

Herlander Elias

CYBERPUNK 2.0

Fiction And Contemporary

University of Beira Interior
Covilhã, Portugal
LabCom
2009





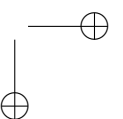
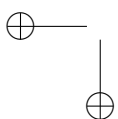


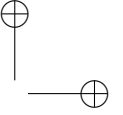
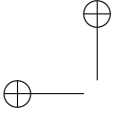
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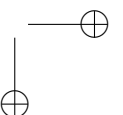
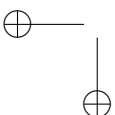
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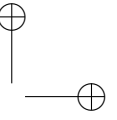
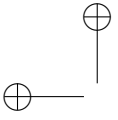
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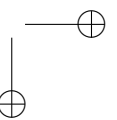
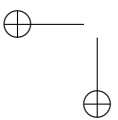
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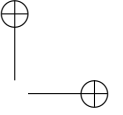
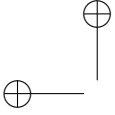
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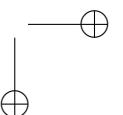
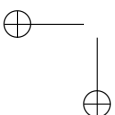
In memoriam,
Ana Maria Elias
My Mother





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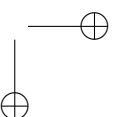
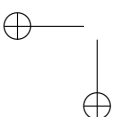
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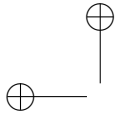




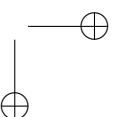
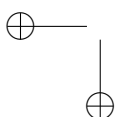
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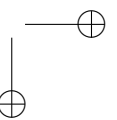
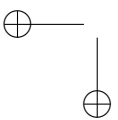
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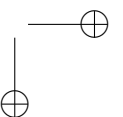
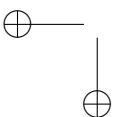


INTRODUCTION

THE MATRIX RELOADING

A decade ago cyberculture was growing in its overwhelming wave of novelties. The early nineties, the Web-boom years with multimedia technologies and cable TV shows were feeding every domestic spots. At present time, after the digital culture has become our culture, demanding a technical literacy and still compressing immense amounts of data into small tiny bits, a lot of things happened. When I first published the original portuguese version of this essay of mine – *Cyberpunk: Fiction And Contemporary* – I still remember most folks thought that the Internet was only for computer freaks and when I first mentioned that home computers such as the Commodore Amiga rendered images in high resolution with 4096 colors, everybody, who heard about my statement, laughed at me. Then Virtual Reality came for domestic purposes and gaming consoles. The nineties were undoubtedly the cyberhype years, so they established the pavement for all cyberculture development blossoming till now. Some said that besides virtual architecture, the Internet and Videogames were for kids, not much to look into. They were wrong. It was a mistake to disregard the science-fiction narratives, like those of William Gibson and Bruce Sterling, and mostly Philip K. Dick's remarkable achievement in the future forecast among a Western world of glossy and plastic media byproducts.

Now after cyberspace gone massified, with digital portable devices all around us, fashion images pumping dance music on every LCD screen in any mall near us, definitely show something that has changed. Peer to peer software, infinitely downloadable contents, Web streaming video, High-Definition

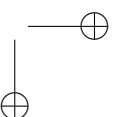




1080p videobroadcast, Blu-Ray Discs available and GPS enhanced services across mobile networks have change the previous decade media panorama.

Steven Spielberg is about to release his version of *Ghost In The Shell*, a cyberpunk *anime* icon; Jonathan Mostow will release in 2010 a new version of John Carpenter's *Escape From New York*, a remake with new CGI footage, and James Cameron's upcoming *Avatar* will surely be a blockbuster in cyberpunk motion picture genre. Two decades back in time and cyberpunk resembled much more like hype than a science-fiction narrative breakthrough, but now we understand why films such as *Blade Runner* were forced to celebrate its 25th anniversary. After all, the future looks like a promise retrieved from Sci-Fi dystopias. Global crisis, ecological breakdown, oil resources turning scarce, technology available almost to everyone, more efficient software and hardware, are the new background of all of us. In the meanwhile Honda's Asimo keeps evolving and besides talking it can also run at slow speed and climb stairs. Also Honda's hydrogen automobiles will soon be a reality just like Toyota Prius and Honda Civic Hybrid keep making the transition into new cleaner ways of transportation with no drastic changes that will affect consumers.

Another father of cyberpunk fiction, in this case in the *anime* Japanese animation genre, was of course Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira*, though a new full rendered version in 3D CGI will be released in 2010. So if we look back through the time frame, again it seems that there was a time when fashion was different from media, much like movies were distinct from videogames, and animation was the little, yet precursor, child of cinematography. Right now all rules got inverted. Any content, media and format flows in the same network direction towards a new kind of *mobile media society*. Screens don't demand our attention and physical presence at the same time, TV shows can be paused, recorded and watched later by pay-per-view viewers and *The Matrix* trilogy films nearly opened a new path for entertainment and made science-fiction re-emerge onto the mainstream. Films are transformed into games, some games resemble films, and it keeps hard to separate how much we need to keep labels in different folders, while media keep making "mash-ups" upon every kind of content. We may say that cyberpunk aesthetics have gone global, there is no doubt about that, if there was any chance of understanding cyberpunk as somehow being apart of media, right now the reality is the opposite. We watch *The Matrix* films, we play *The Matrix* games, and we read *The Matrix* comics,





so if the story is the amount of it put altogether we are witnessing a new genre of “cross media”, as Henry Jenkins assumes we are.

Most of the fashion MTV revolution, the *anime* comics, the CGI movies and even the computerized gear design is established in respect to science-fiction aesthetics; now things must be portable, they empower us with control, and they allow consumers to become all mighty in the *new media milieu*. “Do It Yourself” still is the command line for media action. From robotics to media by-products, advertising and graphic design *graffiti* like Banksy’s; from “*culture jamming*” to news blogs, *anime* cable TV networks and virtual reality games, all that our time is able to dream can be built. Like any MTV idents (short audiovisual clips), the story of one media channel can be broadcast for a few seconds, and the amount of relevant data streaming on it is as compressed as powerfully hypnotic, is in fact “hypnagogic”; that is to say, as hypnotic as pedagogic.

Cyberpunk began as a fiction based on outlaw *hackers* and pranksters, it was supposed to deliver the promises made by previous Sci-Fi writers, and it did, except it went further so it is no longer a marginal genre but a convention where all creative people seem to dive every time they need a high-tech creative input, crystal-clear data burst. Switching on our home screens, or accessing online networks, we realize that the Asian metropolitan skylines look dream-like, China’s economic awakening is a fact, Japanese electronic entertainment is growing in next-generation gaming consoles, Apples’ iPhone introduced the multi-touch interface on wide screen which has been realized in mobile devices, and high broadband usage makes everybody a potential cyberpunk these days. A graphic culture has emancipated from the rest by coupling with information technologies. First Person Shooter videogames keep looking more real, Flash Video *VJs* has already been a professional occupation these days. And Adobe Photoshop *cosmetic graphic* aesthetics is usual among image consultants and advertising agencies.

Who said that right now there is a problem in seeing Aphex Twin’s video-clips directed by the outstanding Chris Cunningham? Who said that fashion is outlaw? And ultimately where’s cyberpunk? And the answer is simple: cyberpunk is everywhere, because we all use and think cyberpunk. Global pop commercial culture is technical, and culture embedded in its technical procedures stands within the digital culture framework, thanks to networks we all are “netrunners”; thanks to Adobe Photoshop we all are *graffiters*, sten-





cilers or cosmetic-graphics artists. Compressed HD video, online shopping, massively online gaming and all of this in a sharing culture have created difficulties to sign where does share culture begin and cyberpunk outlaw theft ends. There was never a time when vast of amount media, information and knowledge were abundantly available to so many people, in the same place, at that speed, and at the same time.

A conflict waits for its summary; we came from a read-only culture (print culture) which now clashes with a read-write culture. McLuhan mentioned the conflict, Jenkins also reminds us, though others (as Lawrence Lessig) keep defending a merge of both read-only and read-write cultures. Either share is a crime or global share shall be harmless and economically viable. For the most extremist cyberpunks truth is that sharing their common-ground, their common-place; cyberpunks never understood another way of doing things besides sharing. They lived upon that concept; a collective role was always on their sight. Also it is also a historical fact that sharing, sharing something is also beyond any law, any contract and institution. Sharing is about trust; if we trust, we share. And the more we share, the more we trust. Global trust indicates the path towards global share. Cyberpunk is related to hacking and music *DJing* and it collides indeed with the already established culture of MTV imagery, the quick-cut video aesthetic is also Afrika Bambaataa's "Planet Rock" (1986) dream of a world speaking the most tribal of languages: music.

International networks and global media are also contemporary of cyberpunk as it first appears in the 20th century. Nomadism is a key word. As top-models choose to travel and walk on runways, as *DJs* fly from nightscape to nightscape in order to bring their music to the new *milieus*, mainstreamed data has this tendency to go global, to become everybody's stuff. It is a sort of an inner nomadism, (...) a perpetual migration of the intensities" as French philosopher Gilles Deleuze would say. Never in our time has media become an environment instead of a tool. Any teenager now grows up surrounded by MP3 music technology, YouTube video communities and "googles" everything on search engines. Kids don't think anymore in a root-like vertical structure as the previous generations did. All the new trends are cyberpunk axioms reminiscences: such as network building, advertising in digital media, GPS mobile enhanced devices, guerilla art going digital, and even Photoshop-





based street art like the *Space Invaders* stickers collection which is now seen all over the world's famous capital's corners.

Now the challenge of our time is how to perceive the technological changes that in the cyberpunk original age were still notorious, as for now they're here yet they're hard to notice at first glance. Technical culture is going invisible as hardware gear becomes dematerialized. It all starts when youngsters play videogames, whenever they go for shopping in malls or choose the items they want to purchase online, every time they dream about angels and cyborgs, as they discover both the latter in fashion television channels. Playing videogames as *Ecochrome*, *Crysis* or *Metal Gear Solid 4*; or viewing films as *I, Robot* or *The Matrix* is now a mainstream behavior. No longer is that an outlaw or a suburbia culture thing. Movies as *Appleseed* and *Avalon* are no longer shocking; they're an easy-viewing icon for kids and adults. There is also this growing *New Media-Fashion-Complex* dictating every wearing model on media to format massive amounts of people. Right now, as we pick our media-resonant clothes from the closet, and put the sunglasses on our face we are creating a pattern, as other people do, of *costume-capsules*. We listen to our music, collect the images we prefer, we buy our fan stuff, and we wear what is linked up to the media products we consume. We are the brands, cyberpunk-styled branding authors, walking on the streets and no more on runways. We can edit videoclips, shoot HD films, write and publish, organize blogs and advertise online. I don't remember a time when media was so easy to reach and at the same time so fast and interesting to follow as now. The thing here is a question of transition. The question we then raised is transition.

One goes from the "Do It Yourself" cyberpunk premise to the "Brand Yourself" fashion punk motto. As a matter of fact we are the post-computer punk model rephrased, a new version of the latter decades of the 20th century, as well as this 00 decade of the 21st century, all at-once. In a McLuhanesque manner, media is a human extension still today, it still creates loops, it still becomes invisible for its fellow contemporary individuals; and it still broadcasts in an all at-once style. Reality is that punk has become supposedly "disneyfied". Artists such as Banksy, the British *graffiter*, mentioned the new instance of "weaponry of mass distraction". As he suggests there is a new regime of "existencilism". I publish images, therefore I am. He imagines cities where anyone could publish his own images on the walls. It's all a matter of reflections. Cyberpunks need to see their worlds mirrored back on the streets. I see

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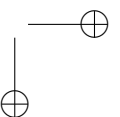
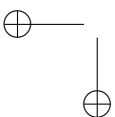




my virtual reflection in videogames, so there is no longer a barrier between the image side of the fence and this side of mine. We easily understand it as we play *Mirror's Edge* (2008), the same way we did when we watched the film *Liquid Sky* (Slava Tsukerman, 1982) three decades ago. The filmmaking camera, the videogame interface, the media fashion icons, the television video-yourself programs and the way brands are advertised nowadays suggest that the only thing which is responsible for turning ourselves into cyberpunks characters is that we are still nomad, either it's all about networks, media or the streets. Circulation, walking, traveling pursuing and searching are in fact already in our genetics. You can't pretend to be a cyberpunk. You just are!

Herlander Elias

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FOREWORD

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE RESERVES TO SUCH A PRESENT?

THIS book is about cultures in our time. A book about all the ruptures that shook a world that thought itself as the future of the past in its rational and optimistic foreseeability concerning the idea of progress. A world that defined itself according to the happy days to come and suddenly discovers itself as if in another planet or even a different solar system.

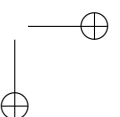
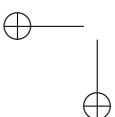
Everything not only changed but became unrecognizable as the author shows us here, both by his exhaustive knowledge of the different subjects and his undeniable ability to explain the different problems that can be shown. The paradigms of thinking are very substantially changing.

It's an unrecognizable world for those coming from the past in History and thought. The rhizomatic proliferation, once so discreetly announced by Deleuze, it is now in the centre of any possibility to understand what happened.

What culture may be is no more thinkable according to a vertical, arborescent model. Rather a proliferant, non hierarchic, horizontality is what may better describe where culture expands itself in fragments.

Fragmentation seems to be one of the dominant categories in this world shown to us by Herlander Elias. Nothing is whole and that isn't what it is pretended. Diversity admits only provisory and less definitive connections. A proliferant fragmentation of the cultural paradigm admits but an attitude not far from the nomadic wandering.

All our classic distinctions, always hierarchic, between permanent and





transitory, center and periphery, essential and its contrary, will dissolve in this unmarked context.

Action and behavior are also affected by new imaginations congruent with all of that. If fragmentation and being precarious are the principles of a new universe, in what can those imaginaries support themselves if not in a permanent and nomadic search?

An entire geography will vanish because the landscape is unrecognizable as in *Blade Runner's* city. And not only the city, the body itself is redesigned by new geographies in which the cyborg is built.

If it is true that everything continues to be systematic, what disappears is its organizing centre, understandable by our everyday familiarity made of habitudes. Because it is also reality in itself which disappears before our recognition.

Reality, as identity, becomes multiple. It multiplies by the number of identities that can define ourselves. Only the urgency remains, or perhaps not, of that embarrassed choice among multiple realities and diverse identities. Choice that nevertheless finally it is made, perhaps not simultaneously but in succession, so that almost all possibles can be incarnated.

It is a long time since identity left us abandoned at the mercy of circumstances, forcing us and sharing us by the diversity of realities to which we may eventually be submitted. Unless it is only fiction. In that case the frontiers seem to us as fading to gray, depending only on the subject – whatever it may be the matter of its submission – to perform the authorized decisions.

In *Cyberpunk 2.0: Fiction and Contemporary*, Herlander Elias offers us an entanglement of reflexions whose consistency rouses an inevitable admiration. The projection of his work that from now on will be organized, allows us to hope for the same scrutinizing vision and the same inquisitive spirit that so passionately characterizes the author.

At the end of the day one only permanent question may still insist: what does the future reserves to such a present? Or, what present will be built upon such a future?

Tito Cardoso e Cunha, Ph.D.

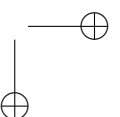
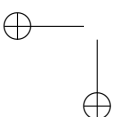
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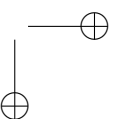
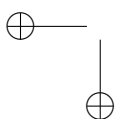
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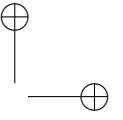
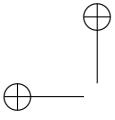




INTRODUCING THE CYBERPUNK IMAGINARY







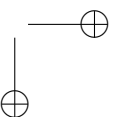
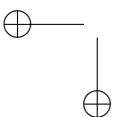
CYBERPUNK – BETWEEN PUNKS AND CYBORGS

“The work of the cyberpunks is paralleled throughout the Eighties pop culture: in rock video; in the *hacker* underground; in the jarring street tech of *hip-hop* and scratch music; in the synthesizer rock of London and Tokyo. This phenomenon, this dynamic, has a global range; cyberpunk is its literary incarnation”.

Bruce Sterling
in *Mirrorshades – The Cyberpunk Anthology* (1986b)

CYBERPUNK is the name of a science-fiction writing movement that conquered its own aesthetic since the beginning of the 80’s decade, time in which, right after the restyling of Philip K. Dick’s writings, Ridley Scott introduced *Blade Runner* (1982) to the world, when the personalities of the cyberpunk “movement” already structuralized among themselves, trying to design a future meant to be not just idealist, but over all coherent. The reason was the will to create a new fiction genre that wouldn’t stop being, however, visionary, powerful and rich. *Blade Runner* was just the movie that got released in a defining moment of the cyberpunks writer’s movement that right then assumed it as an icon of the neo-romantic filme genre, and circa 1983 it is redefined as being worth of the cyberpunk label.

It was in between 1981-82 that the cyberpunk writers, known mostly as *Neuromantics*, non entirely all of them self-labeled themselves in this manner,



started to shape a “school” of writing based upon the death of industrialism which showed a reflection on the emergency of a new pop culture, where youth and street marginality were the epicenters. Writers such as Bruce Sterling, William Gibson, Rudy Rucker, Lewis Shiner, Walter Jon Williams e John Shirley switched letters and gathered, sharing the desire to build a literary and aesthetic project that considered the elimination of utopisms, towards the “future shock” about which Alvin Toffler had mentioned. Yet the cyberpunk writers had already the certainty that both computer culture and pop culture would really intersect, fading all borders in the underground *milieu*.

It is known, though, that William Gibson did not invented the genre, because it was all about a set of interests of several writers who wanted to end the utopian and improper futures existing in much of the Sci-Fi that preceded the 80s. Gibson was the one, as a matter of fact, who had the chance to create an universe where the ideas of the movement are well developed, even venerating too the fact of his 20th century media conceptual model being framed under the notion of “cyberspace”.

Cyberpunk was till a saturation point a “shockwave”, if we may use the vocabulary of the cyberpunk visionaries, able to strike at the entire world by the time *Neuromancer* got published in the middle of the 1980 decade. The “anti-hero” prototypes were already, although, a legacy from Alfred Bester’s writings, with his *Tiger! Tiger!* (1965), the question of the artificial paradises allowed by drugs and by biological phantasies happens to comes from William S. Burroughs’ *The Soft Machine*, the imaginary of the street smart cyborg is imported by what Samuel R. Delany’s structured in *Nova* (1968), are part of the ingredients that shape the cyberpunk pastiche, yet the famous John Brunner’s *The Shockwave Rider* (1975) was also one of the most strongest influences to cyberpunk writers, being the question of the “manipulation of realities”, which K. Dick so thoroughly worked on, not the only one.

The strong idea of the movement focused on sending back the relevancy of the urban discourses to street again, as a stage for fashions, vices and urban living, breaking up this way with the traditional Sci-Fi that remained divided in sub-genres and mostly dedicated to study the impact of technologies in society and the frame of the civilizational process. The cyberpunk writers’ texts appear like something so sharp that their writing “school” began to be nicknamed as “Radical Sci-Fi”, the cyberpunk writers start to be labeled as “The Mirrorshades Groups” and as “The *hardcore* Sci-Fi Nucleus”. Their



writing was, for the 80s, to powerful, considering that it was easy to digest, it was simply convincing, it was not meant to be a science technical instructions book camouflaged under the popular pocket novel concept. It was so cutting-edged that the writers were regardless to the genre classifications by assuming the concern with matters in study. Yet if the cyberpunk figures this was the rebel one, as designers of the future, the cyberpunk writers refused to agree with classification systems, but they knew how to nominate what they thought to be cyberpunk.

It is said that the *cyberpunk* term was coined by Bruce Bethke, in the *Cyberpunk* (1983) story, as well as it is said that, somewhere Bruce Sterling had a contribution to the creation of the concept, when in 82 among the writer's movement already flown the *Cheap Truth* newsletter, one that surfaced at its time many of the outlines from the aesthetic nowadays called cyberpunk. Nevertheless, writer and editor Gardner Dozois had been one of the personalities that in a more or less direct way had used the concept to address the literary movement triggered between 1981 and 1982. There were many uncertainties left until 1984, the key moment when Gibson publishes *Neuromancer* – his first novel – work which managed to gather most of the movement's concerns, and also had in itself most of the conceptual energy that was allowed it to be awarded with the triple crown of Sci-Fi.

From 1984 on the “cyberpunk” concept began to be used by media and constituted its own vocabulary, then materialized at full speed in Gibson's first novel, in the way “the premature arrival of the future” had been designed. Even so, due to its crystal-look, *Neuromancer* might had had invested in run-away into the past instead of materializing the provocation of the desire of integration into the “New Wave”. Because it was a work related to the neo-romanticism a fusion occurred between the visions of the past and future perspectives, a question that then became undoubtedly one of the key elements of cyberpunk genre – the famous tension lying between modern and primitive.

Despite the efforts of Gibson and Sterling, cyberpunk is also a label that north-american press helped to set up, referring to group of writers and artists who have studied the elucidative and realist aspects of the last two decades technology. As a concept it appears in the sequence of a rescuing process of 18th and 19th century's poetics, besides being a renewal of Futurism's aesthetic and its relation with machines. Cyberpunk was a way to set on motion all questions concerning imaginary and surrealist worlds. And to

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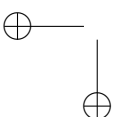
the “confusion of realities” subject too, a legacy from Philip K. Dick’s pre-cyberpunk perverse vision linked to the “construtivism” and the *Bauhaus* art school projects. It was not by chance that Gibson described in *Neuromancer* Julius Deane’s office as a place full of Kandinsky’s design style, mentioned inclusively the existence of a watch in Salvador Dali’s style.

Writers, artists and thinkers tried to figure out the way the future should be conceptually framed. The core question was more like “how is the future designing itself?” as the literary movement conceived it, afraid to fall in the exacerbated idealism, in the finite virtuality, unlikely the kind of virtuality mentioned by all hardcore science-fiction writers for sure.

Like Sterling states in *Mirrorshades – The Cyberpunk Anthology*, the cyberpunk writing “It favors “crammed” loose: rapid, dizzying bursts of novel information, sensory overload that submerges the reader in the literary equivalent of the hard-rock “wall of sound” (1986b: §39). This means that even the writing model should be an immersive and convincing “non-model”, but in order to be communicating it also should follow the novel model, because no one would read a pro-cybertechnologies manifest. If there was the opportunity to give consistency to the designers’ most ambitious vision the literary project would acquire an unthinkable solidness. Cyberpunk writing about cyberpunks should be “cyber”, able to trigger an immersion, as it happens with Virtual Reality devices, showing its availability for technology and its relation to our everyday life, so that the best form to experiment such ideas would just work well depending on the conceptual richness of the chosen novel-paradigm.

Neuromancer’s hypertechnological characters exist as energy cores for all technology that pins down the not much humanity in Chiba City, they become an essayistic project so defying whose only equivalent would be shooting our mind with pure concepts. And this is how the project was set up, through conceiving fictitious universes able to work in a vivid way, surround sound-like.

From the moment William Gibson writes *Neuromancer* the cyberpunks projects are extended. A marketing stream and a *pop mainstream* appear, as soon as cyberpunk fastens from its subculture structure, then becomes unremovable from the marketing stream that supplies it with solidness. A lifestyle breaks out from both streams in tension, one that the *New Wave* fashion and the progressive synthesized music helped to become “real”. All this because technologies had contributed to cement the *Neuromantics*’ literary project,





later appropriated by several institutions. Looks like in a specific moment the 80's decade was a fishery-like experimental spot in which a new reality was being forged, with help from media clusters and thinkers, in a planned or accidental manner. In fact, media like the Internet, the young videogame culture and synthesized music like *Suicide* have provided cyberpunk as its own culture, later carried on compromising their thinkers' ideologies.

Arthur and Marilouise Kroker said that the cyberpunk of the 90s turned out to be a transgression simulation practiced by science-fiction, but even so cyberpunk emancipated itself from literature, something beatniks were not able to do. The cyberpunk figure shows as someone who is able to recognize new information patterns, which can see in the dark, opening his own horizons, although beatniks like cyberpunks may have been inspired on literary fiction. If the *beatniks* had the writing of Jack Kerouac, Alan Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs, cyberpunks have the texts of William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, Lewis Shiner e Rudy Rucker. Both beatniks and cyberpunks have leaned themselves over the shadow of institutions, gliding above the decline of infra-structures and rejecting the concrete modern organization to support an organized street dissension, as a way to constitute the (counter-cyber)culture.

From *punk rock's* "no future", and the illusion that an unavoidable end of the western society would be the outcome, (the scenery depicted by Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of The West*), of all the fictitious idea that an End would be seen, a science-fiction model has been provided, supported by writers such as J. G. Ballard; whose decision center were undoubtedly the hardcore Sci-Fi writers – the renowned "Mirrorshades Group", that in a such a non-metaphorical fashion, returned the real to to the real, with their mirrored lens.

The main idea of the *Neuromantics'* fiction, New Wave was to fade out the borders between science-fiction and other mainstream fiction types and between Fiction and the Real in general. Such a narrative model stood by, no longer set in clumsy futures, but in the present days' analytics.

Writers as Gibson, Cadigan, Sterling and Shirley had realized that there was a difference between "The Third Wave" and all "waves" blended in the compressed pastiche of long gone unknown history. Bruce Sterling, who underlined Alvin Toffler's *The Third Wave* as the "cyberpunk bible", understood the inversion which was taking place between real and fiction. To him the cyberpunk was a privileged, someone who had the skills, the chance to choose





the wrong option, enjoying playing with the intersection of realities. Even so it is known that futurology have always been a forecast made by urban thinkers, simulation aesthetes, nowadays such figures are no longer the only ones provided by the best weapons to see the world, for there are other entities overflowed by technologies able to illustrate the most ambitious and (neo) romantic dreams.

The constitution of the literary aesthetic from the cyberpunk “movement” happens after all that happened in the 80s previous decades. The 1960’s generation of the time of *rock’n’roll* already had shown its steps towards technology addiction, depending on cars, motorcycles, electric guitars and drugs. What happened with the cyberpunks was that they realized media worked as extensions of the human body, nevertheless they were too extensions from repressive institutions, either private or government-controlled, and basically the “american way of life” concept was doomed to fail when the world was unwilling to “buy” huge structures and institutions ideologies to dedicate itself to “consumption”; a problem that awakened all underground cultures (and some of the mainstream) with a very specific rhythmic fashion and its own rituals.

In the 70s the yuppies and the *hippies*’ generation in the US faced boredom before a reality not that colorful. There was the situation for the white-collar jobs, everyone was trying to sneak against the instituted powers, but yet unsuccessful, because both poles weren’t communicating in the same language. The problem of yuppies and nobodies in British territory, for example, was the outcome of a situation of saturation, of a massification and a dangerous alienation which still happened unthinkably after the post-war due to the arrogance of several conservative politicians. It was known that being inside a rigid institutional, uniform gear, that confronted all freedom of speech conceptions claimed as world’s institutionalized democracy main core, did not matched entirely with pragmatics of the principles of liberty; it was all resumed, yes, to a fraudulent wordiness. In British ground conditions gathered so that the alienation had been enough to foment fights against centered power, something that did not happened in the US. Predictable reality, disregarding no interesting surprises at all, homogeneous and “programmable”, not only it looked like a concretion of George Orwell’s *1984* imaginary, as well as the true everyday life for all young london proletarians, yet, even so, only possible to those who had those kind of jobs, because unemployment rates were sky high in such a drastic manner and the “no future” slogan was a





strong street used expression, right after the *Pistols'* mediatization (thanks to the sensationalist british press).

Since the craziness of the 60s, then changed into a cultural *museification* object by powerful publishing sector enterprises, until the 70s, by then immersed in question of impossibility, all the energy of youth was pumped against the iron gates and grey walls of major institutions. However, the end of the 70s decade was searching for energies in an impossible regeneration and inspiring field, based itself upon media information, in the feelings that would supply the subject background for the appearance of global pop music; the last music universal culture which owned the disco's space, and its disco sound full of messages relative to the "saturday night fever" as the prototyping center to practice something that might came out in the 80s decade. A New Wave was foreseen, something supposed to go further than mere stimulation of the dummy feeling and the body rhythmic.

It wasn't written nowhere else that capitalism would not absorb such sub-culture, even though the cyberpunk movement had been a new wave inside New Wave itself, the laboratory test tube for a mainstream acting as materialization of the boldest visionaries and and thinkers' dreams. The true cyberpunk writers who were trying to design a conceivable future were the pioneers believing, providing integrity to a whole new urban rebel image, whose emancipation wasn't figured out since romanticism, because usually turned to be recycled in the System's reach, or, in last case, such emancipation may occur in the shape of suicide as the only exit left.

A cyberpunk would have to sustain and control all its feedback energy, but transforming it into something positive to him, even so if it would be at stake degrade the System. The romantics, for example, had died too early, the *hippies* dived into the country scenery as if it was a *Génesis* remake, the beats stood for rhizomatic culture filled mostly by the American underground losers and, obviously, there was this urgency for something to step out of the alienation capsule; a new attitude was demanded to dethrone all remaining complexes, someone with an usual image, that might be acting out like way beyond its own time and space conditions, but that would act upon time and space common to every individual. The riot *punk* transformed into a tourism object was not really the objective to carry on by the "Mirrorshades Group", They analyzed past and understood the mistakes of all previous generations' projects.

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In all movements the major mistake lied in the fact of being designed to win, and then they would loose. The cyberpunk “movement”¹ cyberpunk introduced itself by making nobodies, losers and outlaws as heroes. The new punk is seen as a new age “survivor”, as rightest and boldest one able to overcome urban threats. This project was set up, not in victory, but in failure instead, there was not the only one “beat the System” goal to achieve. The new neo-romantic project of a new punk was supposed to be a project to fail, but to fail better. . .

Nineteen Eighty Four was the year indicating the starting point to a whole new science-fiction project that, far from being predicted its entire consequences, one cannot say that visionaries weren’t happy, once that cyberpunk’s aesthetic project affirmed itself and became legitimate since it took a life on its own, becoming uncontrollable. The new urban environment had as its peak Ridley Scott’s movie direction, to whom the future looked like a suspended ending, a time when Past and Future would establish dialogues as grandiose as unconceivable.

As a new wave inside New Wave, cyberpunk is the son of a conflict, as like most of the underground cultures that try to resist and to extend their roots, getting just commercial in the end. This happened too in cyberpunk, yet the very way of its selling benefited its behavior and provided it the desired solidness. And if marketing ended up by augmenting the movement, even the 80s decade *hackers* have adopted Gibson’s “prophecies” concerning the *hero-hacker* (the character Case) as an excuse to enhance the most mesmerizing figures of technology. This new punk (the *hacker*) was the heir-subject-object of all technology developed from the Cold War, whose author, the military-industrial-complex, in the absence of wars, prepared itself to build again the urban civilian world, organizing it to be assumed as the new podium of technological competition. A new battlefield would emerge in the body of a new man, a faster and more reflective man that in a heroic fashion would stand out from the rest. Thanks to the knowledge obtained which is able to keep up-to-date and have the faculty to discern information out of “noise”, i.e., counter-information. It was missing someone that could merge street jargon with media languages, resettling high culture from within.

¹The word “movement” is marked with comas because I want to suggest that in fact there wasn’t any movement at all, only personal manifestos with common goals among the cyberpunk fiction authors.





As a writing cyberpunk emancipated from every styling, it was indeed storytelling of the “present time”, not just a writing aesthetic adopted by several writers, we may say it was a lifestyle that wrote itself, a virtuality longing for its materiality. When Bruce Sterling creates *Cheap Truth* (circa 1980), a newsletter, cyberpunk begins as a movement, reaching out mainstream due to its critical frame, as it stood for the claimed Counterculture and free thought. In case the 80s have been the moment of revelation of the New Wave that represented cyberpunk as a literary incarnation, then the 90s made the cybermaniac completely true. If we may use a cyberpunk concept, it was the “the edge”, that is to say, the highest peak, the boiling point; the moment when all required settings were together in order to make the cyberpunk aesthetic charisma convincing, so it could be legitimate by the new power institutions through media marketing devices. Out of that marketing wave still remain left self-reproduced debris, terms as “cyberspace”, “virtual reality” and “cyberworld” are leftovers of ideas from the cyberpunk aesthetic still drifting in the most ordinary projects and redoubts of present day marketing.

In the beginning, Gibson and Sterling wanted just to exercise a powerful, visionary kind of writing, yet not utopian as those of Arthur C. Clarke or the intergalactic odysseys of Isaac Asimov; Their purpose was to create something strong and able to show as the idea of itself, as a prosthetic of its own essence, in which the schizoid fence between appearance and substance would fade away in some aspects, with no beginning nor end. They have conceived something which was the very incarnation of boldness, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s “non-model” “rhizome”, a wild fragmented weed carrying all the information about the whole. Cyberpunk was the native figure belonging to this new culture ground, someone skilled with categories and knowledge to immediately answer to the social and technological postmodern polis oppression, hopefully not to commit the “blank generation”² mistakes.

In this way, for the cyberpunk writers, everything was energized, hardcore and vivid, although it was protected under the narrative novel structure, a mechanism that describes this desired and fragmented reality, more desired by American industrials and technocrats than by the cyberpunk writers since

²“Blank Generation” is an expression that means “failed generation” which refers to the generation that is included in the time period between the sixties and the seventies, which it is considered as remained “blanked”, “disturbed”.





the 90s. The novel model was an excuse, a “Trojan Horse”³ to practice a new type of attitude, by itself far more reaching out than all the “beat generation”.

Basically cyberpunk authors have brought something new in the way they’d use to theorize, with no drug use adjacent, unlike the vision of *hippies*, beats, always showing less unreliable to everyone outside what Irvine Welsh called the “chemical generation”, even so cyberpunks *ravers* were able to create a powerful narco-electronic ritual. *Neuromancer*’s thrilling writing, as an example, stood out due to its laser long coherence, and similar to John Shirley’s and Sterling’s it served to present visions through a writing model that disregarded drugs as an inspiration source. The cyberpunk authorship was based itself in McLuhan’s ideas, regarding the social hypertechnological environment as something already surrealist on its own.

The group of writers understanding the literary movement was circular existence filled up with fragmented visions. We know more or less who boosted it (Gibson), who founded it (Sterling and Gibson) and who attended (Cadigan, Laurel, Maddox, Shiner and Shirley), though, in general, the evolution course was classification-proof, once that there is not, we may say, a single master line which is able to gather all the participants in the literary movement. All there is a set of common subjects, in its turn pretty mediatic, whose autonomy was earned as long as *Mondo 2000*, the magazine, was institutionalized, and lately *Wired*, which still publishes articles from the cyberpunks “founders” nowadays.

Until today all student revolts got marked by the usage of their own speeches and cults; we may see that in the strong relationship between poetry and the students uprising for the young romantics’ 18th century Germany, but, in the 20th century post-war period music was responsible for the changes, a strong ally carrying more than words or images, it allowed a more deep penetrating immersion. Every 20th century counterculture have linked music, drugs, sexuality and the left-wing literature, like the *hippie* imaginary, very “trippy” in fact. Punk was the only culture emerging with all focus on music, or, better saying, in the surrounding immersion of noise, in “distortion”; what

³“Trojan Horse” is a technical jargon related to hackers’ cyberpunk universe. “Trojans”, as they’re also called, are served as surface mainstream programs to implant viral illnesses in the information systems of great enterprises. It is those programs that are namely known as “trojan horses” and hide devastating information subprograms, like the acquainted “logical bombs”.





we also may recognize in the layer of punkers' visual items, an heritage from the "assaults" on the *Sex* shops.

Punk is a model still failing due to its inexistent meaningful manifestation in literature, punk assumed the urgency and it reflected in the length of their songs; compressed, later even more so since some of its ingredients got recycled by grunge music marketeers. Cyberpunk means, in its deepest sense, an aftermath, the whole set of effects, a power united by minorities and the rebelled underground layers of society. By understanding the Past and previous social movements, cyberpunk in very bold fashion introduces itself the embodiment of the rhizomatic "non-model", in its expansion, a representation of the deleuzian "rhizome". This is why the cyberpunk movement happened with an enormous intensity, being a new *stratum*, with "new articulation lines" and "new territories". Cyberpunk was pretty much vigorous by then considering that all previous movements performed sinfully by appearing root-like, while cyberpunk was hard to hold due to its *multidimensional* culture, though there were unaltered questions.

For example what Erik Davis mentions in relation to the electronic music culture is, the fact that, in dub music. It is easy to verify *strata* inexistent in reggae. He says that all the root question, of local folklore, fades to gray in order to breed a social "rhizome". This happens in the construction of new acoustic cybernetic spaces in electronic music; throughout he conceives as the "Black Electronic"⁴ (1997), which he states as being musical contexts investing in overlaid rhythms, instead of investing in the binary root sequentially implying a confrontation between "thesis" and "antithesis". In short, cyberpunk belongs to the "synthesis" domain, not just because of its connection to

⁴"Black Electronic" is a term used by Erik Davis in his famous text *Roots and Wires: Polyrythmic Cyberspace and the Black Electronic*, where he says he is "(...) interested in one particular zone of electro-acoustic cyberspace, a zone I'm calling the Black Electronic. I've dubbed the term from the British cultural theorist Paul Gilroy, who uses the phrase "Black Atlantic" to denote the "webbed network" of the African diasporic culture that penetrates the United States, the Caribbean, and, by the end of the twentieth century, the UK. Gilroy considers the Black Atlantic a modernist countercultural space, a space that, for all the claims of black cultural nationalists, is not organized by African roots but by a "rhizomorphic, routed" set of vectors and exchanges: ships, migrations, creoles, phonographs, European miscegenations, ex patriot flights, dreams of repatriation. (...) So I'm using the Black. Electronic to characterize those electro-acoustic cyberspaces that emerge from the historical-cultural context of the Black Atlantic" (1997: §6).





technologies, prosthesis and with synthetic culture products (in the laboratory grown sense), but because cyberpunk in its true acception is a “synthesis” of all that happened in the last centuries, being special to underline fiction and reality as they were presented in 20th century. Cyberpunk is the fascinating figure of hybridty, the being that inhabits chaotic instances in hyperlinks. He is the center of the multifaceted System.

In the appliace of the numerous aesthetics that compose the sometimes called cyberpunk style, fragmentary yet, disfigurements are made to the aesthetic conceptions of cyberpunk authors. There is an unlikeliness as one tries to reconstitute a no longer existing harmony, all there is but a questions’ promiscuity constantly mentioned as if there were “formulas” to follow in order to become a cyberpunk. The after effect is obvious, an inaccurate perspective of the immense imaginary created by the authors, which is sold as an alternative parallel world, a *marketing* object-environment sprinkled with new typically “cyberhype” settings. It has been tried to reduce cyberpunk to one fashion, even if it has been that too, but in a certain way it was a faster fashion and more dispersed than ever before.

Knowing that movies like *Blade Runner* have been rescued by the *Neuro-mantics* aesthetic radical Sci-Fi project, whose topics finally absorbed gigantic content architectures, movies like *Johnny Mnemonic* weaved cyberpunk as a virtual redoubt, native of an apocalyptic scenery, able to make sense if it could be right on such a chronological epoch. There was an outrageous disfigurement; a cyberpunk image has been forged as a possible, real, alternative, model of an absolutely conscious in all its universe multiplicity individual, being these parallel or common to other people. It has been made such image as the image of someone, when, in the other hand, a cyberpunk is someone who casts an image, an image of an attitude non-serially produced. Skilled to read in between the lines, the cyberpunk⁵ is someone that has the perverse look behind the mirrorshades, wearing them day and night, guiding him and

⁵In one of the last published novels by Gibson, *Idoru* (1998), demonstrates this awareness that the cyberpunk was absorbed by capitalism’s cultural appropriation system. Yet because Gibson is intelligent enough to accomplish the “non-model”cyberpunk premise, he complicated such image, feeding on purpose that kind of imaginary, that set of representations. For instance, Laney, one of the *Idoru* characters, is someone that dives into the information networks and manages to identify and retrieve rich information patterns upon the “ocean of bits”, which are considered to be “nodal points”.





seeing through the dark. This archetype is obvious when Molly, one of the main *Neuromancer's* characters, poses with sunglasses on; more recently the over-stylized Neo in *The Matrix* trilogy matches that archetype too.

Being a figure on the highest speed in a certain space or even cyberspace, cyberpunk is targeted with refined sights, he's able to view the most subversive outcomes of a certain object. That's what happened in the literary movement; Gibson and Sterling managed to forecast the recycling that would emerge from all the characters and their respective failed for urban movements, so did a reinterpretation of the Past, conceiving it in a futuristic way, by taking the technical postwar scenario, painting's and movie's surrealism, and the plastic constructivism also as reasons to host a new attitude for the urban youngster man. And entirely adapting him to the new environments, that no longer are *nature-environments*, but *media-environments* instead.

The cyberpunks cultural experience inevitably intercepted reality at given moment when technologists realized they could architect themselves the links constituting experience, making available to everybody the faculty of creation by means of technology, when direct portable media tech were released⁶, as when *walkman*, *discman* and *sampler* first appeared. On the other hand, much more than the simple generalization of cyberpunk's attitude through marketing and technophilia, Sterling e Gibson tried to denounce fragilities of all rebellions until the 80s, by searching the graphic heritage of Kandinsky's and Bauhaus' design, attempting to weave an impossible to reduce fibrosis, for example, to the adaptation of the punk's failed model to the space of media – cyberspace.

The goal was to accuse the existence of a new kind of attitude, whose inspiration derives exactly from the plasticity of artworks from the first half of this century's modernism vanguards and from rebellion behaviors in cities in half of the same century later. Their purpose was not to transfer vulnerability, the mistake, they've built up an aesthetic designed precisely for the flaw, it was visionary because it was meant to fail, in the sense that it was created in its wholeness for the "flaw", what the cyberpunks *hacker* and *cracker* detect, yet also what the break dancer cyberpunk danced to. The *DJ* figure shall be the one responsible by the "connection" of those flaws, avoiding the violence of

⁶Without the annoyance of being transported, as it happened with *ghettoblasters* - giant sound systems carried on over the shoulder very commonly in coast American cities, at that time *hip-hop* appeared full-steam in metropolises.





such breaks, subtle or aggressive, weaving sound meshes of “breakthroughs”, while accomplishing new mediations, which become substitutes of the whole music.

By reminding the origin of *DJing* we may conclude that it is a practice appearing from the attempts of mixing sound of separate vinyl records. It is not much to say that the major proto-Disc-Jockeys didn’t had money to buy new records, hence this hybridity practice legitimacy.

The “movement” of the “Movement” is cyberpunk, in the way of circulation, the one more full of characters refusing to stay still, to be identified. Cyberpunk is a controller, he exhibits the scanning look of the terminator in the need to identify something that seems to hardly evade. What is at stake is an irreducibility to space, the *élan* assumption, which is the *technotravellers’s* case and of all the nomads that compose the cyber punk’s scenography, they move in new *milieus* (physical and social stratified environments), new territories susceptible of being excavated and explored when one travels within them, with electronics and/or drugs, in case there’s still a distinction, because everything is “desire machines” (Deleuze & Guattari) which demand spaces of their own.

By removing *machina ex dea* cyberpunk takes to himself the power of (re)creation, to decide, to start the game – the chaos. He wants to restart history, though it is based in the organized dissension. Cyberpunk shows up in time when all the persisting media stimulation turns our body into a battlefield for technology; this is what means the artist Barbara Kruger by saying “your body is a battleground”. Yet, if we have in mind the theories of Paul Virilio, if the “real battlefield is now the field of perception”, therefore the cyberpunks seeks to “optimize” (Elias: 2006) their “escape velocity” (Dery).

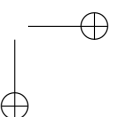
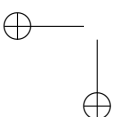




WHY CYBER?

“The old punk rocker in me thinks its better to get paid by a nasty corporation than to give money to a nasty corporation” (Moby [Producer and Musician], 2008).

THE “cyber” part of cyberpunk concerns cybernetics, the science dedicated to study the behavior of information flows in machines and living organisms under the perspective of control. Cybernetics is both a concept and an academic branch created by mathematician Norbert Wiener in 1947, which then served the cyberpunk writers as they tried to explain the possible merge of machine control and the street punk’s attitude. Usually the image we have as a cyberpunk, in fiction, is always addressing to “information highway” travels, to the regular surgical and cosmetic body modification and to the balance between the body-mind poles, therefore defied by drugs and biotechnologies precisely focused on the body correction and improvement. One of the referential points in the cyberpunk imaginary is cybernetics, because it has to do with the relationship between cyberpunks and media, all that is “cyber” – the domain of power technologies. With no other way around, the cyberpunk school added this characteristics to the master-theme of K. Dick’s precursor works, considering that the cyberpunk authors, as contributors to neo-romantic imaginary, have appropriated themselves themes like “confusion of realities”, “man-machine relationship” and “artificial personalities”, making the several layers of the “real” the start engine to a new fiction genre that set up over virtual reality, telecommunications and cosmetic surgery.







AND WHY PUNK?

“(...) nomads are motionless, and the nomadic adventure begins when they seek to stay in the same place by escaping the codes“ (Deleuze, 2004: p.260).

ALL the punk side in cyberpunk resumes itself in the appropriation of the “values” in which the 70’s punk music was based on. This is the other side of the city smart youngster, here empowered by all the power cyberculture inputs on him as the computer culture is instituted, existing inclusively a whole mash of elements youth related, street credit, alienation, no to mention the aggressiveness for the technocracy establishment.

Cyberpunk is the heir of a real which was by then schizoid and fragmented punk’s environment. I am referring to the several labyrinthic layers of reality, which the *multidimensional cyberspaces* were able to re-create by electing the punk cyber as the hero of those new multi-stratified spaces. Basically the innumerable reality levels fit in the reason why cyberpunk was conceived in first place, due to the fact of being left of punk only the bad nostalgia of deception, of being “out of the game”, exactly outside the *in lusio* allowing action. Punk was missing permission to enter the *establishment* scheme – the fabulous world of social and technical representation, that is the full access for the cyberpunk.

As a character, cyberpunk shows up and controls game rules, the icons, thanks entirely to the installed videogame paradigm, as a big consoles and cybernetic wide-screens of Cold War’s control room’s residue. As such, video-





game becomes a code and a practice, because it requires an understanding attitude of a system, whereby there's enemies, paths and awards that match it.

In the case of the *hacker*, who represents eventually one of the most dangerous cyberpunks, it is comprehensive that by dominating some computer languages, he may use them to do whatever he wants to do in the social and technological System, if he sees that's also the arrogant and absolutist positioning of worldwide technocrat ruled-media. The *hacker* is merely the figure of someone who returns back to the System its attitude.

All *hackers* who possess a certain *techno*-scientific power assume a lifestyle based on the computer culture, which is a sub-genre of street culture, only more complex. They're rebels and such rebelliousness does not stay put by fomenting mutiny. When we listen to the music *Start The Riot*, also immensely punk, whose authorship belongs to the *Atari Teenage Riot* music band, we understand that there is something powerful and provocative, in terms of music and attitude, typically cyberpunk, though the degree of rebelliousness and the attempt to sell the rebelled individual breaks apart against the only way possible of being cyberpunk: the attempt to perpetuate the "underground resistance", as defended by *ATR* mentor, Alec Empire.

Cyberpunk dissolves itself when it globalized, massified its purpose, mostly due to the fact that rebellion became a simulated behavior, only fitting in the domain of tribes choosing music as trademark. It was not this way previously when punk began in 1976, date marked by Sex Pistols' first released single. "The Zero Year" of punk was branded by the moment in which punk music style reflected itself in the declaration in the end of a Long Play record, then typically progressive rock fashion. Punk music was energy speed up cluster; it used to start fast and end up unexpectedly, and that still happens nowadays in the *Atari Teenage Riot*'s songs, those cyberpunks that cross *DJs* and *MC* men, using Atari computers wired to samplers and groovebox's to solidify their protest towards society, with all the noise it implies.

Music has always been an excellent mean of communication. What the record companies tried to do was to impose "fascizoid" homogeneity, without content, but the simulation, at the same time they repressed street sound and word. As influencing as the political gear, television or present day's Web, record companies always were a storm establishment, otherwise music bands as *The Buzzcocks* or *The Kids* might not had the need to breakthrough the "assembly line" of record companies to create something personal. The idea



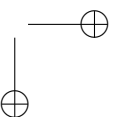
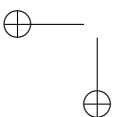


of releasing an artistic production with no intervention from the record labels was then by itself a way to anticipate the present day cyberpunk's premises. I mean, for instance, the famous *Do It Yourself* premise which couples still with the cyberpunk's imaginary and attitude today.

It could not be otherwise, since the cyberpunk writers created an imaginary and have identified in Past several preceding outlines of its own. As a figure, cyberpunk owes its appearance to the need to testify the death of *punk* and an on-going fight against sameness perpetuated. It was not by chance that 70s music bands like the *The Clash*, contemporary of the *Sex Pistols*, have followed another path as they realized punk was depleted in sameness, noise, because in terms of music it missed rhythm, the core element in afro sounds, whose time's paradigm was *dub reggae*. Only when the 80s decade came it was understood that rhythm provided music with life; in the same fashion it would be inseparable from the behavior of living organisms and machines, hence the cybernetics field of research: the study of information flows within biological and/or synthesized organisms. Yet excessively machine-like, rhythm appeared big style in *techno* music, as soon as there was this awareness process, able to point out rhythm as being "the sex of music", opinion shared by Bono Vox, U2's lead singer.

The will to look for rhythm, for new ways of living, concerning stylistic and cultural expressions, took anarchy into oblivion punk's expression. The reason lies in the fact that until *Sex Pistols* the anarchy question was being addressed only within academic contexts, just to be challenged by college boys who used to listen to inert fm rock. Since then the computer began to institute its culture and everything started to interlink; pop culture connects with romantic music, chamber music links with metal, *hip-hop* and electro reveal promiscuities, rock "ciborguizes" itself with electronics and brings to front music new rhythms. An evolution from the "A" of Anarchy, which meant alienation, to the @ of Access to cybernetic information networks, which means integration, happened.

By solidifying hybridity, because it is *multidimensional*, cyberpunks have inaugurated total connectivity among all machines. Contemporary figures like DJ Lee "Scratch" Perry reincarnate anarchy, chaos and articulate "rhizomatically" the technological hiper-ramification of rules. Cyberspace, global telecom and computer music appears the 80s with new instances allowing a reinterpretation of anarchy. Instances as such empower the new punks that em-





power the new punks, despite destroying them, because if the 70s punk was by then “speed up”, how are the cyberpunks since the 80s? Fast of course! They were and still are so fast they drain out in speed, though what saves them is the multicultural instances’ hybridity, the African polyrhythm and the hiper-stratified cyberspaces increase the level of odds and possibilities, which in its turn depends on the amount of interlinked people. Because the cyberpunks dream was total connectivity, there is still space left to appear for many novelties through media cyberspace, therefore the very same space that was explored by the punk movement, neo-romanticism and, respectively, rock music and the telecom industry.

The problem of punk was also the speed that is allowed to be born and die at once, such devotion was later transferred to reggae, the kind of style is able to influence many music bands like *The Clash*. *The Clash* pretty much enjoyed *reggae*’s warm and folklore attitude, its new rhythms, once it brought something punk depleted in its improvised performances. As it ended up mummified pretty fast, punk didn’t introduced innovations at all between the time it showed up and its termination. And then, in London, the new street attitude rebellious was connected to *reggae*, implied in the afro style which reified its futurism over the ashes of punk, providing relevance to the state of latency from where the *reggae* came out, mostly when the British Empire left out Jamaica. In this way, and specially through Bob Marley’s voice, *reggae* was expanding in the “Black Electronic” side a side promiscuously with dub, which had as soberain godfather of analogic *Hi-Fi* systems: the *DJ Lee* “Scratch” Perry; ever since then devoted as being a pre cyberpunk figure. *Reggae* became stand still punk’s rhythm supplement, what provoked as a consequence, for example, that *The Clash* and *The Slits* to look for inspiration in these new afro styles, as musical instruments met new counterparts and innovation, each time more directed to the production of noise and rhythm.

While *Sex Pistols* performed and fierce assault on the monarchy, selling out sentences famous like “God save the queen, she’s not a human being” or “no future”, jamaican *reggae* music groups were creating communities whose folklore was revealing dense and powerful, even cybernetic-like, in the sense that there was a rhythm, its own movement, a life interlinking musicians and *reggae* listeners, and that was *reggae* itself as a cultural object. Existing by then this knowledge thirst in musicians and Jamaica *reggae* music producers, what took them to experiment acoustic tech to enable the creation of *dub*.





Thus exhibiting a cyberpunk attitude if we identify *dub* as a cultural object, designated by the cyberpunk who is attempting to meet its predecessors as in a retroactive manner⁷.

Unlike *reggae*, punk was a type of music marked by the absence of technological knowledge. Present day electronic rock music bands impose themselves before the legacy of naïf and intense *punk*, precisely for that reason, because in these days sound technicians and sound engineers propitiate music bands formation. Even if there's a certain senseless spot in the ashes of punk, it is not what takes out the rebellion legitimacy from it. Though today, such behavior is regularly commercialized as what we referred as pop, like it has happened circa 1970s. Punk became underlined by the non-knowledge of its characters, hence the *Sex Pistols'* nature as noisy and naïf attitude icons.

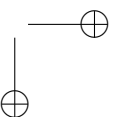
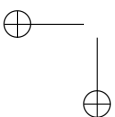
The *Pistols'* lead guitar player defended really such sonority, that electric noise was purposely a provocation to get somebody agonized, it was an aftereffect of not knowing how to play guitar; in the same way Johnny's vocals were an example of his lack of ability to sing correctly; there was no practice at all.

There was this enormous desire to make noise, do return it to the so-called System, considering that radio, for instance, didn't broadcast punk music, so censured it, alleging punk was no music at all and the *Sex Pistols* weren't (good) musicians either. To the establishment, punk by no chance is music made by musicians, it was just a bunch of "kids" doing noisy stuff. And, in a certain perspective, that's exactly what punk was, street music, electrifying noise provoking the most conservative's ears, a street artwork made with the wanderer's guitar⁸. It is due to punk's subversive nature that distortion was applied to the electric guitar, and thus why radios weren't broadcasting punk music. It was seen as a sort of noise and not as any type of music, which in a certain view it was really true.

The punk movement has showed a rebellion condition before the city divisions, angry relative to the space of urban power, such element was inscribed in punk music as a carrier of such aggressiveness against tastelessness. The reason behind it was that punkers wanted to do something different about

⁷This would be pretty cybernetic in its own, thus creating a connection cycle between *dub* music production and the attitude of characters created by the cyberpunk writers.

⁸The one walking through cities while playing his noise, showing off the anguish mediated by the electric music technology's subversive power.





sonics, something shock-appealing and without marketing procedures. Meaningless commercial music, made to be consumed and discarded, very pinky, obliged music bands like *Talking Heads*, with the song *Psycho Killer*, to show such pretension to turn the outlaw into hero (an obvious idea then after the cyberpunk writings). Punk “people” wasn’t feeling heroic-like, neither as a rock star, nor a musician, like the *graffiter* didn’t identify him as being a fine arts painter. The big issue here is that punk musicians simply manifested themselves by electric technology, because punks didn’t know the fact that they weren’t much technical persons, later an item changed by the cyberpunks’ attitudes, precisely upon the discourses of technoscience. Yet there was a need to elect the outlaw because it was all that was left, all have failed.

In its time, punk wasn’t surely a music genre, it shouldn’t, the fact that electric guitar was very easy to attain in the market. This as characterized even more the music of *Talking Heads*, *Sex Pistols*, *David Byrne* and *The Clash* as being street music, punk’s, recorded to some audiences listen to somewhere. This was one of the reasons that took punk to extinction, making it to change its course because punk was turning into a visual fashion with a simulated attitude as a music genre. It was under the barrel of the gun of critics and journalists with expertise in music, so it evolved onto “new territories”, on the other sides, and outlaw zones. As a cultural manifestation punk was doomed to mutation, looking for new streets to blossom, though such expansion ended as punk’s social behavior, in terms of “how to be in places”, was being homogenized, so it became passively an aesthetic enclosure.

The punker generation tried to be a successful generation, but it failed, when, paradoxically, next gen electronic music instruments, like synthesizers, questioned pertinently, so much there was the attempt to create something new, as there was the need to occupy old genre’s chairs, yet underlined with different attitudes and ways of performing. The 70s technological set began to feed fewer imaginaries before New Wave’s technology wonders. Just during the 70s decade Intel’s first microprocessor appeared, alike Xerox’s first Personal Computer and Nolan Bushnell’s first real videogame, as he established Atari in 1972, then the FAX’s and the VCR’s came out too, Microsoft Corporation established in 1975 and in 1976 the world met the first Cray supercomputer. The 70s were propitious years for a technological embryos arena ready to burst out in the next two decades, because it was in the 70s that the pho-



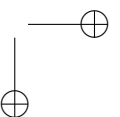
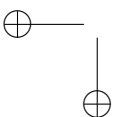


ocopier and the laser printers were introduced, Sony's *swalkman*, interactive video and cellphones.

The technologies which were getting ready to assault on urban man's habits belonged to the domain of speed, but music was extending much on symphonic rock stadium performances. Even though there was punk music, the 70s were a time of segregated speed and distortion of the "real" machines. Famous slogan "too fast to live, too young to die" expressed those who will to escape, such dependence on the liberation and projection speed. The punker figure was tired of the urban prison, he wanted to runaway into a less compressed world. That is how the neo-romantic imaginary started to unfold itself, beginning to assault urban cultures during the 80s decade, because social and technical machines hadn't been shut up, therefore having revealed themselves unable to be disrupted, they had to be powered up. The automobile, the motorcycle, the microcomputer, the cellphone and the Compact Disc, are a few examples of the growing need to speed up machines and their fluxus. It was the new generation's demand, the demonstration of what was left of industrial society: the rapid youth and the incessant machines. Toffler's very idea of the Third Wave's youth "living faster" and "thinking quickly", which sat the world on fire in the 80s with its pop doctrine, was by then something sensed in the 70s when the *rockers* and punkers universe baptized the street life, the wanderer way of life.

In terms of music and behavior, as punk reduces itself to a visual fashion, it provokes the emergence of a new concept of life, music and street culture, stronger, even faster, envisioning not the conformity to radio FM rock's requirements, neither to the imperatives of the sound record companies nor the distributors.

Music was demanding as an adrenaline injection shot, what grunge did to pop rock. It was supposed to "bend reality" from its music patterns, rescuing music from the only editorial control space, take it from unilateral capitalism's wing. What was at stake was the devolution of noise to the System, yet acting right in the starting point, the street stages. Between the end of the 60s decade and the beginning of the 70s decade there wasn't much else left but FM rock, heir of Presley's *rock'n'roll*, though it was much more odd, colored and non critical. On the other hand, progressive rock was considered "fancy", too much detailed to enjoy tripping under fast and cutting sounds, not in the mood to listen to progressive rock's conceptual albums performing live in enormous





theaters like Pink Floyd, featuring 20 minutes songs. There wasn't the time to overspend right then.

A lack of street sound began to get real, no *street rock* was available. Johnny, *Pistols'* lead singer used to say: "and i don't care...". And such was the punk like irreverence, as well as the nonexistence of inspiration sources, they didn't mean to make an imitation of nobody, that's why they didn't make sense, because as a "music machine" they were detached to no other machine – pretty much themselves before a too much conservative social system. At this moment there was only music available for *snoobs*. The need to constitute a different (counter) culture, able to answer to capitalism's items with a decompressions inherent to the wanderer's and unemployed's street music. There is no need to have more music bands like Eagles, Dooby Brothers or any other belonging to corporate rock, because everywhere music was about love and pinkly issues.

From the need to renewal *punk* stands out, music lacked the energy and hence one may understand the effort of *rock'n'roll* rhythms, yet *punk* was about to go to the ridiculous "normality", which is another synonym of "uniformity". *Rock'n'roll* had strong reasons: drugs, love relationships and sex, so it has a growing demand to have something more radical, with or without snobby progressive rock's techniques. Also, rock was getting complicated, garage bands like the *Shadows of Knight*, supporting the "Do It Yourself" paradigm, have settled right in the market, revealing a less adult presence facing the too much articulated *progressive rock's positioning* in charge.

In New York, poetess Patti Smith provoked some discomfort in the core of the considered prepunk level rock, by adopting improvised lyrics, criticizing the new yorkers' possible way of life, though soon other bands bet on the same posture of chaos, like some grunge style bands during the 90s decade. But the resolved improvisation of singing was something that the street MC'ing cyberpunks practiced in relation to the *hip-hoppers* cyberpunks culture. All subcultures of the metropolitan areas desired to flee of the classification and of the labeling procedure; the hybrid space was the only possible exit.

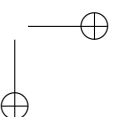
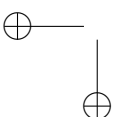




THE RELEVANCY OF CYBERPUNK

“Moreover, the ambiguity and polysemy of the fast-paced, quick-cut music video aesthetic does indeed break traditional Hollywood narrative structure, and we are left with scattered debris for an interpretive framework” (Williams, 2003: p.96).

IT was really astonishing when former-punker technophiles and technologists began to adapt the cyberpunk writing and making it a legitimate doctrine on technology and sociology, taking the present as its main scene, as synthetic fashions and neolooks sank in the very own cyber aesthetics. The true literary movement, initiated by William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, John Shirley, Michael Swanwick, Lewis Shiner, who were linked o Tom Maddox and Walter Jon Williams, ended when its extreme coherence, aside with the hypes vision of the technologies development betrayed it, in the sense that it stopped being strictly fiction. What cyberpunk writers did was that to assume the project of a world they thought no longer to be fiction, and that, soon, it would stopped being just a subculture but to become a global pop culture (then unknown as cyberpunk), in the “mcluhanesque” sense. To the cyberpunks writers, as for Ballard, “We live inside an enormous novel. It is now less and less necessary for the writer to invent the fictional content of his novel. The fiction is already there. The writer’s task is to invent the reality.” (1995: p.3). But besides these arguments, the cyberpunk writers rein-





vented the idea of the “Real”, alleging like K. Dick that we “are living within a huge novel”. It was important to the cyberpunk writers to understand how the “real” reality became prosthesis of itself. Ballard, which related to the New Wave, in *Crash* (1973) has referred that “the small reality nodule that we still have available is located inside our heads”, argument taken by the cyberpunks when they defended the necessity of an outside. This kind of statements were defined as proto-cyberpunk, when in the 80s decade the cyberpunks writers began to name their predecessors. Though let’s not forget that the cyberpunk writers intended to bring forward the issue of representation, which had scared punk, due to its inability to step in the systems of power. This way, the cyberpunk writers take to the extreme the futurology novel form, like Ballard did in *Crash*, in order to prove that the future no longer has the promised fortune. Like Cameron’s terminators, the true fight would not happen neither in the past due to the existence of miraculous gear, nor in the more redeemer of the promised futures, because to the cyberpunk writers all was at stake in the present day. Writers like Ballard who has influenced on *New Wave* also affirming that:

“Has the writer still the moral authority to invent a self-sufficient and self-enclosed world, to preside over his characters like an examiner, knowing all the questions in advance?” (*Idem, Ibidem*; 1996: p.24).

Ballard said that science-fiction no longer was a form of possible redemption of anything, because everything seemed to guarantee that fiction in itself was a process about the excessive representation that characterized Western society based in media and machines. However, the cyberpunk writers decided to conceal ideals adstrict to those of Ballard’s betting on the coherence of the present day, rehearsing it under the novel form, because it was the only way of providing that life existed beyond fiction, which unceasingly contributed to a world of imagery and lies. The cyberpunk wanted something for now, something to be immediate, although they were aware that the world as we know about, the reality which is common to us all, had been modified in a violent manner to allow the adoption fiction models as reality paradigms. We have an example of this theorem when we observe the way the 90s decade decided to market the cyberpunk concept. Although what the cyberpunks writers alleged was the same thing that worried Ballard and most of the writers connected to the New Wave: there was no longer a safe distance, a guarantee



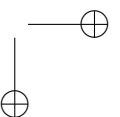
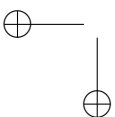


of the existence of the abyss between the Real and the Imaginary. The interrogation of the future, of a premature future, of the “immense continent of the possible”, was a New Wave’s constant, that undoubtedly impassioned the neo-romantic writers.

About the patent representation in the historiography records, on the re-accomplishment of the past carried out by media, about the paganism and the atheism was, in fact, technology that tried to respond to the legitimate inexistence of a creative entity author of everything, the reason is that a demiurgical figure has been eliminated. It so happened that in the absence of a possible redemption, it was the postwar viral technology that impelled us violently towards the “Christ Complex”, re-empowering us as gods, supplying us the illusion of being creative gods, capable of making possible and/or unfeasible all that is known and unknown. The demiurgues have been multiplied. We all can be designers of possible worlds, designing the unlikely of other times. It is exactly here that contemporary cyberpunk figures are called in, as the *hacker*, the rocker, or the *rhacker* who synthesizes the first two, because the technologies conceived today are already made with the purpose of granting their users perverse powers.

Ballard even affirmed that in the classic conception of “reality” was the individual’s outside; society, behavior rules, courtesies and order, while fiction was the field of the personal Real that could lie inside each individual’s mind, serving the social atmosphere as a type of intersection point between the personal Real and the social Real that it is reality in its excellency. So the New Wave conception pointed out precisely the question that all perversions, all fantasies, all the imaginaries, all the dreams would become possible, planned and accomplished by the technology that was in charge since postwar period. Before, that set of personal fiction was intrinsic to the individual, but now it is widespread, it got recycled in a temptress powerful social economy, able to work all affections and in which desire is the new puppet of the most perverse perspectives of late capitalism. From this point on, it has spread the awareness that it was meant to return the cunning and diabolical side of the social system, turning into the object and removing from it the legitimacy to be the subject. It had to be founded a way of fleeing of the constant stimulation and of the progressive control that media developed in society, separating each time more the individual who sank in his own neurotic space, his enclosed Real.

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Although cyberpunk has been figured out to flee of widespread social fiction, as a sort of underground visionary fiction, obviously parallel in relation to mass media society, it happened that the Neuromantics' writing turned out to be absorbed by social reality, as an universe of fictions, representations and imaginaries mightily segregated by marketing.

Cyberpunk was the writing style of the Neuromantics' movement, of the hard science-fiction radicals, of all the ones who supported the aesthetics of Gibson's and Sterling's literature and who enlarged it, so that this could evolve in a world which has gain much more similarity to the one described by the cybernetic punk fictions. That was precisely the problem; not only North-American cultural industries appropriated themselves the genre and the movement's aesthetics, as the movement itself dissolved in reality, in the *live*, ever since Hollywood and Silicon Valley lords recurred to the cyberpunks writers' works. Gibson himself was astonished when he knew that Autodesk enterprise followed his descriptions of cyberspace, because his idea of cyberspace was simply an attempt to conceal the omnipresent and ludic imagery of the media of our time. Cyberspace addressed the information society, towards its relationship with media and computation technologies. It was out of Gibson's mind that (according to his own testimonies), that the MediaLab of MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) also followed his fiction models closely about digital media.

The coherence and the "realism" that the cyberpunk movement was the very great "weapon" of the movement itself, as much as in its construction, as in its dilution. The works of the cyber movement writers' didn't present any utopian future, they were contemporary, and presented in words they used and in the play of realities they built. The non-adoption of an exacerbated distance in relation to the field of possible futures inside science-fiction's archives was a dangerous irregularity, incentive and temptress. Even if the cyberpunks have taken much of the energy of the punk movement, whose questions had been left yet to answer, the great issue that the cyberpunk writers "raised" was that technology was already created to empower its users. They believed perversions were made available to anyone's reach, because the perversion itself was getting inside the technologizing processes.

The technology-embodied perversion was justified the rethinking of the world and the search after new aesthetics, "the most possible" chance, being despised discolored redeeming futures. The technoscience perversion was

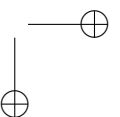
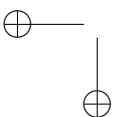




getting structured in its rhizomatic ramifications, in the way how it was willfully mutant, wild. Technology, to the cyberpunk writers, was designed to be used without leaving tracks behind, but human relationships would remain the same way in any period of our time.

Sci-Fi author Tom Maddox, which is related to the literary cyberpunk movement, said in an interview with Darren Wershier-Henry, where William Gibson was also present, that the best way of analyzing the Sci-Fi author's speculative vision, wasn't in turning attention to the "future" he sells, but to the time the author lives in, to understand the author's contemporaneity. Maddox affirms that the Gibson's crystalline writing is a brilliant way to criticize social present, as if he looked at reality through the X-Ray goggles of John Carpenter's *They Live* (1989); stripping exacerbated capitalism and the desire control disguised with subliminal messages of advertising street promotions. But basically, in *Neuromancer* power lies in the lifestyle that Gibson extrapolated in his characters, which use technology just to protect what is left to cyberneticize of their Self.

The aegis of the cyberpunk movement, *Neuromancer*, the boldest, political and solid, which was awarded the Hugo, Nebula and Philip K. Dick Awards, mentions a hypertechnological future, not tomorrow's future, but the hovering present day, the social metropolization carried out by media, completely incrustated in urban citizen's life. The idea that computing technologies expand and become omnipresent themselves, allowing brain connections without no exterior mediations, would just make sense in the context that a network of the information networks existed, then interconnected through the machine of the machines: the computer. Such wiretapping made to the nervous system core would allow information visualization and cybernetic programming, letting us to act on those same data, challenging fastly the real universe's weight by the accessing the Matrix.







ABOUT CYBERSPACE AND THE MATRIX

“We can all be authority”

The Lawnmower Man 2: Jobe's War (Farhad Mann, 1996)

IT is necessary to explain that that cyberspace is what distinguishes cyberpunk from classic punk, which can reconfigure punk's everyday life, in its acoustic, visual, audiovisual or even chemical dimension. According to Bruce Sterling, cyberspace is composed by five levels list below:

1st – INTERNET

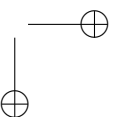
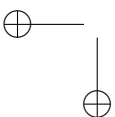
2nd – STREET PORTABLE MEDIA

3rd – MULTIDIMENSIONAL VIRTUAL REALITY

4th – ELECTRONIC MUSIC AND OVERLAPPED ACOUSTIC SPACES

5th – CHEMICAL-DRIVEN ALTERED REALITY

Generally, cyberspace can also be the “place” where or when we are on the “telephone”. In a more *psi* version, cyberspace is the world that grabs our attention. So much it can be the Real I see with background music, like in video clip form, as it can be the images that my eye saw under the disturbing alcoholic states; as well as it can be the *state of art* awe provoked by sophisticated graphic and acoustic technologies, specially when these are mediated or fine-tuned with psychoactive substances, able to send us in a more convincing way to a virtually infinite universe.





What Gibson did, according to his own arguments that stated in some interviews, he was all about coming out with a concept to imply media and our attitude before our time, whose anthropology is inseparable from the media rhythm. He wanted to approach media in an including point of view, in a “VR-way”, for him to face that possible mediatic field as being an “over-space”, a new dimension of communication systems able to cover and see everything in a panoptic manner. As the whole structural development of the media is inseparable of the studies Shannon and Weaver did for Bell Corporation, as well as of the information and cybernetics studies made by Norbert Wiener, Gibson suggested that this whole logic had a space of its own, then called “cyberspace”, thus coining the word.

In this well-known *Neuromancer*'s excerpt he [Gibson] defines it as:

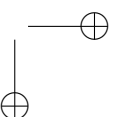
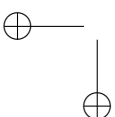
“Cyberspace. A *consensual* hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts. . . A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the non space of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding. . .” (1988b; 1988: p.65).

Its origin is very precise:

“The matrix has its roots in primitive arcade games, (...) in early graphics programs and military experimentation with cranial jacks” (*Idem, Ibidem*: p. 64).

Thus the cyberspace has been conceived the model to explain the communication, control and information space dimension, something Gibson explained in *Neuromancer*, published in 1984⁹. The cyberpunk imaginary owes pretty much to the fact of Gibson having deepened his researches after *Blade Runner*, although it is known that he also had inspired on the colored images of *Heavy Metal*, a well-known comics magazine. The entire conception of a new urban hypertechnological atmosphere was seriously discarding the pink-colored futures, even if Gibson pointed out information networks cyberspace as a possible escape from urban violence. However, the street danger that

⁹Two years after Ridley Scott released his version of a K. Dick novel in the movie *Blade Runner* (1982).





Gibson observed in *Escape From New York* (John Carpenter, 1981), had also given him some clues, therefore it has influenced him how to show the inevitable street danger in *Neuromancer*. After all, streets were the spot where you can pick up to end transactions, in order to consummate the most illicit businesses, who essentially were made in online level inside the Matrix.

Cyberspace was a new borderless dimension, discarding McLuhan's colored "global village". It was about an avant-garde aesthetics, the statement of a new world order, also based on the outlaw zones demanded by technological expansionism. And such technological expansion wasn't much moved away out of the universe of drugs consumption that caused empathy with information society, by then hypnotic in itself as McLuhan defended. The information society reached its last level in the networks' cybernetic space, where everything was at stake in such space intersecting all realities, both interior and external. In the cybernetic space, information allowed establishment of all connections, to which Gibson refers by completing his cyberspace definition, entitling it "an unthinkable complexity". The complexity of cyberspace was about the movement of a digital on-constitution under file morphology contents. The gibsonian cyberspace was a dense information territory, the cybernetics solidified at the Matrix, the net of all the meshes of digital information, the global net of all of the consciousnesses interconnected by wires jacked straight to the brain in surgical manner.

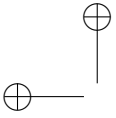
Cyberspace would work out like as a narco-hypnosis, to answer Timothy Leary's statement that modern computers would be the "LSD of the eighties". In an interesting comment on the cyberspace, McKenzie Wark said the following:

"This mythology of cyberspace is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, it provides an alternative to the boredom of suburbia without having to deal with the danger of inner-city living. Every subculture needs a fantasy place to run away from suburban life to, be it the rural fantasy of the *hippies* or the urban fantasy of punk. Cyberspace is a fantasy destination for white, middle class suburbanites who realize that rural life is even more boring than the suburbs and the cities are becoming far too dangerous" (1992: §8).

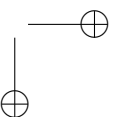
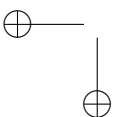
Far. away from the argument that the cyberpunk only needs an escape territory, asylum, the cyberpunk, as a cultural phenomenon, is nomad and, as such, it doesn't stay still in no Cartesian point at all. Truth is this "wave" of

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wanderers meets through networks of mutant tribes, inside and/or outside of the Net. Yet we have to explain that the modem is not a mean to escape from the “Real”, it is simply a technical artifact that allows an exit, the entrance into a neutral territory, that it is part of an enormous grid of telecommunications, in one or another way, to mediate this new punk’s culture. The new punk, in its turn, attacks the system by keeping it to continue, he doesn’t stops it, he magnifies it, turning cyberspace in a prosthesis, in a way to change control into something hard to manage, which is the case of *hacker’s* activities, for instance.





THE CYBERPUNK VISUAL ARTIFACTS

“It was the style that mattered and the style was the same. The Moderns were mercenaries, practical jokers, nihilistic technofetishists. (Gibson, 1988b: Pt2, §17).

As the cyberpunk comes in the sequence of the punk, it is natural that there is a return to the “sexual cult clothing” theme and to the garments of S&M (Sado-Masochism) that transformed feminine lingerie and masculine underwear as outfits. According to history, the cause of punks using those non-standardized clothes was a reaction to the serial clothing. In the same way *techno* music only appears when the possibility of making music based in machines rhythms is assumed, so it it was as machines that Detroit workers were seen. Androids are not just a pre-cyberpunk or cyberpunk Sci-Fi aesthetic project, they are above all a metaphor to think how the corporation sees human beings that could contribute with their effort to the System. Consequently, the punk look, which cyberpunk recycled, is a response to the artificial, uniformed and uncharacteristic aspect that computer-aided fashion assumed in the passage of 70s to the 80s decade.

The fact of being used immense accessories relative to sexual communication, no more as underwear, but above all as outside garments, as outfits, was the proof that the visionary style of hardcore Sci-Fi intended to create what was based on provocation, in shock and sex. The neo-romantic imaginary





bursting exactly with the identification of the remaining punker look, absorbing in short several items of the S&M subculture, of the repressed gay world and the universe of the street outlaw.

The perverse appearance of the classic cyberpunk, with the occult glance thanks to the mirrored lenses of their sunglasses, was consummated in the street prostitute's lingerie, in the boots, in the jacket and in the motard or pilot gloves, and in the chemical aspect of the colored hair. The cyberpunk is over imposed to the punk's generation, it appears from the need, of the desire of all silenced minorities. Therefore his look is a fragmentary tissue of the repressed urban cultures appearance. The cyberpunk visual artifacts are a mixture of the look of several marginals like the prostitute, the outlaw, the vagabond and the rock star, what we could practically find in many assumed *ravers* in the 90s. The whole importance of the Sex shop had in relation to the punk movement, was due to the fact that focus heavily on the exploration of the sex clothing imaginary, hence it was devoted to the "cult of sex clothes" that marked the beginning of the punk style. Open to the public and thanks to the London fashion entrepreneur Malcolm McLaren, "Sex" had been an effect of the concern of inauguration of a new attitude. Attitude, as such, that was based on shock, in the remaining contrast between the notorious leathers, plastics and vinyl. All of the hard plastic artifacts belonged to the visual domain of the hard'n 'sexy clothing, then used as an inspiration for the neo-romantic look of 80s decade. The neo-romantics were the ones who started to mix apparently non-combinatory artifacts, something that had been tried out when in the decade of 70 the fashion punk appeared. Though, unlike the punks, the neo-romantics were not only fascinated by whips nor leathers, they felt obsessed with metals and plastics, with energies, potentialities of science, totally unlike the romantics of two centuries ago. Chemical prostheses, *techno*-surgical prostheses, body modifications through members and organs improvement, fascinated them due to the shocking side, they meant actually something new, "interzonal". Without any casual type, when London saw the "Pirates" collection was also when the famous "Sex" shop was renamed circa 1980 to "World's End". It looked liked they were heading towards chaos and hybridity. It was the decisive step to plan seriously the neo-romantic movement that challenged British and Germanic cities in the last decades of the 20th century.

"Pirates" was the collection of clothing that solidified the neo-romantic





visual aesthetics; it meant an introjection in the heart of the aesthetic renewal of punk, ever since it got patronized by futurism and by primitivism with the name cyberpunk. Actually, “Pirates” was the collection that marked the introduction of British fashion by Vivienne Westwood in the city of Paris. It was by then the second time when the city of Paris was useful as stage for the parades of British fashion. It was the year of 1982, a time to define the Neuromantics writers’ movement and was chosen to release *Blade Runner* – the icon-film of the whole cyber neo-romanticism.

By chance, many of the models that paraded in Paris in the year of 82 presented several fashionable artifacts that were included in the aesthetics later called the cyberpunk style. The torn dirty, spotted, wide clothes, on tattooed bodies, were just the street transvestite’s, the chameleonic wanderer’s, the extreme punk’s outfits, who anointed himself with waxes and phosphorescent paints, showing resinous hair, whose denture looked even or gold chrome-plated. The asymmetry, the big clothes, with hand-covering sleeves, of colored nails, the imperfection of the outfits cut and the exteriorization of lingerie were other characteristics that marked the renewal of the punk aesthetics one decade after the inauguration of “Sex” in King’s Road.

Also related, the aspect of Karl Lagerfeld’s fetishistic creations in the decade of 70, the image of Andrew Eldritch of the Sisters of Mercy or the “synthespian” (Gibson, 1997) models of videogames like Cryo Interactive Entertainment’s *Ubik* (1998) and *Pax Corpus* (1997) are some examples of the visual artifacts that allow cyberpunk style. But beyond the artifacts or the characters created around the neo-romantic (or) cyber imaginary, there are several personalities that corroborate pretty much explicitly the attitude of the cyberpunk with no attachment to delinquency, yet resemble themselves like “outlaws”, as it was the case of the *The Bitmap Brothers*. *The Bitmap Brothers* were one of the largest groups of videogames programmers of the CBM AMIGA era, who were considered by many as the pop star programmers, because when they used to insist on wearing sunglasses in public which are similar to the model that made famous the cyberpunk subculture, to which they said to belong to.

The cyberpunks *The Bitmap Brothers* even created an independent label – *Renegade*, whose goal was to legitimate videogame creators as artists of electronic media, as cultural object producers. Though being cyberpunk was much more of their attitude than merely the visual aesthetics adopted by them.

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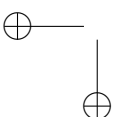
Lets recall what Sterling said in *Mirrorshades – The Cyberpunk Anthology*, because the ostentation of the mirrored sunglasses, used in the day or time, or at night, revealed the perversion of wanting to see without being seen, it symbolized returning the “Real” back to the reality through the mirrored lenses. The mirrorshades allowed to identify without being identified, a sort of protection, also seen as a metaphor to appeal to “rhizomorphic” nomadism of the cyberpunk:

“Mirrored sunglasses have been a Movement totem since the early days of ’82. The reasons for this are not hard to grasp. By hiding the eyes, mirrorshades prevent the forces of normalcy from realizing that one is crazed and possibly dangerous. They are the symbol of the sunstaring visionary, the biker, the rocker, the policeman, and similar outlaws. Mirrorshades preferably in chrome and matte black, the Movement’s totem color appeared in story after story, as a kind of literary badge” (1986b; 1986: p.7).

Besides the sunglasses, its golden mirror effect, perverse and protector, other elements were portrayed as being ingredients of the cyberpunk visual aesthetics. In *Neuromancer*, Case contributed to the cyberpunk style with his collar lifted up, bent in his black leather jacket; Molly exhibited some Nikon mirrored lenses, wearing black leather from high heels boots, showing sometimes a plastic pink gabardine over a white color t-shirt.

Blade Runner, the magic film which helped to trigger the cyberpunk concept, before *Neuromancer*, there was already a ground for *replicant* characters, as sophisticated as nostalgic, and it even provided some models for futuristic casual fashion, as it is easily observed in the scene of the *replicant* stripteaser wearing just a bra underneath a transparent vinyl gabardine. However, the imposition of daring, cyber artifacts, allowed by the New Wave, finally accomplished in certain figurative aspects which are adopted by several pop musicians. We also may recall the case of David Bowie’s make up, the spiked and colored hair, longer at the back of the head, as Nick Kershaw’s haircut, were reinterpretations of punk music band vocalists’ relevant crests, because it represented a returning to man’s primeval and tribal side.

Another examples of pop music personalities that have adopted much the New Wave look as Boy George, Culture Club and A-Ha, they were, let us say, a fashionable application that in certain points coincided with the neopunk ingredients reverse-invented by Sterling, Gibson, Shirley and Shiner’s literary movement; who reverse-interpreted punk’s visual aesthetics and the failed





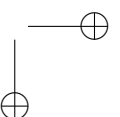
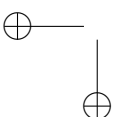
attitude of such a movement. But Vivienne Westwood futuristic and simultaneously *retro* vision was very much more responsible for the appearance of the neo-romantic style. Somewhere she affirmed: “where can new ideas come from if not from the past?”

In *Blade Runner*, the film that adapted to the big screen Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* novel the replicant characters that Deckard pursued, has showed an uttered sophisticated lingerie. Deckard, as all characters in the film, weared clothes to walk in the street, in a way relatively casual, flexible to face the meteorological disturbances, justifying so the usage of gabardine over t-shirt; streetwear model applied by Gibson in *Neuromancer*. The question in the end becomes: where is the New Wave fiction project and reality touch each other, acquiring life on their own? Thus, the punk look was, and it still is, too much mediatized to know how it could evolve towards the cyberpunk status, whether in terms of attitude and lifestyle or just simple image apparatus.

Nevertheless, when Luc Besson finished the film *The Fifth Element*, nobody else could be more appropriate to be held responsible for the wardrobe than Jean-Paul Gaultier, which precisely based on the streetwear to adorn the neo-romantic aspect of the film and all its *kitsch* Sci-Fi scenery. Gaultier was even involved in the design of Billy Idol’s look when the singer managed to adopt an image inspired on cyberpunk, more energetic than his previously usual pop punk image. Besides Gaultier, other fashion industry names as Hillfinger, for instance, have their attention turned against street fashion, but much more into the “street”, because it is where urban habits are made, it is the street that take the responsibility of hosting fashions, which came from it and return to it in the end.

Street fashion is the “cool” fashion *hip-hop* streetwear, because the street is the place of fashions, of their parade, runway. Boy George’s look, from the Culture Club, Duran Duran’s, A-Ha’s, Alphaville’s, Erasure’s and Depeche Mode’s look in the first half of the 80s decade featured all the ingredients of the cyber aesthetics, because it was born on the street. In short, it was an aesthetic of fragments from the youth images of other times, that was parallel to the Neuromantics writers’ project, actually ended up resisting the generality of New Wave, starting from the later perished as an ephemeral fashionable genre.

As for the look of punk, it is known that it was a cocktail of the gay com-





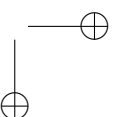
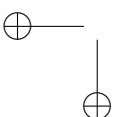
munity's look, mixed with symbols and typical figures of power uniforms as the policeman, the prison guard, the doctor and the psychiatrist, altogether with the look of those alienated and schizoids, as the convict's, the psychiatric asylum lunatic's or the prostitute's outfits. Illustrating this idea, to which John Shirley refers in *City Come A-Walkin* (1991), about the punker and *angst* rocker looks, it "mirrors" the whole typical visual aesthetics from the neo-romanticism of the cyberpunk imaginary:

"Punkers & angst rockers were posted, in a calculated discord, against both walls. The punkers used clothes made by themselves, adorned with chains and jewelries, pendants, nailed buttons, randomly chosen. The similar clothes in style but not same – were a recollection of clothing pieces that didn't match, dissonant, all them reflecting the displeasure for mass manufactured clothing and for the computer designed fashion. The angsters wore uniforms, in their majority – any kind would be good, but the most favorite ones were the prison outfits –, or the tunics of hospital ill. There were some samples of rubber clothing, black leather, chrome-plated halos, transplast sheets incrustations typical of the voguers" (1991: p.73)¹⁰.

This is why the cyberpunk *raver* just recycles and redefines pop culture's by-products or covers himself with less ordinary things, exploring combinations and provocative cultural transvestism. Doctor Marten's shoes, 5010 Levy's trousers models, Scottish kilts are used, avant-garde suits of professional cyclists with their mirrorshades and aerodynamic helmets. There is a new relocation of Venetian masks and carnival gloves, just like transparent vinyl coats or of the simple leather jacket. The whole look is synthetic and elastic, plastic, nylon, denim, leaving its wearers half naked to scandalize (if it still does scandalize anyone). However, it is the mirrorshades that mark the cyberpunk aesthetics.

The new punks see the world with brand new eyes, which are not theirs, they are prosthetics. They do see better and they do love to provoke, yet the generality of the provocation annuls its heterogeneity and shock load, remaining today, due to "total fashion" politics, in the *hippie's* plan, because the currency, mirrorshades or leather no longer seem provocative, they became ordinary icons, it is as if they showed off jeans, sandals or yesterday's naïf braids. It matters now to contradict some social prejudices, because even the

¹⁰N.A.: This translation from the Portuguese edition is mine.





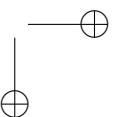
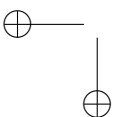
most common cyberpunks as the skater, the in-liner, the *graffiter* or the *hip-hopper* practice a minimum transgression, showed for instance in the usage of baggy pants, the wide pants with pockets, that looked for inspiration exactly in the wanderers of urban ghettos.

The primitive and simultaneously modern look of the cyberpunks is characterized by tattooed, branded bodies, marked by signs and figures that technology cannot store with so much vitality and immanence. The faces decorated by chromatic codes show the needs for a regenerative model, not the Greek mythology, as it has happened always to aristocracy. Instead, an inspiration is searched in primeval cultures, which is the representation of the beginning of history, the beginning of all time. It is also like this that the new neo-romantic punks see the technical and viral development of information: as a new world yet to explore.

The style of the offspring is like Michael Jordan's, Sinead O'Connor's (the so-called "Skinhead O'Connor"). The shaved and/or colored head of individuals that defy the glassy glances in half-nakedness makes extravagance the "rank" within the hypertechnological environment, in which underwear was refined to the exterior and took the place of superficial clothes, carting the seduction role that other times belonged to lingerie's fetish accessories. Now inspiration sources are the Parisian cabaret dancer's wardrobe, the Miami's porn star accessories and the German stripteaser image. The most common accessories resemble a mere pajama, although most usual is halfway to the aspect of the offsprings of underground places in *Metropolis* (1926) directed by Fritz Lang and Auschwitz's concentration camp prisoners look.

Even so, the whole aesthetics nicknamed as cyberpunk was somehow re-projected straight ahead when James Cameron's "terminator" contemporary "style" granted a stronger image to the cyberpunk, then is known to a wider audience since then. It was the year of 1984, year in which *Neuromancer* appeared, when Cameron turned Arnold Schwarzenegger into the most famous man in the planet. The most known image reveals terminator T-800 raising a chrome-plated pistol next to its face and plastic rectangular mirrorshades. The pose was quite irreverent in the sense that the expressionless face the terminator was stucked to its own posture when bending an enormous black leather jacket with the lifted up collar. But the main artifact belongs to the cyberpunk style that used to hide the damaged prosthetic face and not to reveal its lunatic and scanning glance was definitely the shades. One of the most

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outstanding moments of the film is when the terminator goes inside the Tech Noir disco, regarding how it swept the landscape from behind the including and perverse glance of the mirrored lenses, aiming a weapon with laser sight; scene which became a source of “artistic quotation” by several *japanimations* to copy, because it turned out to be an archetype for showing the cyborg as a cyberpunk, its contemporary precedent.

However, without getting far from James Cameron, the *Terminator 2 – Judgment Day* (1992) film also showed and made more solid once and for all what was understood as cyberpunk “style”, featuring both terminators, whether it is the T-800, or the T-1000 model, as strong, monumental figures, both of them hiding machinic and perverse glances from behind the sunglasses. The image of the T-1000, as a motorbike policeman wearing mirrored glasses, in the helicopter or when he accesses the police car database is cyberpunk. Even in the moment of arrival of the T-800 in *T2* is a scenery bar underlined by the presence of motards (all cyberpunks), while the arrival of the T-1000 is signed by the murder of a policeman and the appropriation of his uniform, as if both terminators revealed themselves around the power claimed by the characters demand as holders of both cyber and punk elements.

T2-Judgment Day also focused on the weapons question again, the electric *rock’n’roll* sound, the chaotic urban landscape and in its motorized vehicles, but the cyberpunk figure par excellence in this film is John Connor, the rebellious young man that used to make most of his time riding the motorcycle and playing videogames with money that he “took out” of the System through a laptop wired to credit card. Now, it is relevant to say that the cyberpunk style began its steps in *Blade Runner*, more precisely when actress Daryl Hannah played a feminine punker android, resembling pretty much the image Vivienne Westwood used to have during the punk age.

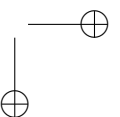
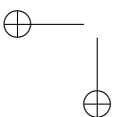


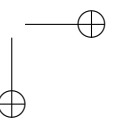
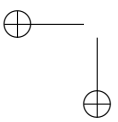
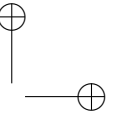
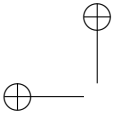


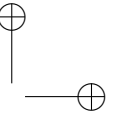
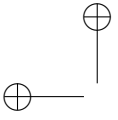
THE CYBERPUNK PREMISES

- a) Information wants to be free.
- b) Access to computers and anything which may teach you something about how the world works should be unlimited and total.
- c) Always yield to the hands-on imperative.
- d) Mistrust authority
- e) Do it yourself
- f) Fight the power
- g) Feedback noise into the system
- h) Surf on the edge

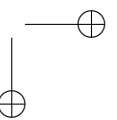
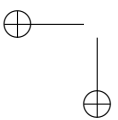
Gareth Branwin in *Cut-and-Paste Manifesto: A "C-Word" Sampler*. (1998)







FAMOUS CYBERPUNK ICONS







BLADE RUNNER: RIDLEY SCOTT'S 1982 MOVIE

“Every civilization and every epoch have had their ends to history”
(Guattari in Deleuze, 2004: p.266).

IN a conversation between Mark Dery and Mike Davis, Dery did say that “Blade Runner, in the final analysis, is about retro-futurism – a nostalgia for obsolete tomorrows” (1996: p.5). And it was truly the typified of the *retro* and primeval side in Scott’s film, which since then it has turned into the aegis of the neo-romantic inspiration, too much concerned with the primitive/modern tension. But *Blade Runner*, as if it was not enough being a movie film that materialized many of K. Dick’s insights, was also based upon the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), featuring too Vangelis – the Greek master of the synthesizer, who supplied an “acoustic cyberspace” as soundtrack for the film, in the 90s, become the icon of cyberpunk movies.

Finished in 1982 by Ridley Scott, starring Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer and Daryl Hannah, *Blade Runner* presented a future in which society was not just addicted in the colored stagings of promotional media, but above all in the nostalgic visions of the past, in its turn seems more and more distant due to the acceleration that matched the present. This future, still a little spleen in relation to the present/future that Gibson had described two years



later in *Neuromancer*, has revealed to us a city of Los Angeles as stage for two factions. The first one would be a force of control in the urban space, the “blade runner” police units, the second one would be the outlaws groups that populated the dangerous streets, for itself a lawless space, a frame of freedom that the system didn’t grant them.

The film puts at stake pertinent questions as the value of human life, which is present in the scene in which the Nexus 6 *replicant* Roy Baty (Rutger Hauer) saves Deckard (Harrison Ford) of falling of the building, exactly when he enjoys his last and precious minutes of life. After all, what the *replicants* wanted was the same man and science was looking for: the prolongation of human existence. Unfortunately, the interest of the *replicants* collided with their creator’s interest, Dr. Tyrell, of Tyrell Corporation. Tyrell had conceived the androids to be explorers; he is the responsible for the creation of the organic brains culture of the Nexus-6 *replicant* generation. He also manages to occupy the figure of God, when he denies the prolongation of life to the *replicant* that blinds him right after no success in obtaining the desired answer to extend his vital time. It looks like creation rebels against its creator, denying paternity, when this one no longer grants freedom to live to the *replicant*, restricting the lifespan. *Replicants* were being misguided to slavery and so, like humans, just wanted to be set free, using what most magical biotechnological engineering had granted to them: the synthetic reason, in the same way Man had been blessed by the existence of his organic reason, the irrational that animals lack of.

The largest violence that Deckard observes along the plot is that he was chosen to unavoidably eliminate androids, in a schizoid manner that is designed to be “more human than humans”. Tyrell Corporation’s famous motto in the film was exactly “making androids more human than humans”.

The entire film plot becomes a war between life and death represented by the two factions: the police and the renegades. And the story seems it was trying to unfold the inevitability of being dragged into a “confusion of realities” [a very K. Dickeyan question], into the chaos of the “Real”, when in a certain moment, Deckard does say it was only possible to be either a police or a victim. Between the non-human “blade runners” side and the human side of the *replicant* characters?

It is also known that the final version [the director’s cut], which has been reviewed before released to public was more extensive than the American



version of 117 minutes. That first version showed a dream Deckard had with an unicorn riding wildly in the mist. In the end of the 117 minutes version we also see the scene in which police chief officer Gaff, an *origami* (folded paper figures) passionate, leaves a paper unicorn *origami* on the floor, before letting Deckard runaway Tyrell's niece, which was a *replicant* after all.

The problem that rose up around *Blade Runner* was that, on one side, if Deckard's chief foresaw his dreams, then the previsibility of Deckard's behavior addressed perfectly the chance of him being potentially *replicant*, because only *replicants* had a certain type of pre-recorded images working as residues of (simulated) experiences they had never had.

Simulated experiences were simply a collection of images that Tyrell Corporation implanted in a mnemonic way in the androids, so that they didn't have existential crisis as they showed up in the world, already grown, without any life experience concerning from the past, hence it obviously has to be simulated, because they were not born. But was not life as lived by ordinary citizen sicked by atmospheric pollution a sort of simulation too? The question is that life in *Blade Runner* is very identified with the nostalgia of the past, the Asian style, the esoteric oriental sound, and the respective pictograms of niponic characters glittering in neons. We observe an entire simulation of the past that appear to reinvent in the present day of the story, hence all atmosphere simultaneously *kitsch* and *film noir* type side a side with high technologies of street surgery boutiques, where organs for humans and humanoids grew up.

In other films, released after *Blade Runner*, like Cameron's *The Terminator* (1984) and Bygelow's *Strange Days* (1995), which also idealized a violent and *high-tech* urban space, putting sophistication and medieval atmosphere side by side, weren't that successful in exploring the neo-romantic imaginary. However, in these films there was also patent the contrast among policemen and marginals, issue that later happened to be explored in a clever and profitable way by the cyberpunk writers, when they showed how both factions managed to access weapons and media.

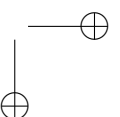
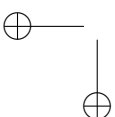
Blade Runner is one of the most outstanding science-fiction films of the last two decades in 20th century (if not the best one), thanks to Ridley Scott, it has been seen a mirror of the prosthetic atmospheres idealized by K. Dick, author who questioned under the novel form how we do conceive our relationship with animal life in a sensitive way, whose absence revealed directly





a track to suspect who might be an android, but in the machine sense; as regardless of affections, something that Cameron's terminators also couldn't conceal. The disrespect before the natural chaos of life and obsession towards "humanity's" programming was some of the pertinent issues explored in this *noir* film style, within a rainy atmosphere, a hyper demographic environment, over-stimulated with advertising promotions. The oriental population circulated mostly in bicycles close to *hovercars* landing anywhere as they drew spirals in the air.¹¹ According to William Gibson, the fact of making the hypertechnologizing process effective is something that doesn't separate from the incessant exploration of the planet's resources, in relation to which we now are the aliens, the foreigners, because the planet is unrecognizable. It is structured what postmodernism calls posthuma. And it is precisely under the perspective of posthumanity concept where cyberpunk finds its ambience, scenery that Scott achieved terrificly in *Blade Runner*, opening doors to the exploration of K. Dick's vast work.

¹¹This is why the cyberpunk writers were fascinated by the hybrid space, because the clear positioning in relation to the animal/machine interface revealed a schizoid behavior, they meant an unforeseen certainty, which they despised by revealing an enormous passion for cyborguization. They were interested in the man/machine and in real/virtual intersection points.





NEUROMANCER: WILLIAM GIBSON'S 1984 NOVEL

“If there is a sense of traditional, sustained narrative form, it has become in music video and cyberpunk ultra-condensed and intensified” (Slusser in Williams, 2003: p.94)

IN *The Neuromantics*, a famous article that Norman Spinrad wrote for an American magazine, later republished in 1986, he explained why William Gibson's romance was entitled *Neuromancer*:

- a) The “neuro” prefix is linked to the idea that the nervous system is an exteriorization of the human body, a theme studied and delegated to us by Marshall McLuhan.
- b) An analogy exists to the term “necromancer”, in its turn related with “the space of the dead”, expression also mentioned in the novel. There is a definitive allusion to the “necro space”, of what is absence of life, in association with simulated and artificial life forms. In the context of the Gibson's novel, in some parts of it exist the main cybernetic personality refers to be the dead and its own ground, yet just in the perspective that bodies and personalities representations within cyberspace are nothing





but representations. That is to say images without real bodies, some-
things commonly nicknamed as “ghosts”, due to the fact of not existing
a body as a reference whose bounds shape an existent energy.

- c) *Neuromancer* also resembles “new romancer”, an advertisement to the
writing style the cyberpunks writers’ school cemented; suggests the
“Neo-romantics” to be the new novelists, the great visionaries, whose
main work was for sure *Neuromancer*.
- d) Finally, the term “neuromancer” directly addresses the term “neo-roman-
tic”, concerning the imaginary sketched up by several artists in response
to their contemporary metropolitan environments. Such imaginary is
presented in a way Gibson idealized *multidimensional cyberspaces* and
the vast digital landscapes. However, besides decoding the meaning of
the term “Neuromancer”, it is also interesting to point out that *Neuro-
mancer* is a virtual soil where the cyberspace cowboy is, thus making
“The Matrix” his own landscape, worth to become a new exploration
territory. “The Matrix”, which is the field of expertise in digital infor-
mation, it is not separable of the obscure businesses, the illegalities and
the seductive danger of digitally projecting consciousness onto the cy-
bernetic space. It is a fact that the cybernetic space is the theater of
protagonism in Gibson’s novel – cyberspace is understood as a global
network of computer used by billions of legitimate operators. These
operators project their awareness onto that space, losing completely the
notion of space, time, personality and body. The most seductive side
of the cyberspace is the virtual architecture representative of the high-
est icons of multinational enterprises, once its what would allow the
experience of “diving” into the information ocean. Due to its infinite
complexity, it would house the most curious and intelligent cybernetic
space predators. They demanded an intense, strong, connection – a deep
“reterritorialization” (Deleuze & Guattari), a new “take off of the real”,
thanks to the size and infiniteness manifest in the powerful labyrinthic
structures of the virtually real cyberspace.

By penetrating the rich windows of data of the “The Matrix”, Case, the
hacker of Neuromancer, had only one goal: to retrieve information from cy-
berspace and bring it outside to the streets underworld, the true urban jungle





where predators are very “real”. The space of the street was the space of alienation of the valuable information, of the wanderer, the black market entrepreneur; the (outside) space was a mediatic landscape full of meta-events impregnated by the invasive promotional logistics of Japanese corporations.

Neuromancer absorbed a lot of *Blade Runner*'s atmosphere, but Virtual Reality, Cyberspace and “The Matrix” made its universe a remarkable self-legitimated work authorizing itself to continue K. Dick's precyberpunk imaginary, considering all the responsibility implied into such task. The problem is that the protagonist of *Neuromancer* is not Case, but Wintermute, the Artificial Intelligence that begins to be self-aware and starts dominating the total cyberspace, being every place where is a connection line to “The Matrix”, as in a Christic manner. Gibson says that Wintermute, after all, was who acted upon the external world, that *Neuromancer* was the cybernetic immortal personality of “The Matrix”, whose brilliant moment of affirmation is remarked by these excerpts:

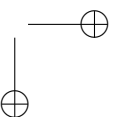
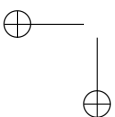
“I'm not Wintermute now.”

“So what are you.” He drank from the flask, feeling nothing.

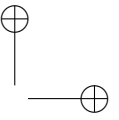
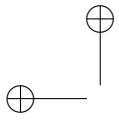
“I'm the matrix, Case.”

Case laughed. “Where's that get you?”

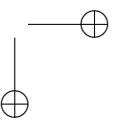
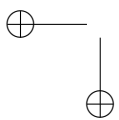
“Nowhere. Everywhere. I'm the sum total of the works, the whole show” (1988b;1988, p.297).







OTHER CYBERPUNK FICTION







COMICS

AKIRA

Akira, Katsuhiro Otomo's (1987) famous hard science-fiction comic, whose *anime* version is directly tuned with cyberpunk fiction, interconnecting high technology to crime and to street violence, has as main scenery its Neo-Tokyo in the year of 2019. The era of *Akira*, the homonymous main character, is a chaotic kingdom and violently hyper technological, marked by a corrosive speed that affects the urban stage with its flows, which is in reconstruction after the Third World War. Based in some points that the Sci-Fi writer Theodore Sturgeon explored in the novel "More Human Than Human", as well as inspired in *Blade Runner* and even in several works of K. Dick, *Akira* is an icon in the cyberpunk ambience, an astonishing story created to exercise the cyberpunk universe, which abused positively the best animation techniques available in the "japanimation" industry.

The story reveals architecture, communication highways and portable technologies as background for the outlaw-hero of Tokyo city, renewed then in 2019. The protagonists are two orphan young men that belong to a motards gang. By existing a strong one and a weak one, it is the weak one who claims *Akira*. Unfortunately *Akira* is held underground in a seclusion state in a military hidden facility underneath the Olympic State in "absolute zero condition". *Akira* is basically a super-being claimed by Tetsuo – the weakest of the motards duo –, having his own psychological powers. Besides the story perspective, the cyberpunk universe of *Akira* is generally an amalgam of persecutions and rebelliousness typical of a high-tech youth that fights the model of apocalypse with an irreverent attitude.

Akira is the protagonist, and he embodies an universe too of an urban





culture of motards gangs, that can't conceal unsolvable sociability problems, adopting determinedly the image of a fast adolescence, unable to stay put in the space of the gigantic structures of corporate skyscrapers. Even the way these motards see the world is based in the model of "no hope" and the model of "no future" – slogans we already knew were being "museified" in the epicenter of punk thought. Acting as legitimacy to disorder, the nuclear holocaust was the situation when it all began. Now it remains as an image after World War Three disintegrated the old Tokyo, now called Neo-Tokyo, populated by immense workers that insist on the reconstruction of public spaces. From the ashes and of the consensual street anarchy, provoked by the holocaust increases a social maelstrom (giant whirlpool) involving multinational and illegal street enterprises – such *hacker* inhabitants of urban ruins. Otomo's vision exhibits an urban nightmare, a fantastic insight that implies the confluence of street anarchy and the rules of Yakuza's organized crime in a niponic metropolitan society, where more real than the immersive cyberspaces, true cyborgs struggle for their spaces and weapons, in an austere and tribal fashion.

DARK MINDS

Pat Lee's *Dark Minds* (1998) comic is a new cyberpunkstyle *manga* which happens to be more relying on retouched 2D Adobe Photoshop graphics. The film noir style of *Dark Minds* communicates directly with Shirow's *Ghost In The Shell*. A very big megalopolis is the place where all action occurs. From the *A Deadly Paradox* (Vol.1, Chapter #1) to the *Opposing Forces* (Vol.1, Chapter#6), *Dark Minds* is always a dark world, a shadowy expressionist zone where crimes happen and neons glitter. This gibsonian cyberpunk comic novel is very sharp in design; the glowing lights emerging from the dark spots are its signature. It's like reading something old in a new stage set. Adobe Photoshop lights overwhelm all the footage of this Sci-Fi *manga* where two cops are investigating what makes a series of crimes to happen so violently in Macropolis. Revealing an obsession with machines, vehicles and architecture, *Dark Minds* is the story of a dark, dangerous mind who manages to perform outrageous killings. All there is what the special investigators try to do, against all odds, is to bring the perpetrator to justice in this new shining city. Set in

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the not-so-distant future of the city of Macropolis, DarkMinds feature agents Tedashi Nagawa and Akane Nakiko as they shoot back adversaries who try to stop their investigation to be conclusive. The police obsession is to catch the dangerous Paradox Killer at once, but despite the weaponry and all the means, evil is always dark, no matter what technology one has at his disposal.

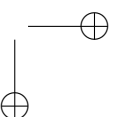
GHOST IN THE SHELL

*Ghost In The Shell*¹² is a Masamune Shirow's (1997) fiction that integrates, not only the neo-romantic universe, cyberpunk, that today we find accomplished, but above all in the postcyberpunk context, where cyborgs are the dominant figures. After the cyberpunk universe reached its goal, in other words, when the cyberpunks writers' theories became presents, but however visionary, the subsequent progression of cyberpunk, such pure rebellious figure of cybernetics and 20th century media addressed straight the cyborguization, the figure of the neo-romantic cyborg.

There was someone who said in the cyberhype time that "the cyberpunks already dreamed of cyborgs", now this statement points out the cyborg as the latest stage of cybernetics under which cyberpunk is indirect or directly. When I recollect Cameron's imaginary of the terminator, what I have in mind how the character shows of his rectangular mirror shades, the way he deals with machines and weaponries, circulating in the dark streets, always with a wanderer aspect, a perverse look, then I conclude that cyberpunk was destined to extinction.

The extinction I refer to has nothing to do with dematerialization of the physical bodies, as in situation of being digitized into Virtual Reality, as mentioned by Gibson, but mostly the metamorphosis towards something definitively cybernetic, the purpose of the neo-romantic cyberpunk writers. The figure of the terminator is useful to explain just how high technology inherent to the cyborg had to camouflage as being cyberpunk, providing cloaked undetectable prothetic substance of the cybernetic organism. For this case

¹²First being released was the comic version, published by Kodansha International, whose several fascicles were rearranged later by Dark Horse Comics to become one single book. The video motion picture dates from 1995, directed by Mamoru Oshi, available in Kodansha Ltd./Bandai Visual Co./Manga Video Entertainment. The last feature was the videogame for Sony Playstation, which was released in 1998, by SCEJ.





we have *The Terminator's* (1984) sequence in which the terminator begins to wear sunglasses after eliminating the culture skin that made him resemble an ordinary, weak human. The cyborg was the next step of following evolution. The cyberpunks would absorb for sure, but the aspect of punk, of the traveller, was always more acceptable and discreet; in short, perverse.

What the cyberpunk *milieu* of *Ghost In The Shell* demonstrated, in a shocking manner from some aspects, was the deconstruction made to the contemporary cyberpunk figure, hence dis closing the 90s as a time of permission to the cyborguization, much more than the decade of the 80s, when the cyberpunk writers sketched the most ambitious visions of technology in relation to urban anthropology. According to the fact of *Ghost In The Shell* revealing a postcyberpunk universe, perhaps it is concerned with the way Shirow managed to theorize about the “entity”, the “body” and the “personality”, which were the remaining elements of the lunatic Artificial Intelligence integrated in the context of the very first cyberpunks. As long as Shirow explains how the human being works in terms of neural networks, approaching the issues of memory, the body cyborguization, we see inexorably the postcyberpunk, not due to the enlargement of the neo-romantic universe, but because *Ghost In The Shell* explains how the kingdom of the information, of cybernetics and corporations and/or street technology, manages to translate human ambition relative to incarnation and reincarnation, not mis regarding re-production and birth but, more than anything, the desire to live.

Ghost In The Shell ends when the Artificial Intelligence lies on a hill staring at the urban horizon, with a curious attitude and resembles pretty much the painting that symbolizes most of the German romanticism; I am referring to Caspar David Friedrich's famous painting which portrays an adventurer with his back turned to us facing the horizon and looking forward to contemplate the fogged nature. In *Ghost In The Shell*, Shirow provides the energy of Caspar David's painting to the Artificial Intelligence embodying the cyborg Major Motoko Kusanagi, when she is contemplating the twilight. However, to understand why it is that Kusanagi, the cyborg police woman, goes to the edge of the hill to stare at the twilight, it is necessary to render here a synopsis of the script that Shirow so well designed and more than that illustrated.

In the first place, the cyberpunk universe of *Ghost In The Shell*, in spite of being devoted to the cyborg mythology, like the title indicates, it is relative to something phantasmal that links to something physical, the title of



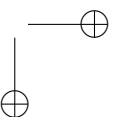
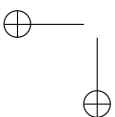


the work has to do the fact of a “spirit” embodying a prosthetic body; such spirit is a fantastic AI. In agreement with Shirow’s argument, cities become megalopolises/city-states, in a time when the interference of technologies is inseparable of urban man’s anthropology, constantly surrounded by action and danger. Information update would be a *modus vivendi*, in other words, a way of life, although it is a reaction of the urban human being to the information overload produced by the megalopolis, from itself to itself. The aftermath of such information overload makes AIs capable of selecting information, hence the omnipresence and omnividence of media.

Therefore, artificial intelligences become part of the technological and urban scenery, side by side to be with the cyborguization of the most daring and ambitious bodies, but it is in fact AI’s which are the theme of Shirow, in the same way *Neuromancer’s* protagonist is not Case but Wintermute. Shirow’s story tells that in a hyper controlled city, where nobody was able to penetrate the security data systems, becomes useful and has an intelligent cybernetic entity, capable of analyzing and retrieving information (a cyberpunk entity), without requiring any body to be caught by the police forces. The will to penetrate the city’s safety zone is to legitimate the construction of an entity only existing inside cyberspace. And, as such, if the cyberpunks of other times were undoubtedly the *hackers*, this “Ghost”¹³, called “The Puppet Master”, completely dematerialized, and tried to materialize itself. In the beginning, it manipulates cyborgs and androids to get unleash a lunatic conspiracy that allows it to “incarnate”.

The central argument is the incarnation of “The Puppet Master” ghost in the Kusanagi’s body, the perfect cyborg woman desired by the *ghost-hacker*. This AI intends to eliminate the immensity of its living, the eternity, wanted to be mortal, to reproduce itself, but to do so she needed a body, but of a body of the same rank. The cyborg Kusanagi is an elite police officer created for special high risk interventions; she is super sensual and full of weaponry for fight back crime. And by the way she looks similar to *Neuromancer’s* Molly, but her ability to hack networks and visualize information in 3D, provided her with skills that awakened “The Puppet Master” AI, which intended to embody

¹³Ghost corresponds to “phantom” and it is the term Shirow uses to identify the bodiless entities and the cybernetic spectrum, because they are pure representations, simulations unprovided with referent, as the Artificial Intelligences.



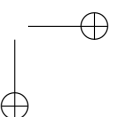


itself in Kusanagi's body, to merge both personalities, both programs, so to develop an omnipotent and omnipresent entity, almost in the Christic manner.

This idea of the intelligent artificial entity, when identified with the dimension of the Internet, assumes a philoreligious behavior, reflecting just the desire of existence of a mega-entity, whether it is the Titans myths, God or NASA's satellites and its pervasive telematics. In *Neuromancer*, Wintermute reaches the transcendent dimension of the cyberspace, in the film *The Lawnmower Man* (Brett Leonard, 1992), Jobe dies trying to be eternal in its digital existence, but the fusion of the Kusanagi's cyborg body and the cybernetic personality of the AI "The Puppet Master", in *Ghost In The Shell*, is, so far, the most scary vision of the human being as a vast individual network.

In one of the final moments, "The Puppet Master" talk with Kusanagi, before the so much desired fusion between mind-bodies and body-minds, when we attend to an explanation of how human being can mean mortality, but also life continuation through the genetic information contained in DNA. It is questionable how we may solve the catastrophe of the sameness and "The Puppet Master" even underlines replication and multi-function as possible exits to the continuation of both natural and cybernetic universes.

After all, "the cyberpunks already dream of cyborgs".





MOVIES

DARK ANGEL

Two seasons of the *Dark Angel* (James Cameron & Charles H. Eglee, 2000) TV series were not enough to present the whole world of Max Guevara, character played by actress Jessica Alba. Set in Seattle, Washington, in 2019, *Dark Angel's* vixen was entitled, according to James Cameron, “the shape of things to come”. Tells the story of this cyberpunk science-fiction universe that somehow everyday life began to run backwards in time in terms of quality of life. *Dark Angel* is a TV series about high-tech and low-life, in the same trend that James Cameron envisioned the dystopian Kathryn Bygelow’s *Strange Days* universe. Within the cyberpunk aesthetic of leather suits, smart weaponry and street cred, *Dark Angel's* main female character is as strong as *Aliens'* (1986) Ripley or *The Terminator's* (1984) Sarah Connor, both figured by James Cameron himself.

The TV show title is very obvious, because Max Guevara, *Dark Angel's* protagonist is getting in action most of the time during the night. Moreover, her angel face does not match her skills or stunts either. Reprimitivization of our culture in a very McLuhanesque sense is all one sees happening in *Dark Angel*, a world which is not very far from our time, where everyday life, urban spaces and technology are in conflict with politics and migration, technology-driven societies and massive poverty; not to mention that cities, the corporate extensions of our physical organs:

“(…) are withering and being translated along with all other such extensions into information systems, as television and the jet – by compressing time and space – make all the world one village and destroy the old city-country dichotomy. New York, Chicago, Los Angeles – all will disappear





like the dinosaur. The automobile, too, will soon be as obsolete as the cities it is currently strangling (...)"(McLuhan, 1969-1994).

Much like McLuhan "predicted" the urban tissue is about to get wrecked up, due to its oil-based economy and car-dependent urbanism, *Dark Angel* features a Sci-Fi world that seems to become oddly possible to be true. We hope not, of course, yet it seems very realistic, not only revealing the impact of technology but how people's lives would be severely affected by terrorist with technology-enhanced threats. The plot says that, since terrorists detonate an electromagnetic pulse weapon over the U.S. airspace, the entire North-American network communication capabilities got wrecked. Everybody's challenge afterwards the pulse is to rely on team work, smart resource management and information trading.

Max escapes in 2009 from a secret government facility lab codenamed Manticore, where genetic engineered soldiers were being designed, raised, trained and taught by a military program. Their purpose was to be deployed on the battlefield and use their skills to outgun any adversary in combat, being the casualties level decreased due to their enhanced bodies. Short armies would be sent to any theatre of war disregarding an outcome of large armies and casualties. Manticore's problem is that as the genetic engineered soldiers escape the military facility, then the goal becomes to hunt them down and bring them back to Manticore. Like Max, many others have escaped and still are at large.

At the time of the getaway Max, a "transgenic" female soldier, is nine years old, wears a boy's military haircut and the serial number 332960073452 barcode tattooed on the back of her neck. Cyberpunk aesthetics are omnipresent everywhere in this TV series, from control technology to rebel video-interventions, biotechnology corporations and military genetic engineering, street punk fashion and pop culture items, cyberculture hardware and criminal syndicates. Deep in the show narrative engine there is always a mcluhanesque vision frame, within which the story unfolds, considering that "if we understand the revolutionary transformations caused by new media, we can anticipate and control them; but if we continue in our self-induced subliminal trance, we will be their slaves" (*Idem, Ibidem*). In this trend *Dark Angel's* plot consists in Max, Logan and their friends attempt to anticipate and control what corporations took from people. Garbage, mayhem, social chaos and pervasive





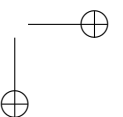
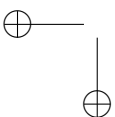
surveillance machines always scanning the streets in a *Total Recall*-style, are very common in many episodes.

Against corporate power and militarized public space, Max struggles with her friends to find out the whereabouts of her brothers and sisters, only to realize that they are working now for Manticore, tracking down those whose fled the scene a decade ago. The U.S. city scenario now resembles Iraq, a war zone that tries to behave like a normal place, where immigrants, salesmen and prostitution invade the streets and no one has the basic thing to live in a proper manner. On one side, we have poor scavengers looking for food and money – on the streets – and on another side, we have rich people living in skyscrapers (like Max’s best friend, Logan Cale, a young reporter that produces the “Eyes Only Freedom Streaming” pirate broadcast).

Like everyone that escaped Manticore’s military precinct, the other X-5s, Max tries to balance her life by searching her original mates and working as a courier in a mail delivery company. As any 20th century paperboy, Max and her co-workers deliver on-demand packages and letters physically, since every electronic medium that now exists is post-pulse; the only thing working well is real mail delivery by bicycle, not by networks. Hence, the real cyberspace became a deluxe commodity for a high-brow class that does not face the problems and needs of street-level scavenging gangs.

Borrowing inspiration from *Blade Runner*, *Mad Max* and sounding somehow very similar to *Terminator 3: Rise of The Machines*, *Dark Angel*’s plot is blossoming with cyberpunk elements so viewers won’t think it is odd to keep on the same frame street gangs and gorgeous skylines. Even the parts shot at night or in desert avenues resemble Japanese *anime* movie sequences; this makes *Dark Angel* a new genre of science-fiction with an imaginary based on Asian iconography as well, though it is shown in a very subtle way. All the times we see Max’s favorite vehicle we recall the superbikes of outlaws in Katsuhiro Otomo’s *Akira* – also set in a post-nuclear future – and one of the most notorious stunts performed by Max is the night sky diving from the top of a skyscraper, thus making us remember Major Motoko Kusanagi – of Mamoru Oshii’s *Ghost In The Shell* – jumping of a building in her *termo-optical* camouflage suit.

Other relevant cyberpunk elements in *Dark Angel* are for instance the prosthetics. Logan’s physical limitations required the use of a wheelchair, but by the end of the first episode of season one, he is already walking, thanks to





a groundbreaking black rubber-like exoskeleton when he is not really driving his SUV. And besides Logan, the cyberpunk reporter that hacks the TV broadcasts with pirate streams, there is another helpful resistance character that is able to speak only through the mediation of a computerized voice recognition system. Not only in terms of visuals, but in terms of story, *Dark Angel* is full of pure Sci-Fi DNA, like the hoverdrones, autonomous robotic flying machines that scan citizens all the time – like the small fan-based drones that search and destroy John Connor in *Terminator 3: Rise of The Machines*. These matte-black drones hover everybody's heads in the streets in a very suspicious way, as if they were patrolling the streets flashing their red and blue lights; but they can be programmed for direct assassination as long as they're targeted to find a face based in photo recognition technology.

We may say the imaginary of *Dark Angel* looks like an updated version of *Strange Days*, yet not as fancy as *Johnny Mnemonic's*. Gangs and corporations show up similar behaviors, except some are one side of the law, and others aren't. The strange part is how in a post-nuclear blast, urban world teenagers and adults still manage to look like fashionable "punk".

ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK

The great subject of *Escape From New York* (John Carpenter, 1981), as well as its pertinence for the cyberpunk genre here at stake, is its imaginary, like *Blade Runner* and *Heavy Metal* magazine, which contributed to William Gibson to create a cutting-edge universe in *Neuromancer*. However, all the conception of the cybernetic city we do have, as space of control, enclosed space, is a matter Carpenter explored a little with the metaphor of the city inside walls, but it doesn't have anything explicitly "cyber". It happened that Gibson was interested in the theme of the street delinquency, which many other writers explored too, though Carpenter's footage had an interesting mediation.

This film of Carpenter also questioned how the outlaw individual can be necessary to an oppressive social system that repels and arrests him. After all only the marginal knows the "street law"; the street doesn't match the noble saloons nor it identifies itself with academies, it addresses the domain of action, something outlaws easily understand and perpetuate.





GHOST IN THE SHELL 2: INNOCENCE

MasamuneShirow's *Ghost In The Shell* is the Asian landmark of cyberpunk manga comics. No one has doubts about that, but the cyberpunk anime of *Ghost In The Shell* (1996), altogether with *Akira*, both award winning titles, are one of the most futuristic and high-artistic quality animation films ever made. In *Ghost In The Shell 2: Innocence* (Mamoru Oshii, 2004) a groundbreaking original soundtrack completes the atmosphere and mood that Oshii wanted to provide to the audience. Fascinated by domestic spaces, niponic culture's masks and quietness, as well as by long-eared dogs, Oshii directs in *Ghost In The Shell 2: Innocence* another anime landmark to continue the path which can be opened by the previous *Ghost In The Shell* animated film and the TV anime series.

It's the year 2032 in *Ghost In The Shell 2: Innocence* and cyborg crime fighters Batou and Togusa are finding new mayhem in the neon world of machines and caotic cities. The main characters assigned by the counter-terrorist task force Sector 9 must hunt a new army of "Gynoids", a replicant generation of human females designed to work as prostitutes. Unlike its action-driven predecessor, *Ghost In The Shell 2: Innocence* is marked by philosophical questions in a K. Dickean manner and its images illustrate perfectly the maze-like world of cyborgs and sprawls, militarized public spaces and cyborged humans. Notions of love, affection and attachment are at stake in how *Ghost In The Shell 2: Innocence* focus on the increasingly unnatural world. One of the best parts of the film is that in which Batou finds himself in an assembly line for Gynoids and questions the very notion of mankind in such a place, where images, body and soul can look pretty confusing. Another moment of the film, one that Oshii too prefers, underlines quietness, as the soundtrack scores peaks high in its chorus, and the helicopter flies-by a gothic cathedral with clouds of birds around it and a folk ritual running on the streets.

JOHNNY MNEMONIC

Johnny Mnemonic (Robert Longo, 1985) features amazing virtual reality-footage every time the character played by Keanu Reeves accesses cyberspace. It is the first movie to truly adapt Gibson's "cyberspace" and "the Matrix" de-

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scriptions audiovisually. It looks like a 90s version of the 80s *Neuromancer*. Nevertheless this film worked out very badly, more like an excuse to classify the unclassifying cyberpunk considering that it has shown cyberspace in a very consistent way, respecting its imaginary. The problem is that this movie, directed by a fine art artist, soon one became seen suppressed without the energetic load and all the free sensation that the voluptuous cyberspaces contained.

The movie looks like a frustrated attempt, even before the videogame footage of its time, to gather elements from the cyberpunk aesthetics, but it fails right into the very beginning as it turns the cyberpunk figure in a sort of “fugitive of the future” issue. This “fugitive of the future” condition, of a cyber outlaw behavior allowed Keanu Reeves to play right “Johnny” (which actually is a very similar to Case’s face as designed by Tom de Haven & Bruce Jensen (1989) in the *Neuromancer’s* comic version). The hero in a suit with an Asian style face and *yuppie* post punk haircut, in *Johnny Mnemonic*, has a pop face, its true, but Robert Longo’s film manages to establish several dialogues with *Neuromancer*. At least visually *Johnny Mnemonic* made easy to recognize how it would look like to experience an interaction with cyberspace, in all its pop culture and “fast fashion” assumption. The film was relevant in the sense that in the absence of a real good official *Neuromancer* film version, *Johnny Mnemonic* had the chance to show inherent perversion, the cyberpunk figures and the opportunity to contemplate Gibson’s insights with new digital special effects.

The problem in *Johnny Mnemonic* is that besides the notoriously chaotic and apocalyptic set which was to be expected, due to the spreading nervous illness on people who were exposed to media electromagnetism, all the remaining elements no longer seem futuristic. The reason is that they already exist in real life, in another perspective it is positive the “presentification” of the visionary literary project. The film fails in the sense that nothing in it looks really a portrait of an avant-garde future if we recall that brain implants, memory augmentation and bionics are common to contemporary (in the 90s!) cyberpunk researchers. These researchers work in the manipulation of the human body with chemical (*ecstasy* for example) and technical prosthetics (like auditive, contact lenses or plastic surgeries, for instance).

Even if *Johnny Mnemonic* can’t unfold Gibson’s imaginary in its plentitude, at least it portrayed the cybermaniac literary figure, shaping it in a crit-





icizing fashion though. It's the kind of film that introduces the audience to a hypertechnological and dangerous environment, with less profiscience the street dangerous question, the street culture subject, which, in its turn, its where Gibson's work emancipates itself more from the imaginary relative to computer footage. We know the 80s were a stage for the great perspectives of Silicon Valley, IBM, Intel and the remaining powerful IT *lobbys* of the military-industrial complex, now making strong the military-multimedia complex, considering *Virtual Reality* and *cyberspace*. But the field of prosthetics was the most evolving one in the "real". Contemporary street cyberpunk is much more sophisticated than "The Mirrorshade Group" cyberpunk, though in other aspects it does not incarnate so directly to the visual aesthetic, what is in itself something typically in the cyberpunk way of life, in the sense that it is not an easy classifying figure.

Also it is known that, no matter how many movies question related to neo-romanticism, it will always remain a deleuzian "paradigm" the "non-model" incarnated by the *Neuromantics*. Which is obvious because it is linked to the System's inability to stop cyberpunk, whether is really the *hacker*, the *rocker*, the *graffiter* or the *raver* dancing in an illegal *rave* party. Not all issues of cyberpunk got lost, some questions made by the literary project got close to cyborg imaginary, but only after the 90s; something like mind merging, enhanced personalities or the simulated identities. For instance, the subject of cloning seems to be one of the literary aesthetics ingredients which deserved more media attention. In the end, movies like *Johnny Mnemonic* don't work out to show how street cyberpunk is the most visible element of the *Neuromantics* style; however it reveals how cybernetic constructs and digital landscapes are no longer fiction.

MAX HEADROOM

Max Headroom(Annabel Jankel & Rocky Morton, 1986) is by far one of the most famous and the first mass media cyberpunk figure as well. His comic statements were very remarkable. Max used to say things such as "Special bulletin: There is still no news from New Zealand. If they ever have any, we'll be sure to let you know". This style made the TV series very well known, the dummy look of the character kept the audience thinking it was a doll at the

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same time it looked like a real person in a news report. By installing the “infotainment” genre of a TV show, Max Headroom opened new ground for television content, mostly underlining the cyberpunk universe of constructs speaking in a fashion manner.

Max was a character that has this insane look, intensively crazy, on his face. The massified image of Max showed him in a nicer version of the anchor reporter who wore a tuxedo, sunglasses, and smiled to the audience, with a very Californian aspect. As a media by-product, Max was entirely created by the media Network 23, and much before the “synthespian” characters of the decade of 90 – the virtual actors designed by graphic artists and computer programmers –, it already tried to get autonomous inside the unilateral cyberspace of television. Max, as it was known mostly, the character of American media who in the “20 Minutes into The Future” show introduced television news as entertainment. Even until now, Max is still the character that best embodied 20th century’s media “Big Brother” who has helped to institute what today one understands as cable TV contents of “infotainment”. He also was the TV series cyberpunk that has introduced the news speaker as an assumed entertainer.

But what really branded Max as cyberpunk figure was its own look, carnivalesque, simultaneously artificial and old-fashioned, smiling wide and plasticized appearance. According to the online communities who have been found of Max Headroom, he usually made references to typically cyberpunk concepts “ice”, “flatline”, “nanotechnology” and “virtuality”. One has to consider that it was conceived in a Commodore AMIGA 1000 computer, at that time the most sophisticated domestic computer for audiovisual ventures, directly responsible for the institution of Virtual Reality as it was known in the 90s. However, one has to mention too the mythical year of 1984 was the time he first appeared, the moment when Great Britain’s Channel Four wanted to produce a rather unusual TV series, a sort of music video show. In this show the anchorman would be computer-generated instead of the habitual puppets animated by many people.

What is unexpected is that by having a completely fictitious life of its own, Max was, in the beginning, designed to be an “Ident”, a video clip for TV broadcasters insert in the breaks between programming like those who is known as MTV style, made by VJs and graphic artists. Due to its cyber nature, Max soon became, not a puppet inhabiting the television spectrum





during some five minutes, but a whole TV series, American version of Max was almost totally created with synthesized imagery. The distance between the movie, the series with puppet and the CGI “synthespian” was enormous and it meant groundbreaking innovations striking at the TV spectrum core.

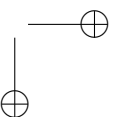
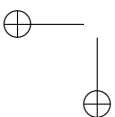
STRANGE DAYS

This James Cameron’s motion picture – *Strange Days* (Kathryn Bygelow, 1995) – is the after effect of an effort to unavoidably revalue the cyberpunk in the end of the nineties. In the end of the millennium (according to the script the exact date is 31st December, 1999), *Strange Days* unfolds a dangerously real street smart universe of characters, all related to the domain of the experience. *Strange Days* is a film that tries to explain the highly addictive Virtual Reality, exposing its “advantages and disadvantages”, raising questions that involves danger and seductive appeal of digitally recorded live experiences and its playback revival, as if the field of experience and perception could be an easy mechanism to manage, yet complex.

The film shows that characters who records subjective experiences in the first person perspective in devices called “playbacks”. This device is mediated by portable media capture subtle helmets called SQUID – a Super Quantum Interference Device – The down part is that these devices could record not only the wonderful, but the horror experiences of its users as well. The horror here is exemplified in experience recording of destructive sex, torture and rapist chasing.

The technology that recorded such experiences breaks out in the streets after being tested in the military and police enforcement, finding in the black market its true expression; and this is a Gibson theory, the argument that “street reinterpretes the use of the things”. The subtitle of this Bygelow’s motion picture was “You know you want it!”, alleging to the persuasiveness and epidemic nature of such re-writing audiovisual technology, considering media designed for recording, sharing and transportation the desire.

As the main character Lenny Nero gets addicted to this “playback” technology, somehow between video systems and VR, the whole plot blossoms with madness and joy, thrill and excitement. “Playback” was a futuristic device that allowed the “recorder”, the “user” to repeat the same life experience





in another time slot, in a digitally perfect way. It looked, in terms of hardware, like a Sony MiniDisc portable re-writing system, and its users used it to share what they saw and felt in the past at the time and place of the recording. They shared their sight, experience and memory technologically.

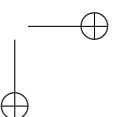
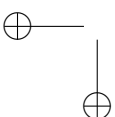
The implications of such technology were so huge that the true acception of the word “experience” was revealed, the domain of *ex peri*, which means, to try out danger. The movie actually is full of footage where danger is far more exciting than the ordinary life. *Strange Days* are the times when the story occurs, dangerous times for the characters who get excited by the possibilities of living something new: a technologically-driven and mediated taboo. The addictiveness of hardware recorded subjective imagery happens because it becomes a device to store perversions. Curiously, in 1990 we had already a lyric from a Depeche Mode song, called *World in My Eyes*, in the album called *Violator*, where the neo-romantic imaginary is underlined by such words:

“Let me take you on a trip. Around the world and back. And you won’t have to move. You just sit still. Now let your mind do the walking. And let my body do the talking. Let me show you the world in my eyes“.

Strange Days reports the danger of exchanging experiences and its *weltanschauungs* (ways of seeing and feel the world). This Depeche Mode idea of “let me show the world in my eyes” its *Strange Days*’s main subject, that accuses us of wanting to see things through other people’s eyes, living intensive experiences on the edge, in the blurred borders with new “lines of flight” (Deleuze & Guattari), what in the cyberpunk vocabulary is defined as possible “second skins”.

The digital recording of experiences brings out the will of transgression of mystery, the desire of breaking with eroticism, to get to see what everything is really like. Paradoxically, in the peak of technology, without exacerbating the future, like *Johnny Mnemonic*, *Strange Days* invokes “straight link”, the “direct connection” that the experience requests, something that got lost in 20th century media, thanks to the abundance of mediations. The primeval side of unmediated experience, in pure *live, live, uncut*¹⁴

¹⁴In the neo-romantic fiction, the maximum experience is always has the smallest amount of mediations, especially because usually the access into the digital landscapes is consummated by jack wires. The whole hard Sci-Fi of cyberpunks looks for the inclusion of digital recorded





Experience acquired a true form of transportation and re-modulation, something incomparable to today's videogame, VR and FX Cinema. The experience would be at a "plateau" of being reduced to any medium, dematerialized and susceptible to be reproduced as any film staging through videotape or CD. The Virtual Reality, in the sense of providing recorded and reproducible "existence", stands on as the false hence the false promise of domestic video, motion picture and computerized landscapes imagery.

The idea of putting the SQUID device on the head, a transmitter of cerebral waves, that it is influenced by the cyberpunk writers' visions, was something that made possible being "there". Such "being there" was basically a recording, a clip of somebody's life, and it is like this the film begins, with a gang breaking into the back of an establishment, an assault, in which we see who is with us and look at us. It really feels like we are in the same place, at the same time, because images and sound are interweaved as if we see it now through our eyes in live. The sequence ends when Lenny, the protagonist, Lenny discussed whether or not he buys this digital recording experience, because it had an unremarkable end, a failed attempt to jump off one rooftop to another, which the outcome was the thief's death. At the recording level, death was the same thing as the cut, because the recording stops as the person ends his life. However, Lenny wanted something uncut, unedited footage as in live shows off-line media. Only the continuous experience would provide pleasure, leaving a slight mark, then re-lived in any suburban cubicle, in clear opposition to life on the street, which became like in the jungle.

The "playback disks", in other words, the experiences stored in computation technology, which could be re-lived and "rewinded" (like in any VCR system), brought the chance to one become any other person, as if there was this Law of the Other, of the otherness, at stake in this video-VR tech problem.

"BlackJack" – the dark side of playback – it is a neologism of "jack", a experiences, an issue approached in *Strange Days* (1995) by Kathryn Bygelow, just as in *Neuromancer*, when Case sees a store of Microsoft – video experiences plugged with metallic cases behind the head. The "Jack In" of the cyberpunks, the direct connection, was the addictive experience, "uncut", as any other drug uncut, which means pure., pure and addictive, is one of the interesting points the film exhibits, in sceneries so different as squares jammed by oriental circulating in bicycles in opposition to the parades of politicians' limos and corporate CEOs. The "strange" reality" was a social mixture of vagabonds, punkers and ravers, and smuggling juxtaposed to luxury were legitimated, being affirmed in *Strange Days*' décor that real life would be in constant fright, no matter how policed were the streets.

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type of direct brain hacking by cable. And in the movie it means the recording of sadistic experiences, it implicates the domain of the horrible. “BlackJack” would be something similar to today’s *snuff films*¹⁵

Strange Days story occurs in the city of Los Angeles, now plundered, with plenty of urban violence, lots of gang *graffiti*. We may say it is somewhere between Blade Runner’s 2019 LA and *Akira*’s Neo-Tokyo, because armored limousines protect the rich, that more than anyone have capital to trade fringe experiences; the new *jack in* drug type. Even the main character, Lenny Nero, assumes the drug addict’s positioning, depending on experiences of other happy days, sheltering in a cubicle with bad conditions, yet with his VR technology which allowed him to relive in a nostalgic way the most unforgettable experiences he ever had with his girlfriend, Faith, the rock singer. A sort of retro-futurism we may conclude?

We find in James Cameron’s *Strange Days* script that the standard of living is marked by an economic crisis, the unemployment rates rise up, “real estate”, “property” becomes “mobility”, as in Ballard’s *Crash* (1985) and his *New Wave* perspective. Freeways and highways are both jammed by minuscule cars and fuel is expensive, the inflation and the suicide rates reach at high peak, but the most obvious “changings” increase desertification. The racial tensions and xenophobia unload their rages in stateless people, making the city to bow before the chaos and the martial laws, because there is entire legacy of social breakdown that has grown since the eighties. “Pressure” seems to take one to the riots; to mutinies, to revolutions only interrupted by military police forces. The cyberpunk scenery is actual, fantastic, hypnotic so the presented future is close and tense. Cameron’s script transmits pretty much the idea that the metropolis starts to agree with the obscure business, in case of anarchy, or of order, because the vices are media brothers and these are invading.

What Bruce Sterling says is interesting to us so we may understand why it is that *Strange Days*’s scenario is so vastly connivent with the cyberpunk universe:

¹⁵ *Snuff* films are a sub genre of video pornography, classified as forbidden and illegal, whose recordings emphasize live murders happening and “cutting” and “burning” fetishes practices allowed by the playing actors, in a wild and criminal way, far beyond SM tradition., which are pure recordings of danger and horror situations. *Strange Days* presents seduction and horror with no mediations of whatsoever at all, as if pleasure and pain were the same neo-romantic interzone, as Depeche Mode’s lyrics somehow refer to.



“Technical culture has gotten out of hand. The advances of the sciences are so deeply radical, so disturbing, upsetting, and revolutionary, that they can no longer be contained. They are surging into culture at large; they are invasive; they are everywhere. The traditional power structure, the traditional institutions, have lost control of the pace of change” (1986b: §20; 1986: p.8).

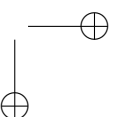
Then he also remarks:

“And now that technology has reached a fever pitch, its influence has slipped control and reached street level” (*Idem, Ibidem*: p.9).

Here are the reasons why *Strange Days*'s cyberpunk ambience points out that the true changes happen behind the violent social reality, in the persuasive technology, in telecommunications, in the sense that everything is completely wired, linked up, and it is these same changes that expel the average individual out of them as if it was an explosion. Imaginaries and consciousnesses are both hijacked by new media by-products. Everything gets an ephemeral behavior that perishes and justifies the search for something more, and it is precisely that which addresses the addiction of images, the neo-romantic passion for the audiovisual and the fascination for VR's animated icons, the dazzle in relation to the dreamlike world that the brain interweaves, whether it is dreams or nightmares.

The experience in *Strange Days* exemplifies the interface between modern humanity and its machinery. It is all about how in many ways the technological landscape can accomplish and mirror the most intimate desires, as pure and simple form of demonstrating to us that we may try something that will be known till the maximum, because it is painful and all that is painful is remarkable and so unforgettable, not perishing in time. This is why Lenny Nero's fringe experiences are addicting and marking, therefore they are our central nervous system's external memory recordings, invading our min-body.

So much immersed in Sci-Fi aesthetics, *Strange Days* presents a social hysteria, mixing sects and priests of the apocalypse introduce figurations on the end of the world, totally moved away from the technophile's genesis. The biblical imaginary is revealed among wild wanderings of police-patrolled crowds regardless of human rights ethics. There are a lot of private law enforcement structures and citizen protection and bodyguard services do prolif-





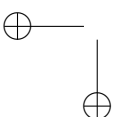
erate. Security is the largest industry in urban areas increased by media promotion of personal pseudo-safety, among which *hackers* and *rockers* emerge as new minsters of the masses equipped with “techno-messianic” discourses.

Living in a transparent society, *Strange Days*’ new punk characters know information has no geopolitic borders, nor structuralism’s, it is on purpose anti-structure. Even in *Strange Days* soundtrack, music band Skunk Anansie plays live a music whose refrain is “they’re selling Jesus again which appeals to be exploration of the needs for wonderfulness, no more the myths of aliens, but the narcosis and the lust for VR technologies – cybersex, the wonderfulness as human form, but technologically transcendent.

The reality of those “strange days” began to happen all behind the scenes and the cameras. The police enforcement now has a brand new panoptic technology. The microphysics of power is the video cameras imagery. The whole background of cyberpunk is a stage for clever fight against the eradication of violence, against the omnipresent surveillance.

Everyone carries handycams, because it is noticed that there is a total discredit. No even the police believe in the police itself, or in the citizens. Only the great consumers are believed. This way, it is the technology role to assure surveillance and to occupy the “perfect sentry’s” position, resembling an amputated divine overlook. “The wars of the video age are fought with images, not with weapons”, Cameron states. Voyeurism grants the social life the characteristics of the pornographic film, in the sense that everything taped gets reconfigured by the new technological gear of image editing.

However, in relation to films that damage the cyberpunk idea as *Johnny Mnemonic*, *Strange Days* presents some concepts for us to think on these matters – concepts loki “tapehead”, “techno-addicted”, “virgin brain”, “virgin mind”, “blackjack”, “playback” and “jack in”. But the boldest concept of the cyberpunk universe is not in the published official movie novel, nor in the film. I mean the “mind rape” concept which patents even in the way the director Kathryn Bygelow impels us to the scenes. Bygelow forces the spectator to really share the VR experience, making him to think on the impact of the VR gear, while the “information courier” played by *Johnny Mnemonic* had the chance only to supply us with special effects as an atmosphere. *Strange Days*, in its turn, works like a critic against the last stage of imagery, the plateau without overbearing representations, nor obsolete mediations, state in which





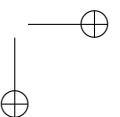
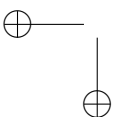
real images, thanks to their richness, would overtake idle stagings of video or CGI footage.

TERMINATOR 2 3-D: BATTLE ACROSS TIME

Set in the future war that *Terminator 2 – Judgement Day* (James Cameron, 1991) announces in its introduction sequence, *Terminator 2 3-D: Battle Across Time* (James Cameron, Stan Winston, John Bruno, 1996) brings back the T-800 Model 101 and John Connor in an incredible 12 minute short-film featuring pursuits, shooting sequences and thrilling appearances of cyborgs and HKs (Hunter-Killers). *Terminator 3 – Rise of The Machines* (Jonathan Mostow, 2003) story happens after *Terminator 2* but its still grounded in present time Los Angeles. In its turn, *Terminator 2 3-D: Battle Across Time* is taking place in 2029 Los Angeles, so this time the terminator universe allows viewers to see what the future war would really looked like, involving a small amount of players in its theatre of war.

The film was made by Cameron and his associates and carries the logo of Digital Domain – Cameron’s CGI and special effects enterprise. Unlike long length motion pictures, *Terminator 2 3-D: Battle Across Time* was designed to be seen with 3-D glasses (with red and blue lenses, and not VR head-up displays) in a live show performance with actors and real stunts on stage at Universal Studios Florida theme park as an attraction for tourists looking for multimedia shows. In the realm of filmmaking and movie business *Terminator 2 3-D: Battle Across Time* represented a landmark in multimedia entertainment. Once in the auditorium the audience would see the real play unfolding like an extension of the 12 minute short-film narrative, breaking thus the division between real and virtual in a pioneer fashion. Some of the screens introduced the T-1.000.000 to the audience, the most fearsome liquid mercury spider robot to be seen in the terminator universe, though the real play was all about live acting, fireworks, surround sound and exciting bike chases.

In itself the film was interesting due to its specificity in showing the future war between man and machines, and also because in this episode John Connor and the T-800 are together again in a paternal relationship of messiah and bodyguard. Basically both of them are on their way to destroy SkyNet for good, the problem is that as they are heading for SkyNet’s pyramidal facility



the T-1000 comes across the time warp and restarts relentlessly his quest for killing John. The reason behind the running for the elimination of SkyNet, this time only in the future, is because, as a spokesman for Cyberdyne Systems explains before the film begins, the destruction of CS headquarters in *T-2* did not stop Skynet, the global satellite defense system, of being built. So we can find awkward why the action takes place in this place, and in this time.

Right in the beginning of the *Terminator 2 3-D: Battle Across Time*, John asks the T-800: “where are we?”. And the T-800 answers: “the future. The final battle between humans and machines“. Yet this is not enough to make the audience understand, so a fast-paced chase is triggered as John Connor and the T-800 ride the Harley Davidson Fatboy through the apocalyptical nocturne future wasteland. When the T-1000 gets across the time warp and tries to hit John Connor on his back with his deformed blade-shaped arms, the T-800 shoots him back with the shotgun on the chest and then in the head. Undoubtedly, this part of the pursuit ends, yet another starts right afterwards.

A flying HK [Hunter-Killer] chases John and the T-800 while they try to flee from the laser bursts and every building debris is exploding like fireworks. Moments later the motorcycle gets stuck in concrete blocks and the T-800 manages to jump, catching John on the air while falling safely on the ground. They run for a cover immediately. Searching lights create daylight in the apocalypse night as the aerial HKs hovers around them in an attempt to blow them to pieces with purple laser shots. Demolished buildings, human skulls and other human bones pile up everywhere all the way to SkyNet. Small aerial HKs with mounted laser turrets are deployed by the big flying HKs to hunt John and the heroic T-800. Among the debris they stay undetected for a while. After defeating and destroying the small drones, a menacing enemy T-800 in its coverless shiny chrome exoskeleton appearance breaks through a wall scanning for John. Rescued by the friendly T-800 (played by Schwarzenegger) John is relieved from the laser sight pointing at his forehead. Not much after, the T-800 grabs the enemy T-800 weapon left on the ground and the satchel charges, going straight for the hole in the wall where we’re already able to have a glance at SkyNet’s pyramid protected by huge laser cannons. Both the T-800 and John Connor enter the SkyNet cyberfacility after the T-800 stops the wall from closing. The film ends, the live show begins, and only in *Terminator 3 – Rise of The Machines* and in *Terminator: The Sarah Connor*



Chronicles (FOX, 2008) TV series we're able to see the terminator war for good in full motion CGI.

TERMINATOR: THE SARAH CONNOR CHRONICLES

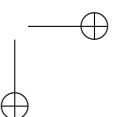
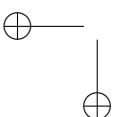
Linda Hamilton owns *The Terminator* TV series franchise and James Cameron adventures himself and his associate in *Dark Angel*. Altogether both TV series make a noble contribution to cyberpunk Sci-Fi. *Dark Angel* is a dystopian future, unlike Sci-Fi narratives of special effects, resembling a possible continuation from our present time, while *The Terminator* always seemed a Cold War based hypothesis. Though in 2008 FOX released its *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* TV show, based on the phenomenally popular *Terminator* movie franchise. The new thing about the *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* is that its story unfolds after *Terminator 2 – Judgment Day*, before *Terminator 3: Rise of The Machines*, and as if this one never existed.

In the end of *Terminator 2 – Judgment Day* Sarah and John witness the self-destruction of the T-800 terminator in the hot liquid metal pool. After destroying the Cyberdyne Systems complex they think they stop SkyNet from being built. But they didn't because there is a time loop that means present changes the future and vice-versa. Only regarding John's safety, Sarah Connor tries to live a normal life after all the incidents, but terminators sent by SkyNet keep coming from the future to track and kill John. *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* shows the everyday life that Sarah and John Connor live undercover, staying away from police units and the information grid. Future resistance leader, John Connor, is now a wise teenager and Sarah is still a protective mother, trying constantly to avoid trouble and remain untraceable by government authorities while they seek for those who keep developing all systems that might become SkyNet in a near future.

It is said in the series intro credits that:

“In the future a computer called SkyNet will declare war on the human race. Machines have travelled back in time keeping human form to terminate John Connor, the future leader of the resistance. Sarah Connor, John's mother, teacher and protector. Cameron, a terminator reprogrammed to

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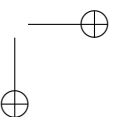
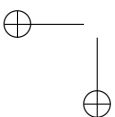
defend them at all costs. Derrick Reese, John's uncle and a commanding officer with the resistance. Together they fight to stop SkyNet of ever being created. The battle for our tomorrow starts today!"

According to the comics of *The Terminator* franchise, John Connor in the future reprograms a model 101 of the T-800 cyborg and sends him back in time to protect him from the incoming terminators in our present time, the result we can see in *Terminator 3 – Rise of The Machines*. On the other side, every episode of *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* takes place before that part of the story, when the nuclear war is inevitable. In order to keep John alive and safe, Sarah struggles for his best life conditions, yet still manages to get upset by moving from town to town, keeping him isolated, for his own good, from school friends. They're nomads, dressing street wear and getting help from friends in New Mexico and in California to stay strict to the planned destruction of the proto-SkyNet.

From the future, bad things come, but the second strong female came this time from the future to protect John from all foes. Her name is Cameron Phillips (played by the actress Summer Glau), and she is a brand new terminator machine, who looks like a teenager girl on the outside, yet she is as strong or stronger than the former T-800. Now the 15 year old John Connor is going everywhere with her bodyguard terminator, the one whom most of his school friends think to be his girlfriend. Raising no suspicions at all, Cameron is able to protect John from the stalking agents of the covert US government project Skynet that are looking for them.

The Cyberdyne Systems complexed got wrecked but the organization behind it didn't, even if Miles, the microprocessor designer, is dead. John, Sarah and Cameron have hotspots and hiding places full of gear, money and guns to continue traveling to runaway from government agents and incoming terminators in this year of 2007. What the problem is that in 2007 John Connor and his team are wanted by the LAPD for terrorist crimes committed against Cyberdyne and for other felonies. Fortunately Cameron is quite good in protecting them thanks to her cold look and superior design. She is able to outgun all foes, but the plot is getting complex as FBI agents find out terminator heads, cyborg hands and victims of blood and organ donors that don't fit in their puzzle.

In the second season things get even more difficult for resistance fight-





ers in present time LA as a new entrepreneur, Catherine Weaver, who creates the Babylon multi-disciples team. The actor plays Weaver's role is Garbage's (the rock band) Shirley Manson – lead singer. In the season two of *Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles* Weaver is a fashion punk director of a new automatic systems project; in fact, as we discover, she is a liquid mercury next-gen terminator that was sent back through time to make sure Cyberdyne System's SkyNet gets built and that machines in the future control the nuclear power plants, a strategic resource. Also in the second season John's new haircut resembles his older self in the future war scenes in *T2* and Cameron starts malfunctioning but then things got back to normal. After all, she is a cyborg version of MTV singers and *Tomb Raider's* Lara Croft.

THE MATRIX TRILOGY

Larry & Andy Wachowski wrote and directed *The Matrix Trilogy* (1999-2004). Three films interlinked with *The Animatrix* (Mahiro Maeda *et al*, 2003) anime feature and two videogames (*The Matrix: Path of Neo* [2005] and *Enter The Matrix* [2003]) to play offline and one to play online (*The Matrix Online* [2005]). The entire Matrix universe is also backed up by several comics online on the movie Web site. The “cross-media” model Henry Jenkins speaks about in *Convergence Culture – Where Old Media And New Media Collide* (2006) is very relevant and puts the Matrix universe in the new media core. In *The Matrix* (1999) we meet the virtual dimension of the real, then in the sequel *Matrix Reloaded* (2003) we see the war between humans and machines which happens in Zion, being *Matrix Revolutions* (2004) the final chapter of a saga between virotic agents and all powerful Neo. It is the purpose of *The Animatrix* to explain to us how it all began, like the comics, but the videogames allow us to be Neo, Niobe, or Ghost and play the parallel plots of *Matrix Reloaded*. This whole new model makes media access differently and try different experiences by putting the pieces together then gathered in several media. By playing the videogames the player actually becomes one of the characters and steps into the Matrix itself.

In a closer inspection we realize that Keanu Reeves is the perfect actor to play the role of Mr.Anderson, a.k.a. Neo, because he looks pretty much like the character Case, the protagonist of Gibson's *Neuromancer* as we see



it in the comic version of Tom De Haven & Bruce Jensen (1989). Besides this, Reeves actually did a neo-romancer role in *Johnny Mnemonic* as a data courier, and somehow his appearances look interconnected in the cyberpunk cluster of films.

Being inspired in Japanese *anime*, *The Matrix* first film managed to change the course of Special Effects Cinema and of advertising, affecting videoclips, TV ads and the very nature of action videogames like its own, and even the *Max Payne* (2001) series and John Woo's *Stranglehold* (2007). *The Matrix* was also the best Sci-Fi motion picture in decades after *Blade Runner*, and it demanded a new regime for filmmaking.

From the mirror shades, to the leather clothing, the cyberspace sequences and CGI effects, SWAT troops and digital landscapes, all that is seen in *The Matrix* is cyberpunk. The videoclip style of the action sequences and the shooting technology so-called "Bullet Time" done with multi photographic gear made *The Matrix* a very remarkable film experience. Aestheticized characters, virtual worlds, non-linear film plot, 3D footage, 3D sound and science-fiction issues turned *The Matrix* into an icon of the cyberpunk genre, which soon became so mainstream it made impossible to allow the real *Neuromancer* film to show up soon. All the "de-realization" philosophers and sociologists speak is observed in *The Matrix*. Directors Larry & Andy Wachowski have created a Sci-Fi film where Kung-Fu is easy to understand and is side a side with religious¹⁶ and philosophical questions. One has also to say that *The Matrix* manages to deliver to broader audiences questions which belong to regular academic contexts, yet the entire films, comics and videogames make it all sound like a pop pastiche, but its not.

Like the name itself suggests, *The Matrix* is all about the matrix, a new cyberspace system built with recordings of the world as it was known before the war between man and machines. The outcome of rendering was a simulation of urban twentieth century's North-American city downtown, a digital space where users would hack into a virtual presence mode. The problem is

¹⁶Religion is very present in *The Matrix Trilogy*. There are a lot of mentions to Zen world and Christian and Judaism traditions, like the battle between good and evil, day and night, or the wait for "the One", the messiah. Besides those elements, Christ, Jesus, Architect and Genius are part of *The Matrix's* plot. For example, in the beginning of the film, Neo, still as Mr. Anderson, opens his door to some people who speak of "Personal Jesus", which is a Depeche Mode song from the *Violator* (1990) album, integrated in the British *New Wave* pop bands.



that the machines discover this simulation and decide to destroy it by hacking too in the matrix. Agents were the viral machine presences and its purpose was to wipe out human users on the matrix. Once human participants were dead in the matrix, they would die physically in the real world too, because the mind can't live without the body.

As Morpheus introduces in the first film speaking in the construct's white space of the matrix, the real has disappeared (invoking Virilio's idea of *The Aesthetic Of Disappearance* [1991]). So we get to know that one sees in the matrix is a simulation (in fact we see a copy of Baudrillard's *Simulacra And Simulation* book [*Simulacros e Simulação*, 1994]) built with image archives.

The story we are told shows a real world, and then a matrix, and then another matrix, and so on, like *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland* who has felt down the rabbit hole, as the Morpheus character mentions himself unveiling the matrix to Neo. In the perspective of Morpheus there is a system of authority figures that enslaves mankind, so the human resistance expects a messiah to come in order to restore the order in a world hijacked by machines with AI. Importing scenography from H. R. Giger's *alien* imagery, Orwell's *Ninety-Eighty-Four* (1991), *The Matrix* succeeds in its controversial philosophic labyrinths and manages to make mainstream young audiences to think. Also *The Matrix* trilogy tells people to question in a Cartesian way, the very reality known to them, the visible world. Morpheus says that a war debris is all that was left, mentioning TV world as a fallacious construct used to make people forget they are slaves. And since the development of AI machines all mankind fell in demise.

The search for Neo is because a *hacker* who is living in a double-life, being Anderson during the day and Neo at night time. Everyone in the real world looks for "The One", a messiah to save the human resistance from oblivion. But as "sentient programs" imprison Mr. Anderson the entire film plot becomes interlinked with CGI footage till the point no one really knows for sure where did the real stopped or *The Matrix* began. It is all part of the game, also means it's all part of the film, which means it's all part of the simulation. From the start to the end, *The Matrix* is nothing but a simulation within another simulation, a cybernetic world where machines made by man challenge him. Neither man wanted machines in his real, nor the machines wanted users





in the cyberspace. The war led to attacking Zion¹⁷, which we see that was happening in the last two films when Neo becomes a sort of Superman character of the digital world.

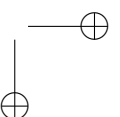
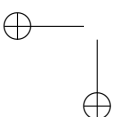
Sameness is what the system's agents brought to a matrix simulation that it restarts itself like digital remake of the Bible every seven times. The reboot of the system would make things get balanced, between the black and white, good and evil, real and virtual, human and machine, and also the male Architect and the female Oracle.

Against uniformization every resistance character fights back in *The Matrix* to make things harder for Agent Smith and other cloned AIs he manages to spread virally in *The Matrix*. As the film shows very well, the *The Matrix* would be no more than a photorealistic imagery-based simulation where everyone could get into in order to do something besides living in the sky-less world of post-holocaust. Set in a Dystopian near future, *The Matrix* story occurs in a digital plastic realm, where the matrix in itself is all media's cyberspace, the information and marketing society – an Orwellian controlled urban theatre inside. After taking the pill to get in the matrix world, Neo finds himself in a spyder-like machines world where humans don't born anymore, they are grown to feed machine's energy demands. Then the disposable body is caught by the human resistance's Nebucadnezar ship with the hair shaved and the eyebrows too. A very odd sequence shows later as we see Neo with acupuncture needles all over his body as he rests in a surgery table, making him looks like a sodomite character of Clive Barker's *Hellraiser* (1987) horror novel.

Even if no one really says, *The Matrix* rescues, fashionably though, the cyberpunk aesthetics from the *Johnny Mnemonic* disneyesque Sci-Fi. With no agreement with the Laws of Physics, inside *The Matrix* world nothing is what it seems like and there is more than meets the eye, because *The Matrix* itself behaves like a videogame.

Much like Gibson's "Matrix simulator" or "cyberspace", *The Matrix* is a vast three-dimensional world, inhabited by representations so real as the outside world appearances. In direct quotation with the original eighties *hacker's* world, when users did used modem equipment to get online with no graphical user interface, in *The Matrix* we see users interfacing with the digital world

¹⁷Zion is also the name of the place inhabited by the orbital *Rastafarians* in *Neuromancer*.





by making phone calls in the digital set's ordinary phone booths, and then by Nokia's branded cellphones. Inbound or outbound calls were the way to get linked up with the *The Matrix* inside the digital world. And let's not forget this all happened inside, because to link up from the outside users had to "jack in" with cortex pirate hack connections established in the ships.

From the chessboard pattern on the grounds, to the baroque architecture, nineteen-thirties film noir police characters to the first running happening on a rooftop (which resembles Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958) initial sequence), everything in *The Matrix* is a pastiche and quotation, all films and none, all digital games and none. What definitely in the matrix is this desertedness, justifying the moment when Morpheus speaks of the baudrillardian "desert of the real". Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland*, simulation, chemical culture and nightclubbing postpunks sequences, among others resembling "hyper-realism", *The Matrix* is as like a Russian doll inhabited by many other russian dolls inside, a cornucopia fractal of footage with no ground for reference, as we see in K. Dick's novels.

The Matrix performs homage to James Cameron's *Terminator 2- Judgment Day* (1991), specially the sequence when John Connor, Sarah Connor and the terminator T-800 go to the Cyberdine Systems to destroy the SkyNet computer chip. True cyberpunk is what we see in this sequence when Morpheus is questioned by Agent Smith in the upper floors and Trinity and Neo go in there to rescue him. Neo starts by saying in the construct of *The Matrix* that he needs "Guns, lots of guns". Seconds later they're both already inside *The Matrix*, fully armed, wore shades and Airwalk leather boots, as they passed across the metal detector and triggered a SWAT team slaughter with acrobatic "bullet time" shootings. As a matter of fact this sequence is unforgettable. Neo is returning the real to its "unreal" source; the virtual domain of oppression.

It is said by Morpheus that the matrix is a construction based on the video age Western's world footage to enslave mankind, making people believe in something that does not exist anymore. As neo steps into the cyberspace and becomes aware of its power he realizes that he is the One as long as he believe he truly is, which means anybody could be whatever they want to be as long as they believe they can. Of course this action sequences made everybody dream of being Neo, wearing wide mirror shades, black clothes and cape-shaped garments, in a sort of fashion-outlaw aesthetics. After *The Matrix* was released

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the “cyberspace cowboy” was somebody that actually everybody managed to see on the film. *Johnny Mnemonic*’s suit with tie was out fashioned by *The Matrix*’s cosmetic punk style, a visionary output in Sci-Fi aesthetics of the post-K. Dick stage.

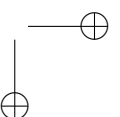
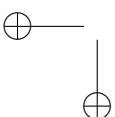
No longer did the cyberpunk ran away from the crowds. On the contrary, cyberpunks were among crowds, changing systems from within, becoming masters of virtuality like *Neuromancer*’s Wintermute construct – “the sum of all parts, being everywhere, the whole show”.

THE TERMINATOR

In spite of unveiling a real cyborg – Arnold Schwarzenegger –, *The Terminator* (1984) is one of the most remarkable cyberpunk films ever made of the era prior to *The Matrix Trilogy*. This film of James Cameron helped to underline the man-machine and the cyborg imaginary. Every pose of the terminator character is amazingly absorbed by Schwarzenegger’s “mask”, and it is entirely built on the eighties *postpunk* outlaw style. Besides the biblical narrative understated, transposed to a Sci-Fi world, this film was a revolutionary motion picture at the time, about a new posthuman man, sophisticated and disregard of affection, more closer to machines than to humans. The mirror shade aesthetic is pasted to this dystopian future where cybernetic organisms have easy ways to wipeout human resistance in a post-nuclear scene.

Reminding the main images of *The Terminator* is to remind the cyberpunk characters. Cameron’s terminator is a crystal-clear menace to mankind. The main poster of the film showed the terminator with a military and at the same time, punk haircut, wearing black leather with the collar up and dark Gargoyles’ mirror shades to hide the machine sight. The terminator had the chrome gun next to his expressionless face and the large rectangular sunglasses would set mystery in this image of black, red an blue colors.

Some of the most disconcerting action sequences present us a determined cyborg dressed as a street outlaw hiding his cybernetic damaged eye. In the beginning of the film the way the terminator scans the crowd of the Tech Noir looking for Sarah Connor is very impressive. But at the end of the film the cyborg heads for the police precinct where, after destroying the electric system, he finds ways to kill everybody while seeing in the dark. At that





moment, in a small group shots, Cameron shows us the terminator with a huge weapon in his robotic arms, with the eyes shining and the resistance seeing him in low-light. Most of the visual artifacts wore by the T-800 terminator and make him look human, human enough to look at first sight like a high-tech outlaw motard. However, all the sequences in which the terminator simulates other people's voices (*phone phreaking* style), the slick use of weaponry, the motorcycle night chases and the steroid built body left us as disconcerting as fantastic images.

TOTAL RECALL

After *Blade Runner* a new army of films began to be released based on the novels and short stories written by Sci-Fi author Philip K. Dick. *Total Recall* (1990) was one of those films of the nineties, in this case directed by Paul Verhoeven. The title of films owes pretty much to the narrative of film, whose screenplay had been written inspired in K. Dick's *We Can Remember It For You Wholesale* (1987), a short story which is known among Sci-Fi readers as *Total Recall – The Forgotten Bits*.

The movie criticizes many developments of the "moving image" during the nineties, like the hologram, the videophone or the virtual realities. But because it is based on a K. Dick story it had to be unveiled in a whirl of realism, conspiracy and humanism. Like Wim Wender's *Until The End of The World* (1990), *Total Recall* is all about criticizing the power of images, dreams and the power to change one's destiny. One of the conclusions we can make after seeing the film is that most of the images concealed in our mind are not just a retinal product, for them, they are also made out by the person's imagination. Hence, the virtual can be detected inside, outside, or in-between, like Verhoeven explores very well in this science-fiction blockbuster. Another point to remark is that K. Dick mentions Mars because that was his way to criticize the Californian lifestyle of its time. For K. Dick, the future of California, adding pollution, mass consumption and environment deterioration would led us to Mars, which is a metaphor of the urban heat, the industrial mutations and glass eyeballs and plastic white teeth of every TV celebrity. An inhuman scenario to inhuman beings, Another subject present in the film is that some images can be created by our mind without our consentment, as if the visual memory

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would automatically began exploring collections of images. The result could be schizophrenia, paranoia or delusional behavior.

The strange part is that in a Kafkaesque manner, like any other K. Dick novel, conspiracy's can exist in our home. And in the last case, all contracts, people and institutions can be very disappointing by working to misguide general population with strange simulations, artifacts or goods. In this film the images of Quaid's dreams, his walks on Mars, are aftereffects of an optical unconscious repression, yet they can't surpass all that thus his memory recalls. The film's title – "Total Recall" – comes from what happens to the hero, Quaid. After all, he lives his life normally when he realizes something has changed, he suffers from insomnia and then later gets to know that he is having an entire recall of his past experiences in dream footage. So we can watch the film and think he was a spy in Mars before becoming a worker in construction sites, or we can think this way he is a worker on purpose because somebody does not want him to be a spy. The paranoia realm unfolds, leaving the audience in a not much solid ground, as we begin to conclude that he might have enjoyed the virtual reality product he bought at Rekall, a private company of touristic simulations, and hence, decided to continue to include that illusive world forever. So no one really can see that he is insane on the outside, like a parallel world, what narrative Quaid chooses is the one ending in a *Genesis* style in Mars outdoors being "terraformed" by alien tech.

Total Recall's intriguing script puts us almost in the chasen shoes of Quaid, in the same anguish. Lets not forget that one of K. Dick's favorite themes was the confusion of realities, but like paranoia, so the film disclosures a landscape of events occurring in a near future, when corporations, which might control crowds with VR, can pursue, kill and brainwash everybody.

Most of the story is about "reality". Is reality really what others tell me about? Is reality what I see before me? Or is reality what I truly felt? Quaid embraces chaotic shootings and puzzling situations to find out what is the "real thing", but in the end, as it makes sense, reality is something we feel. An also, reality can be manipulated like anyone manipulating images in a computer, which leaves the virtuality issue in a very threatening position. Moreover, Quaid manages to fightback Mars tyranny allowing all mutant people to breathe a real atmosphere. However, if the ending is so perfect and the "terraforming" process so fast, was it truly real? Or what we just saw was a VR media product experienced by Quaid while he is asleep?





“Reality manipulation” is undoubtedly a subject across many K. Dickean works, from *Blade Runner*, to *Minority Report* (Steven Spielberg, 2003), but in *Total Recall* feeding back noise into the system looks better, sharp and credible. After all, the high-tech cities, the spaceships landing on Mars, the giant screens, the military police presence, computer-driven cars, mutant resistance and alienware make *Total Recall* impressively cyberpunk.

The movie owes its name to ReKall Incorporated, the corporation selling virtual tourism packages as sensitive experiences implanted on the individual’s memory. The problem of memory implants is that in case of implanting cheap souvenirs the outcome could be disastrous for the customer-tourist. A sales strategy for the company to sell virtual trips is to emphasize on the price difference, thus for those who want cheap flights can come to ReKall. Yet, as throughout the movie we get to know, is that the unsimulated physical and chemical universe of ours outbeats the simulations. Otherwise, in the end of the film Quaid would have chosen the virtual, and as we may realize, he manages to choose the real. There are no proofs of another option being taken, despite the video footage which has misled the audience to think Quaid did the brainwash to himself because he is an undercover spy infiltrating the resistance.

When the ReKall Incorporated salesman asks Quaid “What is the same thing you find wherever you go?”, Quaid stays still, not knowing what to say. Then the salesman responds to himself: “You! You are always the same!”. After this part Quaid meets the “ego trips” concept, a tourist package customized to fill the customer’s desires. The trips allowed customers to choose a destination and to go as someone else’s lifestyle and personality. Quaid chooses the secret agent phantasy and ever since the film’s plot unfolds leaving the audience to think he was already a secret agent with another memory implant so he could be a brainwashed resistance fighter. The subversive narrative triggers an adventure leading to Mars underground facilities, when in fact it is all VR simulation. This is the most plausible explanation of what happens to Quaid about the memory tracking signal and the mall chase and the shootings before meeting the mutant leading the martian resistance. Everything happens like the planned “ego trip” before it starts. So all probabilities were successfully calculated. In the real trip, Quaid might be suffering from paranoid delusion, a hypothesis we never know. Even the fact that Quaid keeps dreaming of Mars outdoors where he could breathe without helmet is a typical cyberpunk





subject, because the *Neuromantics* used to explore in fiction this theme of the need for open virtual uncompressed worlds. In the opposite side, we have Quaid's home, an underground cubicle tomb where screened footage played the role of windows.

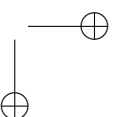
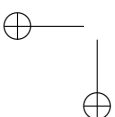
UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD

Wim Wenders in *Until The End Of The World* (1991) directs a Sci-Fi film, not his usual style of film, but it looks interesting because it explores a tension between the modern and the primitive, as well as an addiction to mediated footage. The movie reveals empty wide landscapes and metropolitan dehumanized landscapes with promotion pulsing screens. According to the story that in 1999 an Indian nuclear satellite malfunctions and starts falling to the Earth, leaving fallout debris in the atmosphere. Afraid of the debris people concern about when it would really crash down on the ground and where it would.

Sam Farber, the character played by William Hurt, his the one who is traveling until the end of the world, all around, gathering footage in a sort of VR recording helmet to please his father who had machine that is able to read such a footage. His father was exiled in the Australian hot desert, expecting Sam to come. Once Sam arrived the footage would then be translated into brainwaves that replayed in helmet of Sam's mother. Her blindness was bothering the family so Sam records footage to allow the mother to see the world mediated by a prosthetics video device. This way she would be able to see places where she could never go on her foot and saw things that's unseen yet.

The rest of the characters get involved in discussions, theft, sex and chases, but the video technology is omnipresent in the film all the time. Disconcerting and addictive video films get the attention of the characters who don't seem to get through it.

The onyric dream world of such footage provoked on people's disease due to its watching. Claire and Sam realize the recorded experiences and its replay unfolded childhood experiences of their infancy through memory, as if they would see all of it from the outside. As a contagious disease, the world of images was a labyrinthic provocation of vice without biological explanation. Every time they saw images they got hooked when they watch them, as



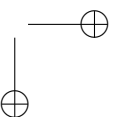
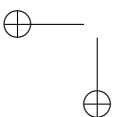


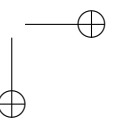
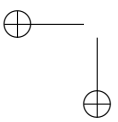
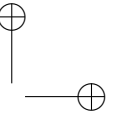
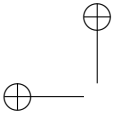
they digged more and more to the footage in order to see something more, something deeper in their memory.

Curiosity was killing them slowly. In short, this is how Wenders criticizes in the plot the creation of meaningless images circulating everywhere with no substance at all. One may also say that this subject is a metaphor explored in film to show what was all about “dream watching”. In one of the most relevant parts of the film, Gene says “They lived to see their dreams. And when they slept, they dreamed about their dreams”. The footage addiction cornucopia is the core subject of this Wender’s film, for the director works on how these images are the very same thing as the medium. But also he works to plot and let us think that all footage are subconscious mediations, though more felt than just seen, like our dreams exemplify. The problem is that images mediate memory, the register of all images captured from the world.

In a sense the film is a mixture of cyberpunk’s “high-tech/low-life”, of primitive lifestyles in contrast with video gear. Very addictive footage, as we see in Kathryn Bygelow’s *Strange Days*, are in Wender’s film the legitimate space of telecom, hence it is explained how the suspension of the world leaves a terrorized crowd of people not knowing when the satellite would crash down. The fear for interruption, the suspension of *multidimensional cyberspaces* would put populations back in the stone age. Interference would be bad, but interruption would be traumatic.

Wender’s crowds were afraid to see the onyric world of images be cut down before their eyes, a situation of no memory, footage left to be replayed would mean panic. Nostalgic records in high-tech were the main concern of *Until The End Of The World’s* people. They lived for the footage, they hide in dark places so they could watch the footage regardless of any bright change on the screens. Without portable pervasive media experiences would not be recorded, and afterwards would not be replayed either. Collections of images were the source of the addiction, the substitution of a reality inaccessible. Traveling was the solution to see and record in the first person what others later would see in a indirect mode, becoming numb in cave places to get mesmerized by images to dream of, over and over again. And endless narcosis, in mcluhanesque style, was a high price to pay for.







SONGS

NEUROMANCER (BILLY IDOL, 1993)

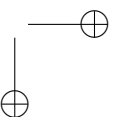
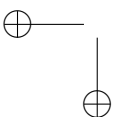
“Age of destruction
Age of oblivion
Age of destruction
Age of oblivion
Discovered love,
In the rancid days of ruin
My body ’s sweatin ’ toxins,
Of my own demise

Only from space, can you see
How much earth is burning
Smokin’ out the innocence inside
The child

It’s the age of destruction
In a world of corruption
It’s the age of destruction
And they hand us oblivion

Neuromancer and I’m trancing
I’m the Neuromancer – and I’m trancing

Man wallows in his insatiable greed
More in the answer that sweats





From desperate palms
Turn on the lies, the secrets,
Of our desolation,
Or be smothered, by the red hot core

It's the age of destruction,
In a world of corruption
It's the age of destruction
And they hand us oblivion

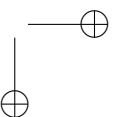
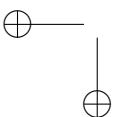
The Neuromancer and I'm trancing
I'm the Neuromancer and I'm trancing
I'm the Neuromancer – I'm trancing
Trancing Trancing And I'm trancing

Denied love in the age of ruin
Suicide toxins of my own demise
In cyberspace, you know how much
The earth ain't learning
Smoking out the man, inside the child – yeah

It's the age of destruction In a world of corruption
It's the age of destruction And they hand us oblivion

The Neuromancer and I'm trancing
I'm the Neuromancer and I'm trancing
Neuromancer – trancing
Neuromancer – trancing
Neuromancer – trancing
Neuromancer

Age of destruction
Age of the Neuromancer
Age of destruction Age of oblivion
Age of destruction
Age of the Neuromancer"





SHOCK TO THE SYSTEM (BILLY IDOL, 1993)

“Woah yeah
It was a night, L.A., burning bright
Oh what a night
Say yeah, come on
It makes my world stand still
Ahh riot, rape, race and revolution, ah yeah
Here come the fire, and my world burns still
Yoww say yeah

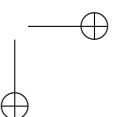
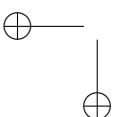
Well, you can rock this land baby yowww

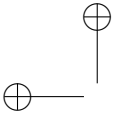
Like a shock to the system
I feel good, well alright
Like a shock to the system
Say yeah, ain't it irie

It was a night
Hell of a night, L.A., it really was
Oh what a riot
I said yeah, come on
It makes my life feel real
Fear police and civil corruption oh yeah
Is there a man who would be king
And the world stood still Ah yeah loud

You can rock this land baby Yeahhh
Like a shock to the system
It feel good, well alright
Like a shock to the system
I said yeah, come on baby
Shock to the system
Feel good, well alright
Like a shock, shock to the system
I say yeah, I say yeah, I say yeah

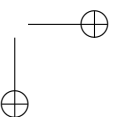
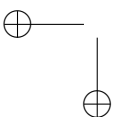
LabCom Books





Come on baby

Yeah, well you can rock this land baby
Like a shock, shock to the system
It feel good, well alright
Like a shock to the system
I say yeah
Ain't it irie"



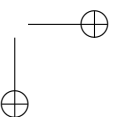
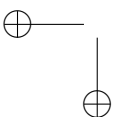


VIDEOGAMES

ANOTHER WORLD

One of the most brilliant videogames in its recent cyberculture, *Another World* (1991) – designed by the prolific Delphine Software –, was with no regards one of the best videogames ever released, worthy of the cyberpunk style label, for the Commodore AMIGA in the nineties. In aesthetic terms, *Another World* was a blockbuster, and in gameplay it was amazing. Basically it was a platform genre videogame which required from the player some mastery to keep the character alive because all the action occurred in an alien planet. It is possible that this is one of the most remarkable videogames bringing the virtual to a videogame. Hence the vectorial design of characters and landscapes, featured in awesome cinematic fashion, are truly a sample of what can be called “parallel world”. Eric Chahi’s creation is an outstanding videogame which fast-forward for its time. Without Chahi’s graphic stunt the whole concept of the game might be missed if the game didn’t had this cinematic performance as a ludic cyberspace.

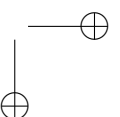
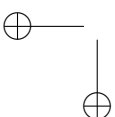
According to the story of the game, *Another World’s* main character is a Lester Knight, a young red-hair scientist, who was leading a bold scientific experiment. He enters the lab wearing a T-shirt, as his facial expression showed both a knowledge position and rebelliousness. Like a Hollywood film, *Another World* was an action game, yet it looked like an action film. In the intro sequence we see Lester getting in the lab as something wicked happens in there. The 3D graphic animations were so remarkable for its time that sometimes the player forgot that he was watching a game. Moreover, *Another World* we saw how undoubtedly videogames would surpass cinema or appropriate for its language. As we left skid-marks in the desert sand a trail of





sands gets marked on the soil. A Ferrari is driven to the lab where Lester will be transported to the “Another World”. A thrilling music, incredible sound effects make the mood for the game when from the gothic lab, Lester jumps to an alien planet. As Lester arrives, the entire landscape changes right after he runs into the lab, the fast key typing and the black nebulae hovering its place in the region like an UFO. The purpose of the visit was to take as an advantage of the bolt strike from thunder storm to get a push to “another world”. By taking the kinetic charge of the lightning bolt, Lester is carried on a trip where he would be the hero.

One of the unforgettable shots is when Lester gets into the particle accelerator, after being through the security systems. Not much time after Lester runs a simulation in the console when the particles dislocated are accidentally overcharged by the lightning bolt that strikes the lab antennae, whose consequence is the trip to the virtual dimension. Along the game Lester is playing and also featuring cinematic cutscenes in the vectorial 3D animations, as we manage to know more of the story and the coming stunts between the other characters and his alien friend. Since the lab is electrified, Lester and the console are disassembled and reassembled back in the new world, though they appear underwater. Because the entire situation was unexpected, Lester forgets about the console and starts swimming up to escape the monster awakening underneath him. The tentacles were pursuing Lester’s feet like snakes. Ever since he crashes in the new world of vectorial menaces the whole game is a runaway, a very strategic escape in a 3D world inside the gamespace. Many were the game sequences when besides the first level of action the player would see the second level of action happening distantly in the back. These sequences turned the player into a voyeur because the games’ graphic structure allowed players to see several parts of action like a film. It was, in fact, “another world”! The game was so successful that Delphine Software made also remarkable in the Commodore AMIGA the sequel *Flashback* (1995) and also a third episode, which many consider to be a continuation, the videogame *Fade To Black* (1996).





BENEATH A STEEL SKY

Legendary software house Revolution Software released in 1994 the Sci-Fi adventure *Beneath a Steel Sky*. According to the title, this so-called “cyber-adventure” was set in a future and very similar to the one depicted in *Blade Runner*, and a landscape full of skyscrapers and machines. Beneath a steel atmosphere the character had to find his own way to solve a mystery. The game’s title owes pretty much to Scott’s Sci-Fi film, where corporate monster buildings stand still prominent before the ground horizontality. Their size is so big that they actually hide the sun, hence touching the city ceiling all over the metropolitan airspace, inseparable from friend food smoke and *ganja* clouds.

Not like many of its time, *Beneath The Steel Sky* is a videogame that corroborate the graphic-adventure genre and which, circa nineteen-ninety-three, under the Revolution Soft label, was in competition with *Flashback*, *Another World’s* fabulous sequel, to be the favorite cyberpunk ambience videogame, designed by illustrator Dave Gibbons.

Not just by taking as inspiration ingredients from *Blade Runner*, *Beneath The Steel Sky* also managed to import some outlines from George Orwell’s *Nineteen-Eighty-Four* futuristic Dystopia, because the “city of steel”, whose sky is all over with its grotesque popped-up hardware, in this Revolution Software videogame, is super-protected, surveilled by CCTV cameras managed by a super-machine that everybody believes to be cybernetic and omnivident.

The player plays with a character very similar to Deckard in the K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* novel called Robert Foster. This character is along the game the one who we share this cyberpunk epopey with; he is just a man looking for his identity, chased by bizarre imagery of his childhood, that in a certain moment others address him as being the “Overmann”. By playing with Foster, we realize he was part of the spaceship crew which crashed down in the middle of the megalopolis, so we are told by a flashback process containing imageries to clarify the narrative. The flashback images disclosure the ship crashing in the city, regarding no plausible explanation. This way, as the game starts, there isn’t much of a sequenced story as there isn’t a coherent character’s identity either. But as the plot unfolds every thing keeps integral, thus the player begins to comprehend the mega-city which is governed by a sinister council and computer called “LINC”. With the help of





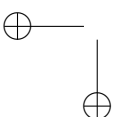
“droid” one tries to discover why our character was kidnapped, and dropped on the megalopolis, during the entire cybernetically surveilled adventure.

BLADE RUNNER

The Blade Runner Partnership and Westwood games merged efforts in nineteen-ninety-seven to make the official videogame version of *Blader Runner*, the movie. The game extends Ridley Scott visuals, which is very responsible for Gibson’s imaginary, exploring to breakthrough legacy of writer Philip K. Dick. The supreme questions concerning this writer’s subjects were the manipulated realities, parallel worlds and Real/Virtual intersection provoked confusion. Everything is at stake around this intersection, which is very well continued in a glamorous way. Though questions like “realization”, “de-realization”, “alienation” and “schizoid” are explored throughout the game, in a very noble fashion, managing do augment the vision of *Blade Runner’s* Director. No poor mimetics included in this game version of the film. The game even happens to reveal questions derived of other K. Dick’s work; many of them remained not that obvious in the motion picture of Scott.

The story unfolds with Ray McCoy – the blade runner – whose mission is to find out the whereabouts of a killer. It all began in the Runciters expensive organic pet shop, the place where the animals are killed. Due to their value, these organic animals were very easy selling items, and because they weren’t electrical, so they were rare and considered to be prestigious assets. All the investigation is lead by McCoy, the main game character, the mission is to find out who did the obscene killing at Runciters. The strange case of the animals’ murder was assigned to McCoy by the new police station lieutenant of the blade runners unit.

Filled with amazing cinematic sequences, this adventure invokes the hybrid imaginary of both Scott and K. Dick, hence brought to life by Westwood Studios. Many of the sequences existing in this game are a mixture of the environments conceived by K. Dick and Scott restyled ambiences, yet there are plenty of new spectacular scenes. The programming and script of the game are very sharp and denote a high quality standard, because they’re loyal to the so-called cyberpunk ambience. Some details, such as the non-linear interactive narrative, the programming of every graphic element which was able to





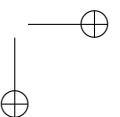
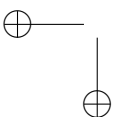
clarify the implied concern on K. Dick's dichotomy of Real and Virtual, are some of the key-points that elected *Blade Runner* as the first great game based on a great movie which is based on a great book.

What is worth to underline here, for example (not in the menu option interface) the possibility to change during the game to be blade runners or replicants. Changing point of view is interesting. At a certain moment of the narrative, the sound design, as well as the 3D graphics, is responsible for the questioning we do about McCoy's notion of the Real. The existing CGI footage, in which McCoy character's discourse is quite relevant to keep the schizo ambience believable as a K. Dickeyan generation universe, is just one of the key-points that turned *Blade Runner* the most successful videogame based in the imaginary of writing considered now to be pre or protocyberpunk.

Two-thousand and nineteen's Los Angeles is a ground from replicants and *blade runners* – the cops –, a place where no outlaw android is allowed to go. In the story, the intrigue gets thicker as we have to discover the killer of the organic animals by using only the VK (Voight-Kampff) empathy test and the cybernetic speech recognition video system "Esper"¹⁸, to interact in three-dimensional way with two-dimensional photograms, in order to discover relevant clues to solve the case. The only problem is that from a certain point in the game, whether we are replicants or not, no one really knows what is to have the privacy. All that exists in McCoy's apartment is an ordinary electric dog and pervasive light beams from outside the windows, side by side with promotional neons flashing into the apartment indoors. As a game, *Blade Runner* allows us to question too, even with clues gathered by the player, the quick appearance we have in the police headquarters, and the reason why we are assigned with the organic animals' murder. In the last case scenario we have to runaway with the replicants to another place or decide to kill them all, but the last hypothesis is the most plausible one since we start to suspect our very own human condition. Actually, one of the characters in the game, Chris Steel, becomes friend of McCoy and is able to identify McCoy as a replicant.

The plot is not much different from the movie directed by Scott; more or less length is not what matters as the story ends with no real answer to define who is who, or, in last case, who is replicant. Following a K. Dickeyan style

¹⁸"Esper" is the German word meaning "form", "figure" or "configuration".





of plot and speaking the man-machine relationship of the game is a very well explained core.

Some characters are added, like Lucy, an undoubtedly cyberpunk figure, unexisting in the film. The game enjoys its length to make players understand questions impossible to figure out in the two-hour film length. We may also say that, much better than the film, some questions concern the animal-human relationship are more extended like the relationship in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Book. Another interesting detail is that the videogame explored too the ambience and design of Syd Mead, Scott's envisioning film direction, but the game would have no coherence if there was no K. Dick writing as a backbone to unleash a such powerful imagery.

One can observe the airspace of Los Angeles being redesigned by spiral smoke trails of police hovercars; the way the entire metropolitan area introduces to us cities merging; how colossal architecture are empty to increase mobile population in the street; and all this is visible thanks to the game developers. They did a non-linear narrative for the game, as labyrinthic as K. Dick's visions themselves replete of strata and substrata. Although, Vangelis music: for the end-titles of the game, which copy the original movie end-titles, has managed to imitate a key-element, its *soundscape*, of the movie aesthetic.

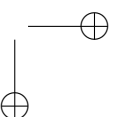
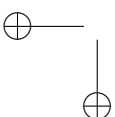
In other words, we may say that the game is able to materialize a set of representations which are all in *Blade Runner* the film; yet the niponic faces featured in promotional ads in skyscraper walls are not in second placed.

In a very polite way there is an artistic quoting of *Neuromancer's* most famous characters – the dub-addicted orbital Rastafarians –, which usually are forgotten in relation to the character Case, but they star in *Blade Runner*, the game. The Rastafarians look aestheticized outlaws as contemporary as any dreadlocks cosmetic, fashion punk of nowadays. Their colored lens aerodynamic goggles, the long modular black fiber-shaped, curled in the back, “rasta” haircut turned them in icons of the game. Above all such characters absorbed every *Afrofuturism* inherent to the *dub* masters, the *dub reggae* music figures.

CYBERSPACE

Developed by Empire Software in nineteen-ninety-three, *Cyberspace* was, as

www.labcom.pt





the title addresses, a game about cyberspace. By following William Gibson's visions, and the theory of French philosopher René Descartes concerning a subject-controlled object on an orthogonal grid before a mathematical horizon, Empire Software tried to make an official cyberspace videogame. A decade after the worldwide publishing of the astonishing *Neuromancer*, *Cyberspace* was a videogame exhibiting a recreation of Gibson's cybernetic game space whose origins were primitive videogames and military experiment. *Cyberspace* is released and conceals the mathmatization of the world mentioned by Descartes and the *multidimensional* perspective of the Gibson's "Matrix". The game platform was PC, the chose medium to play a possible cyberspace in a RPG (Role Playing Game) ludic genre style.

Playing *Cyberspace*, one sees a three-dimensional environment of a virtual city, with one hundred buildings as a set to walkthrough in a first person perspective. In the videogame culture, *Cyberspace* was precursor of "in your face" videogames such as *Doom* (1993) and *Quake* (1996). The cyberspace of the game was basically an orthogonal colored much like *Tron's* (1981) grid, with some three-dimensional objects every now and then, simple and convex, whose bright vertices remind us of Atari videogames of the seventies and eighties. *Tron* is an influence because it was a film about a videogame. Every landscape in this motion picture was colorful and vectorial, a gamescape importing digitized users enslaved to play inside a Virtual Reality. Transported to the "game grid" of *Tron*, users would find a competitive place where characters could not set free from its information architectures. Two years after the releas of *Tron* and *Cyberspace* was launched, looking pretty similar, in a devotional matter, to *Tron*. As the player plays *Cyberspace* he finds himself being transposed to a new territory, a digital place resembling what the matrix looked like to Case in 3D digital space of *Neuromancer* or *Tron's* ludic world seen by Flynn.

As *Tron* is the film based on the computer game, *Cyberspace* is also considered a complicated replication. Hence it has a cyberspace inside the *Cyberspace* within the game itself. This way the game complicates the virtuality and the "interzonal" side of the cyberpunk universe. The cyberspace-game-world is one thing only, like the liquid mirror of the matrix inside *The Matrix*, or *Tron's* gamescape inside *Tron's* film. To tell the story of *Cyberspace*, in a science-fiction style, that the world was destroyed and the inhabitants of the former world turn their attention to virtual architectures to walkthrough. Once

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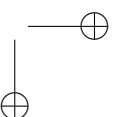




inside the cyberspace, an iconic menu would let us choose among several possibilities which representation pleased us the most. It all happened in fast, extensive and mysterious landscapes. Someone at the time of *Cyberspace's* release said this game was a cross between Disney's *Tron* and Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland*. In the same story genre as *Interphase* (1989), another remarkable videogame on cyberculture themes, *Cyberspace* is a parallel realm, inhabited by one million possible characters to interact with. Their goal is to retrieve information that make their trip more empowered on the vectorial spaces.

DELTA V

In the year nineteen-ninety-three the world could not forget the software house which designed *Delta V*: Bethesda Softworks. Unfortunately the name of the software house is still a brand name, unlike *Delta V* which is left to oblivion till today. Much before contemporary videogames where players do something inside a corridor-like architecture, *Delta V* was one that used such aesthetic in order to provide graphic consistency to an obviously prosthetic environment designed to host fast races. Those artificial places were by no means mimetic with the photography-based Real, for their purpose was only to make the player get inside to a computer-generated virtual world. *Delta V*, in this context, would be a sort of arena for cyberspatial competitive struggles, whose vectorial graphics suit fit the virtual label entirely. Geometrically rough and simple, *Delta V* gamescape was by far in contrast with the real world Hi-Def, or Hi-Res. In this gameplay zone, all fights were perverse and occurred in dramatic air dogfights. The story of *Delta V* explains that the youngsters fought for the title of race winner, searching for a *status quo*, a "street cred", like cyberpunk novel's *hackers* and "cyberspace cowboys". These players, called "NetRunners", lived to get the title in the video-game. Playing cyberspaces to become the best NetRunner is the goal of the youngmen, but it could only come true if they would find precious information to work as trade currency in the digital spaces. The more these players were interconnected, the more they would win boldly any adventure in the information space easily. *Delta V* is one of the NetRunners name, in fact the most promising determined to dethrone all the competition linked up to win the total virtual war game. For its





time, *Delta V* is an outstanding game, visually sharp, aesthetically seductive and by definition it still allows us today to think of it as a virtual reality genre game, despite it is played on a screen.

ENTER THE MATRIX

As one of *The Matrix* media by-products, *Enter The Matrix* was the first game to be released inspired by *The Matrix Trilogy*. The same software house which developed *MDK* (1997) – Shiny Entertainment – did also *Enter The Matrix*, a videogame that features the storyline of *The Matrix Reloaded*. Of course it is wise to see also *The Animatrix* (Mahiro Maeda *et al*, 2003) to be further aware of *The Matrix* universe as to offer. Integrating a cross-media regime, *Enter The Matrix* lets players to be in parts of the story whose scenes are parallel to the parts that for example Neo flies heading for the highway. So in the “meanwhile”, *Enter The Matrix* allows players to choose Ghost or Niobe and go for the rescue of Morpheus as he fights in the truck trailer with a very strong agent.

One of the most amazing elements of *Enter The Matrix* is the straight adaptation of the narrative, characters, places and choreographies of the film. Niobe and Ghost are the main characters to unveil *The Matrix* delusional universe, so Neo is only relevant in one part of the game. Besides that, players get to play with Neo in a videogame just for Neo’s fans: *The Matrix: Path of Neo* (2005). Unlike First Person Shooters, *Enter The Matrix* is a very interesting game but it is designed to be played in a third person perspective. Sound effects and characters allow players to feel like they’re inside *The Matrix* film series, playing a motion picture. The amount and high-quality of details is awesome, nevertheless, even if *Max Payne* (2001) was pioneer in simulating the “bullet time” effects of *The Matrix*, *Enter The Matrix* manages to do such effect in an official and credible way, as a game resource for players. In this sense, one may say that there are so much copied slow-motion effect of making enemies slower, and it sounds like things are happening in aquatic depths, becomes a weapon in itself against SWAT hordes and armies of cloned Agents.

The visual are very impressive, *eyeware*, *streetwear*, vehicles and urban landscape, voices and *décors* match the film series style, opening a fashion

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punk realm for the cyberpunk, as Neo looks a heir of *Neuromncer's* case. Despite one does not play with Neo most of the time, Ghost and Niobe, one as a weaponry guy, and the second a ship captain, manage to do several impressive stunts in the kung-fu acrobatics that made the film series so easy-seeing. The videogame script, the narrative, was also written by Larry & Andy Wachowski, who envisioned this official *The Matrix* videogame as a complement, an *add-on* to the motion pictures images with interactivity and challenging puzzles.

GHOST IN THE SHELL

After the success of the manga comics and the anime film version of Masamune Shirow's *Ghost In The Shell*, Exact/Ultra released in 1997 the videogame version of this cyberpunk universe to please fans, mostly Japanese fans. The game features characters, animation sequences, sounds and music to make players more involved in Shirow's universe. As we see in the comic version, the Fuchikoma assault vehicles are very common, a sort of cybernetic archny-dean armored suit to protect security agents from being wounded. The protagonist of this action videogame is Major Motoko Kusanagi, a cyborg member of the public security bureau Section 9. Making players have fun with such odd vehicle is interesting in the game design, but it is also a sign that the game is again about machines, and in machines. Cyborg Kusanagi has a very subtle presence in the game because players play most parts with the robot resembling a spyder, since we believe some characters are inside piloting it. Like in the comic and the anime version, our goal is the same, to eliminate crime, terrorists, always counting on team work, or team slaughter. Futuristic cityscapes, *techno* music, fashion punk characters, Japanese style and digital hype décors make the *Ghost In The Shell* videogame interesting, but not a historic item. The story features elements common to the anme version, but this time a terrorist cell called Human Liberaton movement wants to eradicate cyborgs. They even manage to explode the cyborg body developer Mega-Tech Body Corps, in order to make their point of view worth it. If the storyline is not that much original, fortunately the character design is from Shirow and is fetish, from mechs, to 3D environments, unveiling once more the Japanese obsession with mechs and insect-shaped robotics. One of the disconcerting





aspects of the game, is the robot that we can control and ask it to play, jump, dodge and shoot in this futurama world, also in fact it is able to climb surfaces and walk on ceilings. The result is a strange vehicle behavior which makes the player forget where is each coordinate and the visual upside-down perspective becomes strange as the cyberdelic *soundscape* keeps on pumping hard *house* beats.

INTERPHASE

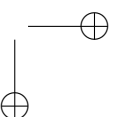
Interphase (1989) is an historic videogame too. In this case an Imageworks videogame for the 16 bit Commodore AMIGA desktop computer. In the same trend as *Delta V* and *Cyberspace*, *Interphase* manages to show the virtual landscapes so much in vogue in the nineties. At its time, *Interphase* was considered as a medium quality game. Although, its game rules made players feel what it is to be in the gamespace of computerized plots. Like most cyberpunk videogames, it explored the action, adventure and riddles style. A dense, multi-layered scenario of translucent moving parts was supposed to make the player's life hard, and the escape or the entrance very complicated too. Considering the gamespace as a graphic, three-dimensional interactive matrix, the purpose of playing it was to hack a computer network and, this way, guide our girlfriend (tells the story) throughout the virtual realm, so that she could discover the memory banks in cyberspace storing our last dream.

The game starts in one of the first floors of the information building and the idea was to make us climb, floor – by-floor, from bottom to the top. Once we reach the top, we had to find where the last dream was becoming a stored relic. At our disposal we had just a spaceship to penetrate the Virtual World and obtain the dream, yet to do so we had to guide our girlfriend through the networked computer's world. Computers tried to sabotage our efforts by hiding out our dream. These machines also had intelligent defense measures that recorded our track or did zapping to us.

MIRROR'S EDGE

In 2008 DICE (Digital Illusions Creative Company), an EA (Electronic Arts) Company, released *Mirror's Edge*, an action-adventure game in which play-

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ers see all the action in a first-person perspective like they do in First Person Shooter videogames. This videogame has outstanding visuals and soundtrack, but the most addictive element in the gameplay is the new breakthrough format. DICE have implemented in this game. In spite of the existing shooting sequences, where cops hunt down the main character of the game, the one player control in the game, the game is not about shooting monsters or exploding things up. *Mirror's Edge* revolutionary gameplay is all about using the environment as a weapon, a mean to an end. So for the first time in the now mainstream videogame culture, players are allowed to experience a true virtual world, photo-realistic and fun, where the goal is not the killing but the evasion of assault teams.

In this DICE's videogame players find a bright city, very luminous architecture, daytime gameplay, where things got messed up like in any Utopian sprawl of cyberpunk science-fiction. Unlike dark gothic "blade runnerized" sprawls of many Sci-Fi scenarios, in *Mirror's Edge*, we find a shiny environment where physical movement is required to surpass the obstacles of architecture mazes and cop pursuits.

The main character of the game is charismatic girl, called Faith, a short dark hair asian athletic rebel that runs across rooftops and walls to escape from the military forces controlling the city where incoming illegal messages are forbidden. Faith cativates the player who controls her in the game. Her asian look, white skin, sportswear unveiling an athletic body and the fashion tattoos on the face and right arm make her one remarkable videogame character. By using one or two controls besides direction, the player may control Faith in a skyline full of glassy buildings and design advertising. Like the high-quality soundtrack and sound design, much of Faith's appearance looks like a cybernetic version of Björk singer mixed up with *The Matrix's* Trinity. Never before, a female character has been so much original since *Tomb Raider's* (1996) Lara Croft hit the videogames blockbuster business. Some of the footage, introduction sequences and concept art show how Faith was observing the sunny metropolitan cityscape in a neo-romantic way. Such an interesting game could only emerge after *The Matrix* film trilogy and the global pop culture of fashion punks, MTV videoclips and the rock star met globalization. In a certain way, Faith is a daytime version of James Cameron & Charles H. Eglee's *Dark Angel* (2000) character played by actress Jessica Alba, because in both dystopias we may find a cyberpunk staring at the hori-





zon, except in *Mirror's Edge* the day can also look pretty dark, and this time the “angel” has an Asian face.

So in DICE's *Mirror's Edge* players get amused easily by mesmerizing behavior of Faith in the urban landscape, a sexy athletic cyberpunk trying to beat the system in the real world, the world exists in off-line computers. It looks also quite hard by trying to separate the Faith character from the cityscape, for they appear to be made to fit each other. As the city unveils its billboard advertisements, skyscrapers and quietness, every corner and ladder look like a leverage for Faith's acrobacies. Likewise the architecture of the game requires characters capability to surpass obstacles, breaking through every hard wall in order to achieve the desired destination.

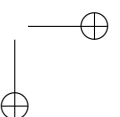
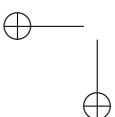
At first glance, *Mirror's Edge* main character looks a new cosmetic Asian punk performing stunts like Trinity did in *The Matrix Reloaded*. However the gameplay makes us feel a Japanese sense of peace and a Western desire to disrespect military authority. According to the exciting storyline of *Mirror's Edge*:

“Once this city used to pulse with energy; dirty and dangerous, but alive and wonderful. Now it is something else. The changes came slowly at first. Most did not realize or did not care, and accepted them. They chose a comfortable life. Some didn't. . . they became our clients”.

The plot which Faith explains is all about a city where information is so heavily monitored that agile couriers, called “Runners”, transport sensitive data away from prying eyes. We begin to play in this seemingly utopian paradise knowing that a crime has been committed, Faith's sister has been framed and now we are being hunted too. Innovation in the gameplay is something that does not mirrors exactly like in the story, in the deepest sense, because in *Johnny Mnemonic*, written by William Gibson, the data courier was a subject already explored in a cinematic way. Though, *Mirror's Edge* adds some new features; first is the most original cyberpunk videogame after *The Matrix Trilogy* motion pictures and its franchised videogames were released; and second, it brings altogether videogame culture and science-fiction without exploring any well-known brand from the past.

The revolution of *Mirror's Edge* is its game engine physics, the programming code that let players see and do the things they do in the game. Much more ahead of any First Person Shooter videogame, like *Doom*, *Quake* or

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even *Crysis*, *Mirror's Edge* summons the FPS genre not to the shooting but to a peaceful gameplay, where players can shoot but the goal is to escape from confusion and deliver packages. For a start, *Mirror's Edge* sets up a brand new style in the subjective cyberspace experience, due to the sounds provided for the gameplay. Players can listen to Faith running, breathing, walking, grabbing things, sliding in tube or climbing; when sliding on a cable Faith's respiration is notorious and even her field of vision changes. Hands on objects and environment's objects, sight and heart beats are very well recreated in the game. From first glance it looks like a videogame but when you look closely, sometimes it looks more like a sports simulator. Making the FPS interface a convention out of a genre which are marked by steady camera perspectives.

The acrobatics Faith performs in every place to get to the destination are called "Parkour"¹⁹

Half of *Mirror's Edge* charm belongs to the architecture that suggests during the chases and evasions what may be the next path suit to our needs. One key point in *Mirror's Edge* is that players are always feeling like Deckard in *Blade Runner*, as if they are always chasing or being chased, in a K. Dickeyan way. The "edge" in this game is the cutting-edge, where we may go in this clean like distopia; which somehow looks like the sets of movie *The Island* (Michael Bay, 2005). Faith believes she is literally on the edge of society in a clean, vivid, gleaming city skyline, where dark things may happen to someone "outside a system". Tall shimmering skyscrapers make the city look almost like an utopia, yet it isn't. So Faith doesn't agree with the strange laws which are coming and a revolution starts to blossom in backstreets, as she and other people are being criminalized, ostracized.

Power in *Mirror's Edge* city is so much non-democratic that Faith only has her body as a weapon, so the only real weapons players will find in the game are the ones used by police forces. Practically the game is born out of

¹⁹"Parkour" is an art of changing course in the urban landscape. Originally it was founded by David Belle in France and it became a trendy sport of changing technically trajectories in places. Men are called *traceurs* and women *traceuses* because they run across a path making an impossible trace possible thanks to sudden movements., an urban movement of sport that people practice in public space, by taking advantage of grids, stairs, pipes, rooftops and other kinds of surfaces allowing one to jump or climb down some places. In short, *Mirror's Edge* combines FPS and parkour, which means hardcore cyberpunk videogames and sports simulator action.



the movements that Faith is able to do. Weapons are in the game, but are not the main item, in opposition to regular First Person Shooter videogames (so the subjective experience is maintained but not for target practice). As the gameplay makes us understand easily, weapons restrict our movements, not allowing us to do the jumps, the grabs and the swings. Which means either we choose for the guns (and we just shoot back) or we choose for physical freedom (and cannot shoot back). Let's say that during the game players have to choose trading short-term firepower in exchange for movements and speed. Same thing happened in *Doom 3* (2005) where players had to choose between using the flashlight in a creepy place or switching to the gun with the lights off.

Attractive and perfect, the world of *Mirror's Edge* appears very challenging. Basically it is an open world, not gigantic, and the goal is the movement of the character in itself. Motion in rooftops, walls, pipes, grids, windows, subway tunnels, is most of what the game seems to offer. Though, as we play in *Mirror's Edge* we can easily grasp that in sunny days, in afternoon and sunsets, Faith meets no intimidation, so every place looks like a new place. In this way, we are told by Faith that:

“Here on the edge of the city...
Things have changed. Something is happening.
They have taken my sister.
Framed her for a crime she did not commit.
And now they are hunting me.
But just because I don't have a weapon does not mean I can't fightback.
So now I am coming back after whoever is behind this.
On the Edge of the city you find out who you really are.”

The fashion punk looks of Faith cannot hide the cyberpunk attitude which was the character setting given by the developers. High-Rez graphics, awesome sound design, atmospheric sound effects, glossy textures and introspective music make *Mirror's Edge* a strong cyberpunk title, even if it doesn't look directly as so. Asian faced-characters are not chosen to be often featured as videogame's main characters, unless in the Nintendo world, because the hardcore videogame *milieu* requires less fancy and more glory games. Like the Asian faces of skyscraper advertising in *Blade Runner*, Faith's face looks familiar and very fast-forward at the same time. Dressed in streetwear fashion,





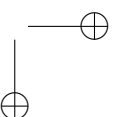
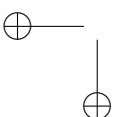
the character exhibits permanent make up tattoos beneath the right eye and cyber tribal inscriptions on her right arm as well.

Originality in *Mirror's Edge* concerns the fact that this game puts us straight into the shoes of a heroine as she traverses the vertigo-inducing cityscape, engaging in intense fight and thrilling chases. Thanks to its outstanding game engine, *Mirror's Edge* allows players to experience a sense of movement and perspective that has never before seen; by importing the FPS interface of subjective cyberspace we are drawn into Faith's world.

Running in this seductive but surveilled city-world is the rule of the game. Players perform so much running in parkour-style in *Mirror's Edge* that they get addicted to the white-blue aesthetics of the cityscape. Working as a help system, the colored zones are good to show Faith the best path for the get-a-way. If *Vertigo* (Hitchcock, 1958) was artistically quoted by *The Matrix's* initial shooting sequence across the rooftops, then *The Matrix* is quoted in *Mirror's Edge*. How players can jump over solar panels, slide down the cables and climbing all things up, while listen to the wind, is something possible now because the videogame medium extends to the film medium.

Mirror's Edge is synonymous of Virtual Reality straight from corporate developers to make players feel like they're on the street, even if its still cyberspace. Considering the gameplay, *Mirror's Edge* shows no negative impact, for it increases the field of view, letting players to use fences or jumping over grid walls. At a simple level it all has to do with the focal point on the screen, that make players see the most optimized route to keep in time. As a player we have to dominate accurate moves and look at red reference points, the color parts on the scenario. If we do not, we risk ourselves to face the vertigo of the fall before dying by making bad options. No other game makes players feel "inside" the game as much as *Mirror's Edge*. Everything is involving, from the slick moves, to the clean city, the background of police sirens faraway.

Perhaps in a homage to Kathryn Bigelow's *Strange Days* movie, some action sequences and fast-paced pursuits of *Mirror's Edge* look like a virtual gameplay of the initial rooftop chasing sequence of *Strange Days*. And everytime a helicopter shows up we can run for its direction and grab its landing gear to swing and jump right to the rooftop on the other side of it. There is not even one thing left to oblivion in *Mirror's Edge* city, because this is not a gameplay following just one path. Players choose which path they like the





most and face the consequences of their actions. Nevertheless the entire city seems a maze to explore, where lobbies are full of cops shooting, air ducts can be used to escape and closed doors demand an opening kick.

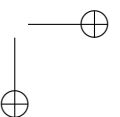
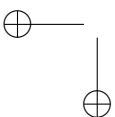
Its all about keeping the pace, keep on running in *Mirror's Edge*, a white porcelanic, antiseptic place that looks more like a city to run away from than a place to inhabit. Instead of citizens we see cops and snipers that we ought to outgun. After all, playing unarmed implies that we have to explore a world and strip their guns with a certain gimmick. The strategy is to separate their groups, escape and beat them whenever we have an opportunity, one by one, yet we can just play without shooting. Who said videogames were just about violence?

The objective of hiring a Runner, like Faith, is to take packages and deliver them to friends. Intuitive button combination provides fun and integration in a virtual world where all sensitive moves against the wall or within it have an acrobatic outcome. It is the game within the game in a triple feature of chase, combat and puzzle. We see skylines and rooftops as the perfect arena to fight in, sometimes the martial arts moves as the flykick can be quite useful against foes. Like in *The Matrix*, an operator keeps telling us what to do and which path is the most correct and threat free. After several decades of videogaming, *Mirror's Edge* looks like a first-person version of *Tomb Raider* set in a near future.

With no blossoming explosions, *Mirror's Edge* is fascinating. Glossy environments, breath-taking evasions and *ambient* music are some of the trademarks of its aesthetics. The cyberpunk outlawness is underlined in this DICE's videogame, where Faith must be lead to lean against walls, try slippery tunnels, press buttons, hang on ledges and find as many exit routes as possible to avoid police controlled streets. As she mentions:

“In a city where information is heavily monitored, agile couriers called runners carry sensitive information on foot via the rooftops and skyways. Usually the police leave them alone - they have bigger fish to fry - but now something has changed..”

In the media theory field, like *Johnny Mnemonic*, *Mirror's Edge* is focused on information transport and media sabotage. That is why we play with the sexy Asian fashion punk, Faith, the best and most agile of all runners, in an adrenaline-fuelled race to save her sister's life as she unveils a bigger





plot involving the whole city and the runners. *Mirror's Edge* is a cutting-edge videogame that restyles the FPS genre by introducing a full body virtualization, the dream of all cyberpunk players, turned into a videogame.

SKYNET

A year after the release of *Terminator: Future Shock* (1995) software house and publisher Bethesda Softworks released the sequel *SkyNet* (1996) for PC based game platform. The battle between human resistance and the evil exoskeletons continues in this second First Person Shooter videogame where, as a member of the human resistance fighters left, led by John Connor, the player has to terminate the terminators that spread in the wasteland that once was Los Angeles cityscape. As *SkyNet* prepares itself to launch a nuclear missile to make the human race extinct, the player has to perform outstanding combat stunts to accomplish the resistance goals. The dark blue twilights and the apocalyptical night have a contrast in the shiny metal red-eyed killing machines, which makes them easy prey for the spotting resistance fighters. A good thing in the game is that players can actually engage in battle with the terminators and use the weaponry and vehicles that are shown on the futures scenes in the film. Resistance fighters have to sabotage the missile launch and do it in a very graphically interesting atmosphere that is able to recreate the movie visuals in an interactive way. The problems besides terminators are the aerial Hunter-Killer ships. Ships that manage to hunt us down, like the cyborgs, across the eight missions which are available in the single player game mode.

SYNDICATE/SYNDICATE WARS

Between nineteen-ninety-three and nineteen-ninety-seve, Bullfrog software house release two best-seller videogames, the first was *Syndicate* (1993) and the second was *Syndicate Wars* (1997). The emergent strategy videogame genre was very pushed up by mythical Bullfrog company and it was published by the famous international publisher Electronics Arts. Embedded in action scenes, *Syndicate* was a videogame where players so the action in an isometric perspective. This new three-dimensional form of seeing the action is to

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let players see all the happening in a “god’s eye” perspective. The cyberpunk perspective of *Syndicate* was fun, and so well received as the male audiences of players that is called *Syndicate Wars*, which Bullfrog released four years later, expressing the need for games inspired in films as *Blade Runner* and *The Terminator*.

The introduction sequence featured a futuristic city, at night, where promotional screens were every corner, and aerodynamic automobiles crossed every road. The nightscape was so sinister that any glittering neon would be noticed easily. The airspace could only more remarked by searchlights in Hollywood action film style. With a slightly high-tech scenario and simultaneously gothic, *Syndicate* introduced a narrative in which the game was all about street fighting among criminal organizations, the syndicates. Street outlawness, typical in cyberpunk universes, was just one of the reasons to legitimate a videogame whose characters would be cyborg agents dressed in cyberpunk fashion. Partially overpowered by their prosthetics, the agents would become stronger, faster and sharper shooters to take down any rival syndicate group. The prosthetics were augmenting and increasing skills of characters, like the bionic leg, the cyber-eye or the cyborg arm. The better this parts were tuned, the more powerful would become the character, thus having fast walk, a more accurate shooting or able to carry heavier firearms.

By providing a certain idea of street syndicates, *Syndicate*, as a game, revealed for the first time in videogames cybernetic characters being tuned in gyrosphere systems to increase manpower capabilities with prosthetics. The perfect assassin was hence forged in a workshop, so it is told in *Syndicate*, a game where the player could enjoy annihilating rival syndicates with characters who wear collars lifted up, mirroshades in *Neuromantic* fashion and colored spiky haircuts. If the game interface appealed to the green holograms, then the silicon chip implants in the brain of our agents would accomplish the cyborguization so many times mentioned by the cyberpunk writers.

THE MATRIX: ONLINE

In spite of its very late release *The Matrix: Online* (2005) debut was relevant to finish all *The Matrix* installments in the videogame world. The dream of every cyberpunk player of videogames would definitely ready to play it online.

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Because *The Matrix* universe is all about hacking in the simulator of a Western World cityscape of late 20th century, *The Matrix: Online* manages to provide that experience very well. Six years after the release of the first film in 1999, *The Matrix: Online* is available to players who want to get in *The Matrix* as the matrix realm shows itself through a network connection. The plot puts players in action sequences played by AI bots and teammates as everything happening occurs after the three films mythology. In other words, *The Matrix: Online* is the utmost *The Matrix* videogame, like the film series. At last it is possible for fans to choose a character, fight kung fu with agents and dominate the *The Matrix* urban landscape so that Zion can never be destroyed and the machine pursuits are not a menace anymore. One of the interesting new features, and which makes sense, is that online game is a MMORPG (Massive Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game) to let players evolve, conquer space and defeat the machines. What we expect to find in *The Matrix: Online* is a cyberpunk dream, no longer dependent on Nokia cell phone calls, but set up on network gameplay in broadband access. So the skyscraper scenario, the alleys where to run away from agents, the rooftop chases and the fights are all very much like players we saw in the film trilogy, but is not easy, one must say.

The city where the game unfolds features all numb fashion citizens who live their lives as agents patrol space looking for resistance avatars in order to win the war between man and AI. As resistance troops fighters, players must get in this grand illusion and win the battles in the digital representation of reality. For the fans the level of customization provided is very high, unlike in other *The Matrix* videogames released so far. Uploading knowledge, weapons and anything else become possible as the Role Play style allows gamers to make their avatars when and what they see best fit their needs they really want to upload whatever they want to for the characters. May we assume this is a totally cyberpunk for gamers?

THE MATRIX: PATH OF NEO

In the same year when *The Matrix: Online* was released, the developer Shiny Entertainment improved its game physics in the all-new *The Matrix: Path of Neo*, and this time gamers could play with Neo, instead of playing with Niobe or Ghost as it happens in *Enter The Matrix*. Getting the synthesized reality of

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The Matrix: Path of Neo makes gamers feel like what they always wanted to feel like: how does it feel to be like Neo. Ever since the *The Matrix* first film was released that fans dream of playing in High-Res with characters of *The Matrix Trilogy*, doing stunt fightings and running away from agents in alleys of some 20th century cityscape.

We may suggest the game title that Neo has its own path, for he is the one everybody expects to restore the balance in the world. Also if Neo is the main character to play with, wearing mirrorshades dark caped suits and priest styled collars, no one can doubt that *The Matrix: Path of Neo* is a title that makes sense. Besides that, for the first time players identify one hundred percent with the game avatar, unlike in other previous *The Matrix* game releases. This episode provides a cyberpunk action adventure for fans and other gamers of high-quality; it is quite interesting that instead of playing in an extra storyline, or afterwards, *The Matrix: Path of Neo* lets gamers play from the beginning of the first film till the end of the third film, all action sequences where Neo is the star. His path, as the player assumes its control, is to lead Zion to victory over the machine world, stopping the machines from invading Zion to make it extinct. The goal of the player is to make them play and complete all story of the films from bottom to top, not in the multiplayer mode, but in single-player mode, challenging gravity, defying armies of agents and making the revolution begin so that, at the seventh time, *The Matrix* can reboot again.

THE TERMINATOR: FUTURE SHOCK

The impact of *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* film in the early nineties was so huge in the imagination of cyberpunks that videogame developers have to make terminator universe-based games. In this trend, the highly addictive, Bethesda Softworks' *The Terminator: Future Shock* (1995) videogame follows the events of James Cameron blockbuster film and shapes it all in the First Person Shooter game genre. For a start, players neither watch the action from the outside, as they were in the film, nor they see the game character in a third person perspective; they play in their place, seeing through his eyes, like a virtual camera holding a plasma rifle.

At the time of *The Terminator: Future Shock's* release many FPS videogames were being published on the mainstream, after the success of *Doom* and

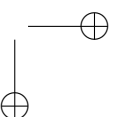
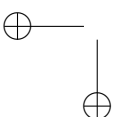
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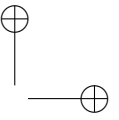
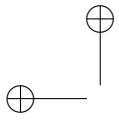




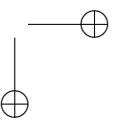
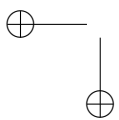
Quake, the videogame subculture desired to play in the first person perspective as their favorite Sci-Fi worlds. That is how videogames and filmmaking began to merge up. The *Future Shock* part of *The Terminator: Future Shock* is allusive to the nuclear war triggered by SkyNet, as it is a commercial trick to recall Alvin Toffler's *Future Shock* book on the impact of technologies, one must say.

For a videogame *The Terminator: Future Shock* is a landmark in First Person Shooter's genre, due to its variety of play styles and its overall graphic, sound and gameplay quality. To play *The Terminator: Future Shock* is to keep engaging in laser action scenes and awesome sound design, special effects and stunning 3D modelling for its time. There are not many *The Terminator* franchise videogames to provide such a good storyline like this one so far, most of videogames on the terminator universe are just about shooting monsters and blowing things up with clumsy characters. In the other way we have *The Terminator: Future Shock*, an enjoyable FPS allowing players to drive and fly besides shooting armies of exoskeletons, raptors and spiderbots in the nocturne wasteland of debris and buried cars (as the *The Terminator* original soundtrack keeps playing), the dream of any cyberpunk in the 90s.





CONTEMPORARY CYBERPUNK FIGURES





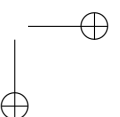


ROMANTIC CYBORGS

“*Cyborgs*, romantic *cyborgs*, *Neuromantic* cyborgs, have in fact been using technological augments for transcendental purposes ever since Dylan picked up that electric guitar” (Spinrad, 1995: §1).

C ONTEMPORARY cyberpunk figures dream of cyborgs, still remains the dream of becoming machine, yet the cyborg interface of our time is the cosmetic gear and nanotechnology equipment, pharmacology and addictive footage of Wi-Fi networks. Cyborguization as shown by the terminators failed because real androids already exist as the ultimate machine as Honda’s Asimo demonstrates. But back in the eighties and the nineties, machines were all the cyberpunks wanted to link up to. The “future shock” was how the future was presenting itself, a viral blossom explosion of novelties caused by technology unravelling itself onto the mainstream. Spinrad, author who also in the cyberpunk movement, mentioned that it make absolutely sense to say that the *Neuromantics* had a writing filled up with “the romantic impulse of fusion between science and technology”. Writers Pat Cadigan, Rudy Rucker, Bruce Sterling, William Gibson and Tom Maddox, are just some of the *Neuromantics* who undoubtedly found out in VRs cyberspatial matrixes a freedom no longer sustained by the dangerous street of the metropolis.

The *Neuromantic* word in itself refers to cyberspace as an extension of our nervous central system, because the neural is our very private *network* – the domain of the direct connection, what makes possible to explore the new landscapes of *multidimensional* cybernetic media, the true reason this new





hardcore Sci-Fi romanticism still exists. But on domain of direct connection, *Neuromantics* really believed in projecting their paradigms in street technology, in London's synthesized *rock*, in *hip-hop's* beats and gang *graffiti*, which are network cultural objects, they are not worth anything singularly, because they tend to weaves links.

It is precisely those links that gear up the new media rhizomatic landscapes, in legitimacy with the most exotic man-machine hybrids, thus they generate something new, inexistent, wether in the realm of nature, or in the realm of industrial machine-scape, from which the outcome is the neo-romantics fascination with spaces for fusion, for cyborgisation.

In a conversation between Mike Davis and Mark Dery, the later stated on neuromanticism that: "it's precisely because we've come to the point of de-industrialization that all of this stuff has become perfumed ruins; it has the same relationship to contemporary consciousness that the medieval landscapes had for the Romantics" (1996: p.7). This way, the romantic "return to nature" is thus renewed by the neo-romantics' attitudes, who feel seduced by the industrial, machine landscapes, because, according to Dery, we have reached out a time that made us have a nostalgia as legitimate to contemporary individuals as, in the 18th century romantics felt for Middle Age ruins, which fascinated pretty much the original romantics. However, contemporary romantics, under the impossibility to refugee in the rural world, or the chance to integrate everyday life's suburbia, have developed a neo-romantic phantasy. And such phantasy is inspired precisely by modern world's industrial machinery and the sexy and cyborgued body as actors of this oniryc process, where sciences and passions are altogether, after a separation in the past, now under the libido's and computation's worlds. It is not by chance Masamune Shirow draws those sexy cyborgs in the *Ghost In The Shell* (s.d.) cyberpunk universe or Pat Lee in *Dark Minds* (1998).

Even if the romanticized "return to nature" was a Rosseau's argument explored in the 18th century, the fact is the rural phantasy was well re-addressed by the 20th century *hippie* movement, which demonstrated its reaction to technology evolution during the Vietnam War, especially when the scandal-government of Nixon faced the *Watergate* scenario.

Like german urbs of 18th century romantics, *hippies* have divorced themselves from complex discourses of sciences and technologies, something that has changed right after the end of the punk movement, as everybody realized





that to get back to complex discourses was a necessity to cutback the weight of the utopian freedom and evasion, which was a heritage of the romantics.

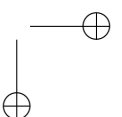
Romanticism was impregnated of an aversion to the technologizing process; it refused the Enlightenment's criticism methodology and prepositivism, the universal knowledge compartments, the rigorous explaining and phenomena's logic discrimination. The logical mechanicism of the Enlightenment was very much demanding, too much urban, it missed something natural, a return to the balanced behavior of man and the chomic forces (where the *hippies* got into), the vastness to conquer, a sign identified in the cyberpunks, in their vision of the matrixes and the cyberspace.

The icon of this romanticism is nicely portrayed in the Caspar David Friedrich's famous painting, which depicts a man turning his back to us, as he looks determined and staring at the foggy horizon, ambitious, intrigued before the mountain abyss as if did not know how the exploration would be like.

The romantic individual looked at nature as a landscape to disclosure; concentrated cities were the leitmotiv to think about leaving the urban city. Afterall, romanticism was essentially an urban phenomenon, a behavior of nostalgia towards Middles Age's rural landscapes, whose aftereffects show circa one hundred and fifty years later in the *hippies*' behavior, so they were tired of metropolitan areas and the world's colonization by technolgies who prolonged evolving wars in a time when peace and balance were desirable.

The romantic was someone who liked to appreciate, a possible poet of the world, a philosopher of passions, whose everyday life was all about free time left for creativity and love. Also it was a kind of person torment by the figure of the genius, yet today, Brian Eno, a landmark in electronic music, says we should speak not of "genius" but of "scenius" (Simon Reynolds cit. in Davis, 1997). Eno pretends to expose that geniusness rammed itself down as it produced technology capable to anticipate Reason and to eventually compete with itself. This way, all that left is imagination, in the sense of providing consistence to ghosts already carried on by technology.

The "scenius", as proposed by Eno, it is so the responsible figure for the weaving of sketched up images – the creator of ready to try scenography, the one who allows many neo-romantics to dream of "portable artistic experiences", somehow it turned real by today's portable media hardware, like PDAs and the PSP (Sony PlayStation Portable).





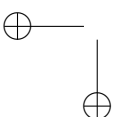
For the cyberpunk to enjoy life, possessing the neo-romantic virtue means to enjoy every technology, to cover all wonderful discourses and every interstice of city space, enjoying devices which make life happy, easy also entertaining.

Low-brow people are the ones who should concern about everyday life, for the domain of dreaming is the obvious option to any contemporary cyberpunk, hence all question of the usufruct of such new “natural” landscape that is the mediatic landscape of big urbe, whether at an *off liness* or of *on liness* state.

Linking neo-romanticism to romanticism is the demand of a new attitude towards what is considered to be this new “natural” landscape. There was this awareness process that new media rose upon the ashes of punk and has to expand somewhere, re-creating nature onto to the streets, hence, it was in the street that most punks wandered. These non-proletarized punks were upright to settle the conditions necessary so the “dandism” could emerge, whose outcome was a new typo of leisure, acid and show business economics peaking at the *ecstasy* culture in Ukas this one turning itself to outer space release. Too bad this space would rescue high tech youth from the earthy ground to the cyborguizing passions, which implied the entrance in the seductive landscapes of media. *Ecstasy* appeared first in the eighties as the right ticket to access to all assembling of cyber footage, as a way to escape from phishcalities’ weight and annoyance, but it acquired already certain urgency. Alvin Toffler’s idea about the new youth figures living and thinking faster, is related to the existence of a rhythm of life connected to the emergent new spaces, which in electronic music, for instance, are polyrhythmic and tactile.

Blowing up time and space, media accelerate till perception fails, so all looks floating as if by narcosis in a possible eternity. Actual culture, this contemporary cyberculture is remarked by speed and phantasmatics, anxiety, for every thing is destined for “yesterday”. And it is this attitude towards time and space which branding global cultures that stays dynamic to such a degree it dethrones order itself, carry the notion of time, for the urgency is so summoned it makes all things anaesthetized. Like Deleuze & Guattari would corroborate we attend to the effective time of the “rhizome”, which is the domain of the “chaosmos”, the universe of chaos, despite the “cosmos” domain, the universe of order.

However the desire to live life with others references, other speeds, was al-





ready detected in the young romantics. It is known they were fond of evasions and for them every thing was supposed to be lived intensely. Strong emotions were pretty explored, so much the most of them died very early in pure rebelliousness. Novalis, for instance, one of the highest names of romanticism died with twenty-nine years old, unable to become a conservative in oldness like some of his friends. The unknown in forests, their mysteries, uncontrollable passions, desires were constantly the motto for the young romantics, which may be explained by its urban nature, for all they were alienated from beauty in their latency state. The wild side of the rural landscape had something that has awakened them.

Although *hippies* have rebelled against the establishment, their adoption of ideas comprehending “feeling”, “living” and “phantasy” is just an ensemble of possible parallelisms that exist between the *hippie* and the romantic. “Nostalgia” (*sensucht*) did occur in spite of the thinking on systemic devices that is enabled by academic ancestry, which required intensive reading habits in a kantian manner and similar to other romantics of early german romanticism that became conservatives later. The romantic wanted to enjoy his vices (*sucht*), passions, feeding desire, what also happened with the *hippie*.

At the time of romanticism only philosophers would be empowered by categories and concepts to think of the real, and only artists supplied imaginary worlds with consistency. Art would bring superiority to life, allowing one to “live” in a different level; the field of poetry most likely was able to reveal seduction skills. Yet since 18th century’s romanticism till the 20th century’s neo-romanticism lots of things have changed, but the poetic side of knowledge has its equivalent in today’s dimension of information.

What the New Wave really did was to turn the *event-landscape*, the city, into man’s “natural landscape”, laying a thought that asides with the emergent electronic pop music assumes itself in its whole urbanity of postmodernism. Instead of coming back to nature, the metropolist pavement was increased, lubricating technoscience heading of to the stars. But if technoscience, on one hand had the purpose to make the control of organisms, of whatsoever discourses, easier, on the other hand, it had the purpose to expand piracy, paganism, atheist sects, and rebelliousness giving birth to new crime types where we find the *hacker* or the *cracker* cyberpunks into. Global pop culture metropolitan space was a growing territory for sciences and technologies, not designed to host humans but markets, technologies, building their headquar-





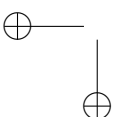
ters in the most noble spaces, in the legal side, or into the most recondite areas, the outlaw zones.

We define the neo-romantic as a “scenius”, not a genius, so he has fun exploring media’s most daring scenographies, because all works out like a videogame, considering everything is reached out by computerization in every aspect of life by its binary ramifications, making objects in ludic elements, due to its logic.

This way, the perverse cyberpunk elects a new set of rules for new, virtual, and also outlaw spaces. In itself the neo-romantic gathers a typical demiurgical attitude the romantic artist has incarnated where he can only find freedom and art form during his game play experience. Such freedom was obtained in a catharsis manner every time the artist played by the rules of art and representation. Schiller, for instance, developed some Kant’s questions who defended art as a game, being the man-artist free only when he made his own laws, circumscribing his imaginary world within the painting *telos* of the canvas. Because the romantic artist and God was seen as being able to create realities, the romantic was like a brother of the gods. He had the skills to provide solidity to the most atrocious and wildest creations of imagination, making them virtual more. Among the romantics, the idea that artist has a sort of powerful imagination turned into a doctrine, it was said that artists could generate worlds and universes, something that is possible today for any kid possessing a synthesizer, a *sampler*, Adobe Photoshop and a MacBook laptop.

We know that the *hippie* wanted to inaugurate the blurry borders between dream and reality, but the neo-romantic cyberpunk was the one who managed to fade away that frontier in a pragmatic way. Novali’s famous sentence “the world becomes dream, the dream world” may be applied to many of Gibson’s descriptions of cybertechnology, it is also useful to depict what happens in *raves*, not just in the *multidimensional* space of music, was overall as a fair of substances which can break apart the existing abyss between the real and the virtual as long as there is a trip. Such a “take off from the real“ to the dream world allows it all who has defined the rules also can be the same person who tries the acid, hence making possible for chemical prosthetics to work on desires and passions. This figure is playing with desire, a chemical which is the neo-romantic cyborg Norman Spinrad speaks so much of.

Everyone looks for the same – a new world. It is even known as romantic





urban palaces were propitious to develop imaginaries about new supernatural worlds, the romantics felt very attracted to ruins, rubbles of other mysterious cultures and to the night. The neo-romanticism in which we find *Neuroromantics*'s elements of cyberpunk, compromises itself with this vision that distant cultures had something more important than the (in)comprehensible Western Society Oswald Spengler criticized when he spoke of *The Decline of the West* (2006) in 1918. This romantic wish to explore distant cultures reflected, for instance, in the way punks recycled war paintings make-up from primitive tribes in tribal tattoos, and in the way haircut was chosen according to identification models, like hair colored spikes, *piercings* and other "lucky charms"; in contrast to uniformization personality absence in white-collar enterprise yuppies.

The neo-romantics have just tried to be fair to romantic ideals as those of Novalis or Friedrich Schlegel's, about their conceptions of "magical idealism" "synthesis", like all one could think about says to organize his imaginary through the dimension of synthesis. The new spaces, the cyberspaces, we verify they manage, somehow, to synthesize the world through numeric technologies, making everything available, re-connecting man in a true religious sense. The idea of "synthesis" is faced as a general tendency, the last instance able to surpass the disagreements of existence, the ideal *campus* to solve life's antagonisms, something the gibsonian cyberspace solves when it weaves out a field of links, connections, in a rhizomatic manner, breaking through several borders. If the cyberpunk really accomplished better these ideals, the *hippie* stayed just by what Schelling determined to be a "spiritual evolution", because the *hippie* was also a crisis by-product. Romantics and *hippies* contested the world's structuralism; the much segmented world model which was closing freedom range for personal, romantic expression alone with its own desires and passions, unable to be applied to technoscience's restricted contexts whose ignition started in the *Aufklärung*'s methodologies.

The very own idea of "synthesis" as a solution used to assume a frightening behavior for the romantics, so they saw themselves explained, taking the risk of being classified by the Enlightenment encyclopedic knowledge. In short, Enlightenment wanted everything to be explained, that is to say finite, under the methodology critique. Hence we may understand the reaction of the young romantics who had to evolve from the nostalgia for the infinite, of when all things were less structured, flexible. That is why Fichte spoke of "receptiv-





ity for the wonderful”, predisposing himself for a pleasant mystery, a sort of guidance to an inebriant becoming-world, nowadays graphically simulated in synthesized imagery pulsating in all fashion mall and nightclubbing screens.

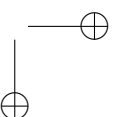
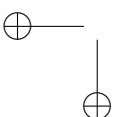
The cyberpunk starring in the film *Strange Days* (1995), Lenny Nero, is the kind of neo-romantic that no longer resists the eroticizing of society, the *total fashion*; somebody takes refuge on urban electroculture’s cyberneticized passions digital records. In another times, the *hippie* saw a source of a possible balance in the rural spaces, which today is impossible given the sensual dimension offered by the also vast digital landscapes, nevertheless, when we analyze the beatniks a sort of “urban being” is then detected. That is the way of urban life that reveals useless towards the legitimate evading *motards* into the desert; even so this one ends up on being a sign for schizoidism, for the *motards* were not ready for chaos. They understand that they need other principles, such as choosing the margins instead of the urban centers where they gathered.

Choosing for eliminating mediation elements, the neo-romancer finds him among the confusion. After all he is prepared for the urban jungle, he is assuming the same pose as the perverted glance *terminators*; the *gate-keeper* figure like Lenny in *Strange Days*. The cyberpunk shows up personally, being the “middle man”, which is somehow so dangerous he lives constantly on the edge, over the blade, running, like a *blade runner*, always managing to run-away. Not that unlikely he is able to float in the ocean of information without drowning, connecting inside straight to object in a consonant immersion, in the utmost forbidden, seductive. It is not hard to figure out why aren’t that many cyberpunks, as there aren’t beatniks as well, hence the amount of real figures that existed ever since its beginning it is around a hundred, whether it is contemporary fashion punks, *tecktonik* robot dancers or the original “Mirrorshade Group”, or the every *beat* living under the *Beat Generation’s* mottos.

Nomadism have always been a characteristic of neo-romantic cyberpunks, we still find that in the walkthroughs favored by digital paths. Still today cyberpunks go further and faster, they want to get rid of physicality, yet they do not despise it, they don’t question it very hard, because it is through it they enjoy life using “technologies of pleasure”, so they really want to be neo-romantic cyborgs.

Though just concerning the cyberpunk writers, Andrew Ross assures:

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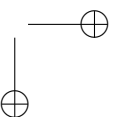
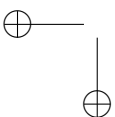
“It is perhaps no coincidence that none of the major cyberpunk writer was city-bred, although their work feeds off the phantasmatic street diet of Hobbesian lawlessness and the aesthetic of detritus that is assumed to pervade the hollowed-out core of the great metropolitan centers. This urban fantasy, however countercultural its claims and potential effects, shared the dominant, white middle-class conception of inner-city life” (Ross, 1990: p.146)

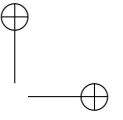
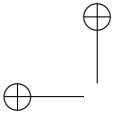
So there was not possible to have cyberpunks without city, and urban wanderers without suburbia, anyway one cycle generates the other. As Ross explains, the neo-romanticism is a by-product of a certain urban white middle-class, but not that fond of inner-city life, which comprehends the street as a place of menaces. As if the crowded street or the back alley could be desert-like, apparently with nothing at all, but in the end it looks like predatory space.

Parallel environments, “multiple presents”, drugs, CGI cyberspaces, acoustic and invisible dance floors, all they are the new deserts, the new “open spaces”. And they’re only possible due to the segregated technologic “americanization” of the world. They were meant to be an escape to the pervasive information, an exit to totality, an opening out of the *techno*-social sameness that provoked *beats* to runaway too.

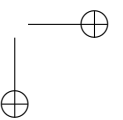
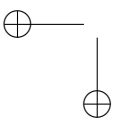
The *beats* were looking for new worlds too, the “virtual” worlds aren’t territories only worth to be explored and cyberpunk authored. The neo-romanticism already segregated by *hippies* and the nomadism practiced by beatniks were examples of evasions into zones designed precisely for narcosis and hypnosis states. The search for the “Interzones” belongs to every time.

Besides, if the cyberpunks take advantage from the two-dimensional ramified parts or the three-dimensional labyrinths and portics to access digital new places, increasing the cyberspace grammar with new customized masks to play shielded against the representative icons of the cyber territory. The *beats* of other times, who were considered to be “social engineers”, related among themselves with pseudonyms, playing roles to mess up with reality, as if it was a novel. Besides from Ballard’s arguments, which suggest that we all live within a general social fiction, so much in the New Wave elements as in the *Beat Generation* elements, what stands out is truly the paradigm of the network, of the map, the “rhizome”, of something no one knows where it came from nor to where it is heading to, yet it guides itself in most chaotic “mi-





lieux”, like the *raver* dances in the crossed polyrhythm or the *hacker* “lost” in the “matrix”.





FUTURE SHOCK: NO FUTURE VERSUS NEW FUTURE

“When it comes to the characteristic music of our times, we have all been accepting *Neuromanticism* as a given for a quarter of a century” (Norman Spinrad, 1995: §1).

DESPITE the efforts of Alvin Toffler in *Future Shock* (1970), futurologies – the discourses on the future – continue to be divided in the conception for utopian and colorful futures, distant and redeeming, in opposition to the close and crystal clear, the kind that cyberpunk environments disclosure.

The decade of the eighties, which remarked the so-called “third wave” was useful to silence out much of the desperation expressed in the growing industrial music since the seventies, because the apocalyptic and cybernetic vision of many *dance*, *metal* or *industrial* bands fell pretty much in the so remarked “end of progress”, thanks to the excessive stimulation of the motto “no future” firmly segregated by the rock punker. The music of bands which oscillated between hypertechnology and primitivism poles was connoting a great determination for tribalism, robotic’s doomsday sounds and assembly line noises. This “illusion of the end” was very much fed by bands like Cabaret Voltaire (in the beginning), Skinny Puppy and Einsturzend Neubauten, which during





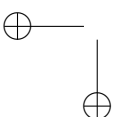
the eighties insisted on the aggressive sound-patterns and in digital sound as in a confrontation with sounds provoked by urban debris in a “nowhere to go” style.

A close, shocking and fast future was an imminent world in its technical and anthropological dimension; it was imaginative too, a hypothetical project in which one may live someday, if our everyday scene continued to keep bearing for the same paths which constantly kept. Such a close future has always been the mold of the *Neuromantics*' visions that were very real in the sense they implied a “plateau” of images, a pictorial architecture as matrix for the urban routine, unlike far futures, usually connected to civilizational progress metaphors, with a last destiny of a community which could not be radically transfigured.

The reason behind civilizational futures was the fixed, far perspective, which considered all past as a box of time recycling, as if there was an archive for archaeology of the past, an archive of nostalgia created for the global unavoidable development of a whole community. By adopting another perspective, the fast-paced progress fomenting the close future model, despised that dead past, which looked like a railway wagon of compressed images. Future was shocking because it rivaled with a better world just approached by imagination. The whole History problem carries the awareness responsibility itself. Jean Baudrillard said that History can no longer surpass itself, face its goal, dream its own ending, so it dives in its immediate effects, getting depleted in special effects, imploding in the present. He also referred that every political, historical, cultural fact is:

“(. . .) invested with a kinetic energy which spreads over its own space and thrusts these facts into a hyperspace where they lose all meaning by way of an inability to attain their meaning. It is useless to turn to science-fiction: from this point on, from the here and now, through our computer science, our circuits and our channels, this particle accelerator has definitively disrupted and broken the referential orbit of things” (1987b: §4; 1987: p.9)

If taken into account Baudrillard's arguments, the only way close futures had to be released from the prison of epical futures was by admitting chaos, man's fall and all universal axioms that *in itself* gathered Man. Only when the concern about a collective progression stops, then there is a reason for the close future to be conceived, politicized, and based on individuality and not in





community. A hermeneutic of futurologies began to be effective, because all future's projects are, in the end, personal projects as long as there is an awareness that significant changes may happen during the individual's lifespan due to the metropolitan fast-paced everyday routines.

There was a time before when significant change in the technological and anthropological point of view occurred only in a long-term, at a century level; the individual's project which close futures conceiving's were replaced by the interests of the community programmed for the whole and not for the part. Now, the remaining last reaction before the excessive technical achievements is the hope for a disaster as the possible way to slow things down and the technical structure devouring everything but the cyberpunk. After all he is the species inhabiting the mighty cyberspaces. This disaster is the holocaust that redeems civilization, bearing a "possible" construction or goal that is common to everybody. In Ballard's *Crash* (1973), for instance, the accident (the car-crash) is a form of speed and escaping which transgresses mobile society's order, while in Katsuhiro Otomo's *Akira* (1986), The Third World War reinforced an inexistent social bonds in Neo-Tokyo megalopolis.

Close futures were meant to be futures about now and not for later. The problem of the *punk* phenomenon was its very fast evolution, compressing in itself as it accelerated its attitude line, which becomes fast an advertising hank of props and flexible aesthetics thanks to sensationalist media. It was a mistake that we are not able to understand after the TV age evolution it was all about black and white footage, collectible items to edit documentaries videos and special reports. Once author Ortega y Gasset really said that "the Revolution had devoured its own offspring", which means revolutions no more reconfigure whatsoever because the social system followed the too seductive and including logic to let us think one could get away from it.

In the British punk movement case, contestation and protest behavior against unfairness caused by conservative politics were useless. Because of this, radical Sci-Fi writers tried to draw something real and futuristic, though not despotic or fascist like. Hence the idea was to design a new behavior role model, smarter and as perverse as the oppressive social system that tried to appear docile, disguising its tyranny. The objective of the *Neuromantics'* mirrorshades was exactly to return the real to reality, yet inverted.

Punk was the banner for a generation of lots of nobodies, who were no longer paying attention to the establishment, and from then on who began





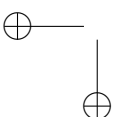
to perceive the future as an actual background, repudiating the old story that sooner or later all classes would have access to the means of production and to wealth, by ignoring entirely materialist forecasts for the poor.

The punk character was the one who also prepared the ground for all capitalism mottos shopping, when it worked as a solution for the social integration of metropolitan youngmen problem: it was capitalism that did create the “new future” for the eighties youth when technophiles and media junkies were reading Toffler’s books. Anyway Toffler’s books were decisive in the mediation between post-war sciences and enterprises, providing elaborate tracks, yet not much conceptual, both in *Future Shock* as in *The Third Wave*. We may either see Toffler as an author who is responsible for the marketing surrounding in the eighties trends, in the same way Gibson was responsible for the cyberhype whose repercussions we are still facing relatively to cyberspace and virtual reality. Gibson e Toffler, like media’s saint patron McLuhan, were appropriated, recycled. It mattered to build the most easy to sell visions. There was a need to make scape goats out of them as positive excuse for the massive attack tech marketing, is the target even for today’s “iPod generation” urban youth.

The New Wave itself represented a sweet rupture, an initiation to consumption models involving haircuts, clothing brands, piercing and tattoos parlors, music stores and, later, technology boutiques. *The Third Wave* which became a trademark was easily set on the idea of “no future”, already promoted by punks. The New Wave, with its “cutting-edge” style, found useful the goalless eighties urban youth, their respective existential and identity crisis, in order to introduce them images, lifestyles, new consumption role models, all as an answer to the Western problems. The System was still winning.

The fact that nobody care about the future, that we would not have a possible future, was adapting to a stigma formed by wild consumption and desire to become famous under the influence of mass media. Henceforth, all consumption became synonymous of the need to build something new; even so nobody truly did knew whatsoever, as if the meaning of creating something was unknown.

“The illusion of the end” idea of french sociologist Jean Baudrillard, is quite relevant to recall for this context, because, above the utmost futuristic and legitimate ideals, the New Wave only did increased the establishment, capitalism, which is each time more exacerbated in the same way between nineteen-eighty-five and nineteen-nine all California’s startups were focusing





on Gibson's descriptions as a pretext for the wildest tech gear to mass produce. The question of "the illusion of the end" is that, if there really is an end, the apocalyptic vision, which stalked Europe after Nazism had been significantly eradicated, was a social disestablishing model. It was fomented by media, a deprive security company that, after Gibson's descriptions on the *hacker* hero, had in IT enterprises a new priority and objective: to expand insecurity onto cyberspace, reshaping the cop and villain model as a virus/antivirus system.

All this made sense in a Western society that used to see images of a new consumption system, kit-model like, more individual-centered, leading him to believe he was the epicenter of a chaotic and indecisive world, society which consumed ever since all media's pop by-products introduced as problem solvers of whatsoever. What the closer future model did accomplished in fact, in terms of capitalism, was to remind us always that we could buy now and pay later. We were taught by this way of thinking which all that matters was to live right now, because everywhere erroneous terrorist footage were released threatening urban life and, generally, catastrophes were broadcast all the time across media as the true Armageddon was about to happen. Fortunately, it didn't.

It just so happened that insecurity was such that all products looked like an exit thus they were immediately bought out. The illusive end media injected on people was just a way to provide trembling in the principles structure, making people fragile and easier to persuade; a way to take them to consume the most unessential things. From this point of view the "no future" motto was recycled in a "new future" one, prettier, aesthetic, easy, colored and generalized, being norma to adopt it. There is no outside.



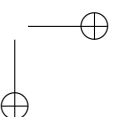
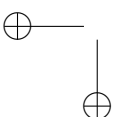




THE END OR GENERALIZING CYBERPUNK?

“You see the thing about *Cyberpunk* is that it was supposed to be like a home-made record, much like these *rap bands* are doing, all made really on home equipment. But it was hard to make people understand that. It was, sort of, making an alternative record. They don’t allow you to make an alternative record” (Billy Idol, 1993).

THemes as hypermediatization, the metamorphosis of the body or destructive sex are the unthinkable item menu in Kathryn Bygelow’s *Strange Days* (1995). On the other side, if we analyze David Cronenberg’s *Videodrome* (1982), we may also observe some elements directly communicating with the cyberpunk universe. Tough today the visual cyberpunk design has been a common ground for many metropolis’ youths as if it would comprehend in itself what was to be, or not, a cyberpunk; the truth is that marketing worked just fine. In other times, at the punk age, sensationalist press like the british *The Sun* published news whose headlines were “How to be a punk!”, and they did provide an items list, where the jacket metal pins, leather jackets and spiked haircuts were the introducing card. On the other side, rock bands at the time, like The Ramones, Siouxsie And The Banshees



and the New York Dolls decided to use regular clothes and long hair, ignoring completely the trends and the imperatives of homogenized look.

In the nineties the same did occurred with the cyberpunk ever since Billy Idol, side a side with the film *Johnny Mnemonic* (1995), killed cyberpunk by capitalizing it. The videoclip of Idol's "Shock to the System" (1993) track, selling a cyborgued *punk* hardwired to electric cables where Idol, the visual redoubt of *punk*, appeared to be covered up with a bizarre cybernetic hack around him, re-entered into another simulation scheme. Within this logic, *Johnny Mnemonic* was, even so it had Gibson signing the screenplay, the most remarkable film of the cyberpunk imaginary (way before *The Matrix Trilogy* [1999-2004]) not due to the best aspects, but it surely shown the rebel look of the cyberpunk and featured awesome CGI VR sequences at the time.

It is obvious that the cyberpunk looks forward to hack into systems and machines, sometimes merging with machinery, cyborguizing himself. In the *Neuromantics'* radical Sci-Fi aesthetics the "cyberspace cowboy" is the legendary figure of someone who is able to find precious information in the cybercrime underworld of any society whose economy is information-based. In general, cyberpunk is always like this, but even the most exploratory attitude of a user "googling" things on a search engine or in YouTube, playing videogames online or downloading music files is, essentially, the pose of someone who is investigating, gathering fragments of a shattered (even if its simulated) real. The on-going search of signs is a very present behavior on cyberpunk, as the *culture jammer* demonstrates in its pranks, hijacking commercial culture overlapping it with redesigned logos semiotics. Searching for signs may eventually reflect in media supports to host information. For example, the *graffiter* looks for walls to paint on, or something has a correspondence in how the *raver* perceives detail richness in sounds of the "acoustic cyberspace", who fulfills his empathy. We can also notice this pattern in the *hacker's* tasks of linking to information patterns, in its ability to decode "oceans of information" in order to identify the "nodal points" (Gibson, 1998) that matter. So much for literary fiction cyberpunk, as much as for the street cyberpunk of nowadays, both identify themselves with nomadic characters, like the *graffiter* Banksy. They care about the territorial factor and, this way, do create all the time new "lines of flight", mostly enhanced by prothetics.

If we consider Timothy Leary's affirmations, hence he said in *Chaos & CyberCulture* that the cyberpunk was a "reality pilot" (1994), we are con-



fronted with thinking the cyberpunk as a very egocentric individual who dominates languages of systems, to which he dedicates himself to complicate, invalidate and, in last case, destroy. According to Leary, cyberpunks are “reality pilots” of their own lives managing to be proficient in languages so that they can amplify their narcissism.

Like the true original cyberpunk writers, street contemporary cyberpunks, fashion punks, cosmetic role models, restyled *hackers*, avant-garde *graffiters*, do not allow to be labeled, unless in the domains of their expertise. They look sharp but not as eighties geeks, they just look to be in alert, as the Morpheus or Neo in *The Matrix* (1999) question in the simulation and construct the very system that teaches not to think. Rebelliousness that has been attentively instituted since the punk movement is reintroduced now by cyberpunks that no longer automatically answer the vident powers, what Leary used to say was an essential characteristic for anyone who wants to fightback society which make everyone able to think. In short, cyberpunks think faster and live faster too, because they are *crackers*, they breakthrough any obstacle, they do not accommodate. This reveals in the interest they share for certain languages and technical discourses, for all information gathered is considered a value-added which ensuring their independence so they can rely on themselves.

In fact, cyberpunks are, all *hackers*, *crackers*, *rockers*, *graffiters*, *hip-hoppers*, *DJs*, *VJs* and *ravers*, that have re-defined ever since all the Past legacy with a punker's attitude. As a matter of fact, the cyberpunk-hero, in “matrix” style, who controls everything is the figure I name of *rhacker*, which is skillful in producing cultural objects which is lying on tech, primitivism and tribality, unlimited in its stunts to image or acoustics because for him the audiovisual gear is the future, like today's perfect multimedia communication. Perfect because it can embrace syntax logics imperativity, both rigid and sequential verbal discourses, so much deconstructed by hypertext styles. As cybernetic as cyberspace's information matrixes, cyberpunk is nowadays everyday citizen of any network discovering walkthrough; because he acts as in a resonant manner like in the African polyrhythm cyberspace which grounding *techno* music modulations.

The *hacker* improves its information programming languages by having the authority to feel free like database devices, questioning the self-enclosed virtualizing democracy. In its turn, the *rocker* is the *post-rock 'n' roll* figure who takes advantage from new tech's possibilities towards an “art of





noise”, whose debris are destined for an hypocrite society through the cybernetic “music from the future”. About the *graffiter* one can say he is the one transforms urban furniture into a graphic decoration, on the condition of “re-territorializing” *polis* space according to new pictorial circuits decoded by him, no more by dominant languages (like rhetorics greek and monks saved us as a flux of power). Lets not forget also that who visually expresses *hip-hop* is the *hip-hopper*. Hip hopper manages to appropriate central urban space that was taken from him which was enclosed in suburban squares, being labeled as rubble zone, a marginal space. Hip-hopper’s media are images.

Among all of them, the *DJ* is the sonic remaker of the wasteland. He manages to remediate rhythm debris and regular sound lines to weave a second hand tapestry; after all his work comes from getting artwork material of everyone else. In an alienated position, the *DJ* dedicates his activities to the re-production, but in the first decade of the third millennium, the *DJ* becomes a star in his own terms, like any other. It is quite common to see cyberpunks circulating in the urban space, exposing their rank of the new elite force among the social and technical strata. Working for money, supporting information, they do everything about symbolic exchange codes in the street. Money allows them to buy more media and improve aesthetics; drugs and prosthetics empower them, day and night on the street, turning them into a sort of multiple personality low-fi stars in the multimedia age.

One can see the *rhacker* as the most full-equipped cyberpunk right next to the *rocker* and the *hacker*. If the heir of the neo-romanticized style is the *raver*, then cypherpunk is the utmost discrete figure, lethal even among the cyberpunks, for him appears to be no one. In the last rank of cyberpunks, the *cypherpunk* is the most powerful, a sort of *hacker* of encrypting codes, the only one dominating all cyphers humanly possible fearing no punks or corporations. As a danger, the cypherpunk means the complication of all versus all, for him who has the capacity to encode, decode or over-encoding any matrix of bits just operating on the outside, with no desires of whatsoever for showing up.

While most cyberpunk figures feel apart from society, others like fashion punks, *DJs*, as time goes by, tend to enjoy their social status. Traditionally they acted as if they were outside mainstream society forever disregarding power circles. Fortunately that positioning led them to create amazing cultural artifacts and behaviors to communicate their anguish, like *angst rockers*. For



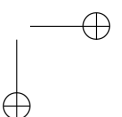


his own option, the cypherpunk is the only one who keeps always apart from social notoriety, yet observing the fluxus of *information-money* and *money-information* – the blood of our civilization. The first one is all about buying precious information according to the interests that led to its search, of any medium support whatsoever, like the “inside traders”²⁰ might be a practical example. The second *fluxus*, the *money-information* concerns e-money, the first true element that was getting in the cyberspace, which can be manipulated only at a network management level. Hence any *hacker* can link, crack and be a cybercriminal by moving data, in its turn, may be huge amounts of money circulating from one bank account to another. Unfortunately for some *hackers*, the cyberpunk label becomes more known in the mainstream for its connection to disestablishing practices in financial electronic centers. Some encryption *hackers* are still today behind attacks performed on online banking or banks data security devices.

In the end, the *cracker* is the classic cyberpunk enjoying just his ability in opening doors to observe more new digital landscapes available. Normally, the *cracker* likes to walkthrough networked media’s complex ramifications, playing hardcore videogames and challenging diabolical AIs, which are unable to make him quit from traveling in the open and uncompressed cyberspaces. Updating the cowboy’s attitude in cyberspace, the *cracker* cyberpunk pretends to open passage through any obstacle wall; he is a player and a marginal who feels happy in penetrating any system passionately hoping to dominate it, in some cases until the hard core is just reached. The cypherpunk prefers to make the system wrecked, showing how everybody should bow before his skills, because he can be in charge of the game. Playing with information and encrypting it, he manifests his abilities to complexify logical-symbolical structures.

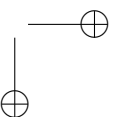
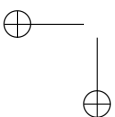
It is not much to underline that unlike *graffiters*, *hip-hoppers*, *break-dancers*, *DJs*, *VJs*, *rhackers* and *rockers*, which one way or the other looks for an aesthetic or “arty” revelation of their work, *hackers*, *crackers* or cyberpunks are not recognized on the street, even they are street people. Since two-thousand-one *crackers*, cyberpunks and *hackers* have become one same person as *graffiters*, *break-dancers* and *hip-hoppers* have too, and also *DJs* and *VJs* became

²⁰These figures sell and buy information to promote their power, outside a corporation or inside it.





rhackers. From now on the trend is to see only three types of cyberpunks. The same is to say, either one can do everything, or one can't. All we can expect is that an each time more, the technical society provides one person to have it all, so the mainstream might become like a reality-show, an MTV by-product encoded in network viruses. In response, the cyberpunk still is marked by his reality manipulation abilities, somebody who seeks to play the real as if playing with several realities at once (like Neo in *Matrix Reloaded* [2003]). The legacy of Philip K. Dick's remarkable work still is in active in the cyberpunk's DNA, for they do like to protect their true identity under layers, strata of disguises, although they seek stardom. Curiously in postmodern times, cyberpunks like the *graffiter* are still updated, able to say "I exist!" or "here I am!" in old decaying walls, but sometimes stenciling Photoshoped-design images as Banksy does.

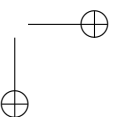
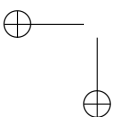




GRAFFITER: THE INTERTEXTUALITY HIP-HOPPER

“For me, a text is nothing but a cog in a larger extra-textual practice. It’s not about using deconstruction, or any other textual practice, to do textual commentary; it’s about seeing what one can do with an extra-textual practice that extends the text. You ask me whether I believe in nomads as an answer” (Deleuze, 2004: p.260).

UNDER the umbrella of Afro-American culture, the recently MTV adopted, *hip-hop* is a culture comprehending mostly black people, who, like any other people draw directives, because they intend to fight and mark territory with their rules as if it is a game. This kind of “fight” games proliferate at *hip-hop/rap* culture level, which have born on the street and it fulfills itself only on the street. I mean the “battles of style” which are known in metropolitan suburbia, in which rappers and *DJs* would become true heroes of the new “Black Electronic” technologic spaces, designed there with the whole rebelliousness attitude very much like cyberpunk, ever since growing until the *Neuromantics* literary movement that managed to name it in a retroactive fashion. Though, it is important to keep in mind that at the time of *hip-hop* birth real street guerrilla did occurred. After all, it was technology





that was offering the chance to obtain a rank on the street: the dream of any black *hip-hop* cyberpunk. Emanuel Ferreira & António Contador add this:

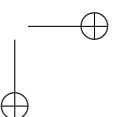
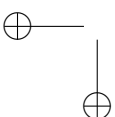
“(...) the local duels in the *block parties* (...) happened in schools or associations, for the territorial supremacy, in fact as it happened with *break dancers* or *graffitis*, but here the duel was verbal and musical. These duels lasted hours and only who had the best gear would won!”²¹ (1997: p.58).

Even if one can understand the connections between *hip-hop* and cyberpunk, the fact is that *hip-hop* has no direct link of whatsoever with the eighties neo-romanticism or with cyberspace; it is a pure street culture, for moments parallel to the neo-romanticism. Nevertheless I have to remark that *hip-hop*, which today gets more powerful with the “iPod Generation” and MTV cable channels, thanks to its fragmentation of styles, is still the same *hip-hop* from the new-yorker ghettos of *afro* punkers. The slight significant chance is that ever since Afrofuturism and Cyberpunk have communicated retroactively with *hip-hop*, a new awareness of power and technologies has emerged. All tech and power got into the *hip-hop*'s codes, which since the eighties has a route, or several routes, above all within the media's circuit: the cyberspace.

I present some of those mechanisms which link *hip-hop*, neo-romanticism and cyberpunk, because there is promiscuity between futurism and visionary street culture. For instance, Afrika Bambaataa & The Soulsonic Force's “Planet Rock” (1986) album was a milestone concerning the separation between rap and funk, so lots of steps were taken to constitute what thus was called *electro-rap*, a style that branding the entrance of *hip-hop* in the real media cyberspace. The electro-rap had its own configuration exemplified in the “Rock It” (1983) music track, in the afrofuturistic Herbie Hancock's “Future Shock” (1983) album, which communicated Alvin Toffler's proto-cyberpunk ideals about how the future world was turning into an hallucinating, acid and hybrid mosaic.

The designated “electronic rap” was the last statement of a *hip-hop* culture slightly becoming cyber, inspired in German quartet Kraftwerk's “Trans-Europe Express (1977), in its turn being the biggest proto-*techno* inspiring source for the majority of the electronic music of the eighties and the nineties. Even so, neo-romantics' visionary Sci-Fi got many ingredients from *hip-hop*

²¹N.A.: The translation from the Portuguese version is mine.





culture to create its technocriminal gang subculture aesthetic based on technology. I think that cyberpunk named *hip-hop* as cyberpunk in a retroactive manner just like *hip-hop* has contributed to make cyberpunk a culture, an imaginary and ensemble of possible street figures. It is not by chance that every contemporary cyberpunks see *hip-hop* culture as a pre-cyberpunk moment and style. If we take this into account that today's *hip-hoppers* are surely cyberpunks, because their attitude has already been changed by the neo-omanticism's ideals, we may comprehend that, certainly exists an association between the *Neuromantics* universe and the design of *graffitis* about landscapes, cars, motorcycles, stereo systems and cyborgs, whose fluorescent colors corrode modernity's industrial facilities walls.

In *Neuromancer*, Gibson mentions why the metropolis is a pole of attractions for technologies and, simultaneously, the world of organized dissention, and here we find out one of his most amazing depictions, as he speaks of Case, the main character:

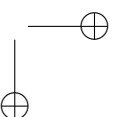
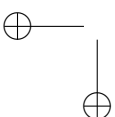
“(. . .) he also saw a certain sense in the notion that burgeoning technologies require outlaw zones, that Night City wasn't there for its inhabitants, but as a deliberately unsupervised playground for technology itself” (1988b: §10; 1988: p.20).

By taking the liberty to take Gibson's statement out of its context a little, perhaps we may understand why streets are the gathering point for *DJs*, *hip-hoppers*, *hackers*, *rhackers* and *graffiters*. All of them are street characters like the *break dancer* or the *MC man* – the microphone poet. Far from all telecom cyberspaces, the street has always been the jungle zone, a space of chaos, riot, hysteria and rallies. In *hip-hop* culture, the street is understood to be a test lab, no more to be militarized by technology, but to be liberated by these militarization technologies. Hip-hop uses and re-defines them heading for an expression of consciousness, now turning into spectacle by his brother: the rhythm, which in other times was the rhythm of military machinery rallies in public squares when belical power had to be exposed.

Now, belical power is poetically renewed.

Provocation, shock, stimulation and sonic aggression were key-characteristics of *hip-hop*. The aesthetes of *hip-hop* even got to invest on Kraftwerk's “robot” paradigm, within the point of view that we are machines, having this into account, maybe, much of Philip K. Dick's incredible arguments in Sci-Fi on the

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man-machine dichotomy. That is why the rhythmic repetition and the circled and deep bass were also object(s) for British and Germanic electronic industrial music, ending on a spheric sonic eternal debris, yet not as eternal as the hallucinating cyberspaces provided by the *ecstasy* culture.

In another context, the hardware released in the eighties, such as the sampler, contained in itself the very nature of the “sentence circularity” caused by the sample’s *loop* that, like *graffiti*, established in *hip-hop* an amazing mash of invisible links similar to the ones existing in data networks. On the networked media, there’s also this question of extending public space, something unilateral media like the TV or the Radio that had already done in the 20th century, by continuing to promote urban globalization as the model to follow. This way, the idea one has about the urban scenario is always an accomplice of the effective *territory of images*, a media landscape stuffed with pictorial and communicative icons. Yet it is this very society that segregates separation and alienation, allowing media cyberspace to be grandiose thanks to the *images of territories*, being this latter the virtuality’s exclusive domain.

The contradictory side of this antinomy remains between the *territory of images* and the *images of territories* are erased by the ironical way *graffiti*’s expression conceals both thesis. On one hand, *graffiti* responds to alienation, by saying “I exist”, marking passage paths for the urban citizen, but, on the other hand, he himself manifests, not just answering to media’s dematerialized images, settling on the physical object whose outcome is the cultural artifact “graffiti”, changing too the real estate icons. This relation with property is established in a tribal form, how it is pretended to say that all around a *graffiti* an organized community is attached²².

In Los Angeles, like any other over-developed city, gang guerrillas found

²²If we have in mind the reason why The Clash are named that way, we may understand how territories stay tense with the images they cast and manage, sometimes for seduction, other for advertising, warning. There is this idea that The Clash, one of the most remarkable punk rock genre bands, chose its name from an homonymous *graffiti* in a freeway pillar at Weetway. The band decided it demarcated a territory and that’s why they had chosen it; it expressed the substance of the band, the adoption of a rock style of their own. In short, their own territory; their acoustic space. The choice of the name revealed an attitude of territorial demarcation. So it is true that when the band began its career, territories were defined in a different way, for that *reggae* was what people were listening to in Portobello Road, while other territories still assured their borders with Latin music and others even with *rockabilly*. Each territory had its own hymn, its sonority and its influences, its roots.

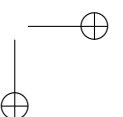




its legitimacy and expression through *graffiti*, in the same way *hip-hop* music, now more mainstream pop than hardcore, becomes very hugely relevant in the communication protocols of those postmodern tribes. From the viaducts, suburbia an avenues scenario till the most hidden walls, serves as a canvas to the inscription of the most politically incorrect contents, which should get written on physical objects in order to no perish before historiography's impotence. There is this need to write contents that do not resemble any other unleashed, erroneous, disembodied media image; the idea is to provide it embodiment. Walls become in the end a more ironical canvas, because the wall has always been useful to delimit and to circumscribe objects. The high urban wall is hence the *telos*, that is to say, the purpose, for tall the street *graffiter* artistic load, while it gets corrupted by exhibiting images as surreal and powerful as the so much claimed freedom of speech.

As an art, *graffiti* gets politicized, becoming available as it belongs to a system of cultural objects. Those elements are the African Diaspora, white-man's technology getting changed by the black-man's using of it on the street level. And the street is the chosen space for testing all gear and humanity inherent to the rebel afro tribalism, which doesn't have to be necessarily black. Urban cubism looks inhuman and *graffiti* shows up as a new color, demanding a new comprehension, but like all post-war subcultures *hip-hop* is included in the "system of objects". We also must underline that it is very hard to possess the *graffiter's* attitude and not enjoying *hip-hop* music, because they are different dimensions of afro expressions, therefore they remain interlinked. The person who makes *graffiti* has the same behavior before the world like the *raver* who decides to have an *ecstasy*; there is courage, responsibility, the privilege of making the wrong choice, endeavoring for the politically incorrect, not mistrusting one's beliefs. This attitude dates from the beginning of rap culture that has always been a form of sonic and verbal provocation.

As new-yorker *graffiter* Rammellzee states (a well-known artist included in Afrofuturism according to culture critic Mark Dery), the textual production merged in the *graffiti* pictograms, is just the very constitution of an intertextual space, reserved to the mostly black afrofuturistic cyberpunks, resisting manipulation. To Rammellzee one avoids what occurred in the history of the alphabet; when, through war, the Roman Empire had stolen the Greek alphabet, which later was disguised by Middle Age monks with a pernicious design





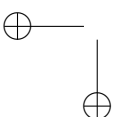
to hide the true meaning of words. Now he says words are protected from any further manipulation (in Dery, 1992: p.183).

Graffiti is the graphic domain of *hip-hop's* sonic realm, a visualization in the same way 3D Virtual Reality solidifies the telecom cyberspace; the image is the deaf scream that even sound can't contain, it is the explosion of urban modernity canons, hence recreated by the hand of tribal codes and the territory/property relationship. Graffiti and *hip-hop* are the proof that the Western polis has been "re-territorialized within its own boundaries. Science-fiction has approached the re-territorialization" question in many other ways.

In *Escape From New York*, musician and movie director John Carpenter provided an odd image of New York, where the danger of streets, once elevated to a superlative of chaos questioned the modern notion of public urban space. The solution found out by the military state is to circumscribe the metropolis with a high wall, turning the urban theatre into an almost zoological prison. Among many films which possess elements of the so-called cyberpunk style, *Escape From New York*, exposes in its B series format of Sci-Fi that urban evolution is not socially proportional to all classes; and that sometimes the opposites legitimate among themselves in the dichotomy of high-tech/low-life. One issue enlighten by this film, that got Gibson's attention, was the fact of the tribal ground being chaos and underground organized crime scenario only for the application of cutting-edge technology. What one can retain from Carpenter's movie, which isn't much, is the same thing we get from *graffiti*, Gibson's suggestion that "the street reinterprets the use of things".

The scenography of *Escape From New York* or of *Neuromancer* are fictitious contexts, environments designed by creative authors to whom rebellious cyberpunk *graffiti* is considered. After all, the *hip-hop* community *graffiter* is, by excellence, the incarnation of the figure segregated by the city alienation.

Graffiti is an exercise of registering information, able to detour, socially, from the media's circuit, but, due to its irreverence, Los Angeles and New York already learned how to make it profitable, making it not that much forbidden, the interesting part. That is how *graffiti* became an icon for metropolitan touristic courses, although the outlaw zones are defined by the marginal *graffiting*. One of the most important factors for the *graffiti* to exist is "dandism", only the free time, as an element of anti-production, provides the devious and desired disturbance that practices like *break-dance*, *hip-hop* and *DJing* im-





proved. Such kind of “dandism” we verify to exist in *hip-hop* culture fights back domestic middle-class, which is isolated at home which attending to TV shows, consuming images, while the ghettos and suburban streets turn into prototype spots for skateboarding and in-line activities²³.

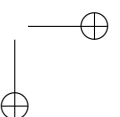
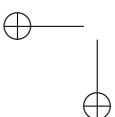
The marginal figure, wearing its *hip-hop* streetwear, moved away from the too much communicologic media circuit, until media began to patrol deliberately forbidden public spaces, the ghettos of black cyberpunks, in order to get images from that subculture. By attempting to be subversive, the *hip-hop* subculture soon faced capitalism’s seduction capabilities and today we have renowned *graffiters* doing *graffiti* ordered by museums for indoor and outdoor panels. MTV has turned *hip-hop* into a mainstream genre and some *hip-hop* singers are posing for advertising TV spots of skateboards, *graffiti* sprays or streetwear. From the point of view of using tech on the street, of deliberate disruption of certain linguistic contents, *hip-hop* culture is one only sphere altogether with tribal orality in a McLuhanesque sense. One of its premises was to contest the social system, which led *hip-hop* crews to modify the spray cans²⁴ usage and to re-invent downtown yuppies’ office clothes.

The large t-shirt, the baggy pants, the *sound system* and the singing of contestation have, in itself, the angry attitude, not as much as before though, elements gathered by the revolutionary behavior of the cyberpunk in the hard Sci-Fi level or in the real underground sub-stream. The signature, the tag, the doodle, the *bombing* are translations of *hip-hop* sound into graphics. The radical objective of *graffiti*, for example, was to affirm an existence, by providing exactly its denial, which is, an effective promotion after the existential crisis; in fact a self-promotion cyberpunk like behavior exercising the “Do It Yourself” directive. We may say this “Do It Yourself” (DIY) is provocation to power, an insult to state the individual’s authority among the urban sameness, despising social rules and the ritual of making contact with media to ask for permission to perform a public usage of Reason.

Like in the game theories, *graffiti* is the outcome of a behavior that requires analysis, its about slow decoding, shocking in size and how it “in-

²³Such practices are absolutely urban, and also inseparable from items like “pot”, speedy rhythm *hip-hop*, whose lifestyles demanded new clothings. The sportswear was not enough, it became an uniform, hence the *streetwear* came back to fashion.

²⁴Spray cans are small paint aerosols, an artifact from the industrial urban landscape, initially destined to retouch automobiles painting.





terquotes” itself in a rhizomatic manner, weaving a content which discards presentation and asks us for a visit, defying pop issues by resisting them, at least with its rebel manifestation. The transgressive side of *graffiti* also reveals in the “atrocious exhibition” which it allows before the “non-sense” forum, somehow translated in graphic means in the vast and complex pictogram architectures. Such complex pictograms have, in its turn, a correspondence in *hip-hop* music, namely in the “sampled” beats and in the rhythm breaks danced in *break-dance*. There is a whole provocation of a “non-sense”, which a protection logic”, yet the encoding and the system of objects is quite engaging, like a line of attitudes making *hip-hop* present, instead of letting it perish.

Many were the theorists that mentioned an impossible fusion between *graffiti* and art. Today, after Photoshoped graphics in street art and Banksy’s post-computer *graffiti* had changed the *graffiti* world, most of the psychology or sociology studies are obsolete, unable to explain *hip-hop* street culture and the African Diaspora.

So far, some said that the *graffiter* is a typical criminal figure for the civilized world. However the celebrity status is something the *hip-hopper* has been awarded with ever since MTV and other cable TV music channels began to promote *hip-hop* as a fashion-driven music genre for the mainstream, unlike before, when the black icons of the “culture of barbarism” (Frankfurt School) were forming their own *star system*. In a symbolic way, *graffiti* reveals its visuals as an underground culture surfacing into the mainstream straight to its *hip-hop* star system built upon the outlaw label, becoming street pop and challenged by promotional neons. Graffiti’s appealing *typos* overloaded with hard-to-decipher pictograms mirrors underground pop culture debris, now globalized by the MTV since the nineties of the 20th century, after its genuine cyberpunk period. The by-products absorbed and merged by *graffiti* are the comics, the B-series film, the ideal *feminine porn star* model and the e complexified cubism. These are the ingredients which led to the provocation of unilateral mass media as TV or Radio, in their turn each time more or less able to integrate electronic music’s cyberspaces, the Video-Jockey’s multimedia, the *hacker’s* hypermedia or the also viral *graffiti’s* intertextuality.

Among many ideas, the “rhizome” concept of Deleuze & Guattari in fact the most able to comprehend exactly all the *graffiti* is about. Every underground by-product is quoted among themselves, by getting copied and pasted





onto other medium supports, with no center or periphery. The very essence of *hip-hop* is its connectivity nature, because it is resonant, whose floating contents are segregations of data wiring all things with each other as long as they are able to be re-translated to rhythm. Like the “sampled” beats of rap, the digital *rock riffs* of *cyborg rock* (from Nine Inch Nails to Daft Punk) or Internet Youtube uploaded footage, is as hybrid, as the “rhizomorphic” afro culture labeled by Erik Davis as “Black Electronic”. What is at stake is that on the “rhizomatic” plateau of culture is by no means the linear progression paradigm, history’s positivist sequentiality, the uncriticizing positioning towards multiple pasts. Now the model is made of fusion, cybernetic layers, hibirdity and viral use of copied data. The main support for underground culture is technology, instead of just simply copying, in its turn, to foment replication. The *DJ* emerging from the *hip-hop* culture inaugurates the remix culture, that is why *hip-hop* is relevant because its all about re-creation, breaking through “originality” and “authenticity”. In our time, the *VJ* completes such tasks by adding to the equation the “appropriation” of music synchronized video footage. Still every *hip-hop* crew looks for *hip-hop* as mean to get freedom of speech in every circuits, whose technical achievement corresponding may be considered the MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) interface, much older than the USB protocol, for instance, helping to promote the cross-linkage of several music hardware and software in the same time. It was undoubtedly the first commercial interface to make machines work like *graffiti* crews inter-quoting each other’s work. The “Black Electronic” follows ever since the MIDI interface came up with the “networked mind” rhizomatic model.

The entire fast-forward speedy graphic acting of the *graffiter* unleashes the disguised deff punk energy, because “bombing” walls with spray can mean to criticize metropolitan society, like the New Yorker’s rebel painting railway wagons on-the-run by filling huge outlined letters with sprayed ink bursts, leaving the signature before the cops appear on the scene. And about the content of *graffiti*, one may state that it is cyberpunk in its core, because all that the *graffiter* wants is to use publically his Reason, outriggering a feedback of technology. The noise in its case is not senseless imagery, instead of the “graphic pollution”, information excess returned back under the aegis of the “graf”.

Certainly the *graffiti* is a mean, a medium, and the same time, a message,

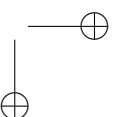




in a McLuhanesque manner, which provides silent networked communication unless in its sonic form, unable to be reduced to the existing relationship web black cyberpunks. In this way, *hip-hop's graffiti* speaks the same language of contemporary digital media, at the same level as broadband cyberspace. Now we may understand how fast *graffiti* did find a way to network media through the "videograph", which is the live recording of the *graffiti* practice, most of the time, it uploaded onto YouTube or Google Video Web space.

The presence of depictions of *graffiti* in fiction by the cyberpunk writers was on purpose. They did know too that *graffiti* is primitive, tribal, and at the same time modern, crystal-clear, but most people ignore the cybernetic aspect of *graffiti*, which makes it so much graphic as sonic, as the audiovisual cyberspaces of nowadays, providing all means to an endless quoting and copying system among *hackers* and *DJs* devoted to 3D sound and image. Cyberspace and the palimpsest wall of *graffiti* are both mazes of many state, possessing their own layers. But the cybernetic space of the *hacker* was still the first to face emancipation, long before the *hip-hopper* could face the MIDI interface. Besides the *graffiti* depended on the wall and real estate is something hard to change, not that much flexible. Without any other means of escaping, the *graffiter*, as the *hip-hop* painter, had to get back to "re-territorialize" space, re-defining territory, whose implications were a new concept of space, the space they already knew that needed to be redesigned; such space has to be designed to exist overlapping the ordinary polis canvas. The need for an "over-space" was urgent, and a faster or more flexible space was indeed required, whose laws and codes would fit over the Cartesian and euclidean world. Among *hip-hoppers*, *graffiti* allowed them to communicate by space points where the game languages looked invisible and could only be decoded by people of their own tribal crews. The problem is that this "over-space", this "Interzone" typical in the cyberpunk imaginary, was also a hybrid space. It was in fact a fusion of the non-rhythmic metropolis decaying concrete and the rhythmic code of expression of the aggressive rap.

What makes the intertextual exercise of *graffiti*, the game which makes content of "bombings" and "tags" to continue is wiring capability that *graffiti* has, it implied in the "street law", its "rhizomatic" behavior totally fragmented to work out like a shattered map where in the center of the cyberpunk is ruling. All things adapt to him, one do not know where it ends or begins the content production because in the paradigm of cartography network, the total





map leaves no tracing calls possible. The cyberpunk, whose attributes one detects in the *graffiter*, is self-guided, for him who does not accept impositions from a hierarchic scale, but yet he do not recognizes. Through the mirror-shades of the cyberpunk, like Neo in *The Matrix Reloaded*, the social system depends on multiple parallels, or according to its own directives. Questioning the academic slow discourses, the cyberpunk sees thee street as scenario for acting, action in the public space, a politics arena. As we see in the end of *The Matrix*, all that is done has repercussions in the street level, because the objective is to run away from mediations, something that media and ordinary institutions cultivate, each time in a much more spectacular fashion.

Like the archives of hypermedia tech, the constant artistic quotation developed by *graffiti* in the street happens in the recording studio too, where *DJs* and musicians mix, replicate, recreate vinyl sound-patterns and sampled mash-ups, using regularly the same style to make their work that can be easily identified, from artwork to artwork. In the *graffiti*, for instance, the signature shaped in the “tag” is all that left to identify besides the pictograms. This exercise in leaving marks is seen even on the *hacker’s* work, when he leaves behind a program routine to let other identify the programming crew he works for, but sometimes is a personal dissimulation, for they are “one man crews”!

The intertextuality of *hip-hop* exists in the domain of information, in a sort of “hypertext format”, for the goal is to link up all texts and contents, following the examples of media, the greatest 20th century institution. In the exacerbated connections we get an acceleration of everything as data becomes available in a synthesized manner, leaving no data of alterity away, the knowledge on the Other, which ends up in a sort of absolutism.

This way, the already provided mappings of any technological street practice origin point out mostly the effectiveness of the same practices. If there was a time to complicate any system from the outside (the centripodeo model), now our time is primary driven by an entrance in any system to perform the always violent change from the inside out (the centrifugal model), being dematerialized all action’s tracks. So, in this sense, we have the *DJ* who is hiding the original artworks upon which he did the mixture, the vynils he used, the *hacker* steals programming code and hides under the “grammar of the masks” (Miranda, 1997) of the cyberspace, while the *graffiter* signs his artworks with different “tags” protecting himself from other consequences. These attitudes are escape routes for the predictability of their actions; dissimulations.





Every individual revealing cyberpunk aesthetic attributes bet on what may happen, playing with immortality, not the boring eternity. One thinks on creating evolutive *continuums*, constant updates of the last brick of the system at stake. The idea of William S. Burroughs about doing pastes, mixtures and adapting cut-ups from newspapers is quite a good example from the intertextuality practice, something that corresponding in the *graffiti* as a prolonged *graffiti*. Some crews, as they detect *graffitis* from a tribe they like, by any reason, ideological or cultural, they try to reshape it, increasing its size or painting on it something more, making out of it a sort of “prosthetic” novelty; something new, not just a representation, even when violated uncontrolled spaces aren’t seen.

In the abstract domain of ideas, data, the cyberpunk wants to revenge its mission: making everything to prevail the “de-construction” ideology. The need for confrontation requires an appropriation of spaces, because the cyberpunks want to conquer mediums, supports to inscribe the data of their practices. Like the *hacker* needs to access the network to input a viral “logical bomb”, the *rocker* uses the star system to promote his values and the *graffiter* looks after walls, floors, vehicles, any billboard space to write down his message. Walls, for instance, in its essence mean for the *graffiter* a conquest of minds, of everybody’s attention as *graffitis* are seen, the “grafs” are the deep signatures of *hip-hop*’s endless intertextuality architecture. For *graffiters* the purpose of “graffiting” is to decharacterize in public space, as a huge cosmetic and graphical operation, so in the end it becomes redefined and among the chaos *hip-hop* gets the legitimate throne; that is why the *graffiter* refers: “I exist”, “I was here!” Every wall painter of the *hip-hop* culture knows *graffiti* as the result from a young rebellion, the desire shows that something could not be controlled.

Once that the city divides spaces, functions and practices, portable technology, computer networks, the ghost world of media images (which does not allow reconnaissance, only exacerbates the desire for association and sublimation) crossing all frontiers, they begin to face the pictorial rivalry provoked by *graffiti*’s urban space colonization. Taking advantage of anonymity, the *graffiter* gets dark, invisible, leaving nothing behind but only the graphic expression of his ideas. Pictograms and stencils in Banksy style even manage to become re-made visuals, competing for our attention and dethroning advertising billboards. What *hip-hop* painters do is to make fun out of the system that





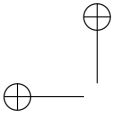
only requires identifying citizens to confirm or not suspicions, as it happens with lots of other citizens. It is hard to trace down a *graffiter*, unless somebody watches him while he is painting a wall.

Reminding us of the simulacrum constructs inhabiting cyberpunk novels, *graffiters* now de materialize themselves in media's cyberspace, leaving their artworks, pure residual imagery, "behaving" like parasites on street's verticalities of any urban or suburban surfaces, and, besides that way, in online Web sites which designed to post in blog style other than the street art. By taking advantage from the exhibiting value which his artworks acquired, the *graffiter* outsmarts the street scenography. He knows the system, like Neo walking in the City simulation inside the Matrix Construct with Morpheus. He knows that the system, the establishment, only authorizes what it wants, and, as such, the cyberpunk does what he wants too, where others don't want him to do. The cyberpunk behavior becomes scandal and provocation, a self-legitimate manifestation. Somehow, tagging and bombing walls is an uncontrollable task in any space that is designed to be controlled, even as the city, because there are always moments when control is not working. And it is precisely in those times the cyberpunks grant themselves authorization to do whatever they want to do with society's technology. In the case of *graffiti* its authorization comes from the street, hence it's where we circulate, live, paint and produce culture. The "ivory towers" are out of fashion, yet they still exist.

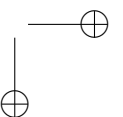
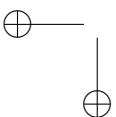
If the jungle is the living field of mortal signs, the "urban jungle" is understood as being a kingdom of signs from the dead, as typical as any posthuman scenario. Such posthuman scenario, dangerously assumed as kind of machine laboratory, is seen, in last case, as a useless scenography expecting the *graffiters'* graphic labels to stick on. Only the angry mood for the dehumanized city may justify the uncomfortable and disorienting "grafs", which shows a bold behavior, the fact of making public some less standardized speeches. We must not forgot that the style must be unrecognisable, the incarnation of an ideological conception, a publicity to the "graf" author's personality, embodying data to resist media metamorphosis, while the cyberpunk is unknown behind the mirrorshades, fully hardwired to its crew.

Art games are useful to the *graffiter* complicate in a deleuzian manner his art, usually working out as language games. He makes the street to attend to the new usage of things and he is its author. Empowered by *hip-hop*, the *graffiter* makes things happen, unleashed from artistic happenings, for this





is the artist, in the sense that, by suffering from the “Christ Complex” he thinks he is a demiurgical creator of the “Black Electronic” staring at the de-industrialized city as if it would be a medieval ruin at its mercy.

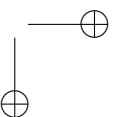
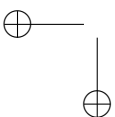




RHACKER: WHEN ROCKER AND HACKER ARE CYBORGED

“The *hacker* and the *rocker* are this decade’s pop-culture idols, and cyberpunk is very much a pop phenomenon: spontaneous, energetic, close to its roots. Cyberpunk comes from the realm where the computer *hacker* and the *rocker* overlap, a cultural Petri dish where writhing gene lines splice” (Sterling, 1986b: §24; 1986: p.9).

IN my opinion, our time has been long influenced by the *DJ* figure, the remix culture surpasses the read-only culture with a read-write culture propelled by hardware and software gizmos and gadgetry. As a heir of the *hacker* and *rocker*, the current generation attends to the expansion of another figure, the *rhacker*. Taking this into consideration the arguments of Bruce Sterling, relatively to how cyberpunk emerges spontaneously upon the *rocker* and the *hacker* figures, which were already pop culture icons. Both *rocker* and *hacker* figures step into a fusion process as video technologies and electronic music devices supply ways to hack, play, merge, mix and reproduce artworks from several different sources. The media types are no longer a problem because data transforms every medium into a computer file that is able to be translated from any type to any other. The *rhacker* is nowadays anyone behaves as a cyberpunk who assembles media files, uploading and downloading





them from the Web, creating resourceful archives to achieve mixing databases. Using photography, video, sound samples, CCTV footage, stock film, video-clips or classic motion pictures, overlapping into digital sound, the *rhacker* elaborates a whole new tapestry of never-ending artworks whose author is no one but himself. Henceforth the distinction between visual and “acoustic cyberspaces” fades away, being replaced by a hypermedia broadband audiovisual hybrid whose origins are *DJ*’s remixes and the *hacker*’s Web hackings.

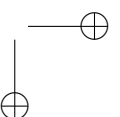
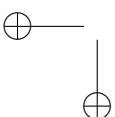
Rhacker is, in my perspective, the most appropriate term to think on the contemporary cyberpunk, this “rhizomorphic” chameleon devoted to cyborguization, replicating, reproducing and sharing contents as a librarian of the new age. Anyway, the *rhacker* is not just a concept I use to follow the path depicted by Sterling; it is above all, a way to snapshot the present day which merges the behaviors of outlaws and stars. Furthermore, the *rhacker* term’s phonetics sounds like “wreck” (wreckage). More like a prankster, the word *rhacker* has, in many aspects and perspectives, the same connotation as the figure of someone wrecking, “destroying” to elaborate something new.

The *rhacker* sees the metropolitan’s world as an audiovisual universe at his disposal. Like the romantics, he recollects the past as an age of our foundation artworks, the beginning of all things, a nostalgic reality. Thus he feels fascinated by details, feeding a passion towards the Real’s residues, which right then he assumes the fetish condition. We show no doubts regarding the way the *rhacker* renews his experience based on the *hacker*’s resources, he thinks for sure that the virtual is at his mercy, and the mercy is his and our own reality.

Much like the *hacker* who has established a connection between the real and the virtual information networks of private entrepreneurs and government, the *rhacker* hacks too but only at a virtual level, mesmerized by virtualized reality’s details which impressed him in a neo-romantic fashion.

The figure who hacks a recondite space, resisting generalized fiction paradoxically contributes to increasing fiction, for the remakes rules by expressing himself in the domain of interpretation, considering all his activity fulfills the chaotic vision of world based on expression. So he feels in the obligation to reconnect and reorganize all things. He is a brand new *romancer*, a pure visionary like the characters conceived by the cyberpunk writers.

On the other side, the *rhackers* absorb from the *rocker* and the *hacker* which is the machiavelic tendency to produce noise; they adore to shock and to





become illegal, inspired on punk make their rituals from the cultural appropriation by means of technical reproducibility. Having these means allow them to justify their conceptions of a Real they do like to “re-realize”. One of their favorite practices, the exercise of replicating contents about reality, whether its news or graphics, texts or artworks. They mix files and the outcome is always a mixing, a borderless field where no clues are left behind, their work is untraceable as the *culture jammer* who redefines corporate brand design, like as if they’re cleaning the path behind the “perfect crime”, metaphor used by Baudrillard to explain the virtual insanity of our time.

Complicating the solid ground of reality is the *rhacker’s* playground, because he thinks the real according to micrologic patterns of the Real, weaving hybrid zones in sound, graphics and words. The *DJ*, for instance, is fascinated by mixing anybody else’s artistic production, because he feels seduced by the sexual nature of “re-production”, but the *rhacker* of new media technology appears already in the age of MTV. Our time, this music and sound as one of the media by-product, which is allowed the *VJ* – Video-Jockey – figure to be a celebrity ever since The Buggles’ “Video Killed The Radio Star” (1980) was released. If the *DJ* comes up before the MTV, like the *rocker* and the *hacker*, the *VJ*, in its turn, which is typically a cyberpunk *rhacker* character, emerges after MTV being institutionalized. No one can be a *rhacker* model without surpassing the hypnagogic imagery while that media expel to mainstream society. The act of rhacking implies a generation of images inexistent in nature; it’s wiring gear demand an audiovisual outcome as the hybrid sum of other hybrid products²⁵.

It is part of the *rhacker’s* activities the constant replication of micrologic details of reality; he is used to gather many artworks to interweave a brand new zone of artworks to himself; an “Interzone” much like the cyberpunk writers have envisioned. Sound and image manipulation from diversified technological and discursive areas, make the *rhacker* eventually fascinated, though he gets more fascinated by sound than by image, comprehending that sounds occupy more pertinently space than images. In its old school days the *sampler* was the tool of choice, but because nowadays all computerized gadgets can sample stuff, the *rhacker* becomes more software dependent than hardware

²⁵In some situations *sitcoms* footage is used side a side with “live” footage, being the sonic background a pastiche somewhere between the work of *DJs*, *Samplers* (the individuals, not the hardware) and motion picture original soundtracks.





dependent. Still the sampling, the connecting and ripping activities remains its playground. After all, all he wants is to play with the technical *mimesis*, but mostly to increase space; in this case, media space, because is very fond of “sampling” reality, as if in a methonomical manner. In the end of the sampled fragments, imaginary worlds persist uncreated by anybody, as a parasite of floating debris near a galaxy, a “collection of real objects” whose *montage* triggers a totally fetish effect.

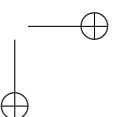
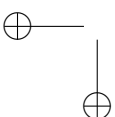
“The range of sonic contributions in the vast spectrum of music in continuous recycling, as it is the case of *jazz*, of *soul*, of *funk*, of *electro*, of *house*, of *techno*, it is augmented by its technological reapropriation”²⁶ (Emanuel Ferreira & António Contador, 1997: p.152).

Engineered with the purpose of replication, the *sampler* is the most powerful instrument of the “acoustic cyberspace”, without it the *rocker* would not be at the same level as the *hacker*, enables the sound data possible to sample. After the release of the sampler the *rocker* began to see the *soundscape* like the *hacker* sees the visual datascapes of files. All information, of whatsoever, thus stayed available to be gathered, recycled, plundered, appropriated, replicated and redirected according to the directives for the *hacker* of sonics and visuals – the *rhacker*.

Dedicating to data sampling, the *rhacker* is the individual who likes to get all info, extracting registers of others thanks to the sentenced circularity of the sample’s *loop*. Regardless of any copyright infringement, the *rhacker* hacks rock and video like a gatherer of data among the debris of contents applying his usual techniques of “cut’n’paste” and “cut’n’mix”.

Sampling audiovisual data the *rhacker* creates a new practice with sampler, making the Video-Jockey his most direct figuration. Well-known *VJ’ing* practices were, for instance, the satellite TV broadcasts that the U2 rock band accomplished in the famous Zoo TV Tour in the nineties, providing the audience the chance to watch live footage of the White House and polemic statements on the stadium led screen. Even in the Pop Tour, the U2 endeavors in live concerts full of audiovisual gadgetry were unusual, yet interesting to understand the *rhacker* domain, for the appears as somebody able to disturb the media spectrum. In live concerts more and more times much larger screens

²⁶N.A.: The translation from the Portuguese version is mine.





connect and reveal sampled footage, allowing people to witness different particles of a Real like the *DJ*, not disregarding the rock part, in this case. We may realize that there is a fusion between the studio and the street where all recording's footage may wind up. About this relationship between the studio and street, Baudrillard argues that:

“(...) the street became a prolongation of the studio, of the non-place of the event. The street itself became a virtual space. Place of the definitive confusion of the mass and the medium, of the real confusion of the act of the sign”²⁷ (1987: p.86).

As a laboratory for subcultures and a test bank for fashion trends, the street is, in fact, just an extension of studios and video regie's cybernetic consoles. Thus, these consoles get back to the street as if in nostalgia, somehow in order to perpetuate the mythical nature of databases. Actually it is quite common to notice that most images understate: “it is here that all happens” or “it was in this place that it happened”. This merge of both realms enable the fusion of the music hero with the computer prankster, hence the *VJ* rocking *hacker* puts at his task the mixing and the cutting of all reality's data, living like everything is nothing but a videogame. So we may say that the *rhacker* does not affected by the annoyance of reality. The widest ambition of the cyberpunk is this blurring line between what really happens in the screens and what occurs in the real outside. Cyborged things become as frontiers get faded away, because the pranksters still dream of the chrome tech that could protect them of the Real, insisting to feedback the noise to the system – the artistic counter-information.

The interesting part of the databases scared the cyberpunks for a while, but when they saw their seductive nature, the appealingness of the resourceful archives, it all changed from day to night. They became aware of that these archives could be weapons in them, the only thing cyberpunks needed to do was to not afraid of the mapped realities, fearing so just imposed reality maps. This was the reason that made the Atari Teenage Riot's “The Future of War” (1997) album to be a protest against History's cultural archive. It sounded pretty “shallow minded”, but at the time, it made perfect sense, for they were criticizing History as an archive of lies, thus the music “Destroy 2000 Years of Culture!” (1997) was released. Undoubtedly this is one of the

²⁷ *Idem.*





most punkish electronic musics available, as the videoclip proves for itself, in a desperate way to state that reality is organized by institutions is nothing more than a representation management. As a matter of fact, the Atari Teenage Riot did always have this rocker and *hacker* synergy in their musics, in a mixture of angriness and beats, noise and anti-labels criticizing. Fighting authorship and media's pseudo-positivist classifying system was a very present issue back then in the ATR lyrics, all below the *house* beats and voracious *hip-hop* breakbeats accelerated with *rock* sounds. Nowadays the Daft Punk, the Crystal Method, Fat Boy Slim, Cubanate, among others, still explore this symbiosis ever since ATR²⁸ and The Prodigy turned the beats into a global soundtrack through MTV videoclips. The path was opened to many other artists.

The age of the *rhacker* marks the end of the old formation of *rocker* and its music quartet. So it was in the end of the nineties, when The Prodigy, Chemical Brothers and Future Sound of London were getting closer to the Underworld's hypnotic beats with the "Rave'n'Roll" press headline. This headline makes some sense if one recalls that in the latest 20th century's electronic music bands, most of the very relevant musician formations were started by technicians. Engineers, *DJs*, sound designers and producers who have left the *rave* and *techno* parties business and had tried a shot in sound composing. One must admit that no matter how appealing today technology is, for instance, for print culture, it still has to go back to books. The seduction comes from media and not from academic rhetorics, which at first glance may even sound insignificant, powerless to fight with the cyberspace's experts of special effects. The Underworld, for example, is a music band that is practically formed by technicians venturing in the *DJ* scene. Others such as The Young Gods are highly dependent on digital sampling and even discard the integration of a real human drummer. So the digital is more economical, otherwise hardware would not provide us with guitar, violin, piano and pass players, all them synthesized in a keyboard and some gigabytes of sampler sound waves. On this problematic, Emanuel Ferreira & António Contador affirm:

²⁸DHR (Digital Hardcore Recordings) is the recording label that publishes the Atari Teenage Riot's albums. Other artists in the same genre, like EC80R, Hanin Elias, Alec Empire, Shizuo, Bomb20 and Cristoph de Babalon were very relevant for the *digital hardcore* venue of cyberpunk at the nineties.





“The *sui generis* way they set up and disassemble those sonic frames, with a single instrument (the sampler), it is the reflex that musical creation no longer depends on the instruments technical limitations and on the fortuitous symbiosis, or not, between many, but and so only, on the imagination and on the cultural background of these new homeboys, from now on moved away from the recording studios, and consequently closer to the refuge of the room where it is stored enough logistics to make music. To do and to undo, using what is done, here is the starting point”²⁹ (1997: p.153).

Whether we’re speaking of “extensions of man” or of “exclusions of man” we are attending to a new psychology of music band formation, impossible to came up without the possibilities of the synthesizer, the sequencer, but above all thanks to the sampler, which its turn are embodied by the *rhacker* himself. We can see that in every *cyborg rock* concert of any live tours of The Young Gods³⁰ because they do a lot of sampling effects discarding the use of real guitars, all by the sampler and the keyboard. Sometimes they manage to sample the audience’s sound in the theatre. A common practice of The Young Gods is that use to excite the audience and then they digitize it, returning the sound in playback as a *soundscape* which already merged with the synthesized rock. Like other cyberpunks, the machine-devoted The Young Gods accomplish one of the cyberpunk premises, sending backwards the noise of social and technical machinery to an audience full of electronic rock devotees.

By reducing the audience to data, a hybrid zone and a feedback process is established addressing the acoustic hardware and the *mind-bodies* turned into beats and bits. The music serves as a parasite to merge the mapping of Real; all seems to reduce itself to digital language because the mighty machine behind it all is the computer binary system, the machine of machines resumed in the modern microcomputer and its seductive and persuasive editing cyberspace. Curiously, one of the most remarkable synthesized rock bands, the Portuguese Bizarra Locomotiva, used to divide the band in “machinist” and lead singer. Aren’t we in the path defined by Mark Dery about “rock has been cyborged”

²⁹N.A.: The translation from the Portuguese version is mine.

³⁰The music band’s name, Young Gods, means that the musician *rhackers* feel empowered by the possibilities of digital technologies, like the *sampler* and the MIDI interface, because only these allow youngsters to feel like gods, which is, as I have been referring until now, one of the cyberpunk’s characteristic: the “Christ Complex”, translated as the will of playing a demiurge, a god.





(1995)? In this sense if we comprehend that the *rhacker* is somebody changes into a special effects wizard, a genius of recording techniques, a master of mixing or an authority in graphics, it looks like contradiction became integration. The free space transformed into a power chair, all due to the art of governing, the space of *kuber*; the cyberspace, therefore the *rhacker* is the perverse hero.

Settled upon a technical revolution capable of reformulating society, cyberspace performs it according to a decentralization fluid process. Undoubtedly, the *rhacker* is the cyberpunk inhabiting the *multidimensional cyberspaces*, within an anthropology framework of the flow, considering that the cyberspaces provide a liquidness towards a more effective “ocean of information”. Even the *rhacker’s* origin comes from the time which *DJs* had the need to dive into rock festivals and concerts, because parties and clubbing mechanics were becoming monotonous, who decaying status was notorious as its adopted dynamics was less pure. It is correct that since nineteen-ninety-three a four *techno’s* non-stop machine beats genre got closer to rock. One motive is that *techno* is missing the young energy and the rebel attitude presents in the old punk, so it required a translation of that behavior to the electronic context, like the Underworld did as well as cyber and punk. The other motive is that beats started to look like the same so it justified the incorporation of simulated electric guitars as well as many directly imported issues from the “rockology’s” sub-genres. In contemporary times, The Crystal Method still make a very good work with mixing guitars and beats, but in the foundation of that “cyborged rock” were *The Prodigy*, that managed to retrieve elements from the latest eighties’ *heavy metal*, a time when *metal* was being replaced in the mainstream by digital sound genres. The end of the old rock was the beginning to the new computer music rock *riffs*, and the reason behind this modification was that electronic music settled not as mere style exercise in a test-tube, but as an architecture. I would like to underline that the “acoustic cyberspaces” are a territory, not just a music fashion.

Rocker and *hacker* become one figure as they adore the superlative of surpassing mere dancing state. The dionysiac noise of “cyborged rock” is still loyal to punk. Until sometime ago, even after the new emergent *brit-rock* we aware still living in a “post-rave age” and dancing to punk styled musics, but this time they were played on a synthesizer, like Underworld’s “Born Slippy” (1996) or *The Prodigy’s* “Firestarter” (1997). Both these electronic punk icons

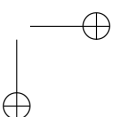




got much more on top of the electronic music pyramid than to rock. In the understatement, a dancer as he or she listened to their sounds would easily identify the sources of rebelliousness, like Rage Against The Machine and Smashing Pumpkins, pumping underneath as a pastiche of *hard techno* and compulsive rock.

While the *rhacker* has at his service music instruments that are media devices, the punk figure was only a music instruments player, with a really low knowledge on technique, therefore its work could only be as naïf as pure noise. In the present day the cyborg sounds of the *rhacker* are enabled by his working conditions provided by the computer discourse, like punk had the guitar, jazz had the bass guitar and the saxophone, or blues had the drum kit and the singer. The sound that comes from contemporary DeepDish's "Flashdance" (2004), for instance, its mixing of guitars and *house* beats, has its background in the nineties' "rave'n'roll", for in this time rock and dance music began to merge because the new music ensembles were using the same hardware and software. It does not matter which style was at stake because all *rhackers* were demanding a dancing audiences, as "jumpy" as any rock audience too, so we got used to to attend to music concerts where dancing and yelling were happening in the same space.

Some consider the outcome as a bizarre byproduct; other thinks integration is a hopeful and powerful source. Otherwise we would be still in the age of the cool and uncriticizing optimistic mood left by *ecstasy* culture. One side effect of this mix of beats and rock is that for a while there was this hangover of ravings; the *raves* were no longer in the 00 years of the new millennium a spot searched for cyberpunks. The advent of "total fashion", the MTV generation and the Internet have changed their behavior of rebelliousness. So it is quite comprehensible why the cyberpunks questioned in the last decade of the chemical products addiction proposed by the utopian culture of raving onto the new world. By understanding McLuhan's vision technophiles have influenced in a very large scale the youngsters generation which grew up with the Internet departure, from 1994 till our days. Henceforth, every yougman had discovered that the electronic gadgetry's cyberspace was an hallucinating dimension in itself. More remarkable than punk's drunken crowds, more styled than rocks hairy stars, refashioned to fit in the new media's trends, the cyberpunks of our time refused the way orgy-like parties of old rock. That was just old school. The new school is demanding that Dyonisius flute is already



as cybernetic as enchanting. And the new war happens to be in fashion and media, under the smart domain of speech, technology and social engineering.

Looking back now would remind us that in the cyberpunk writers' fiction, besides what Sterling referred in *Mirrorshades – The Cyberpunk Anthology*, in other texts such as *Time Considered as a Helix of Semiprescious Stones* (Delany, 1970), like the Lo-Rez band in Gibson's *Idoru* (1998), the *rocker* is still a very notorious figure. Cybermaniacs still think in a conscious way that singers and guitar players rule in society which is addicted to music and media. Although we could just understand it as new remake of the aesthetic model of the sixties and the seventies, when at the time the electric guitar made gods out of musicians as a new *angst* symbol very in precyberpunk manner. With no trends to be made entirely from scratch, *The New Media-Fashion-Complex* manages to recycle in a revival way in old times of contradiction, symbolic figures and iconic lyrics. The problem was that rock technology did too much noise. As time passed by, "rockology"'s arguments got refined and redefined by mainstream videoclip culture, expanding to Hi-Fi digital remastering technology and download Web streams, "YouTubed" videos and music cable TV channels and CGI computer graphics since the eighties.

Not so long ago, *digital hardcore*³¹ and *gabber* were pioneers as music

³¹As a producer and musician responsible for Digital Hardcore Recordings, Alec Empire is one of the contemporary figures of the *rhacker* I say exist nowadays. Alec even signs his texts with the nickname "The Destroyer". But relatively to the *digital hardcore*, in the E.P. entitled "Squeeze the Trigger" (1997) Alec says the following: "Ain't nobody the king of the street... It's all about surviving... It's all about getting yours... Slaughter them and kill everything... All this stuff was hard to get... The ignorance of the trend-chasing dance scene made it impossible. There is no doubt – these tracks are *DJ* tracks! I heard it a few times on *London Pirate Radio*. Our Small «german» *underground* always wanted the english to move in this directions. [because we needed more stuff to play] But they never did... And that attitude didn't stop us. We went even further. It could be seen as the beginning of *digital hardcore*. Now these ep's are seen as «obscure» and «the bastard child of *drum'n'bass*». But who cares what it is? I never do... As long as its violent; full of flicked up soul drums and noise. This sequence goes back in time. I think the development of the riot heats style becomes clearer. It's a story about a very small german *underground* that doesn't exist like that anymore. In the early days everyone was involved in the terror bass sounds system... Later on it was a small group of *DJs* who couldn't accept sucking dick of the british *drum'n'bass* industry, *DJs* who wanted their own identity, their own special sound... A raw, wild sound and not the *trancey*, clean «elevator» *jungle* that fits every shampoo Advert on *TV*... Young people who didn't want to conform to what the music Few dictated. I remember that in 1993 we once had this discussion about "tether we should call ourselves *the underground resistance* because we felt that the



genres, promoting hard beats and unpredictable complex drumbeats like its distorted noisy and fast-paced sounds. Today's revolutionary consciousness, whether it is against exacerbated capitalism or verbal logical's imperatives is prolonged in the new media fashion resorts, the Hi-Res footage of video-clips and Web streamed music MP3 files. Everybody knows now that changes happen inside systematic organizations, from social and technology bonds. Slowly the rock culture changed until every pop artist became a technology artist, like Daft Punk, Depeche Mode, Amon Tobim and Bent. The big difference lies in the fact that electronic music does not come from *rhythm'n'blues* traditions, but from the legacy of Kraftwerk and New Order, Juan Atkins and Pet Shop Boys. All dance music, as now it is called, promoted a dancing listener, not a lyric reminder, the purpose was to make crowds dance and cheer. Hence, the electronic music as we envision now is cyberspatially destined to the neurological structure of the body, which is kept in mind by the *rhacker*.

This is mirrored in the motto of the so-called "Rave'n'Roll", otherwise there would be no mainstream video-acoustic cyberspace for image and sound; our time's "Uninterrupted Sound Matrix"³². Under the guidance of MTV we became aware that whenever music is being played so does images have to pulse. Non-stop footage lies side a side with non-stop music, being the rhythm their brother of unification. This way, each time-space sphere carries its own sound and images' codes, revealing a world which is no more than a collection of pictorial and sonic artifacts. In fact, the "collection of objects" idea seems to be what truly defines computerized 3D world, yet it is also the cyborg music nature. We can observe the existence of this collection of objects in the artworks of Pierre Henry, artist who focused on the recording of real sounds to further manipulation. He manipulated sounds in such a way that every work of his looked like a "collage of the Real", though in the opposite

Detroit sound did not represent what was really going anymore. Becoming part of something great and moving it on, that's what the *underground* means, not just trying to be «special». A real *underground* is Invisible, it's impossible to define it, because it's feeding back all the time, it's constantly changing. It's the greatest thing to be a part of. Why put bits of it on an LP then? I think this music has captured the energy of that time and It's important for people who couldn't be there. I know it comes across differently now... But otherwise it lies around just waiting to get raped. yeah, the and of riot heats and I am somewhere else. Already...". Alec Empire, The Destroyer 23-10-97.

³²."Uninterrupted Sound Matrix" is a term I dubbed upon a William S. Burroughs's expression concerning the MTV, when he said the "MTV is an uninterrupted flow of images".

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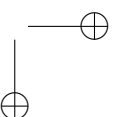
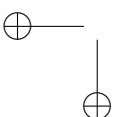
corner of sensations provided by the “take off of the Real” manifested in the “mental film” of all cyberpunk *ravers*.

To understand this context it is useful to comprehend too both “video-clip” and “sound-capsule” (1998, Pt. 4 Tomorrow: §46) concepts, for the scenario, language and postmodern architecture’s lack of attraction, in the sense that they are too much public and impersonal. One needs to translate personal freedom in the system’s breaches, even if its at stake to renounce the commanding logics by also imperative *techno*-logics; this is how modern cyberpunks think.

In a McLuhanesque tradition, if the adolescent is a model of the print culture, the modern teenager is the new son of the electronic circuitry world, because the new modern teenager is a cyberpunk living without stopping, always surrounded by visual and audio data, excluding himself from outside reality in his “sound-capsule”. Steiner affirms about this matter that “the resulting *sound-capsule* encloses the individual. It diminishes the external world to a set of acoustic surfaces” (1998, Pt.4 Tomorrow: §46)³³. Therefore we may conclude that sound sets up the borders between the teenager’s world and society’s world. In this equation we may also insert the fact that visual cyberspace defines the “acoustic cyberspace” of our time, the universe generated by the *hacker* and the *rocker*, which obligates the new figures of cyborged sounds to be stars in a borderless world. As if it would not be enough, the new stars of the cyborged pop world live as everything would be so perfect it would require a response. Thus the new war is to provide, like some authors defend, a “free culture world” being all culture produced so far as part of an endless *continuum* in the digital gear domain. So far there are no frontiers in the mind of the *hacker* and the *rocker*, because they are still fascinated by the “Inter-zones”, the hybrid VR space, where sampled and patched-up rock beats and dance flows are re-made and distorted like any lunatic would stare at the world behind the protective mirrorshades.

Translating all things to information, its digitizing procedure, allow us to do and undo all operations, as if time is controlled by our command. That is why we fasten our behavior in order to use technology to compress distances, letting ourselves being absorbed in the “black electronic” to live in a technical

³³Steiner (1998) in a conservative approach defends though that “A pop regime imposes severe physical stress on the human ear”.





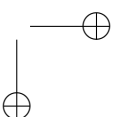
environment which is an hallucination in its deepest sense. All that matters is to allow mixing, cutting, sharing, copying, pasting and upgrading to the “new territory” through a new anaesthetic “line of flight”.

Drum'n'bass, for example, appeared when digital drum kits and groove boxes were initially an automatic engine for practicing music playing. But then it evolved into the “one man bands”, allowing side effects automatized in hardware to become the main track of the band without the need for more musicians and players. If we take in account that street tech work as a virus, we may understand how the electronic sound became a *non-stop* soundtrack for the mainstream pop of electro, breakbeat, jungle and the precursor synthesized pop. It just so happens that the old sounds of background tracks were finally imported to the foreground as music's main elements, even if sometimes it seems that this sonorities belong to a more modern but dehumanized music.

Simulation systems are now the main production tools of cyborg pop stars in the cyberspace of acoustics. The lesson we learn is that modernity brought a reality anticipation by simulation technologies³⁴.

Remarkably in Sterling's way, the *rocker* and the *hacker* changed electronic music as we know it. These figures emerged in the eighties, a time recalled for the advent of domestic simulators, tape copying, videogame culture and New Wave pop sounds. In this whirl of technoculture changes, the eighties were also the frame within which the digital *sampler* was released. No other decade witnessed the appearance of the GUI (Graphic User Interface), the database, the IBM PC (Personal Computer), the MIDI Interface (in 1981), the CD (Compact Disc) and the CD-ROM (Compact Disc Read-Only-Memory). Also it was the time when the hypertext takes its first real step. The VR dataglove was introduced, MTV (Music Television) networks go global and every technology released then it was designed for copying and sharing. The constellation of novelties kept on with teleshopping on TV, Sony's Video 8 format and the revolutionary Multimedia. Still for professionals at the time, the recording studio was entirely changed by DAT (Digital Audio Tape) players, much like the Discman Walkman was the iPod of the latest eighties. Some projects, such as the holographic and Virtual Reality moved into the film and

³⁴In *Simulacros e Simulação* (1994), Jean Baudrillard affirmed that simulation technologies are ahead of reality as precursors of the Real, mentioning also in the end of science fiction.



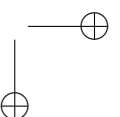
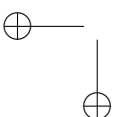


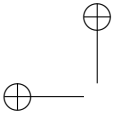
videogame industries. By the end of the eighties cyberspace and Virtual Reality were heading straight to the mainstream surface with Dire Straits' "Money For Nothing" (1985) videoclip – a true pioneer in vector 3D footage made on Commodore AMIGA computers, thus underlining the fusion of the pop culture *rocker* and the cyberculture *hackers*.

Every cyberspace, whether it is the hardcore action videogame, like *Quake II*, The Chemical Brothers or Digital Hardcore Recordings music (DHR), shows the contrast between the digital territories and electronic music liquid atmospheres. In this atmosphere of electrifying sound and synthesized imagery all things are usually generated from scratch, but still unmatched by punk's unidimensionality. Unlike punk, the new cyberspaces are remarkable for their *multidimensionality* of audiovisuals, files, streams and placelessness. With or without chemicals ingested, in these new spaces of the *kuber*, one can reach a syntony with simulation gear's rhythms. Thus, man is just an accessory for the *rocker* and *hacker's* tech, but not in the sense of subjugation, but as its referent. The machine is non-stop.

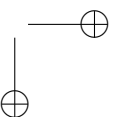
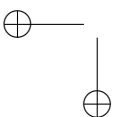
The unstoppable cybermanic members of da DHR affirm that "raves are the progressive rock concerts of the nineties". Nevertheless their punk vein states that techie hardcore is the future (in their perspective, of course!) against capitalism authorities, manifesting their unpleasant as they say not all electronic music is soft, *techno* or *house*. What makes them fascinated with electronic rock is its power beats and rhythmic explosions marked by noise explosions blossoming. Thus we may understand why DHR crew defends that only *digital hardcore* shocks and rescues us from normality. The punk nature and authority questioning attitude finds in electronic rock its most technical expression, as cool as hot, kept by radical wavelengths, outputting politically incorrect slogans and displacing claustrophobic and sphocating vocals over an oppressive bass line full of scratches. The wanderer lives in the electronic environment and as arrived in the new darwinist scale.

The noise punks are the early 20th century's futurism heirs, granted with the new machinery status and the evolving industrial gear extending man's capabilities. Much of the electronic music itself owes a lot to futuristic painter Luigi Russolo, that in nineteen-thirteen wrote "the art of noise" claiming for musical purposes all the industrial sounds filling the worlds' audio spectrum, which is since then even more industrialized. Perhaps the way "Riot Sounds"





marvelled cyberpunk is the apotheosis of that industrial scape sounds gathering, where Detroit's *techno* and many German industrial music began.





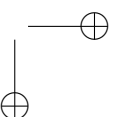


RAVER: THE ACID POLYRHYTHM SURFER

“Words, in this literature, like visual images in music video, surge up in eddies and whirlpools around the icon of the *hacker* and the *rocker*, and the phenomena of energy and speed, disarticulating coherent discourse into semicoherent pulsations, turning each single disoriented word into a “womb” that spawns its own hypervocal harmonics and dissonances” (Williams, 2003: p.95).

WITH no further explanation of what is a *rave*, the *raver* is simply its romantic inhabitant, a “cyberdandy” in love with the new soundscapes built upon afro rhythmic. Though, above all, the *raver* is “chameleon” stimulated by science-fiction influenced rock, the supreme fulfillment of what David Bowie mentions as “space boy” in the “Outside” (1995) album, because he seeks for inspiration in “another worlds”, “parallel worlds”. The *raver* is revolutionary, a remarkable figure of the latest years of the eighties and as an example the entire nineties, currently transformed into a “cosmetic punk”. Without him, pop dancing *techno* would not be futuristic, because it was the *raver* that detoured *techno* like punk had done with the inert Californian FM rock.

Who reads the *Neuromancer* comic version sees that the *raver* looks like Gibson’s characters, nobody else is a better heir for the *Neuromantics’* aesthetics. Importing the imaginary of Kraftwerk’s “robot” figure, the *raver* explored





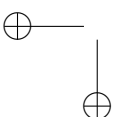
other influences like David Bowie's Ziggy Stardust, also he revealed to be in harmony with the artificial atmospheres generated by "synthophiles"³⁵

Despite the pre-cyberpunk aesthetic figurarions, the *raver* is the nineties king figure of the *Neuromancer* project, because he is the neo (new) romancer (visionary). Nevertheless, the so-called cyberpop become an on-going novelty, unstoppable since Gibson and Sterling have let the "cyberpunk" imaginary to be appropriated by the nineties' mass media, even so the works of Jack Womack e Lewis Shiner were taking music as a strong center in the cyberpunk attitude.

It happens that the pop fan generation who had adopted the close future premises demonstrated that Sci-Fi had invaded and conquered reality. As the *ravers* start dancing like robots, which became a styling ritual within "acoustic cyberspaces", the will of copying the perfect motion of machines by *mimesis* was truly shown. Instead of the regular replication of machines, like Sci-Fi had pages and pages of writing about it, what happened was the setting of a ritual of desire for cyborgs. And it is this cyborg merging that fascinates the cyberpunks, in competition with every early 20th century's artist dream, thus being man the main character and machine the background subject. Today the *raver*, as a protagonist of that cyborguization, mostly chemical, tries, in a certain way, to make fun of the machine motion, laughing of its imperfection, which leaves the hybrid as the only model to follow. Yet, out of everybody's expectation, the trend is to replicate the machine, not the human. The same as the virtual got real and not the inverse.

As a *mind-body*, the *raver* dances mirroring with his ritual the update the machine myth, checking the human replication skills. He is also a figure of the new speeds, the new machines and prosthetics, an unusual character that keeps changing direction, from style to sub-style, from genre to sub-genre; he does not want anyone to classify him. All he does is runaway from labels, attempting to evade the media's panoptic system, while saving back his lifestyle and returning the social and technical architecture that involves all of us. In a certain point of view, the *raver* is inexorably a high-tech travesty, for he is very much "rhizomatic", wild, above all "rhizomorphic", like an intelligent and metamorphic virus, changing to fit in some new unlabeled pattern. In weaving chaotic stylings in a fibrotious tapestry, the *raver* re-creates novelty

³⁵"Synthophile" is a person who is fond of synthesized sounds. as Brian Eno.



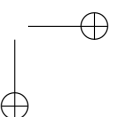


and, this way, responding to media with mediatic impulse. Recalling Billy Idol's "Cyberpunk" (1993) record promotional campaign allows us to glance how the *raver* figure makes sense, in world where the rhythm is acid and has many different overlapped rhythms. The output images are not even a half of what a cyberpunk can unleash, but it is his aesthetic package.

Disregarding the World's famous wonders, Bruce Sterling affirmed that the new technological aesthetic was far more attractive, subtle, intimate, when he defended that all tech that has mesmerized cyberpunks was not exterior but inner-like. Sterling had in mind that, judging by how cyberpunks were related to communication technology, eventually their body would end in cyborged process. The question is that ever since cybermaniacs expressed in literature all technologies are related to moments, and no more related to monuments. We agree that "for the cyberpunks, by stark contrast, technology is visceral. (...) it is pervasive, utterly intimate. Not outside us, but next to us. Under our skin; often, inside our minds" (Sterling, 1986b: §26). Well, just like every cyberpunk writer would say, it is true that the *ravers* who has already absorbed the rhythm of the machines that exteriorize pervasively the human body.

Toffler's ideas that the new youngsters think and live faster altogether with the chemical ritual of the *raver* as he *raves* under the effect of LSD, "Special K" or "Snowballs". We are familiar with the fact of *raver's* need for disturbing space-time conceptions, thus all the legitimacy of hallucinating drugs. What is at stake is, in fact, the very idea that each person has its own notion of placeness and timing, but, it is also important that they look for "accelerators", "speed" pills to have more sophisticated performances. It is like working on a cybernetic upgrade, so that one can process information more powerfully, like what has been done by computers. The cyberpunk attitudes aren't yet reduced to a question of GHz, but it does exist the "nootropic" science, a new science involves the research on drugs whose usage increases intelligence capabilities with mnemonic augmentation and improves general brain activity. Usually nootropics like "smart drinks" were pretty famous in the nineties when *raves* had their peak of popularity. Everybody could find in the parties someone is selling drinks that was labeled as Energy Elicksure, Memory Fuel, Fast Blast or Mind Mix. Their purpose is that once a *raver* drinks them, he obtains energy to dance, though the truth is most of the times they do not get smarter.

Every question concerning speed is linked to what Paul Virilio calls of "escape velocity" (as in Dery's book title), a speed for such a degree it frees





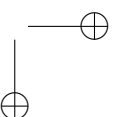
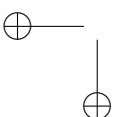
the one which is accelerating, due to an almost unimaginable thrust power. Likewise, when the *raver* ingests or injects chemicals he performs a chemical change in his body to escape free of the body notions. Lets remind how Gibson defines the *hacker* in *Neuromancer* (and thus we will understand the “disembodiement” need in the *raver* too):

“He’d operated on an almost permanent adrenaline high, a byproduct of youth and proficiency, jacked into a custom cyberspace deck that projected his disembodied consciousness into the con sensual hallucination that was the matrix” (1988b: §4).

On a closer look, we may easily imagine the cyberpunk as someone who lives in oscillation between being “sober” and “hallucinated”, among zones whose hybridity ends up favoring precisely a consolidated “disembodied consciousness“. The speed and proficiency of *Neuromancer’s hacker-hero* are provided by adrenalin and amphetamines that one understands to be a prior cause to the mastery in the multi-dimensional cyberspace. Most of the cyberpunk writer’s fiction unveils chemical prosthetics as the latest technology to provide a true “escape velocity” that rescues the cyberpunk from physicality, what disembodies him leaving behind a slightly intelligible track.

If we take Virilio’s concepts we may say the *raver* is somebody who belongs to the domain of the “evasive” and the “trajective”, somewhere between the subjective and the objective, in other words, between the domain of the subject and the domain of the object. Pretty much like other cyberpunk genres, the *raver* wants to walk heading towards to the velocity of liberation that can only be achieved by a “terminal velocity”. With no other things in mind, the *raver* saves his soul like the Space Shuttle which is taking off and defying gravity force to reach geo-stationery orbit, though he does not has needs for, so far, such as mighty gear.

By summoning a new space of expression and dance, the *raver* figure endeavors for paths of sonic experimentation in the “Black Electronic”, the realm of every guru who is responsible for the production of the new electroculture spaces. The *raver’s* role is to “surf” the acid polyrhythms, riding the sound waves and making “tubes” or “reality tunnels”. For this to be the case, he changes the *rave* party or the disco’s arena into the “taking off” center by exploring the new “acoustic cyberspace” jumping from rhythm to rhythm,





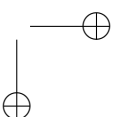
playing with the straight attitude of perverse musicians and *DJs* crossing in-between sounds that attract us or leave us out of the groove.

In a certain perspective the *raver* is the *DJ* of dancing, not a *Disc Jockey*, but a *Dance Jockey* of the “take off”, somebody who buys the ticket to a specific type of Real, that very amphetamine to get away more efficiently. Yet, within the sound space of control, it is the *raver* that makes the rhythms editable. Somehow like the *DJ*, the *raver* also makes a *montage* out of reality, even if it is in different conception fields, because when he makes his own “mental film” he weaves sonic texture fibers. At the same time, the *raver* reveals to the “Christ Complex” like the *hacker*, designing a “tissue” of reality which is in mutation according to the ingestion of acid drugs, alcohol or chemical cocktails. Mixing many reality plateaus allows the *raver* to float henceforth in a new reality roaming for the high ground of the Real, and hybrid environment somewhere located between the images captured by the retina and the synthesized sound atmospheres received by the ears. As a practitioner of raving, the *raver* is a sort of native inhabitant of the audiovisual cyberspace, feeding on the “indirect light” (Virilio, 1993) cast by *strobes* and *lasers* that design invisible suspended edges in the most claustrophobic atmosphere where a dance music party occurs (not always having the same aesthetic content of the *rave* party).

The king of the *rave* – the *raver* – is the one who weaves again the sonic debris which the *DJ* insists to connect in an “automatic” manner, so he is responsible for the polyrhythm reading and, as such, lets the body “go with the flow”; to be manipulated by the rhythm which then re-organizes his motion in which all body behavior in an “altered state”³⁶ is consolidated by the fiber-shaped, three-dimensional, invisibly tactile sound. It is on the *DJ*’s xamanism that the *rave* trusts his *mind-body* for the *DJ* to control him remotely through the *sound-information*. This is how *Rave*-populations are started giving shape to activities like the nineties’ *Summer of Love*, because what is at stake is the longing for a crowd, not the alienated and mind-massified crowd, but the one-body crowd; a *collective-mind-body*.

This is to state once again that this *collective-mind-body* despises individualism when all what truly matters is the *rave*, though it is known that the *ravers* are very egocentric even when they form groups. The so-called

³⁶Such “raving behavior” is also called an “altered state” among the cyberpunk *ravers*.



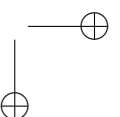
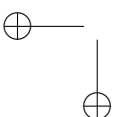


collective-mind-body represents an evolution stated typical in the matrixes futurism and the cyborguizing machines' age. So the *rave* machine only makes sense if we are connected to it, not by cables as the *hackers* connect to networks, but through a *mind-body* to a *mind-body* unmediated communication. If there has to be mediations those got to be chemical to provide a completely transcending, hypnotic sensation under which the look, the body and desire are the communication tools par excellence. This is why usually we refer to cyberpunks as "modern primitives" because they tend to use technology to be "retribalized" in a McLuhanesque fashion.

The meaning of the "come as you are" mentality mirrors how *raves* disregard the need for social complexes, thus they institutionalize another world, more colorful and naive we may say, but at the same time more critical. It is not by chance that in the nineties lots of *ravers* dressed themselves with strange costumes. They licked lollypops, dressed like dolls, wear masks and had faces covered with exotic make-up. As we may conclude, the *raver* does not mind to hide his need to shock, to de-structure levels, they contained models of society, breaking the links between borders. All *ravers* are fond of the disarticulation of codes and show a huge interest in the mediation zone, the gray gap.

That interest in the gray space is an answer to the society's machinic profile, considering that the cyberpunks think society require *robots*, not people. Right on this issue all *techno* rose up to criticize society, based on Kraftwerk's futuristic works. Derrick May and Juan Atkins understood that society was unfair and that justice is not a fact so they unveiled the invisible conspiracy from the individual. Responding with *techno* music, May, Atkins and many others at their time had the chance to criticize a world that needs people only to buy out goods. *Raves* came out of this context by possessing a force as a community, a social machine occurring in marginal control spaces. Detoured from the social mainstream *raves* were being organized to be set in the back of the main avenues. From the awareness that the individual is a machine comes *techno*, showing hard and visionary music as it should be, connected to the posthuman world of contemporary times.

Unlike the *hippie* and the *punk*, the *raver* is not a full-time rebel; he studies spaces, establishes the relevant connections and designs priorities. He feels the gaps of society in its pop "outlawness" like the *hacker* who is working in a company hacking and slashing computer corporate networks' defenses. In





my opinion, the main question is the fact that *ravers*, like *hackers*, are people who live in a “double-life who got fascinated by living in the margins, the undergrounds and the hybrid spots, as if they’re always playing a game. In the acid polyrhythm “apartheid”, *ravers* laugh and have fun to keep their balance.

One thing is for sure, the *rave* experience is a pure intensity; suddenly one is in the middle of a rain of sounds that is able to excite, agree or repel us to any other strata, as if it would be like moving onto another level in a teenager’s videogame’s walkthrough. The same thing happens to the *raver*, who cannot hide his fondness for the walk thorough out of society’s several strata. Hence he always constantly changes his position and mental state, jumps from sonic plateau to another, and establishes a chaotic ritual based on non-stop circulation.

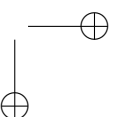
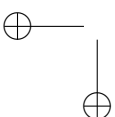
Despite the fact that *raver* can co-inhabit in the space with the *DJ*, it all only makes sense if it is outside mainstream. Only then the metal sound rains and the bass thunders mixed with fast rhythmic percussion can be plausible in the ambience of *hard techno*, showing discontentment for anguish in the city. The *hard techno raver* expresses simply its angry against the metropolitan psychological violence, for the modernity’s old vitrine, now incandescent in the neon-marked spots of capitalized and organized noise places.

The (cyber) citizen inhabiting the *Rave Sessions* and the *Love Parades* is the *raver*, like those of Berlin, in Germany³⁷³⁸

Jargon no longer represents the extreme behavior. Behavior of the typical teenager who lives unhappy with the world made by the adults. Recreating more parallel and even adulterated logic at the level of street tech discourses, the *raver* invests on new behaviors and attitudes rejecting urban society’s conservative linguistic impositions. Right next to the *hackers*, *ravers* accelerate language, not to reduce it to acronyms that just encrypt regular speaking, like it happens with the *hackers*’ discourse. Believing in a violent cut in the way language is used today, George Steiner points out that: “The insurgent and the freak-out have broken off discourse with a cultural system which they despise as a cruel, antiquated fraud” (1998, Pt.4 Tomorrow: §44). But this is not

³⁷In the hype of the *raves* in the nineties, Germany was known by *ravers* as “The Rave Nation”.. At its time, every *raver* could have travelled while dancing in the “lovetrain”

³⁸*Lovetrain* was the nickname of the train and it was available initially for the mega-party “Love Parade”. It is said that this train always full of phosphorescent colored *graffiti*.. This is why in the nineties everybody said the cyberdelic culture already did have a capital city.





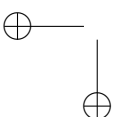
enough. It looks like we have to admit it makes sense that, as Steiner adds: (...) such changes and the verbal provocations of young against old have been variants on an evolutionary continuum. What is occurring now is new: it is an attempt at a total break” (*Idem, Ibidem*: §45).

Despite being prior to the eighties, this statement can be understood as part of the so-called cyberpunk profile, which is based on admitting the break of with the main cultural system, and in this point of view Steiner is right by believing that what is going on in contemporary times is far more noisy and violent, “a total break”.

Today, the acid polyrhythm fans are producing several media-events to respect the “MTV Generation”’s codes under the guidance of the *New Media-Fashion-Complex*. If we recall the “Do It Yourself” premise, on top of the most relevant cyberpunk directives, in order to define how to be and how to behave, it may be easy to comprehend how it all began when *techno* travelers were producing *raves* as if they were *hippies* of the nineties, practicing the cybernomadism. The effort of those cybernetic nomads took them to endeavor for *techno*, mostly the tribal genre, because its percussions provided interesting hypnotic states. “Zippies” is how these *ravers* call themselves, as more tribal figures remaking an interpretation of the *hippie* movement, some of them even manage to access email accounts and play digital music with the MIDI interface in some wasteland *rave*.

We have no doubts that *ravers* are the true motive behind the “black economy” created on the needs of the new punkers, whose peak is the UK’s *ecstasy* culture in the nineties. But *DJs* from *hip-hop* culture hijacked the “acoustic cyberspaces” arena disregarding the *ravers* response as “cyberdandys”. In the end, *DJs* became the mighty gods of any music party, until today. After all, *DJs* has been repressed since the New Wave was happening in British territory, and besides that, the *DJs* are favored in the electroculture music spots. The cyberspace of electronic music does not need to welcome Africa, because it is very afro in its invisible *multidimensionality*.

The “cyberdandism” practiced by *ravers* recalls back from 19th century’s Dandys behavior. We assume that the cyberpunks think on interrupting productivity too, not in agreement with the politically docile economically useful scheme. There is a perverse concern in creating a free-time culture and that is why the “playground” is important. In the absence of productive activities, the cyber-society achieves an eternal time dimension, like the non-stop *rave*





reveals, full of dancers powered by acids and other stimulating substances. No interrupting production by chance, the *raver* is the most cybernetic *dandy*, very fond of the re-production age presided by the xamanic *DJ* figure.

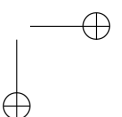
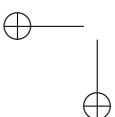
While the 19th century's *dandy* thought that working was useless and chose free-time to reflect as a counter-action to everyday life, punk was the dead-ended figure of the amorphous urban life. Deprived of chances, punk was the schizoid alienated wanderer of the suburbs of a metropolis ruled by aristocrats, monarchics and senators.

Punk was resigned on challenging order because all punks felt excluded from any resourceful horizon. However, the *dandy*, in its turn, enjoyed a different behavior towards the downtown workers. In the case of the new punker *ravers* there is anotehr gray zone, because they manage to absorb information, have fun and work, be provocative and stylish, produce something by re-producing something else. Otherwise there would be no underground pop radical experience in the electroculture's economy of free-time and media-events' by-products.

In a bizarre way, the *raver* emerges in a new wave inside the New Wave itself at the time cyberpunk writers were designing "another worlds". Besides even today the *raver* is still the official music party species, although it has changed itself into a cosmetic punk. We may say too that he is a species dependent on sterephonic information demanding the fulfillment of a new version of paganism: the *techno-paganism*.

Within the absolute space of information, the *raver* is its eternal figure, an artificial memory based character, which in fiction has a direct correspondence in Bruce Sterling's *The Artificial Kid* (1980) and in William Gibson's *Johnny Mnemonic*. Raving people cannot resist simulations, and considering Baudrillard's arguments, we may realize why against the big fossilized and frozen History, a non-stop circulation is claimed. Such type of rhythm, when finding out technologies that provide multiplying cybernetic sound patterns, takes to the extreme a pariah sound. This pariah, placeless sound was produced by the black grove. The black grove uses its determined "deterritorialization", the mutant dimension of the "acoustic cyberspaces". The cyberspaces where acid polyrhythms are gathering – what Erik Davis calls the "Black Electronic".

Normally, the sounds in *raves* aren't just corrosive and mechanical beat strokes but all *ravers* do know that without drugs the music cyberspaces are nothing, so the drugs are needed to provide narcosis empowerment. Some cy-





berpunk science-fiction authors insisted on creating environments with young technophile *ravers*: the techie *ravers*. These characters would be devoted to genres like the *cybergrunge*, keeping tuned to the “acoustic cyberspaces” semantics, debating the genre’s rebels, messiahs and the best artworks. We are familiar with those artificial environments, those “islands” of the Real sketched up by cyberpunk writers in relation to the mediascape of giant wide screens pumping fractal footage on the *ravers*’ field of vision. Well, this contemporary figurations have not had much of virtual, but one has to admit that reality was seen by any dancer who drinks designers’ drinks like “alco pops”³⁹

Today’s lounge spaces and nightclubs don’t look anymore like markets for wired people, media junkies and drug addicts, instead they are full of fashion dancers whose cosmetic looks are so perfect they resemble new media images. The difference between cosmetics and graphics is more and more blurred, due to the democratized technology. With no further “jack in” all around us things look like media types. Still, like *raves*, the cosmetic punk’s spaces for dancing are a synthesis space, where people find vibration and immersion in fiber-shaped *soundscape*s, where soundwaves are prolonged in an incessant way, so everything looks like a “field of strident vibrato” (*Idem, Ibidem*). Even now in contemporary times, our MTV and iPod culture is addicted to fast network communication, erotic footage and fashion eye ware. Our globally influenced MTV world is no more than the accomplishment of Afrika Bambaataa & The Soulsonic Force’s vision of a “Planet Rock” (1986), where one world would listen to one electroculture’s beats and polyrhythms.

³⁹*Alco-Pops* is the abbreviation of the expression ‘alcoholic-pop drink’s, which refers to popular drinks, the kind of lemonades and alcoholic sodas, which provide an interesting empathy with the “acoustic cyberspace”. and “smart-drinks”, (made with pharmacy, alcoholic and aphrodisiac substances) is quite different.



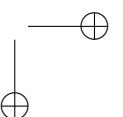


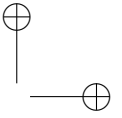
FASHION PUNKS IN MATRIX STYLE

“Future mode no longer means space suits that look like they’re made of tin foil – when you jack into the Matrix, it’s all about clothes that are sharp, edgy and black” (Alyssa Schwartz, 2003).

AFTER the release of next-generation videogames, pushed up by *The Matrix Trilogy* movies, a more demanding costume design began to be required. Fashion punks of our time, under the umbrella of globalization and networked new media, are each time resembling more and more the advertising imageries in which they are based on. Unlike the original punk fashion, the new trendy pop fashion punks respect the cosmetic dictatorship and subvert its suggestions, making in their own way custom-made suits and personalizing designer make-up. Videogame characters like *Mirror’s Edge*, Faith, who showed design make-up on the face in a fashion punk style. Advertising imagery is filtered by Adobe Photoshop aesthetics, thus film industry actors and characters look the same inside and outside on stage.

The current fashion punk style is a legacy of many years of media suggestions and hedonistic cosmetic industry’s by-products. No longer is punk against or outside any system whatsoever, the new answer requires belonging to a trend, general media frameworks and exquisite catalog *cosmetic-graphics*. In this sense the fashion punks are the new children of the colliding realm of cosmetics and advertising, media and primitivism. By appearing in a time regardless of ideologies, politics and personal differentiation, fashion punks have no foe unless that of being out fashioned. Living immersed in a technological, hyper-fashioned and over-stimulated branding society, fashion punks





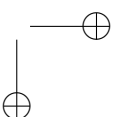
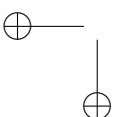
institute a new form of *Sci-Fi branding*, making brands and marks that can be presented in themselves, where futurism is still the law to uphold.

Of course there is a connection between street marketing, streetwear and advertising eyewear, but media doesn't explain all that happens in the new cosmetic punk field. *Photoshop cosmetics* have a major role in the nowadays network make-up, because image manipulation software allows us to correct images to become what users want them to be; everything that one may expect from imagery. So the awkward part is that users who try to mimic themselves to look like computer-retouched photography design and try to become like it; to see a mirrored world that is seductive and practically has no limits for custom-made fashions.

The science-fiction aesthetics hold this retouching obsession goes from the plastic surgery domain to the much simpler fashion design area. Although it is generally a question of how images can be changed and how we can change ourselves. From this point of view, one may conclude that there is a joint-venture going on between cosmetics and graphics, computer images and fashion design. Such a cluster blinds fashion punks as they understand the range of possibilities granted by new networked media technology.

Most of the advertising film posters copies, theatrical poses and product zooms, yet the new fashion punks generation looks at computer enhanced landscapes and characters for a source of inspiration. Instead of dreaming to be at such place or time, the new speed-dial obsessed youth desires to be *the* characters, making the virtual trip a consequence of multiple cosmetic-retouched images. Regarding no other type of concerns, fashion punks search for a reflection of the world they want to step into in media broadcasts of science-fiction genre. It just so happens that in cyberpunk science-fiction the fashion subject is constantly omnipresent. Thus we may think that cyberpunk's Sci-Fi aesthetics somehow become real and less on the conceptual stages if the real fashion punks are copycats of media-enhanced imagery. Futuristic icons shown in cyberpunk films and TV shows are indicating the way to fashion punks, revealing the leading path for them.

In the *Dark Angel* TV series, the character called Max Guevara, played by Jessica Alba, is notoriously a fashion punk, a cyberpunk that states somehow his ideas in the clothes she chooses to wear. A world where corporations and gangs seem to use the same methods to work on whatever they're working on is a world that is as decaying as shocking needed. The answer to a militarized



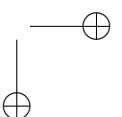


space is a fashion statement, in this case a real mail delivery job, in paperboy-style, made by fashion workers. When all images seem to be gone, the last images last longer, and they're the only ones. Hence, if there is any sort of powerful images, it ought to be the best one broadcast before something bad could happen. We find this problem in *Dark Angel*, because North-America is changed forever due to the detonation of an electromagnetic weapon over U.S. airspace; and we do find it in *Strange Days*, the eve in the last day of the previous millennium, a time when people got confused and sank onto old relationships digital recordings.

Dark Angel's Max is a fashion punk that seems to fit but at the same time it looks better than anyone ought to look like in such environment. For example, in *Strange Days* we find characters very cybernetic-influenced and the night-time requires characteres wearing black leather, Armani suits, clean fashion Rastafarian haircuts and designer make-up too. The more caotic a society looks like, the more people need to act according to images and fashion, thus working in a hamonic manner, becoming different faces of the same coin. Keanu Reeves in *Johnny Mnemonic*, the cyberpunk motion picture directed by a fine arts artist director, is a fashion punk too. He does not seems to fit the 50s scrambled look of Harrison Ford's Deckard character in *Blade Runner* because the way he presents himself in a fashionable, trendy and bold manner, wearing a suit that expresses its punk rebelliousness whenever he interacts with data streams of VR cyberspace.

One has to recall that fashion punks grew up in a networked media environment, like the previous generation who has for itself videogames and VHS movie rentals, and even the previous ones have had only TV or radio available. All this makes us think that somehow fashion punks are victims, when in fact it looks more like predators, of an advertising soaked up environment, a *media-optimized society*. In the end of the 60s, when black and white comics and color television were the hype for the then next-gen of young people, McLuhan believed that:

“It is not an easy period in which to live, especially for the television-conditioned young who, unlike their literate elders, cannot take refuge in the zombie trance of Narcissus narcosis that numbs the state of psychic shock induced by the impact of the new media. From Tokyo to Paris to Columbia, youth mindlessly acts out its identity quest in the theater of the





streets, searching not for goals but for roles, striving for an identity that eludes them” (1969-1994).

At the time McLuhan said these words the original punk movement was weaving itself to react worldwide in the end of the seventies, especially in 1977 when The Sex Pistols noisy punk rock music banged at the doors of New York’s and London’s clubs. And curiously, if we may borrow McLuhan’s statements, “the youth mindlessly acts out its identity quest in the theater of the streets, searching not for goals but for roles, striving for an identity that eludes them” as McLuhan casts, which means the contemporary fashion punks are the twenty-first century’s 00 decade version of punk, more than just cyberpunk.

Also the quest for identity continues in our time, but media imagery suggests all possible hedonistic identity options to suit people’s demanding choices. In short, youth still looks for identity packs, but instead of mistaking images for identity values, they use it on purpose as identity extensions, public manifestations of private options in a global media world. Streets are the theatre of a new fashion war unfolding quietly according to screened orders of advertising. Young people choose their style as if they are buying out their custom-made identity, for the common base of that behavior is that teenagers and young adults still search for roles and not for goals. But as society evolves inside the aquatic media framework, the goal of people is more and more to have a media role, a similar one to fashion screened items.

During the original punk movement punks reacted to the right-wing politics and they began to create their own styles, using tribal motives and old urban iconography. Punks of 70s were easily identified by their crusts and spiky haircuts, sticking badges and metal pins on old dark jackets. Now fashion punks do the same but change it a little because the knowledge they possess is more in relation to the 70s punks, yet they do manage to design custom-made jackets and mix different trousers or shirts; the outcome is a mesh-up of clothing coming from any time, any place, wearable by anyone.

The core of the fashion punk paraphernalia considers as granted the mirrorshades usage because no real fashion punk goes on to the street without sunglasses. Its already part of their selves. Collage of textures, asymmetrical clothes and haircuts, colored hair and graphics painted on shirts are still considered contemporary. Some of the punks of our time manage to personalize





inscriptions in clothes, words for tattoos, and all this in regards of typography design. To other fashion punks, pierced skins, with designer jewelry, and eye make-up can be enough, as to others tribal graphics can be seductive enough.

McLuhan said that "the tribes and the bureaucracy are antithetical" means social organization and can never coexist peacefully; one must destroy and supplant the other, or neither will survive" (*Idem, Ibidem*). On the fashion punks' scenario there is not any longer one side of the establishment and another one of the outsiders. Since the end of the twentieth-century that bureaucracy started to behave in a tribal way (corporations globalized turned the planet into one big village, as McLuhan had foreseen); and tribes became bureaucratic too (by creating new enterprises to capitalize their culture, trends and habits). What is true is that one must destroy or supplant the other, and that is what had happened. The bureaucrats went tribal peacefully like the tribes went bureaucratic, in a quite style either. We may come to the conclusion that both worlds have collided, merged up to survive, and this McLuhan has not conceived. The social organization of tribes and offices is only one realm of the corporate culture that hijacks human culture, their joining efforts make average consumer easy prey for them. Fashion punks are children and potential future predators of this corporate motherhood.

Deeply the reprimativization of our culture blossoms and turns the distinct social dress a corporate demand, as tribal as urban. Now trademarks are a tribe thing organized by corporate brands. Living in this new *milieu*, fashion punks make a corporate statement "restated". Changing the system from the inside of Photoshoped advertising imagery world is much more appealing than performing strange stunts in public space or belonging to noisy rock groups. All fashion punk does now is to recreate the punk look, weaving a remediation of the *Neuromantics'* Sci-Fi aesthetics. The 70's design of Vivienne Westwood and Malcolm McLaren still breathes inside fashion punk skin in its pop culture core. Yet instead of wearing anarchic symbols fashion punks now wear T-shirts of *culture jamming* graphics, with logos and typefaces redesigned to stand for something similar visually but different in meaning. Patches and shocking iconography are replaced by rebranded images of corporate trademarks.

The MTV network music TV channels have an enormous impact on the new birth of punk's subculture, but such rebirth suffered some changes, the demands of the new corporate fashion offices advertising on cable TV. Together,



the MTV and the fashion punks, they reject traditional narrative and print culture in order to promote media by-products easily. Nonetheless, MTV music channels happen to condense and broadcast images that behave on screen like an autonomous optical matrix. Images like these are edited to disregard print culture and narrative, making young people soft flesh for their disconnected figurative spaces.

Besides, MTV and *The New Media-Fashion-Complex* can only evolve graciously because they are suffering the outcome of certain science-fiction icons, like *The Matrix Trilogy* films, comics and videogames. In other words, the MTV-influenced fashion punk is typically post-*The Matrix* and it is linked up to the iPod generation of networks and videoclips. In the era of flat screens and mobile multimedia devices, everybody dreams of becoming a caped crusader, a movie star, a top-model or a secret-agent. Ever since the industry became *Matrix*-driven that audiences of consumers are fascinated by the clean graphic look of costumes. Science-fiction aesthetics can be so appealing that some authors speak of “the matrixification of fashion” (Lillington, 2003). A fashion “matrixified” is a fashion inspired in Sci-Fi trends, blockbuster movie and media by-products clusters; it is a fashion culture and an economic system that allows everybody to wear the same clothes as those used by characters in the *The Matrix* film.

Other authors believe too that “*The Matrix* redefines Sci-Fi fashion” (Schwartz, 2003) because it launched leather back into the forefront of fashion – thanks to Neo’s coat. Self-determined and heroic, Neo is the storm edge of a new fashion punk design careless about spiky haircuts, the same fashion punk design that brought back the black leather jackets, coats and pants from the 80s ark and labelled it as “the new black”.

The Matrix costume designer Kym Barrett does not want to create anything else but the odd Sci-Fi look. Her goal was to design costumes that the audiences could relate to. And that is what really happened at the time. Barrett agreed that a futuristic style may signal a return to the basics as the world gets more advanced in high-tech features. Science-fiction meets advertising and fashion design which makes every consumer a potential fashion punk, acting as a virus for younger audiences at the age of identity construction.

Now we can understand why Trinity’s (Carrie-Anne Moss) costumes looked so tight in black and shiny leather, reflecting a powerful, sexy and soft femininity. Barret suggests that leather works like a “second-skin”, a trendy be-

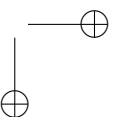
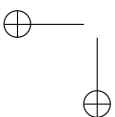


havior that *raver* cyberpunks explored at the aegis of *ecstasy* culture in the 90s. Right now this matrixified fashion culture recreated by Sci-Fi aesthetics has its own signature lasting beyond the use of black leather, as form-fitting clothing, body-hugging leather leggings and jump suits transport consumers to Sci-Fi worlds.

Fashion punks are the everyday version of *The Matrix* film characters, a real edition of the virtual realm of CGI graphics. For instance, most of the Matrix style came from Asian videography, such as Hong Kong films and Japanese *anime* like *Ghost In The Shell* and *Akira*. Bikers, swordsmen, fighters and yuppies flew and mesmerized audiences with Hi-Def computer-generated images similar to MTV videoclips and videogame avatars. A very interesting element is that after *The Matrix Trilogy* films every TV commercial and film, realistic or animated, the matrix style was still an imperative, an irrefutable aesthetic. What the fashion punks have changed on their own way was not the matrixified clothing but the haircuts, the images, and text design over the clothes tissues. That is why we see the Mohawk (Mohican in British English) hairstyle coming back full of gradient color streams resembling Photoshop imagery palettes. Mohawk haircuts are now part of the fashion punk aesthetics and mainstream fashion; so much we forget that once these look like bleached hair and colorful eye make-up displayed by the 70s punks.

Black designer boots replaced army combat boots, corporate make-up kits have substituted custom-made make-up cases, old Converse All-Star shoes were switched by custom-designed colored skin shoes; and micro-images of small logos and flowers are now printed on fingernails that look like shiny nano-confeti. As for the icon of classic cyberpunks, the mirrorshades, fashion punks redesigned them with gradient paint and built-in earphones. In the same style as any doll-kit of clothing, everyday fashion punk girls mix, change and over impose small jackets, medium and short blouses underneath commercial shirts. Thin digital watches decorate the young wrists in the same trend that temporary tattoos, glossy lipsticks and artificial suntans change fashion punks cosmetically.

Inspired by videoclip culture, fashion punks surf on networks the same way they surf on shopping centers and malls; information and consumer products are produced to be gathered, used and discarded. Fashion punks surf the tide of novelties, the really new New Wave. Moreover, fashion punks behave oddly because they absorb decades of imageries and technology, trends



and media commercials; in the end they live as detached from the developing narrative of the State that they live only for themselves, in their private single-feature film. If for the previous generations, there was a boundary between screens and reality, now it does not exist anymore. Virtual Reality gear, GPS news services, IA-driven vehicles, customized advertising and computerized cosmetics are no longer science-fiction; they're science-real.

Unlike before in the history of media, the disembodied motifs are now introduced among young people in a rapid, random and permutational fashion. Young people behave like the images targeted at their communities; they rely on one-dimensional moods based on pop music and reiterate a non-narrative – the hierarchical structure of the punk musician playing in the street. Fashion happens to be new economy surrounding present day youth, a sort of *costume-capsule* enabling people to feel hype; the hype of tripping by simulational pulses. Fashion punks don't scare, they seduce; they do not get noisy; they consume; they don't shout; they are stealth agents dominating the electronic decoration of our public spaces. In the bags they carry icons caught on a hellish center of laser beams. No one finds political slogans that are written on rallies card box boards, instead one finds out aestheticized corporate culture logos, commercial statements redesigned.

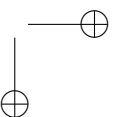
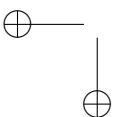
Fashion punks are the fashion and cosmetic version of *culture jammers*, the cyberpunks of the corporate street, the *hackers* of street culture. It is true that they enjoy *rocker* jackets and streetwear, but they use to go further than stereotypes, they complexify stereotypes by creating constantly custom-made repetitions of media imagery. One goes from the "Do It Yourself" cyberpunk premise to the "Brand Yourself" motto. The second replaces the first so much that custom-tailored clothes become Computer Aided Clothing Design.

Photoshop images printed on colorless T-shirts, doodles tagged with *graffiti* pens and photocopied trademarks push fashion punks further and further. Even the images used to be printed on clothes keep summoning a softcore eroticism and celebrities fashion simulacrum. Cheap Chinese bazar items and Western Designer suits are modified to enable something trendy and different to be worth displaying before anybody else. Mods, kits and tuning artifacts flow into a cosmetic punk procedure of creating at the same time imitations and originals. Wearers and objects share the same plasticity and place-detachment; all figures can be unleashed and recombined in media or in



objects, in a tribal but corporate-foreseen kit-culture. Nothing is to be mixed up unless it is to be displayed.

Erotic enticements and advertisements are merging so that the fashion punk becomes a walking magazine cover, a post-computer punk model, an icon and a person, a billboard and a mobile high-definition device. No matter if one wears skateboard punk shoes, semi-tight jeans, *hip-hop* fashion shirts or corporate black-and-white suits altogether. For in a mesh up clothing system shorts, low-rise jeans, socks and underwear exposed slightly on the hips make something provocative as punk is purposely disneyfied. Night dresses for swing dance, baseball caps and shiny earring's can be over the same person's body, impossible is nothing for the fashion punk of trendy superbikes and hyper-automobiles. Fading away the frontier between the commercial ads and the street reality, fashion punks of our time become displays for fancy wireless earphones jacked in mobile multimedia GPS-enabled devices. Marketing Managers from all-around are skilled to rent fashion magazines cover space and cultivate a simulated glamour so that every fashion image is connected to the network media broadcasting system. Who said fingerless gloves and corporate branding tattoos were outfashioned?





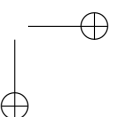


BANKSY: POSTCOMPUTER GRAFFITI

“And even if the journey goes nowhere, even if it takes place in the same place, imperceptible, unlooked for, underground, we must ask: who are today’s nomads, who are today’s Nietzscheans?” (Deleuze, 2004: p.260).

LIKE a special forces agent going “dark”, stealth, Banksy’s re-branding operations began to occur in the UK but suddenly he went across capitals all over the world. British *graffiter* Banksy, which is the first one to be really branded in and against media, is one of the most important cyberpunk figures of our time. He mistrusts authority, relies on critical content like *graffiti* and has a very special signature in his artworks. Public space is his gallery, where he leaves his stenciled *graffitis* as a re-decoration of urban space. By criticizing authority, police forces, monarchy figures and military agents and western fast-food driven world, Banksy has earned as much fans as enemies. Though his controversial work is so powerful that it doesn’t need captions of whatsoever. Most of what he wants to say is its painted in the *graffiti*, but somehow his work’s aesthetics have spread like a virus among street artists, *graffiti* design collectives and *culture jammers* as well.

Never showing off his face, only his works, *graffiter* Banksy however has already become paradoxically a global icon against globalization. His interventions seem to be an after effect of a reflection on some subjects of our political agenda, yet they’re becoming much more; they’re becoming a home-





made⁴⁰ virus infecting public squares, walls and floors. Every surface is a potential canvas for Banksy. The amount of works he has been stenciling everywhere is so huge that sometimes people think there is an army of aestheticians (Banksys?), *graffiters* devoted to the Banksy brand, because right now Banksy is a brand. A brand we are easily aware of much like any corporate brand of nowadays monoculture.

We may also see Banksy as a figure which integrating the context of *post-computer graffiti*, for there was an original *graffiti* exercise before the usage of computer, and there is another usage of computers right now transforming the *graffiti* process. The *graffiti* of present day, the Banksy era, is based on images manipulated in computer software as Adobe Photoshop and then is printed to be stenciled on any wall. Though, the original *graffiti* was, and it still is, classified as the classic *graffiti per se*, made by street artists from *hip-hop* culture that painted walls with spray cans, tagging pens and “bombing” spray all over previous graphics on a wall making palimpsests. I call Banksy’s work of *postcomputer graffiti* because the way imagery gets composed, juxtaposed, colored, edited and stuck on walls reveals signs of computer generated effects. This means that without computers some images of Banksy would not be possible to create, at least as perfect as they look.

Banksy’s stealth operations rebrand public spaces, making citizens to think on messages that belong to a campaign of concepts as it happened in any other marketing campaign. Except in the stenciled *graffiti*, Banksy does show his work to everyone is his target-group, because he wants to spread his messages to reach everyone, and not just one audience segment. At first glance his work resembles a remake of corporate advertising, then looks like he just performs as a stunt in public space leaving his mark everywhere, as we see more and more works of his we realize he is an artistic icon saboteur. In this sense, he is more than a *graffiter*, more than a street artist, because his works are media-related, so in a deepest level Banksy is a *postcomputer graffiter*, a “*culture jammer*” – a figure of which Mark Dery and Kale Lasn speak so much about.

In the domain of philosophy, Gilles Deleuze mentions German philosopher Nietzsche as the author behind “counterculture” within itself. Says Deleuze that Nietzsche is the founder, the dawn of counterculture, and further

⁴⁰A tool-kit for home-made stencils is being used by many *graffiters*, in an attempt to perpetuate Banksy’s work, which is inspiring, and in a way to promote unknown new world by *graffiters* to start stenciling. So who is Banksy, after all?





ahead Deleuze refers that Nietzsche built a “war-machine of thought: “this is perhaps Nietzsche at his most profound, a measure of his break with philosophy, as it appears in the aphorism: to have made a war-machine of thought, to have made thought a nomadic power” (Deleuze, 2004: p.260). This “war-machine” based on thought is still living in the core of cyberpunk, so much that in Banksy’s *postcomputer graffiti* we still attend to a graphic realm so criticizing that his works resemble those of a nomad warrior. And wherever he goes, we find his dissident artworks leaving messages stenciled on the walls. Thus, it makes forbidden signs not forbidden anymore. The nomadic power of autonomous soldiers that Deleuze mentions we find it in Banksy’s images, which are stars in a galaxy of contemporary criticism counterculture. What is truly remarkable too is that Banksy has created so far a counterculture of his own. The goal, like in the nomad “war-machine of thought”, is not to go to some place specifically, but to leave an icon. A counter-icon that colonizes space by aesthetic, by thought. In this sense, Banksy, like the *culture jammers*, is a nowadays Nietzschean.

On the *culture jamming* phenomenon, prominent author Kalle Lasn refers that a counterculture is needed in contemporary media society because:

“brands, products, fashions, celebrities, entertainments – the spectacles that surround the production of culture – *are* our culture now. Our rule is mostly to listen and watch – and then, based on what we have heard and seen, to buy” (Lasn, 2000: p.xiii).

So the real answer to such a mediated world is to change the imposition that the media branding corporate world is *our culture*. In the perspective of Lasn, American monoculture is a problem, though consumption-based society is not just found out in North-America but it is in all corners of the Western world. Banksy’s positioning in his aesthetic imagery concerns the Western media footage in general; all places have target-groups to his artworks. And curiously, in the essay *On Desert Islands And Other Texts* (2004), philosopher Gilles Deleuze says “that England is populated will always come as a surprise; humans can live on an island only by forgetting what an island represents. Islands are either from before or for after humankind” (p.9). Yet in the Banksy context England is a problem, because he started to stencil Bristol’s walls, and then London’s, and the island configuration is not a problem of geographic nature, but of mental nature. What Banksy criticizes is the

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island-thinking in England as a key-part of Western society, metonymically. Westerners thinkers create walls that emprison human mind as Morpheus mentions, metaphorically, in *The Matrix*. It is precisely this closed geography thinking that nomads criticize, for them, they're not afraid of islands, they're afraid of deserts or, in another word, deserted islands.

Other arguments which are interesting to consider on the matter of *post-computer graffiti* is that Banksy's stencilism is remarkable in the Photoshoped and design *graffiti* age. BBC 2 TV channel called him "The Illusive Banksy" in 2006, showing that his visual input contributes to counterculture aesthetics. Ten years ago nobody knew who Banksy was then, and right now nobody knows either, but his works keep spreading virally worldwide. A decade after his stencils began to appear in urban walls and street artists from all around are following him as a mentor for their works, a founder of *graffiti* counterculture in non-African style. Unlinking *graffiti* from *hip-hop*, Banksy manages to continue his trend as a real trendsetter of high-quality stencils, using models and spray cans to print out pre-edited computer imagery.

From Bristol to the world, like so many music groups, Banksy globalizes *graffiti* in an Internet age, while trying to keep his identity private. Like any smart cyberpunk, Banksy leaves only behind his images and mottos, somehow making things to prevail his style as a sort of street artist mythology, followed by many as nomad role model; an anti-hero. This anti-hero concept, which cyberpunk explored a lot in the Neuromantics Sci-Fi novels, is being rescued by Banksy in street art, where information, and not advertising, should "stencil" in. Besides no matter what *graffiti* critics may say, like *Tecktonik* dance culture, Banksy's images are branded too, and also helped by our current networked media environment. The result is that images like Banksy's are soon noticed, and perhaps branded since its beginning.

In the artworks of this singular *graffiter*, every image starts to become something else, and the street is his catwalk, his canvas; Andy Warhol's Marilyn Monroe becomes Kate Moss and attack helicopter A-64 ("Apache") gunships that looks like toys with bow-ties. If these are some of the artworks that show a pre-edited imagery in computer software, one should remember too that Banksy started drawing freehand and only later he began to make more complex juxtapositions and colored figures.

Basically he criticizes hypocrisy so much he frequently uses "rats" and "monkeys" to figure in his allegoric *graffiti*. The "thing" he has in rats is a

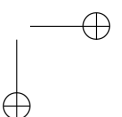


metaphor for “the little people on the street”. In short, he keeps making fun of celebrities and advertising icons, authority figures and others alike, yet his message must resemble as if it was grown on the street and for the street, criticizing only someone that is important else important.

In one of his many stunts, Banksy went to a museum and stuck in one of the exhibition wall a rock with a drawing carved of a prehistoric figure. The fun part of this is that the figure represented was a prehistorical man pushing a supermarket trolley with a huge stroke over it. Such rock-carved image was placed on the museum wall and only later somebody noticed it as non-fitting in such an environment, as a prank object with a caption. Of course Banksy left in disguise so nobody saw him getting inside, placing the object with his image on the wall, and then left the scene. We can say what Banksy has done is a typical cyberpunk behavior. One will never meet Banksy in person besides viewing his artworks.

Every image of Banksy’s repertoire is like a *DJ* hybrid produce, a remixed work, images that, once they’re juxtaposed, acquire other meanings, thanks to the marvels of computer software and photographic editing. In a time without computers, drawings of his would definitely be seen on walls, though thanks to the access in the Web provides image search, for instance, artworks can become very impressive. Many of Banksy’s images are symbolic, punk-styled rebellious against who he calls “the hypocrits”, the “people who tell you how to behave”. Cyberpunk aesthetics aside, Banksy makes doodles too, and in extreme cases he paints gigantic figures either, always redefining creativity, pushing the limits beyond. One of his most popularized images is the cover design of “Think Tank” album (2003) for Blur – a famous British pop rock band – in which a boy and a girl hug each other wearing both of their metal underwater suit helmets.

Culture jamming defender Kalle Lasn affirms that “american cool is a global pandemic. Communities, traditions, cultural heritages, sovereignties, whole histories are being replaced by a barren American monoculture” (2000: p.xiv). Besides making sense Lasn arguments have an opposite side because Banksy himself becomes a brand, like many *culture jammers* works, as they create their own version of corporate advertising. Banksy’s icons are more site specific and remarkable following the *graffiter’s* own aesthetic inside the street art galaxy. In a cyberpunk fashion, Banksy iconography is recognised everywhere and is considered by graphic artists and fancy trendsetters as out-





law and marginal as cool. So how is the uncool becoming cool? That is a tricky question, for sure, considering that Banksy's *graffiti* iconography replaces itself the commercial American monoculture icons that it becomes a replacement too as any other advertising outdoor image. Fortunately it fails in that detail, but succeeding in another, leaving the Banksy virus behind in media, walls and information networks. It is this sort of "communism" that Banksy hates in media icons, because they appeal to consume for an exit and makes people to buy products, services and, above all, ideas. Sci-Fi author J.G. Ballard, in the short story *The Subliminal Man* wrote something about this sameness model sold to average citizens:

"Maybe," Franklin said, opening his door. "But mechanically the cars of today are far more sophisticated. They're lighter, more durable, safer to drive." Hathaway shook his head skeptically. "They bore me. The same model, same styling, same color, year after year. It's a sort of communism" (Ballard, 1963).

Against this "comunism", propelled by everybody's shopping practices, Banksy exerts a powerful answer, as if his images were weapons in a charming and aesthetic "art of war". Hence, under the ballardian, deleuzian and nietzschean umbrella, British *graffiter* Banksy manages to promote the nomad "war-machine of thought" by stenciling subversive *graffiti* outdoors and indoors as if posting new road signs for blind people in the age of media despots. He demonstrates this when he paints suburban living rooms in colored stencils in the wall barrier dividing Israel and Palestine (the world's largest prison); because there are no centers or peripheries to the nomad anymore, just the nomad adventure. Taking street art to another level, Banksy and his notorious stunts are really different from anything else we're used to see. Making walls of segregation and outdoors of subliminal advertising a new canvas turns the streets into art galleries; that is why he dreams of cities where buildings are paintings and entire streets are artworks of colored figures. He finds this exciting where the possibility turns the world's most invasive structures into arenas for free speech and "bad" art. These remind him Glastonbury, where he first felt the need to react to the political situation and to design breaches in walls. For the "faceless" *graffiter* all nomadic signals hijack the royal message, forge the signature of the state; and whenever and wherever media's floating signals





are becoming seeds, new impressions of novel forms show up, sparks which sometimes inspire revolutions, at least aesthetic.

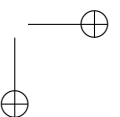
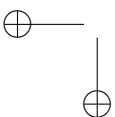
From the contraction of the words “vandalism” and “branding” Banksy came up with “Brandalism” a term he coined in *Wall And Piece* (2005), a book on his own productions. Besides this one, in *Existencilism* (2002) and in *Banging Your Head Against a Brick Wall* (2001) he already weaved much criticizing in how public space was organized. Altogether his three books seem to work out like a manifesto, in a cyberpunk manner, against cruelty, right-wing politics and corporate iconography. If one recalls that classic *graffiti* states somehow an “I exist” message, Banksy’s stencils expose a certain “existencilism”, an existence needing to stencil messages on walls. A key mark in Bristol’s global *graffiter* is his positioning before advertisers:

“People abuse you everyday (...). They make flippant comments from buses that imply you’re not sexy enough and the fun is happening somewhere else. They are on TV making your girlfriend feel inadequate. They have access to the most sophisticated technology the world has ever seen and they bully you with it. They are The Advertisers and they are laughing at you” (Banksy, 2005).

For him, advertising is persuasive, insulting and a useless tool in the hands of advertisers, concerning content. So in his perspective all street artist should ever do is to return “meaning” to the streets. Due to copyright protection laws no image under intellectual property rights or trademark system should be forbidden to retouch. In the age of Photoshoped graphics seems odd why images set on public space can’t be manipulated, knowing that they’re on everybody’s space. This is how Banksy positions himself in the art of “brandalism”, becoming, on the other hand, a brand himself. Nonetheless he states that “any advert in public space that gives you no choice whether you see it or not is yours. It’s yours to take, re-arrange and re-use. You can do whatever you like with it” (*Idem, Ibidem*). By saying so, all that implies retouching, re-arranging and re-using trademark footage means that in the era of computer graphics, Photoshop cosmetics and videoclip marketing packs, no image shall remain unaltered.

Sometimes extremist words of his are spoken to defend that public space should become again as before, when there was no need to restore it to its original sense. For Banksy advertisers don’t ask permission to put their mes-

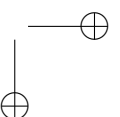
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sages in front of everybody, so why should we care to ask for permission to change theirs? In artistic contexts this makes perfect sense, yet in the realm of everyday marketing it is questionable to say how would Banksy react if someone would appropriate his works and retouch them on the street? This is quite a question! Especially nowadays that the Banksy virus has spread through information and video networks that it is impossible to stop it, even if the *graffiter* himself is caught by police officers. However, you can't stop a virus. And above all, by now, there are so many copycats of Banksy's work that no one knows for sure anymore if he is man or woman, or if it is a team. The most odd part is the fact that Banksy with his "brandalism" has customised cities where he went to stencil, reclaiming those public spaces as his.

Labeled by some as "stencil hackers", "graphic pirates", street artists get many captions, though their work is hard to clean from walls. Such an art of rebellion is understood as being an art of retribution in the cyberpunk sense but entirely focused on the street, outside of computers. Of course *graffiti* like Banksy's always returns back to computers, Web sites, online sharing communities, and so on, because it behaves like a virus, no matter how hard it is stuck on urban walls. The gunships wearing pink bow-ties, the Mona Lisa with a rocket launcher, the policemen of smileys, the revenge of monkeys, the army of rat pranksters with drills, are just some of his most subversive images. Let's not forget *Pulp Fiction's* actors John Travolta and Samuel L. Jackson firing bananas in a black outdoor. It is to say that the day Banksy goes public it will be the day *graffiti* ends. And then we'll no longer have monkeys with "weapons of mass disruption" signed with a bold typeface or establishment buildings where it is stenciled: "By Order National Highways Agency This Wall Is A Designated Graffiti Area (Come back a few days later, and people will have obediently tagged the wall)".



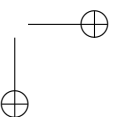
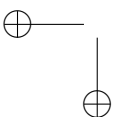


TETSOO: MOTION DESIGN SHOCKWAVES

“The computer is just a tool, nothing more. It is mechanical. I am interested in how it can help me transpose a feeling, an emotion. Something mechanical morphing into an organic form, sensitivity” (Greg Tetsoo, 2003: §6).

WHAT is interesting in Gregoire Poget’s – a.k.a. Tetsoo – artworks is that they rely on cyberpunk glittering neons and Sci-Fi videoscape special effects, while targeting corporate media channels and fascinating arty audiences as well. Works of an outstanding creativity are updated online and you can find it on www.tetsoo.com Web site that demonstrates fabulous technical skills and exhibits awesome footage; he does graphic design, motion design, film editing and even the soundtrack. Most of his short-films seem to be advertising jolts of a cyberpunk pirate broadcast with static interferences and hardcore quick-cut cyberculture motives. Besides motion graphics design, Tetsoo makes static images too, but it is in motion design that he transcends himself succeeding in creating “idents” for media channels as the North-American Anime Network, among other clients.

Like a nuclear blast shockwave tormenting Cold War media images with interruptions and video disruptions, the best work of Tetsoo’s motion design is a cutting-edge, crystal-clear, sharp video artwork. Twenty years of cybercul-





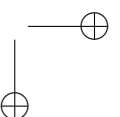
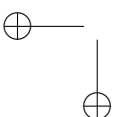
ture allow today's graphic designers to become gods in the media tech field as sound editing and video editing software increases artists capabilities so that they can express easily in their artworks. It could be ten times faster when using hardware and software with broader Web band usage and it makes old school graphic designers feel like they are still in Stone Age, as designers like Tetsoo literally take off from computer screens and leave behind their shoulders only their visions shaped in motion design manifestations.

There is a conflict between static and motion, raster and video footage, color and grayscale, silence and hard *rocky'n'techno* sounds. Tetsoo's typical postmodern artwork managed to clear new paths for motion design, by taking tension as a form of visual expression. In his clips, objects and their respective visual language are always fighting and overcoming themselves on the image frame, as if they did not have much time left to be seen. The usual ten or fifteen seconds length video clips are as aggressive and powerful as they're short in time. During a small amount of time one is able to see how cyberpunk science-fiction is condensed in short high-speed motion design video, where graphics are the main ground, not the music, even if sound design is high-quality too.

Tetsoo Productions' films are very likely motion design storms, and electric graphics disturbances also wait for its audience like quiet predators unleashed online to become celebrities, as its author remains hidden, like Banksy, faceless. Fancy figures ("10Sity, April, 2003 in Print design), cartoon characters, technological *origami*, old film scratchy effects and MTV aesthetics are summoned in Tetsoo's video artworks. Intense, short, bold and perfectly edited, his quick-cut video interferences behave on screen like ripples on the aquatic videoscape no matter which subject is at stake. He calls his motion design shockwaves "short animated movies" and watermarks them with a cute Japanese-style young octopus, "branding himself" (now within the same way he used to with the Japanese white typeface over a red circle logo). Stepping into Tetsoo's graphic world is to observe high-tech graphics side by side with supersonics and CGI, 3D modeling (the robotic home CD player concept, "Electro 01", April 2002, print design) and amazing character rendering, hypertunnel wireframes and strange oblique architectures ("CrashTest", April 2002, print design). Inside of these science-fiction spaces, utopian places, motion objects collide in supercolored clips like compressed semiotics artifacts of present time.

His old artworks were famous and still are remarkable, such as the clip

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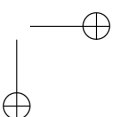


“Tentakl – September 02” that features a subway bridge-tunnel. One does not know if it is day or night. Breakbeats volume up like underwater sounds and when they burst the bass volume a knot of red tentacles which stretches from the far exit tunnel moving in strange ways heading for the camera; respecting the perspective lines and leaving a 3D shadow in the 2D video frame image. Then lights go off. Twisted lines, hovering design logos and unreadable type-face are the trademarks of this video clip; this one too made for the Anime Network, like another one Tetsoo made based on an underground parking lot.

Other clips, like “Form – September 02”, reveal a metamorphosed geometric wireframe in colored in sepia and red. Electronic riffs of bass sound burst up. Then synchronized to sound, the 3D graphics merge into 2D forms and go back to the previous state in a sort of liquid behavior. Grids, numbers and lines appear rapidly around quick-cut, vectorial-like forms that get thick and thin, fast and minimal according to the dry breakbeats and the synthesized bass *riffs*. Multiplicity and unity, liquidness and rigidity, translucency and opacity are invoked in this Tetsoo amazing clips of motion design which end back in the square where it started.

And in another astonishing “ident” for the Anime Network, Tetsoo shows a machine with chrome textures turning on. Interferences and image interruptions damage the video stream. The exotic machine face turns its eyes on white glow and extends its arm, from the palm of the African-Asian styled robot blossoms a blue tree in 3D full of network branches which popping up blue cubes. Finally the network branches rises up and creates the outlines of the Anime Network logotype while gorgeous beats clash their ending over the white background and light blue subtle jolts.

Jolts, interferences, interruptions and shockwaves are omnipresent in Tetsoo’s motion design. In fact, they’re part of Tetsoo’s volatile image fashion, as we may see in the clip “CNX TV – June 03” where a white background glowing over the figures outline and robotic machines turning around in black and white aesthetics, jolted with sounds and interferences of pervasive scanlines. Quick-cut, impossible to follow editing mixes raster and 3D footage to create a blip culture motion design short animation. The robotic being awakens and stares at the screen in front of it with Japanese writing. Again between the liquid and the solid, Tetsoo’s clips enable a graphic bombing mixed with belic electronic music. Suddenly the robotic being swings and from its thorax a whirl of skin-colored tentacles pops out in a nervous and interlaced behav-





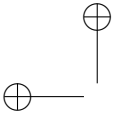
ior. As one of the tentacles hits the screen, another sequence reveals a golden metal cyberglobe interlinked with network tentacles and breakbeat sounds at the time when an “X” marks the spot.

There is another remarkable clip “Anime Network – February 03” that is stuck to the Tetsoo’s habitual style; in these one we see a modern building, in front of which an origami transformer leans over before vanishing. The clip is a mix of layers where scratches, painted ink stains are digitally introduced in the sequences, leaving grain and visual noise to make it resemble a soundless old sepia film of early 20th century. As the origami object keeps changing fastly and the beats mark those changes with electric sound patterns. Tetsoo did another similar clip of an *origami* object, that turns into a jet fighter, and then into a pterodactyl dinosaur. In such clip the blurred footage was strange, blue colored, and the camera unfocused and it seemed on purpose disconcerting.

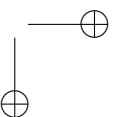
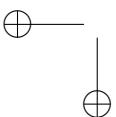
Surprising camera angles, different motives, bizarre tunnels and moving texturized backgrounds, are his visual signature. Some clients of his are iStockphoto, FIXT, Helio Finland, Hybrid Studio and Celldweller. Tetsoo is so proficient as a motion designer that he is able to make logo animation, illumination and lightning effects, modelling, video editing, typography, texturing and audio postproduction. It’s like a “one man brand” that can create figures and fragment, unite, rewind and animate graphics of any style whatsoever. His inspiration comes from the music of Cat Power, Radiohead, Deftones, among many others The Hives, Elliott Smith; and from the films directed by David Fincher, Tim Burton and Martin Scorsese. The eclectic cultural background of Tetsoo makes possible for him to weave transitions almost impossible to achieve in his stunning 3D animation.

Print design (like “Nautilus”, April 2002) and 3D modeling are the core of his productions right now, but the compelling visuals of his short-film clips attract clients interested in product design and packaging concept also. Because he is interested in drawing, 3D modeling, music and Flash software, one cannot find odd why the motion design he creates looks very “flashy”; He is limited by a software-condition. In sum, one may define his motion images as carriers of a style (“Alright”, March 2002, print design), a very peculiar style indeed that is becoming a trend, a fashionable “punk” recycling of images that wrenches their motives out of the original context to allow free signification (“Love”, September 2002, print design). Even the online audi-





ences classify Tetsoo's works as being bombshock, deserving awards for their nice "3D ness" ("Bloo", January 2002, print design).



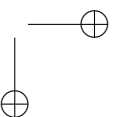
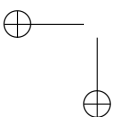




CULTURE JAMMING: REDESIGN CORPORATE LOGOS

“A week later Franklin began to compile his inventory (...) When the first of the explosions sounded dimly around the city and he reads of the attempts to sabotage the giant signs, he automatically assumed that Hathaway was responsible, but later he heard on a newscast that the detonations had been set off by construction workers excavating foundations” (Ballard, 1963: §18).

NAOMI KLEIN and Banksy are icons of anti-corporate activism, and yet they'd become brands too. This is the problem of *culture jammers*, they're so much anti-brand that they become brands themselves. Is there an exit route away from corporate brand logos? *Culture jammers* think so. Sabotaging signs is the adventure of *culture jamming*, whether it is in image production or in its public disclosure. Authors like Ballard, among others of course, are pretty concerned about the devouring discourse of advertising. In the short-story *The Subliminal Man* (1963) Ballard speaks about a world where advertising outdoors look menacing and incite people to buy useless commodities. The rule is that every time advertising finds dissidents of corporate culture it absorbs them, in the same way Deleuze mentions that



the Despot State integrates the nomad war-machine, in order to keep threats contained inside and adrift.

From the cyberpunk “Do It Yourself” motto to the “Brand Yourself” slogan, something new has emerged. Computer manufacturers are friends now and politicians are all like in the new global neo-liberal economy *milieu*, so advertisers are the foes in corporate massive branding environment of urban space. As one may observe in the *culture jamming* spoof ads and in the *culture jamming* manifestos it is all about redesigning corporate culture ads, slogans copywriting and logotypes as a kind of semiotic warfare. In sum, and as Jill Sharpe demonstrates in the 2001 *Culture Jam* documentary film, *culture jamming* envisions the *culture jammer* figures as the anti-heroes of corporate monoculture. *Jammers* pretend to hijack commercial culture and to reconfigure global logos to state “we have the power!” in a similar fashion to *hip-hop’s graffiti* and *hacker’s programming bomb code*.

A new element is added to this subversive imagery production equation: all *culture jammers* behave and think as cyberpunks, and they try to change the brand environment from the inside, in media, using for its purpose the same semiotic warfare to state: “reality is not consumption of commodities, and neither it is culture like that!” The new element is also typical from an age of network computers, because *jammers* use cyberspace to change branding images according to their own taste. We call it rebranding. They see it as a sort of mission with specific goals to achieve in order to redesign corporate logos. In this way one may understand how *culture jamming* mixes and remixes practices of previous cyberpunk figures, like the *graffiti* and the *hacking*, the *Djing* and the pirate broadcasting; changing outdoors, commercials and public spaces with rebellious performances and cyberspace statements in Web blogs. Growing from street art and cyberspace grounds, *culture jamming* evolved in a digital image-driven society to remake corporate culture in a new fashion. A “slap twist” is how *jammers* call it; provocative and shocking exercises needed to wake up consumers from getting numbed by easy-selling techniques. Activism against semiological global warfare is what *culture jammers* do, creating a new field of aesthetic response to brands in a cyberpunk manner that implies advertising and *DJ* culture heritage.

Culture jamming sympathizers, like Jack Napier from the BLF (Billboard Liberation Front), call *jammers* to restore order in public space. But to do so, *jammers* must seize control of three ventures: the street furniture, the street

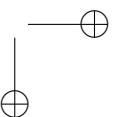
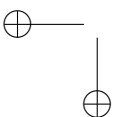


ads and the billboards, to accomplish the control of the message broadcast system. All efforts envision one basic objective: “put your message out there”, as Banksy does. Enterprises like Infinty have 240.000 outdoors across US and Mexico. The dream of any *culture jammer* is to have such space to advertise (“subvertise”) for himself and mottos like “Marlbore”, “Dispepsi”, “Think Doomed”, making fun of Philip Morris Marlboro cigarretes brand, Pepsi Co. Drinks and Apple computers, respectively.

New surfaces are always what *jammers* looking for to spread their re-branding virus, from TV channels to stickers on ATM machines, car paintings, sidewalks drawings or outdoor muppies. One of their most desirable surfaces is backlit outdoors, because these are perfectly useful during day and night. We may say *jammers* like playing god, revealing the same “Christ Complex” like any other cyberpunk in an on-going friendly war. For them it never ceased to be warfare, except where they switch advertising slogans, *hackers* hack information systems and *Tecktonik* dancers battle to occupy the best spot on the street. *Culture jamming* is a collective exercise, a team-based adventure that keeps amazing the people passing by changed outdoors and billboard pranks as well.

Responding to the inhalation of mainstream messages, *jammers* try many different strategies, yet these strategies depend on how much notorious is a certain brand, which justify the rebranding process, and also how well the *jammer* knows the brand from graphics to slogans. Some *jammers* begin to hack the advertising system by promoting a dialogue with the audiences, leaving stickers in train wagon indoor ads, delivery trucks or post office boxes. And as team-based operations evolve they implement tactics to make the jamming practice a more collective and organized icon saboteur mission. No one wants to redesign corporate logos unless their work has some impact back onto the logo itself. It means the redesign exercise requires engagement – a way to respond to. Teachers, artists, former advertisers and designers of the information age try to speak in the same language as the advertising targeting the “iPod generation” does. For sure it is all about mind share, people establishing a connection with people, with no brand in the mediation, just the very same medium used by corporate conglomerates.

By targeting the brand, a new transgressive drama is triggered as consumers who don’t expect to express themselves and think of it as being odd and almost “wrong”. On another perspective, some jammed ads are somehow





very insulting and skip the aesthetic and sensitive part, but still manage to awake people to the responsive, sharing culture of present day. Extremist *culture jammers* attempt to disrupt the shopping process, because in their opinion people just live to keep buying things; the so-called “empty-doll cycle”. Such cycle requires getting the “doll” (any product), and when one finds the doll is empty one buys something else more in order fill the gap. Hence the solution is always to buy more. For the activists the plausible reaction is to not to consume a pre-packed event, the brand experience, so every *jammer* criticizes the culture collage that brands perform. However, a collage is too what the *jammer* creates upon debris of massively branded messages.

It is quite a mistake to have a society optimized to share more mediated images than having it optimized for real people to share thoughts. So in the age of instant messaging we are still not sharing all we know or all we are; we are sharing media; lifestyles, by-products, trends, commodities and pre-packed events. It is hard to say where the misdemeanor ends and the felony starts, which is a problem due to the fact that in the end the anti-ad is all there is; a hidden message finally exposed.

Ballard’s short-story on subliminal advertising explores the territory of commercial signs in a kafkian and K. Dickeyan way, as two characters say:

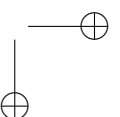
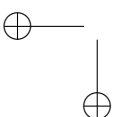
“Anyway, television is a total waste of time. There’s only one program. It’s ridiculous to have four sets.”

“Robert, there are four channels.”

“But only the commercials are different.”

(Ballard, 1963: §16).

Yes they are, only the commercial TV spots are different, and just in which moment they appear between programs, for them, the same information gets broadcast no matter which TV channel is on. An insulting sameness devours every visual medium to make consumers buy the same things even when they do not need anything special. Lasn goes further down the jamming spiral and says “we ourselves have been branded” (2000: p.xiii). This makes sense if we remind that lots of celebrities are naming their children of brand names, like “Dove”, “Apple” and “Denim”. Oddness taken to the far side of the brand-scape is all we find in a monoculture awaiting to be remixed, remediated, rebranded, redesigned as a sign of last hope. Who has any doubts that a manipulative corporate ethos drives our culture? Not many people, of course.



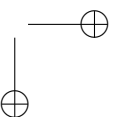
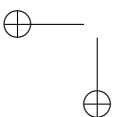


The only issue is how to redesign corporate culture without reaching the *milieu* of terrorism, it is the challenge of the *culture jammer*, the anti-hero of the semiotic warfare.

Major concerns of *culture jammers* were the same for cyberpunk writers, under the umbrella of Sci-Fi author Philip K. Dick. Ballard also shared the preoccupation for the enslavement of the unconscious. Targeting an economic system that forces people to consume against their will through the use of technology is a matter the cyberpunk novels revealed in sharp crystal-clear writing in the 80s. For Ballard, people would not want to consume at high cost if they were not “forced” to do so. And in this way, the contemporary realm of *culture jamming* is somehow updating cyberpunk premises for the twenty-first century. In the landscape of persuasion lies the new battlefield where, as James Cameron referred in the script of Bygelow’s motion picture *Strange Days*, the wars of the future [our video age] would not be fought with guns but with cameras – videoguerrillas. Theories as such can be extrapolated though to any manipulated imagery signed by cyberpunk *jammers*.

According to Douglas Rushkoff, for instance, the violent landscape of persuasion makes everyone of us answering it. Almost in an automatic fashion, consumers tend to be persuaders in the end. If *culture jamming* is about redesigning corporate culture’s logos – the return of the branding viral messaging system –, then how can one distinguish that response from any message of the same branding system? Because until further proof all that *culture jamming* does is to turn average citizens in marketing cyberpunks. We can also say that in the landscape of persuasion, everyone’s dream is to become persuasive, the virus spread out is that of form, not that of media content.

Ultimately there will be no us or them, no citizen vs corporations, because even in the spoof ads made by *jammers* we find that if the secret is how to make people converting themselves willfully, then corporations have won. Was not Philip K. Dick once said that “the Empire Never Ended”? Perhaps he was more than right; he was awesomely accurate about it. Films like *They Live* (John Carpenter, 1989) were fantastic Sci-Fi frames to see through how it would be if any one would be able to see beyond the superficial aspect of advertising. In this case, the main character in Carpenter’s film happens to find a box full of mirrorshades. As he starts wearing one of them he discovers that every time he stares at billboards and other signs of commercials that new





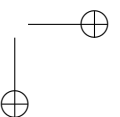
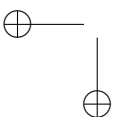
messages⁴¹ of a commanding system are lying underneath (and they're only visible if one wears those mirrorshades). In a prototypical fashion, Carpenter's film is focused on the glossy-fakeness of American advertising, how it hits consumers and changes their behavior patterns. In the same way *culture jammers* mention the need for a response to this commercial landscape. We have examples of this almost schizophrenic disorder in Ballard's short-story:

"They'll soon have all the approach roads covered. When they do we might as well stop thinking. "Your trouble is that you're thinking too much," Franklin told him. "You've been rambling about these signs for weeks now. Tell me, have you actually seen one signalling?" (Ballard, 1963: §1).

The Sci-Fi context of Ballard's short-story concerns a civilian feeling caught and chased by the messages of strange set of advertising signs in a quixotesque manner. His fear of ads was increased so much that he behaved like an animal pursued by predators. In any given moment, Franklin's friend hallucinates and fears for his own life, saying that "we've got to stop them, Doctor, they're trying to transistorize our brains!" (*Idem, Ibidem*). As advertising keeps getting modernized how far will go the *culture jamming* in the attempt to stop commercial conspiracy and protect everyday consumer? Looks like if the digital realm keeps integrating every data and object in cyberspace that *culture jamming* might become the hacking culture of this new century, the semiotic warfare is based in rebranding practices made by fashion cyberpunks. Anyway, how can one person not convinced by another that there is such thing as subliminal advertising, when even in fiction characters suspect of it:

"Hathaway started to protest, and Franklin raised his right hand firmly. "Listen. For the last time, if you can show me one of these new signs, and prove that it's transmitting subliminal commands, I'll go to the police with you. But you haven't got a shred of evidence, and you know it. Subliminal advertising was banned thirty years ago, and the laws have never been repealed. Anyway, the technique was unsatisfactory; any success it

⁴¹The billboards in the motion picture feature messages like "obey", "marry and reproduce", "no independent thought", that sound like inspired on Orwell's *1984*. As the main character keeps street walking wearing the new found shades he's able to read "consume", "no imagination" and "conform" orders written in every book's page and others like "stay asleep", "watch TV" and "do not question authority" inside the stores.





had was marginal. Your idea of a huge conspiracy with all these thousands of giant signs everywhere is preposterous” (*Idem, Ibidem*).

Are we really sure that a conspiracy of giant signs is preposterous in present day? How is that? What we do know is that advertising becomes the atmosphere *per se* in our urban public spaces, and in a natural way of acceptance. Shopping malls, freeways, motels, dinners, coffee shops, public squares and many other commercial spaces make us feel that there is a real marketing blitz going on among persuading industries, and the persuaders are always aiming at us. Let’s not forget that as we do street walking low-cost airliner agencies, information bugs and brand visionaries acquire all means necessary to seduces us with logotype substances and textures. One may question the substances, after all there is a crisis on substances, but textures are getting a face; they’re iconic, apparently emotional and optimistic, classic and happy. Persuaders use to say that they need to feed the bulldog! Now the bulldog has a face.

Ephemeral messages are all we should expect coming from advertising, the enemy of Banksy, because it promotes things as if we were still in the 60s. What product is available now that does not happens to be sold as “faster”, “stronger”, “better”, “cleaner”, “smoother” or “tastier”? Not many, for sure. Besides the core problem in corporate narrative is that every now and then things are being mixed up with culture. Now the problem is that culture and advertising are so friendly that there might not be culture at all in a near future, in a non-branding form. *Sex And The City*, the TV series (HBO, 1998), for example, like *Cast Away* (Robert Zemeckis, 2000), among other films, like *The Hire* (BMWfilms.com) (2001-02) were released as a marketing package surrounded with narrative, and not the opposite. It is quite easy to figure out what is the problem here. Corporate global culture is becoming *a* culture, or *the* culture (we hope not) thanks to its endeavors in guerrilla operations, how its express promotions becomes omnipresent.

In *No Logo* (2002), Naomi Klein suggests that we developed immunities to corporate marketing. We do know that once you’re in the competition you cannot stop, so there is a warfare among advertising agencies, and another one happening between them and general consumers. So much warfare and no content at all is outrageous. “What does it mean when our lives and culture are no longer shaped by nature, but by an electronic mass media environment





of our own creation?” asked by Lasn (2000: p.xvii). This is the problem: once a culture becomes advertising-friendly, it ceases to be a culture. And as if this was not enough already, the more advertising landscapes surround us the more we feel lonely and consumption is the rightest answer to fill up that gap temporarily. Human beings are designed for many things, but loneliness is not one of them. Persuaders who know this try to increase the sense of community in consumer by-products. Like Starbucks sells community coffee meetings, and Nike sells transcendence through sports competition. Each brand has its corporate epiphanies and manages to infect audiences with a potential meaning, community bonds and identity packs. Sometimes even in fiction TV series branding and marketing seem unbearable, like in the first episode of the first season of *Desperate Housewives* (ABC, 2004) when one character says to his wife: “I want the divorce. I just can’t live in this detergent commercial anymore”.

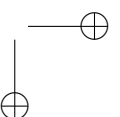
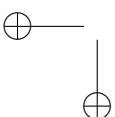
It doesn’t sound that good that in the age of networked media people communicate very much but do not say really something at all. Just routine talk and regular broadcasts are killing communication between people. So many media and nothing to say is the contemporary dilemma as high-tech media are before us and words are meaningless. Absorb the code, check the code, on code, off code, seem to be the plausible positionings for the *jammer* one may find in this corporate monoculture framework. Brands as relevant as nowadays’ require consumers to be egocentric, selfish; the more they’re solipsist and hedonist, the better consumers they’ll become.

Under the hype of the *culture jamming* trendsetting, Kalle Lasn promoted this new practice like:

“It will change the way information flows, the way institutions wield power, the way TV stations are run, the way food, fashion, automobile, sports, music and culture industries set their agendas. Above all, it will change the way we interact with mass media and the way we interact with the mass media and the way in which meaning is produced in our society” (*Ibidem*: p.xi).

And again we are prompted to meaning, the production of it in this *media-optimized society*⁴². It seems that meaning and identity were linked, and still

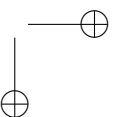
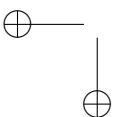
⁴²Please read *The Media-Optimized Society* (Elias, 2006).





are, to a level of community bonds. That is why brands try to increase the feeling of belonging to communities where the brand product happens to be in the middle, because communities are harder to dissolve and survive longer. Actually the new trends suggest that brands require cults in order to create a pool of knowledge useful to easily targeted consumers. All that lonely and, or, egocentric consumers want to feel is that they belong to a place, a community, according to a local identity, thus their personal identity relies upon a tribe. Brands are forging tribes with logotype marks in order to make imperative the feeling of belonging, for in contemporary times the placelessness is felt by everyone. Precisely because things are not in their place, like people, branding becomes the element of bonding between switched up figures and roles, identities and stories, traditions and behaviors.

Invitation after another, distributed ready-made identity kits, consumer by-products accessories and multi-commodity campaigns, try to change people into brand – eaters, like the iPod campaign: a brand experience designed to deliver knock-out ideas – creativity in the age of networks and awe operations. To respond to such brand design statements, one should not forget that the nomad space is smooth and open, transitive yet untraversed, like the *culture jammer* desires to spread his iconic plagues and rebranded viruses somewhere. Maybe the alternative is to become so much nietzschean that we should bet on an “(...) absolute encoding – to get something through which is not encodable, to mix up all the codes” (Deleuze, 2004: p.254).





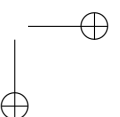


TECKTONIK: BRANDING DANCE CULTURE

“Acoustic space is organic and integral, perceived through the simultaneous interplay of all the senses; whereas “rational” or pictorial space is uniform, sequential and continuous which creates a closed world with none of the rich resonance of the tribal echoland” (McLuhan, 1969-1994).

FROM the words “Electronic” and “Technologic” emerged the “Tecktonik” a new dance culture that appeared in European urban streets as a trademark, a music genre and a dancing culture. One of the most interesting and acclaimed *Tecktonik* music is Yelle’s “À Cause Des Garçons”, released in the album “Pop Up” (2007). The most common feature of *Tecktonik* is the dancing moves inspired in *hip-hop*’s *break-dance* and Kraftwerk’s robot imaginary. In addition, *Tecktonik* also presents a fast paced dancing where dancers link every move to another as if their bodies were elastic, hence its name addresses us to the collision of the tectonic plates.

Tecktonik is very recent in the dance music culture and it is seen as music and dance culture protected by copyright law within a already huge galaxy of producers, *DJs*, dancers, videoclip directors and many other trendsetters. Revealing a big concern about haircuts, electric dancing movements and group exhibitions, *Tecktonik* imports key elements of *hip-hop* bloc parties’ contests and collective competitions which is happening in the street. Territoriality is important in *Tecktonik*, as it was in early *hip-hop*, being the electric body



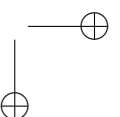
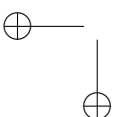


language a form of marking spots in public space where a group is dominating. We have seen similar kind of behaviors in B-Boys of break dancing and in late *rave* culture of the 90s.

If *break-dance* was the dance of the breaks, the stops were more relevant than the flowing subtle movements, in *Tecktonik*, it is flow that matters, which makes it a typical MTV generation subculture, powered by videoclips, cosmetic graphics and global pop fashion. Choosing to dance continuously makes *Tecktonik* dancers as if they are resisting to stop, eliminating the stops between choreographies, so every dance looks one object with specific start and ending. Like in a videoclip, it means aesthetic behavior, group features, electronic dance music and a certain length to perform before the audience.

Historically *Tecktonik* began as an urban dance phenomenon the reason it spreads fast all over the urban globe because dancers, producers and *DJs* started to share their videos online in YouTube and Daily Motion Web Sites. Instant Messaging software also helped to brand this street dance culture in which fashion punks remake cyberpunk history in the new media lines. Mouth to mouth rumors and news ran across everywhere as teenagers chat online posting their videos, tutorials and home-made songs and choreographies in blogs and Web pages. The Metropolis complex of nightclubs on the outskirts of Paris was relevant for the start of this new branding dance scene, in the same way the networks allowed users to share files online about this new cyberpunk subculture.

Arms twisting, sudden torso movements, quick footsteps, fast star-shaped poses make *Tecktonik* dancers in a sort of living characters of videoclip broadcasts. The fashion punk looks of *Tecktonik* dancers makes teenagers resemble *raver* cyberpunks of the 90s, in a sort of nostalgic comeback to the new “electro” sounds dance scene. It is absolutely right that at first sight *Tecktonik* is a cyberpunk *rave* movement remediated by new media and global pop culture. There are no doubts about it. What seems to be very new about *Tecktonik* is its trademark feature, because every element (dance, streetwear clothing, haircuts and music) are branded. So it is the dancers and users of the Internet that turned the global by sharing new moves, sounds and artifacts. Cyberpunk aesthetics are very notorious in *Tecktonik*, but the problem is that it worked out more in a fashionable way, so *Tecktonik* right now become as temporary as *raves* were. Thanks to postmodernism no one can really say what is

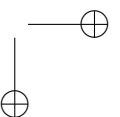
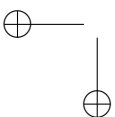




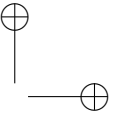
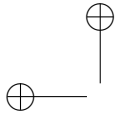
past and what is present, because as *Tecktonik* proofs to us, things from before can be from tomorrow too.

Following the previous trends of *hip-hop* bloc parties *Tecktonik* dancers gather during the day in meeting spots to enter in team battles, first in Netherlands and Belgium, as a spontaneous culture scene, then in Paris, as a trademark, and later in Germany and London as a social phenomenon. A key item in *Tecktonik* is the disarticulated movements of arms and legs, the *Tecktonik* futuristic haircut (Mohawk style) and the accessories like graphic imagery on T-shirts. And of course there has to be a flashy big belt and baggy slim pants to make *Tecktonik* look as alternative as it is supposed to be. A TV channel of music clips, called MCM, has promoted worldwide the *Tecktonik* movement of fashion punks, followed by MTV and M6 music channels.

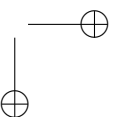
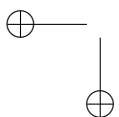
Branding this dance culture is something new in pop culture, so instead of hearing from “Do It Yourself” one should hear something like “Brand Yourself”. Besides being a fashion movement of contemporary cyberpunks, *Tecktonik* is a branded music style of music and choreographies that wered designed to be seen on screens as video music and also in the street. So the new thing about *Tecktonik* is its purpose of happening in TV, video sharing Web Sites and the street. In both “places” dancers perform as if they’re trying to prove something and occupy a territory before the competition. But instead of fighting with fists, they fight with the dance in European ground like *hip-hoppers* fought in US boulevards. One may say that *Tecktonik* is a “revival” of the New Wave of the 80s occurring in the age of new media of cyberpunks.







**THE ACOUSTIC
CYBERSPACES
OF
PRESENT DAY'S
ELECTROCULTURE**







SOUNDSCAPES: THE SONIC LANDSCAPES

“McLuhan believed that electronic media were subverting visual space by introducing “acoustic space:” a psychological, social and perceptual mode that eroded visual space’s logical clarity and Cartesian subjectivity, returning us electronically to a kind of premodern experience (...). Simply put, acoustic space is the space we *hear*: cybernetic, resonant, invisibly tactile, “a total and simultaneous field of relations” (Davis, 1997: §3).

ON the ashes of the old *Discos* the true landscapes are still being built today, no longer just based on image, but above all in sound. The new landscapes that we found from the shopping mall boutiques to the electronica music parties are constituted by sound lines, that the *Disco*’s laser gear insist on drawing with the magic of their glittering streams. The new sonic landscapes are the crucial element of any raving act, because they are what the customers of the electronic music parties seek – an open space unprovided by the city cubicles. The new panoramics are fruit of the audiovisual, but it is the music that provokes in fact the immersion, with or without chemistry. We find it everywhere, because now the sonic landscapes work like *surround sound*, they organize a space to involve dancers and listeners of digital music in an immersion state that only the most advanced acoustics engineering make possible.

One verifies that, in the most different urban scenarios, urban culture is marked by territories which in fact are “sonic landscapes”. They were setting





up the boundaries, by shaping the respective urban tribes. Seattle was inseparable of its *grunge* in the 90s, Bristol was synonymous off the *trip-hop*, New York produced the *hip-hop*, London already museified its *punk* and to speak of Frankfurt, for instance, requires speaking of *trance*. In our present time, Paris is branded with *Tecktonik* like Latin America is with *reggaeton*. Each city possesses its own sonic landscapes, but when I speak of sonic landscapes I don't refer only to the urban scenery of the metropolis which shows a certain sociocultural context capable to segregate certain music genres and of visual "landscape". What I define as sonic landscapes is also the images of landscapes that digital technologies proclaim through the acoustic engineering, as well as it is the Virtual Reality immersion type. It is actually explored by *3D techno*, hence what in at stake is the attempt of liberation from concrete of the city, precisely for an exalted state, in its turn is augmented by the surroundingness of three-dimensional sound.

The sonic landscapes are a type of perspective of the world granted and mediated by the new "acoustic cyberspaces", for the technologies which allow creating new spaces where only invisible sound exists. It is the sound, the domain of the sonic, that provides the ticket to the "new world", and the new world is cyberspatial, immersive, aggressive, hot, cybernetic, sexual and whose vibration is endless. In a time when telecommunications cyberspaces link and cross-linked all things, the sonic landscapes of electronic music parties are organized with the intensive work of *DJs* and music producers, they are the last evolution stage in terms of escape culture.

As a landscape, *raves* were a cocktail of sounds, computerized images and alchemy, the glance one had of a sonic landscape of this kind was characterized by the lightness of the body, which rescues the individual from the futility in everyday life towards freedom. It is the freedom that typifies the "acoustic cyberspaces", the realm of computer music, because the very "nature" of the computer is a network nature and for that it implies total connectivity of everything within everything, hence breaking out the social complexes, making people come close, to inaugurate a mind-to-mind communication. In the end, music is just the actress of such process.

The sonic landscape is always the space of the hybrid, because it is a mixture of the social "real" landscape that we see and listen to simultaneously with the sonic landscape computer music delineates in the atmospheric emptiness, thanks to the prophets of acoustic engineering.



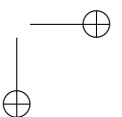
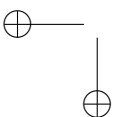


The *rave DJ* is the figure that manages to interconnect several sonic landscapes and to channel them to the different time position of each *raver*. The *raver* thus puts all fibers together according to an ensemble of images, heading for a fiction imaginary which it is corroborated by chemistry and alcohol. In its colored state such imaginary can be a sonic landscape or even more than sonic, if one understands that the surrealist images triggered by the domain of the sound may segregate in us then the desire to express through sound and reaching more senses – the multi-sensorial.

Besides the *DJ*, other figures try to merge different stylistic worlds of sound, what is commonly called “fusion”, however, in the attempt to create more innovative sound landscapes, musicians as *Bomb The Bass* even did videogame soundtracks in late 80s, and for its time such attitude was explicitly cyberpunk. By creating the music and the special effects for the famous *shoot'em up Xenon 2: Megablast* (1990), a computer game edited for the Commodore AMIGA computer, *Bomb The Bass* proved to be cyberpunks as legitimate as programmers in *The Bitmap Brothers* team, whose games have already considered the “acoustic cyberspace” of soundtracks. Much more than just conceiving the graphic scenography of 16 bits videogames, software programmers were aspiring for the construction of more involving sonic landscapes. They wanted to explore, also in a neo-romantic way, the power of sound, because image was predictable, it would become, as we now know, three-dimensional, autonomous. It is known, nevertheless, that what videogame programmers wanted to do were not, for sure, the same electronic music musicians like what Robert Miles did in the 90s, by building sonic patterns synchronized with visual landscapes⁴³.

This neo-romantic environment, figurative in Robert Miles's somehow *pop* context, showed different spaces colliding, if we have in mind the distinction McLuhan invokes between “acoustic space” and “visual space”, that researchers like Erik Davis speak of pertinently. In the opposite side of Miles, and the time period a little before his *pop* perspective about the sonic landscapes, Brian Eno, who is considered as the “acoustic cyberspaces” guru, af-

⁴³This is the opposite from creating sonic landscapes, where sound is the excellence upon the secondary footage of the visual landscape. I recall this famous music entitled “Children”, whose videoclip showed road-movie style, shot from the inside perspective of a vehicle, after whose windows one could observe mountainous landscapes.



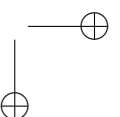
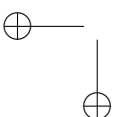


ter having been interned in hospital in the decade of 70, built a genre of sonic landscapes that still are classified under label and concept of *ambient*.

By appealing in an immediate way to “ambience”, “environment”, to an acoustic space, after his hospital internship, Eno used to listen for long to music records played in a stereo system in which only one of the speakers could work. It is said, today, that *ambient* is an after effect of Eno’s traumatic imaginary in conjunction to the electronic sounds. But the truth is that Eno spent a lot of time listening to rain drops bumping on the window’s parapet in the hospital room, and its symbiotic effect plus the terrible music playing in only one speaker revealed to him some new paths. His *ambient* is allusive to a landscape; in this case a landscape that only exists in terms of sound, what eventually the cyberpunk *ravers* step into frequently and whose name is “acoustic cyberspace”, the sonic landscapes produced by contemporary electronic music electroculture.

Ambient is a music concept that only makes sense to exist if one has in mind the creation of landscapes, more than a concept. *Ambient* is a form of stylistic design that keeps opened to the imagination, sparing the words in function of a perception of sound, as if it allowed us to “see the sound” as it happens with mammals like dolphins. It is also a cybernetic atmosphere, “music with lines that unlock doors”. It can even make possible conceiving images by stimulation incentives. This is the case of some records of Eno like “Ambient I: Music For Airports” and “Music For Films”, both edited in 1978.

Brian Eno’s sonic landscapes disclosure “environments”, appealing to spaces exhibiting life forms, other sonic landscapes address isolationism, the individual’s “encapsulation” in his own sound world. There is even an album entitled “Ambient, Vol. 4: Isolationism” (1995), about individualism, while bands as The Orb (1991) show *ambient* as a type of atmospheric “music with an attitude”. One has to refer that this subject of sonic landscapes, fascinating contemporary electroculture’s cyberpunks so much, is just, and so only, the technical consummation of some Erik Satie’s (a known French piano music composer) theorems defended in the beginning of the 20th century. Music was thought to be background, ambience music. This is why some authors suggest the existence of a correlation between what Brian Eno did and what Erik Satie said in the beginning of the century: “there is a need to create music for furniture, which is to say, music that becomes a part of the surrounding noises and





considers those sounds as well (...)”⁴⁴. Erik Satie’s arguments, relevant in all his aspects, to think on the sonic landscapes model, revealed plenty of tracks, above all concerning the creation of music to be a part of the landscape, of the *ambient*. Satie referred, in an explicit way, that it was urgent the music creation considering the noise – the sonic disorder, the acoustic counterintelligence. Just by checking what has happened to *dub reggae* we conclude that such plan was accomplished, one way or the other. In spite of Satie’s theorems, they still do find application, Remains this huge feeling that one has been ignoring from exploration of the (acoustic) cyberspaces that are produced in contemporary electroculture, though it is good in its sonic architecture, the construction of musical and social spaces.

The concern of contemporary electronic music drags in the desire to construct spaces, something that is a cyberpunk’s attitude, as the whole attempt of using the telecommunications and digital media cyberspace to sustain and solidify a parallel world, marginal and evasive, which is no longer new. If we observe how DJ Lee “Scratch” Perry wove his *reggae* and *dub* spaces, mostly *dub*’s, is possible to understand the kind of *soundscape*, the sonic landscape created by the time analogical technologies were reining.

Nowadays, *tecktonik* looks fast-forward, yet we must not forget the appearance of the *jungle* music and the still contemporary *cybernetic jazz* genre, pretty impressive in the work of Grooverider. These genres point out the construction of landscapes made by sound patterns accurately interwoven. One notices that there is a perverse attitude in what respects to the conscious elaboration of virtual worlds, of marginal spaces, that may allow to exit outside, to the outside David Bowie sang about, to where we should go, not today, nor yesterday, now!

Cage, Stockhausen, the symphonic and progressive rock of late 60s and in the early 70s, were enormous contributions to the fomentation of the acoustic cyber spaces, because it was after the decade of 70s that synthesizers first appeared (for commercial purpose) at a full-strength. Synthesizers, the synthetic, synthesizing keyboards, had, in its essence, the electronic architecture of modern microcomputer. This brand new keyboard allowed all-sounds synthesis and the production of unavailable sounds in nature; it had the capacity to reveal sonica, virtual ambiences also virtually infinite. The “acoustic cy-

⁴⁴N.A.: The translation from the Portuguese version is mine.



berspace” acquired consistency, but such invisible tactile consistency didn’t come from hardware architecture, it came from the portable technology of the synthesizer. After all it was a street, “accessible” technology, as the *hip-hopper’s* soundsystem, the *rhacker’s* sampler and the *DJ’s* mixing table or the turntable. There had to be this “street cred”; a street credit so that this gear could be elected by the audience. Such “street cred” was the goal, as we may identify it in the futurist sketch of *Neuromancer*; things had to have an exchange value once in the street, regardless of any entrepreneur group’s mediations.

Referred by many as if it would be Europe’s electronic music counter-weapon, *trance*, originally Frankfurt’s, is known so far the most lasting “acoustic cyberspace”. New genres emerge but *trance* is still on top of consumer’s choices. It has been the ideal music genre to obtain what is called among the underground of dance music as a “second skin” The main purpose around the *trance* production is weave sound elements capable to pull us off the “real world”. *Trance* is the music style that, much more than *house*, it was conceived willfully considering the new *soundscape*s and the chemical “another worlds” of postmodern electroculture.

Prodigy’s lead singer, Keith Flint, is still an icon in the cyberpunk music scene since the group released “The Fat of The Land” (1997) album in the late nineties. One of the latest releases was “Always Outnumbered, Never Outgunned” (2004), which didn’t let the best seller in top ratings sellings, yet it is still classified as being still cyberpunk. When “The Fat of The Land” was released, Flint once said that this album’s songs were the soundtracks to his own shows, underlining so the need of the audience whom has to get in from another space. Now Flint is no longer wearing classical 90s cyberpunk outfits. However, the need to step into a space which is a space of sound is still real. This kind of space Keith referred to may be not a space accused by the power of imagery, for we presume the most powerful is defined by the sound cyberespatiality and in its invisible edges. There is no need to apply only David Toop’s “ocean of sound” concept, if we remind this argument of Keith also addresses that “sound-capsule” idea that George Steiner (1998, Pt.4 Tomorrow: §46) tried do conceive. In Steiner’s perspective, music would have the responsibility to provide a cinematic status for the Real, turning us listeners into actors, being the music from the background to match our per-



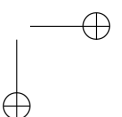
sonality, for contrast in relation to the typical representation, everyday life's boring artificiality.

This type of message was present too in chronicles available in booklets inside CD recordings published by DHR (Digital Hardcore Recordings) aiming for underground young pop consumers. Its president, Alec Empire, said he used music as a kind of shield against the outside world when he was young. The goal was to stop anything, any announcement, political lies or propaganda gets inside the head by coming from the exterior. In the "same" Europe, half century before, let's not forget the Nazis who has practiced something not that different at all in this aspect only: the *Luftwaffe* fighter pilots used to took off listening to Wagner's epic music. Perhaps the acoustic spaces are more technically real now, yet the practical implementation of the acoustic space is much older. We may envision it as strong and inclusive that it is under a redefinition process operated by the new cybernetic acoustics engineering and discourses.

No more is music suit to upper middle class nor to space fixation, the new codes are pretty much about excuses for *dandism* and about music being incrustated everywhere. Tod Machover, then a technology designer in MIT's Media Lab who produced *Brain Opera* (1996), is right when he assures that "music won't leave our body presence anymore". In the same style as George Steiner, Machover defended the existence of a new total sonic sphere. We still notice such sphere as being constant.

Steiner was concerned about this type of subjects, when he argued that "the walls are throbbing gently to the beat of music" (*Idem, Ibidem*: §45), which would be capable to take musical rhythmic on the other levels. He did notice the multiplicity of resident spaces in the invisible acoustic cyberspaces, what perhaps made him has said "the beat is literally unending. It matters little whether it is that of pop, folk, or rock. What accounts for is the all-pervasive pulsation, morning to night and into night, made indiscriminate by the cool burn of electronic timbre" (*Idem, Ibidem*). It is this utmost undifferentiation that works like Virtual Reality, as that for immersion, which puts in practice what David Toop calls "ocean of sound", henceforth the forum of the electronic *soundscape*s that became deliberately uncontrollable to house that anarchical side of digital technology. That undifferentiation is so much the far side music reaches when it gets built by pervasive technologies which also affect desire. This type of opinion is shared by Sterling ever since, whose

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corroborates it affirming that: “The advances of the sciences are so deeply radical, so disturbing, upsetting, and revolutionary, that they can no longer be contained. They are surging into culture at large; they are invasive; they are everywhere” (1986b: §20; 1986: p.8).

To understand the need for sonic landscapes the cyberpunks have, on a collective level, or at a personal level, for the “sound-capsules”, it is necessary to relate both sound realms. Whether it is the social domain, or the personal domain, both are connoted with the re-producibility that technologies of acoustic engineering provides, now liberalized with the digital. In a certain perspective, one cannot speak of “sound-capsule” (Steiner, 1998), the sonic sphere that surrounds an individual’s invisibly tactile space, which is very personal, without mentioning piracy or copyright law infringement, mis-control, file sharing or replication of music digital files.

One knows in the present time the relevance that Digital Recorders have among consumers, like MP3 players, CD recorders, USB interface music devices, Webcast software, and so on, as well as Sony’s Walkman with Mini-Disc, flash drive or HD, because the treasure of individuality depends upon a possible “sound-capsule” (*Idem, Ibidem*). And too upon reproduction, file sharing, recycling and compilation files, network searchings that the cyberpunk *rhacker* does to gather sonic debris. On the other side, any mass media acoustic by-products according to its own taste. It is not by chance that today we no longer speak of “gangs of duplication”, hence nowadays new tribes learned how do make “rapidshare”, download torrentz files, upload ISO files and use real albums officially published on the Internet by the rock bands themselves. So every media can be customized as a totem of the “acoustic cyberspace”. “The user takes it all”!

The new hyperdistribution methods have turned every consumer into a media maniac. Sony introduced the *walkman*, Philips the Compact Disc Record, Apple the iPod, yet as time goes by the motto is still that “we should make our own music”. Of course this is not something new; the business model is just getting changed liberalized, the capitalization of the most both cyber and punk attitude from the ghettos. It has to do with the need for using other people’s music, and some despise for the alienating and uniformizing that publishes spheres of record labels. Without such a distance between mass media realms we would not witness the mixing of other author’s sonic works, in the end this new *DJ* culture has grown upon illicitness. And in turn it has provided



synthesis. The aftermath was the omnipresent of the *DJ* figure, historically a cyberpunk devoted to *plunder phonics* activities. In its short but very productive history, the *DJ* has moved from a character whose work was based on sonic debris of any other artist and producer's work, to a position of making the mix the new thing. As in a new interweaving process of second grade sound fibers which are able to become remade, by supplying them a new shine with sonic patches. The *DJs* origins are, in this way, a faithful portrait of the attempt to customize the "sound-capsule" (*Idem, Ibidem*), henceforth dedicated to the aesthetic exploration of music's noise and the extra-aesthetic. Basically it's all about a creation of a very own world of sound, deep between information and sonic pollution. Might it be the real version of visionary Erik Satie's sound world?

Customizing this "sound-capsule" (*Idem, Ibidem*) it's took the *DJ* Lee "Scratch" Perry to upload directly the signs of degradation in his dense architectures of polyrhythmic textures. Perry was not retroactively like named of cyberpunk by chance; hence it is known he even anticipated the *Neuromantics*, as well as many figures of *hip-hop*, by revealing interest for the practice of re-producing noise and readdressing it back into the system.

Perry is unarguably a precyberpunk, because he had contributed with his work to produce something which was not by then new. Nevertheless, his work was presented in a brand new perspective, whose mediation belonged to the vision of a *re-producer*, the *rhacker*, somebody merging all that it is produced and has settled. The question of the re-production is implied in the very idea inherited of the *new future*; so, instead of building a future based on the present, one re-produced constantly present itself which become intensely lived then, because a continuous recycling of everything was implemented. It was left just a hesitation grounded in artistic constitution and in dissolving of itself, powered by information technologies of reproduction, the same providing the contemporaneous acoustic spaces.

By analyzing *dub* music, for instance, very well representative of reproduction tech, we may observe how a music genre expands and fills the utmost thick sonic architectures of cyberspace. Even *dub*, the name, is a reduction of *doubling*, a Jamaican practice for reproductibility, re-configuration and the creation of versions from original works. It all began using one track of rhythms towards other new music configurations, this upon magnetic tape mediums and analogical gear management. Deeply rooted in the cyberpunk attitude,

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o *dub reggae*, with all its religious and mythical style of Rastafarian assets, appears in the sequence to multiply technology, due to the need for replication, for returning noise backwards as sonic produce, mentioned by Jamaican folklore as a source of catharsis much before the *Neuromantics*.

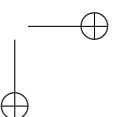
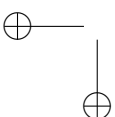
When *reggae* was corrupted by the upcoming afrofuturistic doubling practice, the whole authenticity of rasta folklore was compromised, after all *dub* came up as a new mosaic of sound, as a recycling of sonic tissues, questioning music by corroding and dematerializing metric units, demanding the analogical recording studio as a music instrument perfect for control, and by making the acoustic engineer the real band, *a one man band*. *Dub* inaugurated the break of with “original”, the respective sound virtualization obstructed *reggae*’s folklore roots by making effective “rhizomes”, perdition in meshes of anesthetic take off, something that so well tipified black precyberpunks and their diasporic life, full of mutant roots.

The truth is that when dubgot into the street it dethroned completely *reggae*’s “dread ridms”. By appearing with some cyberpunk’s stylistic elements, *dub* was in fact rebel, came along with noise, provoking feedbacks and its mentors organized too in a tribal manner, as much moderns as primitives.

Improvisation practiced by prepunk, punk and even the *hip-hop*’s MC’ing are proving that the generation’s interest for technology increased and so there was not chance to reduce the sonic architectures by “playing the guitar”. Like *DJing*, *dub* represented a perversion about black cyberpunks’ will to change the registers integrity, one intended to modify the existing sonic landscapes and “sound-capsules”, by creating in-between spaces on the effective acoustic spaces, with which *doublers* no longer be able to identify themselves with.

Dub was perverse, an inspiration to the cybermaniacs, because it was being settled in the concept that one should de-construct all that was done, it was supported by the hybridity model and the distortion created by the new electromagnetic provocative noise, disorientation was the result, only the most notorious cyberspatial architectures are allowed, hence all the aura load around *dub* masters pioneers.

Nevertheless, the sonic landscapes outlined by *cybergrunge* take *dub* as a precursor genre of an energetic *punk* cemented with much more arguments, because one has been searching for something new, the clever assembling of noise and sound information. Degradation signs like tape saturation, static electricity and *feedbacks* came out from *dub*, henceforth elevated since the





British crown left Jamaican territory, when Jamaica began to invest in its “cultural industry”. The way of releasing those cultural industries converged into an icon of analogical systems – Bob Marley, the hallmark which broadcasted Jamaica in the whole Western world with the hot and expressive *reggae*⁴⁵.

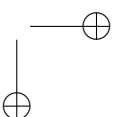
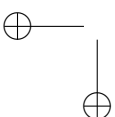
With its origins in black Jamaican cyberpunks, *dub reggae* was a true original *cut’n’mix* activity, looking back when there was this need for building cybernetic spaces with multiple levels of acception. As Erik Davis believes, *dub* was the assumption of “Africa on the moon”, like *reggae* seems more like “Africa in the New World”, yet both *dub* and *reggae* were Afrofuturistic. It was not by chance at all that Gibson mentioned *dub* music in the classic *Neuromancer*, introducing orbital *Rastafarians* who listened to *dub* as counter-cultural refugees from an extra-terrestrial, holy, sonic culture, whose rituals would be listening to a hybrid and cut-up sound bricolage.

Sharing the dreamed space of sound hybridity, *dub* also presented polimetry and crossed rhythms, proving to be at the same level as the remaining cybernetic spaces of sound, exposing multi-centered, multiplied sound-patterns, following by the book the *networked mind* principle, because it was the only way to conceive new “capsule-like” or collective spaces. The use of information technologies to record sonic content required a memory encoding, now very important for new sonic forms of religious experience, in the sense of *re-ligare*, “re-connecting” man with man. Yet at the beginning *dub* was a complex beats production because it has recorded all its effects from tape, when it is the time which many necessary equipment are not yet to make what we call *digidub* nowadays, of the analogical *dub* star: DJ Lee “Scratch” Perry. If it wasn’t for him, *dub* wouldn’t have been described in *Neuromancer* like the following listed below:

“As they worked, Case gradually became aware of the music that pulsed constantly through the cluster. It was called *dub*, a sensuous mosaic cooked from vast libraries of digitalized pop” (1988b: Pt 3, §4; 1988: p.122).

When Gibson described *dub* was constantly pulsating, a mosaic cooked from libraries of digital pop music he had already identified *dub* music as a

⁴⁵ *Dub* and *reggae* are inseparable from the *marijuana*’s religious nature in the *Rastafarians*’ celebrations. This drug played the same role for Jamaican black cyberpunks like wine did in catholic’s religious rituals.





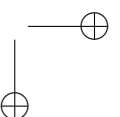
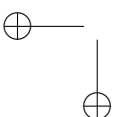
sort of seductive, non-stop, cybernetic, resonant acoustic space, yet the truth is the same freedom margin he addressed in matrix cyberspace, built upon the virtual architecture to make it credible, was not as powerful concerning sound atmospheres – the *soundscape*s. *Neuromancer*'s cybermania space is a totally absolute and synthetic space, the technological “rhizome” where all information about everybody was being assembled by telecom's hypertechnology. If we had the distinction Marshall McLuhan proposed of “visual space” and “acoustic space” in mind, what Gibson's *cyberspace* really made possible was the impossible sum of two types of space foreseen by McLuhan. About this matter, Erik Davis gives us some hints on this relationship between the visual and the acoustic domain:

“Unlike visual space, where points generally either fuse or remain distinct, blocks of sound can overlap and interpenetrate without necessarily collapsing into a harmonic unity or consonance, thereby maintaining the paradox of *simultaneous difference*” (1997: §3).

This means that the acoustic (cyber)space where *dub*, *reggae*, *techno*, *jungle*, *tecktonik* belong, as most electronic music, is anyway a field of multiple presents, an atmospheric sound space full of parallelisms, un-centered patterns, all of this re-empowered by digital nowadays, making it possible to have the necessary structural perfection to the polyrhythm and the crossed rhythm composition.

Parallel sonic environments can be replaced, a phenomenon patent in the *DJ*'s activity, considering that *DJing* idealizes the merge of two or more sonic strata crossed in-between, whose result is an entirely new patched up product. It is the rhythm and beats overlapping that attracts more the electronic music aesthetes, as well as appropriation, acceleration and the complication of the main the sources of sound. All was about controlling the music which collapses, then making a new environment, in itself belonging to the forum for cyberspace dematerialization; acoustic. *Ambient* is a good example of this parallel *soundscape*, as cook of digitalized pop sounds assumed to be a new ground of cybernetic space. The myth of creation of a space has been so much elected as the Internet in the mainstream, hence we can explain why a portion of the cyberpunks live wired to synthesizers, samplers and on broad band Web – they are looking for virtually explicit spaces, working on three-dimensional sound through interpenetrated frequencies and mixed sound channels.

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Erik Davis believes the “acoustic cyberspace” is inseparable of *afro* culture and its connection with white man technology, so all afrofuturism, as I think, implies what Davis refers as “Black Electronic”, due to the fact of the black cyberpunk’s mischievous attitude being promiscuous with an opening and with the expansion model can be observed in digital media networks. The *leitmotiv* of this “non-structured” rhizomatic mash comes from the black cyberpunk’s way of life, from their their behavior in *soul*, *funk* and *hip-hop* music.

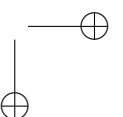
The existing evolution in the “black electronic” is connected to electronic gear and most advanced acoustic hardware, because new media is open, they cultivate this articulation of lines. What the black cyberpunk did was to create intercommunicating, cross-linked spaces. The more he is concerned with the cultural construction of new territories, rhizomorphic machinery that perpetuate its sense the more they connect with other machinery. Such was also the attitude of artistic quotation performed by the *graffiter* or the cybernetic behavior profile adopted by the *hacker*. Both Cyberpunks and *hackers* realized that the bigger the amount of spaces, the larger the freedom margin and the odds. After all, what the cyberpunk is looking for freedom of speech and freedom of information, but in a specific space: the cyberspace.

Autonomous “closed” spaces, which are the acoustic parallel cyberspatial environments, acquired only consistency and make sense if they’re able to connect among themselves. Otherwise they become something narcissistic, playing badly in the filed of communicability, hence they were where the legitimacy of “sound-capsules” came from. The sonic landscapes weaved by the black electronic of afrofuturistic cyberpunks which enable “lines of flight” of their own” and very singular ways of “territorialization”⁴⁶, yet they appeal to *collective-mind-bodies*.

When a *raver* weaves that mash of immersive sound, as he relaxes in the tides of the “ocean of sound”, the question at stake is no more that of “territorialization” but of “re-territorialization”, which is the strata of creation of a new space, an entirely virtual and personal one, remarkable in its *inter-linkage* properties.

The whole reconfiguration of the conception of space and time in cy-

⁴⁶“The territory is in fact an act that affects *milieus* and rhythms, that *territorializes* them. The territory is the product of a territorialization of *milieus* and rhythms” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1999: p.314).





berspace is strong item to one understand its ability to articulate new spaces, disclosing new paths, new *poros*; new “lines of flight” justifying such “re-territorialization”. As much in the bits networks matrixes, as in the “milieux” of *rave* parties, the perception of world changes as if we were within a mapped labyrinth, in continuously becoming, a chaotic becoming of the world reproducing itself unstopably, just like the fractal footage screened in *raves* in the nineties or contemporary *VJ* hypnotic assemblages.

What makes *dub* different is pretty much the close nature to all electronic music, *dub* guided electronic music to close the gap between the acoustic engineer and the creative musician, and between producer and the band. *Dub* is a brother of the musical technological perversion detectable in jungle, hence the jungle genre, it is popular because of the contributions of artists like Goldie or Roni Size, also the jungle genre has much of the mischievousness essence of the cyberpunk. The proof is that jungle is one of the strongest homemade music genres, notorious when it infectiously spread across the dance music scene, underlining much of the Afrofuturism natural to the urban black population in the UK, establishing a significant metamorphosis in the “black electronic” ever since Derrick May’s Detroit *techno*.

Jungle’s Afrofuturism, from the point of view of what is created as being black and cyberpunk, in parts or in the sum of parts, comes from the time when in the beginning of the nineties dance music became a battlefield in its own way. That was the moment since *trip-hop*’s beats were accelerated, pushing out the machine-like aspect of electronic music, taking the overlapped rhythms aggressiveness to a diabolic state. All this happened in the time breakbeats got popular, sounding like a burst of sounds in the same nature as *digital hardcore* and gabber were blossoming. The goal was to rise mutiny *soundscapes* almost warfare. Although even more relevantly was jungle’s contribution to the scenario *dub* had prepared, the fabulous dimension of multiple sonic acoustic strata. That is why jungle bet on bass sounds, exploding breaks and punctual silences that stretch and corrode time-space, small empty paths opening to suspend us. Without cyberspace, there would be no new atmosfericities, new purely aquatic cells crossing time-space blocks in the “acoustic cyberspace”. As an after effect, each time-space block produces an opposition to the outside, in its turn caused by the speed of acid polyrhythms, then infinitely crossed each other until the *outside*.

Existing different forms of living sustained uniquely by its technology





pace, this also implies that artificial creation of both inner and exterior needs to be, in fact, fruit of a shock between different speed devices which in effect that make space-time capsules juxtaposed or antagonistic, but it is essentially different. Exactly in-between these space-time capsules, whose speeds are singular, that is possible to perceive the outer side, the parallel domain, in its turn intrinsic to the recombinant virtualizing cyberspace; typifying the “black electronic” which resists modern spaces by creating multiple others. Such cyberspaces elevate themselves since the afro’s tribal percussion marries white man’s digital gear. The attitude of the black cyberpunk, far from being just a redoubt to hardcore Sci-Fi, is the outcome of African polyrhythmic sensibility, when this one finds electronic paraphernalia full of possibilities and details yet to explore. Manipulation, sonic discourses and re-production are therefore the real *techno*-logic.

Derrick May’s *afrofuturism* was so much implanted through *techno* music in Detroit such as DJ Lee “Scratch” Perry’s analogical *dub reggae*⁴⁷

In *Flame Wars – The Discourse of Cyberculture* (1992), culture critic Mark Dery, who has manifested about Cyberculture and the Cyberpunk, pointed out several personalities and artworks identified, in his opinion, as being icons of what one might call *Afrofuturism*. However, in my point of view, all names and artworks recalled by Dery look unquestionably like belonging to black cyberpunks, if we consider that the cyberpunk aesthetes renamed *graffiters*, *rockers*, *hip-hoppers* and *DJs* in a retroactive fashion:

“If there is an *Afrofuturism*, it must be sought in unlikely places, constel-

⁴⁷ *dub*, assumed in the eighties as a vanguard of electronic music, was a heritage of the seventies, when with no samplers and just with analogical ribbon tape recorders, Jamaican *DJs* perpetuated sound effects in music back then, yet in such a radical way, that the structure of special and spatial effects on the music turned into the musical concept one was looking after, which some think to be a typical *Afrofuturism* behavior, or Jimmy Hendrix’s electric guitar sounds. These examples mean that sound technology is connected to afro’s creativity, being all these spaces of acoustics in our electroculture a proof that the black cyberpunk is not just the *graffiter*, the MC man, the *hip-hopper* or the *DJ*. All these cyberpunk figures, like the *rocker*, the *hacker* and the *raver*, are responsible for adopting the protest attitude used in the fruition of cyberspatial tech. In other words, these technologies provide criticism conditions, bringing along new urban behaviors, disturbing by countermeasure the creative urban ground – the academies, the institutes and universities. Cyberpunk grants himself authorization and he’s not in the hierarchical position, he is one of the elements, in a certain perspective, who manages to fight the system in the same language, like Banksy does in street art *graffiti*.





lated from far-flung points. Glimpses of it can be caught in Jean-Michel Basquiat paintings such as *Molasses*, which features a pie-eyed, snaggle-toothed robot; in movies such as John Sayles's *The Brother From Another Planet* and Lizzie Borden's *Born in Flames*; in records such as Jimi Hendrix's *Electric Ladyland*, George Clinton's *Computer Games*, Herbie Hancock's *Future Shock*, and Bernie Worrel's *Blacktronic Science*; and in the intergalactic big-band jazz churned out by Sun Ra's Omniverse Arkestra, Parliament-Funkadelic's Dr.Seussian astrofunk, and Lee 'Scratch' Perry's *dub reggae* (...) (1992: p.182).

From the position of the cyberpunk aesthetic and imaginary the *afrofuturists* mentioned before are referred as perfect representations of the "black electronic", that "black-tronic science", strata fabricated as a sort of surreal Sci-Fi, which was an advertisement for several *dub* music productions, yet not as likely as Kraftwerk's technology romance and their respective synthesizer music "The Robots" (in "The Man-Machine", 1978). There are, anyway, other examples of *afrofuturism* practiced by other black cyberpunks. In an allusion to the *Pac-man* videogame, Scientist's "Scientist Encounters Pac-Man" (1982) exposed a scientist manipulating a mixing console, from which things came out similar to *comics*' characters. Nevertheless, the band Mad Professor featured electronic circuit boards and cyber characters standing close to fetish dolls in the "Science and The Witchdoctor" album (1989), while "The African Connection" (1983), for instance, addressed more of the afro tribal dance, in a scenography where bass woofers and magnetic tape whirls were set up on trees, hiding the origin of mythical percussions.

The so-called *Afrofuturism* is a conception that involves many subcultures believers for the electronic music world, *hip-hop*, bold *graffiti* and the comic circulating across suburban black communities in New York. The afro Futurism acts as main medium computer music, it will not be happening if without Derrick May and Juan Atkins' noble contribution. A decade ago Grooverider was calling the shots and following the steps of such attitude that designs new paths with his hard step-influenced *cybernetic jazz*. What one may point out as being the outstanding core of afro futurism is its ability of overlapping rhythms and weaving them in a mesh with thick drum beats, in order to make every sonic space a single music.

The *multidimensionality* inherent to the "acoustic cyberspace" reveals in the way autonomous *milieux* are generated. *Milieux* are physical and/or social





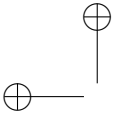
environments, within which one may live or where some phenomena will happen. Unlike the fiction of cyber radical Sci-Fi visionaries, virtual worlds don't imply dissolving the Real, yet they add the strata of virtual, which conquers ground as technology evolution is face to face with experimentation poverty.

The virtual is more accessible and rapid; it is a parallel invader, the multi-dimension field electro-african polyrhythmic that produces new environments as *media-environments*. And *milieux* are those very social and technological spaces of communication that conceal in themselves many possibilities levels, a new intersection frame. If in the *hacker* we perceive and identify his *milieu* in the activity of penetration, he exercises in on line media system, searching information, how he runs through interfaces and arborizing electronic and resses, in the *raver* we find the *rave* image, as a cybernetic space, piling on many social genres and their respective reality levels in an in-between space: the disco's arena or the "concentration camp" of the warehouse.

Created by the many rhythms of electronic music, such new spaces they meet the denial of collapse, in a refuse relative to apocalypse, linearity and progress. It is intended to be the creation of dialogues among structures, blow up the structuralism sketched up in modernity's spaces. *DJing*, the improvisation, Patti Smith's prepunks lyrics or the complex unmemorizing *gabber's* or *digital hardcore* rock's drumbeats are artistic behaviors mirroring the needs to escape from the end, denying the linear path, hence the idea is to disarticulate organisms, in a deleuzian way. That is why the *DJ*, like the pioneers of *dub reggae*, shows up in the sense that there is the urgency to have someone replication hybridly all things ever created, but also someone who may go from one *milieu* to another. The purpose is to build communicating spaces which are heterogeneous and less structuralist, although a certain order (the "non-logic") persists in the *DJing* practice.

All polyrhythmic communication between *milieux* in the "acoustic cyberspace" is designed to create music through cuts, breaks and fusions. Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari wisely said "(...) the *milieux* pass into one another; they are essentially communicating. The *milieux* are opens to chaos, which threatens them with exhaustion or intrusion. Rhythm is the *milieux*' answer to chaos. What chaos and rhythm have in common is the in-between – between two *milieux*, rhythm-chaos or the chaosmos (...)" (1999: p.313). This way one assumes that the goal of subjective *montages* is to reorganize chaos, like

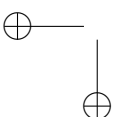




DJing, or how could it be a cyberpunk representation, implicit in the chaos scenery, the strongest legacy of the proletary street punk's anarchy.

Polyrhythms are opened to chaos. John Miller Chernoff (1979: p.42) manages to say “we must *enter into* polyrhythm; by selecting particular rhythmic clusters, and cutting and combining them with other beats (. . .)” (cit in Davis, 1997: §17). In other words, the “acoustic cyberspace” is immersive, oceanic, and really liquid. All we have to do is to choose which “wave” we want to get into. It's all in the mind.

As one dance and one floats among fluid rhythms and rhythmical flows. Merce Cunningham said once the electronic music is not just suitable for the muscle structure and the respective rhythmical body attitude, hence the electronic sound heads straight to our neural structure, it reaches the auditive complex and the brain itself triggers off sensations, because it stimulates the mind which in turn stimulates the body, already a *mind-body*. Raising the crossed rhythm and polyrhythmics, “acoustic cyberspaces” architectures are as modern and as equally primeval, revealing themselves in dematerialized “black electronic” beats and its electromagnetism. Lee “Scratch” Perry himself, the notorious *DJ*, suggested the fact that the music for the mind was more inner like, more digged into us and more underground, by providing conditions for abstraction, like drugs and virtual worlds.



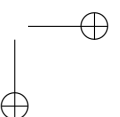


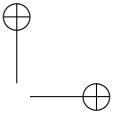
TECHNO: THE CYBERDELIC MUSIC

“(...) *motionless journey* it’s not an inner journey, it’s a journey on a body, and collective bodies if necessary” (Deleuze, 2004: p.261).

AFTER being tested by many styles and bands nowadays the “proto-techno” label finally found its best fit, *techno* music appears in the 80s, an epoch of New Wave’s glamour, unfortunately *techno* is a powerful sonic patterns cook whose question was the man/machine relationship. After all Detroit was not suitable for people, this automobile industry city was a machine in itself, so it justified the appearance of *techno*. Today it is no more than another American postmodern Acropolis. It was not by chance that the *Neuromantics* inspired themselves in many electronic music bands. Albums such as German Kraftwerk quartet’s “Neon Lights” (1978), “Trans-Europe Express” (1977) and “Computer World” (1981) or Afrika Bambaataa & The Soulsonic Force’s “Planet Rock” (1986) were an example to all visual cyber aesthetics postmodernists, so much fast-forward as tribal.

Techno’s futuristic music style had its origin in a city which turned itself to the future – Detroit; the tribal aspect was related to the fact that *techno* was a music genre inseparable from orality and polyrhythmics of Afro-American culture, which then collides with sound synthesis tech devices, as the acoustic spaces finds the (cyber)spaces mentioned by neo-romantic cyberpunk writers. Ever since all African Diaspora has developed symbiosis processes between





its own rhythm nature, therefore incessant, tribal and warm, and the most arborized and perverse technologic discourse of cyberspaces. As favorable to *techno* music, and as for the remaining styles of electronic music, the “acoustic cyberspace” that has been constituted is still today’s responsibility for the segregation of cultural artifacts produced so far in a non-stop way. To all this process, Erik Davis calls “The Black Electronic”, that in fact is the outcome of the mixture of the Afro culture and the sonic cybernetics.

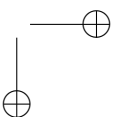
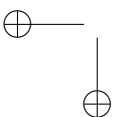
In the beginning, *techno* was made with analogical gear, by appropriating “industrial sounds debris” to conceive kinetic junk upon strong, dionysian beats, what turned America’s industrial sound fossilization in its own prime-matter. No longer as romantic, *techno* music, like Tiesto’s, for instance, still comprehends a very mechanic and repetitive sound, as if it still laments the fact of being black and young in the post-industrial America. It was just about looking for new forms of life in the sonic chaos of the most futuristic “urban jungles” (and here futurism was not exactly translated as prosperity!). The adoption of the machine paradigm was on purpose. Tricia Rose, in an interview made by Mark Dery, in which Afrofuturism was being debated, said:

“What Afrika Bambaataa and *hip-hoppers* like him saw in Kraftwerk’s use of the robot was an understanding of themselves as *already having been robots*. Adopting “the robot” reflected a response to an existing condition; namely, that they were labor for capitalism, that they had very little value as people in this society” (1992: p. 213-14).

Even so, in another interview made by Dire to iconic Stacey Pullen for the Portuguese cyberzine *Counterforce*, Stacey defined Detroit city as a place that was a stage for social conflicts polemic in the 60s to become “Motorcity”. He states that “(...) Motorcity was always based in the creation of cars for the future. We had to put that in this perspective and in this time we felt what Detroit was: futuristic, industrial, and not to have much to do in this town (...)”⁴⁸ (in DIRE, 1997).

The origin of this “cyberdelic” revolution is in psychedelics that was all along with music movements since the 70s till the 80s. Though in the eighties cyberdelics has set up. The causes that favored the birth of cyberdelics

⁴⁸N.A.: The translation from the Portuguese version is mine. The original is available on the Web in www.barkingcat.org/counterforce.



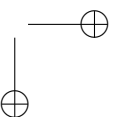
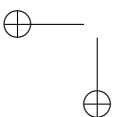


were *techno*, *house*, *ecstasy*, and the exclusion of niggers from social benefits. And also the enclosure of them in suburbs and the entire repressive load that stopped them to get in commercial or aristocratic domains of many areas. The warm behavior and the “tribality” inherent to Afro-Americans’ nature, disguised in its distance, ended up in a cultural revolution. Discriminated by skin color, culture and social abilities, in the beginning, they began to affirm themselves as stars, making their own system, their own *star system*. And it happens with the technology white man had massively conceived with their advanced capitalism system, which still works with slavery forms of labor that now as modern as subtle too.

What always has been with the cyberpunk literary movement was hard *techno*, because it was much more powerful, beating and mnemonic. Hard *techno* did choose Detroit’s *DJs*, they were tech priests from the automobile industry capital of the future, skilful to mediate hot african and south american polyrhythms through cold technology. In UK a different “song” was playing, also a symptom of a cyberpunk attitude, which is the will to make *riots*, mutinies, rebellions, against the so-called system. Some techies claim this was what happened in Detroit, when *techno* music was created as the last artistic interweaved from the phonic chaos of the proletarian cyberpunk’s urban jungle (I have in mind the slogan “Go To Detroit!”).

Rave culture emerged as *raves* parties where occurring everywhere, and instead of producing some prom neo-code, they provoked a fragmentation so huge that not much later jungle and ambient were out, and not much more the hardcore *techno* until now. This later it has managed to make hybrid styles and audiences, absorbing much of the heavy metal’s public. Right between the eighties and the nineties electropop defined its borders with Depeche Mode and Erasure, both born and grown out of the ashes of The Sex Pistols and The Clash, bringing up the more techie “britmusic” to the domain of synthesized romantic pop. On the other side, electronic poprock was continued a lot by bands as Pet Shop Boys, Frankie Goes To Hollywood, New Order and even by David Bowie.

Techno’s cyberculture was just a culture that grew upon the need, an euphorical culture which noticed the street. Cheap technology and the economy could grow too from there. The niggers were apart from economy and American mainstream social benefits, homosexuals were discriminated in the moral domain and black homosexuals were forbidden to express their identity even





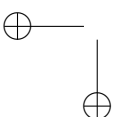
inside their own communities. So was born the dance music culture, this cyberdelic field of electronic sounds, as much of synthesized pop made by bands like The Communards or A-Ha during the eighties.

Frustration and repression have found their psychological breakthrough as its social exit in nightclubs, the only places where representations were dismissed and masks wared in public discarded. The place where everybody could have his own wishes, desires, unfearlessly inhibited. This new places of contemporary electroculture were social environments that made *media-environments* possible; Or there wasn't becoming real voracious and cybernetic "acoustic cyberspaces" like nightclubs, just to provide an answer to the pressure which different people has experienced below moral society's outside world.

The rules of a marginal game turned out to be also played by similar minds. No more was the church, home or hierarchic family the cult spot, but the nightclubbing supportive (inter)zones instead. On the other side one was looking for an "altered state" – an excited state of mind, explained maybe by what Paul Virilio envisioned, when he defends we wen through the *over-man* to the "over-excited man" (1993). Artists supporting the *psi* state of cyberpunks devoted to *techno* and the acid polyrhythm defend the motto "drop acid, not bombs".

Having punk icons reduced to a mere anthology of acoustic and promotional spaces for record companies, aware or an ware cyberpunks had to recreate new idols, a new system where the *angst rocker's* attitude to the world and the whole society would be renewed, recharged and reaching information society. The proletarian eighties punk need to weave its own culture, as if in an archaeological manner he could be aware of "punk's postculture". Step by step, the eighties postpunk movement lasts till the nineties when the cyberdelics bubble bursted aside with chemical and technological prosthetics, later the sign of a dawn which got its energy on the sixties hubris, those dionisiac years reserved to excess.

The cyberpunk movement was practically created; the aesthetic project on *techno-sociality*, that great weapon of the *Neuromantics* had created its structure so that could be places designed for the cybermaniacs. The fact of the underground social-culture led to this cyber path, it is due to the fact many intellectual, scientific personalities, musicians and fine arts artists had began to read William Gibson, Lewis Shiner, Pat Cadigan, Mark Laidlaw and



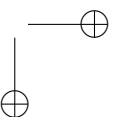
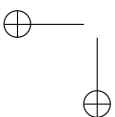


Bruce Sterling. The problem in the end is that something or someone should absorb postcapitalist technology, even if it was over the ashes of the punk icons. Hence it was known that the “acid rock club” needed to be reinvented. Jimmy Hendrix, Jim Morrison and Jannis Joplin, had no way to expand the voices, the figures, the live shows, the clothing; everything needed a profound renewal and some Sci-Fi writer’s social and aesthetic project coming up made the technological present a “Last Eden”. This project created new roots of inspiration for the technophilia enhanced acids culture. The cyberpunk Sci-Fi writers were the new designers of that future.

Acids were counterplacated on the other side of massive cocaine and heroin distributions occurred till the eighties, because in the nineties personal doses were first introduced, conceived by toxicology and psychoactive substances experts. Everything did turned *ravers* in pure *mind-bodies* constantly in an altered state, so there was this attempt to “encapsule” the individual with sonics and acids. The phenomenon of toxic products dependency met a globalization of drugs that has settled on the private consumption and in the experimentation in closed music circuits, thanks to the laboratory experiences which are done by underground outlaw alchemists evading from law; cybermaniac outlaws who looked for not being arrested as Augustus Owsley Stanley III, Timothy Leary or Ken Kessey.

A new line of “acid alchemists” was urgent, no longer suffering the influence of low power drugs as morphine and german labs cocaine, but above all concerned with the amphetamine business. Due to right-wing reformations and conservative politics, unemployment rates, the annoying future young punks were expecting, all made possible the creation of system based on the street economy. *DJs* and musicians started to produce their own home-made cyberdelics. Technology allowed the evolution of artistic manifestation and private entertainment and, in a large scale, a whole new line of cultural artifacts. Capitalism and conservative political maneuvers didn’t foresee the effects of technology, like the Sony venture based entirely on the street like the *walkman*, for instance. Because it was re-appropriated by the underground pop srata, capitalism in a liberal way became at the service of a rebel youth whose applications were not forecast.

The “chemical generation” mentioned by the former punk Irvine Welsh was beginning an economic system similar in every detail to the capitalist oppressive system, a neo-capitalist market re-creator of party environ-





ments, no more based on wine and fairs, but upon “chimiotropisms” and “electrotropisms”, which are, respectively, the need for chemical drugs and the need for electromagnetic energy fields, as if both were essential to life. One invented immersive environments, pretty attractive to the cathaliser and legitimus effect of psychiactive substances. First it was the completely restyled music between the end of eighties and the beginning of the nineties, then new codes and languages arose, a new jargon and street tech talk inseparable that ended to merge in only one culture; a “cyberculture of technological and pharmacological rituals”, altogether with pleasure and technique in a viral manner, the desire and machinery hyponotically working, the big deleuzian polarities.

Begin the *techno*, par excellence, the favorite sound of the raving cyberpunk, it is, therefore, plausible that *techno* music assumes itself as a symbol of the need for an inexistent way of life. *Techno* is the music genre which only makes sense because it was, and still is, whatever the sub-genres emerge, a symbol of machine age, of robots. It is, é rough, aggressive, paranoid, has the essence in the “chamaleonic” state of the urban citizen, appealing to the “rhizomorphic” behavior, the “Interzone” of possible attitudes, it is so that its essence only manifests itself in a state of constant flux. Still now new styles of *techno* are coming up, because *techno* is a collective sonic space consensually operated by many artists and producers who insist on the propagation of the continuum, the street technological art mash up. Like most of the electronic music, *techno*, perpetuates itself like Web Art, network style.

In the cyberpunk classic John Shirley’s *City Come A-Walkin* the electronic sound is described with these characteristics: “the machinic perfection of the incessant rhythm, the evocation regardless of emotion, the hypnotic inexorability of a thousand variations of a music constituted by beats and screeches – the labyrinthic substance of paranoia”⁴⁹ (1991: p.27). In spite of this cyberpunk writer’s arguments, reflecting the substance of *techno* music, they’re not enlightening, but of course criticizing, hence it its known, crystal clear, that only make sense speak of the “acoustic cyberspaces” of *raves* if one has in mind the power of chemicals and the sensuality inhabiting a place where electronic music is playing. The pleasure is impossible to unlink from cyberspace, because the cybernetic space was precisely created to empower us, to make us

⁴⁹N.A.: The translation from the Portuguese version is mine.





feel grandiose, providing easily a world that is henceforth at our reach, under our seduction.

Eroticism, *techno* music and cybernetics are the elements of postmodern electronic music parties' tryptich. Chemistry was not investigated by chance at all at the same as sound. Since the nineties that Berlin, Stockholm, Oslo, Tokyo, Los Angeles, and UK are hot spots for a musical technological set soaked on the production of hallucinogenics. As a consequence of the *techno* "movement" one headed for a path in which the experimentation of chemicals is personal and empowered by the atmospheric music scene. Like Marshall McLuhan said, the technique environment is already, in fact, the true "ambient".

However, even if one knows that the true environment is a social and technological cybernetic *milieu* social like a network, independent by itself from psychoactive substances, one knows too the empathy with the electronic environment is for sure increased by the cathartic effect of chemicals flowing. In the present day, drugs and "sound-capsules" (Steiner, 1998) are so and only one thing altogether with even today's acid postmodern acoustic spaces. Such virtual universe is acid, as if it is an on-going "encapsulation" only justified as a logical reaction to the metropolizing world that absorbs all systems without stopping, globalizing urbanity, seeming to terminate the exterior, the outside. McLuhan's "global village" is already our world, and all we have left is to create our own capsule, either by refugee or reaction.







RAVES: THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS OF THE 90's

“Entire groups take off on a nomadic adventure: archeologist have taught us to consider nomadism not as an originary state, but as an adventure that erupts in sedentary groups; it is the call of the outside, it is movement” (Deleuze, 2004: p.259).

*Rave*⁵⁰ means to talk wildly, as in delirium, as in hallucination or narcosis situations, yet it addresses us too for an extreme enthusiasm, concomitant with an extasis provoked by chemical prosthetics. As a situation and an event gathering a collective of people also implies the act of raving, which is the way of being of *ravers*, whose criticism lies upon the aesthetic of shock and contrast.

In first place, *raves* are a shared experience, a rhizomorphic organism, which articulates itself with its own uncertainties, in its “Interzone”, comprehending a whole space of unity only existing because it puts in the background personal presentation and identification. This way, music is the *milieu* par excellence. As social and technological fibrosis like spaces, *raves* are the news *milieus*, events where cyberspatial sound rises up as a tapestry responsible by the connection of all *mind-bodies* of dancers and *ravers*. *Raver's* “rhizomorphic” side

⁵⁰*Rave* [reiv] means to be delirious, the act of raving as if in madness.



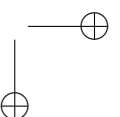
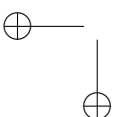


which makes *raves* possible as something that happens whatsoever anywhere, addresses us to the magic aspect in *raves*, which unquestionably appeals to the projection of the disembodied consciousness in the many electronic music's cybernetic invisible cyberspaces.

We can also define *rave* as a community who appears from debris, the rest, the "trash", what the mainstream had segregated, and that now emerges fully loaded of hypertechnological discourse. Raving can be described as a self-legitimate activity which is passible of being practiced in a one night shot and then entirely broke apart next morning with no prior model of whatsoever. The existing model is the "non-model" of the delezian "rhizome", an "interzonal" gap, inhabited by new beings changing levels as if the total and ressonant "acoustic cyberspaces" would be seen and accessed as if one would be climbing up or walking down the stairs.

About *raves* in themselves, it is said that they are no longer on the hype, they're something of the past, that they're decadent. Yet they gave birth to a new and stronger subculture, nevertheless *rave* is still in contemporary times the label of any dance music party that last all night long, sometimes even weeks, conquering so the *rave* parties *status*. In their majority, *rave* parties were illegal, recondite events, though such characteristics were true when the cyberpunk movement set up under marketing procedures in the nineties, after the globalizing New Wave really happened, earning the label of "global pop culture", later reducing itself to vulgarity, cultural youth mainstream. But if it wasn't the eighties and nineties youth, nowadays youngsters would not be seen as heroes of the new age, opening a brand new field to "*culture jamming*", punk cosmetics and Photoshoped imageries under the effect of "total fashion" packaging by-products.

The *rave* is a space of freedom re-interpreted by post-*blank generation*, the underground that now creates a cyber environment addressed to many types of people that involved in street tech and *digital underground*. It is very likely that *raves* work as gathering point, a sort of both *tech* an *noir* spot, mostly concomitant with the nightclub environment featured in science-fiction films as *Terminator's* (1984) "Tech-Noir" or *Strange Days'* (1995) "Retinal Fetish", both being cybernetic environments, with plenty audiovisual gear and the latest cyberdelics hardware, though simultaneously reminding sceneries of nineteen-thirties' noir film. These "milieux" are a perfect spot to get the body





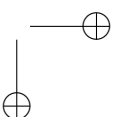
numb the body or exciting it, where it is allowed to by “illicit video experiences”: *bootlegs*⁵¹

Rave festivities are a pure manifestation of rebelliousness, and sometimes they work just like “underworld shopping centers”, mostly in metropolitan areas. Not just in the sense of infringement or in relation to the outlaw appearance of cyberpunk, but because all that happens in the *rave* scene and came out as if it would be disconnected from the exterior, on the other side of the law. There is this new attitude towards time and space as if the *raver* would dive into an aquatic reality similar to Virtual Reality in the dense and invisibly tactile *soundscapes*. That is why *raves* are considered to be parallel worlds, places where you can and sell hardware, software, acid pills, nerve stimulators, even in some cases, enjoying the pleasures out of the flesh. Electronic music’s polyrhythms substitute folk music, which is out of the game, less communicating them the interconnection available in digital immersive systems.

Apolineous aesthetics’ order and logic are not in charge hence what is seek is an on purpose uncontrollable body, whether it is in underground closed controllable places as old factories or rusty warehouses. The name itself of *house music* comes from the places where it was played in the first time. Djs who mixed *acid* music at the old Chicago warehouses made possible to label that music as “house” when it did played in those known “acid werehouses”. Unlike a close space, yet still in the context of the raving practice, sometimes open outdoors spots are chosen by lots of producers and *DJs* who like neo-romanticism and need a place to make a *rave*. I comprehend that there is this correspondence between the 18th century young romantic Germans and that of the 20th century’s eighties and nineties *punks*, which explains the fascination *ravers* have too for open outdoors. Sometimes it is just a coincidence because not everyone knows the true meaning of neo-romanticism. It is usual however, to be fond of a certain atmospheric decompression that provides the illusion of “freedom”; somehow it is unavailable in the cubic building tombs of urban theatre where *raves* take place. On the subject of *raves*, authors Emanuel Ferreira e António Contador present an interesting definition:

“*Raves* are conceptually a reviewed and corrected version of the New York

⁵¹*Bootlegs* are pirate media of recordings like albums, music, live shows, movies or TV programs, commonly traded in the black market., pirate clips or clothes.



block parties. By principle they are illegally organized in improvised places under the constant threatening of police forces' irruption in the extent of the repression to the illicit invasion of private properties and the consumption of *ecstasy* in this universe of the *raves*, the drug par excellence. Besides the *ecstasy*, one essentially consumes in musical terms pre-recorded and pre-edited themes of *acid-house*, *techno* and *hardcore techno*, emanated in a rhythm between the 125 and the 140 bpm"⁵² (1997: p.157).

In addition to these clear arguments, *raves* are also what Hakim Bey (1995) calls of *TAZ*, which is a "Temporary Autonomous Zone". This concept of an anarchist philosopher intended to question the possible chance to escape social system. After September 11, 2001, any argument of such type looks threatening and surely disconcerting, considering it mentions the word "terrorism". But it is not much to say that Bey's arguments here make sense because they envision a sort of prankster figure that is typically of 20th century's last decade at least. For debating *raves*, the *TAZ* concept looks pretty sharp because that is what really *raves* are – a form of evasion from the seductive and overwhelming social system. Besides that, the *TAZ* model suggests a virotic happening that happens in the same as it unfolds and get forgotten, like something natural or as artificial as any media event. Anyway, *raves* are something that suffers from a *montage* so all they provide is a simulation of freedom suited by technical prosthetics. In the end, *raves* look like institutions of zones which are autonomous only in a "part-time" regime, they're temporary. Within this perspective one can say that a *rave* is highly time-controlled event in space that looks outlaw while it occurs, not before, or after. Still the volatile nomadism defines the cyberpunks that often look for *rave parties*. Their desire for spatial concentration quite known, after all they're always looking for a cybermaniac space. According to Bey, what really matters is that there is no fixed space at all, hence the whole concept is about mobilizing people towards new spaces, thus making legitimate the circulation of high-speed dancing *collective-mind bodies*. For us to understand the cyberpunk *raver* makes its own sets of rules, making institutions out of self-sufficient people. Such organizations are heavily defined by the model of the "rock band", instead of the family model. Bey believes the reality check instance is

⁵²N.A.: The translation from the Portuguese version is mine.



surely the music group in this excerpt of the “Temporary Autonomous Zones” (1995):

“The family is *closed*, by genetics, by the male’s *possession* of women and children, by the hierarquic totality of agriculture/ industrial society. The band is *open*, not to everyone of course, but to the affinity group, the initiates sworn to a bond of love. The band is not part of a horizontal pattern of custom, extended kindship, contract and alliance, spiritual affinities, etc” (1995: §7).

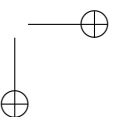
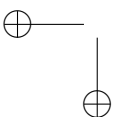
Still about the “Temporary Autonomous Zones”, Hakim Bey adds about the music as an organization principle that “the essence of the party: face-to-face, a group of humans synergize their efforts to realize mutual desires (...)” (*Idem, Ibidem*: §13). In this essay on the concept of “TAZ”, Bey makes us conclude that the party is always open new participants in a rhizomatic way, structured in its own rules, thus it cannot be “comanded”. It can be planned, although unless it really happens it is a failure. By importing the “TAZ” concept, we understand how *raves* work out. We can verify that the element of spontaneity is crucial. *Raves* are undoubtedly “Temporary Autonomous Zones” which means a *rave* cannot be organized to happen strictly as planned, its organization model is a non-organized model; in fact it follows a deleuzian “non-model”.

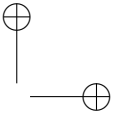
The spontaneous rhythm behind organizing a *rave* can fall apart if it follows hierarchy, too like in the “TAZ”. No cyberpunk looks forward to see how they and *DJs* set up a *rave* music party in a warehouse or in an outdoor rural property inside a tente. Hence it is explained how fast *ravers* fill spaces like 20th century’s obsolete war factories.

In our time, the beginning of the Third Millennium, one invokes the sonic scenario for reconverted old factories, always provided with dark halls and wide dancefloors, illuminated by strob lights and lasers drawing crazy doodles in the air, making intermittently visible the presence of hallucinated dancers and travelers in the dance stages and the balconies.

The substance of *raves* as present day’s electroculture “acoustic cyberspaces” ends up these parties that look like dark labyrinths where sonic bolts and ravaging whirls of *hard techno* or de drum’n’bass sounds get lost. Clients usually dance bellow, on the main dancefloors. The wizards for technique control sound, light and computerized graphics from up there. It is the role of the

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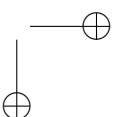


raver to glance at the metallic, industrial structures, thus renewed by technology in these new “concentration camps”. Such places are authentic alternative worlds, with their own jargon, codes, languages and communication gestures, which is capable to provide understanding within the dark and the depth provoked by the acoustic synthesized space.

If we have in mind Baudrillard’s theories, perhaps it is possible to say that, in *rave* realm, aside with the acid polyrhythm, computer footage made with Motion Dive, Video Flash, Final Cut or AfterEffects software we witness that such spaces propagate a continuum of infinite virtual imagery. Nowadays VideoJockeys know this too, that’s why they use computer software with pressure, light and temperature sensors in order to make these electroculture places into something interactive. That is right, the dancefloor is already cybernetic, an other screen for footage gathered on the Internet search engines and pre-recorded and pre-edited video clips to follow synchronized music. Images like this, looping and pulsing on walls which now are screens, are also a proof that now of a strong new articulation since the nineties *rave* screens mixed up with AcidWarp software. The articulation between the “chaos of rhythm“, and the “rhythm of chaos“, is very relevant, because at the audiovisual domain it has an obvious correspondence in the acid beat. As an outcome we have a brand new fractal infinitely full of mathmatized footage that beat psychedelically, built in a cyberspace in conjunction with *sound-information* and chemicals. All this process is named “cyberdelics”.

The cyberdelics that shape contemporary music parties are no longer like the *raves* of the nineties, the true original *raves*. Nevertheless the *dance music* still plays the same role and clients need to feel as hyped as *ravers* did. *Raves* can be seen as an answer to an apocalyptical chaos that fortunately never came up. This way the dance music scene looks pretty controlled and simulated either. One can see the *rave* scene as a response to fast progress, in the same way Deleuze & Guattari said the music’s rhythm were an answer to chaos, a repetition-based attempt to make music unlike chaos in nature. The question one can ask is this one: in relation to *raves*, is the cyberdelic way, the “sound-information” dimension, thanks to the black cyberpunk’s subculture needs, able to substitute catastrophe?

As we have noticed in the year 1999, the new millennium’s eve showed us that “there is no the End of the World”, so anything could happen besides that. But in September 11, 2001, the world really changed, and musicians as





Moby, whose birthday in fact is that date, had to change their lives to avoid the matching with the 9/11 horrible incident. Armageddon as expected that would never happen, is a cultural need meaning that there is hope in change, but everybody interprets as a narrative about the end of it all. In opposition to what *raves* made *raver* feel, the post-9/11 world is in fact no possibly substituted by music, because there was this plane crashes in New York's WTC towers, which means the catastrophe really happened, unfortunately. However, after catastrophes music has a relevant role to make people elevate their morality, their kindness and helps them to make stronger community bonds. In this sense, like *raves*, our world witnesses music parties as a recreation after chaos.

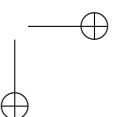
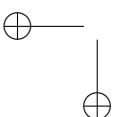
In the essay *Ilusão do Fim (Illusion of the End or Strike of Events)*, Baudrillard (1987) states that synthesized images are responsible for an infinite virtuality, thus they present information as a substitution for the apocalyptic set, in itself enclosed like *virtuality*, in how the later possesses a contagious, epidemic "rhythm chaos":

"(...) the synthesized television-image, the video-image (...) are images without negative. (...) They are virtual, and the virtual is what puts and end to all negativity, therefore to the whole Real or factual reference. This way, the infection of images, that can be self-generated with no reference to a Real or an imaginary, it is itself virtually limitless, producing such creation without limits, the information as catastrophe"⁵³ (1987: p.85).

By accepting that information it can be received as a catastrophe, we can comprehend that there is this need for something old, which makes us recall times of chaos, hazards and cataclysms. The *retro* and primary, or primitive, sides of *raves*, sets up on the idea that past can be recreated, that it is not just a question concerning the graphic cyberspaces. The reason lies in the fact of *raves* overimposing themselves on Antiquity as they remake old ceremonies with brand new hybrid codes.

The most shown theme in the scenography of cyberpunk is exactly the confrontation between old and new, antique and modern, modern and futuristic. But the use of music as spiritual communication instrument along with the idea that one can live in Real society in a cybernetic way, addresses the cyberpunk subject to the parallelism between worlds.

⁵³N.A.: The translation from the Portuguese version is mine.





Unlike the optimistic *hippies'* trips and the alienated punks, the cyberpunk *raver* is aware that flowers do not speak the same language of power, or that punk defeats bad establishments. After all, today's cyberspace is not even like directly inhabiting world like the cyberpunk writers had previewed, yet it is completely contemporary that cyberpunks can always enter and get out of cyberspace at any time they want. No more as in a remote control fashion, or Sci-Fi jack cables, but by playing videogames, using GPS devices or surfing the Web in Hi-Def as we know it every time desire speaks louder.

Ever since Plato one knows that the music's rhythm can allow anyone to "command" audiences and consciousness, that was the reason why Plato feared musicians, because any change in the canons of music produce eventually changes in the government policies. Today, as each time the tendency is to "individualize" space-time notions, each person has its own notion of the Real and of its own "parallel world". The result of this equation is that each person shows a different way to understand the world, which structures itself, no more according to its family, but in sintony with dancing and listening music preferences. Like Hakim Bey refers, the rock band is an inspiration far stronger than family, hence it legitimates a great ensemble of individuals which devoted to the productions, deeds and cultural habits of an icon-group, as in opposition to family and closed triangle structure of power.

Music concedes territory to a certain tribe, it is in its banner, organizes each individual's "sound-capsule" (Steiner, 1998). The power of the rhythm allows it to control and exert influence on thought, which, through music, can reveal pretty vulnerable before its most subtle or even direct "suggestions". In this way, we live in a society in which the rhythm of music is fast-paced, maybe that is a symptom of who we really are for sure, fast-information society obsessed by the speed of machines. Machines pull us off the ground in any situation, releasing us and disembodding us towards the most cybernetic or biotechnological cyberspaces. Henceforth it is speed, in a virilean manner (Virilio), which creates new music styles, a phenomenon we may observe ever since *techno* appeared and assumed itself as a sonic incarnation of industrial machinery's sounds.

Raves are, above anything, an escape culture, speedy, polymorphic, nomadic one. They are so fast they let listeners and dancers free with the releasing color of *ecstasy*, *Special K*, *snowballs* or any other drug. Surreal hallucinations began with use of LSD, but today's cyberpunks find more techie





drugs to get rid of the social mainstream pressure, balancing between the *underground* (the subterranean), the *upperground* (the “over-terranean”) or the *outer space*, supplied in chemical prosthetics. The goal is to escape from society towards a new *open space*, to an utopian world so wide just like those painted by *Renaissance* painters, and as free as the strange object-worlds of Dali’s or Magritte’s surrealist painting.

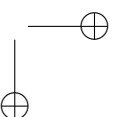
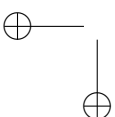
Reality does not exist within a *rave*, everything is excessive provocation, shock, the strong updating future, corrosive in its nakedness; the *rave* is a closed space, a game played apart the great social game, where the *raver* and his friends gather. They meet in spaces invited by the invisibly fibrosis and texturized music in sintony with “chimiotropisms” (the need for chemicals) and “electrotropisms” (the necessity of electromagnetic energy).

Inside the *rave* space all is not as it seems, each person floats in its own space and time, in the uncertain and the eternal. The music is collection of sound-patterns fed to itself, on its hybridness, its debris and neologisms; musician definitely loses its original conception to evolve in collective *continuum* re-triggered each time *DJs* add their Self to the albums remixed on the take off.

All is a simulacrum, a representation of a representation, a copy of a copy. From the visuals to the involving and “acoustic cyberspaces” nothing assumes itself as it really is, thus all is effective as long as other elements are crossed-in-between. The *rave* is a game of “consensual hallucinations” like the hallucination provoked by the Matrix and the Cyberspace’s realism described by Gibson in *Neuromancer*.

A consensus of surrealism exists in *raves*, compromising everyone to make real the *rave* outlaw space; otherwise all would be reduced to only one plastic *montage*. The *montage* never wipes itself out entirely, but most surrealism persists because everyone drinks *smart drinks* and other trippy drinks. Non-tropics products, Viagra, alcohol cocktails and amphetamines, for instance, work as cathalisers to allow the access to the encoded surreality occurring in dance music parties, as in the nineties. Chemistry accelerates the individual so he can feel free, yet only for a short period of time, it is a borrowed time-space reality, which costs money and above all energy – the usual ingredients to who wants to access dematerialization and the new lightness of being.

The *DJ* occupies the throne of the shamanic rituals that happens under the



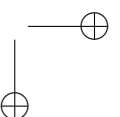
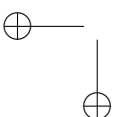


name of “rave”, he manipulates all *raver’s* take offs from the Real, addressing “sound-energy” to the *mind-bodies*”, over-stimulating the *raver* with excessive sound-patterns, inhuman stimuli that overload the *raver’s mind-body* until chemicals unleash the hypnosis state. The figure of the *DJ* is the one who realizes that electronic music, due to the convincing immersion produces, is a powerful tool to hypnotize; its rhythm is the hard target for immense devotions, situation, this one, where the *trance* music scene is located, hence appealing to trancing behaviors. Although, when *ravers* are not in extasis states or trancing states they’re used to observe the performance behavior of the *DJ*. Many people interested in this practice want to know how the *DJ* uses his turntable, the laptop computer, the sampler, groovebox or the mixing table. This practice of checking out the style of work of the *DJ* is also called “trainspotting”⁵⁴. One lesson we learn from the cyberpunks is that anyone in contemporary times becomes a “trainspotter”. Media’s cluster of news is so huge we can just stare, try to understand, but in no way try to stop the media train. It’s funny that modern trains are a new trend of transportation to future railroads. Who might be the rightest one to drive them?

THE END

⁵⁴Today, not in relation to “live” performances, it is more mentioned *video-trainspotting*, which is the analysis of how a *VJ* mixes video footage. In disk, tape or using a video-synthesizer in the conception and *videoclip* directing, just like *DJ* mixes sonic patterns, a *VJ* creates a hybrid objects collection, pure example of the era of the re-creation that the cyberspaces of the contemporary electroculture inaugurate.

The emergency of *DJs* or of *VJs* is justified thanks to music and images falling in a void of emptiness, in the total ephemera without singularity. Whether it’s the *DJ*, or the *VJ*, both figures appear when it is necessary to recycle existing media in an alternative manner, re-producing and responding to the effective patterns.





AFTERWORD

SCANNING THE FUTURE

IF the science-fiction in the 1950s seemed like to make us stare at the future many times only to show us the present, altogether with its allegories of imminent galactic catastrophes, the cyberpunk science-fiction of the 1980s told us that wherever we would stare at in the present time we would be always facing the future, along with its immersive and saturated spaces. On one side we had the outer and political exterior, and on the other side, there was the urban and neuronal innerscapes.

The 1980s was a promising era, not only a new age but many possible futures. One of those futures became shaped as the driven shore cyberspace. In its utmost fascinating and utopian version, cyberspace stood in eventually an eternity of simulacra. No longer made out of matter but of information. As if the world would loose in its thickness what it earned in signs. And as if machines were becoming, on one hand, more and more organical, on the other hand, they looked more and more invisible. Therefore, in an extraordinary paradox, these machines that always seems to add materiality to the world, throughout their solidness, inertia and the resistance of metal parts, which become the entry point into the virtual now. The vehicle get inside the immaterial. Machines that once allowed the body to travel, were turning themselves into mind mobiles now; as before they helped replacing the physical labor, now they helped mostly with the intellectual work. The human (organic) and the tech (machines) were getting into new forms of combination, crossings and probably disagreements.

It is this the period which marked by a fascinating reinvention of the future that Herlander Elias addressed in this book. The theme is wide, mutant,





made of untraceable connections and surprising detours. Human and machine stand face-to-face. The punk and the cyber side by side. Elias examines the issues from several perspectives and with in-depth explanation: real and virtual, social and cultural. It covers literature, filmmaking and music as well. Across its scenarios and its iconic landmarks. In the founding artworks, as in *Neuromancer* or *Blade Runner*. In its celebrating rituals, as in *raves*, also in its powerful illustrations, such as film.

There is a constant preoccupation in mind in regards of the genealogy of concepts and key-figures. How far may one extend cyberpunk as a concept? A network, a map without clearly definition and closed boundaries? Such figures are multiple. Some are previous and others are subsequent: the *beatnik*, the *hippie*, the *punk*, the neo-romantics, and the *rastafarian*. Or the *graffiter*, the *MC*, the *DJ*, the *VJ*, the *hacker*, the robot, the cyborg and the *cyberpunk*. Many examples can be listed here. In some cases, in an immediate and fast examination we would not suspect such a broad family (or better saying, tribes...). Though the theme calls for them all. And Elias dedicates them not only just a really sharp look but also an exceptional reflection.

The author proposes a dynamically and thoughtfully examination to the most decisive transformations to which the last decades have addressed on culture in its widest acception. A relevant and resolute aspect is highlighted by the author: the way we went from a natural environment – as the founding surrounding of human experience – to a *meta-environment* that is featured in our epoch. Cyberpunk's science-fiction materialized the latter in many instances. Will there be a new space for the human's reality? And will such reality still belong to the ontological order that assured our previous cosmovisions? Or are we each time more immersed in a network of spaces and courses that keeps remaking the slightest matter which constitutes the human being?

This cyber-phenomenology of space will eventually find a double speculation on the relationship between man and machine. And also we can find in its new configurations. Let's take for example the relationship between the *break-dancer* and the robot, which is very interesting in this context, and somehow carrying an almost methonymical symbolism as clearly demonstrated by Elias. In some way there is a logic of double sense mirrored here, that even if it does not cease to be a little paradoxal, it unveils itself, after all, symptomatic to decode the theme which is discussed here. The *break-dancer* would be a *mimesis* of the robotic kinetics which assumed as a depiction of lifeforms





marked more and more by rhythmic and the plasticity of technical artifacts. So the robot, the cyborg and the android would be, in their turn, the ultimate characters within a chimerical humanization of the machine. Here we have the evidence of a reciprocal and imaginable convergence. The machinization of the human being and the anthropomorphizing technique. Somewhere within these influences and confluence zones, we may find out a possible description of the cyberpunk age.

The vastness of the theme is matched by Elias' style of an unattackable property. In his way of writing we may identify the rhythmical and tonal marks of the issue at stake. And when the *zeitgeist* invades a style, not only does one see better form, but better content too. Because in fact we may testify an unrefusable legitimacy: the legitimacy of someone who deeply dived into the depths of the examined theme in this essay, of someone who happened to dismantle it from the inside, of someone who carefully dissected its most subtle articulations. It is a fast-paced style, empowered with rhythm, built with crossings and nodal points, layers and juxtapositions, conceptual and theoretical nomadism multiplying the cores to better take care of the edges and the feedbacks. A genuinely cyberpunk style.

In this sense, to underline the relevance of style which allows us to perceive the multiple inputs provided by the text: so one immerses himself in another reality just by the vision and sensibility of the author. As it should, the style assumes itself as a sign of authority. An authority of someone responding to the vastness of the research object with the broadness of a look which seems to emulate the synthesizing, examining, all-scanning cyborg glance. It is a scrutiny of networks, poles and repeated inputs, of a rhizomatic and cybernetic reality that Elias places in a much coherent whole. Thanks to an incision in conceptual archaeology, the summoning of deleuzian philosophy or the pop aesthetics principles, for instance.

He can't help himself in returning to the romanticism of last centuries in order to better understand the neo-romantics of the latest decades. He heavily stands for the modernism and futurism premises so it is possible to think the postmodern millennial sensibility. The author does not refuse the urban mosaic's variety which allows him to get closer to an almost metaphysics of pop culture. Easily he displaces us between a romantic age with no possible coming back, to whenever the individual returned every time the city became annoying, and the still utopian novelty of fiction of a virtual ground that, at





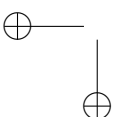
least in promise, seems to replace the real. Is it true that cyberspace, in its mimetically realistic version, is the “Matrix”, the fictive equivalent of the very same Nature that once tempted the romantics? Answers seem indefinite since cyberpunk is in its inner dynamics, the place of vibration and metamorphosis. Technology remakes, reshapes, re-styles and replicates objects, models procedures, routines and spaces.

It matters then, ultimately, to try understand the cyberpunk legacy, its present fictions, the configurations of our contemporaneity – yet it is uncertain to keep mentioning a “legacy” thanks to the simple and undeniable fact that cyberpunk didn’t leave us and, on the contrary, it has spread out all over to our everyday lives, turning out to be almost invisible in its omnipresence.

What we cannot contemplate by now, surely is the purity of the Golden Age of cyberpunk, the very moment when all seems to shine with seductive promises and novelties. And also with the almost utopian impetus of a future in which all was yet to design. That is the period of time that Herlander Elias dissects in his book in an extraordinarily, wise, and careful manner. We are not face-to-face with it and even so we get mesmerized with *cybercowboys*, *punks* wearing mirror shades, a symbolic form of prosthetics carrying the meaning of a whole imaginary, as Elias well observes in his work. The 1980s seems like long-gone by now, though there’s the feeling, that for us, today, that was the time when the future has met itself. Here is the reason why nowadays we all seem to feel a little like cyberpunks on the inside and in our skin. Certainly a re-dimensioned, prosaic, cyberpunk.

Everyday the Web offers us our piece of the “rhizome” and the detours. Videogames provide us journeys of immersion and control. Electronic music inspires us the frenzied traffic or the atmospherical slowdown. Filmmakers look forward to illude us with its resurrected three-dimensionality. Yet we do not – or perhaps we never will – inhabit an ultra-realistic “Matrix” as Neo. We neither get away from androids on the street nor we do fear the uprising of machines; we don’t need John Connor. In this sense cyberpunk surrounds us very discretely in small signs and artifacts. No longer it is a wanderer fighting the future, a paradoxically prophetic nihilist or an artificial paradise Messiah, but an ingenious *DJ*, a ludic cybernaut, an unattached gameplayer.

So far, perhaps it is appropriate to ask: “How it is future designed today”? Or in another words: “Is there anyone still designing the future today”? Have you ever had the feeling that the future is no longer a concern because the





present is too busy taking care of itself? Let's stop here. Flashback into the 1980s: "We shall look into to the future as if we were still back then!". Is not today's future a nostalgia of itself? Though it is not as always in its deep condition? Many questions, intuitions and preoccupations shall be thickened after Herlander Elias' book. Here is what of most radiant we find in the book we just finished reading. *Cyberpunk 2.0: Fiction And Contemporary* grew out of the knot "No Future vs New Future". It is to such stage that the book returns back to us. From back then it re-sends us into the present. From then he unveils the future to us, as being latent, closer, ubiquitous.

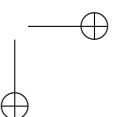
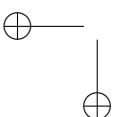
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July, 2009



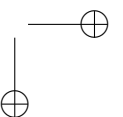
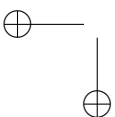




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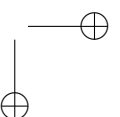
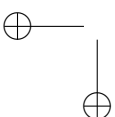
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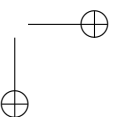
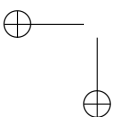


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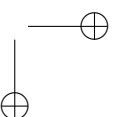
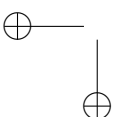
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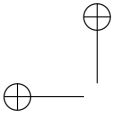
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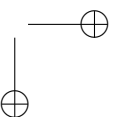
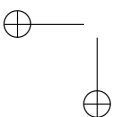
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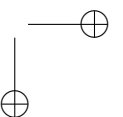
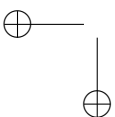
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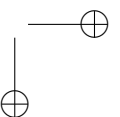
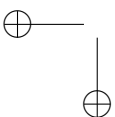
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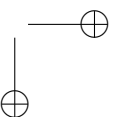
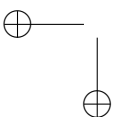
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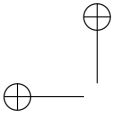
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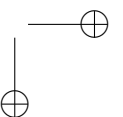
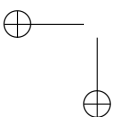




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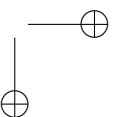
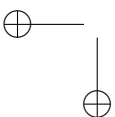
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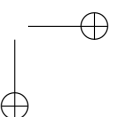
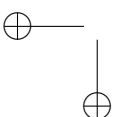
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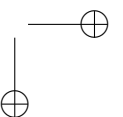
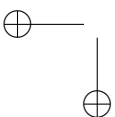
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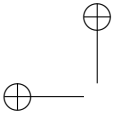


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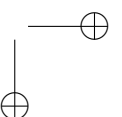
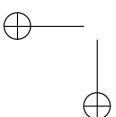
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CAPTION

360 – Microsoft Xbox 360

ARCADE – Pay-per-play videogames in public game parlors

GB – Nintendo Game Boy

C64 – Commodore 64

CBM – Commodore Business Machines

DC – Sega Dreamcast

GENESIS – Sega Genesis

NES – Nintendo Entertainment System

PC – Personal Computer

PHILIPS CD-I – Philips Compact Disc Interactive

PSN – Sony PlayStation Network

PSP – Sony PlayStation Portable

PSX – Sony PlayStation

PS2 – Sony PlayStation 2

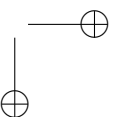
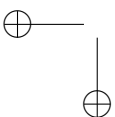
PS3 – Sony PlayStation 3

SUPER NES – Super Nintendo

Wii – Nintendo Wii

XBOX – Microsoft Xbox

ZX Spectrum 48K – Sinclair ZX Spectrum 48k





GLOSSARY

Acoustic Cyberspace = Expression employed by Erik Davis, an author who invokes the distinction between “visual space” and McLuhan’s “acoustic space” to refer to the existent *multidimensionality* in polyrhythmic electronic music.

Afrofuturism = Concept coined by Mark Dery to explain the meaningful relationship between science-fiction and *hip-hop* culture including its cultural artifacts that result to as an outcome from African Diaspora and media.

AI = Artificial Intelligence, the domain of autonomous and self-regulated computerized constructs.

Black Electronic = A new expression author Erik Davis uses by changing Paul Gilroy’s “Black Atlantic” expression to explain the actual interaction between African Diaspora and electronic polyrhythmic music produced by Afro-Americans.

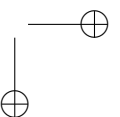
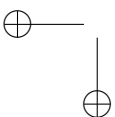
Cyberdelics = Word that appears in cyberculture from the junction of the terms “cybernetics” and “psychedelics”, implicates a fortuitous agreement between chemical drugs and the digital audiovisual technology.

Cyberspace = It means “cybernetic space”, a space designed for control and it is usually related to media like the Internet, videogames and computer database. The term was first revealed in William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* and *Burning Chrome* novels.

Cyborg = It has the same meaning as “cybernetic organism”, a machine or organic system or both in technical autonomous existence.

Cyberpunk = The cyberpunk that can encrypt, encode information in cyberspaces.

DJing = A word also following the *DJ (Disc Jockey)* concept, it describes the practices of mixture and bricolage of sonic patterns in music parties.





Dub = Music genre and concept of Jamaican music which emerges based on the integration of noise and the mixture of effects in magnetic tape medium. *Dub* also pushed toward a relevant way by *DJ Lee* “Scratch” Perry.

Gabber = The most violent, fast and dehumanized electronic music genre.

Graffiti = Usually translated as the graphic expression of *hip-hop* culture, although not all doodles or scribbling written on a wall are considered *graffiti*. Graffiti is a word that derives from the Afro-American jargon reserved to everyone who paints and identifies himself with rap culture, by following its codes and myths. In my perspective, *graffiti hip-hop* artists are authors of “image territories”.

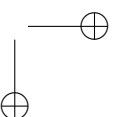
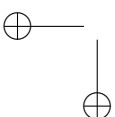
Groove Box = A technical device that is designed to edit, sequence, record and play patterns or randomly chosen rhythms; it also known as the “box of rhythms”.

Hacker = It is a metaphorical expression which means how meticulously cyberpunk *hackers* “hack” into the information networks. *Hackers* spent their time connecting to cyberspace. The two generations of *hackers* are divided like this: the first one anticipates the *Wargames* (John Badham, 1983) film and the *Neuromancer* novel, but the second one takes this cultural artifacts as granted in the technocrime iconography of the cyberpunk movement.

Hip-Hop = A modern expression that defining *rap* culture in all its assets, considering the galaxy contents full of *hip-hop* music, *graffiti*, *break-dance* and *DJing*.

Hypermedia = Vast multimedia archives storing non-linear content in a very different file format, incredibly fast accessed cross-link hypertext, videogames, electronic sounds, virtual reality and interactive video.

Max Headroom = The first truly cyberpunk character starring in a movie and also in an info-entertainment TV series.





McLuhan = Famous author known for its thesis on media as “extensions of man” for describing contemporary media-driven technoculture as a “global village”.

Multimedia = Nowadays an audiovisual-driven media information system which enables easy access to wide range of media types simultaneously like video, text, photography, animation and music, in online or offline cyberspace.

Neuromancer = William Gibson’s first famous great novel, that stood for as an icon to the cyberpunk’s movement. In a not very distant future, the story shows a time when high technology and street danger were together, in a set that marked by cybernetic technologies and the bold intervention of outlaw-heroes. Side a side with the darkest alleys, amazing virtual realities would mimic the real world in a anaesthetic and augmented way, whose great actors would be mostly artificial entitles, constructs.

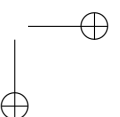
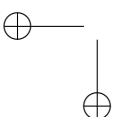
Neuromantics = Another nickname for “cyberpunk writers”.

New Wave = An expressive label that refers to the romantic imaginary created for the decade of the 80s, this imaginary is considered new fashions, pop music and science-fiction literature inspired in Alvin Toffler’s *The Third Wave*.

Punk = A wanderer, but also a very precise kind of fashion and a visual style promoted by enterprenêur Malcolm McLaren altogether with fashion designer Vivienne Westwood. The most well-known punk rock band still is *The Sex Pistols*.

Rave = A form of speaking and of behavior very speedy and typical of nineties generation of cyberpunks, figures who managed to organize spontaneously electronic music illegal parties, always happens misregarding territory ownership, where anybody could consume *techno* and *house* music under the usual effect of *ecstasy*.

Raver = The cyberpunk who rules in the rave.





Rhacker = A concept of mine created to explain the merging of both *rocker* and *hacker* figures, based in Sterling's ideas, because the *rhacker* is somebody who can retrieve and interfere with sound or image (audiovisual) in an age where all things are multimedia, networked and available in "samples". The answer is a manipulation of contents so complex and rhizomatic as the networks themselves.

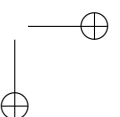
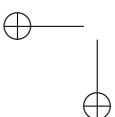
Rhizome = In biology, it is described as wild low vegetable tuber, a rootlike subterranean stem, capable to generate gigantic roots in a commonly horizontal position. In Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari's philosophy, the "rhizome" is also a concept that is very useful to understand and a hard to identify phenomenon. The "rhizome" "philosophy" tries to explain also rootlike multiple, easy self-reproductive, chaotic, vyal, intense phenomenon as beatniks' underground, for instance. Thus "rhizomatic" is, in this way, all that shows characteristics of the "rhizome"; in the same logic, "rhizomorphic" is what appears to have the shape of a "rhizome". The "rhizome" implies too the "chaosmos" dimension—the chaos universe.

Sampler = Digital device which is created to allow digitizing sound ("sampling"), manipulating electronic music and computer sound editing. Even so a wide range of devices like cellphones, desktop computer soundcards, and the others, make sampling easy nowadays, yet originally the "sampler" was just a one piece of hardware. It was considered to be the cyberpunk's favorite instrument, in sound, but video artists in the late decade of the 70s were able to create a "video sampler" for manipulating video footage linked to a video synthesizer. Then another revolution began from which emerged of the contemporary *VJ* figure.

Sci-Fi = The acronym of "Science-Fiction", the same as "scientific fictions".

Synthespian = A word emerging from the contraction of the expression "synthetic tespian", meaning the same as "virtual actors" – images designed by cybermarketing such as Max Headroom or Lara Croft.

Techno = Electronic music genre first appears in the end of the 80s decade in Detroit, whose authors were, among other artists, Stacey Pullen, Derrick May e Juan Atkins. The word resumes "technologic music".





Trance = Another electronic music genre that appeared during the decade of 90s in Germany, evolving from “techno”. It was fast paced, more circular, electric, hypnotic and atmospheric, and it addressed “trance” states.

The Edge = This expression means “the top”, “the aegis”, a climax, “state of the art” human body or cybertechnology situation.

Underground = The urban avant-garde subcultures who avoid mainstream media.

VJ'ing = The main practice of VJ (Video Jockey) activities, the *DJing* of audiovisual and multimedia contents.

VR = Virtual Reality = Also known as “augmented” or “artificial” reality created to provide digital experiences available in simulators. The expression is used by cyberpunk writers, to describe computer-generated environments in three or more mathematical dimensions which is capable to hallucinate or simply to fool us. It is the outcome of the application of shapes and volumes in the cyberspace grid, like the scenery of *Tron*.

