



## An Analysis of Cyber Terminologies in William Gibson's *Neuromancer*

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### Abstract

*In a language, Letters, Words and Sentences form a complete language. Apart from spoken and written, some other types of communication are also considered as a language. A novel a play or a movie can be conveyed through language only. The presence of language has a heavy influence on creative work. For e.g. Film directors communicate with the audience through movies. It is not only about the dialogue but the form of visual language and storytelling. This is how the global audience can understand the perfect plot of a great movie without any subtitles. This shows the power of a language but in the form of storytelling. Under structuralism, this subject is addressed as 'Narratology'. "Narratology is a branch of structuralism, but it has achieved a certain independence from its parent, and this justifies it being given a chapter of its own." (Barry p.214). This technique is applied in various genres of fiction and movies to keep the readers and audience focused. Unlike the ordinary structure such as a Hero, Doer and Villain, authors of science fiction have to concentrate a lot on their narrative techniques. William Gibson published a novel Neuromancer in 1984 that was way ahead of the time. William Gibson's Neuromancer was a pioneer novel in cyberpunk. Gibson was the first one who introduce the term 'cyberspace' through this fiction. Unlike other fiction, if a novel is written on an unknown timeline, the author should focus on the language and lifestyle of the time such as new terminologies never used in the present era. This paper is about to analyze the applications and the derivation of cybernetic terminologies and jargon handled by the author.*

**Keywords:** Cyber Technology, William Gibson, *Neuromancer*.

### Introduction

William Gibson is known for his unique science fiction works of the twentieth century. He was born on March 17, 1948, in Conway, South Carolina, USA. Gibson is remembered for his iconic pioneer novel "Neuromancer," which was published in 1984. This novel is recalled for the genre of cyberpunk which is often used as a familiar genre in the field of science fiction. This is almost like the replica of a dystopian society but in the realm of technology. Gibson's many works probed technology, cyberculture, and the identity crisis between reality and virtual space. As mentioned earlier, his works nearly reflect the condition of a dystopian world which is close to the future world. His world is constructed with complex technologies and incredible artificial intelligence entities. His way of making stories is reflected in his other novels such as *Count Zero*, *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, and the famous *Bridge* trilogy. His works were largely reflected over many popular culture and grounds such as video games, movies and other works written on cyberpunk themes. Even in 1984, he could produce a vision of an unexplored realm of technologies. His audience could understand that imaginary world through accurate narration though they had never experienced such a world before. Gibson could slightly indicate the hazardous atmosphere of



future technologies through many modified cyborgs and androids. Apart from this perspective, Gibson's innovative terminologies used in this fiction are still incredible in this age of Artificial Intelligence. As a reader or a research scholar, one can learn the face of future technologies and their threats through many 'technological words' applied by Gibson. Beyond the concept of gaining knowledge through fiction, this paper is to probe the condition of the present and future condition of this society by analyzing the logical reasons behind the usage of those cyber terminologies. These terms can merely not be rejected as just jargon of the cyber world. They possess various contexts and ideologies from a critics' point of view. This paper is about to analyze some set of selective terminologies found in this chosen fiction.

### **Cyber Terminologies**

We the humans are living and consuming pleasure and pain in this so-called reality space. At the same time, man tried to create an alternate world where no pain but pleasure like the promised heaven mentioned in the Bible. Since reality is controlled by nature, men tried to make the imaginary realm in an alternate space where their intelligence could control them all. The readers of science fiction as well as the audience of dark science fiction movies might be familiar with virtual reality. Before this term, William Gibson is known as a writer who coined the term 'Cyber Space' in his *Neuromancer*. From this fiction, the following terminologies are about to be analyzed in this paper. All these terminologies come under one umbrella term 'Cyber Space'.

### **Cyber Space**

Gibson presented his cyberspace as reality as a world that can function as a three-dimensional reality. So, a man or a 'user' can perform any function in this cyber world as he can do in his so-called dimension reality. "A year here and he still dreamed of cyberspace, hope to find nightly". (Gibson p. 4). Since it is constructed on the binary concept, a user can go forward beyond the boundaries found in the real world. That is the way they can enter and exit this cyberspace like the user can control his birth and death. Such things are not possible in a God-made world. To produce this novel close to the term cyberspace, Gibson introduced more innovative cyber terminologies equal to real-world terms. Instead of bounty hunters or thieves or hackers, he used 'Console cowboys' to stand for 'digital thieves' who collect and collapse data instead of stealing currency and jewels. The mind is the control centre of a human where he can go without his physical body. It has some limitations, but in cyberspace, Gibson projected his characters with the same senses and pain as the real world and the inanimate objects are formed as data only not by bricks and cement. This applies to the user also that our emotions are binary not by veins and neurons. Even now Game creators and animators are following this concept in making virtual maps, AI-based architecture models and science projects such as constructing the anatomy of anything. His cyberspace terminology has evolved up to 'metaverse'. Gibson's vision has come true as information technology incarnated as a virtual bridge between our natural world and the cyber world.

### **Black Clinic Of Chiba**

Here the term 'Black clinic' or the application of black clinic is to be analyzed. "The black clinic of Chiba was the cutting edge, whole bodies of technique supplanted monthly, and still they couldn't repair the damage he'd suffered in that Memphis hotel." (Gibson p. 4). However, it is necessary to know the background of 'Chiba' city used by Gibson in his *Neuromancer* Japanese edition. He had never visited that city and he heard of this by his wife. In reality, there is a city called Chiba in Japan. In the 80s, this was the city known for evolving Japanese technology. This is why for biotechnology-related shots, Gibson fixed this



city name. “In 1989, Chiba city was designated as the country’s research centre for high definition (now “high vision”) television.” (Lancashire p. 341). Case was experiencing a huge problem that he encountered in his precious mission and his crime demanded his memory as a result of punishment. So, he needed treatment where one could perform supplant in his body. Like cyborg movies, Gibson’s characters are completely not made of flesh and bone, but integrated with technology Neo in *Matrix* had ports at the back side of his neck to connect to the virtual world. Here nerve splicing is performed. Instead of replacing a tissue against a damaged nerve, artificial wires are used to operate a body. Usually, this black clinic is known as just a name for a clinic, but from the view of its application, this term is associated with the biotech industry where one can modify himself even at the DNA level. Character Armitage made many such changes in his body and lived as two personalities. In deep analysis, the word ‘black’ is not about any particular colour or race, it stands for the illegal operations of criminals and underworld gangsters. Like present world organ trafficking, in Gibson’s story also, making changes in the body with technology is prohibited. The case had to lose his savings and fulfil the demands of Armitage.

### **Matrix**

There was no movie called ‘Matrix’ when Gibson published this novel. But this terminology is a casual one in mathematics. But in the realm of computer technology, the representation of the term ‘Matrix’ is far different. Gibson introduces a matrix as evidence of cyberspace where all data are interconnected. “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, bright lattices of logic unfolding across that colourless world...” (Gibson pp. 4-5). This is nearly like a virtual form for abstract data. Gibson makes this matrix very close to reality like a living human can enter into virtual space with the help of his technically modified neurons. This shows that Gibson turns a human into binary data. This data has no boundaries. Instead of consuming vitamins and minerals, Case’s body is exchanging and storing data through his nerves, because this matrix is also constructed like real-life cities and countries but in the form of binaries. Armitage controls his data from the ‘London grid’ that exists in cyberspace. In the present scenario, Gibson’s ‘Matrix’ has evolved in an unimaginable way in the field of computer technology. Every user is treated as a matrix in this twenty-first century. “The filter bubble is the unique universe of information created around the users by prediction engines or recommendation algorithms” (Pariser. *The Filter Bubble*). This is a term associated with a matrix. Often a user might have experienced that their searches on Google are reflected as recommendations in various formats. This is called ‘the filter bubble’ in all the algorithms are trying to map a user’s data by their tastes and later the collection of massive amounts of users is built as a matrix as we know in *Neuromancer*. Gibson did not focus on the side of commercialization but he projected his matrix as a combination of millions of individual blocks. Gibson made an effort to establish the presence of a matrix in a virtual world through his imagination where there was no computer to support that technology. His ideas are becoming alive in this century like user-friendly feeds from OTT and e-commerce platforms. Gibson’s filter bubbles are modified as stored data in the grids of cyberspace. His perspective of the matrix can be understood as a form of escaping reality from the real world.

### **Simstimdecks**

Gibson’s terminology was way ahead of the 1980s. This device is almost like the VR headset which is being used in many sectors such as video games, the medical industry and architecture departments. J. M. Zheng et al. say, “Virtual reality (VR) is an advanced, human-computer interface that simulates a realistic environment. The participants can move around



in the virtual world. They can see it from different angles, reach into it, grab it and reshape it.” (p. 20). However, Gibson found this concept before the emergence of VR headsets. This device is addressed as Simstim which is nothing but ‘simulated stimulation’. “The place sold small bright objects to the sailors. Watches, flick-knives, lighters, pocket VTRs, simstim decks, weighted manriki chains, and shruiken. (Gibson p.12). This is nothing but having the experience of the real world through virtual reality. The function of the device is highly complicated to explain, however, twentieth-century readers can understand the operation of this device by connecting the scenes of the *Avatar* movies. Humans in the movie move in Pandora like the avatar species through the help of advanced technology. Before this movie, this idea was born in *Neuromancer*. This Simstim would give access to a person to experience the point of view of another person. Through this one can receive the sensory input of another person including smell and taste. This is somehow like a ghost possesses a person. The user has to use simstim ‘rigs’ to connect with another person. It functions like a bridge between reality and cyberspace to access the binary world from the real world.

#### **Wintermute The Ai**

Gibson’s power of creativity touched its height with ‘Wintermute’ in this fiction. This paper concludes with an analysis of the term Wintermute, an AI introduced in Gibson’s *Neuromancer*. Like VR gaming, and low kbps internet, this Artificial Intelligence was also an age-old term in Gibson’s age. “ML (machine learning) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) have become prominent in education research and channels for advanced learning delivery to learners.” Okagbue et al. (“Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence in Education Research: A Comprehensive Overview of 22 Years of Research Indexed in the Scopus Database”). However, unlike Chatgpt, SIRI, and Alexa, the technology did not completely evolve in the 80s. But Gibson’s AI Wintermute reflects the same characteristics of present-age AI bots. “Wintermute is the recognition code for an AI. I’ve got the Turing Registry numbers. Artificial Intelligence.” (Gibson p. 79). Gibson’s ultimate character is *Neuromancer* AI which is mentioned as the sibling of this Wintermute. Wintermute’s motive was to merge with the network of *Neuromancer* and to become an ultimate control centre to control mankind and cyberspace. All intelligence transitions from loaded information to the conscious level. “Rule-based decision-making matches weak AI while rule-following decision-making is an attempt that tends towards strong AI.”(Collins et al.). Wintermute was made as a separate entity with consciousness. As the present generation hates their previous generation, Wintermute wants to act autonomously, but like kind-hearted humans, *Neuromancer* is not ready to follow the orders of Wintermute. This term Wintermute was chosen from Philip. K. Dick’s work *Valis* (1981). It came as a character in this novel. However, Gibson once mentioned that he got the inspiration for this name from one of his high school classmates.

#### **Conclusion**

Gibson's fiction was published as fiction not as a book of prophecy. But he predicted all the technological developments in every nook and corner through his characters and the plot. His ideologies and concepts of man and machine amalgamation are gradually emerging in information technology. Present society is nearly guided by the algorithms of multiple AI bots. In recent years, religious institutions, judicial institutions, academic institutions and many more industries started to adapt to the presence of AI. As a reader and as a researcher, one can gain a limited level of knowledge about the autonomy of computers through the terms used by Gibson in *Neuromancer*. Terms and jargon are being used inside a community or an organization. But as an extrovert, Gibson’s terminologies did not become obsolete. They became active terminologies in AI-related research. Being a science fiction author, he



did not merely choose vocabulary for just a showoff. Apart from that, his terminologies offered a static image of the future world and the supreme power of AI technology.

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