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Posthuman Entities and Late Capitalism in William Gibson's *Neuromancer**

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Yoo, Jihun. "Posthuman Entities and Late Capitalism in William Gibson's *Neuromancer*." *Studies in English Language & Literature* 45.4 (2019): 57-73. *Neuromancer*－a centerpiece of the cyberpunk movement－is a 1984 science fiction novel by William Gibson. This paper examines cyberspace, cybernetics, and various posthuman beings－themes commonly dealt with cyberpunk－in *Neuromancer*. This paper also traces the association between the novel's techno-culture with late capitalism. Multinational corporations, wage working conditions, and the concentration of capital make up the essential elements that provide grounds for reading the novel in association with late capitalism. Examining these components through a model of multinational capitalism reveals how Gibson portrays the complexity of cultural, social, and economic issues associated with technological innovations and evolutionary shifts in the human condition. (Busan University of Foreign Studies)

Key Words: *Neuromancer*, William Gibson, Posthuman, Late Capitalism, Multinational Corporation

I. Introduction

Cyberpunk emerged as a genre through the work of authors such as Philip K. Dick, Bruce Sterling, and William Gibson. In 1984, William Gibson published a novel that began new traditions in science fiction writing－*Neuromancer*. It is a

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genre that takes place in a near future governed by "media overload, global industrial and political blocs" (Conn 209). The novel won all three of the major science fiction awards: The Hugo, the Nebula, and the Phillip K. Dick. Indeed, it was the "centerpiece of the cyberpunk movement characterized by a mix of high technology in the fields of computer networking and biomechanical interface and urban street life" (Posadas 36). Gibson is the most influential author of the 1980s cyberpunk movement. His early work "provided the blueprint for what were to become the trademarks of cyberpunk writing: computers, computer(ized) environments and artificial intelligence" (Krevel 27).

Previous research on *Neuromancer* tends to fall into two main threads. The first trend of research, from a postmodernist prospective, attempts to focus on the novel's deconstructive, decentralization, and postmodern elements. These scholars include Sue Matheson and Daniel Punday. Matheson's studies, for instance, concern Gibson's narrative dynamics that focus on "indeterminate [and] postmodern elements" (51). Focusing on Gibson's cyberspace discourse, Punday notes that intertextuality in Gibson's works offers us a way to "negotiate the conventional discursive elements used within online communication" (195). Opposing such views, the second trend aims to examine these territories in association with feminism, racism, and gender politics. These critics include Stacy Gillis, Marjorie Worthington, and Lauraine Leblanc. Gillis, for instance, examines how "hyper-sexualized cyboric female bodies are positioned in contrast to the repressed bodies of the mirror-shaded male hackers" that may reveal the "destabilizing conundrum of supposed agency contained by the determinacy of the (post) feminist body" (7). In a similar way, Worthington, for example, argues that "[i]nstead of the seemingly endless possibilities for the decentered subject to enact new and different personae, cyberspace seemed to encourage only the banal identities . . . that resort ultimately, in racist, sexist, essentialist notions of the embodied self" (192). More particularly, Leblanc claims that writers such as Gibson "present female-gendered cyborgs [to] undertake a role-reversal into masculinity" (73).

If cyberspace and cybernetic (posthuman) beings are significant indicators to read *Neuromancer* in terms of postmodernism, feminism, and gender politics, then it seems imperative to examine more closely the socioeconomic functions and implications of cyberspace and posthuman beings in a near-future science fiction. In fact, there seems to be a lack of scholarship that reads *Neuromancer* in terms of socioeconomic realities—i.e., late capitalism. Marxist theory has played an important role in sf criticism, especially in the last third of the past century. Since the 1960s, "many of the most sophisticated studies of sf have been either explicitly Marxist in orientation or influenced by Marxist concepts adopted by feminism, race-criticism, queer theory and cultural studies" (Csicsery-Ronay 113). Most of the critical work of the Marxist scholars associated with *Science Fiction Studies*, and later also *Utopian Studies*, was devoted to two practical purposes. The first was to "identify recent works of sf that could model the dual function of critical utopias, that is, to criticize the status quo and to offer hopeful alternatives, thereby altering readers to potentially subversive works, and cultivating radical inspiration" (Csicsery-Ronay 120). The second goal was to "identify and elaborate the critical-utopian content in those complex sf texts that reveal the irremovable contradictions of bourgeois ideology while they strive to contain and resolve them" (Csicsery-Ronay 120). Critical in linking postmodernism with late capitalism is the idea of the "primacy of industrial production and the omnipresence of class struggle" (3) in the culture of "simulacrum" (18) or the "postmodern hyperspace" (44) that Fredric Jameson mentions in his book, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991). Delineating the characteristics of multinational or corporate capitalism, Jameson have indicated that "besides the forms of transnational business its features include new international division of labor, new forms of media interrelationship . . . [of] computers and automation, the flight of production to advanced Third World areas . . . the crisis of traditional labor, the emergence of yuppies, and gentrification on a now-global scale" (Jameson xix).

Drawing partly from Jameson's ideas, the major tenets of late capitalism can be

identified as the dominance of multinational corporations and their socio-economic model, exploitation of wage workers, and monopolization of capital. First, I will be using N. Katherine Hayles' concept of the posthuman and Donna Haraway's metaphor of the cyborg to characterize various forms of beings in *Neuromancer*. The term 'poshumn' used in this paper relies on Hayles' concept of the posthuman subject－a "heterogeneous . . . entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction" (3). The posthuman is achieved by "escaping or repressing not just its animal origins in nature, the biological, and the evolutionary, but more generally by transcending the bonds of materiality and embodiment altogether" (Wolfe xv). As a subcategory of the posthuman, the cyborg, according to Haraway, is not only a cybernetic organism but also a hybrid of machine and organism that transgresses boundaries, allows potent fusions, and suggests dangerous possibilities. The posthuman entities, include, but not limited to, bioengineered super-mans, mutants, cyborgs, hybrid creatures created from an impulse to enhance every aspect of human biology. Second, I will be following Tony Fabijancic's and Timothy Yu's ideas concerning late capitalism, generally characterized as multinational capitalism, to understand the socioeconomic conditions within the futuristic landscape of *Neuromancer*. Showing the associations among technology, business, and posthuman bodies, Fabijancic's examination on urban practices in Gibson's cyber world in terms of "business imperatives and new technologies" (105) which alter natural bodies and create new visions of humanity is important. Furthermore, Yu's investigation on global economies and multinational corporations that control cyber technology and shape new modes of consciousness and behavior provide a framework to link multinational capitalism with postmodernity "apotheosized in the notion of cyberspace" (46). Finally, this will allow us to identify various posthuman beings (such as cyborgs, cybernetic beings, clones, avatars, and artificial intelligences) in the novel, then to find the associations among these entities and socio-economic conditions in the world of *Neuromancer*. It is my contention that although *Neuromancer* exhibits many postmodern elements, its focus

not only on cyberspace, cybernetics, and posthuman entities but also on their relationships with multinational corporations, wage working conditions, and the concentration of capital provide grounds for reading the novel in association with late capitalism. In fact, examining these elements through a late capitalist model may reveal the complexity of cultural, social, and economic issues associated with technological innovations and evolutionary shifts in the human condition.

II.

The indistinguishable relationship between humans and posthumans; physical landscapes and virtual realities is why many scholars consider Gibson's cyberpunk novels as postmodern works. Fredric Jameson was perhaps the most influential theorist of postmodernism, through his 1984 essay, and the 1991 collection of the same name. For Jameson a "postmodern text is not a critical representation of an authentic reality, but is a simulacrum, a copy without an origin . . . where there is a breakdown in the meaningful connections between the words or images" (Butler 141). Gibson's investment with simulacrum and his focus on "corporeally-and mentally-invasive technology, in the form of prosthetic enhancements and direct brain-computer interfaces, is but an extension of an existing theme in our current experiences with the products of our technological innovation" (Leblanc 72). For this reason, the cyberpunk genre "constitutes a new relationship between people and their minds and between people and machines" (Conn 207). This is because cyberpunk harmonizes well with the basic orientation of postmodernism: an "extreme mode of skepticism which challenges all we took for granted about language and experience" (Olsen 279). As Tony Myer notes, we may see cyberspace as a "representational strategy for domesticating what Jameson terms postmodern hyperspace" (888). Gibson's Neuromancer, undoubtedly, is a "tour de force of the postmodern aesthetic brought to life" (Sponsler 628).

As many scholars would agree, there are obvious reasons—the introduction of new technologies such as cyberspace, cybernetics, and posthuman bodies—for considering Gibson's Neuromancer as a postmodern text. This new postmodern condition not only questions the ideas of reality and human subjectivity but also destabilize the demarcation between physical landscapes and cyberspaces and humans and posthuman/cybernetic beings. In fact, much of Gibson's Neuromancer is centered on a postmodern idea of cyberspace, or the matrix as it is alternatively called. In Neuromancer, cyberspace is defined as

> consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts . . . A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights receding. (51)

Many characters in *Neuromancer* live "for the bodiless exultation of [this] cyberspace" (6). Just as Henry Case falls into "the prison of his own flesh," for Gibson's characters, the body is simply "meat" (6). This is because cyberspace provides a variety of elation and adrenaline rush that are commensurate with a bodiless/spiritual experience. In the matrix "you could throw yourself into a highspeed drift and skid, totally engaged but set apart from it, and all around you the dance of biz, information interacting, data made flesh in the mazes of the black market" (17). Here's how bits of information react with each other and data become materialized in the matrix: as Case jacks himself into the matrix, a gray disk, the color of Chiba sky begins to appear and

> rotate, faster, becoming a sphere of paler gray. Expanding—And flowed, flowered for him, fluid neon origami trick, the unfolding of his distanceless home, his country, transparent 3D chessboard extending to infinity. Inner eye 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. (52)

In this techno-utopian milieu of a postmodern cybernetic society, the body is considered as an original prosthesis that is able to be extended or replaced by other prostheses. Many characters in *Neuromancer*, in fact, are posthuman organisms, or what Hayles calls "heterogeneous entities" whose "boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction" (3). In regards to the posthuman condition, Hayles notes that

> the presumption that there is an agency, desire, or will belonging to the self and clearly distinguished from the "wills of others" is undercut in the posthuman, for the posthuman's collective heterogeneous quality implies a distributed cognition located in disparate parts that may be in only tenuous communication with one another. . . . William Gibson makes the point vividly in *Neuromancer* when the narrator characterizes the posthuman body as "data made flesh" (3-5).

These posthuman bodies contribute to the central theme of Gibson's work that problematizes "the border between human and machine" and at the same time "thematizes the present phase of modernity in the form of the cyborg body" (Siivonen 228). Haraway defines a cyborg as a "cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism" suggesting its potential for "transgress[ing] boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities" (292). According to Haraway,

> a cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. . . . Contemporary science fiction is full of cyborgs--creatures simultaneously animal and machine, who populate worlds ambiguously natural and crafted . . . There is no fundamental, ontological separation in our formal knowledge of machine and organism, of technical and organic (291-313).

As Haraway would agree, cybernetic organisms in *Neuromancer* seem to question the Cartesian notions of human subjectivity as they blur the distinction between physical reality and cyberspace as well as between humans and cybernetic beings.

These posthuman beings range from cyborgs—with body parts augmentation, biochemical alterations, and artificial memory implantation—and clones to avatars and AIs. Case, the main protagonist of *Neuromancer*, is a 24-year-old former cyberspace cowboy who has undergone biochemical modification in his brain and liver. Case has been nerve-damaged by employers he stole from, rendering him unable to jack into cyberspace. Due to the debilitating pancreas and neural damage that disabled him from accessing the matrix, he is recruited and healed by a man named Corto/Armitage who wants him to steal a digital copy of Case's now-dead cowboy teacher, McCoy Pauley, and with Pauley's help, break into the Tessier-Ashpool's system known as Neuromancer. Armitage runs "a virus called Mole . . . the first generation of real intrusion program" and he needs a "console cowboy" (28) to hack into a corporate deck. Case accepts Armitage's job offer for his services as a hacker. Case, his bodyguard Molly Millions, the sexual psychopath Peter Riviera, and Armitage eventually succeed in releasing Wintermute and Neuromancer from the "hard-wired constraints that keep them from melding and evolving into a higher form of sentience and intelligence" (Stevens 415).

Additionally, Molly is a cyborg with artificial mechanical body parts. She has weaponized razor blades under her fingernails and augmented eyeglasses that enable her to see things in the dark. Her "glasses were surgically inset, sealing her sockets. The silver lenses seemed to grow from the smooth pale skin above her cheekbones . . . She held out her hands, palms up, the white fingers slightly spread and with a barely audible click, ten double-edged, four centimeter scalpel blades slid from their housings beneath the burgundy nails" (25-26). Julius Deane, an import/export dealer in Chiba City, through genetic surgery, is 135 years old. He lives by having his "metabolism assiduously warped by a weekly fortune in serums and hormones . . . where genetic surgeons reset the code of his DNA" (12).

Furthermore, a former Green Beret named Colonel Willis Corto has an artificial memory implanted in his brain, which generates the persona called Armitage. In fact, the "Armitage" personality was constructed by Wintermute through an artificial

memory implant that allowed him to live as Armitage—the mission recruiter of Case's team—and no longer as Corto. Here's Molly's description of Armitage: Wintermute "found him, sifting him out of all of the war's ripe detritus, gliding into the man's flat gray field of consciousness like a water spider crossing the face of some stagnant pool, the first messages blinking across the face of a child's micro in a darkened room. Wintermute had built Armitage up from scratch, with Corto's memories" (195).

The notions of human subjectivity and consciousness are stretched to the limits as Gibson forces readers to reconsider our traditional norms and conceptions about human beings by bringing avatars and AIs to the forefront of *Neuromancer*'s narrative. First of all, in *Neuromancer*, there are entities whose copied consciousnesses exist in the form of avatars within the matrix. One October night, when Case enters the matrix, he sees three figures—cybernetic beings (the copied consciousnesses of Case, Linda, and Riviera) living inside it. They "stood at the very edge of one of the vast steps of data. Small as they were, he could make out the boy's grin, his pink gums, the glitter of the long gray eyes that had been Riviera's. Linda still wore his jacket; she waved, as he passed. But the third figure, close behind her, across her shoulders, was himself" (260). Then, Wintermute and Neuromancer are artificial intelligences that purely exist within cyberspace. Wintermute is one of the Tessier-Ashpool (a wealthy Rockefeller-like family that created artificial intelligences)'s AIs, and its goal is to merge with its sibling AI, Neuromancer, and become a superintelligence. Wintermute is revealed to be the supermind that orchestrated the entire mission—as the entire plot of *Neuromancer* revolves around it. Wintermute's sibling AI, Neuromancer, on the other hand, is made from a portmanteau of the words neuro, romancer, and necromancer: "Neuro from the nerves, the silver paths. Romancer. Necromancer. I call up the dead" (235). Neuromancer is able to copy human minds/consciousness and play them as RAM (random access memory), allowing the stored personalities to grow and develop, and it has no intention to merge with Wintermute.

III.

Drawing partly from Jameson's ideas, some of the essential elements of late capitalism manifests in Gibson's *Neuromancer* by its dramatization of the dominance of multinational corporations and their socio-economic model, exploitation of wage workers, and monopolization of capital. Below, Jameson explicates the correlation between transnational business models, namely late capitalism with various social crises. This correlation allows us to understand Gibson's future society in such association.

> Besides the forms of transnational business mentioned above, [late capitalism's] features include the new international division of labor, a vertiginous new dynamic in international banking and the stock exchanges . . . computers and automation, the flight of production to advanced Third World areas, along with all the more familiar social consequences, including the crisis of traditional labor, the emergence of yuppies, and gentrification on a now-global scale. (Jameson xix)

Undoubtedly, Gibson's *Neuromancer* explores "human experience within the context of media-dominated, postindustrial, [and] late capitalistic society" (Sponsler 626-27). Following Jameson,

> many theorists associated postmodernism (as a cultural phenomenon) with the structure of late capitalism, frequently characterized as "multinational" or "global" capitalism. Among the characteristics of this regime of capitalism is the increasingly transnational operation of capital, facilitated by multinational corporations operating across the borders of nation-states. (Yu 46)

The setting of Gibson's *Neuromancer* can be considered as one in which capital is operated by multinational corporations and social Darwinism—a social theory that explains the evolution of society and humanity through social competition characterized by natural selection and the law of the 'survival of the fittest'--governs

all aspects of human and non-human life. The social Darwinian aspect in the novel, however, refers particularly to selection through technology and the principles of the survival of the wealthy (especially referring to multinational corporations that monopolize worldwide finances and state-of-the-art technologies).

As cyberspace technology, cyberspacial experience, and cybernetic entities become norms in the postmodern dystopic world of *Neuromancer*, Gibson's famous description of the Night City landscape effectively portrays a late-capitalist society. First of all, Gibson's postmodern cities like Chiba illustrate a late-capitalist society and its late-capitalistic symptom in which multinational corporations incubate and affect black market technology, inauthentic medicine, and cheap artificial organs that permeate the entire socio-economic strata of *Neuromancer*. In the novel, the city of Chiba itself becomes a "magnet for the Sprawl's techno-criminal subcultures" that provide a "shadowland of black medicine" including "implants, nerve-splicing, and microbionics" (6). As a result, *Neuromancer*'s techno-cultural cartography requires an individual to constantly and carefully move forward in his or her business to avoid being cast out by the system and face death.

> Night City was like a deranged experiment in social Darwinism, designed by a bored researcher who kept one thumb permanently on the fast-forward button. Stop hustling and you sank without a trace, but move a little too swiftly and you'd break the fragile surface tension of the black market; either way, you were gone, with nothing left of you but some vague memory in the mind of a fixture like Ratz, though hearts or lungs or kidneys might survive in the service of some stranger with New Yen for the clinic tanks. Biz here was a constant subliminal hum, and death the accepted punishment for laziness, carelessness, lack of grace, the failure to heed the demands of an intricate protocol. (7)

Moreover, the techno-dystopian scenes that Gibson paints in his works obviously remind readers of a late-capitalist society in which the majority of its inhabitants are, or become, wage workers working for multinational corporations like the TA and

sentient entities like Wintermute. Indeed, Tony Fabijancic effectively explains the symptoms of a late-capitalist society. In explaining the "capitalist process which pervades the spatial organization of cities," he points out that such a society involves the "fragmentation or abstraction of individuals—the limited development or maturation of workers in order to motor the capitalist machine, the separation of individuals from each other, and a failed sense of vision, an inability to see this state of affairs for what it is" (106). As a matter of fact, these cyboric beings function as individuals of abstraction—petty workers or employees—working for multinational corporations and global schemes in the world of *Neuromancer*. As Christopher Palmer claims, many of the characters in Gibson's world are "waifs, young and vulnerable, deprived or bereft" (227).

Secondly, just as late capitalism's socio-economic model exploits wage workers, in this future world where social Darwinism govern its inhabitants, in order to survive, most must work as contract workers. The three main characters in the novel, thus, are essentially contracted workers (recruiters, mercenaries, and hackers) working for their bosses, whether they are corporate leaders or even AIs, in order to make a daily living. Case is a cyberspace hacker who is hired and at times disposably used for shady businesses. He "worked for other, wealthier thieves, employers who provided the exotic software required to penetrate the bright walls of corporate systems, opening windows into rich fields of data" (5). As a limited-term wage worker, he has no alternative but to take the job offered by Armitage, and by extension Wintermute, to hack into the TA system's core in exchange for curing his illness and getting new organs. As a wage worker, Case's use-value is only valuable in terms of what he can actually accomplish, provide, and exchange. Here's a conversation between Case and Armitage that suggests this notion: As Armitage tells Case, "You need us as badly as you did when we scraped you up from the gutter" (46). By agreeing to join the team, Case is able to replace his fluid, change blood, get a new pancreas, and receive new tissue patched into his liver (32). Also, as a mercenary/assassin, Molly is merciless and unsympathetic, willing to kill in order to

accomplish the work that she is tasked by her clients. When she found Tessier-Ashpool, the founder of the TA corporation, asleep during her mission to infiltrate Villa Straylight, she "picked up her fletcher, dialed the barrel over to single shot, and very carefully put a toxic dart through the center of his closed left eyelid" (180). This is because her job requires assassination. As Molly tells Case, it "[c]osts to go to Chiba, costs to get the surgery, costs to have them jack your nervous system up so you'll have the reflexes to go with the gear" (142). Furthermore, Corto, who was heavily injured both physically and psychologically during a secret operation named Screaming Fist, "need[ed] eyes, legs, and extensive cosmetic work" (80) to gain a new identity and maintain a living as Armitage. Not surprisingly, despite their cybernetic bodies and superhuman abilities, Gibson's characters are considered as wage workers unable to effect significant changes within the socioeconomic-political fabric of their society.

Thirdly, Gibson illustrates the monopolization of capital and the division of wealth as symptoms of late capitalism by dramatizing their dominating effects in his future society. Indeed, despite all the technological advances and emergence of cybernetic beings, the concentration of capital becomes a prevalent condition and reality in the world of *Neuromancer*. The future Gibson's novels imagine is one in which "multinational corporations control global economies, urban blight has devoured the countryside, crime and violence are inescapable events in urban life and technology has shaped new modes of consciousness and behavior" (Sponsler 626). In fact, in *Neuromancer*, the concentration of capital is represented by the contrast between the residential space of multinational corporation leaders and the nameless streets of some urban slum where drifters and part-time workers reside. This is because, according to Fabijancic, the contrast in space is an "active agent which structures the capacities of capitalism" that we can find in "the same ideology that informs the politics of 19th century urban space" (105).

So, on the one hand, Gibson provides a lively picture of a postmodern techno-graphic mansion owned by the Tessier-Ashpools. The TAs spend most of

their inactive time in cryonic preservation in a labyrinthine mansion known as Villa Straylight. 3Jane explains in her diary that

> [it] is a body grown in upon itself, a Gothic folly. 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 . . . In Straylight, the hull's inner surface is overgrown with a desperate proliferation of structures, forms flowing, interlocking, rising toward a solid core of microcircuitry, our clan's corporate heart, a cylinder of silicon wormholed with narrow maintenance tunnels, some no wider than a man's hand. (167)

With an endless array of chambers, passages, rooms, and stairwells lined with state-of-the-art microcircuits, the TAs reside in a serpentine maze of a colossal structure and a luxurious piece of property. As a current leader and owner of TA corporation, 3Jane owns a "pair of insane artificial intelligences" (211)—namely, Wintermute and Neuromancer—that are considered surplus capital. The TAs are known to be an "eccentric first-generation high-orbit family" (73). By developing AIs, monopolizing the technology to develop these sentient entities, and retaining all the capital gained from them, they have built an empire of their own. In Straylight, they have sealed themselves "away behind [their] money, growing inward, generating a seamless universe of self" (167). In a similar line, as a symptom of late capitalism, the division of wealth, and especially the poor conditions in the slums contrasted with the wealthy cityscapes, becomes an everyday reality for the citizens of the Sprawl. Gibson furnishes a microscopic view of a small area of land dominated by cheap bars, brothels, and motels where Case frequents and stays. Case is only able to afford to stay in one of the cheapest motels, called the "coffin," that is "three meters long, the oval hatches a meter wide and just under a meter and a half tall" (20). It is a place situated between the techno-utopian city (the Sprawl) and an old Port, in an area of streets without names where neon lights and holographic images fade out into darkness: "Night City, with Ninsei its heart. By

day, the bars down Ninsei were shuttered and featureless, the neon dead, the holograms inert, waiting, under the poisoned silver sky" (7).

IV. Conclusion

Previous research on *Neuromancer* tends to focus on either the novel's deconstructive, decentralization, and postmodern elements or its association with feminism, racism, and gender politics by exploring the significance of cyber-technology, cybernetics, and posthuman beings. As cyberspace provides a variety of sensations that are commensurate with bodiless/spiritual experiences, the unstable, indistinguishable, and deconstructive relationships between humans and cybernetic beings/AIs and between physical landscapes and virtual realities are the reason why many scholars consider Gibson's cyberpunk novels as postmodern works.

In this techno-utopian milieu of a postmodern cybernetic society, the body is considered as an original prosthesis that is able to be extended or replaced by other prostheses. As discussed earlier, many characters in *Neuromancer*, in fact, are such posthuman entities. These beings seem to problematize the Cartesian notions of human subjectivity as their existence blurs the distinction between physical reality and cyberspace as well as between humans and cybernetic beings. These posthuman entities range from cyborgs—with body parts augmentation, biochemical alterations, and artificial memory implantation—and clones to avatars and AIs.

As cyberspace technology, cyberspacial experience, and cybernetic entities become normal conditions of reality, Gibson's postmodern landscape is essentially late-capitalistic. This is because, first of all, it is a future world in which capital is operated by multinational corporations and social Darwinism governs all aspects of human and non-human life. Second, it is a society in which the majority of its inhabitants are, or become, wage workers working for multinational corporations (the TAs) and sentient entities (Wintermute). Finally, despite all the technological

advances and emergence of cybernetic beings, the concentration of capital becomes a prevalent condition and reality in the world of *Neuromancer*.

While *Neuromancer* exhibits many postmodern elements, it explores the relationship among multinational corporations, wage working conditions, and the concentration of capital. In fact, examining these elements through a late-capitalist model suggests how Gibson portrays the complexity of cultural, social, and economic issues associated with technological innovations and evolutionary shifts in the human condition.

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