Cyber Fiction

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Science fiction changes as times change—early science fictions used to be stories that narrated imaginative journeys from the earth to the space, and back. AD 1800s gave birth to time travel stories that concerned about traveling through time and explaining the future and future worlds. '*Utopia*' written by Thomas Moore in 1516 is such a story that talks about a place in the future and its machinations. As we get to the 19th century, the backdrop of most science fiction stories is industrial revolution. Many consider Jules Verne, who wrote nearly 60 science fiction titles during 1863-1905, the father of science fiction. As HG Wells contributed immensely to the genre towards the end of 19th century, science fiction has started gaining immense popularity among masses. We can observe most stories written after 1887 dealing with disasters like natural calamities. In the beginning of the 20th century, at the summit of colonialism, we can observe fictional writings even about places that humans could not go to yet. The creation of the Theory of Evolution has also given ample opportunities for imaginations about the ancient times of the world. Science fiction as began by George Melies in the movie '*A Trip to the Moon*' has given way for creating movies in Russia in the 1920s to 50s. The fear of attacks of the Russians took the shape of aliens towards 1950s.

The word '*Cyber*' is related to science. It was Nobert Wiener, a mathematician, who used the term '*Cybernetics*' in 1948 for the first time. In his book '*Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*', he explains the revolution of Machine Age by categorizing the same into four stages in the book and explains the 4th stage as the Age of Communication and Control (whereas the other three are Pre-Technological World, Age of Clocks and Age of Steam). The computer-based artificial intelligence that was invented by the British mathematician Alan Mathison Turing (1912-54) has also given wings to human imagination. Androids, Cyborgs, Computer-Simulated Bodies, Mutants, and Replicants who could behave emotionally like regular humans of the novel, '*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*' and the movie based on the same novel, '*Blade Runner*',* have also created the perfect backdrop for the new form of science fiction.

Though we cannot give authoritative details about the emergence of the word 'Cyber Culture', we can say that much that the term was being used widely during the 1900s. It is an amalgam of many loose, complex and decentralized sub-cultures such as avant-garde, pop culture, visual technological methods. It is created constantly by the interaction between the humans and the cyber world. Today, there are some who associate cyber culture to media culture while there are a few who tether the same with the digital culture as well. Now, everything from shopping, entertainment, education, social media to politics and jobs rely on the internet. Further, mobile revolution has tethered its hands with internet and surpassed even the computer revolution. All of these cultural factors have significant roles in creating today's ultra-modernity. We must specifically analyze about the social and economical factors of the new culture that we are all a part of—knowingly or otherwise. A diverse range of issues such as highly educated people ending up doing small jobs, insecurity, health issues, lack of growth, work time, and lack of rest that are caused by the novel culture making human less humane have been made central topics of numerous studies in the recent past.

Following of the footsteps of Foucault's Power, Haraway has coined Machine Code and Genetic Code as the Centers of Power of the modern world. Chela Sandoval who experienced the reality of Cyborgization has talked about the workers of the Silicon Valley in the US and their unique living styles and conditions in her article, *'New Sciences: Cyber Feminism and Methodology of the Oppressed'*. Post-industrialism is called Informationalism by Manuel Castells. He also explains that thus-formed informational capitalism has also become the foundation for the Informational Mode of Development.

The word '*Cyberpunk*' has been made by adjoining the word '*Cyber*' of '*Cybernetics*' with *Punk* (defiant attitude related to urban street culture). The spread of technology and consumerism along with the emergence of the corporate and the higher capital formed from information technology have made Cyberpunk become a subset of science fiction. Images became products and it further accelerated the use of these products. Further, internet has shortened the distance and began its mission. The treatise written by Jean Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulations, reminded of a time where hyper-real images that looked realer than natural things were made. The real things lost their values and the difference between the original and the copy became insignificant. In the 1980s, Joran Lannier has contributed the word Virtual Reality to denote making lifelike images with the aid of computer programs. He explained this to be transferable to any number of people and changeable with instructions. As the time went, this word was started to be used the reality in the media world.

Cyberpunk was the name given to a story in the collection of short stories, Amazing Stories, written by Bruce Bethke that was published in 1984. However, it was Gardner Dozois who popularized this word by using the same repeatedly in his article titled '*Science Fiction in the Eighties*' in the Washington Post. While he talked about the major science fiction writers of the time such as William Gibson and Bruce Sterling, today, most contemporary creative efforts such as movies, books, games and songs are included in the term.

In the book, *'Storming the Reality Studio – Case Book of Cyber Punk and Post Modern Science Fiction',* edited by Lary McCaffery and Richard Cadry for the Duke University Press, they have listed hundred and one books that have helped form the Cyberpunk ideology and aesthetics. The list starts from Mary Shelley's *The Frankenstein*. Along with many science fiction books, the list includes the Throbbing Castle music created in the 1970s, the music album created by David Bowie and Brian Eno in 1977 and another music album Daydream Nation as well as the MTV Music began in 1981. Such movies as *Blade Runner* released in 1982*, The Terminator* in 1984 and *Max Headroom* released in 1985 are also mentioned in the list. In addition to all these, such books as *The Gutenberg Galaxy* written by Marshal McLuhan, *The Post Modern Condition* by Lyortard in 1979, *Post Modernism* by Fredric Jameson in 1984, *The Post Modern Science* by Arthur Kroker and James Cook in 1986, and *Mirror Shades: the Cyberpunk Anthology* by Ed. Bruce Sterling in 1986 have also been included in the same list.

In William Gibson's Neuromancer that was acclaimed as the first cyberpunk novel written in 1984, the imaginative space that he created for his characters to interact is called Cyber Space—*a consensual hallucination experienced by billions of legitimate users, a graphic representation of data extracted from banks of every computer in the human system* (Unthinkable Complexity (1984, P-67)). This has been further elucidated upon in more details as a parallel universe in '*Cyber Space: First Steps*' written in 1991 by Michele Benedict, which has elevated the same to a theoretical dimension. He explained the Cyber Space is an imaginative place born in the minds of people who think about it.

It has been further established that in such an imaginative place all such things as androids, cyborgs, computer-simulated bodies, mutants and replicants can all become characters and behave though the book '*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*' and later by its movie adaptation '*Blade Runner'*. The human characters in cyberpunk are mostly on the edge of ultra advanced modernity and urbanization and they all endeavor to live and conquer. Their misaligned dreams and the ways to realize their twisted dreams are what lead the novel forth. They are not affected by the social laws of the world in their cyber world imagination and there are no heroes or villains there. The illicit activities carried out on the internet by Computer Cowboy and the changes and repercussions that usher in the World Computer Matrix (A pool of data banks of the network) are explained in William Gibson's Neuromancer. Biotechnology also

takes center stage in this novel. Molly, one of the characters in the novel, has been installed with the ability to see in the night as well as dangerous blades between her fingernails. In George A Effinger's trilogy novels, '*The Exile Kiss*' (1991), '*A Fire In the Sun*' (1990), and '*When Gravity Fails*' (1987), cyber clips have been installed in the brains of characters that even change the personality of the characters entirely. He has also depicted a form of black that collects body parts for rich, affluent people market in the novel. Bruce Sterling has effectively used body transformation as an imperative creative means to tell unique stories. With inventive usage of genetic engineering, technology has been imaginatively used to make changes in the human body. The examples for the same are '*Schismatrix*' of 1985 and '*Twenty Evocations*' written in 1988. The characters in these novels are people who have become the slaves of drugs, rock music and video games.

Today is a time when the same person is divided into two personalities where one accepts and the other does not accept technology. This has led to the creation of cyborgs that alternate into these two states (natural and artificial). This was also used to overcome the ambiguities and challenges of such dualities as human/non-human, technological/biological, original/copy and natural/artificial. This has annihilated the human-scientific-logics that were categorically human centered. In cyberpunk novels and stories, artificially created cyborgs became main characters. Cyborg or Cyberpunk Organism is explained as a manmade autonomous man-machine system—a combination of loose biological and mechanical constructs. From 1963, NASA has been giving more importance to Cyborg experiments and studies. This has led to the same getting enormous attention in military-medical fields as well as in the entertainment field. In her article, '*A Cyborg Manifesto', Donna Haraway* has elucidated upon cyborg as the combination of the concepts of self and the other that completely destroys the concept of stable identities.

Even the cities and places in cyberpunk novels are imaginative cities made in the artificial reality. Even their names and its pronunciations will be artificially made. The name of the city in Pat Cadigan '*Tea from an Empty Cup*' is 'post-apocalyptic Noo Yawk Sitty'. In Gibson's Punk Trilogy, it has been explained that Cybernaut moves through the Blackholes of the Cyberspace. Without any structure, they combine diverse places and times of the world to create new, inventive and imaginative world. Most gothic novels have such imaginatively made-up worlds, says Dani Cavallaro who finds similarities between Cyberpunk novels and gothic novels. Both these types of genres can be seen to create chaotic, grim, ruined and scary worlds that are seamless and ugly. These types of novels always share the worries about the western culture.

During a time when the world of science fiction writing was predominantly held by men, the emergence of the sub-genre of Cyberpunk has given numerous opportunities and dreams for women. Theorists such as Haraway have proclaimed Cyberpunk as a world that is devoid of sexual harassments, machinations of power and oppressions. In 1990s, a new concept of feminism termed Cyber Feminism has take form and those believed in the same has strongly postulated and advocated that the world can create spaces for women in the modern media world. Writers such as Sadie Paint and Claudia Springer have written numerous articles on the topic. Though Haraway has advocated that artificially created cyborgs are the representation of a world without genders, in her book, '*The Virtual Body in Cyberspace*', Anne Basamo has argued that they still carry the traditional symbols of male power through their bodies and strengths.

We can undoubtedly say that Cyberpunk Fiction talks about the doubts and fears about a world run and led by cyber. The space for such literature is the new world created by all the inventions of science, information technology and the media world that make the cyber world in the first place. The most imaginative creations of this fully artificial world are its characters. They are created by those crazy people who use technology and knowledge without any conscience, without any laws and people who are the victims of ultra-urbanization. All such branches of science as Biotechnology, Nanotechnology and Genetic Engineering all come for their aid and support. Cyberpunk Fiction can lure and keep audience engaged in the conflicts thus created. One can without any doubt say that Cyberpunk, a sub-genre of science fiction has transcended from cyber stories to all other forms of shapes of art such as novels and movies as well as music.

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