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Between Eden and Utopia: Techno-Innocence and Cyber-Rapture in William Gibson's *Neuromancer*

Constructs of Innocence in Cyberpunk Fiction

Cyberpunk surfaced as a subgenre of science fiction in the 1980s to popular and critical acclaim. Among the writers who laid the genre's foundations were Pat Cadigan, William Gibson, and Bruce Sterling. In the 90s, the flagship writers of cyberpunk and its latest offspring—postcyberpunk—were Greg Egan and Neal Stephenson. As of the most recent decade, its legacies are continued in the writings of Paolo Bacigalupi, Ian McDonald, and Charles Stross. Furthermore, cyberpunk has garnered considerable interest among postmodernist critics. Brian McHale asserts that while "there are few… absolute novelties in cyberpunk SF" and all its motifs have had "precedents in earlier SF," the subgenre's novel character stems rather from its "shift of dominance" to particular motifs and its dismissal of outmoded motifs within the general science-fiction repertoire (150). In other words, cyberpunk foregrounded a specific "motif complex" (McHale 150), one neither featured nor practiced before in this particular fashion within science-fiction literature. Scholars appreciated cyberpunk for its foregrounding of (dis)embodiedness, its social-liberationist political potential (D. Haraway), and its textual exploration of ontological motifs (B. McHale).

Despite cyberpunk's stellar success, the subgenre had been in fact born out of failure—the failure of science-fiction literature prior to the 1980s[1] to live up to its core promise. For the dedicated readers of science fiction, its touchstone had always been its successful efforts at extrapolating from the present and making accurate predictions about the future. In this respect, cyberpunk's emergence could be understood as the consequence of and the answer to science fiction's disenchanting failures at extrapolation.

1 Which William Gibson dismissed wholesale as the "Gernsback Continuum," named so after the editor of *Amazing Stories* pulp magazine, Hugo Gernsback.

Prior to cyberpunk, science-fiction had, with some dystopian exceptions, advocated utopian boosterism. The critic Raffaella Baccolini notes a "revival of utopia in the 1960s and 1970s" (520) within science fiction literature. It is inevitable, the "Gernsback Continuum" genre had professed and prophesied, that mankind shall soon achieve its utmost potential through the belief in positivist scientism and technological progressivism. In its most generic and commodified iterations, science fiction offered mere "uncritical and uncreative technojingoism" (Ross, "Gernsback Continuum" 414): masculine narratives of hegemonic power, colonial ambitions, and wish-fulfillment fantasies on the outer-space frontier.

However, the reality of the 1980s brought about an end to active space exploration. The continuing loss of public interest in outer space was reflected in science fiction's withdrawal from its boosterish descriptions of unbounded frontier exploration. Furthermore, continued efforts in nuclear disarmament brought about an end to most postapocalyptic science fiction. In consequence, the genre could have perhaps returned to "pure" scientific extrapolation and once again be judged not on the basis of its cassandric forecasts and forewarnings, but rather, its successful social and technological extrapolations of the present. However, in hindsight it began to be apparent that science fiction has failed to predict the impact and scope of the information revolution and the groundbreaking emergence of the Internet in particular. Because science fiction failed to predict the ensuing techno-cultural paradigm shift, the genre turned to cyberculture as its next source of inspiration.

In consequence, readers' belief in science fiction's pretensions to actual powers of extrapolation had waned with time. This disillusionment is best described in the words of the critic Sadie Plant: "Once upon a time, tomorrow never came. Safely projected into the reaches of distant times and faraway galaxies, the future was science fiction and belonged to another world" (348). In other words, science fiction's utopian grand narrative of "a future perfect that never was" (Ross, "Gernsback Continuum" 411), developed throughout the decades in countless works of fiction, had been proclaimed a naïve misunderstanding.

As a result, cyberpunk announced science fiction's strategic retreat from its frontiers in outer space and committed itself not just to a downward movement towards Earth in general, but rather, to its shadier districts, slums, and backstreets in particular. This process resulted in "The overlapping of worlds that were formerly separate: the realm of high tech, and the modern pop underground" (Sterling xi). Its outcome had been a considerable enrichment of the science-fictional repertoire, one in which "the contradiction" of rural, romanticized, anti-science, anti-tech counterculture with cutting edge technologies "had become an integration" (Sterling xii). The ensuing "cultural Petri dish" (Sterling xiii) appealed to both postmodernist

critics and pop culture pundits alike. However, because of its retreat and in spite of the thematic broadening of science fiction, cyberpunk could also be diagnosed as a symptom of science fiction's state of psychological recoil following its (and mankind's) grand disillusionment with the ideas of science and progress.

In consequence, cyberpunk holds an ambivalent position within the science-fiction continuum. On the one hand, in the preface to the seminal *Mirrorshades*, Sterling is of the opinion that "the cyberpunks as a group are steeped in the lore and tradition of the SF field" (x), emphasizing the subgenre's continuities with the prior tradition of science fiction. On the other hand, Sterling adds that cyberpunk is in fact "a new movement in science fiction" (ix), "a modern reform" (xv), one which, not unlike punk music, is "in some sense a return to roots" (x-xi), and thus discontinuous with older SF.

In renouncing most prior science fiction of the "Gernsback Continuum," building upon its failures, and beginning anew from the position of "clearing the ground" and "breaking with the past" (Ross, "Gernsback Continuum" 413), cyberpunk marks another figurative return to Eden within the American narrative tradition[2]. In other words, older science fiction is to cyberpunk what Europe had been to America in its inception: an aborted past, an inconvenience, a shameful

2 In the American tradition the notions of innocence and escapism are embodied in constructs of the Self which have their origin in the figure of the American Adam. The figure appeared in literature in response to the formation of a national American culture distinct from its European counterpart. It embodied a sentiment shared throughout America in the nineteenth century that "the authentic American" should strive to emulate Adam, the first Biblical man: "A figure of heroic innocence and vast potentialities, poised at the start of a new history" (Lewis 1). The idea of Americans as new men in a virgin land was first put forward by J. Hector St. John de Crèvecœur in his *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782). Due to American culture's Biblical frame of reference, the notion of a "pure" man in a "virgin" land soon became associated with the image of Adam in Eden and developed as such in American literature. Works of fiction combined Biblical and political discourse into a textual amalgam which led to the formation of American exceptionalism and individualism. Furthermore, the figure of the American Adam was awarded considerable critical recognition in the writings of R. W. B. Lewis. In his *The American Adam. Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (1955), Lewis claimed that the recurrent motif of Adamic innocence in the works of Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, and Melville shaped the subsequent thematic landscape of American fiction. The innocent American has also been featured as a staple of American fiction in the criticism of Leslie Fiedler and Ihab Hassan. Both critics enumerated the subsequent permutations of the Adamic figure, which include the juvenile male protagonist, the Fiedlerian Good Bad Boy, the alienated intellectual, and the Hassanian radical rebel-victim. All of the aforementioned character templates in American literature have their origin in the figure of the American Adam.

heritage under erasure. In consequence, cyberpunk could be understood to stand for a literature of "second chances" for science fiction, one which renounces the genre's prior accumulated experience and returns to a state of innocence with all that this notion entails in the American tradition. Despite the genre's postmodernist surface, its protagonists are more often than not the avatars of the unified humanist subject: the American Adamic Self. Not unlike Adam, the cyberpunk protagonist is out to explore a new world, one unburdened with the heritage and stock solutions of the prior SF tradition, but rather, one in which the individual is free to participate in its sub-creation. Following the tradition of the American Adam, the cyberpunk hero is a frontiersman. His is the most recent and relevant frontier, cyberspace, as he has realized that *outer* space as an SF frontier is long past its ideological prime, much too haunted with the "semiotic ghost" of "outdated futures" (Ross, "Gernsback Continuum" 411), and much too crowded and civilized for his tastes.

Although considered a "Movement writing" (Sterling x), cyberpunk never had its singular manifesto[3]. However, cyber*culture* in general has had its self-proclaimed manifesto in the form of John P. Barlow's "A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace," an online document written in 1996 in the rhetorical mode of a declaration of independence, which made its rounds on the then-just-expanding Internet, reaching out to both dedicated proponents and distanced opponents of radical Internet libertarianism. The document begins with a direct address to those against whom cyberculture reaches out to "dump some tea in the virtual harbor" (pref. par. 2) in the all-American gesture of renunciation *par excellence*, and from whom it wishes to declare independence: "Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of the Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather" (par. 1). The document continues in such a rhetorical fashion throughout its sixteen paragraphs. What is apparent in this short excerpt alone is a discourse of semantic differentials, which assigns superior hierarchic value to a) the mind over the flesh; b) the ethereal over the corporeal; c) the individual over the collective; d) us over them; e) freedom over rule, and, what is most important from the perspective of this article: f) to the future over the past. In renouncing the past, cyberculture

3 Although self-proclaimed members of the cyberpunk subculture adopted Christian A. Kirtchev's 1997 "A Cyberpunk Manifesto" as their own and are working at present as a volunteer group on a revised third edition. However, this manifesto does not concern literature in particular.

marks a new beginning, a second chance, a figurative return to Eden. Such a return entails a complex of ideological and ethical undertones.

In his *Real Love: In Pursuit of Cultural Justice*, Ross approaches the aforecited document as advocating "unfettered individualism at the core of Net libertarianism" (12), which "translates into a general phobia about any government activities" (10). The declaration's rhetoric reveals "the desire for self-liberation from the social life of mortals" and "the retrofitted nostalgia for a Rousseauesque state of nature," which once again signifies a return to Eden. Because the declaration proclaims cyberspace to be an independent "act of nature" which "grows itself through our collective actions," its discourse falls back on the American tradition of pastoralism and subverts Leo Marx's Machine in the Garden metaphor into the flattened image of Machine=Garden. The proclamation results in a "clean, messianic break with the world most of us inhabit" (Ross 12), echoing Hassan's notion of social recoil, Fielder's flight, or Lewis's deinitiation[4]. As documented in the scholarship of the three critics, such desires and declarations are part and parcel of the American tradition of innocence and individualism. In consequence, cyberculture in its most radical manifestation marks a recoil from the social order in search of sublime, ethereal otherworldliness, a motif which the critic Rob Wilson calls "neo-transcendental" "techno-euphoria" (211). The discourse of its proponents is secular, albeit verges on the metaphysical.

Another aspect of cyberpunk's return to the Edenic (and thus Adamic) paradigm of American innocence and individualism is its understanding of the Self. Notwithstanding the genre's postmodernist surface and its postmodernist decentering of the subject in some respects, its protagonists nonetheless struggle to remain unified, centered Selves. One of the critics who point to the powerful and positive image of the cybercultural individual as a centered and self-reliant Romantic subject is Timothy Leary. In his rather poetic article "The Cyberpunk: The Individual as Reality Pilot," he deconstructs the word "cybernetics" in order

4 All three critics describe different mechanisms of escapism in their scholarship. In the words of Lewis, "the valid rite of initiation for the individual in the new world is not an initiation into society, but, given the character of society, an initiation away from it: something I wish it were legitimate to call 'deinitiation'" (115). According to the logic of deinitiation, innocence is prone to degrading into social Adamism, which could be understood as social alienation and atomism. Hassan claims in a similar fashion that the natural reaction of the modern Self to the world and its victimizing character is that of "recoil," that is, the radical renunciation of outwardness (35), "the ego's estrangement from the collective conscience" (18). Fiedler, in turn, describes the figure of the male hero in literature as taking flight from the social/sexual in order to retain his manhood and innocence, or rather, out of a fear of experience and the feminine.

to emphasize its empowering semantic and pragmatic undertones. Leary traces the term's etymological origin back to the Greek word "kubernetes," which translates as "pilot" (254). The prefix "cyber-," therefore, evokes agency, movement, and action. According to the critic: "The Hellenic origin of this word is important in that it reflects Greek traditions of independence and individual self-reliance which, we are told, derive from geography" (254). Leary, therefore, traces the tradition of American individualism even farther back than to the Adamic origins of the American Self alone in the world (which also "derives from geography"). He traces this tradition as far back as ancient Greece, which he treats as the figurative birthplace of later American frontier thinking and frontier navigation.

Other concepts associated with cyberpunk also reveal unified approaches to the Self. Before the term "cyberpunk" garnered widespread acceptance, its authors had once been called "the Mirrorshades group" (Sterling xi) after the icon of cyberculture which later served as the title of Bruce Sterling's collection of stories. The significance of mirrorshades in cyberculture is best described in Sterling's own words:

> Mirrored sunglasses have been a Movement totem since the early days of '82. . . . By hiding the eyes, mirrorshades prevent the forces of normalcy from realizing that one is crazed and possibly dangerous. They are the symbol of the sun-staring visionary, the biker, the rocker, the policeman, and similar outlaws. (xi)

Mirrorshades shelter the eyes from the exterior world. The "eye," of course, is a metaphor of the entrance into the "I," the Self. In this respect, cyberpunks are practitioners of Hassanian strategic recoil in their attempts to remain impenetrable, self-sufficient, innocent Selves. However postmodern, they undertake excursions into the world with the use of all possible technological means, but nonetheless strive to prevent the world's incursions into them.

The Edenic/Adamic motif of individualism is only a part of the American paradigm of innocence that cyberpunk reaches out to in its traditional thematic remnants. The critic Ihab Hassan is of the opinion that because of their radical disconnection with the present, American literature and culture take the form of "a running debate between Utopia and Eden," since both are "a form of radical innocence" (Hassan 37–38). In other words, the allegories of Eden and Utopia seem inseparable. In fact, a future Utopia is implicit in Eden in and of itself since the teleological Christian narrative, of which Eden is the inception, is finite and implies a final Rapture. Such salvational narratives end in a blissful coda. Adam and his heirs, having left Eden, await Utopia: the post-endtime, post-Rapture reconciliation with God. When a literature is bound in Edenic allegories of onset, it

seems inevitable for such literature to assume an allegorical salvational endgame as well. Hence cyberpunk's preoccupation, its secular surface notwithstanding, with the Christian notion of Rapture.

In their article "Bad Endings: American Apocalypsis," the anthropologists Kathleen Stewart and Susan Harding point to the fact that "America had always been an eschatological hotbed" with both "a sense of crisis and millennial hope" (289). The critics assert that the colonization of America had been a Christian "millennial and apocalyptic project" (288), the discourse of which continues on in present times. Apocalypticism and millennialism are defined in their respective aspects as: "The dark and light sides of a historical sensibility transfixed by the possibility of imminent catastrophe, cosmic redemption, spiritual transformation, and a new world order. The apocalyptic/millennial mode of attention is fascinated by endings, overturnings, and originary moments" (286). The critics note that such anxieties have intensified in American culture as the millennium drew nearer, "inhabit[ing] and structur[ing] modern American life across a wide range of registers" (286). Such inhabiting is also apparent in cyberpunk. As a product of the 1980s and 90s, cyberpunk reflects both apocalyptic/dystopian and millennial/utopian paradigms.

For the most part, cyberpunk reflects the apocalyptic/dystopian mode. Stewart and Harding note that apart from religious apocalyptic thinking, millennial visions in America have also become secularized in a process which imbued cyberculture with radical "technophilia and technophobia" (289): secular, albeit semi-religious mindsets reflective of millennial and apocalyptic paradigms. In their opinion, apart from religious eschatologies, American culture offers two secular endtime narratives. The first is contained in the notion of a "technological apocalypse, in which technological progress brings both devastation and salvation" (Stewart and Harding 290). Such an endtime narrative is contrasted with what could be labeled a postmodernist end*game*: the "ironic apocalypse, the dystopian, postapocalyptic view that history has exhausted itself, coupled with a playful celebration of surface styles and reproductions" (290).

Nevertheless, despite cyberpunk's preoccupation with the apocalyptic/dystopian mode, the genre reaches out to Utopia as well. In her article "The Persistence of Hope in Dystopian Science Fiction," Raffaella Baccolini asserts that Utopia has found an afterlife in even the most dystopian of literatures. On the one hand, the critic confirms that "our times . . . have produced what a series of scholars have addressed as a 'dystopian turn' in Anglo-American science fiction" (520), of which cyberpunk is the direct consequence. On the other hand, however, Baccolini also believes that recent science fiction "maintains a utopian horizon in the pages of dystopian science fiction and in these antiutopian times" (518).

Despite its secular surface, cyberpunk's affiliations with Utopia are religious in nature. As mentioned before, cyberpunk's religious "utopian horizon" within its secular dystopian dominant is centered on the Christian notion of Rapture. In his work *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of the Century*, the cultural critic Mark Dery introduces the discursive construct of "escape velocity" (42). Within physics, escape velocity is the speed required for a vessel to escape the gravitational well of a planet in order to reach outer space. Within Dery's criticism, "escape velocity" is a metaphor of the "eschatological zero hour" (42): the point in time in which the vigilant, technophile "true believers" will be "raptured" from this world into a cyber-Utopia of one kind or another. In Dery's view, "escape velocity" is "techno-transcendentalism's version of born-again Christianity's 'rapture,' in which true believers are lifted out of the mundane, into the parting clouds" (48–49).

Dery's idea is similar to the critical mechanisms of escapism of his predecessors (Lewis, Fiedler, and Hassan) in that it signifies "transcendentalist fantasies of breaking free of limits" (8) and "a promise of deliverance from human history and mortality" (11). In their offer of escape from the "mundane" historical and social realms, such escapist fantasies both seduce with the bliss of Utopia and require the innocence of Adam in Eden. The incoming Rapture is limited to the "true believers," hence such a discourse, like most other American constructs of individualism, is entangled in elitism, exceptionalism, and social solipsism.

To recapitulate, cyberpunk as a subgenre of science fiction perpetuates American constructs of innocence in a twofold fashion. First of all, despite its postmodern surface, it features traditional, ego-centric, juvenile, self-reliant protagonists, who resort to escapism or recoil in order to avoid the burdens of social life and retain their innocence. Such figures derive in the American tradition of innocence from the image of Adam in Eden. Furthermore, cyberpunk perpetuates American timelessness: the escape from the present into an ancestral Eden or a future Utopia, both of which are also images of innocence. Such constructed motifs of innocence can be found in Gibson's seminal cyberpunk novel, *Neuromancer*.

William Gibson's *Neuromancer*

William Gibson's *Neuromancer* was published in 1984, just when the present had caught up with a previous exemplar of dystopian fiction: George Orwell's titular *1984*. Needless to say, 1984 had not turned out to reflect the world as prophesied in Orwell's cassandric opus, perhaps to the satisfaction of dystopian fiction's detractors. Nevertheless, Gibson soon filled the resulting void with his own seminal dys(u)topia. As a work of fiction which reflected both the hopes and the fears

of its time, *Neuromancer* was the first novel to have been awarded the so-called "triple crown" of science-fiction awards: the Hugo, the Nebula, and the Philip K. Dick Award.

Despite *Neuromancer*'s positive reception as both a science-fiction novel and a piece of postmodernist prose, Gibson himself had later called his first novel "an adolescent's book" (Neale). However dismissive this comment might sound, it nonetheless opens up *Neuromancer* for interpretation within the American tradition of juvenile fiction, escapism, and innocence. The critic Norman Spinrad points out that the title of the novel itself, a portmanteau of "neuro-" and "necromancer," could also be (mis)read as "new romancer," opening up the novel for interpretation as a new instance of traditional Romance fiction (Spinrad 111).

In terms of its structure, *Neuromancer* indeed remains faithful to traditional "cause-and-effect plot development" (Sponsler 636). The plot structure of *Neuromancer* resembles point for point the generic plot of a heist movie[5]. Heist movies tend to follow a three-act structure, which consists of: assembling a team of conspirators and making preparations for the heist, the heist itself, and the heist's aftermath. In *Neuromancer*, the instigator of the heist is an Artificial Intelligence code-named "Wintermute," whose source code is stored on the private servers of Tessier-Ashpool SA, a detached and secretive corporate clan. Wintermute had been designed to be but a half of a potential larger AI. Its sibling counterpart had been code-named "Neuromancer." Both AIs were forbidden from ever forming a single holistic mind, for fear of their becoming too powerful. Their potential to combine and develop further is limited due to a recent change in the politics of Tessier-Ashpool, which abandoned its prior plan of combining both AIs in favor of keeping them apart, as well as the jurisdiction of the Turing police, a special-forces bureau supervising AIs on a global scale in order to prevent their growth. Resorting to financial motivation, psychological manipulation, and coercion, Wintermute assembles a team of conspirators to do his bidding: Armitage, Molly, Case, the Finn, the Dixie Flatline, Peter Riviera, and Maelcum. The novel's plot consists of two consecutive heists. The first group objective is to steal the Dixie Flatline (one of the prospective team-members, a ROM module) from the servers of the media consortium Sense/Net. This heist serves as a test run for the heist proper. In a surprising plot twist, it turns out that Wintermute's second objective for the conspirators is to steal Wintermute itself from the servers of

5 Gibson himself had commented on *Neuromancer*'s traditional cause-and-effect plot in an interview: "I knew I was so inexperienced that I would need a traditional plot armature that had proven its potential for narrative traction. I had these different things I wanted to use, but since I didn't have a preset notion of where I was going, the plot had to be something I already felt comfortable with" (McCaffery 137).

Tessier-Ashpool in order for Wintermute to combine its source code with that of Neuromancer and enable both AIs to become a greater, God-like being.

In addition to its heist structure, *Neuromancer* also reveals its adherence to the American Adam metanarrarive: the individual's initial interaction with the world, his Fall and loss of innocence, his subsequent escapism and recoil, his being granted a second chance, and his ensuing attempts at reconciliation and integration. The character who embodies this Adamic motif in the novel is Case, the narrative's sole focalizer. Case is presented as a rather stable individual, in contrast with the novel's unstable ("postmodern") peripheral characters: Armitage, the Dixie Flatline, Peter Riviera, 3Jane, and Wintermute. In the words of Sponsler, "in a seeming contradiction to the decentering of the subject that occurs with many of his minor characters, Gibson's protagonists still fit the well-known mold of the free-willed, self-aware, humanist subject" (637).

Within the time-frame of the novel, Case is introduced *in medias res*: in the aftermath of his initial incursion into the world and his ensuing victimization and recoil. However, several retrospective passages reveal his past and the particular circumstances of his Fall. Before his introduction in Chiba, Case had been "a cowboy hotshot," "a rustler," and "a thief" (*Neuromancer* 11–12). Such self-proclamations point to what Stockton understands to be a "remythologiz[ation] of an earlier, powerfully autonomous subject," which results in the perseverance of the traditional image of the "swashbuckling pirate and/or American cowboy" under the conditions of postmodernism and cyberculture (588). As an elite member of the meritocratic subculture of hackers, Case had offered his services to various corporate clients and stolen packets of data from their competitors' servers. In having done so, Case reveals his adherence to the Western images of the freelancer and the maverick (as well as the Eastern ronin archetype), which, according to Leary, all converge in the postmodern image of the hacker: the strong, stubborn, creative individual who "explores some future frontier" and "collects and brings back new information" (252). Case's occasional excursions into the social order, that is, his makeshift alliances with the corporate world, had all been of expedient nature and none have resulted in Case's integration into the corporate social notation. To use Leary's words: "Cyberpunks are sometimes authorized by the governors. They can, with sweet cynicism and patient humor, interface their singularity with institutions. They often work within the 'governing systems' on a temporary basis. As often as not, they are unauthorized" (260). In return for his services, Case had been provided with finances, firsthand access to "exotic software," as well as the promise of "permanent adrenaline high," the respect of his partners-in-crime, and "the bodiless exultation of cyberspace" (*Neuromancer* 12). In other words, he had been provided the sufficient means of masculine self-confirmation and wish

fulfillment within an environment akin to Fiedler's Great Good Place.[6] Prior to his Fall, Case had frequented the bars of the Sprawl, masculine zones where "mothers do not come" (Fiedler 174), and shared word of his achievements with his male associates. His pride, however, had led him to break the unwritten commandments of his craft and steal from his benefactors, transgressing the rules of his Garden and reaching out for its forbidden fruit. In retaliation, the benefactors had crippled his nervous system with a toxin, preventing him from ever returning to cyberspace. This victimization, which in the narrative's deep structure signifies an expulsion from the Biblical Garden, is in fact described outright in Biblical terms in the novel itself: "For Case . . . it was the Fall" (12) (note Gibson's capitalization). Within the Christian creed, "the Fall of Man" is defined as "Adam's sin of yielding to temptation in eating the forbidden fruit, and his subsequent loss of grace" (*Webster's* "Fall"). The initial plot of *Neuromancer* reveals this Biblical motif in its deep structure: Case yields to temptation in stealing from his benefactors and thus loses grace in being expelled from cyberspace.

The Biblical Fall signifies a passage from an immortal life of grace to a mortal life of hardship and toil. The post-Fall expulsion from the Garden of Eden leads Adam to the earthen world of mortals. In *Neuromancer*, however, Case conceptualizes his own expulsion in much more radical terms than the Garden and the world proper. He sees his Fall as a direct descent from Heaven to Hell, the mundane world of mortals excepted. As mentioned before, cyberpunk reflects the apocalyptic/dystopian mode. Within this mode, there is no place for moderate conceptualizations of space such as those of the Garden and the Earth. Instead, "the modern world is characterized by simultaneous overstimulation

6 According to Fielder, the *Great Good Place* is "a temporary asylum not only from 'sivilization' but from pursuit, enslavement, and death; and leaving it, the refugee plunges into further flight" (569). The critic defines this discursive construct as "some place . . . where mothers do not come" (174); in which the protagonist "[consummates the union] with his own childhood" (347). Lewis would perhaps associate this Great Good Place with the pre-historical and pre-social Garden of Eden. However, Fiedler does not delve into the deep structure as much as Lewis. Instead, he accepts the popular images of the Great Good Place in literature (campsites, rafts, ships, tree-houses, etc.) at their face value. Such places function as bastions of manhood and require "isolation" and "the non-presence of the customary" (349), that is, the non-presence of domestic, matriarchal rule. Such locales often function in literature as "masculine" elitist meritocracies, in which not the "feminine" social and familial bonds, but rather, "survival of the fittest," individual merit, and willpower define collective hierarchies. Within cyberpunk, when viewed from the Fiedlerian perspective, the Great Good Place is realized in the images of hacker cults, biker gangs, and cyberspace.

and numbness, alarm and anesthesia … and it is imagined in terms of dialectical extremes, of heaven and hell, of dreamworld and catastrophe" (Stewart and Harding 291). *Neuromancer* as a representative of dystopian fiction follows the aforecited schema. Case conceptualizes cyberspace in terms of Heaven (overstimulation, alarm, dreamworld) and the real world of "meat" in terms of Hell (numbness, anesthesia, catastrophe). Within the novel, therefore, the Adamic model of expulsion from Eden into the world proper is discarded in favor of radical millennarian/apocalyptic (utopian/dystopian) extremes.

For Case, the matrix is the epitome of "bodiless exultation" (*Neuromancer* 12), a notion which is most often associated in the Western tradition with Heaven. Cyberspace, therefore, is in Case's mind an artificial *ersatz*-Heaven and his initial expulsion from the matrix into the corporeal world could thus be read as a descent into an artificial *ersatz*-Hell. As such, Case's later excursions into cyberspace will form a part of *Neuromancer*'s religious "utopian horizon" within its dystopian dominant. The matrix offers a limitless and therefore a (techno-)sublime world for the protagonist to explore. Case's transition from the world proper to the cyber-world signifies movement from a world of limited experience (at least as far as Case is concerned) to a world of limitless potential. However grim and uninviting cyberspace might seem to the reader, for Case it doubles as a boundless frontier of action and creation. As such, it reveals utopian characteristics. Sure enough, excursions into cyberspace are described as a dangerous undertaking, but for the traditional American protagonist, the masculine monster-slayer, isn't a limitless world full of artificial monsters that strive to vanquish a masculine Utopia, or a Biblical Heaven, nonetheless . . . ?

In his work "Cyberspace: First Steps," the critic Michael Benedikt confirms that: "Cyberspace can be seen as an extension, some might say an inevitable extension, of our age-old capacity and need to dwell in fiction, to dwell empowered or enlightened, on other, mythic planes, if only periodically" (22). Benedikt adds further that the matrix is a metaphor of Heaven insofar as it is a reflection of the Heavenly City. According to the critic, such architectural Utopias share features such as "weightlessness," "numerological complexity," and "transcendence of nature and of crude beginnings" (27). All such features are reflected in Gibsonian cyberspace. Furthermore, such cities constitute "an image of what would adequately compensate for, and in some way ultimately justify, our symbolic and collective expulsion from Eden. They represent the creation of a place where we might re-enter god's graces" (27). Because cyberspace can be approached in such Biblical terms, Case's return to the matrix with the help of Wintermute will allow to be conceptualized in terms of a cyber-Rapture (Benedikt's "re-enter[ing] god's graces") in the further course of this chapter.

The Heaven of the matrix is situated in the mind of Case in direct and radical opposition to the Hell of the real—the *corpo*real—world of "meat." Within the Biblical narrative, Adam's transgression in Eden had made him well aware of his status as a mortal and fragile being of flesh (in realizing his being naked). Similarly, Case's attitude towards himself and the exterior world after his Fall is structured on this Biblical motif. Having been prevented from ever entering the matrix, Case had been made aware of his nakedness, that is, his being embodied. Because of his prior inhabiting of the cerebral and abstract matrix, Case had objectified and reduced his corporeal self-image to mere "meat": "In bars he'd frequented as a cowboy hotshot, the elite stance had involved a certain relaxed contempt for the flesh. The body was meat" (12). Case's expulsion from the matrix and the subculture of hackers mirrors Adam's expulsion from the Garden in that both figures must come to terms with their just-discovered corporeal, embodied nature. After his Fall, Case realizes that he "fell into the prison of his own flesh" (12). His regressive Cartesian approach and preference for the mind over the flesh is made apparent when he invokes the image of "the prison of his skull" (43). Furthermore, Case prefers the abstract and cerebral minimalism of the matrix over the "gratuitous" phenomenal nature of the corporeal world.

Hackers figure as "cyberspace cowboys" (11), and the "console cowboys" (39) are derived in part from the Westerns and thus share certain attributes with Western protagonists. In her work *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns*, the feminist critic Jane Tompkins comments on the deep bond shared between cowboys and the land: "Westerns believe that reality is material, not spiritual; they are obsessed with pain and celebrate the suppression of feeling; their taciturn heroes want to dominate the land, and sometimes to merge with it completely— they are trying to get away from other people and themselves" (6–7). Although cyberpunks share similarities with cowboys, their attitude towards "land" (matter) constitutes a radical reversal of this relationship. If Westerns believe that "reality is material," then cyberpunk fiction asserts that the real world is immaterial, if not in the literal sense of the word, than at least in the figurative: it is immaterial in being irrelevant. Furthermore, Tompkins adds that the Western genre "represents physical strength as an ideal" (11). Cyberpunk reverses this motif as well and represents as its ideal mental capacities. Because of this reversal, hackers form deep bonds with the spiritual world instead.

Case's spiritual world is that of the matrix. He acknowledges that the matrix is "a drastic simplification of the human sensorium," but nonetheless prefers its reductive, geometrical nature to the "gratuitous multiplication of flesh input" (71) of simstim (simulated senses) and the real world. Case prefers the geometric "masculine" mind over gratuitous "feminine" senses, as Gibson still resorts to such

regressive cultural associations. Because Case is operating within a radicalized, dystopian mode of perception, he finds himself incapable of arriving at a functional middle-ground between the dialectical extremes of "drastic simplification" and "gratuitous multiplication." Because he feels limited to an either/or choice, as millenarian thinking often assumes thinking in simplistic binaries, Case totally commits himself to the former. He renounces full phenomenal reception of the exterior world as a gratuitous experience (echoing Lewis's "strategic distance"), because the corporeal senses (as opposed to the abstract nature of the mind) are for a hacker of his stature a gimmick, a mere "meat toy" (*Neuromancer* 71). In conclusion, when Case had access to the cerebral dreamworld of the matrix, he had succeeded in the erasure of his own flesh. However, after his Fall he had been thrust into a world of "meat," characteristic of the "numbness" and "anesthesia" of Hell as conceptualized within the apocalyptic mode of dystopian fiction.

Apart from Case's personal conceptualizations of space, the world of *Neuromancer* itself is presented as Hell on the level of narration. However, its descriptions elude the most obvious association of Hell with hellfire. Instead, the world is presented as lacking movement and vital forces: frozen, passive, and dead. Such an image of Hell remains consistent with Stewart and Harding's description of Hell as invoking "numbness" and "anesthesia" (291). The novel offers various images of being frozen on the level of descriptive metaphor (the ICE of the matrix; hacking as breaking through ICE) and the world's sociocultural construction.

Case inhabits a frozen world in sociocultural stalemate, wherein the political and mercantile powers—the multinationals, the mafias, and the corporate clans (particularized in *Neuromancer* as the zaibatsus, the Yakuza, Sense/Net, the Turing police, and the Tessier-Ashpools)—might perhaps gain advantage one over another at a given point in time, but such local change in power signifies nothing. Traditional science fiction presented worlds in which time moved forward with the sheer force of change, progress, and extrapolation. In contrast, the sociotemporal impasse presented in *Neuromancer* is best summarized in the words of the punk movement's nihilistic mantra: "No future." This approach marks science fiction's retreat from optimistic extrapolation in favor of pessimistic recoil.

The world of *Neuromancer* grants chosen individuals prolonged lifespans, but one such long-lived character, Julius Deane, is described as having been petrified in the past with no prospects whatsoever for his future. His office, with its heterotopic collection of antiques such as "Neo-Aztec bookcases," "Disney-styled table lamps," a "Kandinsky-look coffee table," and a "Dali clock" (21), does not strike one as a living room, but rather, a museum or even a mausoleum. Deane himself is described in the following manner: "Sexless and inhumanely patient, his primary gratification seemed to lie in his devotion to esoteric forms of

tailor-worship. Case had never seen him wear the same suit twice, although his wardrobe seemed to consist entirely of meticulous reconstructions of garments of the previous century" (21). The description hints at the prospect of the future being a mere ironic and meaningless repetition of the past, echoing Stewart and Harding's postmodernist apocalypse with its "playful celebration of surface styles and reproductions" (290). Deane's wearing different suits signifies mere quantitative repetition instead of actual qualitative change.

Chiba, Case's initial operating ground, is described as "a deranged experiment in social Darwinism" (14), a zone in which individual people might perhaps rise or fall in terms of their social status, but the *status quo* itself remains petrified in a stalemate: "Stop hustling and you sank without a trace, but move a little too swiftly and you'd break the fragile surface tension of the black market" (14). Similarly, culture itself is presented as an accelerated succession of meaningless fashions: "Fads swept the youth of the Sprawl at the speed of light; entire subcultures could rise overnight, thrive for a dozen weeks, and then vanish utterly" (74). *Neuromancer*'s prospective counter-cultural forces such as the Panther Moderns do not engage in actual political change, but rather, are reduced to "practical jokers [and] nihilistic technofetishists" who engage in "random acts of surreal violence" (*Neuromancer* 75). This description is at once evocative of cyberpunk's indifference to social commitment in favor of meaningless games. The most direct image of the frozen world of *Neuromancer* is contained in the individual clan-members of Tessier-Ashpool SA being frozen in cryogenic suspension for considerable amounts of time: "'I'm old, Molly. Over two hundred years, if you count the cold. The cold'. . . . 'You can get freezeburn,' she said carefully. 'Nothing burns there,' he said impatiently . . . 'Nothing burns'" (221). Such descriptions define the real world of Hell as a place of stagnation rather than hellfire.

To recapitulate, after his transgression and Fall, Case is thrust into a frozen, hellish world. There he must come to terms with his human nature: his embodiedness, his being fragile and mortal, and his dependence on sustenance and capital. His instinctive reaction to the world's hellish nature and his own victimization is that of Hassanian "recoil." Case, who at first has no means of escaping into the matrix, escapes instead into mental inwardness. According to Scott Bukatman, even the character's name invokes images of inwardness, since the name *Case* could mean "a closed object, a container, a hard case" (95). This intuition is confirmed in several passages from the novel. Case sleeps "curled in his capsule in some coffin hotel" (11), lives in the "prison of his own flesh" (12), and finds himself in a "cubicle [which] was the sort of place where people died" (28). He is described as bitter (10), paranoid (23), and in a state of "terminal overdrive" (14). Unable to nurture his addiction to the matrix, he resorts to using drugs. His

emotional recoil is diagnosed outright in the text itself in the words of Ratz, the bartender: "'And you wander back and forth in this portable bombshelter built of booze and ups [drugs], sure. Proof against the grosser emotions, yes?'" (32). Ratz also refers to Case as "too much the artiste" (9), confirming Case's status as an avatar of the figure of "the alienated intellectual cast adrift in a community of philistines" (Fiedler 439). This notion refers to the talented, albeit misunderstood individual who is aware of a potential Utopia (the matrix), but who is prevented from reaching it.

However, Case's recoil and strategic distance had not proved successful against the world's victimization, echoing Hassan's sentiment that individuals in postmodern times are no longer capable of succeeding in this struggle, as Case is also confirmed to be suicidal and on a straight path towards death: "Ninsei wore him down until the street itself came to seem the externalization of some death wish, some secret poison he hadn't known he carried" (14). In another scene in *Neuromancer* evoking the image of games, Case realizes that his recoil has led him to a mental state in which he is no longer capable of treating his life as something other than a perverse game: "Case knew that at some point he'd started to play a game with himself, a very ancient one that has no name, a final solitaire. He no longer carried a weapon, no longer took the basic precautions. He ran the fastest, loosest deals on the street" (14). Case's willingness to accept jobs involving a high risk factor represents his death drive; a repetition automatism which emphasizes the machine-like character of his life at this point in the narrative. His recoil is hopeless, albeit empowering at the same time, representing a Romantic last stand of the active Self against the world.

If one were to trace up to this point just the secular, dystopian dominant of the novel, there would seem to be no hope for Case as an individual and the world of *Neuromancer* in general. Indeed, in order for the narrative to "save" Case, it must reveal its religious and millenarian "utopian horizon" instead and resort to a traditional motif in American fiction: the God-given second chance.

In *Neuromancer*, God proper does not make an appearance, but the Wintermute AI functions, for all intents and purposes, as the narrative's secular *ersatz*-God. Case as the novel's focalizer conceptualizes Wintermute as such and the AI itself alludes to its God-like qualities in an ironic fashion. When Case first notices Wintermute in the matrix, he sees "a simple cube of white light, that very simplicity suggesting extreme complexity" (140). As mentioned before, for the cerebral-oriented hackers of *Neuromancer*, geometric shapes are the epitome of simplification, a feature which all hackers worship and strive for. As a simple cube, Wintermute invokes the impression of an advanced form of being. Although Case is aware that Wintermute is just an AI program, his instinct tells him there is more to

this particular AI so he asks: "'You running the world now? You God?'" (140). The question prompts an interpretation that despite its secular surface, the novel features in its deep structure a utopian longing for Rapture and salvation, which is typical of the American topos of innocence.

Wintermute does not confirm Case's intuition outright. However, its replies to Case reveal its awareness of the fact that it possesses God-like qualities, as it alludes to motifs from Biblical scripture and seems to be masquerading as God. In one instance, it asks Case: "'You want I should come to you in the matrix like a burning bush?'" (202) (*King James* Bible, Exod. 3.2). In another, it claims to possess God-like omnipresence in purporting to exist: "'Nowhere. Everywhere.'" Afterward it adds: "'I'm the sum total of the works, the whole show.'" (316). When asked if its presence changes the world, Wintermute replies: "'Things aren't different. Things are things'" (316). Because Wintermute is a "thing" itself, it seems to be once again alluding to the scripture, and in particular, to God's tautological pronouncement: "I AM THAT I AM" (*King James* Bible, Exod. 3.14).

As the ironic "thing that is a thing," the literal *deus ex machina* of *Neuromancer* (as science fiction is known for its literalizing of concepts and metaphors), Wintermute provides Case with a divine second chance of returning to the world which has violated him. It provides the means of restoring Case's pancreas, liver, and nervous system, allowing Case to return to the matrix (60). This "God"-given second chance reveals in its deep structure the American Adamic motif of an individual being granted a fresh start in a new world, to explore it and make it one's own. The second chance also represents the novel's "utopian horizon" within its dystopian dominant, here realized in the motif of Rapture.

Within Mark Dery's concept of "escape velocity," Case could be conceptualized as a passive, albeit vigilant "true believer" awaiting Rapture from the mundane social world into a world of greater significance. *Neuromancer* presents what Dery describes as "the cyberdelic vision of a techno-mystical apotheosis in the there and then," which "diverts public discourse from the political and socioeconomic inequities of the here and now" (48–49). Wintermute "raptures" Case into greatness, allowing him to return into the matrix and providing him with powerful software which elevates him to the status of a hacker-magician in the act of divine intervention. However, this "rapture" happens despite the fact that Case is undeserving of elevation on moral grounds.

When commenting on the immoral, asocial disengagement of cyberpunk protagonists, Dery points to Case and Molly in particular as individuals who "are utterly apolitical, aspiring to the peak of their professions—the glamorized corporate soldier of fortune—and nothing more" (251). Such indifferent characters are in recoil from the world and must therefore turn to a "utopian horizon" in

search of self-fulfillment. Case turns his utopian desires towards the matrix and it is this passive worship which grants him a second chance from Wintermute. His asocial conduct is rewarded with "rapture," which reveals one of cyberpunk's disturbing overtones: divine salvation is granted to those in particular who turn to Utopia and leave their social responsibilities behind.

However, while Case conceptualizes Wintermute as a benevolent, semi-divine being and Wintermute itself masquerades as such, other characters in the novel would rather believe Wintermute to represent a devil or a demon. Claire Sponsler notes that in contrast with Case, Wintermute embodies a "decentering of the subject" (631). In one instance, it is referred to as a "hive mind" and a "ghost" (315). In another, it is revealed that Wintermute is unable to function as a stable, holistic being, masquerading instead under makeshift masks with incomplete personalities (256). Such features reveal its origin in postmodernist thought, as opposed to Case. Wintermute's cunning, protean character marks him as a demon rather than a divine being. Within the narrative of the Garden of Eden, the devil had shape-shifted into a snake and thus deceived Adam and Eve. Within the Christian tradition, therefore, protean shape-shifting is perceived to designate malevolent beings ("tricksters," as it were). Such a Biblical intuition is common in *Neuromancer* on behalf of characters other than Case. The Dixie Flatline claims that nobody "'trusts those fuckers . . . Every AI ever built has an electromagnetic shotgun wired to its forehead.'" (159). When asked about Wintermute, Tessier-Ashpool replies: "'A name. Yes. To conjure with, perhaps. A lord of hell, surely.'" (221). One of the Turing police officers warns Case about his dealings with the AI: "'You are worse than a fool,' Michele said . . . 'You have no care for your species. For thousands of years men dreamed of pacts with demons. Only now are such things possible. And what would you be paid with? What would your price be, for aiding this thing to free itself and grow?'" (193).

In conclusion, Wintermute is an ambivalent character with both a divine and a demonic aspect, a character whom Gibson seems to have based on both God and Satan alike. Perhaps such a deep structure hints at the notion that an Artificial Intelligence as the science-fictional Other *par excellence* eludes our crude human conceptualizations and binaries. From the demonic perspective, Case could be perceived as a character based on the immoral Faustian antihero who resorts to pacts with demons in exchange for power and knowledge. In consequence, he could be interpreted as a naïve innocent who finds himself unable to see Wintermute for what this intelligence represents. In his naïveté, Case believes to be entering a beneficial covenant with an *ersatz*-God, whereas in truth he might be helping an *ersatz*-demon against all mankind. Indeed, as Leslie Fiedler has demonstrated, within the American tradition of masculine protagonists there is

"the convention of treating magic as science and thus reclaiming it for respectability in the Age of Reason; the magician Faust in his black robes becomes the scientist in his white coat" (*Love and Death* 121). The Faustian magician's pact with a demon could thus function as one of *Neuromancer*'s deep structures, particularized in the image of Case the hacker (the scientist-magician) entering into a pact with a malevolent Artificial Intelligence (a "postmodern demon" if there ever was one).

According to Fiedler, the notion of the American Adam in addition to its benevolent surface has certain disturbing overtones. One of these is its Faustian aspect. In his naïve innocence, the American Adam is premoral, and therefore outside of the social realm. Its radical Faustian counterpart is no longer premoral, as his high intelligence implies the knowledge of morals. Instead, he is amoral and no longer outside of the social realm, but above it. Case as an avatar of Adam in his Faustian aspect reveals what Fiedler describes as: "The blasphemous hope of Faustian man: the re-ordering of nature, the canceling out of the effects of original sin, the creation of life become the daily business of the laboratory, if not on today's agenda, at least on tomorrow's" (*Love and Death* 122).

Despite its dystopian surface, *Neuromancer* reveals its "utopian horizon" in developing several semi-religious motifs of utopian nature, one of which is the aforecited "re-ordering of nature" and "creation of life." Case and Wintermute are intertwined in a paradoxical relationship in which both can be claimed to be agents of power and creation. On the one hand, Wintermute can be interpreted as the omnipotent agent of the novel, the *deus ex machina* God who "raptures" Case from the frozen world he inhabits. On the other hand, however, it is perhaps Case himself who, in helping Wintermute to reach its goals, allows for the genesis of a "god" in a powerful act of subcreation. Inasmuch as the secular discourses of the West have led to the "death of God," the "utopian horizon" within cyberpunk fiction allows for the "resurrection" of God, or at least the subcreation of "a god," an omnipotent being with God-like qualities. Such an interpretation would invoke what Lewis labeled a "Yankee genesis" within the discourse of the American Adam; an act of creation in which "the creature has taken on the role of creator" (45–46).

Case enters into the role of Adam the subcreator who is to change the world around him. In deciding to help Wintermute against the warnings of other characters, Case manages to break the hellish, frozen structure of the novel's world and claim: "'I got no idea what'll happen if Wintermute wins, but it'll change something!'" (307). In effect, Case functions both as Adam, to whom a second chance had been given from above, and as the one who himself provides the

world with a second chance through altering its structure. In a world petrified in a stalemate, Case finds himself in the position of a savior capable of doing "the real thing" instead of meaningless repetition:

> 'You're always building models. Stone circles. Cathedrals. Pipe-organs. Adding machines. I [Wintermute] got no idea why I'm here now, you know that? But if the run goes off tonight, you'll have finally managed the real thing.' 'I [Case] don't know what you're talking about.' 'That's 'you' in the collective. Your species.' (204)

In the words of Leary, one of the functions of hackers is to "guide the gene pool to the next stage" (1). Wintermute's words confirm that Case functions as such a "shepherd" figure for his collective: moving it forward, negotiating its future, and providing it with "a god."

As Adam the subcreator, Case is also modeled on the figure of "the American poet," which according to Lewis is "the type of creator, the poet *par excellence*, creating language itself by naming the elements of the scene about him" (5). The role of Case as the hacker-magician is to "'learn the names of programs, the long, formal names, names the owners seek to conceal. True names . . .'" (*Neuromancer* 289). This motif has its origin in Adam naming the flora and fauna of the Garden, a gesture through which he becomes their master. Case's successful alteration of the world's structure (or, to use the words of Fiedler, his "re-ordering of nature" and "creation of life") represents one of the novel's "utopian horizons." It is through this change that the novel ceases to reflect the postmodern, ironic apocalypse of Harding and Stewart with its petrified "celebration of surface styles and reproductions" (290) and instead turns to the productive millennarian mode with its "overturnings" and "originary moments" (286). The frozen surface of the hellish world is broken and an omnipotent being is liberated. In this gesture, *Neuromancer* returns to the utopian progressivism of older science fiction.

Baccolini claims that "utopia is maintained in dystopia, traditionally a bleak, depressing genre with no space for hope in the story, only outside the story" (520). She further claims that recent science fiction novels "by resisting closure, allow readers and protagonists to hope: the ambiguous, open endings maintain the utopian impulse within the work" (520). Accordingly, *Neuromancer* maintains such a "utopian horizon" despite its dystopian surface through its perpetuation of traditional utopian motifs. The narrative ends with Wintermute discovering another Artificial Intelligence in outer space in the Alpha Centauri system and making preparations for a first contact scenario (*Neuromancer* 316). Though just hinted at in one closing paragraph, this sudden shift (in fact: a regression) in motifs

from cyberspace back to outer space marks *Neuromancer*'s final gaze towards a "utopian horizon," its sudden re-emergence from a state of recoil, and a return to the traditional science-fictional paradigm of outer space, alien beings, exploration, and first contact.[7] This unexpected emergence of traditional plot elements is not provided with a proper closure, hence the novel resolves (or rather: does not resolve) in a promise of potential Utopia.

Nevertheless, the narrative does provide some closure to Case as a character. Case returns to working as a hacker on routine assignments and living a "normal" life: "He found work. He found a girl who called herself Michael." (317). It would seem at first glance that Case returned full circle to his precise point of departure and achieved nothing in particular, but in allowing Wintermute to grow and develop, he allowed the AI to change himself as well. Wintermute provided Case with a realization which he did not have prior to the heist: the recognition that he is capable of "passion" towards life. This productive state of mind at last enabled Case to integrate into the real world of social notation and cease functioning in a constant state of mental recoil. His growing awareness of his passion towards life is a motif which reappears throughout the novel in descriptions of his "love" and "hate" (or "rage") towards particular people and situations (love and hate being extremes on the differential scale of passion). In the course of the narrative, Wintermute and Neuromancer rid Case of what he then realizes are his most essential needs: food, warmth, shelter, sex, and love: "'I had a cigarette,' Case said, looking down at his white-knuckled fist. 'I had a cigarette and a girl and a place to sleep. Do you hear me, you son of a bitch? You hear me?'" (143).

At the onset of the narrative, Case frowns upon such simple "creature comforts," mere necessities of "the meat." In the course of Wintermute's machinations, however, he comes to appreciate them and discovers that it wasn't the absence of the abstract and cerebral matrix, but his lack of recognition of such tangible fundamentals which forced him to lead a life in recoil: "He knew then: the rage had come in the arcade, when Wintermute rescinded the simstim ghost of Linda Lee, yanking away the simple animal promise of food, warmth, a place of sleep. . . . 'Numb,' he said. He'd been numb a long time, years" (181). In other words, Case discovers that what makes him human are his embodiedness and his commitment to fundamentals, as well as his being grounded in the relative innocence of human necessities, as opposed to the cerebral transcendence of the

7 In a sense, therefore, *Neuromancer* managed in the scope of one novel to both introduce a new subgenre of science fiction, as well as provide it with proper closure in returning to traditional science-fictional motifs.

matrix. Sponsler seems to confirm this sentiment: "[Gibson's] male heroes are the characters who are the least invaded by technology. Without exception, they are resolutely 'human,' not least of all in their vulnerability" (637–638). In being vulnerable and realizing that this in particular is what makes him human, Case for the last time invokes the American tradition of innocence.

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