

The Organic Nature of Technology: How to [In]Correctly Predict the Future

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Technology has become synonymous with the future. We assume, as a species, that technology makes us more intelligent and more prepared to face the challenges that we shall continue to face. If one were to ask an individual their vision of the future, most would likely imagine a technological utopia driven by intelligence and science. However, there exist a few far more pessimistic interpretations of what could be. Writers like Pat Cadigan and William Gibson have imagined worlds of danger, chaos, and drug-fueled violence. Above all else, they consider the future that comes with capitalism, as Fritz Lang had in his film *Metropolis*. The optimistic association with the future neglects the inclusion of monopolistic capitalism, which persists within our current world. The utopias that we assume will be in the future will be the anti-utopias caused by late-stage capitalism.

Fritz Lang drew heavily from a science fiction novel by the same name, written in 1925. The tale's concept was inspired by an intense struggle to understand the reality that disturbed Germany in the early twentieth century. Wrought with financial instability and societal unrest, Germany was ripe for artistic exploration. The separated society shown in *Metropolis* was crucially visible within the world during the 1920s, materialized in an era commonly and historically referred to as 'The Roaring Twenties.' The world of *Metropolis* is split between the glitzy utopia of the upper class and the structured dystopia suffered by the lower class. What is a utopia to some could be a dystopia for others, as Edward James discussed in his essay. In truth, "many such utopias would turn out to be 'dystopias'" because they are "oppressive societies" (James 220). The use of an 'oppressive society' exists in many different science fiction novels which strive to predict a form of the future. *Metropolis* is far from the first example of any such 'dystopia' and far from the last.

The punk movement of the eighties resulted in a heavy level of scrutiny from society. The world was experiencing a new awakening of the technological future. Computers were becoming cheaper, and people learned how to use the brand-new tech that made the decade memorable as an era of escape. In her futuristic short story, Pat Cadigan referenced the escapism that put the decade in a spiral that has only continued to persist in the current era of social media. The world constructed by Cadigan is one of visual excess; popularity is based on consumerism. The future that she proposes is a virtually materialistic one; everything exists in a "hyper-program," or "the ultimate of ultimates, a short walk from there to the fourth dimension" (Cadigan 131). A world of artificial and preserved beauty is not a genuine existence. A life stuck on a disk or a chip is no such

utopia, but the concept of continuing to live on as one had must seem slightly utopian, if not reassuring of the continuation of a living form.

Just a few years before Cadigan, William Gibson described his own imagined future. His creation is darker in comparison, seeing as criminal activity dramatically influences it. Gibson's cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer* must have inspired Cadigan's take on the future of materialism, seeing as the 'matrix' proposed in Gibson's story is similar to that of the 'hyper-program' utilized in *Pretty Boy Crossover*. However, unlike Cadigan's short tale, Gibson describes a bleak dystopian future consumed by greed for life in a metallic and modified persistence. The term 'artificial' only barely scratches the world's surface presented in *Neuromancer*; every concept seems to connect to another, developing a complex web of technological flotsam. The matrix that the character Case constantly craves, as though he views the level of consciousness as his crutch, is a realm of "adrenaline," or as Case would put it, "proteins linking to distinguish cell specialties" (Gibson 17). Case is written as a complex character with a flawed background and a struggling force that desires transformation or transcendence into the matrix. He proposes that the matrix is more organic than many might assume when defining a predominantly technological invention; that's the marvel of technology and intelligence.

The concept of intelligence is one strictly defined by organic life. Even when involved in a mechanical being, the intelligence utilized is still created by an organic person. The writers from the eighties and the visionaries of the 1920s recognized that machinery is far more organic than we presume it to be. Humanity is closer to technology, especially now within our current reality. The prosthetics and the physical alterations that people obtain are artificial, yet they are still a part of an organic whole. Many would choose to separate the organic from the inorganic, but the artificial exists because of the biological beings created and invented. Intelligence in its most basic form is often recognized as the knowledge that is held of any information; it is inherently technological, seeing as our memories of information are essentially databases. There is a reason why humans think of their minds as computers, and it is because we based our technology on ourselves; though, our designs were subtle and possibly unknown to the creators themselves. The utopian and dystopian futures that we dream up with are influenced and informed by our current issues. There is no single way we could ever correctly guess what will occur, even if we might trick ourselves into thinking that we could. All we have is our best guess, and that *best guess* will almost always be off. The actual future will only ever be revealed when we are on the cusp of it.

Works Cited

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