

# Multinational Angst

Ian Jones

1998

Like Mitchell in *City of Bits*, Gibson forecasts a future completely revolutionized by the networked computer. Whereas Mitchell predicts wonderful and idyllic new communities and unheard of democratizing power shifts, Gibson's future is a dark one, with global corporations running the show and the individual cast as helpless fodder for those who have the money to squabble over power, in the form of information. Indeed, reading *Neuromancer* and *Count Zero* was like wading through a war zone, I couldn't even begin to count the corpses. People seemed like books and other remnants of lost eras, anachronistic. Despite attending school, Bobby of *Count Zero* expresses trouble with reading printed word, illustrating the passing of that form of communication.

The wars, of course, are no longer fought between nations, but between multinational corporations like Maas Biolabs and Hosaka. In *Count Zero*, these two corporate entities are portrayed as having an intense rivalry, resulting in industrial defections- much like cold war defections of citizens from the USSR to the US and vice versa. Rather than being representative of two different ideologies (like the US representing capitalism, the USSR representing communism), Maas Biolabs and Hosaka are for all practical purposes identical.

All the characters which the reader somehow is supposed to relate to, especially the main three - Marly, Turner, and Bobby - are living in the cracks of corporate existence, making bucks as free agents in this completely Darwinian determined world order. They are the underdogs who will not sell out. They are also noble martyrs - representation of the modern-day civilized people caught in a hostile world of machines, economics and simulacra. Marly refuses to let Paco in to acquire the box-maker, Turner refuses to abandon the girl Angie, forsaking his contract with Hosaka in the process, and Bobby is essentially a child playing with his toy soldiers in a minefield throughout the novel. The corporate clearly, like Virek, is no longer human. Nice warning, Gibson.