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WRIT 510

Short Take 3

Script

The term ‘cyberpunk’ was first coined by Bruce Bethke in 1983. “Cyberpunk's literary roots date back to the technological fiction and hardboiled crime writing of the 1940s and 1950s (especially the rough, urban idiom of Raymond Chandler), to the subversive fantasies of William S. Burroughs and J. G. Ballard, and to the visionary prose of Samuel R. Delany and Philip K. Dick who took up themes of alienation in a mechanized future.” (“Cyberpunk Short Fiction”)

*The Eyre Affair* and *Neuromancer* are both cyberpunk novels. They share the same characteristics yet differ in the ways that the audience relates to each one.

Cyberpunkreview.com lists six characteristics of cyberpunk.

The first is: “Negative Impact of Technology on Humanity”

There is evidence of this in both books. It is much more prominent in *Neuromancer.* A good example of this is the ability to replace parts of the human body with other objects as the character Riviera demonstrates. He was born human but has replaced much of his body with cybernectic implants that allow him to project holograms. At what point does such a person cease to become human? Technology blurs the line between humanity and technology to the extent that the Flatline, Dixie, thinks of himself as less human than Wintermute, simply because he cannot truly act for himself. Instead, he is confined to a list of prerecorded thoughts, actions, and words in a ROM. Wintermute can continue to add to himself as long as he chooses.

The negative impact of technology on humanity in *The Eyre Affair* can be seen in the way that Hades misuses Mycroft’s Prose Portal. *The Eyre Affair* is much closer to life as we know it and it is easier to identify with Hades (the bad guy) stealing a weapon and using it for evil than it is for us to find common ground with Wintermute completely redoing Corto’s personality from a bedside computer.

The second characteristic is: “Fusion of Man and Machine”

In *Neuromancer*, we see this with Molly. She is the cyberpunk samurai. She has not only learned to master her weapons and fighting style; she has literally become a weapon. Her talons and glass eyes allow her to function more as a machine when fighting than an actual human being.

There are no cyborgs weapons in *The Eyre Affair* but they do have the technology to replace lost limbs. Major Phelps shows off his new hand to Tuesday when they meet on the airship.

The third characteristic is: “Corporate Control Over Society”

There is evidence of this in both books.

In *Neuromancer* the Tessier-Ashpool family seems to control everything that matters, but are not a police force.

In *The Eyre Affair* The Special Operations Network is a type of police force that keeps the peace, but does not necessarily have supreme control over society

The fourth characteristic is: “Story Focuses on the Underground”

*Neuromancer*’s main characters all seem to have origins in the underworld. Each has connections with less than savory characters that give them an underground network of people and information.

Meanwhile, *The Eyre Affair*’s main characters are part of a secretive organization with its own list of underground contacts

The fifth characteristic is: “Ubiquitous Access to Information”

Both books have this in spades.

In *Neuromancer,* Case can jack himself directly into the matrix and look up his own information or have a machine do the searching for him.

While in *The Eyre Affair*, Tuesday can look up almost anything she needs to know in a book or even ask a ChronoGuard to go back in time and check on a fact.

The sixth and final characteristic of cyberpunk is: “Cyberpunk visuals and style”

“Cyberpunk visuals, ideally, are dirty, hyper-realistic ‘lived in’ looks at the near future.” (“What is Cyberpunk”)

This is most clearly seen in *Neuromancer*. Every grimy inch of the dirty streets is described in details so vivid you can almost taste the stink. The characters freely discuss drugs and promiscuous sex in terms that make the reader cringe.

In *The Eyre Affair*, everything is described in rich detail but the world doesn’t have a dirty feel.

Both novels are part of the cyberpunk literary movement but are told in different ways. The audience comes away with something different from each book.

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