



CYBERPUNK: AN EXPRESSION OF POST-MODERNISM

PRAVIN BAJIRAO SHINDE-PATIL

Arts and Commerce College, Madha
Tal- Madha, Dist- Solapur. MS INDIA

ABSTRACT

Cyberpunk began as a literary movement and in a very short span of time has become a sub-cultural organism. It is a sub-type of science fiction which deals high techno life/ culture and portrays advanced technological and scientific achievements/ stories. Cyberpunk portrays the stories and sequences related to or represent information technology and cybernetics, which is different from traditional way of writing stories, altogether novels, drama, etc.

Emergence

The term 'Cyberpunk' is coined by Bruce Sterling in his famous short story 'Cyberpunk', which has published in 'Amazing Stories' magazine in 1983. Exactly after one year Gerdner Dozois wrote an article for 'Washington Post' and labeled this term to a particular group of science fiction writers and among them were Bruce Sterling, Lexis Shiner, Rudy Rucker, Pat Cadigan and William Gibson. From the cyberpunk, 'Cyberpunk literature' has emerged as a sub genre of science fiction and dystopian fiction. The term itself is a portmanteau of cybernetics and punk. It is amalgamation of two seemingly disparate entities of computer science and punk subculture.

Difference between Science Fiction and Cyberpunk

There is a clear difference between science fiction and cyberpunk. Science fiction is a type of fiction that deals with the advances of a science and is often situated in outer space/ planet locations. The main plot of this type of fiction frequently deals with the contacts with more scientifically advanced civilization and locates in near future on the earth rather than into orbit. It creates the situations different from both the present day and the known past. Opposite to computer technology, the plot of cyberpunk focuses on the flight of individual against multinational corporations. It becomes one of the famous and most important sub-genre of science fiction.

The main features of cyberpunk

The following are the some of the most important features of cyberpunk:

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- 1) The cyberpunk fictions are dystopian in their nature, dystopia is the antithesis of Utopia. This type of novels depicts a world with a totalitarian or authoritarian forms of government with the state propaganda and strict conformity among its citizens. e. g.- Nineteen Eighty Four by George Orwell, A Clockwork Orange by Anthony Burgess.
- 2) Cyberpunk fiction deals with a hopeless fight of the individual against the corporative power and corruption.
- 3) This type of fictions discusses new concepts like penetration of technology into a body (cyborgism) not only in the form of prosthetic limbs but also implanted circuitry and genetic alterations more astounding is the idea of mind invasions in the form of neurochemistry or brain- computer interfaces. Both of these invasions could seriously change the nature of humanity and self- identity of the individual.
- 4) Cyberpunk fictions usually take places in a large urban area. These are the metropolis without any identifiable borders or any history. The society is no longer regulated by state and the role is taken by huge corporations.
- 5) Cyberpunk fictions portray the life of metropolis and then seems that there is no life outside the metropolis and nature is just simulated artificial animals and smells. This denaturalized society does not offer any sanctuary for the people so they seek refuge in socially accepted drugs. These drugs are of high tech quality smart drugs.
- 6) One of the most important features of cyberpunk is the dislike of frontiers. It is a nationwide phenomenon and thus it is very difficult to determine any local influences that affected the birth of his sub- culture.

Setting

The setting of cyberpunk fictions is always different than other kind of fiction. In most of cyberpunk fictions actions take place online, in a cyberspace which is a placeless society and having blur/ thin borders between actual and virtual reality. Special/ typical trope in such work is a direct connection between the human brain and computer system and internet connectivity. The writers of cyberpunk also like to use elements from hardboiled detective fiction, film noir and postmodernist prose style which always describes nihilistic underground side of an electronic society. It always set in urbanized, artificial landscape and city lights.

Theme

Technical culture has no longer remained under control of man, the experiments and advances of science are very deeply radical, too distributing, upsetting and revolutionary.

They are intermingling into culture at utmost level everywhere. The traditional power structure, the traditional institutions have lost control of the pace of change, For the cyberpunks, by stark contrast, technology is visceral. It is not the bottled genie of remote of big science boffins, it is pervasive, utterly intimate. Not outside us, but next to us, under our skin, inside our minds. These land of themes of personal technology, fusion of body and machine reflects in a cyberpunk fictions.

Style and Imagery

Cyberpunk style is not pronounced very clearly. Most of the features now attributed to cyberpunk are the result of commercialization process, that occur in the case of most subcultures. Besides the popular externalizations in the form of movies, computer games, fashion, magazines and music. Cyberpunk is about ethics and away from life. It is also a computer underground that threatens the security of national governments and ruins corporations. Cyberpunk is techno music, drug-taking, street culture.

It is based on traditional hacker's ethics. This was concerned with the promotion of computer technology, freedom of information and mistrust of authority. In its production and uses it is a kind of 'techno-bricolage' (Bell 164), which means reinvestment of technology with subversive meaning and intent, wresting it out of the hands of those in power and reclaiming it for their own ends' (Bell 166). This kind of ' techno- bricolage' is also applied to language.

The official language of cyberspace is apparently English. Here claims that cyberpunk in addition uses codes (computer language) for the purpose of making communication faster and easier. Thomas claims that young people are very capable of learning language and that computer language is one of them (Thomas,210) ...

The role of computer jargons is also important because it makes communication more difficult in order to isolate the community from the common users of computer. There exists a unique source of jargon used in online communities called Jargon File 4.2.0.

Protagonist

As it is a genre of modern fiction and as modern heros or protagonists are anti- hero who are opposite to traditional Aristotolian concept of protagonist. The protagonist of cyberpunk is also negative, they are manipulated or becomes the puppet in the hand of situation. They are robbers, thipers, burglars, gangstars, criminals, outcasts, etc.

e.g.- Case from William Gibson's Neuromancer who is " console cowboy", brilliant hacker and betrays his organized criminal partners.

Influence

Cyberpunk literature has influenced the part of the youth culture that started to identify with the ‘ heros’ of this subgenre and shared a similar fascination with computer technology. They shared the same anxiety about the idea of international corporations ruling the world. The idea of retreating into the virtual world where there are no borders and limitations. The possibility of threatening these corporations via cyberspace fascinates them. These youngsters started to call themselves cyberpunk. Though cyberpunk was born on the platform of hacker culture or rather on the fascination with hacker ethics, it was based on literature, movies and games with cyberpunk imagery.

England and mostly USA are the countries, where cyberpunk sub- culture sprang very quickly because of the fast spread of computer technology and may be because cyberpunk authors were mainly from Anglophone countries. Later it spread all around the world. Cyberpunk took on mainly the positive attitude towards drugs and rebelliousness. Leary comment on the rebelliousness and argues that philosophy of both sub- cultures was “ Think for yourself and question the authority” (Leary 1997: 64)

Society’s Reaction

The reaction of the society to this genre has been mostly negative, on the otherhand, the sub-culture becoming commercialized is alluring to the masses. The negative standpoint is seen not only on the part of mass media, but also from the area of the closet family of cyberpunk. As members of society cyberpunk culture is mostly young boys in their teenage. It is the form of the protest against the paternal authority. David Bell observes that- “ Youth it is about transition from a world of paternal authority, where the parents dictate how things are done to a world of responsibility, where youth makes decision for themselves. The transition is marked by rebellion, defiance and a seemingly single minded focus on defiance. (Bell 143)

Conclusion

Cyberpunk is a reflection of disintegrated; especially the young men are attracted to this genre. They don’t care for ideals or rather they trample on them. Moern man has in the strip of scientific development, which is astray. The society likens this genre, which doesn’t encourage it work on the right path. Only the metropolis life is central to this genre, life in other places is neglected entirely. Even a culture or ground reality has no place whatsoever in this genre.

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