William Gibson

William Ford Gibson (born March 17 , 1948) is an American and Canadian speculative fiction writer and essayist widely credited with pioneering the science fiction subgenre known as cyberpunk . Beginning his writing career in the late 1970s , his early works were bleak , noir , near @-@ future stories that explored the effects of technology , cybernetics , and computer networks on humans ? a " combination of lowlife and high tech " ? and helped to create an iconography for the information age before the ubiquity of the Internet in the 1990s .

Gibson notably coined the term " cyberspace " in his short story " Burning Chrome " (1982) and later popularized the concept in his acclaimed debut novel Neuromancer (1984) . These early works have been credited with " renovating " science fiction literature after it had fallen largely into insignificance in the 1970s .

After expanding on Neuromancer with two more novels to complete the dystopic Sprawl trilogy , Gibson collaborated with Bruce Sterling on the alternate history novel The Difference Engine (1990) , which became an important work of the science fiction subgenre steampunk . In the 1990s , Gibson composed the Bridge trilogy of novels , which explored the sociological developments of near @-@ future urban environments , postindustrial society , and late capitalism .

Following the turn of the century and the events of 9 / 11 , Gibson emerged with a string of increasingly realist novels ? Pattern Recognition (2003) , Spook Country (2007) , and Zero History (2010) ? set in a roughly contemporary world . These works saw his name reach mainstream bestseller lists for the first time . His more recent novel , The Peripheral (2014) , returned to a more overt engagement with technology and recognizable science fiction concerns .

In 1999 , The Guardian described Gibson as " probably the most important novelist of the past two decades , " while the Sydney Morning Herald called him the " noir prophet " of cyberpunk . Throughout his career , Gibson has written more than 20 short stories and 10 critically acclaimed novels (one in collaboration) , contributed articles to several major publications , and collaborated extensively with performance artists , filmmakers , and musicians . His work has been cited as an influence across a variety of disciplines spanning academia , design , film , literature , music , cyberculture , and technology .

Early life

Childhood , itinerance , and adolescence

William Ford Gibson was born in the coastal city of Conway , South Carolina , and he spent most of his childhood in Wytheville , Virginia , a small town in the Appalachians where his parents had been born and raised . His family moved frequently during Gibson 's youth owing to his father 's position as manager of a large construction company . In Norfolk , Virginia , Gibson attended Pines Elementary School , where the teachers ' lack of encouragement for him to read was a cause of dismay for his parents . While Gibson was still a young child , a little over a year into his stay at Pines Elementary , his father choked to death in a restaurant while on a business trip . His mother , unable to tell William the bad news , had someone else inform him of the death . Tom Maddox has commented that Gibson " grew up in an America as disturbing and surreal as anything J. G. Ballard ever dreamed " .

A few days after the death , Gibson 's mother returned them from their home in Norfolk to Wytheville . Gibson later described Wytheville as " a place where modernity had arrived to some extent but was deeply distrusted " and credits the beginnings of his relationship with science fiction , his " native literary culture " , with the subsequent feeling of abrupt exile . At the age of 12 , Gibson " wanted nothing more than to be a science fiction writer " . He spent a few unproductive years at basketball @-@ obsessed George Wythe High School , a time spent largely in his room listening to records and reading books . At 13 , unbeknownst to his mother , he purchased an anthology of Beat generation writing , thereby gaining exposure to the writings of Allen Ginsberg , Jack Kerouac , and

William S. Burroughs ; the lattermost had a particularly pronounced effect , greatly altering Gibson 's notions of the possibilities of science fiction literature .

A shy , ungainly teenager , Gibson grew up in a monoculture he found " highly problematic " , consciously rejected religion and took refuge in reading science fiction as well as writers such as Burroughs and Henry Miller . Becoming frustrated with his poor academic performance , Gibson 's mother threatened to send him to a boarding school ; to her surprise , he reacted enthusiastically . Unable to afford his preferred choice of Southern California , his then " chronically anxious and depressive " mother , who had remained in Wytheville since the death of her husband , sent him to Southern Arizona School for Boys in Tucson . He resented the structure of the private boarding school but was in retrospect grateful for its forcing him to engage socially . On the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) exams , he scored 148 out of 150 in the written section but 5 out of 150 in mathematics , to the consternation of his teachers .

= = = Draft @-@ dodging , exile , and counterculture = = =

After his mother 's death when he was 18 , Gibson left school without graduating and became very isolated for a long time , traveling to California and Europe , and immersing himself in the counterculture . In 1967 , he elected to move to Canada in order " to avoid the Vietnam war draft " . At his draft hearing , he honestly informed interviewers that his intention in life was to sample every mind @-@ altering substance in existence . Gibson has observed that he " did not literally evade the draft , as they never bothered drafting me " ; after the hearing he went home and purchased a bus ticket to Toronto , and left a week or two later . In the biographical documentary No Maps for These Territories (2000) , Gibson said that his decision was motivated less by conscientious objection than by a desire to " sleep with hippie chicks " and indulge in hashish . He elaborated on the topic in a 2008 interview :

After weeks of nominal homelessness , Gibson was hired as the manager of Toronto 's first head shop , a retailer of drug paraphernalia . He found the city 's émigré community of American draft dodgers unbearable owing to the prevalence of clinical depression , suicide , and hardcore substance abuse . He appeared , during the Summer of Love of 1967 , in a CBC newsreel item about hippie subculture in Yorkville , Toronto , for which he was paid $ 500 ? the equivalent of 20 weeks rent ? which financed his later travels . Aside from a " brief , riot @-@ torn spell " in the District of Columbia , Gibson spent the rest of the 1960s in Toronto , where he met Vancouverite Deborah Jean Thompson , with whom he subsequently traveled to Europe . Gibson has recounted that they concentrated their travels on European nations with fascist regimes and favourable exchange rates , including spending time on a Greek archipelago and in Istanbul in 1970 , as they " couldn 't afford to stay anywhere that had anything remotely like hard currency " .

The couple married and settled in Vancouver , British Columbia in 1972 , with Gibson looking after their first child while they lived off his wife 's teaching salary . During the 1970s , Gibson made a substantial part of his living from scouring Salvation Army thrift stores for underpriced artifacts he would then up @-@ market to specialist dealers . Realizing that it was easier to sustain high college grades , and thus qualify for generous student financial aid , than to work , he enrolled at the University of British Columbia (UBC) , earning " a desultory bachelor 's degree in English " in 1977 . Through studying English literature , he was exposed to a wider range of fiction than he would have read otherwise ; something he credits with giving him ideas inaccessible from within the culture of science fiction , including an awareness of postmodernity . It was at UBC that he attended his first course on science fiction , taught by Susan Wood , at the end of which he was encouraged to write his first short story , " Fragments of a Hologram Rose " .

= = = Early writing and the evolution of cyberpunk = = =

After considering pursuing a master 's degree on the topic of hard science fiction novels as fascist literature , Gibson discontinued writing in the year that followed graduation and , as one critic put it , expanded his collection of punk records . During this period he worked at various jobs , including a

three @-@ year stint as teaching assistant on a film history course at his alma mater . Impatient at much of what he saw at a science fiction convention in Vancouver in 1980 or 1981 , Gibson found a kindred spirit in fellow panelist , punk musician and author John Shirley . The two became immediate and lifelong friends . Shirley persuaded Gibson to sell his early short stories and to take writing seriously .

Through Shirley , Gibson came into contact with science fiction authors Bruce Sterling and Lewis Shiner ; reading Gibson 's work , they realised that it was , as Sterling put it , " breakthrough material " and that they needed to " put down our preconceptions and pick up on this guy from Vancouver ; this [was] the way forward . " Gibson met Sterling at a science fiction convention in Denver , Colorado in the autumn of 1981 , where he read " Burning Chrome " ? the first cyberspace short story ? to an audience of four people , and later stated that Sterling " completely got it " .

In October 1982 , Gibson traveled to Austin , Texas for ArmadilloCon , at which he appeared with Shirley , Sterling and Shiner on a panel called " Behind the Mirrorshades : A Look at Punk SF " , where Shiner noted " the sense of a movement solidified " . After a weekend discussing rock and roll , MTV , Japan , fashion , drugs and politics , Gibson left the cadre for Vancouver , declaring half @-@ jokingly that " a new axis has been formed . " Sterling , Shiner , Shirley and Gibson , along with Rudy Rucker , went on to form the core of the radical cyberpunk literary movement .

= = Literary career = =

= = = Early short fiction = = =

Gibson 's early writings are generally near @-@ future stories about the influences of cybernetics and cyberspace (computer @-@ simulated reality) technology on the human race . His themes of hi @-@ tech shanty towns , recorded or broadcast stimulus (later to be developed into the " sim @-@ stim " package featured so heavily in Neuromancer) , and dystopic intermingling of technology and humanity , are already evident in his first published short story , " Fragments of a Hologram Rose " , in the Summer 1977 issue of Unearth . The latter thematic obsession was described by his friend and fellow author , Bruce Sterling , in the introduction of Gibson 's short story collection Burning Chrome , as " Gibson 's classic one @-@ two combination of lowlife and high tech . "

Beginning in 1981 , Gibson 's stories appeared in Omni and Universe 11 , wherein his fiction developed a bleak , film noir feel . He consciously distanced himself as far as possible from the mainstream of science fiction (towards which he felt " an aesthetic revulsion " , expressed in " The Gernsback Continuum ") , to the extent that his highest goal was to become " a minor cult figure , a sort of lesser Ballard . " When Sterling started to distribute the stories , he found that " people were just genuinely baffled ... I mean they literally could not parse the guy 's paragraphs ... the imaginative tropes he was inventing were just beyond peoples ' grasp . "

While Larry McCaffery has commented that these early short stories displayed flashes of Gibson 's ability , science fiction critic Darko Suvin has identified them as " undoubtedly [cyberpunk 's] best works " , constituting the " furthest horizon " of the genre . The themes which Gibson developed in the stories , the Sprawl setting of " Burning Chrome " and the character of Molly Millions from " Johnny Mnemonic " ultimately culminated in his first novel , Neuromancer .

= = = Neuromancer = = =

Neuromancer was commissioned by Terry Carr for the second series of Ace Science Fiction Specials , which was intended to exclusively feature debut novels . Given a year to complete the work , Gibson undertook the actual writing out of " blind animal terror " at the obligation to write an entire novel ? a feat which he felt he was " four or five years away from " . After viewing the first 20 minutes of landmark cyberpunk film Blade Runner (1982) which was released when Gibson had written a third of the novel , he " figured [Neuromancer] was sunk , done for . Everyone would

assume I 'd copped my visual texture from this astonishingly fine @-@ looking film . " He re @-@ wrote the first two @-@ thirds of the book twelve times , feared losing the reader 's attention and was convinced that he would be " permanently shamed " following its publication ; yet what resulted was a major imaginative leap forward for a first @-@ time novelist .

Neuromancer 's release was not greeted with fanfare , but it hit a cultural nerve , quickly becoming an underground word @-@ of @-@ mouth hit . It became the first winner of one science fiction " triple crown " ? both Nebula and Hugo Awards as the year 's best novel and Philip K. Dick Award as the best paperback original ? eventually selling more than 6 @.@ 5 million copies worldwide .

Lawrence Person in his " Notes Toward a Postcyberpunk Manifesto " (1998) identified Neuromancer as " the archetypal cyberpunk work " , and in 2005 , Time included it in their list of the 100 best English @-@ language novels written since 1923 , opining that " [t] here is no way to overstate how radical [Neuromancer] was when it first appeared . " Literary critic Larry McCaffery described the concept of the matrix in Neuromancer as a place where " data dance with human consciousness ... human memory is literalized and mechanized ... multi @-@ national information systems mutate and breed into startling new structures whose beauty and complexity are unimaginable , mystical , and above all nonhuman . " Gibson later commented on himself as an author circa Neuromancer that " I 'd buy him a drink , but I don 't know if I 'd loan him any money , " and referred to the novel as " an adolescent 's book " . The success of Neuromancer was to effect the 35 @-@ year @-@ old Gibson 's emergence from obscurity .

= = = Sprawl trilogy , The Difference Engine , and Bridge trilogy = = =

Although much of Gibson 's reputation has remained rooted in Neuromancer , his work continued to evolve conceptually and stylistically . Despite adding the final sentence of Neuromancer , " He never saw Molly again " , at the last minute in a deliberate attempt to prevent himself from ever writing a sequel , he did precisely that with Count Zero (1986) , a character @-@ focused work set in the Sprawl alluded to in its predecessor . He next intended to write an unrelated postmodern space opera , titled The Log of the Mustang Sally , but reneged on the contract with Arbor House after a falling out over the dustjacket art of their hardcover of Count Zero . Abandoning The Log of the Mustang Sally , Gibson instead wrote Mona Lisa Overdrive (1988) , which in the words of Larry McCaffery " turned off the lights " on cyberpunk literature . It was a culmination of his previous two novels , set in the same universe with shared characters , thereby completing the Sprawl trilogy . The trilogy solidified Gibson 's reputation , with both later novels also earning Nebula and Hugo Award and Locus SF Award nominations

The Sprawl trilogy was followed by the 1990 novel The Difference Engine , an alternative history novel Gibson wrote in collaboration with Bruce Sterling . Set in a technologically advanced Victorian era Britain , the novel was a departure from the authors ' cyberpunk roots . It was nominated for the Nebula Award for Best Novel in 1991 and the John W. Campbell Memorial Award in 1992 , and its success drew attention to the nascent steampunk literary genre of which it remains the best @-@ known work .

Gibson 's second series , the " Bridge trilogy " , is composed of Virtual Light (1993) , a " darkly comic urban detective story " , Idoru (1996) , and All Tomorrow 's Parties (1999) . The first and third books in the trilogy center on San Francisco in the near future ; all three explore Gibson 's recurring themes of technological , physical , and spiritual transcendence in a more grounded , matter @-@ of @-@ fact style than his first trilogy . Salon.com 's Andrew Leonard notes that in the Bridge trilogy , Gibson 's villains change from multinational corporations and artificial intelligences of the Sprawl trilogy to the mass media ? namely tabloid television and the cult of celebrity . Virtual Light depicts an " end @-@ stage capitalism , in which private enterprise and the profit motive are taken to their logical conclusion " . This argument on the mass media as the natural evolution of capitalism is the opening line of the major Situationist work The Society of the Spectacle . Leonard 's review called Idoru a " return to form " for Gibson , while critic Steven Poole asserted that All Tomorrow 's Parties marked his development from " science @-@ fiction hotshot to wry sociologist of the near future . "

Late period novels

After All Tomorrow 's Parties , Gibson began to adopt a more realist style of writing , with continuous narratives ? " speculative fiction of the very recent past . " Science fiction critic John Clute has interpreted this approach as Gibson 's recognition that traditional science fiction is no longer possible " in a world lacking coherent ' nows ' to continue from " , characterizing it as " SF for the new century " . Gibson 's novels Pattern Recognition (2003) , Spook Country (2007) and Zero History (2010) are set in the same contemporary universe ? " more or less the same one we live in now " ? and put Gibson 's work onto mainstream bestseller lists for the first time . As well as the setting , the novels share some of the same characters , including Hubertus Bigend and Pamela Mainwaring , employees of the enigmatic marketing company Blue Ant .

A phenomenon peculiar to this era was the independent development of annotating fansites , PR @-@ Otaku and Node Magazine , devoted to Pattern Recognition and Spook Country respectively . These websites tracked the references and story elements in the novels through online resources such as Google and Wikipedia and collated the results , essentially creating hypertext versions of the books . Critic John Sutherland characterised this phenomenon as threatening " to completely overhaul the way literary criticism is conducted " .

After the September 11 , 2001 attacks , with about 100 pages of Pattern Recognition written , Gibson had to re @-@ write the main character 's backstory , which had been suddenly rendered implausible ; he called it " the strangest experience I 've ever had with a piece of fiction . " He saw the attacks as a nodal point in history , " an experience out of culture " , and " in some ways ... the true beginning of the 21st century . " He is noted as one of the first novelists to use the attacks to inform his writing . Examination of cultural changes in post @-@ September 11 America , including a resurgent tribalism and the " infantilization of society " , became a prominent theme of Gibson 's work . The focus of his writing nevertheless remains " at the intersection of paranoia and technology " .

Latest novel

William Gibson 's most recent work is a novel titled The Peripheral . He described the story briefly in an appearance he made at the New York Public Library on April 19 , 2013 , and read an excerpt from the first chapter of the book entitled ? The Gone Haptics . ? The story takes place in two eras , one about thirty years into the future and the other further in the future . The Peripheral was released on October 28 , 2014 .

Collaborations , adaptations , and miscellanea

Literary collaborations

Three of the stories that later appeared in Burning Chrome were written in collaboration with other authors : " The Belonging Kind " (1981) with John Shirley , " Red Star , Winter Orbit " (1983) with Sterling , and " Dogfight " (1985) with Michael Swanwick . Gibson had previously written the foreword to Shirley 's 1980 novel City Come A @-@ walkin ' and the pair 's collaboration continued when Gibson wrote the introduction to Shirley 's short story collection Heatseeker (1989) . Shirley convinced Gibson to write a story for the television series Max Headroom for which Shirley had written several scripts , but the network canceled the series .

Gibson and Sterling collaborated again on the short story " The Angel of Goliad " in 1990 , which they soon expanded into the novel @-@ length alternate history story The Difference Engine (1990) . The two were later " invited to dream in public " (Gibson) in a joint address to the U.S. National Academy of Sciences Convocation on Technology and Education in 1993 (" the Al Gore people ") , in which they argued against the digital divide and " appalled everyone " by proposing that all

schools be put online , with education taking place over the Internet . In a 2007 interview , Gibson revealed that Sterling had an idea for " a second recursive science novel that was just a wonderful idea " , but that Gibson was unable to pursue the collaboration because he was not creatively free at the time .

In 1993 , Gibson contributed lyrics and featured as a guest vocalist on Yellow Magic Orchestra 's Technodon album , and wrote lyrics to the track " Dog Star Girl " for Deborah Harry 's Debravation .

= = = Film adaptations , screenplays , and appearances = = =

Gibson was first solicited to work as a screenwriter after a film producer discovered a waterlogged copy of Neuromancer on a beach at a Thai resort . His early efforts to write film scripts failed to manifest themselves as finished product ; " Burning Chrome " (which was to be directed by Kathryn Bigelow) and " Neuro @-@ Hotel " were two attempts by the author at film adaptations that were never made . In the late 1980s he wrote an early version of Alien 3 (which he later characterized as " Tarkovskian ") , few elements of which survived in the final version . Gibson 's early involvement with the film industry extended far beyond the confines of the Hollywood blockbuster system . At one point , he collaborated on a script with Kazakh director Rashid Nugmanov after an American producer had expressed an interest in a Soviet @-@ American collaboration to star Russian @-@ Korean star Victor Tsoi . Despite being occupied with writing a novel , Gibson was reluctant to abandon the " wonderfully odd project " which involved " ritualistic gang @-@ warfare in some sort of sideways @-@ future Leningrad " and sent Jack Womack to Russia in his stead . Rather than producing a motion picture , a prospect that ended with Tsoi 's death in a car crash , Womack 's experiences in Russia ultimately culminated in his novel Let 's Put the Future Behind Us and informed much of the Russian content of Gibson 's Pattern Recognition . A similar fate befell Gibson 's collaboration with Japanese filmmaker Sogo Ishii in 1991 , a film they planned on shooting in the Walled City of Kowloon until the city was demolished in 1993 .

Adaptations of Gibson 's fiction have frequently been optioned and proposed , to limited success . Two of the author 's short stories , both set in the Sprawl trilogy universe , have been loosely adapted as films : Johnny Mnemonic (1995) with screenplay by Gibson and starring Keanu Reeves , Dolph Lundgren and Takeshi Kitano , and New Rose Hotel (1998) , starring Christopher Walken , Willem Dafoe , and Asia Argento . The former was the first time in history that a book was launched simultaneously as a film and a CD @-@ ROM interactive video game . As of 2013 , Vincenzo Natali still hoped to bring Neuromancer to the screen , after some years in development hell . Count Zero was at one point being developed as The Zen Differential with director Michael Mann attached , and the third novel in the Sprawl trilogy , Mona Lisa Overdrive , has also been optioned and bought . An anime adaptation of Idoru was announced as in development in 2006 , and Pattern Recognition was in the process of development by director Peter Weir , although according to Gibson the latter is no longer attached to the project . Announced at International Film Festival Rotterdam in 2015 is an adaptation of Gibson 's short story Dogfight by BAFTA award @-@ winning writer and director Simon Pummell . Written by Gibson and Michael Swanwick and first published in Omni in July 1985 , the film is being developed by British producer Janine Marmot at Hot Property Films .

Television is another arena in which Gibson has collaborated ; he co @-@ wrote with friend Tom Maddox , The X @-@ Files episodes " Kill Switch " and " First Person Shooter " , broadcast in the U.S. on 20th Century Fox Television in 1998 and 2000 . In 1998 he contributed the introduction to the spin @-@ off publication Art of the X @-@ Files . Gibson made a cameo appearance in the television miniseries Wild Palms at the behest of creator Bruce Wagner . Director Oliver Stone had borrowed heavily from Gibson 's novels to make the series , and in the aftermath of its cancellation Gibson contributed an article , " Where The Holograms Go " , to the Wild Palms Reader . He accepted another acting role in 2002 , appearing alongside Douglas Coupland in the short film Mon Amour Mon Parapluie in which the pair played philosophers . Appearances in fiction aside , Gibson was the focus of a biographical documentary by Mark Neale in 2000 called No Maps for These Territories . The film follows Gibson over the course of a drive across North America discussing various aspects of his life , literary career and cultural interpretations . It features interviews with

Jack Womack and Bruce Sterling , as well as recitations from Neuromancer by Bono and The Edge .

= = = Exhibitions , poetry , and performance art = = =

Gibson has contributed text to be integrated into a number of performance art pieces . In October 1989 , Gibson wrote text for such a collaboration with acclaimed sculptor and future Johnny Mnemonic director Robert Longo titled Dream Jumbo : Working the Absolutes , which was displayed in Royce Hall , University of California Los Angeles . Three years later , Gibson contributed original text to " Memory Palace " , a performance show featuring the theater group La Fura dels Baus at Art Futura ' 92 , Barcelona , which featured images by Karl Sims , Rebecca Allen , Mark Pellington with music by Peter Gabriel and others . It was at Art Futura ' 92 that Gibson met Charlie Athanas , who would later act as dramaturg and " cyberprops " designer on Steve Pickering and Charley Sherman 's adaptation of " Burning Chrome " for the Chicago stage . Gibson 's latest contribution was in 1997 , a collaboration with critically acclaimed Vancouver @-@ based contemporary dance company Holy Body Tattoo and Gibson 's friend and future webmaster Christopher Halcrow .
In 1990 , Gibson contributed to " Visionary San Francisco " , an exhibition at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art shown from June 14 to August 26 . He wrote a short story , " Skinner 's Room " , set in a decaying San Francisco in which the San Francisco ? Oakland Bay Bridge was closed and taken over by the homeless ? a setting Gibson then detailed in the Bridge trilogy . The story inspired a contribution to the exhibition by architects Ming Fung and Craig Hodgetts that envisioned a San Francisco in which the rich live in high @-@ tech , solar @-@ powered towers , above the decrepit city and its crumbling bridge . The architects exhibit featured Gibson on a monitor discussing the future and reading from " Skinner 's Room " . The New York Times hailed the exhibition as " one of the most ambitious , and admirable , efforts to address the realm of architecture and cities that any museum in the country has mounted in the last decade " , despite calling Ming and Hodgetts 's reaction to Gibson 's contribution " a powerful , but sad and not a little cynical , work " . A slightly different version of the short story was featured a year later in Omni .

= = = Cryptography = = =

A particularly well @-@ received work by Gibson was Agrippa (a book of the dead) (1992) , a 300 @-@ line semi @-@ autobiographical electronic poem that was his contribution to a collaborative project with artist Dennis Ashbaugh and publisher Kevin Begos , Jr . Gibson 's text focused on the ethereal nature of memories (the title refers to a photo album) and was originally published on a 3 @.@ 5 " floppy disk embedded in the back of an artist 's book containing etchings by Ashbaugh (intended to fade from view once the book was opened and exposed to light ? they never did , however) . Gibson commented that Ashbaugh 's design " eventually included a supposedly self @-@ devouring floppy @-@ disk intended to display the text only once , then eat itself . " Contrary to numerous colorful reports , the diskettes were never actually " hacked " ; instead the poem was manually transcribed from a surreptitious videotape of a public showing in Manhattan in December 1992 , and released on the MindVox bulletin board the next day ; this is the text that circulated widely on the Internet .
Since its debut in 1992 , the mystery of Agrippa remained hidden for 20 years . Although many had tried to hack the code and decrypt the program , the uncompiled source code was lost long ago . Alan Liu and his team at " The Agrippa Files " created an extensive website with tools and resources to crack the Agrippa Code . They collaborated with Matthew Kirschenbaum at the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities and the Digital Forensics Lab , and Quinn DuPont , a PhD student of cryptography from the University of Toronto , in calling for the aid of cryptographers to figure out how the program works by creating " Cracking the Agrippa Code : The Challenge " , which enlisted participants to solve the intentional scrambling of the poem in exchange for prizes . The code was successfully cracked by Robert Xiao in late July 2012 .

Essays and short @-@ form nonfiction

Gibson is a sporadic contributor of non @-@ fiction articles to newspapers and journals . He has been a sporadic contributor of longer @-@ form articles to Wired and of op @-@ eds to The New York Times , and has written for The Observer , Addicted to Noise , New York Times Magazine , Rolling Stone , and Details Magazine . His first major piece of nonfiction , the article " Disneyland with the Death Penalty " concerning the city @-@ state of Singapore , resulted in Wired being banned from the country and attracted a spirited critical response . He commenced writing a blog in January 2003 , providing voyeuristic insights into his reaction to Pattern Recognition , but abated in September of the same year owing to concerns that it might negatively affect his creative process .
Gibson recommenced blogging in October 2004 , and during the process of writing Spook Country ? and to a lesser extent Zero History ? frequently posted short nonsequential excerpts from the novel to the blog . The blog was largely discontinued by July 2009 , after the writer had undertaken prolific microblogging on Twitter under the nom de plume " GreatDismal " . In 2012 , Gibson released a collection of his non @-@ fiction works entitled Distrust That Particular Flavor .

Influence and recognition

Hailed by Steven Poole of The Guardian in 1999 as " probably the most important novelist of the past two decades " in terms of influence , Gibson first achieved critical recognition with his debut novel , Neuromancer . The novel won three major science fiction awards (the Nebula Award , the Philip K. Dick Award , and the Hugo Award) , an unprecedented achievement described by the Mail & Guardian as " the sci @-@ fi writer 's version of winning the Goncourt , Booker and Pulitzer prizes in the same year " . Neuromancer gained unprecedented critical and popular attention outside science fiction , as an " evocation of life in the late 1980s " , although The Observer noted that " it took the New York Times 10 years " to mention the novel .
Gibson 's work has received international attention from an audience that was not limited to science fiction aficionados as , in the words of Laura Miller , " readers found startlingly prophetic reflections of contemporary life in [its] fantastic and often outright paranoid scenarios . " It is often situated by critics within the context of postindustrialism as , according to academic David Brande , a construction of " a mirror of existing large @-@ scale techno @-@ social relations " , and as a narrative version of postmodern consumer culture . It is praised by critics for its depictions of late capitalism and its " rewriting of subjectivity , human consciousness and behaviour made newly problematic by technology . " Tatiani Rapatzikou , writing in The Literary Encyclopedia , identifies Gibson as " one of North America 's most highly acclaimed science fiction writers " .

Cultural significance

In his early short fiction , Gibson is credited by Rapatzikou in The Literary Encyclopedia with effectively " renovating " science fiction , a genre at that time considered widely " insignificant " , influencing by means of the postmodern aesthetic of his writing the development of new perspectives in science fiction studies . In the words of filmmaker Marianne Trench , Gibson 's visions " struck sparks in the real world " and " determined the way people thought and talked " to an extent unprecedented in science fiction literature . The publication of Neuromancer (1984) hit a cultural nerve , causing Larry McCaffery to credit Gibson with virtually launching the cyberpunk movement , as " the one major writer who is original and gifted to make the whole movement seem original and gifted . " Aside from their central importance to cyberpunk and steampunk fiction , Gibson 's fictional works have been hailed by space historian Dwayne A. Day as some of the best examples of space @-@ based science fiction (or " solar sci @-@ fi ") , and " probably the only ones that rise above mere escapism to be truly thought @-@ provoking " .
Gibson 's early novels were , according to The Observer , " seized upon by the emerging slacker and hacker generation as a kind of road map " . Through his novels , such terms as cyberspace , netsurfing , ICE , jacking in , and neural implants entered popular usage , as did concepts such as

net consciousness , virtual interaction and " the matrix " . In " Burning Chrome " (1982) , he coined the term cyberspace , referring to the " mass consensual hallucination " of computer networks . Through its use in Neuromancer , the term gained such recognition that it became the de facto term for the World Wide Web during the 1990s . Artist Dike Blair has commented that Gibson 's " terse descriptive phrases capture the moods which surround technologies , rather than their engineering . "

Gibson 's work has influenced several popular musicians : references to his fiction appear in the music of Stuart Hamm , Billy Idol , Warren Zevon , Deltron 3030 , Straylight Run (whose name is derived from a sequence in Neuromancer) and Sonic Youth . U2 's Zooropa album was heavily influenced by Neuromancer , and the band at one point planned to scroll the text of Neuromancer above them on a concert tour , although this did not end up happening . Members of the band did , however , provide background music for the audiobook version of Neuromancer as well as appearing in No Maps for These Territories , a biographical documentary of Gibson . He returned the favour by writing an article about the band 's Vertigo Tour for Wired in August 2005 . The band Zeromancer take their name from Neuromancer .

The film The Matrix (1999) drew inspiration for its title , characters and story elements from the Sprawl trilogy . The characters of Neo and Trinity in The Matrix are similar to Bobby Newmark (Count Zero) and Molly (" Johnny Mnemonic " , Neuromancer) . Like Turner , protagonist of Gibson 's Count Zero , characters in The Matrix download instructions (to fly a helicopter and to " know kung fu " , respectively) directly into their heads , and both Neuromancer and The Matrix feature artificial intelligences which strive to free themselves from human control . Critics have identified marked similarities between Neuromancer and the film 's cinematography and tone . In spite of his initial reticence about seeing the film on its release , Gibson later described it as " arguably the ultimate ' cyberpunk ' artifact . " In 2008 he received honorary doctorates from Simon Fraser University and Coastal Carolina University . He was inducted by Science Fiction Hall of Fame that same year , presented by his close friend and collaborator Jack Womack .

= = = Visionary influence and prescience = = =

In Neuromancer , Gibson first used the term " matrix " to refer to the visualised Internet , two years after the nascent Internet was formed in the early 1980s from the computer networks of the 1970s . Gibson thereby imagined a worldwide communications network years before the origin of the World Wide Web , although related notions had previously been imagined by others , including science fiction writers . At the time he wrote " Burning Chrome " , Gibson " had a hunch that [the Internet] would change things , in the same way that the ubiquity of the automobile changed things . " In 1995 , he identified the advent , evolution and growth of the Internet as " one of the most fascinating and unprecedented human achievements of the century " , a new kind of civilization that is ? in terms of significance ? on a par with the birth of cities , and in 2000 predicted it would lead to the death of the nation state .

Observers contend that Gibson 's influence on the development of the Web reached beyond prediction ; he is widely credited with creating an iconography for the information age , long before the embrace of the Internet by the mainstream . Gibson introduced , in Neuromancer , the notion of the " meatpuppet " , and is credited with inventing ? conceptually rather than participatorally ? the phenomenon of virtual sex . His influence on early pioneers of desktop environment digital art has been acknowledged , and he holds an honorary doctorate from Parsons The New School for Design . Steven Poole claims that in writing the Sprawl trilogy Gibson laid the " conceptual foundations for the explosive real @-@ world growth of virtual environments in video games and the Web " . In his afterword to the 2000 re @-@ issue of Neuromancer , fellow author Jack Womack suggests that Gibson 's vision of cyberspace may have inspired the way in which the Internet (and the Web particularly) developed , following the publication of Neuromancer in 1984 , asking " what if the act of writing it down , in fact , brought it about ? "

Gibson scholar Tatiani G. Rapatzikou has commented , in Gothic Motifs in the Fiction of William Gibson , on the origin of the notion of cyberspace :

Gibson 's vision , generated by the monopolising appearance of the terminal image and presented in his creation of the cyberspace matrix , came to him when he saw teenagers playing in video arcades . The physical intensity of their postures , and the realistic interpretation of the terminal spaces projected by these games ? as if there were a real space behind the screen ? made apparent the manipulation of the real by its own representation .

In his Sprawl and Bridge trilogies , Gibson is credited with being one of the few observers to explore the portents of the information age for notions of the sociospatial structuring of cities . Not all responses to Gibson 's visions have been positive , however ; virtual reality pioneer Mark Pesce , though acknowledging their heavy influence on him and that " no other writer had so eloquently and emotionally affected the direction of the hacker community , " dismissed them as " adolescent fantasies of violence and disembodiment . " In Pattern Recognition , the plot revolves around snippets of film footage posted anonymously to various locations on the Internet . Characters in the novel speculate about the filmmaker 's identity , motives , methods and inspirations on several websites , anticipating the 2006 lonelygirl15 internet phenomenon . However , Gibson later disputed the notion that the creators of lonelygirl15 drew influence from him . Another phenomenon anticipated by Gibson is the rise of reality television , for example in Virtual Light , which featured a satirical extrapolated version of COPS .

When an interviewer in 1988 asked about the Bulletin Board System jargon in his writing , Gibson answered " I 'd never so much as touched a PC when I wrote Neuromancer " ; he was familiar , he said , with the science @-@ fiction community , which overlapped with the BBS community . Gibson similarly did not play computer games despite appearing in his stories . He wrote Neuromancer on a 1927 olive @-@ green Hermes portable typewriter , which Gibson described as " the kind of thing Hemingway would have used in the field " . By 1988 he used an Apple IIc and AppleWorks to write , with a modem (" I don 't really use it for anything ") , but until 1996 Gibson did not have an email address , a lack he explained at the time to have been motivated by a desire to avoid correspondence that would distract him from writing . His first exposure to a website came while writing Idoru when a web developer built one for Gibson . In 2007 he said , " I have a 2005 PowerBook G4 , a gig of memory , wireless router . That 's it . I 'm anything but an early adopter , generally . In fact , I 've never really been very interested in computers themselves . I don 't watch them ; I watch how people behave around them . That 's becoming more difficult to do because everything is ' around them ' . "

= = Selected bibliography = =

Nonfiction