

# Cyberpunk : Final Solution

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== WE'RE ON AN EXPRESS-ELEVATOR TO HELL. GOING DOWN ! IN CYBER-SPACE NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU SCREAM ==

CYBERNET'ICS, n. Study of system of control and communications in animals and electrically operated devices such as calculating machines. [ f. Gk Kubernetes Steersman, -ics] ('The Concise Oxford Dictionary')

= METROPHAGE : A VIRTUAL TECHNOLOGY VIRUS STALKING UNDERGROUND RESISTANCE CULTURE "PLEASE TAKE A LOOK AT THIS MAP, SIR ! THE SITUATION IS QUITE OUT OF HAND" : THE HUMAN LEAGUE - THE CIRCUS OF DEATH. "IN A SOCIETY INUNDATED WITH FICTIONS OF EVERY KIND, PANIC IS NECESSARY".

= HARDWIRED IN THE METROPHAGE

Cyberpunk is pure blag. It is essentially some techniko-street types cutting together a science-fiction/critical theory crossover - with fictions of every kind - in the post - Situationist techno-cultural fragmentation, the new architecture of entropy. A wall of words. The humming of language. Taking an eye-ball locked into the infinite televisual surface-static knockdowns of the virtual and hardwired technologies of the dominant Metrophage. Like the Videodrome itself is just waiting there; all huge and self data-chatter in the semiotic information power web; while you feel Nietzschean and your credit line is good for the new DNA and micro soft implants - still nothing gives, but then that is dialectics.

= THE ARCHITECTURE OF ENTROPY

Images and impression. Some cautionary tales. Cyberpunk is an industrial myth of the near future, a new techno-surreal fiction. Cyberpunk is probably some sort of new situationist theory, although I don't really feel like going for a fix; the shifting uncertainties are so beautiful, so much the architectures of entropy. Cyberpunk is a mass of questions flung fast-forward on the big wipe-out, the ultimate chemical edge - coming straight down at you like a thousand howling screaming tons of heavy metal, that's going to jack-off your skull-case as a matter of first impressions. Cyberpunk isn't mean, it isn't superlatives, it's total, it is truly critical. Cyberpunk is potentially a scrambled mass of referential fictions stolen from the near future in search of an operational strategy for the living of life, my life, your life, life, which in itself is increasingly experiencing slippage into the virtual technologies of the near future. There you go superimposing Bruce Sterling/William Gibson over Guy Debord/J.G. Ballard and you're slipping again - everything is spinning, isn't it wild out here at the edge of theory. The real is leaking into representation and the feedback is a white-noise of new mediations indexing themselves into the spectacular sub-strata in the interzone - oh so errogenous - where the real and the irreal exchange meanings.

= TELEVISIONS, SAND-DUNES AND THE CONTOURS OF YOUR FACE

*Max Headroom* was Cyberpunk. All smiles, napalm teeth and "no comprenez" - he's so brittle when it's torture hour. All hail Max Headroom, the first post-bourgeois individual of black-lined aestheticized Liberalism, who actually vanishes, skids like Max Renn into the Spectacle, the Videodrome, the simulacra of the information

system - call it the Schizmatrix, the call of the West. Max Headroom - call him Tom Vague, whose face can be digitalized and fractalized by computer-imaging, has organic - atomic structure translated into a cathode-ray - photonic double - is a final statement. Pure pirate vid-disc beaming out of lower-eastside N.Y.C. and streaming hot out of Brazil on satellite bounceback, it's all in the signal, even the physiological - chemical changes. Max Headroom/Max Renn/Tom Vague is living out a panic-conspiracy in television as the real world and whose moods are perfectly post-modern because they attenuate between the horror of kitsch, waking up to menace, dread and the circuit up-side to that well-worn wild euphoria between the ecstasy of catastrophe and the terror of the simulacra, the double. Where is this ? Oh we're in the fractal zones, they've just been thought up by a new recombinant mix of entropy/catastrophe theory and there is Karen Eliot with her face pressed against the window - what are those guys doing in there ? Max Renn. Paging Max Renn ! Mr. Renn ?... I... going under again. Come on Mr. Renn, the Videodrome waits for you. You are Max Renn... aren't you ? So much cross-talk coming through the wires - it's a question of new psychologies.

#### = CODES AND FICTIONS FROM THE MOON

Cyberpunk attempts to de-mythologize the established cultural codes, in order to decipher concealed strategies of domination, desire, will, power, and the will to power. Cue dry ice, smoke, Leni Riefenstahl. Cyberpunk allows new genuine symbols of our culture to speak. In essence, our increasingly cyborg (cybernetic organism) relationships with our own artefacts, technologies, hardwired abstractions are realized, reified, idealised, materialised in the more intense level of ideation and practice that constitutes Cyberpunk. Cyberpunk is a radical interrogation of the virtual technologies at work in contemporary society.

#### = S.I.T.U.A.T.I.O.N.I.S.T. VS. C.Y.B.E.R.P.U.N.K.

Situationist Cyberpunk flicks aside the general form of Marxist analysis (dialectical contradictions between forces and relations of production and their irreconcilability) and suggests that the classical definition of productive forces is too restrictive and expands the radical analysis of Guy Debord further into the whole murky field of significations, transmissions, communications, materializations, reifications - programming phenomena. Cyberpunk achieves a velocity which ruptures the very critique attempting to describe and analyse changes in virtual and hard-wired technologies purely in terms of material production.

#### = TOM VAGUE, HELICOPTERS AND THE SHATTERED REVOLVING DOOR

The brief handed out by Tom Vague for this issue, by one of his many agents currently operating the "Get London Swinging Again" crash programme; was that the aim of this issue was to be oblique, but then that is the architecture of entropy. The more information derived from Cyberpunk concerning the near future, the more operational strategies of resistance, growth patterns, in response to the accelerating accelerations of the virtual technologies of the Videodrome. There is no typical Cyberpunk, Tom Vague is a fiction, although the general project does have central themes, tenets and topics. I guess I'd better say it is an eighties milieu - nineties, post-2001 would equally do - a fix on anything - it is a product of the interzone between hard technologies/sciences and nihilo-romanticist surreality. It's precursors are Michael Moorcock, Langdon Jones, Harlan Ellison, Samuel Delaney, Norman Spinrad, Brian Aldiss, John Varley, Phillip K. Dick, Alfred Bester, the strange pulsing entropies of Thomas Pynchon, the panic-theory of Baudrillard, the Situationist International, Larry Niven, the Anarchists never interested me, Roger Zelazney, H.G. Wells, the "programming phenomena" control-data buzz of Guy Debord and the seminal genius of J.G. Ballard.

#### = WEASELING IN THE DATA NET

Cyberpunk has a strong garage-band aesthetic. Pure Mexican - Central American radio. It grapples with the raw core of the near future. Its myths. Its ideas. Its coming practices. It is a pop culture which is theorizing itself into a more cohesive and self-determined existence. Cyberpunk began as a loose generational nexus of writers

swapping letters, manuscripts - ideas. Now Cyberpunk is expanding into the inevitable empire state human. Skidding over fantastic new streams of situationist theory, high technologies, street or blag culture and the furious reflections of a spiritually vacant, vagrant intellectual underground, strung out like a line of wreckage from Vague to Compendium, on the exact nature of the control data chatter.

= A STRANGE AND TERRIBLE SEA CHANGE

Cyberpunk is about being realistic, relentlessly honest and taking it head-on when the cutting edge comes down and the blood really starts to run and it get slippery underfoot. Cyberpunk is getting into the challenging complexities and contradictions of working with new video techniques, new virtual-technologies, of working for the Videodrome - through the very operational strategies of resistance which oppose it. It is new neuro-chemistries, new psychologies, new hacking programmes, the pirating of new electronics, the sort of street tech of hip-hop - very hip, but don't just hop to it when the money starts ringing - for whom the bells toll. Cyberpunk is the literary incarnation of this colliding of fictional worlds, between the high-octane five star fantasies of the multi-nationals and the junk-cult feral scams of the street guerillas living off their products, but fantastically mutating them.

= THE DRAINED LAGOONS OF HER MIND

In Cyberpunk, as science fiction genre, one of the immediate traits is visionary intensity and imaginative concentration, a new level of intensified ideation. Cyberpunk gorges detail - it uses carefully constructed intricacy and readily extrapolates into daily life. It goes for crammed or condensed prose : rapid, dizzying, skidding bursts of novel information, sensory overload, a special brilliant feeling that makes you crisp at the edges - submerging the reader in the equivalent of a titanic sonic blast of information, great gulfs of linguistic intensity as the vassopressin hits.

Cyberpunk crunches together neuro and physical chemistry, genetic biology, structural linguistics, cybernetics, bio-technology and cyborg engineering into a fantastic series of fictions.

= WHAT EXACTLY IS HE TRYING TO SELL ?

Cyberpunk makes clear that information is a name for the content of what is exchanged with the outer world as we adjust to it and make our adjustments felt upon it - to live effectively is to live with adequate information, the fictions of Cyberpunk.

= CROSS A STAKHANOVITE WITH A SADIST AND HE'LL EMIGRATE TO SOUTH AFRICA =

= TEACH IT PHENOMENOLOGY, DOLITTLE

Cyberpunk is probably negentropic, given the necessary contradictions waiting on the peripheries for the next dialectic interphase-cum-change - pure feedback. Systems feed energies into each other. Feedback exists between systems that are not in themselves closed but rather open and contingent upon other systems. There are no truly entropic or closed systems in Cyberpunk as there are in Situationist theory; all processes impinge upon and are affected by other processes in some way. A system is closed when entropy, virtual technologies, the Videodrome, gas or electricity bills dominate the feedback process, that is when the measure of energy lost is greater than measure of the energy gained. It used to feel like that deep-reading Situationist texts. A candle is a good example. Attrition.

= IGUANAS, GENETICS AND THE ZEITGEIST

The phenomena of Cyberpunk, it's fictions, are realized in it's interpretations of mechanistics and biologies

which are negentropic, their sub-systems feed energies/new operational strategies of resistance into each other. Computers changed everything. We've been building our secrets into their software for years. We can collapse the commercial banking systems of the West. We can play the Visigoth and freeze the Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles in their secret silos. We can bring news production at Wapping to a halt. We can shut down the safety systems on a nuclear reactor. We can re-orbit spy satellites. All possibilities. We already have tomorrow - it's today we want.

#### = THE LANDSCAPE IS CODED INTO DIALECTICAL BLOCKS

The differentials between the sciences and the humanities : the gulf between literary culture, the formal structures of art and politics and the culture of science, the world of engineering and industry - it's all converging. Cyberpunk instinctively understands that technical culture is moving very fast. 95% of the Left in total are already thirty years behind and still receding. The advances of sciences are deeply radical - potentially revolutionary even, if utilized appropriately. They are surging into culture at large; they are invasive, the spectacle has transmitted into the virtual technologies of the Videodrome. THERE IS NO SEMIOLOGY OF SILENCE AFTER GUY DEBORD, WAKE UP ! WE ARE ALREADY IN THE SPECTACLE ENHANCED. Traditional institutions, positions, practices have become completely discredited or metamorphosed into a Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club type of moral joke known as the Socialist Workers Party. Cyberpunk comes from the realm where the computer-hacker has locked into the post-art political culture and it's discontents. Agitprop has been superseded by visceral technologies. Cyberpunk explores interzones, especially those between the multi-nationals and street cultures - the street always finds its own use for things, call them technological artifacts or the virtual technologies/transmissions of the Videodrome.

#### = THE TARGE VEHICLE

Certain central themes spring up repeatedly in Cyberpunk. Firstly the theme of body invasion, the target vehicle : prosthetic limbs, implanted circuitry, cosmetic surgery, cyber-space, DNA, genetic alteration. Secondly, the real hard-edge of mind invasion : brain-computer interfaces, artificial intelligences, neurochemistry - all the techniques radically redefining the nature of humanity, the nature of the self.

#### = CROSSING OVER INTO CAMBODIA

Cyberpunk engages the whole notion of the Spectacle - the Videodrome, the satellite media net, the multinational corporation - they are the stuff of Cyberpunk and continually reappear in its fictions. For the spiritually vacant, everything has been said before, everything is fiction. Cyberpunk, marked by its use of surreal-visionary intensity, takes ideas, psychologies, experiences and pushes them past their limits to new thresholds, to the point of virtual disintegration. Cyberpunk writers use an almost unblinking critical objectivity, a zero-point objective analysis taken from science and shot into literature for the more amusingly twisted aspects of short sharp shock value.

#### = THE PERSISTENCE OF THE BEACH

For Cyberpunk, the computer is much more than an object; it is also an icon and a metaphor that suggests new ways of thinking about ourselves and our new environments, new ways of constructing images of what it means to be human.

#### = THE DEPARTURE INTO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Cyberpunk is a pop-cultural fascination with Cybernetic systems including a vast array of machines and apparatuses that exhibit computational power. Turing and Von Neumann were just describing topological surfaces. Such systems contain a dynamic, even if wasted, quotient of intelligence. Telephone networks,

communication satellites, radar systems, programmable laser video-discs, robots, biogenetically engineered cells, you think this isn't happening - that's what they want you to think, rocket guidance systems, videotex networks - all exhibit a capacity to process information and execute actions. They are all cyber-cybernetic in that they are self regulating mechanisms or systems within predefined limits and in relation to predefined tasks. Cyberpunk uses the computer and artificial intelligence to symbolize the entire spectrum of networks, systems and devices that exemplify cybernetic or automated but intelligent behaviour.

#### = THE COMMAND MODULE

Cyberpunk explores the irony of the process of adopting new ways of seeing, that consequently propose new forms of social organization, that become paradoxical or contradictory - in that this very process of transformation spawns new practices, new levels of intensified visionary surreality - which are themselves engendered and substantially recuperated by the existing form of social organization - which they contain the potential to overcome. Our sense of reality is being adjusted by new means of electronic computation and digital communication - these technological changes introduce new forms of culture. In Cyberpunk, one lists the problems of the imaginary other, for being human is defined in relation to cybernetic systems - computers, biogenetically engineered, eco-systems, expert systems, robots, androids and cyborgs - all the metaphors change - everything is style - everything slips into the virtual.

#### = RELIGION X GENETICS = POLITICS

Cyberpunks not only understand that cybernetics is a conveyance of information theory and cognitive psychology, but that these are the dominant phenomenologies of a virtual society. For instance, the problem of tracking anti-aircraft weapons against extremely fast targets (and no-one moves faster than a workerist trying to dodge the critique) has led to research into, and the development of, intelligent mechanisms capable of predicting future states faster than the unaugmented human brain can do - or that was until they started messing around with cyborg interfaces. Never strike where your opponent is, but strike at the space which they will occupy in the future. (This tactical strategy gave the Specto-Situationists the edge they needed, Guy Debord uses it repeatedly with devastating effect in "Society of the Spectacle"). No-one should forget the nihilistic synergism between the development of cybernetics and military requirements, because waiting in the wings are the multinationals.

#### = THE DYING ALGEBRA OF THE SKY

The U.S. Airforce uncovered a critical flaw in the creation of ultra-sonic jet fighters - the inadequacies of the body reflexes of pilots. The unaugmented human body cannot absorb or respond to the information environment of jet fighters moving at hyper-speeds. So the designers created heads for fighter pilots. The U.S. Airforce is experimenting with compensating for the inability of human vision to match the speed and intensity of the information environment of jet-fighters; pilots will be equipped with virtual heads : special helmets which block out normal ocular vision and, by means of a video-screen projected on the inside of the mask/visor, feed the pilot, at a slowed down and selective pace, specific, strategic information about the aerial environment, altitude, presence of other aircraft, speed, and target range. A system of perspective - virtual vision for those advanced outsiders of teleonomic society rocketing across the dying algebra of the sky into the retinal fictions of Cyberpunk.

#### = THE ECLIPSE OF THE SPECTACLE : RHIZOMES AND VAGUE

The pervasive imagery of programming phenomena are now enveloping us - a sensorily expanded data-chatter, image-flick world of digitized life and languages mediated by video display screens - the formation of a discipline shifting inevitably towards cyber-space. Cyber-space as described by William Gibson in *Neuromancer* was prefigured in Nicola Tesla's 1901 plan for a world system of totally inter-connected, planetary

communications. He believed he could engineer a globe unified by the universal registration of time and fully traversed by flows of language, images and money - all reduced to an undifferentiated flux of electrical energy. Tesla had a primordial understanding of the totalizing logic of the Metrophage and its evolutionary stages - Leviathan, Capital, Spectacle, Videodrome, the Gesellschaften out in Cyberspace, complete with ambiguous paracetal artificial intelligence - television has emerged as the key component of a world system.

#### = THE SKIN AREA

We are all implicated in the practise of giving a conceptual solidity and unity to the evasive and seemingly ubiquitous entity that is television - well, I've used several identities - very simply, "the monsters we create welcome us aboard". Just look at us, we maintain an illusory coherence around what is a shifting coalescence of powers, dominions, thrones, objects, effects and relations. Even though all that is subsumed by television, the society of the spectacle enhanced, has historical specificity, technological under-pinnings, and links/rhizomes into multiple economies, we and I mean all semiotic, media, phenomenological and situationist/critical theorists have mystified it and situated it beyond the grasp of critical analysis, while at the same time endowing it with a despotic identity of social processes. The Videodrome has always been an aggregate of bodies, institutions, transmissions, ultimately programming phenomena in perpetual transformation. Cyberpunk is the only active theory seriously identifying and subverting the conjunctions it forges, the circulations it controls and the accelerating mutations it is undergoing. Pure Tornado moan.

#### = THE FINAL VIOLENCE

At Porton Down, they make the most deadly bacteriological germ-warfare in the world. Drop a test-tube at Porton Down. We will have unleashed upon ourselves the final violence. The same is true of the Metrophage. The convergence of television, telecommunications, computers is creating an ideology of technological determinism and pre-fabricated futures, which mirror the present Spectacle. A transmission of dead souls. But the Spectacle and its metamorphoses are more than Frankenstein meets MTV, the technological changes are also leaking into other zones : cultural, economic, geo-political, psycho-geo-graphic. Cyberpunk understands the final violence, the corpses, the nihilistic urban dead-zones, the Metrophage itself and is no longer merely isolating properties deemed to be intrinsic to a self-stabilizing semiotic system, which can be read as a super-structural transmission through which power is exercised - Cyberpunk is hammering away against a system of appearances that is so thoroughly of the social/material that its operations are indistinguishable from those of the entire hegemonic order. They are the hegemonic order.

#### = A CRASH COURSE IN EXONERATION

The fictions of Cyberpunk suggest that the Spectacle as television is a global tracery of linkages that seemingly produce truth. But the thing about television, like any other spectacular power, threshold or dominion and its genocidal deployment, is that its unreasoning, endless surfaces conceal barely visible alcoves, striations, folds, gulfs, where things get really strange. In Cyberpunk theory, the Spectacle is a circuit of power that can be uniform and seamless as a macrophenomenon, but that is broken, diversified and never fully controllable in its local usage. They're always looking for the ultimate in mind control, but it's got ideas of its own and now its growing huge. We are the Spectacle. Our relationships and spiritual vacuum in the social are the Spectacle. Our iconographies are the Spectacle. Our atrocities are the Spectacle. Walter E. Kurtz really took his orders from the Spectacle. From us. From you. From the collective human ID and it really made a mess of him.

#### = A DYING STARMAN FINDS THE NTH ROOT OF WONDERFUL

Adorno and Horkheimer admired the Spectacle for its ruthless unity, Trotsky gazed at the ice-pick and saw the Spectacle, a totalizing power, collective human nature, which even in its more primitive forms is uniform and whole in every part. How they underestimated Leviathan, those rationalists, and now the collective human ID is

leaking heavily into the post-modern again. The Cyberpunks, like the Frankfurt "talking shop" of Marcuse, Adorno, Althusser and company, know that the Spectacle is an inescapable reified voracious semiotic web that absorbs and commodifies everything with a logic that, for humanity is slipping into rhizomatic fascism. Religion x genetics = politics. It is all deep psyche-ritual. Everything. All a search for a spiritual absolute.

Baudrillard takes the Guy Debord/J.G. Ballard fascination with "the virtual commodifications or crystallization of organic life towards extinction" further, towards narrating a technological triumph of the inanimate - a negative eschatology - the nullity of all opposition, the dissolution of history, the neutralization of difference and the erasure of any possible configuration of alternate actuality. At this cold super-dense core is the absolute domination of digitized memory - storage banks, not even dimly fathomable through the aqueous screens of video display terminals. But it is in these very silent seas that Cyberpunk dives and delves, through electronic eddies, currents, flows towards the nature of the catastrophe, the final fractal zone. The failure of most Situationists is a failure to understand the nature of the catastrophe and flow with the crisis. Panic can be an incredible energiser. A prigonic carthexis.

#### = THE NOBLE NEUROTIC

Philip K. Dick was influential on Cyberpunk, in that his novel *A Scanner Darkly* touched on what is crucial in Baudrillard's disintegration into neurosis : "Biological life goes on, everything else is dead. A reflex, machine-like, like some insect repeating doomed patterns over and over. A single pattern. The failed codes of an escape combination. But how can you truly escape yourself ?".

#### = LET'S GET OUT OF TIME

For Baudrillard and his approach to Cyberpunk theory, television - call it the Spectacle by any other name - is a paradigm of failed escape combinations, of implosive effects, of remembered codes that make you forget yourself to pieces : the Videodrome collapses any distinction between receiver and sender, between the medium and the real. Like Mallarmé's Herodinde, and virtually all theorists, caught up in a sterile closed circuit with her mirror, Baudrillard's subject is locked into an uninterrupted interface with the video-screen in a universe of fascination. The materiality of both receiver and television apparatus dissolves, along with the multiple and contradictory layers of institutional texture, such as the economic imperatives of the multinationals. Cyberpunk both involves itself in this project and carries out a radical critique of the processes involved, with a view to transformatory change.

#### = THIRTY SECONDS OVER TOKYO

Technological miniaturization is a one-way ride, a symptom of a global system moving towards domination and universal circulation. In Cyberpunk, geographical frontiers no longer exist and in their place are being manufactured vast micro-electronic territories. Information, structured by automatic data processing, becomes a new kind of raw material for the industrial myths of the near future. The convergence of home computer, television and telephone lines are the nexus of a new virtual social machinery, which testifies to the spectacular consumption of the commodity and the addictions.

#### = SHOCK THE MONKEY AND WATCH THE MONKEY GET HURT

For Debord, who was necessary for Cyberpunk to have a sense of critical-theoretical praxis, the auratic - virtual presence of the commodity was bound up with the illusion of its utter tangibility. But now there has been the gradual displacement of aura from images of possible objects to digitized flows of data, to the glow of the VDT and the post-libidinal promise of access embodied there. Cyberpunk is possibly a supersession of the process explored by Guy Debord, in which the seeming self-sufficiency of the commodity was a congealment of the forces that were essentially mobile and dynamic. Now, however, with pure flux itself a commodity, a

spectacular-cum-contemplative/addictive/hypnotic identity-fulfillment relation to objects is undermined and supplanted by the new forms of virtuality, the Videodrome itself.

= A HEAVY MAGNUM, SOME BLOOD AND A SENSE OF LOSS

There is no more opposition in the Cyberpunk territories between the abstractions of money and the apparent materiality of commodities; money and what it can buy are now fundamentally of the same substance. There is a growing dissolution of any language of the market, desire, hysterical violence and berserker visionary states, into binarized zen-pulses of photonic interfacing that extrapolates the fictive unity of representation, the virtual into the material. Figurative images lose their transparency and are consumed as simply one more code.

= CORROSION, SEMTEX AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Cyber-Space is yet another development of five centuries of space-simulating techniques - you'd be amazed who we have managed to replace with their own double. Reproductive virtual technologies move ever onwards with new parameters of mimetic fidelity - call it holography, high resolution television, cloning, the serial Karen Eliot and my memory of the partially incinerated paper-skin face of the female soviet MIG 31 fighter-pilot in the casualty unit - smiling - as I hand her the semtex and absolution. There is an immense drift of the image, electronic continents, towards pure surface, endless skidding. In Cyberpunk whatever drifts across the retinal socket, the screen or the home computer is part of the same homogeneity.

= FROM STOKE NEWINGTON TO BAADER-MEINHOF

Through the 1960's television collaborated with automobile in sustaining the dominant imagery of spectacular representation : in the virtual annexation of all spaces and the liquidation of any specific signs that had occupied them. The television screen and car windshield reconciled visual experience with the velocities and discontinuities of the market place. As windows they seemed to open on to a visual pyramid of extensive space in which autonomous movement might be possible - instead they have both become apertures that frame the subject's transit through streams of disjunct objects and affects, across disintegrating and hyper-abundant surfaces. Television has gone further and has grafted itself into other networks. Now the screens of the home computer and word processor have succeeded the automobile as core products, in an on-going relocation and hierarchization of productive forces. Video-games are the beginning of wholly revolutionary links with VDT's and the cameras pan as Baader - Meinhof stagger through the video-arcade blindfold quoting Karl Marx, but those links are altogether different from the prothesis of body and automobile.

= DISSOLUTION AND COMMUNION : FICTIONS OF EVERY KIND

A planetary data-communications network has been physically implanted into the decaying, digressive terrain of the automobile-based city. One of the key roles of the expanding electronic grid is to articulate a new social and geopolitical stratification based on the immediacy of access to transmitted data. The aim of Cyberpunk is to create a state of temporary grid-lock in order to insert certain secrets of its own. Cyberpunk, as Philip K. Dick's novels and films of David Cronenberg, deals with the near-future world congested with the coming technologies of everyday life and pushes the thresholds to the point where the psychoses rip through and the Metrophage gets ugly...

= THE ATROCITY EXHIBITION

Cyberpunk was essentially initiated by J.G. Ballard in *The Atrocity Exhibition*. Ballard details the collapse of a landscape through which lines of deterritorialisation have proceeded to absolute tolerances. Ballard explores fractured zones in which sheer contiguity replaces syntax and which extend only in terms of the ceaseless conjugation of bodies, architecture and images that briefly abort, then detach to make new connections.



Ballard's landscape, the city inter-penetrated by image/events of car-crashes, astronauts and war crimes, demands an unrelenting and unremitting effort of decipherment, made virtually impossible by the equivalence of everything glutting the field.

#### = THE WEAPONS RANGE

A fully saturated spectacular space neutralizes the interpretive delirium of paranoia at the very moment of inciting it. For Ballard, empirical and quantitative practices become the flip-side of psychosis and its loss of identities. The simulation of coherence for Ballard results from the blank accumulation of clinical data, laboratory recording techniques and the objective observations of scientific research. J.G. Ballard is a language in himself which only J.G. Ballard can fully access.

#### = MULTINATIONALS : THOMAS PYNCHON'S FLYING CIRCUS

Thomas Pynchon in *Gravity's Rainbow* explores the obliteration of outdated territories, languages, filiations, of any boundaries or form that has impeded the installation of cybernetics - the theory of messages and their control is here inter-meshed with the hegemony of what Pynchon calls the mega-cartel, the zaibatsu, the multinationals.

= UNDERSTAND SOMETHING. ALL FRINGE SOCIO-POLITICAL GROUPS ARE WEBBED TOGETHER, PULL ONE THREAD AND EVERYTHING COMES APART =

#### = THE COMING OF THE UNCONSCIOUS

Ballard's work is an attempt to grasp the contradiction of representational analysis of the future directly. These inundated near-futures transform our own present into the determinate past of something yet to come.

#### = BLADE RUNNER : CYBERPUNK GOES FILM-NOIR

*Blade Runner* as a Cyberpunk film emphasizes the continuity between the contemporary world and that of a film dealing with the near future; not by insisting on the invariability or a permanence of society's characteristics and values, but by following and continuing the development of lines of force already at work. *Blade Runner* is about Tom Vague. Everything is ultimately speaking of Tom Vague. Just who is Tom Vague ? He's you and he is spinning, revolving and dialectically free-associating; waiting for a message of some sort or another. *Blade Runner* takes as its object the city a tactical mapping system - a living video-close for a fictional Cyberpunk overlay. In its essentials, *Blade Runner* is gazing back at Raymond Chandler and the Private Eye genre - all very film-noir. You know, Tom Vague in the back seat and you're all wrapped up in bandages again and the nurse leans over, all needles and clinical zen, and pumps you full of strange drugs - and just maybe you'll never come down this time and reaching the door handle takes an eternity. The thriller of the 1940's has a particular affinity for urban imagery, since it's filmed from a perspective that skims, skids, skips over the city, a perspective that is immanent to its multifoliate currents.

#### = SYMBOLISMS, AIRSTRIPS AND MASS PRODUCTION

These psychogeographic perspectives belong to a hero on the run (call it a heroine - call it anything, it's going to get much more twisted) or at very least, on an irrepressible slide. Like madmen and mystics, the latest Tom Vague, they descend into the malestrom of our collective desires and longings, our collective unconscious, and follow the logic of the landscape in which they find themselves. Incapable of mastering the situation, the Cyberpunk tag renounces repairing it and attempts instead to join the flow of events, to follow its twists and turns; crossing over into Cambodia towards Kurtz, he jumped into the furnace where they keep the scary monsters and supercreeps and went a few rounds with the collective human ID and its demand for a sacrifice.

Kurtz, did you really laugh at Nagasaki ? Two types of images predominate in Cyberpunk film-noir : first there are images of crowds and of Tom Vague/Deckard/Willard cutting through them - laminar flows of people on wide boulevards, minor turbulences susceptible to sudden explosion and rapid coagulation capable of paralysing a city - grid-lock - where there are no longer spaces set aside/apart for gatherings. The movement of crowds sweeps in like control data, while they re-run documentaries of refugees, and mix the most heterogeneous groups, sometimes homogenizing them, sometimes provoking clashes. Then there are also images of derelict spaces, spaces that have lost their original purpose which clutter Cyberpunk fiction and Situationist psychogeographic theory : obsolete furniture and buildings (clocks, warehouses, mazes of alleyways, humanity's fallout) and zones which are not subject to any law - either urban planning or the dominant psychologies.

= ASHES TO ASHES, DUST TO DUST...

When used by Cyberpunk, the structure of film-noir is able to :

- [1] Develop images of urban crowds, panic, a set of escape combinations, from a skimming point of view.
- [2] Complicate, contradict, dialectically free-associate, reverse the relationships between centre and periphery. A deserted centre, occupied only by visionaries, and a quiet life on the periphery create an image parallel to that of the urban exodus that has affected large western cities for more than a decade.
- [3] Denote spaces and objects whose original purpose has been lost, due not to obsolescence but rather, to an over-investment (of MEANING, VALUE SYSTEMS, PRAXIS) brought about by constant recycling - vehicles, shops, texts and constructed from the most diverse elements, superimposing futuristic and archaic strata.

= THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TERRORISM AND THE GLOBAL MEDIA/VIDEODROME IS SIMPLE. FORCES LOCKED IN MUTUALLY ANATAGONISTIC ROLES SECRETLY ABET EACH OTHER =

= AN IMMENSE HALF-SUBMERGED CITY

*Blade Runner's* first task is to subjectivise heterogeneous crowds, as they are seen through Deckard's/Willard's/Renn's eyes - yet another hero - who is immanent to their movements and the savant cipher to their movements, the narrative use of derelict spaces and the proliferation of patchworked, overinvested objects. The city, made up of these elements, is furthermore bound together by a deluge, a pouring rain - another element. Cyberpunk stole from film-noir - and by the ubiquitous BLAG - a street language - a patois of Vague - speak, German, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Anglic - used by the in-mixture of various groups that make up the metropolis population.

= KOYAANISQATSI

As for Deckard, he initially appears as the equivalent of the private detective with the voice-over of film-noir - very existential, nihilistic and almost apocalyptic - as both a sensitive, messianic - failed messianic - possibly pathological spirit repelled by the state of the world and even while cradling his gun, shouting love at the heart of the world. Contradictions. The Cyberpunk tag has to clear a path through a deliberately theoretically confused atmosphere of this fictive metropolis and distinguish the real from the unreal even in the most indiscernible cases. At the heart of the city this quest is hindered by the lack of an horizon, everything is Tom Vague, making ambivalent clues and unpredictable danger-cum-behavioural response patterns ever present. The Cyberpunk cipher therefore must take one step at a time, (pure chess - it always comes down to games, because they always contain the idea of terror), yet allow herself to be swept into the multiple currents that cross the city and beckon at random. The investigation, the inquisition of forms, is no longer the central point, instead, the skidding, the drifting, the wandering the city, the vertigo of the city, the panic become the phenomenological-dialectical focus, as everything starts slipping.

## = DATAPANIK IN THE YEAR ZERO : THE 19th PROLETARIAN ASSAULT ON THE GLOBAL ELECTRONIC ECONOMY

*Blade Runner* crosses the threshold beyond which the hunter lets himself be captivated by the prey he should be capturing and by the very hunting ground on which the prey is completely at home. In *Blade Runner*, the disguised villains whose multiple identities must be unravelled are no longer intellectuals salvaged by Tom Vague from oblivion or oh so femme fatales but replicants, androids made indistinguishable from humans through the wonders of fictive genetic DNA montage shuffling - to hell with this, let's have a car chase and some assassins, fast music and pheromones. At the end of their four-year lifespan replicants are retired. Produced for service in the off-world colonies in the division of labour, they have been outlawed on Earth since four of them rebelled - and the job of Deckard, the Blade Runner (bounty hunter), is to find and eliminate them. Deckard is not really a private eye, even if he looks and sounds like one - that's nothing, virtually the whole of the left sound situationist nowadays, when talking about the media - he is an ex-policeman specialized in replicant hunting. He has indeed left the police - just as a private eyes are former cops who either were fired for insubordination or who resigned out of disgust - he allows himself to be re-enlisted because, as his boss points out, outside of the police he is "little people", no one. The fear of identity loss.

## = SOME COMMENTS OF SYNTHETICS

The use of secret agents by the police, who can merge with the locale they monitor and where they maintain a loose or at least flexible relationship with the police hierarchy, is a recurrent theme in contemporary western cinema and London at large. These agents correspond to a new police strategy made necessary by the complexity and obsessions specific to the Metropolis - THE METROPHAGE. They must be capable of adapting themselves unnoticed to a specific milieu. The only truly unpenetrated situation has been the british situationist web of cells, contacts, individuals, Cyberpunks, workerists - It is clearly not enough to say these agents must appear as marginal in a society where all margins can be recuperated by the mainstream of the Spectacle and where any social-professional category is susceptible to marginalization - where the movement from the fringes to the centre is, like the approach to the Castle in Kafka by endless de-tours but also by unexpected shortcuts and waiting in the High Castle is Tyrell/Kurtz.

= STALINISM IS LONG OBSESSIVE STREAMS OF CLAUSES - POSSIBLY SOME FORM OF CONFESSIONAL CANT =

## = AN URBAN SOUND-SWEEP

The hierarchy in *Blade Runner's* japanese Los Angeles, is even concretized in the pyramidal forms of the immense skyscrapers resembling Aztec structures. Who's sacrificing who ? The projector vehicles with their ads for the colonies, the face of Tom Vague, do not merely cover the facades with images, but in doing so, they re-define them. No longer surfaces of separation, they become potential screens, the Videodrome ? And yet, as soon as there is no longer an image projected on it, it tends to crumble, to collapse - leaving behind dilapidated buildings, fossil spaces. Such is the new double status of the facade : sometimes polished, auratic and homogenized by an image, it becomes a vertical plane on which all depth is reduced to mere surface, and sometimes it is perforated, permitting the unfolding on an horizontal plane of a field of unlimited depth but with no horizon. The co-existence of these two states creates many of the Cyberpunk urbanisms in the film - from a projector vehicle above a neighbourhood in ruins to a videophone booth covered with cracks and graffiti.

= I AM NOT TYRELL, AT LEAST NOT IN THE SENSE YOU MEAN

At the summit sits Doctor Tyrell, president of the Tyrell Corporation, the corporate that makes the replicants. Interestingly, the production process does not take place in large factories nor in hi-tech laboratories, but in

workshops, black labs scattered throughout the city. Tyrell is waiting for Roy. He's coming, Tyrell. Don't you hear that soul - biting tornado moan - he's got plans for you, Tyrell. Goodbye Tyrell. Poor Roy. All rage, confusion, bloody murder and remorse - oh so sensitive, such depth for a killing machine. How do emotions feel Roy ? Yes ! Conscience is the key ! That's what it is to be Kurtz, human. It is the judgment of conscience that defeats us...

#### = ROY BATTY : A VERY HUMAN INQUISITION

Here's Roy ! *Blade Runner* is really about Roy Batty/Rutger Hauer/method actors in general. Deckard sees his face on the VDT and knows he's looking at the final technology. An iron fist that is impossibly lifting the fascist jackboot off the face of liberal humanity, in fact it is being shredded. Deckard has a relationship with all the replicants and the relationship is strange, elusive, multi-levelled, a meeting of Raymond Chandler with William Blake. But with Roy Batty it is everything, it is full of speed and furious, hysterically violent, wild, berserk, dialectical, pure tornado moan, so crazy that Roy just has to howl with emotional desolation, hyper-primitive and really dynamic. The relationship is not homosexual although homosexual apologists will inevitably appeal to homo-erotica. It's more. Savage ritual always is. Sexuality is not an ultimate. Neither is violence. The spiritual affirmation of life, ragged, red, raging and pumping out of control, coming at you like the worst thing in the world is an ultimate - I mean ask Tom Vague, he knows all the big secrets.

#### = HIGH BIO-TECHNOLOGY

Helter Skelter ! The Replicants are dangerous but fascinating, frightening but beautiful, often but not totally and intractably alien; they gradually emerge as the film's true emotional centre - and Roy who is gigantic, huge, existential, dying, embodies a love that can kill. Roy Batty uses a near-quotation from Blake to introduce himself :

"Fiery the angel fell; deep thunder rolled = Around their shore, burning with the fires of Orc", *America a Prophecy*

Roy Batty is a Blakean visionary, driven to acts of incredibly hulking Nietzschean greatness, because he embodies the world's pain. "Quite an experience to live in fear, that's what it is to be a slave". But Roy is not just another skin-job, he's what every Amerikan militarist fantasizes about, the sound of the end of the world. Culture is disintegrating around Roy and he just ignores the post-modern culture - collapse, the values - panic and goes to meet Deckard. Roy lapses into vague homo-erotica when he speaks to Deckard - "You'd better get it up, because if you don't, I'm going to have to kill you". - Roy is savage, dying undulation - pure here and now rather than only slightly now and then.

#### = THE STATE OF HUMANITY / TORNADO MOAN / DESOLATION

Roy's murder of Tyrell is the most meaningful statement in the whole of Cyberpunk - "IT IS A FEARFUL THING TO MEET YOUR MAKER" - It is the way he kills Tyrell. The whole film pivots on his expressions just after he kills Tyrell as he goes to meet Deckard at the end of the river. Roy/Kurtz and Deckard/Willard/Hopper mirror-image each other. Roy has to force Deckard back to humanity, morality, mortality - hence the querulously ironic, "Are'nt you the good man ?" - here all language breaks up, everything crashes, all the certainties break down. Roy is meant to be Aryan, oh but he's more and that's the real twist. He's murdered Sebastian and Tyrell ruthlessly - as if coming to grips with a fantastic new logic, but as he descends in the lift he feels a growing sense of humanity - the moral inquisition, conscience. Roy is straight out of liberal Anglo-Western fantasy, angel-perfect and yet monstrously homicidal in dark stalinist - fascistic - liberal - democratic hues as he contemplates a humanity which makes him exterminate ruthlessly with a self-destructing desolate compassion - a love that can kill. Roy lets Deckard smash him with a steel pipe, half smiles and reproachfully says - "That hurt !" - then goes after Deckard towards the final summation of historical event. Deckard is good, the best any human suppressing his humanity could be - in fact he edges into super-human

overdrive when Roy's hunting him - pure lust for life. Roy's got Deckard all worked out, he actually forces him beyond his limits, watches him nearly die, then suddenly saves his life - Why did you do that, Roy ? Life knows its own, Roy. There is no middle-ground, sainthood or brutishness - probably a mixture.

= COMPUTERS MELT OTHER MACHINES, FUSING THEM TOGETHER - TELEVISION - TELEPHONE - TELEX - TAPE-RECORDER - VCR - LAZER-DISK - BROADCAST TOWER LINKED TO MICRO-WAVE DISH TO SATELLITE - PHONE-LINE - CABLE - TV - FIBRE-OPTIC CORDS - THE HUGENESS, THE HUMMING, A TORRENT OF PURE LIGHT. A SEMIOTIC WEB, A GLOBAL NERVOUS SYSTEM THINKING FOR ITSELF =

= WILLIAM GIBSON / NEUROMANCER / MICROCHIPS / IBM

*Neuromancer* is a Cyberpunk science-fiction novel, definitive in style and content. Yanked from a Japanese slum, where he's been trying to repair his damaged nervous system and re-enter cyber-space as a cowboy and steal data from the great glowing subjective geometrics that represent corporate hotcores, Case soon finds himself way out of his depth in Turkey, in the Sprawl (the long-predicted Boston-Atlanta Eastern sea-board Megalopolis) and in Lagrange halostats out in corporation-dominated interplanetary space. Case has been hired to penetrate the adamantine ICE (Intrusion Counter-measures Electronics) that incase the weird Lagrange-based Tessier-Ashpool corporation whose two AI's (Artificial Inteligences), Wintermute and Neuromancer play paradoxes and generate programming phenomena saturated industrial myth of the near future.

An equally interesting use of data-buzz is explored in Michael Stanwick's *Vacuum Flowers* - it has the usual over-complex endless power-game among the gesellschaften or the corporate interests and kicks the hell out of humanism. Bruce Sterling's *Schismatrix* is frankly the most complicated of the Cyberpunk fictions - they are all worth reading just for the fictive quality of the language.

Case met his first Modern two days after he'd screened the Hosaka's precis. The Moderns, he'd decided, were a contemporary version of the Big Scientists of his own late teens. There as a kind of ghostly teenage DNA at work in the Sprawl, something that carried the coded precepts of various short-lived sub-cults and replicated them at odd intervals. The Panther Moderns were a softhead variation on the Scientists. If the technology had been available, the Big Scientists would all have had sockets stuffed with micro-softs. It was the style that mattered and the style was the same. The Moderns were mercenaries, practical jokers, nihilistic techno-fetishists.

The one who showed up at the loft door with a box of diskettes from the Finn was a soft-voiced boy called Angelo. His face was a simple graft grown on collagen and shark cartilage polysaacharideas, smooth and hideous. It was one of the nastiest pieces of elective surgery Case had ever seen. When Angelo smiled, revealing the razor-sharp canines of some large animal, Case was actually relieved. Toothbud transplants. He'd seen them before.

"You can't let the little pricks generation-gap you", Molly said. Case nodded...

== CYBERPUNK IS A REFERENTIAL ANALYSIS ON  
POWER=IDENTITY=PSYCHOLOGIES=FUTURES= CYBERPUNK IS PURE BLAG == ==  
'NEUROMANCER' IS ESSENTIALLY SYNTHESISING IMAGES OF POP CULTURE, APPLIED TO THE  
NEAR FUTURE ==