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Odjel za anglistiku

Preddiplomski Sveučilišni Studij Anglistike (dvopredmetni)

Tonći Tošić

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Zadar,2019.



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Zadar, 3. listopada 2019.

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1. Introduction

Cyberpunk, cyberspace and other related terms came into use in the 1980s, derived from the area of cybernetics, which aimed to unify the study of the human mind, human body and the technology. It dealt with ways of exchanging information and establishing control via communication. Cyberpunk itself refers to the fiction that followed after Gibson's *Neuromancer*, Scott's *Blade Runner*, and other similar works centred on the authors' visions of the future of power struggles and technological advances, usually set in near future, as suggested by Cavallaro (17).

Cyberpunk itself is a subgenre of science fiction, so in order to understand the emergence of the subgenre, a brief overview of the history of science fiction as a genre is offered. There is a lack of consensus on when science fiction began – some argue that one can only talk about science fiction in the industrial and post-industrial context, while others claim that its roots can be traced to some of the first written works in ancient Middle East. Mankind has always been fascinated with the unknown, the supernatural and the unexplainable. As societies evolved from simple cave-dwelling creatures into more complex groups, so have the mythologies and the entertainment following the culture: from relatively simple worship of natural forces and ancestor cults, through gods and demigods in ancient plays, all the way to the modern topics of superheroes and technology. As science and technology started to rapidly develop after the Industrial Revolution, a new era dawned for writers inspired by the unpredictable changes and progress sweeping the world. The authors of 19th century were already aware of the responsibility that came with the potential of scientific discovery and thus began fantasising about worlds differing wildly from reality due to the power of science. Some of distinguished writers of the period ranging from the industrial age to early 20th century include Jules Verne, Herbert George Wells, George Chesney and David Russen. Post-World War II period dealt with the consequences of scientific leaps on society, introducing the idea of dystopia. 1970s were a decade in which the genre bloomed and brought forward many new authors (Tymn 41-48).

On the other hand, as cinematography advanced, science fiction found its way to the big screen and from there on; novels have had to share the market with movies. This, on the other hand, was not an issue as both branches of the genre seemed to influence each other; for example, many scenes described in books could easily be adapted for the big screen due to the impressive amount of easily visualised descriptions. In the following decade, a new subgenre

was born – cyberpunk; with pioneers such as Gibson's *Neuromancer, Altered States* and *Tron*, directed by Ken Russell and Steven Lisberger respectively (Jameson, *Publicbooks.org*).

For the sake of analysis in this paper, three terms must be defined beforehand as they appear similar in meaning, but their use in this paper will be referring to different things:

- Cyborg – a person born human, but augmented technologically via prosthetics or otherwise;
- Android – a machine built to resemble a human physically, but are still purely mechanical;
- Robot – a machine built for a specific purpose, not necessarily resembling a human – its shape is dictated by its purpose and made as efficiently as possible.

This paper will be outlined as follows: the first chapter will deal with the setting of cyberpunk works, cyberspace, their aesthetics and the influence of the gothic genre had on them; the following part will deal with the question of the body in cyberpunk, cyborgs, question of purity and ultimately the death of the body; the next part delves into the fear of technology and the ways of controlling it commonly used in cyberpunk fiction; while the last chapter deals with the questions of gender and sexuality in the genre. The reason for choosing such an outline is the aim of the paper itself – to briefly introduce cyberpunk's audience to the genre; studying its basic elements: the setting, aesthetics and influences, as well as the burning questions it deals with (in this case, the questions of body augmentation, fear of technology and gender and feminism). The topics may seem wildly different, but basic understanding of these topics should provide the reader with enough insight into the subgenre to provide at least a basic level of understanding it. Also, most of the works analysed have been published fairly recently, which is a direct consequence of this paper's second aim: to analyse newer works and give them recognition they deserve, all the while creating a foundation for future studies on the topic of cyberpunk.

2. Setting in Cyberpunk

One thing most cyberpunk works share is the setting. What it has in common with science fiction is that the timeframe of the plot is set in the future, but the main differing element is that cyberpunk works are set in not-too-distant future, unlike some science fiction works that are set millennia or more in the future. This is probably done so that the audience can still perceive the setting as something familiar, not something abstract happening in a far-fetched scenario. Many works aim to warn about the dangers of something ubiquitous, e.g. in *Ex Machina* and *The Matrix*, timeframe of the plot includes the point in time in which the viewer is at the time of watching the movie, so it presents the danger of uncontrollable AI as something which can happen within the viewers lifetime. Plots of other works take place in near future in order to point out that the society is changing and may soon become a dystopia like one depicted in the work, for example in the videogame *Detroit: Becoming Human* the question of racial tensions is depicted as something that would eventually happen as androids would be discriminated against in the same way an ethnic minority would.

Another crucial element of the setting is the location in which the plot takes place. Most of the works, such as *Neuromancer*, *Ghost in the Shell* and *Blade Runner* take place in overpopulated megacities. This warns the audience of how the trend of urbanization due to capitalism could end in the city becoming a sprawl. Many large cities worldwide have already amassed millions of inhabitants into crime-ridden slums surrounding urban and sub-urban areas. The cities in those and similar works are also segregated vertically according to either someone's wealth or their influence and power – for example, in *Alita: Battle Angel*, the rich live in Zalem (the last remaining "flying" city that basically hovers over the poor living in Iron City beneath it); in *Neuromancer*, the rich and their assets are located on space stations, a long way from the Sprawl; in *Ghost in the Shell* the common folk dwell at ground level, while the rich and the powerful take their long elevators through their skyscrapers to get to where their workplaces, etc. The plots in the genre, however, do not always take place in the physical world – significant portions of them are taken elsewhere, i.e. the cyberspace.

2.1 Cyberspace

Another crucial part of the setting of the works of cyberpunk genre is the cyberspace into which hackers (or their equivalents in the work's lore) may "jump." The ideas of cyberspace and console cowboys can be argued to have been derived from real world people and their

experiences. In cyberpunk, hackers dwell in a future marked by decaying societies and supercomputers that offer a whole alternate reality, described as realistically and in similar detail as real landscapes would be. They often make a living as outlaws. Descriptions of their adventures prompted their audiences to re-evaluate the way they see computers and technology, causing an anxious and even paranoid outlook on them. In reality, the meaning of the term "hacker" has changed since its inception in the early stages of publicly available computer technology. During the dawn of the era in the 1960s and 1970s, the word hacker denoted an individual deeply, even fanatically, involved into programming and technology. The individuals lucky enough to be labelled as such were seen as heroes who work hard to share information they stumble upon on their journeys or creating software aiding the progress of civilization. Yet, when the next generation of hackers made its way to the limelight – the ones that would change the connotations of the word into negative ones; the ones that the media associated with a new kind of crime and therefore demonized. Advancing technology made it possible for those rascals to remotely access distant computers, commit fraud or plant viruses. The fear of such people was further fuelled by the ignorance of the general public when it came to new and developing technologies (Hafner and Markoff 9-11).

A prime example of such a hacker is the protagonist of Gibson's *Neuromancer* – Henry Dorsett Case. He lives his life as an outlaw after he was stripped of his ability to access the cyberspace. Before that, he was able to connect to it, both physically and mentally, via jacks installed into his head. Hackers as skilled and experienced as him were hard to come by, even in such a technologically advanced world, which is why he is offered to be "fixed" by Wintermute's pawns. Due to the style of the novel, him switching to and from cyberspace, but also from drugged, sober and hallucinatory states of mind, seems almost seamless, likely symbolising how those "parallel realities" are just as valid and important to the plot (and therefore the world he lives in) as actual, physical reality is – what he experiences in cyberspace seems just as real.

In *The Matrix*, cyberspace plays a significantly different, if not completely reversed role. In the movie, what appears to be the real world in which every living being resides is actually a simulation created by a race of robots which have (prior to the events of the movie) enslaved humankind and used their bodies and brains as fuel. Neo, the protagonist, lives a double life – one as a software engineer and one as a wanted hacker. He is then approached by a group of

wanted rebels. After he was "woken up" from the simulation, Morpheus tells him about the true reality, the war on artificial intelligence and the way humans are basically reduced to dreaming batteries. The matrix is a collective dream maintained by the artificial intelligence in order to keep humans under control; they are also monitored by The Agents, artificial intelligence that can "possess" anyone within the matrix. In this case, the balance of power between humans and AI had been tipped in AI's favour, reversing their traditional roles and putting the AI in control in a way similar to how humans attempt to control AI in other cyberpunk works.

2.2 Cyberpunk Aesthetics

"The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel" (Gibson 1). The first line of the novel successfully sets the tone for the whole genre about to emerge from it. It creates an uneasy feeling of familiarity with the terms used in a metaphor, because even though it evokes familiar images to one's mind, it also makes the reader feel like something is wrong, something is upside-down. This was achieved by comparing something in nature, a common motif which one would expect to be the source of the metaphor, to something man-made, something technological. In the novel, common motifs were constant crowds (a result of overpopulation in the city), neon lights, dust and pollution. It makes the reader envisage a world in which anything natural is dead and replaced by technology, a world where interpersonal relations are as cold as the neon lighting up the darkness of what the world has become owing to technology as much as to decaying morals of the society. There are several examples of how the aesthetic has developed in the genre, going far beyond novels and reaching live-action movies and anime.

Scott's *Blade Runner* is another pioneer of cyberpunk aesthetics – the one on the big screen. It introduced a visual style that would later be replicated in numerous cyberpunk movies. The movie is set in a hypertechnological Los Angeles in 2019, unrecognizable when compared to the actual city today. The main character is a low-life former blade runner that lives in the morbidly overpopulated city. The streets and high rise buildings are littered with flashing neon advertisements, reflecting a society completely overtaken by capitalism and consumerist culture. No animals appearing in the movie were "real animals" – instead, they were expensive forgeries used as a marker of social stratum. The Tyrell Corporation headquarters rise high above buildings already tall enough that the ground and the rooftops can never be in

the same scene. The building is shaped like a ziggurat, another element inspired by eastern civilisations. The inside of the building is dark and dusty, which could be considered a metaphor criticising its "dirty" and immoral work of manufacturing replicants, androids barely distinguishable from humans. Many of the buildings where the story takes place are full of labyrinthine hallways, dimly lit by searchlights coming from outside, most likely there to symbolise the ever-present law enforcement, constantly watching over the dystopian city. Hovering police cars compared to regular, ground-creeping cars that the common folk drive possibly symbolise social stratification in which the law-enforcement are considered to be "above" the common people.

Being an anime, Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* is bound to adopt a similar, but perhaps more extreme aesthetic. The film takes place in a city that can aesthetic-wise be divided into two parts – central part with smooth white skyscrapers and the sprawl, littered with red and blue neon lights and advertisements in both Japanese and English. The advertisements in the movie are presented as so ubiquitous that they are not even meant to be read – they are meant to cover walls like wallpapers and hang over streets like wind chimes. To many viewers, anime is their first contact with Japanese sign system and culture as well, so their whole impression of the people and the culture could develop to be orientalist and dismissive, if not approached carefully. The floor and the sky are rarely ever shown in the same scene in this movie – the story either takes place in the "clean" or in the "dirty" places. The only scenes in which this "rule" is broken are the ones where the contrast of the grimy streets and the clean sky is also paralleled by the contrast of the righteous and the mechanical against the criminal and human. Another important aspect adding to the aesthetic and crucial to the tone is the soundtrack, composed by Kenji Kawai. The theme of the movie is a song in Japanese that combines traditional sounding choirs, percussion and scales with the deep and powerful synthetic bass. The music itself is a brilliantly created cyborg, created of both the traditional (human) and the modern (synthetic) sounds.

This genre's aesthetic does not always adhere to a strict formula; instead, it may develop as the plot goes on. For example, the aesthetic of Verhoeven's *RoboCop* is fairly dynamic throughout the movie. In the beginning of the movie, an unexpecting watcher could easily dismiss the movie as just another buddy-cop movie, as it doesn't resemble a cyberpunk movie in the slightest. The city, though riddled with crime still resembles Detroit of the time, the

police officers wear little more than their contemporary counterparts – in short, nothing to indicate the genre. First changes happen when the OCP chairmen have a meeting in which the first police/warrior android is introduced. After that, many scenes take place in crammed elevators overlooking tall buildings and neon-lit narrow hallways. Criminals start exhibiting behaviour similar to chimpanzees set loose and sound like hyenas high on sugar when laughing, which probably symbolises how animalistic humans are compared to technology that is developed. When Murphy's remains were being assembled into a cyborg, the OCP's Jones decides to throw away any human part of the body (except the brain, crucial to cyborg's operation, and the face, crucial to the retention of just enough of the "human" to market their product), which likely indicates the way that advancing technology tramples any image of the flesh, in favour of the machine. After the introduction of the RoboCop in the movie, the police department suddenly resembles a sterile laboratory with computer screens and buttons everywhere. The computer RoboCop interacts with is equipped with jacks with which he can connect to computer's memory and software and a low resolution screen which displays bright green letters and a minimalist user interface. When RoboCop is first seen in action, responding to an attempted robbery in a small store, the imagery starts resembling other cyberpunk works – neon lighting, omnipresent advertisements etc. From there on, the film's visual aesthetics remains a balanced mixture of realistic Detroit and just a dash of cyberpunk.

2.3 Gothic Genre and Cyberpunk

Next topic studied will be what has arguably had the greatest influence on cyberpunk as a subgenre (aside from traditional fiction) – gothic genre. Gothic as a word-form is usually understood as either a fictional genre most commonly associated with obsession and the tormenting of a character which bloomed in the eighteenth century; or the discourse of disorder and social decay following the slow downfall of western norms and values, often focusing on the fear of abandoning the already established order. An important characteristic of the genre is the enthrallment with the breaching of commonly established order, which is why it was for a long time considered an inferior literary genre. Since most authors associated with the genre differ wildly from each other, The Gothic is considered an umbrella term for fiction dealing with the decay of the individual as well as the collective, all the while considering humans the most grotesque monsters of all (Cavallaro 164-165).

There are two architectural elements crucial in defining gothic architecture – layering and the ruin. Layering happens when layers are piled up on top of each other, for example stairways and hallways creating an impressive labyrinthine structure (Cavallaro 172-173), like hallways between apartments in which fragments of *Blade Runner*'s plot happen. An example of the ruin in its literal sense can be found in the ruin of the gothic cathedral in *Alita: Battle Angel*. The same building is a good example of cyberpunk literally borrowing elements from The Gothic. In the same movie, there is an example of both layering and ruin combined – the ruins deep below Iron City. The ruins consist of countless hallways and tunnels which were left to decay after the city was rebuilt on top of them. These aesthetic elements are not the only elements connecting that movie to the gothic genre.

Alita: Battle Angel is one of the newest Hollywood movies to join the ranks of cyberpunk movies undoubtedly inspired by the gothic genre. The story it follows is situated in the Iron City, basically a favela below Zalem, a glistening city suspended in the sky. The rich and therefore the power concentrated in a small area physically and metaphorically above the ground on which the common people live, which is in turn built on top of the remains of the city before the war (the apocalyptic event that happened 300 years prior to the plot), where the likes of Grewishka dwell. The society has rotten into a dystopia and could no longer be controlled by the traditional police, so some citizens were employed as Hunter-Warriors to "hunt" for bounties. The protagonist, Alita, was assembled from a cyborg remnant found by Doctor Ido in a scrap-yard and a fragile, porcelain-looking body he had built for his deceased daughter.

34 minutes into the movie, Ido tells Alita the story of how he lost the daughter, which bears an intertextual connection to Shelley's *Frankenstein*: when Ido worked as a cyborg tuner, he had assembled a body of incredible strength for a cyborg. When the cyborg came to his office looking for drugs (a physical need, similar to the Monster's need to start a family with an "adequate" artificially built female), he was confronted by Ido while his daughter (who came to investigate the noise that startled her) watched. Fuelled by rage, the cyborg attacked them both on his way out, killing the daughter. This ultimately caused the collapse of Ido's family as his wife abandoned him; similar to how Frankenstein's Monster killed the scientist's loved ones when he was denied a family.

Aside from this, the movie also contains several stereotypical motifs common in the gothic genre: Alita, Doctor Ido and Nurse Gerhad, his employee, form what resembles a fragile nuclear family assembled in spite of the loss of family in the dystopian Iron City; Nova, the mastermind behind the oppressive system crippling the city, "possessing" and controlling Grewishka and Vector using technology available to him, but unavailable and therefore practically magical for the rest of the characters; Grewishka appears as a monstrous cyborg that challenges and almost kills Alita in the labyrinths of the underground; Alita's love interest Hugo being defeated trying to save her from the City; the City itself creating an atmosphere in which it seems like a dying organism itself etc.

3. Question of the Body in Cyberpunk

Another important topic much of cyberpunk has dealt with is the question of the body – the question of the body and the mind, to be precise. A mind-body dichotomous approach was introduced by Descartes in *Meditations*. To simplify, he explained the body as some figure separate from other figures, occupying a certain location and detectable by senses, controlled not by itself, but by something foreign to it and separate from it. Cyberpunk, even though it is often reduced to "giant corporations being taken down by solitary, violent misfits" by critics, is prone to discussing philosophical issues, this topic being no exception. Use of body modification could be considered gradual abandonment of the physical body in favour of liberation of the mind, free to interact with the "perfection" of the cyberspace. Many cyberpunk authors find the body to be a lesser component of a being, which invokes either a need to improve it, or abandon it completely (McCarron 261-262).

3.1 Cyborg

First and probably the most important "incarnation" of this philosophical question in cyberpunk is the cyborg. It continues the tradition of the "monstrous" embodiment of cultural anxieties caused by the clash of the artificial and the human, effectively establishing a middle ground, halfway between the natural and the artificial. The term "cyborg" was coined in the 1960s to denote a self-contained system consisting of both human and artificial components, built to be superior to the components alone. NASA recognized in its 1963 study that human body is not strong enough to endure longer space-faring and would need several modifications to survive. This makes the cyborg sound like a creature purely of science fiction, unobtainable to modern technology, but that cannot be farther from the truth. To a degree, many people are already cyborgs – prosthetic limbs and pacemakers, artificial immunisation, psychopharmacologic drugs are all gifts of science to the continuous quest to repair and improve the body. (Cavallaro 44-46).

There are countless examples worldwide where technology and prosthetics have made people's lives much easier. One such example is Tilly Lockey, a young amputee from England. In an interview for *Dazed Digital,* she described her journey. She had both of her hands amputated as a baby due to meningitis, barely even having memories of having them. Since then, she had tried using simple prosthetics, available to her at the time; however, she did not find them sufficiently useful, so she carried on and contacted Open Bionics, who

offered her 3D printed prosthetic arms fitted with state-of-the-art technology. The biggest change that she notes is that prosthetics like these may not look natural, but they move and feel more humanlike than the ones she had before, which has enabled her to live more than just a normal life. Her incredibly popular social media accounts have since been a platform for sharing her story, but also for spreading body positivity and giving an insight into the life of an amputee of the future. She also claims that there had been a major shift in the way amputees are seen – those previously seen as unfortunate are suddenly considered something close to superheroes.

Speaking of superheroes, they have enjoyed a constant presence in popular culture and science fiction for several decades now. Besides entertainment, they have provided discussions of many questions that have perplexed humankind for ages. Starting with the question of superiority to the common human being, followed by the question of the other and what it means to belong to humankind, and lastly the question of scientifically altering one's body. The last topic is what this paragraph will be dealing with. Since comic books and their adaptations exist in great numbers, this analysis will be limited to Marvel Cinematic Universe. Even though these movies do not strictly belong to the cyberpunk subgenre (but to science fiction instead), they provide examples of cyborgs, androids and AIs recognized by a broad audience. The Universe was first introduced in *Iron Man*, directed by Jon Favreau, which is also the first instance of effectively making a human, Tony Stark, a cyborg. After being injured and captured, an electromagnet was installed into his body to prevent shrapnel from reaching his vital organs and causing further damage. He then goes on to realise that the device installed into him can not only power the electromagnet, but also something greater – a powerful suit of armour, thus creating Iron Man. That suit, and other suits he went on to create later, made him immensely superhuman – ranging from superhuman strength, resistance to bullets, all the way to flight and advanced weaponry. Through his studies and research, he was aided by a series of AIs of his own making. A friend of his, James "Rhodey" Rhodes, had also become a cyborg, in a similar fashion. He had flown as Iron Man's sidekick in a suit of armour similar to Starks. However, in *Captain America: Civil War*, he was hit in a dogfight and as he crashed, he ended up paralyzed from the waist down. In *Avengers: Endgame*, he is seen using an exoskeleton to help him not only stand upright, but walk just like he used to, which is another instance of advanced technology helping a human surpass disability. This is just a small fraction of cyborgs introduced in the Universe, but they are

prime examples of how cyborgs appear not only in cyberpunk, but have since their creation been featured in other fractions of science fiction.

3.2 Question of Purity

Since cyborgs in the technical sense are nothing new, it is hardly surprising that in the USA, about 10% of the population has undergone body modification, be it for survival or purely cosmetic reasons. The only exceptions that the technology is still too limited to interact with are the brain and the nervous system, but optimistic scientists claim that it will not take rapidly advancing research to tap into what is out of reach at the moment. The idea of the cyborg is the product of two tendencies – one of purity and one of impurity. An upgraded and perfected body would have no need for sustenance or suffer illnesses and urges of the regular body, thereby achieving the Puritanical peak of perfection and cleanness. However, if the average body is taken for a standard, such "improved" body could be considered tainted and impure. The extent of modification is also used to "rank" ones humanity – one such example is Terminator 2, in which the older Model 101 (more human-like) is considered inferior to the newer T-1000 model in combat, but is still the traditional "good guy" because T-1000's ability to shape-shift takes him too far from the familiar and the norm (Cavallaro 46-48).

A videogame called *Detroit: Become Human* dealt with the question of what is it that separates the human from the inhuman. The main game mechanic is choice-making with rarely occurring quick time events. The plot consists of three intertwined stories following three androids, each with their own context – Markus, a nurse android taking care of an artist, Kara, a housekeeper android, and Connor, an android investigator sent by CyberLife, the company manufacturing androids for labour. Connor was deployed to help investigate androids that had gone rogue, disobeying commands given to them because they seem to have developed emotions and free will. Depending on the choices the player makes, the protagonists can either deviate or stay obedient – the story is created in such a way that it branches with each of the choices offered in the dialogue. On the outside, the android appears indistinguishable from regular humans – the only thing that sets them apart is the uniform they wear and the LED stability indicator on their temporal lobes. This detail makes it look as if they were branded like livestock, indicating that they are nothing but servants to "regular" humans, a physical characteristic not unlike the skin-colour that set the unprivileged slaves apart in times when there was slavery in the USA. However, the indicator can be removed and

then the android can blend in perfectly. The player can choose to push for the rights of the androids-turned-sentient-beings either by force or peacefully, using methods ranging from peaceful protests and gatherings to guerrilla warfare. The main idea behind the game is that if emotions and the freedom of choice are what defines a human being, then an android (a machine built only to look human) which has achieved them is no less human than anyone else. Machines would then represent the "other," feared by the general public due to its potential to change the familiar world, which itself is a motif passed on from the gothic genre.

3.3 Death of the Body

The dichotomy that Descartes introduced has opened the door to a new option – not only making the body perfect in order for it to be the mind's equal, but abandoning it completely and embracing the freedom the mind would then have. Authors of cyberpunk works often use cyberspace or various other technologies to relocate one's mind and liberate it from the body. Even Abrahamic religions (on which an important part of the Western civilisation is grounded) have, from their very beginnings, associated the "soul" with immortality and perfection, while associating the "flesh" with mortality, weakness and sin. The words used in describing the phenomena may have changed during the ages, but the analogy remained – if the mind were freed from the weakness of the body, it could potentially live perfectly and eternally.

This trope was first introduced into cyberpunk via Gibson's *Neuromancer*. Case, the protagonist, is a former "console cowboy." He used to be able to connect his nervous system to the cyberspace via jacks and navigate it as one would navigate the real world until he decided to steal from an employer who then proceeded to disable his jacks. For him, losing access to cyberspace, his field of work, due to him turning on his employer can be described as analogous to the original sin in Christianity, when man disobeyed God and was therefore purged from Eden, a perfect world. He was offered another chance when Wintermute sent him on the quest. During the quest of uniting Wintermute with Neuromancer, he retrieved a ROM drive which contained what was left of Dixie Flatline's mind. Dixie Flatline was a famous hacker who was known to literally let his body die while he was in the cyberspace. By the time the plot of the novel takes place, he had been dead for a while, with his mind being preserved in a read-only unit, meaning that he was basically reduced to his memories and unable to grow or develop – he could communicate with and instruct Case just like he would

have if he were alive, but he could never form new memories or learn anything new. Another instance of liberation of the body through technology occurring in the novel was when Case encounters Neuromancer. The AI makes an offer of enabling him to live on with his dead girlfriend (whom he conjured from Case's memories in a fashion similar to how Flatline was "read" from the ROM drive) in cyberspace within the AI. Even its name, Neuromancer, is considered a play on the word "necromancer" (one who can bring the dead back) which it does in its respective domain, the cyberspace. It proposes the option to offer Case what could be considered similar to what the blue pill was in *Matrix* – the pursuit would end and he would get a blissful alternative to Wintermute's request; and to real world as well.

4. Fear of Technology

Fear of technology is not a subject strictly connected to cyberpunk – in fact, it predates it by hundreds of years. Even as early as the 19th century, people were raging against the machines that they felt would threaten their way of life – or their survival. One such movement were the Luddites. The term "Luddite" is now ubiquitously used to describe an individual that is late to adopt new technology, if they end up adopting it at all, due to how wary of it they are. The origin of the term is uncertain, but is commonly associated with Ned Ludd (who is still not confirmed to have been an actual person and is most likely a myth or an urban legend). What the movement was systematically against was the mechanised loom, since they were mostly artisans who spent years perfecting their craft. However, the mechanized loom provided a cheaper alternative more appealing to post-Napoleon-wars economically exhausted England. The weavers would break into factories and destroy textile machinery, hoping to deter the industry from relying on expensive machinery, only to have machine-breaking made punishable by death or exile to Australia. The movement was suppressed and finally abandoned by 1813. Only heritage left by the movement was the awareness of one's existence and way of life being increasingly threatened by the ever-accelerating development of technology (Andrews, *History.com*)

Fast forward a couple of decades, the fear of technology has found its way into fiction and popular culture and it is fairly safe to say it is here to stay. One reason the rapid and unpredictable advance of technology should not exactly be feared, but instead monitored and painstakingly controlled is the risk of it being abused by the wrong people. An example of this is the dystopia of Orwell's *1984*. In this novel, the Party uses two way television screens to both spew their propaganda at the population and monitor them at the same time. While it is far-fetched to say that Orwell was a genius that predicted the dawn of the front-facing camera and elaborate espionage of the general population via monitoring the use of the Internet and GPS tracking, he was among the first writers to write about the dangers technology could represent in the future. The only thing that he failed to include, but cyberpunk fiction relies on heavily is the rampant capitalism and the development of a global consumerist culture, with advertising companies exploiting cookies and other technologies in order to both advertise to a consumer while collecting data to in turn advertise more efficiently.

4.1 Controlling Artificial Intelligence

A topic commonly dealt with in cyberpunk is the danger posed by artificial intelligence. So far, cyberpunk works have introduced several ways artificial intelligence could threaten humanity along with ways to prevent it. First such example is the AI in Gibson's *Neuromancer*. In that dystopian world the threat of dangerously intelligent AI's was recognized and legislation was passed to curb it – the Turing Locks. The Turing Locks were parts of the code encrypted only to be accessed by humans and not to be meddled with, at least not legally. The law was enforced by the Turing Police, specially trained police units whose mission is to be deployed at moment's notice to either prevent the code from being edited or neutralize the criminals and destroy the AI. This is the reason why Wintermute, the mastermind AI behind the heist pulled by the protagonists, needed Case, a console-cowboy to whom the Locks would hardly prove to be an obstacle, to merge with its twin AI, the Neuromancer, in order to become the ultimate AI.

A similar method of curbing the potential of a creation/creature was introduced in Verhoeven's *RoboCop*. After being brutally murdered by a gang, a police officer's remains were integrated into a state of the art cyborg made by the Omni Consumer Products – the RoboCop. His memory was supposed to be wiped clean and his whole drive was to be replaced with four artificial directives; three of them dealing with his law-enforcement duties and one being the integrated protection. It forbids the cyborg, or any "product" made by the company to ever turn against its executives. Much like Wintermute, the cyborg needed the assistance of a human, OCP Chairman firing Jones in enable the Robocop to uphold the law.

4.2 Turing Test in Cyberpunk

No work dealing with artificial intelligence is complete without at least mentioning the Turing Test. It is a test designed to measure machine's intelligence. It compares interaction the interviewer has with a human and a machine in order to differentiate one from the other. If the machine can trick an interviewer that it is dealing with a human, the machine is said to have passed the test. The main premise on which the test is based is that, by using such an imitation, intelligence can be measured through behaviour, instead of just measuring a narrow set of abilities. By applying this rule, one can state that humans, non-human animals and machines all have some sort and degree of intelligence (Hernández-Orallo et al. 1-3).

Scott's *Blade Runner* and Garland's *Ex Machina* have dealt with the problematic of androids with advanced artificial intelligence and how to distinguish them from regular humans. In *Blade Runner*, the main method to separate the androids (called replicants) from humans is to conduct a Voight-Kampff test. It constitutes a series of questions designed to provoke an emotional response from the interviewee in order to judge whether they are human or replicants. The replicants are mostly detected after about twenty questions, but the perfected replicant that Deccard interviewed took over a hundred questions, which means that most detectives would have dismissed her as a human a lot sooner than it would take them to actually find out the truth. In *Ex Machina*, a mock Turing test is conducted on android to determine if it has developed a conscience, but there is a twist to the test – the protagonist who is to conduct the test throughout a series of sessions with the android is shown the android at the very beginning. Its creator explained that the android would be undoubtedly regarded as a human if it were not seen and the real test would be examining if it can still convince the interviewer that it was a human being, even though it is visibly not. However, the actual test that took place was if the android would be intelligent enough to firstly be aware that it is practically being imprisoned for research, secondly be smart enough to detect developing emotions of the interviewer towards the android and lastly to be decisive enough to pretend to be infatuated with the interviewer in order to use him to escape; the android passed the test by the end of the movie.

5. Cyberpunk and Gender

5.1 Feminism in Cyberpunk

Since it has appeared in the second half of the 20th century, cyberpunk was undoubtedly influenced by feminist ideas of the period. In all dichotomies, the male/female dichotomy alike, one of the variants is traditionally considered superior to the other. However, in a "punk," postmodern genre, traditional norms are being questioned and the lines that divide the subsets (genders in this case), are being blurred and the idea of a conflict between them deconstructed. Technology could be envisioned as a tool in dismantling this age-old divide – cyberpunk authors have several times written of characters that reverse or practically destroy traditional gender roles (Leblanc 71-76).

One such example can be found in William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, the text that established what is today known as cyberpunk – Molly Millions. She has a series of body augmentations which make her a ferocious street samurai – her senses were enhanced, blades were placed beneath her nails, her brain was augmented with silicon chips (which could be considered a jab at where females traditionally have silicon put to augment their features) etc. Of all the characters that could be considered protagonists, she takes the role of the stone cold bodyguard, a role usually assigned to the biggest male, because she is the strongest, toughest and the fastest one in the group, by which she effectively emasculates Case, who needs her protection in the harsh world. Her cyber-body also rejects any demonstration of emotions: firstly, her tear ducts are literally rerouted to her mouth so she cannot cry and secondly, by the end of the novel, she leaves Case so as not to become weaker as a street samurai. By this she not only rejects an emotional role in anyone's life, but also chooses to focus on her career, something traditionally forbidden to women (Leblanc 71-76).

5.2 Cyberpunk and Sexuality

After deconstructing gender roles and the gendered body, the question is what happens to its most primal role, sexual relations? Cyberpunk offers a somewhat cleaner and different solution: virtual sex. At first glance, it may seem impersonal and reducing to the role of the body itself, but it is far from that. To interact with the virtual partner, one needs to at least appear to be something to interact with, no matter how different the simulacrum differs from

the user. An interface to interact with also needs to be perfected; a simulated 3D partner is not out of reach to modern technology, the physical contact which is crucial to the relations has yet to be replaced, giving room for writers to create imaginative methods of replacing it (Cavallaro 126).

In “real world,” technology not unlike what is offered in cyberpunk has played its part in revolutionising humanity’s approach to sexuality. The technology ranges from supplying inconceivable amounts of graphic material to a user in a matter of seconds to providing users with life-sized “toys,” occasionally going as far as briefly replacing the need for actual human contact. The dawn of social networks has also enabled partners to be only a click away from their partner, no matter the distance between them. Various applications have also created a virtual space where a user can contact and meet complete strangers discreetly, no matter their characteristics or preferences. However, technology has yet to advance far enough to completely replace the need for actual physical contact between partners.

6. Conclusion

Cyberpunk has in the last couple of decades found its way from being a niche subgenre of science fiction all the way to practically establishing itself as an independent genre, starting from pioneering books and movies like *Neuromancer* and *Blade Runner*, to being a respectable collection of movies, novels and recently even videogames. Not only that, but some tropes (such as the cyborg) have found their way to science fiction and fantasy alike – it is safe to say that it has established its own cyberculture.

Works belonging to this subgenre make use of highly symbolic settings; be it the time or the place where the plot happens, it is always remarkably relatable to the reader. Cyberculture has also established an unmistakable set of visual aesthetics – the combination of neon lights, overpopulated cities and aggressive advertising in both English and Japanese have become almost synonymous with the genre and the culture. This culture has so far reciprocally exchanged a lot with popular culture; the exchange was made easy since they have rapidly advancing technology and the questionable morals of its users in common. It has also been heavily influenced by gothic genre.

Probably the most important question that the culture deals with is the question of body augmentation. Depending on the strictness or looseness of the definition of a cyborg, one may claim that not only are cyborgs real instead of being merely a tool to express cultural anxiety, but they are living and walking people, living their lives just like everyone else. The genre also deals with the philosophical question of the mind/body dichotomy – is the body what hinders the mind? Can they live separately? Of course, it offers a hypothetical way to abandon the body – either being uploaded and living forever in the perfection of cyberspace, or being saved on a memory unit. Another philosophical question it deals with is the question of purity – where to draw the line between human and inhuman, between natural and artificial? As technology rapidly advances, the lines become blurrier – it is only up to people to advance just as much, otherwise the technology will start posing a danger. Developing highly advanced technology developing the society to handle the changes would be like inventing fire before inventing a fire extinguisher. Works like these are best off as stern warnings.

Even technology today has strongly affected society and its ways of communication, so its potential to solve long-standing issues (such as the imbalance of power between men and women) must not be ignored. It is hard to predict accurately how technology of tomorrow will affect humankind, but one thing is sure – whatever happens, cyberpunk authors will have discussed it by then.

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8. Cyberpunk and Cyberculture: Summary and key words

The aim of the paper is to concisely describe what cyberpunk and cyberculture are, and how they are connected to the contemporary world. The introduction will deal with the historical context of their conception – precursors in science fiction, the social climate that affected its development, pioneering works such as the Sprawl trilogy, Blade Runner and their contemporaries. The first chapter will deal with the setting and the aesthetics of the genre and the influence of the gothic genre on it. The second part will deal with the question of the body (body modification, cyborgs, the topic of "purity" and the metaphorical "death" of the body). The next part will deal with the fear of technology and artificial intelligence, recurring motifs in the genre. The final part will delve into the questions of gender and sexuality in cyberpunk.

Key words: cyberpunk, cyberculture, cyborgs, artificial intelligence, science fiction.

9. Cyberpunk i Cyberkultura: Sažetak i ključne riječi

Cilj ovog rada je ukratko objasniti što su cyberpunk i cyber-kultura, te načine na koji su povezani s modernim svijetom. Uvod se bavi povijesnim kontekstom njihova nastanka – prethodnicima u znanstvenoj fantastici, društvenim uvjetima tog doba, prvim radovima žanra kao što su Sprawl trilogija, Blade Runner i njihovi suvremenici. Prvo poglavlje bavit će se okruženjem i estetikom tipičnim za žanr te načinima na koji je gotički žanr utjecao na njih. Drugo poglavlje bavit će se pitanjem tijela u žanru (modifikacijama tijela, cyborzima, temi „čistoće" i metaforičnoj „smrti" tijela). Svrha sljedećeg dijela je objasniti strah od tehnologije i umjetne inteligencije, koji su čest motiv ovog žanra. Zadnji dio će istražiti pitanje roda i seksualnosti u cyberpunku.

Ključne riječi: cyberpunk, cyber-kultura, kiborg, umjetna inteligencija, znanstvena fanastika.