldo jacked straight into the stump” (173), when Bobby arrives back at the loft with Rikki Wildside. The term “myoelectric” refers to the electrical properties of muscle tissue from which impulses may be amplified, used especially in the control or operation

of prosthetic devices; a “waldo” is a mechanical agent, such as a gripper arm, controlled by a human limb, originating from a Robert A. Heinlein story, “Waldo.”

Heinlein’s story is a piece of straightforward SF. Waldo Jones is a brilliant, eccentric and wealthy inventor who lives in a private space station in low earth orbit. A disabled genius, he is afflicted with *myasthenia gravis*, a disorder of neuromuscular transmission. Since he lacks muscular strength to do things with his arms and legs, he invents a system of remote-controlled mechanical hands, called “waldoes,” devices that amplify his strength. Waldo puts his hands in, and the machine comes to life. He flexes and extends his fingers gently, and the waldoes follow in exact simultaneous parallelism. Returning to earth, where harmful power transmissions throughout the atmosphere are affecting everyone’s health adversely, Waldo solves the problem by the discovery of an “other world” or parallel universe, at the same time overcoming his disability to become a professional dancer and brain surgeon.

Gibson’s story follows a more perverse line. When Rikki Wildside visits Jack, she again sees him “with those leads clipped to the hard carbon studs that stick out of my stump” (174) but says nothing. Unfazed, she makes no comment as he unclips the waldo, just “watched attentively as I put my arm back on,” which endears her to Jack. On another occasion, she asks Jack what happened to his arm, and he replies it was “the result of a hang-gliding accident, burned off with a laser by a Russian” (175) during the war (unspecified). Most importantly, the exchange between Jack and Rikki is the prelude to a seduction scene when Bobby is away on a business trip, leaving him alone in the loft one afternoon with Rikki: “her hand went down the arm ... to the black anodized elbow joint, out to the wrist ... fingers spreading to lock over mine, her palm against the perforated Duralumin. Her other palm came up to brush across the feedback pads” (177). This illustrates a transfer of agency to the prosthetic device in the context of a seduction scene. (Seduction is also integral in the story about Lise, in an exoskeleton, which I discuss in detail later in the chapter.)

Interviewing science fiction writer Samuel Delany, Tatsumi takes up the idea of prosthesis in relation to Gibson and Sterling, pointing out that the prosthesis is “a kind of ambiguous boundary between the human and the mechanical.” Delany adds: “One interesting thing about cyberpunk ... is that, while we usually consider the prosthetic

relation where the prosthesis is helping us to deal with some kind of loss that we've sustained, in cyberpunk ... you don't quite know where the prosthesis ends and the body begins. There's always a kind of ambiguity – like Molly's mirrorshades that are actually replacement eyes" (*SF Eye* 8).

Tim Armstrong in his book *Modernism, Technology and the Body* develops a notion of positive and negative prosthesis which is useful here in order to delineate this ambiguous boundary. There are contradictions in the term related to addition and lack which Armstrong formulates as the "negative" prosthesis (the replacement, the replacing of a bodily part, that operates under the sign of compensation, the body defined by absence, by hurt) and the "positive" prosthesis (which involves a more utopian version of technology, in which human capacities are extrapolated). The rise of cyberpunk in relation to prosthetics occurs within a larger framework of prosthetic thinking. I will look at two practitioners influential on cyberpunk, Stelarc, and Mark Pauline, who present different sides, and tend towards "positive" and "negative" poles of the debate, respectively. Both have been written about by cyberpunk writers.

Prosthetic Thinking

I'm not going to follow theorists of the prosthetic who generalize it out of existence. As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, the rampant application of the prosthetic as a theoretical model is evident, and according to some, the proliferation of its use has overburdened it. As I discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the literal and material ground of the metaphor has largely been forgotten, if not disavowed in favour of "a general premise underpinning theoretical work about the ways in which technoscience and bodies interact (Sobchack 209). Tim Armstrong points out that prosthetic thinking has its origins in the confluence of two elements. One is (i) progressive evolutionary thought, which projects a future of human adaptation and improvement; the other is (ii) the body-machine model (79-80). Both perspectives have been influential on cyberpunk, particularly in the examples of practitioners like Stelarc and Mark Pauline.

Picking up on the body-machine model, according to Armstrong, the change was this: from the body as the machine in which the self lived (a lived body which could not be penetrated safely) to the body which, by the early twentieth century, could be

penetrated by a range of devices, was “resolved into a complex of different biomechanical systems” and “other technologies were applied to it: drugs, inoculation, electricity” (2). In the chapter “Reshaping the Body” Armstrong examines the issue of the body-machine interface in terms of prosthetics, “the replacement of bodily parts, organ-extension theories, and the organologies of war and advertising” (10). As well, there were various external regimes designed to improve its make-up, shape, and the flow of energies through it. Work, for instance, maximized the performance of the body in relation to machine culture; at the same time the body harboured a crisis. This paradox has been characterized as the “double logic of prosthesis” (self-extension and self-mutilation). Jain has critiqued this position, noting that Henry Ford’s machines are not prosthetic in the sense of replacement, but make optimal use of all existing human limbs, transforming workers into the consumers of the products they make.

Overall, what is apparent in prosthetic thinking of this type is an extraordinary symbiosis of humans and machines. This is a fundamentally new development in the history of the human. Now with the advent of genetic engineering, we not only consciously evolve and invent our machine companions, we can do the same for our bodies; it is “participatory evolution” (Gray 3). This is clearly a major step beyond natural selection and the careful breeding Darwin called artificial selection. “Evolution is an open-ended system with a tight link between information and action.” According to Gray, we have an opportunity to be free of both the rule of blind-chance necessity (the Darwinian perspective) and its opposite, distant absolute authority.

Stelarc vs Mark Pauline

Cyberpunk writer John Shirley wrote an approving article on Stelarc for an early issue of *SF Eye* in the 1980s, described therein as a performance artist pushing the limits of technology. Entitled “SF Alternatives, Part One: Stelarc and the New Reality,” Shirley finds Stelarc’s views on technology and its importance to this stage in human development are strikingly parallel to ideas explored by Sterling (*Schismatrix*), Delany (*Nova*), Gibson (*Neuromancer*) and Shirley himself (*Eclipse*). There is a “conceptual synchronicity” in Stelarc, in Laurie Anderson and other performance artists which would seem to indicate “a parallel development across the various media, for the recognition of

the new, hyper-intimate and all-encompassing phase of man's interaction with technology" (61).

Stelarc (Stelios Arcadiou) is a performance artist who has performed extensively in Japan (where he has been based since the 1970s), Europe and the USA, using medical instruments, prosthetics, robotics, Virtual Reality systems and the Internet to explore "alternate, intimate and involuntary interfaces with the body." He is a man who has pierced himself and put machines in his gut and wired his body to the Internet so that people around the globe can manipulate it, and is "militant about the individual's right to claim his or her own evolutionary path" (Gray 200).⁷ This means, according to his Cyborg Manifesto, the freedom to modify and mutate one's body to determine one's own DNA destiny.

Besides body suspensions with insertions into the skin, and with an Exoskeleton, Stelarc performed with a Third Hand (at Hosei University, Tokyo, 1982). On stage he had three hands, the third being an electronic prosthesis attached to the right arm, which he controlled via EMG signals detected by electrodes placed on four strategic muscle sites on his legs and abdomen. The Third Hand wrote "The Body is Obsolete." Clarke in *Natural Born Cyborgs* deems him "the most thoughtful, careful, and farsighted practitioner of cyberperformance" who "invites us to explore a new realm of complex and multiple embodiment" and "enrichment of the subjective sense of self" (116). In a recent exhibition catalog Stelarc has noted:

What characterizes all my recent projects and performances is the concern with the prosthetic. The prosthesis is seen not as a sign of lack, but as a symptom of excess. Rather than replacing a missing or malfunctioning part of the body, these artefacts and interfaces are alternate additions to the body's forms and functions. Third hand (technology attached), Stomach sculpture (technology inserted), and Exoskeleton (technology extending) are different approaches to prosthetic augmentation.

⁷ Stelarc tends to appear prominently where the more utopian aspects of cyborg society are discussed. See Andy Clarke, *Natural-Born Cyborgs*: "Stelarc's vision is positive and liberating" (118). See also Dery, *Escape Velocity* 153-169.

Dery notes that Stelarc is a confirmed McLuhanite: “the extension of any one sense alters the way we think and act – the way we perceive the world. When these ratios change, men change” and finds Stelarc “has evolved an “aesthetic of prosthetics” (154). He “bodies forth the human-machine hybrid ... the organic nerve center of a cybernetic system ... a postmodern incarnation” (154). Each performance is “a step up the evolutionary ladder” (157). It is essentially science fiction, a kind of postmodern view of the future. Dery further describes his performances as “pure cyberpunk” – simultaneously extended by, and an extension of, his high-tech system. However, it’s not all euphoric, and Dery points to a number of reservations: pathological fantasies, ideas free of ideologies, a “sadomasochistic subtext” (164). Even Clarke notes of these new kinds of collaborations advocated by Stelarc, it’s “too soon to say” (118).

John Shirley concludes his article by comparing Stelarc with the work of Mark Pauline, the founder and director of the Survival Research Laboratories (SRL) artist’s co-op, “a group specializing in darkly satiric performances using deadly home-made robots – the ultimate capitulation to the machine” and cited as influential on Gibson. According to Shirley, Stelarc glories in the constructive and transcendent potential of high tech, whereas Mark Pauline, in a kind of “dark counterpoint” to Stelarc, “depicts its nightmarish side with a sort of fetishistically-deliberate excess” in a “notorious selection of sinister mechanized sculptures” (Shirley, *Science Fiction Eye* 61) and combat machinery.

Mark Pauline’s SRL has since 1979 staged mechanical spectacles in which teleoperated weaponry and autonomous robots menace each other, as well as members of the audience, “in a murk of smoke, flames, and greasy fumes” (Dery 111). SRL performances incorporate military technology in a Theater of Operations that explodes popular myths about antiseptic “smart” wars. Pauline builds these engines of destruction for this “heavy metal theater of cruelty” (Dery 111) from the ready availability of broken-down or discarded machinery in the San Francisco industrial district. According to Pauline, the resulting ““cast-off devices can be used to create a new language which comments on the power structure, which is what the whole cyberpunk thing is about anyway”” (qtd. in Dery 130).

On one level, the group's colliding vehicles can be seen as a scaled-down model of our chaos culture. Mechanical performance artists like Pauline dramatize the disappearance of the human element from an increasingly technological environment and remind us of our ever more interdependent relationship with the machine world, a relationship in which the distinction between the controller and the controlled is not always clear. Pauline notes in a recent article for *Wired* magazine that "the mark of a true machine consciousness" is "when a mechanical system gets to a point where there's a disjunction between you and what's going on ... Systems are getting so complicated that they're out of control in a rational sense. The role model for the future of human interaction with machines, if we want to avoid our own destruction and gain control, is to start thinking of our interaction with technology in terms of the intuitive, the irrational."

Pauline "pioneered *the* definitive cyberpunk artform, the mechanical spectacle" which "exemplifies the hybrid of the cybernetic and organic, state-of-the-art and street tech that typifies the cyberpunk aesthetic." William Gibson paid the SRL group the highest possible tribute. In *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, Slick Henry is an outlaw roboticist who builds machines.

However Pauline is not without his critics, who see the performances as "masculinist fantasies" in the techno-masochism of Ballard and Burroughs; the dozen or so coworkers at SRL are mostly male; there have been connections with Nazism. On another level, the events staged by SRL are "war games in the literal sense ... an absurd parody of the military-industrial complex" (Dery 119) a point in line with Gray's formulation of postmodern warfare and thus relevant to the next section on cyborg warriors.

Pauline's work underscores the discomfiting aspects of prosthetics and how "disability" is shaped or made in cyberpunk works.⁸ Pauline himself lost three fingers and a thumb in an explosion preparing for one of his shows. Thus, it needs to be restated

⁸ Goggin and Newell have questioned the way that "disability" is shaped or made in cyberpunk film and fiction. They have taken issue with Sandy [Alluquere] Stone's article (prosthesis is a key term in Stone's lexicon) and observations therein on physicist Stephen Hawking, namely that "the issues his person and his communication prostheses raise are boundary debates, borderland/*frontera* questions." As with other theorists, "the prosthesis is a case in point of the difficulty of clearly demarcating between body and technology, human and machine, something which Donna Haraway and others have argued concerning the figure of the cyborg. Yet they find that "disability as a category remains curiously un(re)marked and unexplored" (112). In their view, "a prosthesis is not only a signal of disability but also an artifact" (113).

that there are the views of those who use prostheses to take into account. Gray points out that: “When one looks at the research and anecdotal evidence about the relations between people and their prostheses, it is clear that some very significant psychological dynamics are occurring” (99).

These dynamics have a basis in the development of the standard military and industrial prostheses, which derive from a traumatic amputation sustained in warfare, or the result of an accident. In cyberpunk Ratz sports a “Russian military prosthesis”; Automatic Jack with his “myoelectric arm” in “Burning Chrome” resulted from an “accident” sustained in warfare, recalling Edgar Allen Poe’s influential story, “The Man That Was Used Up,” about a veteran of the American Indian Wars completely reassembled by prosthetic parts. The history of prosthetics is also the history of amputation surgery and the modern era of prosthetics arose with quantum leaps in technology developed in wars and the subsequent improvement in prostheses.

Early Adapters

Gibson may have paid tribute to outlaw technicians modeled on Mark Pauline in his early cyberpunk novels. But the more utopian leanings of the “prosthetic evolution” have also to some extent been utilized by Gibson. And it is perhaps Gibson’s later pronouncements that align his thought with a more utopian-centered stance, where Japan occupies a central role.

In a fairly recent article entitled “Japan’s Modern Boys and Mobile Girls” Gibson finds the Japanese to be living “several measurable clicks down the time line.” The way Gibson sees it, the Japanese are

the ultimate Early Adapters and ... If you believe ... that all cultural change is technologically driven, you pay attention to the Japanese. They’ve been doing it for more than a century now and they really do have a head start on the rest of us.

He finds Japan possesses a “technocultural suppleness” and takes up the example of the “Mobile Girls” of Tokyo, marveling at the speed with which they have adapted the latest technology to themselves, text messaging on their cellular phones, subsequently

spawning a “micro-culture.” This flair for adaptation can be traced back one hundred years to the importation of the mechanical watch from England, via Japan’s Modern Boys.

Gibson’s fascination with cellphone technology is revealing of his more utopian leanings when it comes to Japan. The cell phone is an extension of the hand. The mobile is something you use and something that is part of you. It is “like a prosthetic limb over which you wield full and flexible control, and on which you eventually come to automatically rely in formulating and carrying out your daily goals and projects” (Clarke 9). Buying cellphones, people are not just investing in new toys; they are buying “mindware upgrades, electronic prostheses capable of extending and transforming their personal reach, thought and vision” (Clarke 10).

In Japan prosthetics have played a central role in the development of Japanese robotics. The most automated society on earth, the first robot was produced in 1973, at Waseda University, which has seen four decades of humanoid robot research. It began with an attempt to produce a working artificial hand, in tandem with prosthetics maker Imasen Engineering. WABOT, an anthropomorphic robot developed into My Robot, “the third stage after industrial robots and computers in what Kato saw as an evolutionary process” (Hornyak 75-6). Industrial robots have been essential for the development of Japan’s automobile industry.

The title of Timothy Hornyak’s book *Loving the Machine: The Art and Science of Japanese Robots* sets the “utopian” tone, which details Japan’s long love affair with humanoid robots.⁹ Drawing extensively on manga and anime for support, he argues that the Japanese have a different relation to their technology (than the rest of the world) even though there is a dissident or dystopian view of robots evident in some of this material. While US companies have produced robot vacuum cleaners and war machines, Japan has created humanoids and pet robots as entertaining friends. In the “Robot Kingdom” robots perform tasks that mimic nonviolent human activities. To put it simply, “the difference between Mighty Atom and the Terminator shows the differences between how Japanese and Westerners view robots. Westerners tend to have this sense of alarm or wariness.

⁹ On the “symbiotic relationships” between robots and humans, see Ueba Hiroyuki, “Rise of the Robots: Dreams becoming Reality,” *Daily Yomiuri*, Thurs, June 22, 2006, 1.

Japanese are unique in the world for their strong love and affinity for robots” (qtd. in Hornyak 25). The book traces this love affair back to the *zashiki karakuri* dolls from the Edo period, through the first *jinzo ningen* in the early part of the twentieth century, and to the advanced robots of today.

The utopian angle fits Gibson’s later thesis about the nation of Early Adapters and evolution by technology. Japan is thus the unrivalled location for technological advancement, and an example of “techno-orientalism” in the view of Morley and Robins, Japan being synonymous with screens, simulations, advanced robotics and the like. Yet this is at odds with other fictional presentations of Japan, for instance Chiba City in *Neuromancer*, depicted as “a deranged experiment in social Darwinism.” And there is the fate of the seemingly invincible fighting machine, the Yakuza Assassin, who falls to his death, “a defeated kamikaze on his way down” (Johnny Mnemonic” 21).

2. “All You Zombies”: Ninja Assassins and Street Samurai

As the minuteness of the parts formed a great hindrance to my speed, I resolved, contrary to my first intention, to make the being of gigantic stature ...

(Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*)

Robert Longo’s sculpture/installation entitled *All You Zombies: Truth before God* depicts a massive bronze, science fictional warrior turning slowly in front of a semi-circular painting of an opera house. It “stages the extreme manifestation of the body at war in the theater of politics” (271) according to Jennifer González. This is a striking piece, and a compelling example of postmodern orientalism. The monstrous cyborg soldier takes center stage, a “cultural and semiotic nightmare of possibilities” (González “Envisioning” 272). The helmet is “adorned with diverse historical signs” such as “Japanese armour, Viking horns, Mohawk-like fringe and electronic network antenna” (272). The “cyborg’s double face with two vicious mouths snarls through a mask of metal bars and plastic hoses that penetrate the surface of the skin. One eye is blindly human, the other is a mechanical void.” It has the attributes of both human sexes. Overall the body

has “a masculine feel of weight and muscular bulk” (273) and a “feminine hand with razor sharp nails reaches out from the center of the chest” (272). Covered with scales, fins, insects, and ammunition, it is a “hybrid body which ‘rejoices’ in ‘the illegitimate fusions of animal and machine.’”

The work has multifarious links. An obvious one is Victor Frankenstein’s creature, although this late twentieth century incarnation is not stitched together with organic parts. Another source might be found in science fiction, Heinlein’s story “All You Zombies” (1959), the story of a young man who travels in time with the paradoxical result that he becomes his own mother and father. The sculpture is an amalgam of parts from different “genres” (the prosthetic razor sharp nails are cyberpunk) and cultures (Japanese samurai armour) fused together. Longo has described the work as an example of “American machismo” which “storms across several thresholds; that between male and female, life and death, human and beast, organic and inorganic, individual and collective” (273). Finally, in line with the comments from Gray about postmodern warfare which began this chapter, it takes the integration between soldiers and weapons to new (and increasingly perverse) levels.

González goes on to discuss Longo’s sculpture in terms of hybridity. The sculpture is an “amalgamation of organic and inorganic elements that is the result of a dangerous and threatening mutation and asks what makes this ‘hybrid’ fusion ‘illegitimate.’” Hybridity itself is fraught with many contradictory cultural connotations. One meaning of the word pertains to the interaction of two unlike cultures, or anything derived from heterogeneous sources or composed of different or incongruous parts, and bred from two distinct races. What makes the term controversial is that it appears to assume by definition the existence of a non-hybrid state – purity – with which it is contrasted. According to González, is this notion of purity that must, in fact, be problematized. It is therefore necessary to imagine a world of composite elements without the notion of purity. Thus the term “hybrid” has come to have “ambiguous cultural connotations” (274) related to words such as illegitimate and miscegenation as a marker of race and gender. I will now discuss two relevant figures from cyberpunk fiction which illustrate this, ninja assassins (the Yakuza Assassin), and (female) samurai warriors.

Yakuza (Ninja) Assassins and Street Samurai

The Yakuza assassin is a Gibson invention, a strange hybrid fusion that is probably now better known as a ninja assassin, from Gibson's short story "Johnny Mnemonic." This "little tech sidles out of nowhere, smiling" and with just "a suggestion of a bow" his left thumb comes off and reveals a molecular weapon which slices up his opponent: "his nervous system's jacked up ... He's the best ... state of the art. He's factory custom ... He's a Yakuza assassin" (8). There is no discussion of the Yakuza assassin's role in terms of the human/machine dichotomy. At the same time, as will become apparent, the figure does not quite fit the profile of a fully masculinized "terminator" type assassin either, to the extent that he amalgamates aspects of Oriental otherness and Asian power.

The yakuza, a "true multinational" (22), had moved aggressively into South-East Asia, Hawaii, and the west coast of the United States by exploiting the familiar advantages of financial might, strategic skill, and absolute dedication to group goals. They maintain ties to time-honored Japanese business etiquette practices, and in corporate structure Japan's yakuza syndicates closely resemble her *zaibatsu* industrial conglomerates. Higher ranking gangsters are known as *kanbun* (management) and the offices from which they conduct their affairs as "branches." At the same time, they are uncompromisingly ruthless, known for rituals and protocol designed to reinforce group identity, mostly derived from the samurai ethos, such as covering their bodies with intricate tattoos, and the practice of cutting off fingers.

Mostly grown in a vat in Japan, the Yakuza assassin has had part of his left thumb amputated and a prosthesis fitted, courtesy of the Ono-Sendai company, which conceals a piece of sophisticated and deadly weaponry:

They must have amputated part of his left thumb, somewhere behind the first joint, replacing it with a prosthetic tip, and cored the stump, fitting it with a spool and socket molded from one of the Ono-Sendai diamond analogs. Then he'd carefully wound the spool with 3 meters of monomolecular filament. (6)

Although depicted as a “mild little guy,” the type likely to be drunk on sake and singing the corporate anthem, this “little tech” nevertheless with the “suggestion of a bow,” pulls the tip from his thumb, and an opponent, Ralfi, sliced in three parts, “tumbles apart in a pink cloud of fluids” (7). Throughout the short story the ninja assassin is unnamed, only indicated by the pronoun “he” and described or exfoliated through a complex set of seemingly incompatible similes: moves “like a man stepping from one flat stone to another in an ornamental garden”; and Gibson depicts an array of qualities associated with Japanese culture, plastic *zoris* and the like. He is also an assassin with a keen sense of smell, linking him to the ninja (from the Japanese *hinin* “not human”), a “ninja assassin” well-known to readers of pulp fiction, as in Eric Lustbader’s fiction, *The Ninja*. He is a “little tech” and a “tourist tech” a reference to Japanese and where they have in the past most often traveled – Hawaii. The shirt (as in gangster movies) is Hawaiian, and the “enlarged chip” thereon “looming like a reconnaissance shot of some doomed urban nucleus” (17) adds to the incongruity. He is “like a man.”

At the end of the story, high above Nighttown he meets a violent death at the hands of his opponent:

Just before he made his final cast with the filament, I saw something in his face, an expression that didn’t seem to belong there ... stunned incomprehension mingled with pure aesthetic revulsion at what he was seeing. There was a gap in the Floor in front of it and he went through it like a diver, with a strange, deliberate grace, a defeated kamikaze on his way down (20-21)

The reader is informed that he dies with “the dignity of silence” in “a graceful curve” falling like a “diver” (it is the sky, no less), gathering speed as he heads downward, a doomed Icarus-like figure, and the comparison to kamikaze, the Japanese pilots on suicide missions towards the end of World War II, makes it a compelling image.

The final comment: “he died of culture shock” is darkly funny. In its caricature, it refers to Japan at the time of World War II. Another source, I think, is postmodern, Thomas Pynchon’s “Komical Kamikazes” (a parody of a comic book) in *Gravity’s Rainbow*. From comic book culture, there is Elektra Assassin, the most deadly of female

characters who made her first appearance in *Daredevil* (#168, Sept. 1980). When her father is murdered, she becomes a ninja assassin. Trained by a band of mercenary ninjas known as The Hand, she learns martial arts and mystical skills, and eventually becomes a mercenary herself. Her weapon of choice is the sai (a short dagger-like weapon).¹⁰

Robert Longo's film *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995) has numerous changes which makes the short story and the film into distinct works. Yet along with the cavity in Johnny's head, one important aspect that remains unchanged is the Yakuza assassin's thumb (although it is his right thumb, not his left.) In the film Johnny is hunted by a gang of "killer samurai" of the corporations, dressed conservatively as businesspeople in their identical gray suits. The leader of the team is Shinji, "a young, half-Japanese, half-American, fast-track Yakuza yuppie, cool and analytical, long hair in a ponytail" (9). It's a telling image, not Japanese American, but half – half-Japanese, half-American.

In the hotel elevator Shinji "uncaps his thumb and carefully extrudes a glittering loop of filament from his thumb-tip" (18) hidden by a metal cap. As in the short story, the prosthetic tip is a weapon. However there is a contrast here with Johnny, who also utilized a prosthetic device in the elevator. Shinji reports back directly to the Yakuza head for a sector of North America, Takahashi (played by "Beat" Takeshi, Kitano, a well-known actor, comedian and film director). That the Yakuza have such a presence in North America shows the extent to which Japan has come to exist in the American unconscious as a figure of danger (accompanying the promise that foreign capital offers).

Looking at Shinji's capped thumb, Takahashi smiles contemptuously: "I see you have found a way to turn your shame into an asset" (25). The prosthetic tip continues to provide an "improbable" link not only to the Yakuza, but to Japanese culture generally (and the concept of "shame" or atonement). Likewise Takahashi's samurai sword, a potent but antique weapon, is no less effective in dispatching of the opposition or his own people. Impeccably attired in the conservative suit of the Japanese "company man," yet undressed, revealing a powerful, beautifully tattooed body, Takahashi "unsheathes an

¹⁰ A specifically Western comic book prototype is the Elektra Assassin (see Andrew Ross). Elektra was introduced to comics by Frank Miller while working on the popular Marvel superhero comic book *Daredevil*. *Daredevil* (Matt Murdock) loses his sense of sight, but finds his other senses becoming increasingly sharper including developing radar sense. The daughter of a Greek ambassador, Elektra is the beloved of Matt Murdock.

antique samurai sword” (58) and dispatches two of Shinji’s “kobuns” with the remark: “They are honored to have been dispatched with such a fine instrument” (58).

Nakamura notes in *Cybertypes* that “the samurai warrior fantasy for role-playing ... permit their users to perform a notion of the oriental warrior adopted from popular media.... The orientalized male persona, complete with sword, confirms the idea of the Asian man as potent, antique, exotic, and anachronistic” (39). Both the Yakuza assassin and the character of Takahashi are orientalized in this way, already dubbed as not fully whole, enabled and disabled by specific technologies, here weaponry. In the film, there is an incongruous mix of weaponry; moreover, the weapons that are associated with the Japanese also involve a transfer of agency; the prosthetic tip molecular whip and the sword seem to have a will and a life of their own.

Perhaps the most famous cyborg warrior from this tradition to emerge in cyberspace is Molly in *Neuromancer*, a prosthetically enhanced agent:

‘You’re street samurai,’ he said. ‘How long you work for him?’

‘Couple of months’

‘What about before that?’

‘For somebody else. Working girl, you know?’ (41)

The original “razor girl,” among Molly’s cybernetic augmentations are surgically inset mirrorshades which seal her eye sockets, “ten double-edged, four-centimeter scalpel blades [in] housings beneath [her] burgundy nails,” and a jacked-up nervous system. She also carries “a fair amount of silicon in her head.”

The street-wise Molly is Case’s bodyguard-girlfriend in *Neuromancer*; her fingers maybe “slender, tapered very white against the polished burgundy nails” but the blades which “snicked straight out from their recesses beneath her nails, each one a narrow, double-edged scapel in pale blue steel” are lethal. These retractable claws of Molly, which reminded Tatsumi of Rydra Wong in Delaney’s *Babel-17* and Delany of Jael in Joanna Russ’s *The Female Man*, are also familiar, I would add, from film and

television.¹¹ Vina, the green-skinned slave girl in one of the early series of *Star Trek* shown in the 1960s has similar claws. The colour is not incidental, either, if we think of Tretchikoff's Orientalist painting, the "Green Lady," a "green-faced girl with a supernatural gift." In Paul Rudnick's mainstream 80s novel, *Social Disease*, we read of a clinic where placards were taped on the wall. One placard featured a wicked Oriental woman, with long fingernails, in a tight sheath. The caption read, "'Beware The Good-Time Gal'" (37).

It has been noted in *Neuromancer* that "nearly every character is motivated by some past trauma" (Farrell 343). Molly is no exception, and narrates a past in which she was a prostitute, doing "puppet time" in a high-tech whorehouse in order to earn the money required for various augmentations. Moreover, she describes murdering a sadomasochistic "john" in her earlier life as a prostitute. After slaughtering her last "trick," Molly begins to hire herself out as a mercenary and bodyguard, inhabiting traditionally masculine roles. As a street samurai, Molly no longer participates in the economy of sexuality; she has reinterpreted what it is to be a woman on the streets, to be a working girl.

Generally, Foster finds cyberpunk texts "call into question distinctions between mind and body, human and machine, the straight white male self and its others, even while they remain dependent on those distinctions to some degree" (209). But *Neuromancer* takes for granted certain traditional assumptions about heterosexual masculinity. Corresponding assumptions about Molly's gender and sexuality are called into question by her cyborg hybridity. It has been argued Molly's character can best be described as a reversal of traditional gender roles, a cyborg woman in a masculine role, underpinned by Gibson's use of male action-hero metaphors (Sony Mao, Mickey Chiba, Bruce Lee and Clint Eastwood). Interestingly, some of these "male" heroes are Asian.

The prosthetic enhancements serve to make Molly more than human and certainly less than feminine. Molly's tough posturing and martial abilities make her the clearest candidate for "female-to-male role-reversal in cyberpunk" (Leblanc). Carla Freccero notes that Molly's femininity is unusual; she is "a killer, and she is stronger than Case;

¹¹Besides the claws, Delany notes that both Jael and Molly wear black and have "a similar harshness in attitude." He argues it would have been impossible to write this kind of female character without feminist sf of the seventies.

her body is described as machine-like” and she is “tough and heroic” (108). At a certain point in the novel Case is forced to “inhabit” her through a simulation. Freccero finds this relationship between Case and Molly also suggests “the feminization of the male in relation to technocultures ... that the new technocultural man is feminized by his relation to the prosthetic device” (109). And in *Neuromancer* this feminization is positively, not negatively, valorized. In the case of the Asian cyborg, such feminization I would maintain is negatively valorized.

Thus we have what seems to be “a progressive reimagining of the feminine in this world: masculine and feminine are brought into closer contact” (109). However Freccero qualifies this by asking whether these female characters bear any relation to “women” at all, or do they enact precisely a masculine feminization, which would make them, instead, “men in disguise?”

3. Exoskeleton from the Closet: Lise

I am doll eyes/Doll mouth/Doll legs/I am doll arms/Big veins ...

I fake it so real I am beyond fake/

And someday you will ache like I ache

(Courtney Love, “Doll Parts”)

In his examination of the body-machine interface in terms of prosthetics and modernism, Armstrong has pointed out that this requires taking into account physical culture in relation to the “increasingly interventionist gender technologies of the twentieth century, characterized by hormone-therapies, rejuvenation operations, and early transsexual surgery” (10). An example of the latter case Armstrong cites from the era of modernism is Lili Elbe, the first known recipient of sexual reassignment surgery during the 1930s, in Berlin.

Cyberpunk is also concerned with technologies of gender such as hormone therapy: the 135-year-old Julius (“Julie”) Deane, “sexless and inhumanly patient,” has “his metabolism assiduously warped by a weekly fortune in serums and hormones”

(*Neuromancer* 20); rejuvenation in the Tessier-Ashpool clones; and radical and subversive instances of cosmetic surgery. In Pat Cadigan's *Tea from an Empty Cup*, Yuki and Joy Flower are "surrounded by tall thugs, male and female. They all looked Oriental but Yuki could see that it was strictly cosmetic; beautiful work of its kind, but too finished to be anything but rendered by a human hand. She and Joy Flower, by comparison, had obviously been born to their features, although Joy Flower's were a mixture of Mongol and Japanese, with a hint of Siberian forebear. It was an unlikely combination, but authentic" (33).

These texts raise the questions of where gender and race are "located" in a technologically deconstructed body; what happens to gender identity? Moreover, following Haraway's notion of "women in the integrated circuit" we find that the new division of labour ushered in by the information age, the new work patterns, a world capitalist organizational structure made possible by (not caused by) the new technologies are about "the complexities of international *gendered* divisions of labor in the globalized economy." And not just work: private life, leisure time, intimacy are all restructured by science and technology.

Gibson's short story "The Winter Market" is an insightful exploration of Western (prosthetic) technology and culture, and has specific postmodern (drug addiction and trauma) and orientalist features (the appropriation of the Japanese term *gomi*). The narrative concerns a woman named Lise and her uncanny ability to retrieve dreams, which are then transformed through a neuroelectronic process for popular consumption. Lise suffers from a devastating illness which induces extreme pain and may only be controlled by the wearing of an exoskeleton. In order to relieve the pain, Lise is addicted to industrial strength doses of "wiz," a potent form of amphetamine. Paralyzed by this disease, Lise thus lives "encased in a rigid body suit – an 'exoskeleton' that moves her in response to signals wired to it from her brain."

Balanced against this disability – and perhaps the kind of scenario that disability studies finds an issue – the ability to transform dreams into audio/visual recordings make Lise, as well as Casey, a "simstim" editor who edits the intense, surreal images obtained through her, famous and rich. For Lise, the ultimate aim is to escape, which she eventually does; she attains stardom and cybernetic immortality by way of having

“merged with the Net,” and having a Rom construct of her personality built, encoded as a digital memory – as a posthumous computer construct.

The term exoskeleton generally refers to a hard outer structure, such as the shell of an insect or crustacean, and which provides protection and support for an organism. It situates a boundary, that between the animal and the human. The exoskeleton is usually understood as an external supportive covering of an animal (and contrasts with endoskeleton, an internal skeleton): “She couldn’t move, not without that extra skeleton, and it was jacked straight into her brain, myoelectric interface” (122). The skeleton that should support her on the inside has been displaced to the outside. It is “awkwardly mechanical and overtly technical,” according to Hicks, who finds this supports a reading of Lise as a “critique of masculinist technological agendas” in her article “What Is It That She’s Since Become” (which finds this story is “a cyberpunk rewriting of ‘The Girl Who Was Plugged In’” by James Tiptree, Jr.)¹² My discussion of this story is in relation to some of the points that Hicks makes.

A comparison with Stelarc is useful here, for whom an exoskeleton is an extreme form of alternate embodiment, “human-like in form but with functions” (qtd. in Bell 572). Stelarc’s earlier version of the exoskeleton was a jerky, stiff-jointed 600kg machine that uses eighteen pneumatic actuators to drive its three degrees of freedom legs. The upper torso of the biological body controls the mode and direction of motion using magnetic sensors on the joints. In 1998 for Kampnagel, Stelarc completed “Exoskeleton” – a pneumatically powered 6-legged walking machine. Yet in Gibson’s text, the exoskeleton is described as a “pencil-thin polycarbon prosthetic” (121).

The exoskeleton in Gibson’s story blurs the line between the human and animal: the “smooth dorsal ridge of the exoskeleton”; and between the human and mechanical (automaton): “Lise came after me ... weaving through the bodies and junk with that terrible grace programmed into the exoskeleton ... advanced – was advanced” and “I could hear it (the exoskeleton) click softly as it moved her” (121-2). Or “I heard the exoskeleton creak as it hoisted her up from the futon. Heard it tick demurely as it hauled her into the kitchen for a glass of water” (125). This would seem to underline Sobchack’s

¹² Hicks argues that Gibson has acknowledged the influence, citing the *SF Eye* interview with Maddox.

point about prostheses which begin to take on a life of their own, tending towards technoanimism.

It is Casey's friend Rubin, a junk artist (and perhaps incorporating aspects of Mark Pauline), who first comes across Lise in an alley on one of his "gomi" runs, and brings her home. *Gomi* is his "medium, the air he breathes" (143); "gomi" is the Japanese term for garbage. The boxes in Rubin's studio are filled with "carefully sorted gomi" (150) such as batteries, capacitors, and transformers, even the heads of Barbie dolls. So it is that Rubin "brings home more *gomi*. Some of it still operative. Some of it, like Lise, human" (143). The scene brings to mind the replicant Pris in *Blade Runner*, a punk waif discovered in the garbage outside J.D. Sebastian's apartment.

If it is Rubin who salvages Lise from the garbage, it is Casey who takes her home. They initially met at one of Rubin's many parties, in the Kitchen Zone near a fridge that "had come in with the *gomi*." This "wasted little girl" propositions him, and reluctantly Casey takes her back to his apartment: "Take me home, she said, and the words hit me like a whip.... I'd never been hated, ever, as deeply or thoroughly as this wasted little girl hated me now, hated me for the way I looked, then looked away" (121). The word "wasted" functions in a double sense, as being a waste product, and under the influence of drugs.

Casey takes her home: "I could see the thing's ribs ... through the scuffed black leather of her jacket." He notices the exoskeleton was "jacked straight into her brain, myoelectric interface" and how "the fragile-looking polycarbon braces moved her arm and legs." Then she turned:

hand on thrust hip, she swung – it swung her – and the wiz and the hate and some terrible parody of lust stabbed out at me from those washed-out gray eyes. 'You wanna make it, editor?' And I felt the whip come down again. (122)

Casey replies sarcastically: "Could you feel it, if I did?" Her face never registered: "'No,' she said, 'but sometimes I like to watch.'" Thus, after a failed attempt at seduction, they interface via computer. Here the cyberpunk component comes in: Casey sits down beside her on the futon "and snapped the optic lead into the socket on the spine

... of the exoskeleton. It was high up, at the base of her neck, hidden by her dark hair” (124). Thus connected or plugged in (jacked in): “we jacked straight across” (123).

There is one other seduction scene in the story, where according to Hicks “female agency, the constructedness of ‘physical’ desire, and forms of embodiment and disembodiment all come together in a complex collision of significations and meanings” (83). This scene takes place in a bar in a seedy district of Vancouver. Casey comes across Lise, the mark of fatal illness written on her features, attempting to (again) seduce a drunken young man. This second instance reveals “the hidden engine of this narrative. Lise’s body is inscribed with (and within) an old narrative about heterosexual desire and an even older one about the body as the site of woman’s value” which is “(a) bit of a decoy in this text,” according to Hicks.

Building on the findings of the previous chapters (drugs and rock music), I think another reading is possible here, that situates this narrative in terms of postmodern orientalism. And a number of elements in the text support this particular reading.

Firstly, the presentation of drug addiction. In the narrative Casey’s first contact with Lise is at one of Ruben Stark’s parties: Lise is speeding, “her eyes burning with wiz” (121). Looking into those eyes and it was like you could hear “some impossibly high-pitched scream as the wiz opened every circuit in her brain” (121). The term “wiz,” as I noted, is street talk for a form of speed. This accompanies the wearing of the exoskeleton, and marks out another cyberpunk interest: drugs, in particular speed (as I discussed in chapter two). But it is debatable that this particular drug is correct for Lise’s condition (wouldn’t morphine be the prescribed drug?).

Furthermore, there is a corresponding descent into drug addiction; on one level the drugs ostensibly relieve pain, but the intake of drugs also escalates as Lise achieves fame, following a trajectory familiar from the world of the rock star in decline, like Reed or Bowie at certain stages in their respective careers. Later, Lise took out an inhaler full of wiz and took a huge hit” (130). She is addicted on a daily basis. In the bar, I saw the wiz flash in her eyes and knew that those drinks had never contained alcohol and “her skull about to burn through her white face like a thousand-watt bulb” (139). She was really dying, from the wiz or her disease or a combination of the two.

The relationship between drug addiction and the disease is presented through the mediating category of trauma. The cultural fascination with trauma is the central concern of Kirby Farrell's book *Post-traumatic Culture: Injury and Interpretation* in the Nineties. Farrell's concern is to extend our interpretation of trauma beyond the clinical case study by examining how trauma functions as a trope, "a strategic fixation that a complex stressful society is using to account for a world that seems threateningly out of control." Farrell notes that in the recent framework of "radical prosthetic development in human identity" (175) the "prosthetic dimension" calls into question who (or what) we are: where does the self stop and the tool begin? Where does the self leave off and the other begins? Trauma reflects "a disruption of prosthetic relationships to the world" and "one way of looking at post-traumatic culture is to examine prosthetic relations" (176).

Secondly, there is a countercultural (punk rock music) context for the story which is structured around a party (or carnivalesque) atmosphere. Says the narrator: "I met Lise at one of Rubin's parties. Rubin had a lot of parties. He never seemed particularly to enjoy them himself, but they were excellent parties. I lost track that fall of the number of times I woke up on a slab of foam" to the sound of a coffee machine. Rubin, in the tradition of Andy Warhol (and famously Jay Gatsby in Scott Fitzgerald's novel), doesn't really attend them.

Rubin is a famous artist, a "gomi no sensei," a Gibson coinage from Japanese which means in this text "master of junk"; he inhabits a jammed littered 'factory-style' space near the Market. From the surrounding junk and waste products, "his ongoing inferno of gomi," he creates a kind of "heaped gomi" installation at the Tate which makes him worth a lot of money in the galleries in Tokyo and Paris. A master of junk, a "gomi no sensei." Rubin is a junk artist, and the antecedents may be Marcel Duchamp, or Mark Pauline. Another I would suggest is Andy Warhol. A parallel can be found in Rudy's house in *Count Zero*.

An appropriate point of reference, then, is seventies rock culture, by way of the Velvet Underground aesthetic, which pervades the encounters between Casey and Lise: the "sodomasochistic" overtones of black leather and "like a whip," the voyeurism of "sometimes I like to watch"; David Bowie's "not sure if you're a boy or a girl" (*Diamond Dogs*); Lou Reed's "how do you think it feels, to always make love by proxy" (*Berlin*);

and even mainstream rock, The Kinks anthem “Lola” (“walks like a woman, and talks like a man”). This allows for Lise to be situated between genders, or at a point of transgender, bordering on transvestism (“programmed it to move with a grotesque approximation of a walk ... like a model down a runway”). Moreover Lise fits the profile of the (bisexual) punk waif rescued from the street: “She stared at me with those pale grey eyes ... Replaced the jacket with a black blouson which she kept zipped to the neck ... her rough dark hair a lopsided explosion above that drawn, triangular face” (133). This problematizes the gender we assign to Lise: what is it that “she” is in the first place is not an unreasonable question.

These kinds of evocations are reinforced by the description of Lise as *gomi*. Bukatman has remarked that “(n)ot everyone can read *Neuromancer*: its neologisms alienate the uninitiated reader – that’s their function” (152). Exploring this short story we face a similar difficulty with the term *gomi*, compounded by the fact that it has been appropriated from another language and cultural context. The term means, in American English, simply garbage, waste material. (There is a link here to Pynchon’s use of WASTE in *The Crying of Lot 49*). Then again, it is “kipple,” a startling neologism coined by Philip K. Dick in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* meaning “useless objects ... which reproduces itself ... a universal principle operating throughout the universe” (65-6). And it is refuse, a more formal meaning which evokes particular kinds of waste material related to the environment: the refuse dump, landfills, what has been left behind or discarded by humans. Finally, the term “cast-off goods” conjures up unwanted possessions, discarded products, “those commodities that had been fetishized by advertising ... now stripped of their aura” (Shohat and Stam 45). This human *gomi*, or metahuman kipple in P.K. Dicks’s terms, has links with “the replicant woman perceived as waste, thrown down and trodden upon.”¹³

The term *gomi* functions here as something of a “floating signifier.” In this story it is readily deemed to be equivalent to trash and attributed to a person, i.e. personified. Yet there is also a Japanese context for the term, which is in some ways incompatible

¹³ See Judith B. Kerman, ed, *Retrofitting Blade Runner* 25-31. The “metahuman kipple” concerned with characters in Dick’s novel, J.R. Isidore (Sebastian in the movie) and the replicant Pris “are treated as subhuman, useless objects by their society.” In *Blade Runner*, “The city is full of waste, both the filth that blows through the streets and rains down from the chemically-polluted clouds, and also the people who did not ... go off-world” (18).

with Gibson's deployment. In Japanese the term has a number of meanings (and rules) governing its usage: "dust," "litter," "garbage," "trash," and "waste." Furthermore, it can be written three ways using hiragana, katakana, and less frequently, kanji (Chinese characters). The term chiefly occurs in combinations which refer to household garbage; for example, "moeru gomi" (burnable waste), "moenai gomi" (non-burnable waste), and "sodai gomi" (large-sized garbage). When referring to waste disposal in a more general sense, a clear distinction in terminology is made between "gomi shori no shikumi" and "haikibutsu shori": the latter term refers to industrial waste and is likely to be found in official documents. In addition, the collocation "gomi no sensei" is strange. First, "Gomi" can be someone's name, so then it would be written Gomi Sensei. Second, it would probably not be used as a designation for people. Another term is used; thus "ningen no kuzu" is an expression which means "worthless people" ("kuzu" not "gomi").

Gibson's use of the term *gomi* is also indicative of the difficulty in finding an appropriate language. Hicks directly ascribes a positive valence to the term *gomi*, as a source of art, and technological evolution, thus subscribing to Gibson's appropriated use of the term. But, particularly if we keep in mind the Japanese context, as I outlined above, the term remains an unstable signifier. The specific borrowings of lexical items from the Japanese language (such as *gomi* and *idoru*) embedded in the text can be usefully described as functioning in a similar way, as a kind of prosthesis.

Hicks concludes this woman, encased by technology, is also released by technology, to become something new. Lise's own status as *gomi* – the rich material of art, the source of possibility and change – and the presence of a "winter market" which establishes an alternative system of value. She may be marginalized, "discarded" socially because her body takes her out of the economy of sexual encounters that this text privileges. Moreover, Hicks argues, Lise has her own agenda. After a failed attempt at seduction, she interfaces via computer. Lise's gift is quickly turned into a highly marketable product. This marks the translation of her personality from her wrecked and dying body into a mainframe computer.

This reading rests to some extent on the recognition that cyberpunk authors privilege disembodiment over embodiment. As Hicks points out, this further entrenches the Western association of woman with "body" and man with "mind" (65), the

mind/body binary “persists ... and has implications for those “marked” by gender, race, or class as bodies rather than minds.” Yet earlier in this chapter I discussed the possibility that the persistence of dualistic categories and the attempt to displace them reflects the difficulty of finding a language adequate for the emergence of a third category of technocultural experience in cyberpunk, a “third space” which ends up being “a space of undecidability.” Accordingly, the trope of the prosthesis functions in this story, for example, as both replacement (compensation for the effects of a congenital illness) and augmentation (release through cybernetic immortality). The relation is at once ambivalent and reciprocal.

4. Virtual Idols

There is an air comes from her: what fine chisel/
Could ever yet cut breath?

(Shakespeare, *The Winter's Tale*, V. iii)

Cyberpunk writers like Gibson are often thought to create cyborg characters which transform gender but, as I showed in the previous section with the example of Lise’s exoskeletal prosthesis, “these are transgendered representations, rather than radical revisions of gender” (Leblanc 2). It may be that gender dichotomies can be overcome through the prevalence and use of technology, as “cyborgs create new social and cultural contexts, redefining gender.” But the fictional cyborg, like Lise, however, does not necessarily escape gender categories, nor reshape them.

Haraway reminds us that from the seventeenth century till now, machines could be animated – given ghostly souls to make them speak or move or to account for their orderly development and mental capacities. Or organisms could be mechanized – reduced to body understood as mind. These machine/organism relationships are obsolete, unnecessary. For us, in “imagination and in other practice, machines can be prosthetic devices, intimate components, friendly selves” (178). Haraway has noted how this entails a “profusion of spaces and identities and the permeability of boundaries” (170). Social

relations are mediated by and enforced by the new technologies. In a sense there is no “place” for women in these networks, only geometrics of difference and contradiction crucial to women’s cyborg identities. But if “we learn how to read these webs of power and social life, we might learn new couplings, new coalitions” (170).

Lise’s exoskeleton presents a case of a highly visible prosthesis. The simulated replicants in *Blade Runner*, however, are implanted with prosthetic memories, and require a sophisticated test (the Voight-Kampff Empathy Test) to decide whether they are human or not; in the case of one of them, Rachel, it remains a problematic distinction. The test is a “vision machine” which distinguishes between replicants and humans by enlarging and subsequently examining the respondent’s eye on a video monitor. It raises the issue of what it means to be human within a world of simulated replicants (blurring the boundary between man and machine). Biological organisms have now become biotic systems, communications devices like others. There is no fundamental, ontological separation in our formal knowledge of machine and organism, of technical and organic. The replicant Rachel “stands as the image of a cyborg culture’s fear, love, and confusion” (Haraway 177-8).

In contradistinction to Leontes’ observation about what chisels can or cannot do in the Shakespearean era, cyberpunk envisages a world teeming with “living” automatons, androids, and replicants (not to mention AI’s) who roam at will, redefining the Pygmalion myth. And as Wills notes, “within the ambit of the prosthetic ... (o)nce one begins to deal with the complexities of mutation, symbiosis, bionics and so on, the transcendental concept of organic wholeness is irredeemably problematised” (51).

Technological development has brought about the elaboration and intersection of technological systems throughout every aspect of social life. The prosthetic dimension is no longer clearly demarcated, or even visible. There is, as Baudrillard has characterized it, the generation by models of a real without origin or reality, a “hyperreal.” How, then, do we account for wholly lifelike synthetic performers such as virtual idols?

Idoru

Gibson’s novel *Idoru* (1997), which deals with the phenomenon of stardom and the world of (Japanese) virtual idols, offers some interesting insights into the relation of

technology and representation, and the formation and identity of “virtual constructs.” The term, like *gomi*, is appropriated from Japanese culture. In the novel, the protagonist Colin Laney finally comes face to face with Rei Toei, a virtual idol adored by all Japan. He finds her to be a sort of hologram, something “generated, animated, projected” (231) which absorbs images and data into itself, a data flow. Looking into the idoru’s face, Laney discovers that she is not flesh but information, entirely “process” and “infinitely more than the combined sum of her various selves” (267).

What then, is this virtual entity? The recognition is of the centrality of information and its subcategories, simulation and computerization. But there are recognizable human features: black hair, pale shoulders, eyes, a face. And “In the very structure of her face, in geometries of underlying bone” he saw “stone tombs in steep alpine mountains, ponies with iron harness bells, the curves of the river below”(230). There are eyes, which lock in some kind of recognition: “He fell through her eyes. He was staring up at a looming cliff face that seemed to consist of small rectangular balconies ... a Mongol princess or something up in the mountains” (234).

Thus “she may not be flesh, but the idoru is “she”; it is a “gendered, romantic vision of subjectivity” (Case 636). She is an “envoy” of some “imaginary country.” Dusted with something white seems to hint at the powder worn by geisha. The main source, however, is the female pop idol industry of Japan that is exploitative in many respects. In an interview, Gibson notes that he started a story about a real Japanese “aidoru.” These are:

disposable girl singers who are supposed to have a shelf life of about six months, just completely artificial and made up. This is a traditional thing in Japan. And in one case they forgot to attach a physical girl to the product ... this one became really popular because word got out she didn’t exist. Some of the young boys who go for these entities found that even sexier and she had a really interesting career. ... there was something in that story that I found wonderfully resonant, looking at our pop-music industry ... the manufacturing of celebrities ... So I started playing around with that and came up with the idea of a completely artificial pop-star.¹⁴

¹⁴ Interview, Salon.com. The “story” is from Karl Taro Greenfeld’s book *Speed Tribes*.

In Gibson's novel *Rei Toei* consists of a patchwork of artificial memories that draw on the wishes and needs of her fans, mined from the internet. As Sue Ellen-Case notes of Gibson's novel *Idoru*, "Within a heady confluence of postnational identities, all converging in Japan (the imaginary of future-tech), the process of constructing celebrity narrates just how subjectivity may be inscribed within data flow. The new mode of celebrity is an effect of the electronic rather than its source" (636). Gibson's *Idoru* is right on target, "placing celebrity at the center of how cultural production ... will survive within the electronic" (638). *Rei Toei* then is a metaphor for the already virtual character of the star, the embodiment of digital information; situated at the interface between the fans and the pop-music industry. Thus Gibson designs *Idoru*'s world as the logical extension of a society in which the internet has become the accepted means of communication and an important economic factor.

Most importantly for the concerns of this thesis, this virtual idol is an unparalleled instance of postmodern orientalism. On the one hand, it is a simulation, and a consideration of some relevant passages from Gibson's fiction demonstrates the evolution of this entity in line with the three different orders of simulacra formulated by Baudrillard: the first order is that of the counterfeit (difference of automaton from the human); the second order is that of production (robot vis a vis the human); the third order (the copy has replaced the real). Moreover, it is holographic, one of the "metaphors of the new technology" according to Hollinger (*Storming* 215). It is in the form of a holograph that her media presence extends into real space. On the other hand, the virtual idol is a representation that is gendered, and orientalized, in my opinion modeled on the Japanese mechanical automaton (doll), a predecessor of modern-day robots.

In order to substantiate this latter point, a comparison with the novel *The Difference Engine*, co-authored by Gibson and Sterling, is instructive. Set in the Dickensian world of 1855, a very funny, farcical passage occurs when the main characters Oliphant and Mallory are seated in a dining room with five Japanese men. A woman is with them as well, kneeling at the table's foot. How do we know she is Japanese? She has a look of "mask-like composure and a silky black wealth of hair" and is wearing "native garb, bright with swallows and maple-leaves" (166); i.e. kimono. The

men are introduced by their “impossible names” and are in the service of His Imperial Majesty the Mikado of Japan. The Japanese woman still makes no response, as whiskey is being decanted into an elegant ceramic jug, at the right hand of the Japanese woman. Mallory wonders if “she were ill, or paralyzed.” Then one of the Japanese men fits the little jug in her right hand, and inserting a gilded crank-handle into the small of her back, the “ticking automaton” begins pouring the drinks. Mallory marvels at it, like one of those Jacquot-Droz toys, or Vaucanson’s famous duck. Moreover, it is now obvious that “the mask-like face, half-shrouded by the elegant black hair, was in fact carved and painted wood.” And not a bit of metal in her, adds Oliphant, stating it’s made of bamboo, horse-hair, and whalebone, adding that the Japanese have known how to make such dolls for years (*karakuri*, they call them).

The above example, an automated Japanese doll which moves itself, suggests that a corresponding strategy has been adopted for the depiction of the idoru (something “generated, animated, projected”) which draws its support and coherence from the evolution of the robot in Japanese culture. And as has been noted, it is “a short step from animism to animation.”

Repliee

In a chapter entitled “Android Dawn” Hornyak considers androids which look like real people, much closer to the ideal human form than traditional robots. It also encompasses the notion of synthetic beings that are mainly organic instead of strictly mechanical. At the 2005 Aichi Expo, humanoid robots were on display “to the delight of millions of visitors” (134). All were instantly recognizable as artificial organisms, except one. This one “had moist lips, glossy hair and vivid eyes blinking slowly as it gazed around the room.” True there was something not quite right about the gaze, the mouth and the skin. But, for a mesmerizing instant from fifteen feet away the senses were deceived and the Repliee Q1 expo was “virtually indistinguishable” from a typical Japanese woman in her thirties. (The name was taken from the French “repliquer” but evokes the “replicant” biological androids of *Blade Runner*, “more human than human,” for whom elaborate “empathy tests” must be administered to tell machine from man).



Fig. 5. A television announcer (Fuji Ayako, left) poses with the android Repliee Q1.

According to the creator of Repliee Q1, humanoid robots are “information media” and their main role is “to interact naturally with people” (Hornyak 136). The point I wish to stress is that, according to some, the more robots resemble humans, the more their “subtle imperfections” make us feel uncomfortable, “engendering a deeply negative response in us” (141). This phenomenon is known as the Uncanny Valley. It hides something deeply connected to human life or human psychology. Some researchers have dismissed this as pseudoscientific, or simply a question of aesthetics. It suggests that people naturally tend to see humanlike androids as human beings, but subtle differences make them uncanny; moreover, people expect a natural correlation between appearance and behavior – they want robots to behave as they would expect mechanical beings to behave and feel uncomfortable if they do not. I have emphasized in the examples in this last section (“he seemed to cross a line”) the focus in cyberpunk is on a particular psychological or aesthetic moment, of recognition, marveling, and difference.

Conclusion

It has been observed that the dichotomy between over-embodiment and (a desire for) disembodiment is often taken as evidence that cyberpunk is “both unable to think its

way out of Cartesian mind/body dualisms and also invested in a reinscription of gender and race norms” (Foster 50). In contrast Foster argues that this seeming dichotomy is actually displaced by the emergence of a “third space” (50) of technocultural experience, which cannot be easily captured by dualistic categories. Foster finds cyberpunk works through these dualisms to open their relationship to new articulations and therefore “locates itself in a space of undecidability.” Thus, it demonstrates a “paradoxical insistence on simultaneously eliminating and retaining gender categories ... a double gesture both a characteristic of cyberpunk representations of embodied cultural differences and as a puzzle that needs explanation” (50-51).

As I have shown, this “third space” manifests the characteristics of postmodern orientalism at the same time that it complicates the notion. Working from the particular cases of cyberpunk-particular content that I have considered so far, in this chapter I have developed Armstrong’s notion of the negative and positive prosthesis in terms of replacement and augmentation. Focusing mostly on the replacement side of the debate, I have considered race (and gender) in some key cyberpunk texts, and traced the links to an emerging (postmodern) discourse of trauma. In the final section I looked at the positive pole, with examples of virtual culture, utopian in that they would promise perfection of the body, the technological systems that support it, and the discourse of orientalism which frames it.

Chapter Five: Cyberspace and the Virtual Orient

Cyberspace – a term in increasing currency today, and perhaps one of the most contested words in contemporary culture – is a “cultural space” which has generated “more confusion and revealed more paradoxes than it has created clarity” (Kendrick 143). The term now generally refers to the notional space of the Internet and virtual reality, the “nowhere space” of computer-generated environments where information is exchanged between computers and in which computer networking happens. Gibson’s *Neuromancer*, where he first “came up with the idea of cyberspace, the place where brains and software meet” (Disch *On SF* 146), predated the explosion of popular and leisure use that has transformed the Internet.

Generally, I think we can agree with Rudy Rucker, that “the reputability of cyberpunk rests on this one visionary extrapolation” – cyberspace (326). In this fictional world, cyberspace is a global computer network of information which Gibson calls “the matrix”; operators like Case in *Neuromancer* gain access (“jack-in”) through headsets (“Sendai dermatrodes”) via a computer terminal (a “cyberspace deck” such as a Japanese Ono-Sendai VII) that projected his disembodied consciousness into the “consensual hallucination” that is the matrix. Once in cyberspace, one enters a landscape (akin to virtual reality) inhabited by computer programs and simulacra created by artificial intelligences, and the operator can “move” to any part of the vast three-dimensional system of data coded into various iconic architectural forms laid out beneath him like a vast city.

A range of other “intelligent” entities can also “exist” in cyberspace, which do not have a human referent “outside” the system. Some are previously downloaded personality constructs of humans, while others are autonomous post-human artificial intelligences (AIs) which live in cyberspace, as Bruce Sterling explains, “like fish in water.” Essentially, then, Gibsonian cyberspace represents an imagined merger between the Internet and VR systems. Gibson’s “cyberspace” has become “a synonym for virtual reality and information technologies” (Brandt 105).

Gibson's "consensual hallucination" has subsequently become "almost a brand name for life in the postmodern, post-industrial age" (Markley 55). But, as science fiction writer Gwyneth Jones reminds us, in the fictional as in the real world, it has been somewhat the victim of its own success. According to Jones, the speed with which that term "hit the streets and proliferated shows how hungry we were for a new spatial metaphor.... In much of the fiction – books, comics, movies, videos, games – cyberspace has become merely a dreamland, the immemorial *other world* where fantasies happen" (83).

One paradox revealed here, and a concern of this chapter, pertains to cyberspace described in binary terms. On the one hand, as Jones points out, when Gibson comes to "the core of his fantasy science, he feels bound to try and explain *cyberspace* logically: what it is and how it came to exist" (16). Although Jones notes that "the language of science is a means, not an end: the process, not the product" (17), it is the influence of the scientific method that leads science fiction writers to insist that "we must describe realistic futures; that the book must be able to answer the question *how did we get there from here*" (17). Thus cyberspace can be conceived of as a coherent, technologically created spatial environment, and situated within a Western tradition of physics and metaphysics, as "rational" space, "created and mediated by machines and mathematics" (Kendrick 143). In this it resembles the 3D computer-generated virtual reality environment which emerged from sophisticated military and medical applications. Yet on the other hand cyberspace is very much a "dreamland" or "other world," a fantasmatic space. Thus, in Kendrick's terminology, cyberspace can be described as "irrational," in other words "mystical, performative, and cognitively dissonant" (143). In this sense, Gibsonian cyberspace is very much a fictional landscape, constructed from language, the effects being the products of language and the imagination, and availing itself of rhetorical strategies, particularly "new" spatial metaphors.

In an infrequently cited article, "Academic Leader," Gibson provides his own account of the emergence of cyberspace, which suggests to me how the construction of cyberspace might be paradoxical in this way. Gibson presents a succinctly poetic, metaphoric delineation of cyberspace. Seemingly based on a postmodern cut-up or

sampling method (according to Gibson, the article is composed entirely of textual fragments from previous work) it has the following description of cyberspace:

The architecture of virtual reality imagined as an accretion of dreams: tattoo parlors, shooting galleries, pinball arcades, dimly lit stalls ... premises of unlicensed denturists, of fireworks and cut bait, betting shops, sushi bars, wonton counters, love hotels, hotdog stands, tortilla factories, Chinese greengrocers.... These are dreams of commerce. Above them rise intricate barrios, zones of more private fantasy. (28)

Here cyberspace is first envisaged in terms of an architectural (spatial) model, which has much in common with postmodernist representations of space, in particular Jameson's concept of "postmodern hyperspace." The article also includes Gibson's famous dictum, "the Street finds its own uses for things." Still other references link this "accretion of dreams" specifically to Asia and "the Orient," for example, the "unlicensed denturists" (this phrase occurs in Gibson's article on Singapore in which he makes mention of Kowloon Walled City, "Disneyland"). Then there are the sushi bars and the love hotels of Japan; later in the cyberspace article we read "she puts on the [VR] glasses and the gloves and slots virtual Kyoto."

Gibson's rendition of cyberspace provides "a complex and ambiguous fictional space for readers to explore, one which is rationally ordered but also open to fantastic uncertainty" (Kneale 212). And if we can agree with Chun that cyberpunk fiction "originated the *desire for* cyberspace, if not cyberspace itself" (248) then this particular essay by Gibson further shows the representation of cyberspace as a means of expressing or exploring the non-existence or purely mental, fantasmatic experience of "the Orient." Putting this into dialectical terms, the dominant concern of this chapter then is to arrive at an understanding of "cyberspace as enabling/being enabled by Orientalism" (Chun 251).

Gibsonian cyberspace can thus be regarded as postmodern orientalism: firstly, it exhibits the spaces and forces of multinational capitalism, as per Jameson's definition of postmodernism; secondly, it developed from Asian cities, in terms of aesthetic and geographical influences on Gibson's imagination; and thirdly, like the Orient, cyberspace

is the space of fantasy. Before considering each of the three sections outlined above separately and in detail, I will sketch out some of the more general concerns and related issues around the term postmodern orientalism, in particular postmodern subjectivity (the intervention of technology in subjectivity) and orientalist fantasy, and introduce some of the theorists I will be referring to in the course of the chapter.

Postmodern Subjectivity and Orientalist Fantasy

As Michelle Kendrick points out, cyberspace does not exist as a coherent, technologically created spatial arena but as the discursive site of ideological struggles to define the relationship between technology and subjectivity. In this sense “it is *both* an imaginary projection of the idealized *telos* of technologically mediated existence *and* the latest instance of the technological interventions in human subjectivity” that have always structured definitions of the human. Cyberspace, therefore, is “a cultural conjunction of fictions, projections, and anxieties that exemplify the ways in which technology intervenes in our subjectivity” (143-4). The central issue is this:

Cyberspace, then, can never separate itself from the politics of representation precisely because it is a projection of the conflicts of class, gender and race that technology both encodes and seeks to erase. (Markley 4)

In the era of postmodernism, the status of subjectivity is figured in notions of the death of the subject and the schizophrenia of the self. The old closed centered self, the autonomous human subject, gives way to a fragmented self linked to a world of organizational bureaucracy and corporate hegemony. The non-centered subject is part of various groups, occupying multiple subject positions conceived as social roles with specific groups, and online environments are believed to facilitate this fragmentation of identity. In the early to mid-1990s scholars and researchers wrote about the multiple and dispersed self in cyberspace, and how communication technologies reconfigure notions of identity and human relations. This has resulted in the conception of a “fluid subject that traversed the wires of electronic communication venues and embodied, through its virtual disembodiment, postmodern subjectivity” (Kolko 5). As Scott Bukatman defines

it, this new “virtual subject” is constituted by electronic technologies, but also by “the machineries of the text” (22).

David Brande’s notion of “operative subjects” addresses the lack of psychological depth (compared to that of the “realist” novel) in Gibson’s characters, and how this is typical of postmodern narrative. Brande’s argument is that the “socio-spatial context” of cyberspace constitutes “an ideological fantasy of crucial importance to advanced capitalist society” (81). Brande considers cyberspace, as an extension of the logic of late twentieth-century capitalism, to be Gibson’s “fantastical geography of postnational capitalism” (105), suggesting that the fiction of Gibson plays a crucial role in theorizing the implications of the information revolution. A close discussion of Brande’s article “The Business of Cyberpunk: Symbolic Economy and Ideology in William Gibson” not only situates cyberpunk in the culture of late capitalism, but finds that Gibson’s cyborgs and his construction of cyberspace represent “not the reality of subjectivity within late capitalism, but the fantasy that governs the production of that subjectivity” (97).

Brande relates this to aspects of the “fantastical geography” of multinational capitalism, the “production of new spaces within which capitalist production can proceed” (100) such as cyberspace. Gibson’s construction of cyberspace promotes a vision “of limitless virtual space for market expansion” as inherent in the term “console cowboy,” the lone male protagonist of much American literature and film, evoking the fantasy of limitless open spaces. Brande makes the point that this “thoroughly commodified space is not exactly the same as the nonvirtual spaces of nineteenth-century westward expansion” (101). However, if we consider Kowloon Walled City as a prototype for Gibsonian cyberspace, a number of interesting overlappings and similarities emerge.

In *Orientalism*, Said raised the importance of “imaginative geographies” and their representation, and *Culture and Imperialism* provides the opportunity for rethinking geography through the contrapuntal method, in terms of how the world is divided geographically in the imperial imagination, and the material effects of imperialism in a global framework. This involves the appearance of empire in cultural products such as novels, associated with “far-flung and sometimes unknown places ... or unacceptable

human beings” (64) who only exist as shadowy absences; I will argue the depiction of Kowloon Walled City in *Idoru* offers a compelling instance of this.

Such an approach foregrounds some differences in the term “postmodern orientalism” and “high tech orientalism” (or “techno-orientalism”). It has been suggested that whereas Said’s interrogation of Orientalism examined it in a period of colonial control, high tech Orientalism takes place in a period of US anxiety and vulnerability. As formulated by Morley and Robins, “techno-orientalism” engages the economic crises of the 1980s which supposedly threatened to “emasculate” the West. Faced with a “Japanese future,” high tech orientalism resurrects the frontier, albeit in a “virtual” form, in order to secure open space for America. The result is the representation of a Japanese future marked by other types of “primitive” difference, for example, zaibatsu, yakuza, ninja, and the like. However, as my reading of Kowloon Walled City will suggest, the term “postmodern orientalism” better conveys both the operations of imperialism in terms of the struggle over geography, and the aspects of “geographical dispersion endemic to postmodern life” (Hayles 271) that are formative in Gibson’s construction of cyberspace.

Although, as Chun cautions, “spatializing is not necessarily orientalizing,” it can be noted that “pleasure and power marks the difference between the mere spatialization of information and high tech orientalism” (250). High tech orientalism offers the pleasure of exploring, “of being somewhat overwhelmed, but ultimately ‘jacked-in’” as well as the promise of intimate knowledge, of “concourse with the ‘other’” (Chun 250). This drive structures the reader’s relation to the text, generating “pleasure and desire for these never realizable, yet always seemingly approaching ... futures” (250). Analyzing the importance of Orientalism to cyberspace does not dismiss cyberspace and electronic communications as inherently Oriental, but rather seeks to further understand “how narratives of and on cyberspace seek to manage and engage interactivity” (Chun 252).

Finally, we can begin to consider how the idea of the Orient as fantasy relates to Said’s conceptualization of Orientalism. Cyberspace can be a means of expressing a purely mental, fantasmatic experience of “the Orient.” As defined by Cheng the “fantasmatic” refers to a question of “the constitution of desire, of subjectivity even, rather than the location of a preexisting desire” (121). That is, fantasy assumes there is a “stable and inviolate subject doing the fantasizing” whereas the fantasmatic, on the other

hand, “unclasps fantasy’s securing of subject and object position and pinpoints the unstable interaction that goes into informing the making of the mythology of the ‘object’ or the fetish” (121).

1. Postmodernism and Gibsonian Cyberspace

“I am floating in a most peculiar way”

(David Bowie, “Space Oddity”)

One of the constitutive features of the postmodern, according to Jameson, is a “new depthlessness” which finds its prolongation in a “new culture of the image or simulacrum” (*Postmodernism* 6) as well as a consequent weakening of historicity. Jameson relates these effects to new technology, “itself a figure for a whole new economic world system.” In understanding and characterizing this “bewildering new world space” of late or multinational capitalism, cyberspace is perhaps of unparalleled importance.

A feature of the postmodern that Jameson identifies is a certain emptying out of significance. He contrasts two famous pieces of art to demonstrate the difference between art that has involved some emotional or intellectual depth: Van Gogh’s *A Pair of Boots* and a screen print by Andy Warhol, *Diamond Dust Shoes*. In the latter there is no illusion of depth, no visual perspective and no markers of context or explanation. We are witnessing “the emergence of a new kind of flatness or depthlessness, a new kind of superficiality in the most literal sense, perhaps the supreme formal feature of all the postmodernisms.” In this current “culture of the simulacrum” the very concept of the real has been thoroughly problematized. It is a matter “of some more fundamental mutation both in the object world itself – now become a set of texts or simulacra – and in the disposition of the subject” (9).

Besides the hermeneutic model of inside and outside, Jameson finds at least four other fundamental depth models have been repudiated in contemporary theory: the dialectical one of essence and appearance; the latent and the manifest; authenticity and

inauthenticity; and the great semiotic opposition between signifier and signified, which was itself rapidly unraveled and deconstructed during its brief heyday during the 1960s and 1970s. These various depth models are replaced by “new syntagmatic structures” which derive for the most part from “a conception of practices, discourses, and textual play” (12); depth is replaced by surface, or by multiple surfaces. Nor is it merely metaphorical: it can be experienced physically and literally.

Jameson reads “simulacrum” chiefly in visual terms, describing a society in which the image has become the final form of commodity reification. Predominantly visual, the culture of postmodernism ranges everything before the eye, giving it a spatial logic, hence the “new spatial logic of the simulacrum” (18). Moreover, history becomes merely a set of styles, depthless ways of approaching the past. Jameson’s premium example to illustrate this however, comes from architecture. Jameson equates the three-dimensional experience of a famous hotel with the suppression of depth in postmodern painting or literature. As the centerpiece of this chapter is architectural, Kowloon Walled City, I will now look at Jameson’s example.

The Bonaventura Hotel in Los Angeles is a postmodern “hyperspatial” building that “aspires to being a total space, a complete world, a kind of miniature city” (Hardt and Weeks 220). It has a “glass skin” which repels the city outside. Jameson alights on the analogy of reflector sunglasses “which make it impossible for your interlocutor to see your own eyes and thereby achieve a certain aggressivity and power over the Other” (cyberpunk Bruce Sterling uses the same example, “mirrorshades” to discuss cyberpunk).

Escalators and elevators, the latter which ceaselessly rise and fall, account for much of the spectacle and the excitement of the hotel interior. Elevator gondolas, a radically different, but complementary (to escalators), spatial experience, that of rapidly shooting up through the ceiling and outside, along one of the four symmetrical towers, with the referent Los Angeles, spread out before the spectator.

Jameson finds a “dialectical heightening” of the process whereby the escalators and elevators replace movement but also and above all designate themselves as “new reflexive signs and emblems of movement proper.” Such space makes it impossible to use the language of volume, or volumes. This alarming disjunction point between the body and its built environment indicates a greater dilemma, our incapacity to (mentally)

map the greater global multinational and decentred communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects. Thus immersed, without any of that distance that formerly enabled the perception of perspective or volume, Jameson notes “you are in this hyperspace up to your eyes and your body.”

Flickering Signifiers

In “Virtual Bodies and Flickering Signifiers,” N. Katherine Hayles suggests that the shift to an information paradigm towards the end of the twentieth century has profoundly affected contemporary fiction. Cyberpunk is cited as an example of fiction directly influenced by information technologies.¹ In societies enmeshed within information networks (notably the United States and other first-world countries), the effect of this transformation is the creation of a “highly heterogeneous and fissured space in which discursive formations based on pattern and randomness jostle and compete with formations based on presence and absence” (261). Information is produced by a “complex dance” (265) between predictability and unpredictability, repetition and variation. Pattern and randomness are bound together in a “complex dialectic” (260). The shift from presence and absence to pattern and randomness is encoded into every aspect of contemporary literature, from the physical object that constitutes the text to such staples of literary interpretation as character, plot, author, and reader. Importantly, information technologies “fundamentally alter the relation of signified to signifier” creating what Hayles terms “*flickering signifiers*, characterized by their tendency toward unexpected metamorphoses, attenuations, and dispersions” (263). (By contrast, floating signifiers, following Lacan, are founded on a dialectic of presence and absence.) The changing modes of signification affect the *codes* as well as the subjects of representation.

Neuromancer, according to Hayles, gave “a local habitation and a name to the disparate spaces of computer simulations, networks, and hypertext windows” that prior to Gibson’s intervention had been discussed as separate phenomena – the richly textured landscape of cyberspace. And like the landscapes they negotiate, the subjectivities who operate within cyberspace also become patterns rather than physical entities. Case still

¹ For the view that a paradigm shift from print to digital culture is a defining aspect of postmodernism, see Joseph M. Conte, *Design and Debris: A Chaotics of Postmodern American Fiction*.

has a physical presence, but regards his body as “meat” which sustains him until he can re-enter cyberspace again. Others have completed the transition that Case’s values imply, as a personality construct within the computer, defined by the magnetic patterns that store his identity.

Gibson’s achievement, Hayles suggests, is based on literary innovations that allow “subjectivity, with its connotations of consciousness and self-awareness, to be articulated together with abstract data” (268). One of these concerns point of view (pov) which in cyberspace does not emanate from the character, but literally *is* the character, and therefore does not imply physical presence. The pov constitutes the character’s subjectivity by serving as a “positional marker” substituting for the absent body. The second innovation concerns how cyberspace is “created by transforming a data matrix into a landscape in which narratives can happen” (269). Narrative becomes possible when this spatiality is given a temporal dimension by the movement of point of view through it. Through the track it weaves “the desires, repressions, and obsessions of subjectivity” (270) are able to be expressed. I will return to this last point later in the chapter, because it is unclear to me how these desires, repressions and obsessions are expressed, or what particular form they might take.

Gibson’s innovations, then, carry the implications of informatics “beyond the textual surface into the signifying processes that constitute theme and character.”² Hayles finds Gibson’s novels have been successful because they “embody within their techniques the assumptions expressed explicitly in the novel’s themes” (270). Subjectivity, already joined with information technologies through cybernetic circuits, is further integrated into the circuit by novelistic techniques that combine it with data. The reasoning here is that subjectivity and computer programs have a common arena in which to act. Historically that arena was first defined in cybernetics (*cyberpunk*) by the creation of a conceptual framework that constituted humans, animals, and machines as information-processing devices receiving and transmitting signals to effect goal-directed behavior (in Norbert Wiener’s seminal text). The result is “a series of fissures and

² The term “informatics” is used by Hayles to designate a network of syncopated relations between changes in bodies as they are represented within contemporary literary texts, the changes in textual bodies as they are encoded within information media, and the construction of human bodies as they interface with information technologies. It refers to the full spectrum of cultural changes that initiate, accompany, and complicate the development of technologies of information.

dislocations that push toward a new kind of subjectivity” (274) that has important implications for both the construction of the narrator and the construction of the reader.

Operative Subjects

David Brande points out that Gibson’s novels offer little of the kind of pleasure provided by “realist” novels (the construction of psychological depth). The characters in these novels are “operative subjects.” These heroes and heroines, for example Molly and Case in *Neuromancer*, lack “psychological depth” because they “make explicit the form of subjectivity conditioned by the triumph of exchange-value ... over other modes of symbolizing” (90). They thus fail to meet the expectations of readership conditioned by modes of symbolizing characteristic of industrial capitalism and the cultural residues of earlier epochs.

By this Brande means Gibson’s characters “operate less on principles of interiority than through modes of connectivity” (96). One such example is Josef Virek in *Count Zero*. Virek exists biologically at the extremity of “molecular sludge” within a linked system of “support vats” located somewhere outside Stockholm. He searches for “bio-soft,” which will allow him to escape his support vats for a more sophisticated and powerful material basis for consciousness. He is as rich as some zaibatsu; is he an individual? No longer even remotely human, Virek’s subjectivity is “pure connectivity and force” (Brande 92). According to Brande, these are the embodiments of the logic of alienation which flattens the subject and “dis-affects” social exchange. McCoy Pauley (aka Dixie Flatline) exists in the novel only as a literal abstraction. Dixie embodies the “abstract positionality of the operational subject, thoroughly commodified” (95).

Brande’s article explores how Gibson’s cyberpunk “in the sense that it ‘represents’ the culture of late capitalism ... stages the underlying market forces that drive that culture constantly and ever more rapidly to revolutionize its relations of production” (105). Brande finds for his purposes Gibson’s significance “lies neither in his prose style ... nor in his description of humanity’s disappearance into technology, but in his novels’ staging of the modes of symbolization characteristic of a technologically advanced capitalist society.” Gibson’s fiction is “a dream of late-capitalist society” (81). Brande’s aim (in terms adopted from Žižek) is to illustrate how both “cyborgs and their

socio-spatial context, 'cyberspace,' constitute ... an ideological fantasy of crucial importance to advanced capitalist society.”

In order to situate Gibson's characterizations and fictional environments more precisely, Brande considers the work of Jean-Joseph Goux on “symbolic economies” to explore the “formal linkage of the economic and subjective ... without positing a causal deterministic relation between the two” (89). Of particular interest here is the “rift between the intersubjective and economic relations” which leaves subjects with “only an operational relation to symbolic substitution and exchange. The symbol may ultimately lose its depth, its verticality, and becomes a signifying articulation, a structure, which represses interiority.” According to Brande (and we can also include Hayles), then, it can be argued Gibson's cyborg characters embody the abstract positions of such subjects. Both Molly (the cyborg samurai) and Case define themselves by their avenues of entry into extended circulation and exchange-value. For his part, Case, at the beginning of *Neuromancer*, is busy self-destructing, the result of his having been neurochemically maimed by previous employers from whom he had withheld stolen goods. He is no longer able to access the “bodiless exultation of cyberspace.” Apparently life outside the matrix for Case is not worth living.

Given the prior position of the division of labor, and the modes and relations of production to the formation of consciousness's conception of itself, the “denaturing of the Cartesian subject and the articulation of the cyborg or fragmented consciousness ought to be seen as an effect of changing modes and relations of production and of changes in the division of labor” (83). The “constant revolutionizing of production,” embodied by Gibson's cyborgs (Brande's example is the Panther Moderns in *Neuromancer*, and how they express the underlying market forces that condition their environment) necessitates “speed-up in economic and cultural turnover time, which has the psychological effect of making time collapse in on itself” (85).

At issue is the extent to which cyberspace is an ideological fantasy answering to one of the most intractable (and most vital) contradictions of capitalism itself – crises of overaccumulation. It is the “constitutive ideological fantasy of space that enables capitalist circulation to continue” (102); the production of new spaces within which capitalist production can proceed; the “fantasy of limitless open spaces, frontier without

end” (101) inherent in the mythology of the cowboy; the investment of capital and labor in geographical expansion (the “spatial fix” in David Harvey’s terminology). Cyberspace, then, is Gibson’s “fantastical geography” of multinational capitalism “fulfilling the same basic functions as did the frontier and the nation state in an earlier era” (105). The matrix is not only a grid but it is also “both a new geography enabling the expansion of capital markets, ameliorating overaccumulation with a ‘spatial fix,’ and a domain of symbolic reterritorialization for the increasingly and bewilderingly complex flows of capital through those markets” (105). Gibson vividly illustrates this in his descriptions of wasted industrial landscapes (and Brande notes the relevance of industrial music of the eighties and its response to the failed promise of the postwar boom; but I would argue the rock formation of the seventies is more apposite here, as I demonstrated in the chapter on rock music).

An integral part of these descriptions of wasted industrial landscapes depends on representations of Japan. First, Japan’s Chiba City is a fantasy of Detroit, the Motor City characterized, at the end of the twentieth century, by urban breakdown and inner city decay, which in turn provides the blueprint for Night City; and second, the trope of *gomi* in Gibson’s fiction, which usefully extends the points Brande makes regarding crises of overaccumulation, while also pointing in other, more overtly Orientalist directions.

A Reified Space-Vision Construct

To further explore these points, I will now examine Gibsonian cyberspace in terms of a “reified space-vision construct” and focus on how his fiction “represents” the reification of space and vision that is characteristic of multinational capitalism. Reification is an important process which pervades the spatial organization of cities in modernity. Space conditions the direction of capitalist expansion in both a material and ideological sense. This process effects our cognitive relationship with the social totality. The reification of late capitalism transforms human relations into an appearance of relationship between things; it seeks to explain how estranged and alienated forces can come to dominate and oppress human existence, just as things themselves – commodities and objects – become treated as if they were important, or more important than people.

For Marxist critic Georg Lukacs, reification operates in two ways: one is the way in which capitalism defines everything in commodity terms because everything has an exchange value, an amount of money for which it can be bought or sold. It involves “the substitution for human relations of thing-like ones” such as money. Second, it sees the triumph of the commodity, and the subsequent eclipse of the sense of society as an organic whole. The “wholeness” of social life is shattered into sporadic dispersions of specialized, machine-like or technical objects and operations, each of which has the potential to assume a near-life of its own and dominate actual human beings. The “reified” fragmentation of contemporary life as a direct result of capitalism is marked by a straining towards “psychic wholeness” in response to a vision of the world in ruins and fragments. In our fragmented and atomistic society, matter has been invested with human energy and henceforth takes the place of and functions like human action. The machine is of course the most basic symbol of this type of structure.

Jameson considers the triumph of global late capitalism (i.e. the failure of Communism and the spread of capitalism all over the world) to have involved a more comprehensive commodification than ever before. This turning of everything into a commodity, something particularly evident in the worlds of art and culture, is precisely reification, the “thingifying” of all human creative and relational abilities. Reification undermines the sense of totality in society, according to Jameson; it fragments out perception of the world in which we live, so that we can only see the frozen discrete objects that make up our existence. Our world shrinks to just those reified things that define our world.

In his article “Space and Power: Nineteenth-century Urban Practice and Gibson’s Cyberworld,” Fabijancic finds Gibson’s fiction enacts the shift from the temporally-oriented depth modes to spatial, surface ones that Jameson associates with third-stage or multinational capitalism. The new imperatives of business result in “new categories or levels of space,” in new ways of seeing that issue from these strange virtual dimensions, as registered narratively in the juxtapositional spatial form that originates with the radical experimentations in modernism.

However, I would also add holography here as contributing to new ways of seeing, a technology of perception that features prominently in cyberpunk, and which

complicates the relation to modernism (or enforces the link with postmodernism).³ An important source for holography in cyberpunk might well be the influential physicist David Bohm's use of the analogy of a hologram for thinking about "implicate order" because of its property that "each of its parts, in some sense, contains the whole" and referred to in Fritjof Capra's widely read *The Tao of Physics* first published in 1976. Capra defines holography as "a technique of lensless photography based on the interference property of light waves. The resulting 'picture' is called a hologram" (323). He writes that "if any part of a hologram is illuminated, the entire image will be reconstructed, although it will show less detail than the image obtained from the complete hologram." Admitting the analogy is somewhat limited, Capra notes its usefulness for Bohm is that "the real world is structured according to the same general principles, with the whole being enfolded in each of its parts." In his first story "Fragments of a Hologram Rose" (written around 1977) Gibson adapts the terminology and visual effects of holography to convey an updated metaphysical complexity whereby each fragment which reveals the whole image of the rose "reveals the rose from a different angle."

Two areas which manifest the reified space-vision construct are the subject/object relation, which is increasingly bridged only through vision (consumption activities such as the promenade or mall, TV, and videogames) and the relation between public and private space (the specialization of shops, rooms, etc). The subject/object relation in Gibson's trilogy – of which the object pole can be viewed as the multinational system rather than, more specifically, the object as commodity – is rendered through cyberspace. This parallel world is a uniquely multinational capitalist space which acts as a point of conflation between reified subject and object. Cyberspace is a point of conflation in the sense that it is thought to represent all the data produced in the human system. This conflation is a limited one because just as the reified object world confronts its subjects like an alien force, "cyberspace itself functions in a similarly alienating way" (12). Its operators cannot know it in its entirety because many of its sectors are the privileged

³ This may also be a source for the "dance of data" metaphor in *Neuromancer*, which as Larry McCaffery points out, suggests "a familiarity with interactions between Eastern mysticism and modern physics." Gibson's response to McCaffery's suggestion is that he was aware of that image of the dance as being part of Eastern mysticism, but a more direct source was a letter from John Shirley about "proteins linking" (*Storming* 273-4).

private domains of multinationals or corporate clans like the Tessier-Ashpools in *Neuromancer*.

Late capitalism's hyper-urban configurations are characterized by a vast network of banks, business centres and major productive entities, as also motorways, airports and information lattices through which the city as simply a vast agglomeration of people ceases to exist. Furthermore, multinational capitalist urban space intensifies the division between "haves" and "have-nots." Atomization and compartmentalization, the separation of private from public space reinforces the apparently irrevocable reality of separateness in its most negative sense of isolation and alienation, both of which are an inevitability of modern existence. Such separateness "reinforced in spatial and psychological terms" marks out capital's power.

2. Orientalism and Cyberspace

"The Walled City continued to haunt me ..."

(William Gibson, preface to *Idoru*)

The premise of Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, in which the "themes are a sort of sequel to *Orientalism*" (54), is that the institutional, political and economic operations of imperialism are nothing without the power of culture that maintains them. We recall orientalism realized a very important component of the European will to domination over the non-European world, and made it possible to create a set of institutions, a latent vocabulary, a subject matter, and subject races. Above all, Orientalism had the "epistemological and ontological power virtually of life and death, or presence and absence, over everything and everybody designated as 'Oriental'" (*World* 223). Said finds it alarming the extent to which contemporary criticism seems "utterly blind to the impressive constitutive authority in textuality of such power" (224). Imperialism "lingers where it has always been, in a kind of general cultural sphere as well as in specific political, ideological, economic, and social practices" (*Culture* 9). Its very investment in culture makes imperialism a force that exists far beyond a geographical empire.

In this section I am concerned with the “residue of imperialism” in recent cultural examples from Gibson and cyberpunk fiction. Kowloon Walled City stands as an unparalleled (and unforgettable) example of the geography of empire, and the many-sided imperial experience that created its fundamental texture (the Hong Kong of the British, the resistance of the Chinese, and the interventions of the Japanese). As such, it is a cultural document in which the interaction between Europe on the one hand and the imperialized world on the other, is animated, informed, made explicit as an experience for both sides of the encounter.

There are a number of consequences related to the pervasiveness of imperialism and these can be summarized as follows: the organic continuity with earlier narratives (elite texts); the reinforcement of perceptions and attitudes about England and the world; a globalized view of British power; and the structure connecting novels to one another has no existence outside the novels themselves.

Some qualifications can be added, which relate to the following discussion on Gibson’s evocation of Kowloon Walled City. The attitudes about England as they relate historically to Kowloon Walled City are buried or hidden so as to seem unconnected to that particular site. In fact, adopting Said’s methodology, it is only through a contrapuntal reading of Gibson’s *Idoru* that the particular significance of Kowloon Walled City, both as an imperial artifact (City of Darkness) and a blueprint for Gibsonian cyberspace (Hak Nam), becomes apparent.⁴ Finally, the images of Kowloon in circulation come from the lens of a Japanese photographer, which complicates the notion of “British” imperialism, and the role of the novel.

Said’s methodology for uncovering the interrelationship between European culture and the imperial enterprise is a mode of reading which he calls “contrapuntal,” a form of “reading back” from the perspective of the colonized to uncover the submerged presence of empire in texts. It operates polyphonically, focuses on discrepancies, and provides a way of rethinking geography. Using this method for Gibson’s *Idoru* allows us to see Kowloon Walled City as more than a stand-alone “gothic” manifestation tied to a

⁴ As Said notes, Joseph Conrad captures two very different but intimately related aspects of imperialism in the novel *Heart of Darkness*: the idea that the power and opportunity to take over territory, *of itself*, gives you the right to dominance; and the practice or implementation that obscures this idea. In these terms, Kowloon would seem to be an apposite example.

particular generic tendency (horror and/or science fiction), as a provocative instance of postmodern orientalism.

Kau Kung Shin Kai (Kowloon Walled City)

In the preface to *Idoru*, Gibson mentions that he was introduced to Kowloon Walled City “via the photographs of Ryuji Miyamoto,” a Japanese photographer, and remarks how these “stunning images” continued to influence him, forming the texture for The Bridge in the novel *Virtual Light*. The Walled City offers a kind of virtual counterpart to Gibson’s presentation of this space, the squatter community on the Bay Bridge. It is this concern for maintaining autonomy in the face of the colonizing corporate interests that provides a key dynamic at the heart of these works. The attempts to protect the Bridge, and the Walled City from “the co-opting processes of global capitalism” (Annesley 226) give these novels its central motif.

In *Idoru*, the “Walled City” is an internet enclave cut off from the corporate processes that dominate much of the rest of the cyber experience, and would seem to represent the promise of freedom (in and through the internet). The Walled City, Gibson explains, exists in an “informational wormhole, with no space or place, an electronic never-never land.” Gibson writes that “the Walled City is of the net, but not on it. There are no laws here, only agreements.” Furthermore, “the people that founded Hak Nam [the Walled City] were angry, because the net had been free, you could do what you wanted, but then the governments and the companies, they had different ideas of what you could do, what you couldn’t do. So these people, they found a way to unravel something. A little place, a piece, like cloth.... They went there to get away from the laws. To have no laws, like when the net was new.” The first rendering of Hak Nam is described thus to one of the protagonists:

And then the thing before her: building or biomass or cliff face looming there, in countless unplanned strata, nothing about it even or regular. Accreted patchwork of shallow random balconies, thousands of small windows throwing back blank silver rectangles of fog. Stretching either way to the periphery of vision, and on

the high, uneven crest of that ragged façade, a black fur of twisted pipe, antennas sagging under vine growth of cable. (238)

Chia asks what is it? Masahiko replies, Hak Nam, “City of darkness. Between the walls of the world” (238).

Gibson’s description is an extrapolation from a number of sources: historical fact, a series of photographs, a metaphorical “city of darkness” (versus “city of light”). Then there are the Gothic and science-fictional overtones (“the thing”). But, in the realization that imperialism has monopolized the entire system of representation, it has more in common with Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.



Fig. 6. Kowloon Walled City.

Historically Kowloon Walled City was one of the most “feared and lawless barrios in the world.” Kowloon Walled City. By a quirk of the 1898 Convention of Peking a tiny area of Hong Kong (about the size of a New York City block) which had once been a small walled village, became a disputed territory theoretically owned by China, ruled by the British, but governed in fact by Chinese criminal fraternities whose members used it as a safe haven. By the 1960s it was a dense wedge of buildings bisected by narrow dark alleys into which the sun seldom penetrated, noxious cellars, warrens of

apartments, staircases, tunnels and one-room factories making anything from fish-balls and boiled sweets to plastic sex toys. It was also a primary heroin-manufacturing centre.⁵

Kowloon Walled City was the place which the Manchus maintained as a fortified headquarters before the British ever came to Hong Kong, and in which they reserved their authority when the New Territories were ceded in 1898. When the British took over the New Territories they very soon got rid of the Chinese officials at Kowloon. However, the status of the place was never quite settled. It became a sort of no man's land, known simply as the Walled City. As late as the 1970s it was said that any real administration was provided by the Triads. It revived remarkably after the Second World War, when squatters by the thousand moved in. By the late 1980s it housed some 30,000 people (some accounts put the figure at 60,000). The walls were torn down by the Japanese. The slum has remained a "strange reminder of China's stake in Hong Kong." Kowloon Walled City was destroyed in 1993 but it seems to have become better known since its disappearance. It has been used as a setting for video games and as a model for postmodern images of labyrinthine and derelict cities in films.⁶

At a recent retrospective of Miyamoto's photographs which I happened to see in Setagaya, Tokyo, the harrowing images of Kowloon Walled City still remain for me the centerpiece of the exhibition. The photographer is noted for his work detailing architectural ruins, and the images of Kowloon haunt the observer long after seeing them. In one particular image sequence of the rooftops with a mish-mash of antennae and other twisted materials, a 747 jet enters and exits the sky above.

The notes that accompany the exhibition mention Gibson as being influenced by the photographs for his novel *Idoru*. At the end of an earlier essay on Singapore ("Disneyland"), Gibson mentions flying over Kowloon. In this piece of journalism, Gibson writes that "ordinarily confronted with a strange city, I'm inclined to look for the parts that have broken down and fallen apart, revealing the underlying social mechanisms: how the place is really wired." Admitting to having had no such luck with

⁵ By the late 1950s it made Hong Kong of primary importance to international drug traffickers. In Kowloon Walled City heroin could be purchased openly there by the kilogram on the main alley known as Pak Fan Gai. See Jackie Pullinger *Crack in the Wall*.

⁶ The films *Blade Runner* and *Brazil* have been cited as examples. In the case of the former, it may be the videogame that is being referred to.

Singapore, he finds Kowloon fits the bill: “I caught a glimpse of the Walled City of Kowloon (butcher’s, denturists, dealers in heroin, etc).”

In fact, in an early issue of *Science Fiction Eye*, on his first visit to Tokyo, in “Tokyo Collage” Gibson writes on Kau Kung Shin Kai, as “orientalia of a different order.” He notes the photographer “captured views from the almost sunless heart of a structure that seems to have been generated from a single cell” and finds it representative of the “dark side” of Asia, pointing out “unlicensed dental clinics ... the ganglia of wiring, phone lines, plastic tubing ... some monstrous growth.”

Concerning the photographs themselves, in “Architectural Apocalypse” (an introductory text to the photographs) Isozaki states “the city of the future is a ruin” and Miyamoto “entered the inner depths of contemporary urban space and portrayed its fascinating chaos.” This work expresses Miyamoto’s consciousness of “a dangerous crisis in contemporary civilization and the need to sound a warning.”



Fig. 7. An aerial view of Kowloon Walled City

As is obvious from the photographs, one reason that the Kowloon block of slum apartments appeals to the postmodern sensibility is its unique structure, its density and

unplanned expansion “created an extremely complex, labyrinthine structure that might be described as a secret virtual city” (203). It is a space that can never be completely known from the outside. Once on the inside, it is impossible to obtain an overall image of the outside. This is a “world” rather than a “space. (Similarly, the operators of cyberspace cannot know it in its entirety because many of its sectors are the privileged private domains of multinationals or corporate clans.) Miyamoto’s anonymous, documentary approach captures the detailed images of alleyways and stairs receding into the depths.



Fig. 8. The buildings are a maze of dank, dark alleys “sealed together by overlapping structures, ladders, walkways, pipes and cables and ventilated only by foetid air-shafts” (Morris 263).



Fig. 9. Twisted cables and garbage.



Fig. 10. Up on the roof.



Fig. 11. Children on the rooftops.

William Gibson's "cyber-punk reading" of Kowloon Walled City may have been based on Miyamoto's photographs, but according to Hayashi, Gibson developed his first impressions further by going beyond the tactile appeal of the photographs and sublimating them into virtual images. It would be wrong to see Miyamoto's photographs

as embodiments of a Gibsonian virtual space, Hayashi argues, because these photographs result in a hallucinatory sensation of a flood of fragments that will never be unified.

I would suggest, however, that Gibson's construction of virtual space is inseparable from these images of Kowloon Walled City, which represents, in an extreme version of Jameson's "postmodern hyperspace," not only multinational capitalist urban space (which intensifies the division between "haves" and "have-nots") but also, in Said's terms, a cultural document marked by the residue of imperial history (paradoxically local and global at the same time). It is a sign of how the imperial past lives on: "The rooftops of the Walled City were its dumping ground, but the things abandoned there were like objects out of a dream, bit-mapped fantasies discarded by their creators, their jumbled shapes and textures baffling the eye, the attempt to sort and decipher them inducing a kind of vertigo" (*Idoru* 277).

Planet Gomi

Strangely, Gibson recorded his wish that something akin to Kowloon Walled City should be built in Tokyo Bay (Tatsumi and Nijima 27-28), which links this particular structure to the "trope of gomi." In some ways, Hicks notes, "gomi" works in Gibson's fiction as part of "a rather conventional cyberpunk formula: hyperconsumption equals global mortality ... a trademark of the genre are barren, irrecoverable urban backdrops, ecologically devastated spaces" (80). Gibson lingers on "a case in which gomi is used to expand physical frontiers." The brand of garbage with which Gibson concerns himself "represents the possible foundation for something, or some (space) place, new." Thus

Where does the *gomi* stop and the world begin? The Japanese, a century ago, had already run out of *gomi* space around Tokyo, so they came up with a plan for creating space out of *gomi*. By the year 1969 they had built themselves a little island in Tokyo Bay, out of *gomi*, and christened it Dream Island. But the city was still pouring out its nine thousand tons per day, so they went on to build New Dream Island, and today they coordinate the whole process, and new Nippons rise out of the Pacific. (142-143)

This set piece begins with a rhetorical question. There is a “hundred year” time-frame, underlining the point that garbage exemplifies time-space compression : “In Foucault’s terms garbage is ‘heterochronic’ as it concentrates time in a circumscribed space” (qtd. in Shohat and Stam 43). The pronoun “they” clearly refers to “the Japanese” adding a touch of irony to the accompanying verb “christened” with its western and religious overtones. The set piece is anchored with a fact (9,000 tons per day). There is a polemical tone evident from this passage which suggests that the Japanese, when it comes to garbage, are by turns creative, ironic (“Dream Island”), industrious, and expansionary, as “new Nippons” (not “Japans”) are rising out of the Pacific at an alarming rate.

According to Shohat and Stam, “As a diasporized, heterotopic site, the point of promiscuous mingling of rich and poor, center and periphery, the industrial and the artisanal, the organic and the inorganic, the national and the international, the local and the global; as a mixed, syncretic, radically decentered social text, garbage provides an ideal postmodern and postcolonial metaphor” (42-3). In cyberpunk Japan is figured as the site of ecological disaster. Gomi in the Sprawl is a matter of decaying urban-industrial landscapes, such as Tokyo Bay: across from “the towering hologram logo of the Fuji Electric Company” was “a black expanse where gulls wheeled above drifting shoals of white styrofoam ... under the poisoned silver sky” (*Neuromancer* 13). The suggestion of toxic pollution calls up the environmental disaster from mercury poisoning in Japan.⁷

These associations are spelt out at the ending of *Idoru*, in descriptions of the beach and the garbage. Tokyo Bay is “a beach pebbled with crushed fragments of consumer electronics”; the very “fabric of the beach, wrack and wreckage of the world” is the result of “unthinkable tonnage, dumped here by barge and bulk-lifter” (379). There is an “undeveloped landfill in the Bay. An island. One of two. Off one of the old ‘Toxic Necklace’ sites” (347).

In order to naturalize the term, and locate Japanese culture within a particular configuration, Gibson provides the viewpoint of the character of Kumiko (Kumiko’s eyes) who, as Disch reminds us, is “extraneous to the plot” of the novel *Mona Lisa Overdrive*. I would suggest Kumiko is not an “operative subject” in Brande’s

⁷ Minamata disease is a neurological disorder caused by methylmercury poisoning stemming from a major environmental disaster in Minamata City, Kumamoto Prefecture in Japan, officially disclosed in the 1950’s.

understanding, nor does she conform to Hayles notion of “pov” (that is, point of view in cyberspace does not emanate from the character, but literally *is* the character, and therefore does not imply physical presence). As a Japanese character, Kumiko demonstrates how cyberpunk fiction “seeks to classify and navigate through landscapes by reducing others to their markers of difference” (249). This is what Chun terms high tech Orientalism, a strategy that seeks to “orient the reader to a technology-overloaded present/future (which is portrayed as belonging to the Japanese or other Far Eastern countries) through the promise of readable difference” (250).

3. The Virtual Orient

In the introduction to this thesis I referred to the increasing “technologization of culture” (Chow 55) in terms of the technologies of visibility, and the preoccupation with the visual as a dominant discourse in the twentieth century (photography and film). Add to this the development of the imaging technologies of the postwar period, and the volcanic importance of the visual media intensifies. The strategies of modernity steeped in visualization, such as “techniques of the observer” and “scopic regimes,” were being slowly transformed by technologies that incorporated the new metaphors of cybernetics and television. Accordingly, this marked the “assimilation of vision into technology” (Druckrey 18). Such developments bring to light problems that are inherent in social relations, particularly the ways social difference is constructed in terms of race and gender, as evident in cyberpunk fiction and its envisioning of cyberspace.

Given that I have been arguing for an augmented and enlarged concept of cyberpunk science fiction, particularly in the arena of popular culture, the emergence of cyberspace in terms of the link between spatiality and visual representation needs to be explored further in the wider context of electronic culture. According to Gibson, “I’m mainly interested in cyberspace as a metaphor for what we’ve already created ... with electronic media.”⁸ Gibson has also pointed out that the cyberspace idea had been around “in larval form” in a lot of other stories. There are “all sorts of pre-cursors in science fiction to what I did with cyberspace and for some reason people just don’t recognize

⁸ Interview, Alexandra DuPont 2000.

them: I mean everything from Ellison's 'I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream,' to Vinge's 'True Names.' There's a body of work there that's never been recognized but I was certainly aware of it.'" Bukatman finds Vinge's story published in 1981 "a significant precursor to *Neuromancer*" and an "adept exploration of cybernetic spatiality and interface" (Bukatman 200-1).

Vinge remarks that "One of the central features of *True Names* is the notion that a worldwide computer network would be a kind of *place* for its users. I needed a word for that place, and the best I came up with was 'the Other Plane.'" For some this was the first depiction of cyberspace.⁹ Vinge's *Net* story features a game designer and a group of hackers who encounter sinister multinational forces in a "cybernetic otherworld" (Bukatman 200). Set in the future, around 2014, these computer users gather in illegal cybernetic enclaves (perhaps a forerunner for the internet enclave in *Idoru* known as the "Walled City") disguised in their self-defined alter egos. "True Names" is an interesting distillation of hacker culture, interactive fiction, role-playing games such as *Dungeons & Dragons*, and elements of cyberpunk including specific (high-tech) references to Japan and America (Nippon Electric).

Bukatman notes that "Vinge is familiar with computer operations in a way that Gibson isn't, and so his language is less hyperbolic and more logical" (203). Yet central to Vinge's narrative and, I would suggest, the space "she" inhabits is the "personality" known as the Red Witch or Erythrina, with "her green, faintly oriental eyes" and her "dark, faintly green face" which was "slim and fine-boned, almost Asian except for the pointed ears" (262). On closer inspection, Erythrina is a composite figure from a heterogeneous cultural context: an archetypal Asian "green lady" with slanting eyes; a comic book heroine (the Red Witch, I would suggest, is a transposition of the Scarlet Witch, a fictional character in the Marvel Comics universe, a mutant super-villain turned heroine, with an uncanny ability to alter probability and project "hexes" from her hands); a science fictional creature with "pointed ears"; and dark-skinned. Thus Erythrina in the Other Plane is, in the final account, "an assemblage of cultural and racial fusion and fragmentation" (Kolko 9) a postmodern pastiche which draws on a number of visual

⁹ Mark Pesce finds that "Without using the word 'cyberspace' – whatever that means – he [Vinge] presented a globally networked world into which human imagination has been projected, a 'consensual hallucination' before Gibson's matrix" (228).

forms, the comic book heroine, for instance, and the creatures of science fiction film and television sources.

David Bell in his *Introduction to Cybercultures* has made some observations pertinent to furthering our understanding of Gibson's depiction of cyberspace: that Gibson was only "dimly" aware of virtual reality when he was writing *Neuromancer*; he wrote the novel on a typewriter; and his "inspiration for imagining cyberspace came from watching kids play arcade games" (22). Gibson conceded that this imaginary environment was based, not on the world of computing, but upon the videogames young people played. In an interview Gibson points out that he has "no grasp of how computers *really* work." McCaffery asks: "So your use of computers ... results more from their metaphoric value or from the way they sound than from any familiarity with how they actually operate?" and Gibson replies: "I'm looking for images that supply a certain atmosphere" (*Storming* 270).¹⁰

In this chapter I have argued that Gibson's fiction encourages one to think of cybernetic spatiality in somewhat paradoxical terms. Cyberspace, or the matrix, is Gibson's virtual dataspace in which the combined knowledge of his information society is represented as virtual objects in an infinite space, organized as a regular grid, or founded upon an urban model. Users like Bobby in "Burning Chrome" interface with cyberspace through their computers to perform operations on this data. These operations "like all activities in cyberspace, are spatialized, as users move through the matrix, shift from one location to another and enter and leave databases." These spatial metaphors represent ways for Gibson, his readers and others to make sense of the "non-space" of information, allowing them to "create imagined geographies of the Internet and other dataspace" (Kneale 207).

Yet these "imagined geographies" are also implicated in the "imaginative geographies" of Orientalist discourse and imperialist sites which provide cyberpunk and its depictions of cyberspace with a "certain atmosphere," through recourse to compelling image repositories such as Kowloon Walled City. Chun has suggested this should not

¹⁰ Gibson has commented in an interview "I'm more interested in the *language* of, say, computers than I am in the technicalities." Moreover, "On the most basic level, computers ... are simply a metaphor for human memory: I'm interested in the hows and whys of memory, the ways it defines who and what we are, in how easily memory is subject to revision" (*Storming* 270).

imply that cyberspace can only be understood as an Orientalist space, but rather, that “cyberspace has been constructed as such in influential off-line representations that have impacted, if not shaped, popular off- and on-line conceptions of the internet” (251). However, if a key metaphor for the appearance of data in cyberspace is “city lights” it is hard to ignore the impact of Asian cityscapes and the vestiges of colonial and/or imperialist structures on constructions of cyberspace that began with Gibson and have continued in movie versions of video and computer games. In the final section of this chapter I now want to explore further some “off-line” examples which develop the link between cybernetic spaces and the strategies of visual representation, and which would seem to have a basis or locus in videogame culture.

Gibson comments that “cyberspace [is] a visual experience” and had its genesis in “the Sony Walkman ... in 1981 a radical piece of technology,” sleek advertisements for the hardware for the Apple computer, and “kids playing arcade games.” Somehow in “my visual imagination I put those ... things together and it suggested something. The intensity of what they were doing suggested that they were trying to get through to the other side of the screen.” Gibson, on looking into one of the video arcades, was impressed by “how *rapt* the kids inside were” and how they “clearly *believed* in the space games projected” (*Storming* 272). In “Burning Chrome” Bobby “drove the disc into its slot with the heel of his hand. He did it with the tight grace of a kid slamming change into an arcade game, sure of winning” (168). What attracts Gibson’s attention is the electronic participation of the kids who “stood at the consoles” marking a new age or stage in human-machine interfacing. Fabijancic notes the relation between “reified subjects and reified space in modernity ... is now refigured in that static hooked-in relation between console cowboy, cyberdeck, and screen.” In the final section on the “virtual orient,” which points in the direction of a conclusion to the thesis, by shifting the emphasis towards participation and “interactivity,” and perhaps from consumer to user, I want to suggest some new bearings and orientations for postmodern orientalism.

Despite Aarseth’s pessimism with the term, that “the word *interactive* operates textually rather than analytically, as it connotes various vague ideas of computer screens, user freedom, and personalized media, while denoting nothing” (48), it is clear that the “inversion of the subject implied in the interactive gesture demands new thinking about

the position of the subject” (Druckrey 25). Notwithstanding his lack of interest regarding the technicalities of computers, Gibson’s coinage of “cyberspace” still draws on GUI (graphical user interface) efforts, and developments in the computer industry, through the “immersive desires of videogame interaction” (Crane 89), to develop a visualizable space through which characters and readers can maneuver.

Based on earlier discussions in this chapter we can refine or complicate this distinction between the reader and the character in terms of subjectivity or “subject position.” In cyberspace, operators can “move” to any part of the vast three-dimensional system of data coded into various iconic architectural forms laid out beneath them like a vast city. This allows for interactions between iconic representations of operators, such as avatars or “graphical virtual representations” (González) so that co-presence can be simulated within a myriad of different highly vivid environments. This “co-presence,” as Hayles’ points out, in Gibson’s fiction means we can think of pov as constituting the character’s subjectivity by serving as a “positional marker” substituting for the absent body. Furthermore, in Brande’s argument, it is the “operative subjects” that stage the fantasy that governs the production of subjectivity in multinational capitalism. The fantasy, as I have insisted, is also orientalist, and cyberspace a means of expressing a fantasmatic experience of “the Orient.”

Two approaches are useful here to sum up the main directions of this chapter, and the thesis generally, as both relate to the representation of Japan in Gibson’s fiction. One concerns the distinguishing features of fantasy as a psychoanalytic category. An engagement with cyberspace, through the distancing it offers, allows particular structures of fantasy to surface. This distancing, according to Slavoj Žižek, most commonly takes the form of interpassivity. In order to enhance the definition of “interpassivity,” Žižek invests the term “interactivity” with a contrary sense: “the subject is passive while another actively performs its task.”

Another concerns the distinction made by Henry Jenkins between interactivity (for example, videogames which can “allow consumers to act upon the represented world”) and participation, “shaped by the cultural and social protocols” (*Convergence* 133). Jenkins notes the potential of a new media technology (or of texts produced within that medium) to respond to consumer feedback. The “technological determinants of

interactivity (which is most often prestructured or at least enabled by the designer)” contrasts with the social and cultural determinants of participation which Jenkins finds to be “more open ended and more fully shaped by consumer choices” (287).

By way of conclusion, then, I will consider the implications of the effects of this interfacing with technology which have already generated a reconfigured subject whose “border” is porous and whose autonomy is “enframed” not by but *within* technology.

Strange Virtual Landscapes

Gibson himself considers his work to be in dialogue with the visual forms of popular culture, such as the comic book, and later, Japanese anime. In their introduction to a special issue on “graphic narrative” Chute and DeKoven note that concerning the graphic novel (graphic narrative), the form’s “fundamental syntactical operation is the representation of time as space on the page” (769); it calls a reader’s attention “visually and spatially to the act, process, and duration of interpretation; it comprises the verbal, the visual, and the way these two representational modes interact on a page” (767). Since information networks and data are invisible, cinema also offered (*Hackers*) and continues to offer (*The Matrix*) visual parallels. Significantly, it is videogames which bring together computing, narrativity, and graphic art. By offering the equivalent of spatial stories, gameworlds present sites imbued with narrative potential.

We recall Newmans’ point about videogames, where some cyberspatial landscapes are designed to simulate “geographic” space, whereas others are not, and the pleasure of videogames can involve the transformation of geography itself. The worlds or environments created in videogames are for players to explore and traverse, even manipulate. Bukatman has noted computer games, for instance, “combine narrative progression with ‘virtual’ sensory pleasures.” The operations of narrative “constrain the effects of a new mode of sensory address, so the fascination with the rise of virtual reality systems might represent a possible passage beyond narrative into a new range of spatial metaphors” (195).

Thus the character is inserted into the cybernetic field transforming perception into subject mobility. The human is granted its own spatiality and control over these new vectored fields. So “virtual reality speaks to the desire to see the space of the computer ...

and to further figure it as a space one can *move through* and thereby comprehend” (Bukatman 200). This “desire” forms the basis for much of the science fiction of the 1980s. This “immersive desire” is predicated on more than escape. It is more complex, and I will add, often implicated with forms of Orientalist fantasy.

For Hayles the innovative feature of Gibson’s cyberspace fiction is how a data matrix is transformed into a landscape in which narratives can happen. In my view, this landscape has distinctively Asian features just as, in many video and computer games, the audience is presented with a markedly fictional, exotic space, a space that can be understood as corresponding to the cyberspace in which the games are played. This space is most clearly signaled to be ‘oriental’ in nature.

There is much in Gibson’s fiction that facilitates these points. Fabijancic notes in Gibson’s presentation of cyberspace the “accent on visuals and his use of heightened language becomes something like pure exhilaration,” that “his high-speed language is suited to the high speed of ‘biz,’ the high of cyber-travel, the depthless rhetoric of multinational capitalism.” Gibson “dramatizes the spectacular simulational surfaces of late capitalism through his visually-charged style.” Thus there are “optical” effects associated with movement, such as “speeding up and slowing down,” and a sense of disjuncture in time and space. Time is no longer linear: it jumps around between past, present, and future; it speeds up, slows down, everything is on one flat simultaneous plane.

In *Neuromancer*, we come across the following description of the cyberspace experience:

He closed his eyes.... Symbols, figures, faces, a blurred, fragmented mandala of visual information A gray disk, the color of Chiba sky beginning to rotate, faster, becoming a sphere of paler gray. Expanding – And flowed, flowered for him, fluid neon origami trick ... opening to the stepped scarlet pyramid of the Eastern Seaboard Fission Authority burning beyond the green cubes of Mitsubishi Bank of America, and high and very far away he saw the spiral arms of military systems, forever beyond his reach. (68)

To a certain extent the passage depends for its effect on recognizable visual cues pertaining to a “landscape,” such as “sky,” and recognizable shapes, for example “disk,” “pyramid” and “cube.” The viewing subject is “he.” These effects are achieved in tandem with Japanese evocations: “Chiba sky,” the “green cubes of Mitsubishi Bank,” and “fluid neon origami trick.” There are also references to more traditional viewing patterns – “stepped,” and “high and very far away.” Cyberspace is presented as a landscape which is familiar to the reader: “Up the construct said ... they ascend lattices of light” (40). There are binaries such as “up/down” and “near/far” that enable the reader to map out the cyberspace landscape in order to register more advanced cyber-optical effects: “cyberspace shivered, blurred, gelled” (139).

The creation of “strange virtual dimensions” appropriate for cyberspace to a certain degree is evident in the depiction of the Villa Straylight, the Tessier-Ashpool orbital home which Case and Molly access through an audio-visual hookup in *Neuromancer*:

The walls blurred. Dizzying sensation of headlong movement, colors, whipping around corners and through narrow corridors. They seemed at one point to pass through several meters of solid wall, a flash of pitch darkness. ‘Here,’ the Finn said. ‘This is it.’ They floated in the center of a perfectly square room Each space in Straylight is in some way secret, this endless series of chambers linked by passages, by stairwells vaulted like intestines, where the eye is trapped in narrow curves, carried past ornate screens, empty alcoves ... (205-8)

We find that “the Villa’s silicon core is a small room, the only rectilinear chamber in the complex” and that, by some startling trompe-l’oeil ‘trick’ the eye is deceived and the “paneled room folded itself through a dozen impossible angles, tumbling away into cyberspace like an origami crane” (208).

In “Burning Chrome” we read how a “silver tide of phosphenes boiled across my field of vision as the matrix began to unfold in my head, a 3-D chess board, infinite and perfectly transparent.” Gibson’s presentation of the visual exhilaration of cyberspace (speed and movement), the visually intense formations (“bright geometries”) of the

“simulation matrix” recall Jameson’s characterization of the postmodern condition in terms of hallucinogenic intensity, the thrill of disorientation, vertigo, immersion in a “hyperspace up to your eyes and your body.”

It has been suggested that when I “go” into cyberspace, my body remains at rest in my chair, but some aspect of me “travels” into another realm: “when I am interacting in cyberspace my ‘location’ can no longer be fixed purely by coordinates in physical space.... the question of ‘where’ I am cannot be answered fully in physical terms.” There is a sense in which, in cyberspace, we have manifested an “electronic state of mind” (Wertheim 41).

How narratives of and on cyberspace seek to manage and engage interactivity is perhaps best displayed in Gibson’s accessing of the Walled City in *Idoru*. In a barely furnished room somewhere in Tokyo, Chia and Masahiko sit facing each other on a square of carpet in front of their respective computers, black goggles over their eyes connected to their computers by optical leads: “Something at the core of things moved simultaneously in mutually impossible directions ... and then the thing before her: building or biomass or cliff face looming there ... at the periphery of vision” (238).

Masahiko tells her it is Hak Nam, the city of darkness, “between the walls of the world.” Chia remembered the scarf she’d seen in his room behind the kitchen. The scarf turns up in the virtual space, a *trompe-l’oeil* device. Chia comments that people played games in MUDs; they made up characters for themselves and pretended. Masahiko cautions, this is not a game: “Continual visual impact.”

They were inside now, smoothly accelerating; “Tai Chang Street.” Walls scrawled with messages, spectral doorways, ghost figures. A sharp turn, and then another. They were ascending a maze of twisting stairways, still accelerating, and Chia took a deep breath and closed her eyes. Retinal fireworks. (239)

Chia notes that the room, or more accurately “the reproduction of his tiny room ... it was about the smallest virtual space she could remember having been in (was it because he was Japanese, she wondered)?” An explanation is forthcoming: “The Walled City is a

concept of scale. Scale is place. The original: thirty-three thousand people inhabited it, two-point-seven hectares, as many as fourteen stories” (241). Then:

They were out of his room, fast-forward through the maze of Hak Nam, up twisted stairwells and through corridors, the strange, compacted world flickering past. Ghost-figures whipping past, and everywhere the sense of eyes, the thing ... (276)

These are visualizable spaces through which the characters (and readers) “move” or manoeuvre. There are similarities here in the way graphic narratives call the reader’s attention “visually and spatially.” Postmodern orientalism is characterized by the pleasure of exploring, the desire for, or the promise of intimate knowledge, of “concourse with the ‘other’” which structures the reader’s relation to the text, for the reader is always “learning,” while reading these texts that at first relentlessly seek to baffle and confuse the reader. The reader eventually emerges as a hero/ine for having figured out and taken possession of this landscape (in this case a “virtual” Orient), for having navigated these fast-paced and initially unfriendly texts with many unrelated plots. The readerly satisfaction generates pleasure and desire for these never realizable, yet always seemingly within reach exotic locales.

My Own Private Tokyo

Henry Jenkins has made the point that each of us “constructs our own personal mythology from bits and fragments of information extracted from the media flow and transformed into resources through which we make sense of our own everyday lives” (*Convergence Culture* 3-4). This is similar to Arjun Appadurai’s notion of “mediascapes,” which I have referred to already, which tend to be “image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality” and what they offer to those who experience and transform them is a series of elements and textual forms out of which “scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places” (35). These scripts provide “narratives of the Other” and constitute “fantasies that could become prolegomena to the desire for acquisition and movement” (36).

When Gibson began writing his cyberpunk classic *Neuromancer*, he only had a vague sense of Chiba City, or Japan for that matter, and so in his own words, he “got lucky with the geography” when it transpired that some of the locational details (on a peninsula, across the bay) happened to accord with the geographical “facts.” During subsequent, periodic visits to Tokyo Gibson has supplemented and embellished the depictions of Japan to be found in his writing. In an article entitled “My Own Private Tokyo” Gibson recounts his return to Tokyo in 2001 in order to “refresh a sense of place, check out the post-Bubble city, [and] professionally sharpen that handy Japanese edge.” Gibson presents himself as an urban street-walker, a postmodern version of the flâneur, on the streets of Tokyo at night, “dining late, in a plastic-draped gypsy noodle stall in Shinjuku, the classic cliché better-than-*Blade Runner* Tokyo street set” (117). Later, he can be found walking along “nameless neon streets” or in Roppongi, witness to a drug deal, the “flash of white” as palms meet: “Folded paper. Junkie origami” (118-119).

The title of Gibson’s article is appropriated from Gus Van Sant’s film *My Own Private Idaho* (1991) a “hallucinatory movie” about male hustlers on the streets of Portland, Oregon. The hero Mike (played by River Phoenix) suffers from narcolepsy. The shifts in narrative aren’t conventional in the film; when Mike blacks out, in a sense so do we, and we keep waking up in different parts of the story and in different locales. It is almost hallucinatory, how one can be in Idaho today and Italy tomorrow.

And in Tokyo the day after, and cyberspace whenever. In *Neuromancer*, Case has arrived “home” somewhere in the (American) Sprawl and just woken “from a dream of airports,” of Molly’s dark leathers moving ahead of him through the concourses of Narita, Schipol, Orly. He opens his eyes and sees Molly, “naked and just out of reach across an expanse of very new pink temperfoam.” Lying on his side he watches her breathe, her breasts, the sweep of a flank defined with the functional elegance of a war plane’s fuselage.” Otherwise, the room was empty, blank wall, no windows, a single white-painted steel firedoor: “He knew this kind of room, this kind of building; the tenants would operate in the interzone where art wasn’t quite crime, crime not quite art. He was home.” He gets to his feet. His head ached: “He remembered Amsterdam, another room” (57-8).

The impression conveyed through the repetition and emphasis on “home” is the opposite, one of dis-location, of being home-less. In the above example, the shift in locales underscores the position of the male subject, cast in such a way as to magnify the visual object status of the woman: Molly’s “dark leathers,” the “functional elegance” of her sleeping body, a “body” which was “spare, neat, the muscles like a dancer’s” (58).

Perhaps one of the most profitable ways to understand the workings of these particular mechanisms is through the relation between desire and fantasy. Žižek reminds us that fantasy (considered as a psychoanalytic category) is not reducible to an imagined scenario in which our desires are satisfied or fulfilled: “the gap opens up between every material object which satisfies my need and the unfathomable ‘it’ at which my desire aims; my desire becomes mediated by the desire of the Other” (“Is it Possible” 114). The desire realized in fantasy is only “satisfied” by the postponement of satisfaction, by the perpetuation of desire. As soon as desire is satisfied, in the sense of being fulfilled, it disappears.

The object of our desire is not something given in advance. Every subject has to “invent a fantasy of his or her own, a ‘private’ formula.” Thus fantasy teaches us what to desire in the first place. Fantasy actually “constitutes our desire, provides its co-ordinates; that is, it literally ‘teaches us how to desire’” (*Plague* 7). Desire that is realized in a particular fantasy is not strictly my desire, but the desire of the Other: “‘What am I as an object of desire for the Other?’” (“Is it Possible” 114). Fantasy is only produced by the interaction between subjects. (However specific a fantasy is for an individual, that fantasy in itself is always a product of an “intersubjective” situation.) Fantasy can be thought of as a kind of frame through which we see reality, offers a particular or subjective view of reality (fantasy is a kind of anamorphic frame around reality).¹¹

When I “go into” cyberspace, my body remains at rest in my chair, but “I” or at least some aspect of myself am teleported into another arena which, while I am there, I am deeply aware has “its own logic and geography.” To be sure this is a different sort of geography from anything I experience in the physical world but “despite its lack of

¹¹ Anamorphosis is a term used by Žižek. It means an image distorted in such a way that it is only recognizable from a specific angle, the most famous example being a painting by Hans Holbein entitled *The Ambassadors*. The anamorphic reminder of death alters the meaning of the picture. In the same way, “fantasy” designates an element which “sticks out,” which cannot be integrated into the given symbolic structure, yet which, precisely as such, constitutes its identity. See also Aarseth, 178-183.

physicality, cyberspace is a real place. *I am there* – whatever this statement may ultimately turn out to mean” (Wertheim 231).

Žižek reminds us what it means is that we should reject the notion that indulging in cyberspace is by definition not an act, since we dwell in a virtual universe of simulacra instead of engaging ourselves with the “real thing.” Fantasy is the little piece of our imagination by which we gain access to reality – the frame that guarantees our access to reality. Fantasy intervenes (serves as a support) precisely where we draw the line of distinction between what is merely our imagination and what “really exists out there.” Traversing the fantasy undermines the very fantasmatic frame that guarantees the consistency of our (self-) experience.

In *Neuromancer*, Case returns to where he happens to be living, with “his deck waiting, back in the loft, an Ono-Sendai Cyberspace 7. The Ono-Sendai; next year’s most expensive Hosaka computer; a Sony monitor; a dozen disks of corporate-grade ice; a Braun coffeemaker.” Molly asks: “You want me to go out, Case? He shook his head. No. Stay.” Case puts on the dermatodes:

He stared at the deck on his lap, not really seeing it, seeing instead the shop window on Ninsei.... He closed his eyes ... And in the bloodlit dark behind his eyes, silver phosphenes boiling in from the edge of space ...A gray disk, the color of Chiba sky ... fluid neon origami trick, the unfolding of his distanceless home, his country ... And somewhere he was laughing, in a white-painted loft, distant fingers caressing the deck, tears of release streaking his face. Molly was gone when he took the trodes off. He’d been in cyberspace for five hours. He carried the Ono-Sendai to one of the new work-tables and collapsed across the bedslab. (68-9).

The point of view of our most fundamental fantasy is what objectively makes us subjective. Fantasies are the one thing unique about us, allowing a subjective view of reality, open to sensitivity. Every subject has to “invent a fantasy ... a private formula” (*Plague* 7). I would claim Gibson’s title “My own private Tokyo” signals, in its engagement with Japan (as in the engagement with cyberspace, through the distancing it

offers) a particular structure of fantasy. In order to circulate freely in cyberspace, “one must assume a fundamental prohibition and/or alienation” (“Is it Possible” 114).

Concerning cyberspace, in contrast to the commonplace that we are dealing with a subject the moment an entity displays signs of “inner life” Žižek claims that “what characterizes human subjectivity proper is, rather, the gap that separates the two: the fact that fantasy, at its most elementary, becomes inaccessible to the subject” (120).

Cyberspace opens up the domain which allows us to realize (to externalize, to stage) our innermost fantasies. It opens up to artistic practice a unique possibility to stage, to ‘act out,’ the fantasmatic support of our existence, up to the fundamental ‘sado-masochistic’ fantasy that can never be subjectivized. We are thus invited to risk the most radical experience imaginable: the encounter with ... the foreclosed hard core of the subject’s Being. Žižek does further note that perhaps cyberspace opens up a domain in which “the subject can none the less externalize/stage his or her fundamental fantasy, and thus gain a minimum of distance towards it” (122).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored Gibsonian cyberspace and considered how it can be regarded as postmodern orientalism because it exhibits the spaces and forces of multinational capitalism, in line with Jameson’s definition of postmodernism. When Gibson’s “console cowboys” don their cyberspace helmets, they are projected by the power of the computer-generated three-dimensional illusionism into a virtual data landscape. The data resources of global corporations are represented as architectural structures.

Furthermore, cyberspace developed from Asian cities (such as Chiba City in Japan, and Kowloon Walled City in Hong Kong), in terms of aesthetic and geographical influences on Gibson’s imagination. Cyberspace offers spaces marked by cultural and racial differences which may be exhilarating, or unsettling, even terrifying, but they are ultimately readable and negotiable. Gibson’s texts are often uncritically read/viewed as celebrations of cyberspace. The portrayal of cyberspace as enabling/being enabled by Orientalism allows for another understanding of how narratives of and on cyberspace seek to manage and engage interactivity.

Finally, cyberspace has become much more than just a data space. Like the Orient, cyberspace is the space of fantasy. In this sense, cyberspace has its own logic and a different sort of geography. The concept of cyberspace contributes to the decentering of the subject. Cyberspace “unfolds a new social and psychological space, one open to new patterns of human behavior and interaction” (Sponsler 634). One of the primary uses of cyberspace is social interaction and communication, and increasingly also interactive entertainment, including the creation of online fantasy worlds in which people take on elaborate alter egos (of which Vinge’s story can be seen as a harbinger). This new digital domain functions as a space for complex mental experiences and games, for experimenting with the constructions and reconstructions of self that characterize postmodern life.

Gibson muses in an interview how one could write a novel in more or less the traditional form that would reflect this new kind of global connectivity. This indicates a sort of “simultaneous experience outside of geography that individuals are now having, these strange connections that people make by virtue of being on the Net.” The virtual, rather than closing off meaningful contact, can also inaugurate it.

CONCLUSION

The issue is dispersion. The task is to survive in the diaspora.

Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto"

Cyberpunk writing is notable for engaging with recent developments in technology, culture, and socioeconomic organization, and what are seen as their inevitable consequences. In this new world order multinational corporations control global economies, urban degradation is the norm, and technology has (irreversibly) shaped new modes of subjectivity and behaviour. In this cyberpunk is "quintessentially postmodern" (Sponsler 627) as the thesis has demonstrated, reflecting postmodern preoccupations with surface and depthlessness, the flattening and decentering of the human beings who move across this object world. Postmodernism emerges as an affectless, disorienting space, invested by deep but mysterious transformations that defied the capacities of the modern subject to orient him or herself and find new forms of political agency (postmodernism as it relates to the collapse of the utopian ideals of the 1960s).

However one particular and sustainable bond is the relation with the virtual, specifically cyberspace, the invisible space of databases and computer networks, the "real" space of postmodern societies, and the level at which the deep currents of postmodernism moves. The concept of "cyberspace unfolds a new social and psychological space, one open to new patterns of human behaviour and interaction" (Sponsler 634). In the realm of cyberspace the console cowboy might well, like Case, find himself on a sandy beach communicating with his now-dead girlfriend Linda Lee, when "in reality" he is in his room jacked into his computer deck.

Yet immersion in electronic media also has a psychological and sensory impact that profoundly affects the "ontological security" of the individual. As cyberpunk manifests a sense of escalating estrangement in response to the dislocations of modern life, it registers the "cognitive dissonance" which according to Gibson "we feel everyday and try to ignore" (Interview, Felperin). The protagonists of cyberpunk novels are "adrift in a world in which there is no meaning, no security, no affection, and no communal

bonds – except for those they themselves tenuously create” (Sponsler 627). The alienation of the subject is displaced by the latter’s fragmentation.

Cyberpunk would also seem to square with postmodern culture as described by Jameson’s notion of the past as only available as a random pastiche of images, styles, and cultural artifacts, seeking the historical past through “our own pop images and stereotypes about that past, which itself remains forever out of reach” (“Postmodernism” 118). Gibson’s *Neuromancer* poignantly conveys this, the abrupt geographical displacements that focus a strange homogeneity. Staying with Molly in a hotel in Istanbul near the bazaar, the Kapali Carsi, Case comments: “Their room might have been the one in Chiba ... He went to the window, in the morning, almost expecting to see Tokyo Bay. There was another hotel across the street” (108). The exotic orientalist settings capture this sense of adriftness, and the types of insufficiency or estrangement that accompany it (absence and loneliness) in typically urbanized and orientalist locales.

Bruce Sterling reminds cyberpunk enthusiasts that “the cyberpunks aim for a wide-ranging, global point of view” reflected in novels set in “Tokyo, Istanbul, Paris ... Russia, Mexico – as well as the surface of Mars” (*Mirrorshades* xii). Moreover, cyberpunk has “little patience with borders” and global awareness is a “deliberate pursuit.” Global in scope, the tools of global integration (the satellite media net, the multinational corporation) figure constantly in their work. The thesis I have proposed modifies this enthusiastic Western-inflected global positioning, and finds cyberpunk does not escape the “extraordinary reach” of nineteenth and early twentieth-century European imperialism which “still casts a considerable shadow over our own times” (Said *Culture and Imperialism* 5). Cyberpunk I have found reinscribes a wide variety of hybrid representations of the Orient which now roam global culture. The ongoing results of decolonisation and identities shaped by discourses of imperial power can be seen in the “strategic use of modern architectural sites, both real and imagined” (Heuser xxiv) such as Kowloon Walled City.

Culture as a strategy of survival, according to Bhabha, is both transnational (because contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement) and translational (because such spatial histories of displacement – now accompanied by the territorial ambitions of ‘global’ media technologies – make the

question of how cultures signify, or what is signified by culture, a rather complex issue). Bhabha has noted how the “transnational dimension of cultural transformation – migration, diaspora, displacement, relocation – makes the process of cultural translation a complex form of signification.”

This requires a form of dialectical thinking that does not “disavow or sublimate the otherness (alterity) that constitutes the symbolic domain of psychic and social identifications” (172-73). In the thesis chapters I have tried to approach cyberpunk and Japan by exploring a number of particular theoretical positions and terminologies, working toward highlighting the dynamic of reflexivity inherent in postmodern orientalism. The notion of reciprocal causality is the term I have adopted which provides a dynamic for understanding media and cross-cultural interactions as well as a context for exploring the development of personal and social identity. This means structures are not only constraining but enabling, and those social structures enable subjects to act.

One could add that Gibson’s reliance on a traditional form (the novel) precludes to some extent the full realization of a representation or simulation of the virtual to emerge. Gibson recently has emphasized his commitment to the novel, and wonders how one could write a novel in more or less the traditional form that reflects this new kind of global connectivity. How can one represent this sort of “simultaneous experience outside of geography” that individuals are now having, these strange connections people are making by way of the Net? An issue here is how notions of the virtual have challenged literature’s role as a specific technology of representation; as well technology is shaping the novel in various ways. But the core concern is the problematic of representation which has been identified as a failure of narrative, i.e. Gibson’s difficulty in handling plot and agency in a manner commensurate with the postmodern impulse (Sponsler), or a failure endemic to all science fiction, or a failure of representation, of representing our technoculture to ourselves, of grasping the whole world system of present-day multinational capitalism (Jameson).

In the thesis I have also focused on representation, specifically cross-cultural representation and have located these contradictions or limitations somewhat differently, in the commodification of otherness, and the complex forms of signification associated with the representation of Japan in cyberpunk. Each chapter presents a facet of this

engagement. In the first chapter I began with some postmodern intersections between cyberpunk and popular culture. In Chapter One I traced the emergence of cyberpunk (literary) and its diffusion into a wider cultural formation. This chapter concluded with a detailed analysis of Gibson's short story, "New Rose Hotel," as a way to sum up the features of postmodern orientalism that I have been foregrounding. The story exhibits the characteristics of orientalised postmodernism as it imagines a world in which multinational corporations characterised as Japanese zaibatsu control global economies. It is also postmodernised orientalism in its deployment of the figure of the Eurasian. What is conveyed here is a compelling sense of postmodern dislocation, a series of vertiginous moments of estrangement (on a corporate and global scale) rendered as otherness.

Then I explored cyberpunk's unremarked relationship with countercultural formations, practices and manifestations of Oriental otherness in subsequent chapters: on drugs, the persistent association of Western discourses of drugs with the Orient, and the Oriental bazaar, the city of Istanbul's central market "for spices, software, perfumes, and drugs" (*Neuromancer* 112); and rock music, the curious manifestations of a sense of otherness that emerged in the early seventies with David Bowie and his fascination with Japan, and the avant-garde pop dissonance of the Velvet Underground. This focus allowed for cultural refractions with specifically Japanese features to emerge: the designs of Yamamoto Kansai, the style of *visual kei*.

One way of reading cyberpunk is as an extended investigation into the postmodern identification of man with machine, the transgression of the traditional boundaries between organic and inorganic (synthetic) results in a decentering of the human subject seen as the hallmark of the postmodern condition. The emphasis in the remainder of the thesis shifted towards technologically-mediated figurations in cyberpunk: the hybrid figure of the cyborg, prosthetic interventions of various kinds, and the evolution of cyberspace in tandem with multimedia innovations such as videogames. The final chapter of the thesis focused on Gibson's evocation of cyberspace as both enabling/being enabled by orientalism. Again specifically Japanese features were central to the discussion, such as virtual idols, and anime.

In terms of anime, the film *Ghost in the Shell* offers another perspective on cyberpunk and opens the way for an understanding of the ongoing reciprocal interactions

that highlight the dynamic of reflexivity in postmodern orientalism. It has been pointed out that cyberpunk themes are present as crucial visual elements in *Ghost in the Shell*. At the conclusion to the film a “new” Kusanagi, no longer the Puppet Master or a woman, looks out over the night city, wondering where “she” should now go, concluding “the Net is vast and limitless.” In his film Oshii is able to use the idea of a technologized Asia to his advantage. The urban locale is transposed from a fictional Japanese metropolis (Newport City) in the manga to an unnamed East Asian sprawl in the film version that bears a striking resemblance to Hong Kong. This development has been seen as the result of cyberpunk’s uneasy relationship with East Asia, its tendencies to fetishize Asia, and Japan in particular, the explanation being that Japan in the late twentieth-century is the locus for all things high tech. Because of the emphasis on technology, Oshii is seen as contributing to formulations of techno-orientalism.

Importantly recent developments in global immigration flows, accelerated cross-cultural mixing, and local changes within Asian cultural production are evident in the new visibility of Asian film, music, video games, and anime which have saturated the US cultural landscape to become part of the vernacular of popular culture. The ways in which Asian American identity has been transformed by the increasingly porous boundaries between America and Asia also alerts us to the phenomena of “counterflows.” We need to consider the ways in which Asians consume and rework images, and this applies no less to the topic of cyberpunk and Japan. At the same time we must be ever mindful of the “power dynamics in current cultural dialogues between East and West within the transnational production and reception contexts of popular culture” (Park 60).

In this thesis I have attempted to trace some of the “ideological implications of stylistic exchange” between Japan and the US. To this end the term postmodern orientalism conveys the operations of imperialism (the struggle over geography) and the geographical dispersion of postmodern life, increasingly registered within the “anxious” discourse of virtuality. The world we now live in seems “rhizomic ... even schizophrenic” according to Appadurai. It is characterized by “rootlessness, alienation, and psychological distance between individuals and groups on the one hand, and fantasies (or nightmares) of electronic propinquity on the other” (29). This is the world of cyberpunk.

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