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## Cyberpunk

(\_sjanger) Undersjanger av science fiction. Handlingen er plassert i nær framtid, under forutsetning av at den digital-teknologiske utviklingen har gått lynraskt.

“Cyberpunk fiction is a sub-genre of science fiction set in a near future where the world is saturated with technology. The first novels and films in the genre appeared in the early 1980s. The term ‘cyberpunk’ was introduced as the title of a story by Bruce Bethke in 1983, and was first used to describe a genre in 1984, by Gardner Dozois. The prefix ‘cyber-’ comes from cybernetics, indicating the genre’s concern with today’s information technology, and the ‘-punk’ refers to the subversive outcasts and street kids the genre usually casts as its protagonists.” (Jill Walker i Herman, Jahn og Ryan 2005 s. 93)

“Gardner Dozois, one of the editors of Isaac Asimov’s Science Fiction Magazine during the early ‘80s, is generally acknowledged as the first person to popularize the term ‘cyberpunk’, when describing a body of literature. Dozois doesn’t claim to have coined the term; he says he picked it up “on the street somewhere”. It is probably no coincidence that Bruce Bethke wrote a short story titled ‘Cyberpunk’ in 1980 and submitted it Asimov’s magazine, while Dozois may have been doing first readings, and got it published in Amazing in 1983, when Dozois was editor of 1983 Year’s Best SF and would be expected to be reading the major SF magazines. [...] Bethke is not really a cyberpunk author, in mid-1995 he published ‘Headcrash’ which he calls “a cybernetically-aware comedy”. [...] Cyberpunk literature, in general, deals with marginalized people in technologically advanced hierarchical societies. In cyberpunk milieux, there are usually powerful elites, be they oppressive governments, paternalistic multinational corporations or fundamentalist religions, who dominate the lives of the mass population. These regimes are aided and distorted by artificial intelligence, electronic media and information technology, resulting in an unusually subdued and compliant citizenry. Often this technological reliance extends to the very bodies of citizens themselves, via brain implants, prosthetic limbs, cloned or genetically engineered organs, etc. In this way human beings literally become part of ‘The Machine’. This is the ‘cyber’ aspect of cyberpunk. However, as in any society, there are those either unable or unwilling to

conform to cultural norms.” (Aurora Slyde m.fl. i <http://18hz.deid.net/cyberpunk.htm>; lesedato 30.04.13)

“Living out on the edge at the margins of an alienating system, are the criminals, outcasts, visionaries, dissenters and misfits. Cyberpunk literature focuses on these people, and often on how they turn the system’s technological tools to their own ends. This is the ‘punk’ aspect of cyberpunk. The best cyberpunk works are distinguished from earlier works with similar themes, by a certain style. The setting is urban, the mood is dark and pessimistic. Concepts are thrown at the reader without explanation, much as new developments are thrown at us in our everyday lives. There is often a sense of moral ambiguity; simply fighting the system, whether to topple it or merely for survival, does not mark the protagonists as heroes or worthy in the traditional sense.” (Aurora Slyde m.fl. i <http://18hz.deid.net/cyberpunk.htm>; lesedato 30.04.13) Hovedpersonene er opprørere mot Systemet, mot konsumsamfunnet osv., og leter i ny teknologi etter alternativer (Fiévet 1995 s. 57).

“Cyberpunk typically portrays dystopic worlds where civilisation has been shattered by environmental or political catastrophes [...]. The environment is often unstable or hostile, nation-states tend to be extinct, and land and people are divided between corporations, sects, racial, or ideological groupings. These protagonists are often poor and outsiders to existing power structures; nevertheless, they are far from powerless because they are skilled manipulators of the technology that controls most other citizens of the world. These heroes combine the streetwise subversion of punks with a love of technology: they are wired, wear enhanced reality glasses, and are brilliant hackers, often with a moral cause. Often a portion of the narrative in cyberpunk fiction takes place in a virtual or technologically enhanced environment.” (Jill Walker i Herman, Jahn og Ryan 2005 s. 93)

En undersøkelse blant franske ungdommer viste at deres holdninger til samfunnet langt på vei stemte med kjennetegn ved cyberpunk: mistillit til samfunnets maktinstitusjoner og opplevelse av at individene blir fremmedgjort og lurt (Trémel 2001 s. 293).

Den amerikanske forfatteren William Gibsons bøker er cyberpunk, men har også blitt kalt “future noir-romaner” (Rauscher 2012 s. 61).

“Spurred on by cyberpunk literature in the mid-1980's, certain groups of people started referring to themselves as cyberpunks, because they correctly noticed the seeds of the fictional ‘techno-system’ in Western society today, and because they identified with the marginalized characters in cyberpunk stories. Within the last few years, the mass media has caught on to this, spontaneously dubbing certain people and groups as cyberpunk. Specific subgroups which are identified with Cyberpunk are: Hackers, Crackers, Phreaks and Cypherpunks. Hackers are the wizards of the computer community; people with a deep understanding of how their computers

work, and can do things with them that seem magical. Crackers are the real-world analogues of the console cowboys of Cyberpunk fiction; they break into other people's computer systems, without their permission, for illicit gain or simply for the pleasure of exercising their skill. Phreaks are those who do a similar thing with the telephone system, coming up with ways to circumvent phone companies' calling charges and doing clever things with the phone network. Cypher-punks are those who think a good way to bollocks the system is through cryptography and cryptosystems. They believe widespread use of powerful encryption algorithms will create regions of privacy that the authorities cannot invade." (Aurora Slyde et al. i <http://18hz.deid.net/cyberpunk.htm>; lesedato 30.04.13)

"Some other groups which are associated with Cyberpunk are: Transhumans are actively seeking to become 'Posthuman'. This involves learning about and making use of new technologies that can potentially increase their capacities and life expectancy. They follow Transhumanism, a set of philosophies of life (such as the Extropian philosophy) that seek the continuation and acceleration of the evolution of intelligent life beyond its currently human form and limits by means of science and technology, guided by life-promoting principles and values, while avoiding religion and dogma. Extropians are dedicated to the opposition of Entropy, or lack of balance in human society. Politically, extropians are close kin to the libertarians, including some anarchists, some classical liberals, and even a political neo-conservative or two. But many extropians have no interest in politics at all, and many are actively anti-political. Extropians have a principle called 'Spontaneous Order', but politics is by no means the only domain in which they apply it. [...] The point being that we all live in a cyberpunk society today, after all Gibson himself said "The future has arrived; it's just not evenly distributed"." (Aurora Slyde m.fl. i <http://18hz.deid.net/cyberpunk.htm>; lesedato 30.04.13)

"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 bank of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights receding. (William Gibson) [...] William Gibson's classic definition of cyberspace quoted above highlights the fantastic quality of many of our quotidian experiences. The solidity of many of the products we consume is, by and large, a *hallucination* – something delusory, illusory, mirage-like. Yet Gibson's definition also suggests that our illusions and mirages form the basis of a kind of *consensus* by being continuously shared by large groups of people. This sharing is achieved by transforming individual experiences into collective representations. Advertising, the media and the information industry capitalize on the translation of people's subjective desires, emotions and fantasies into images of ideal and desirable products. Such images bypass individual tastes and preferences by being presented as universally appealing. They thus create a curious notion of commonality, based on the assumption that belonging to a culture amounts to desiring the same

commodities desired by virtually any other individual inhabiting that culture. In this illusory community, people are often little more than anonymous strangers to one another: all that connects them is an abstract network of representations. They are characters in a narrative, or actors in a play, who roughly know the plot without being familiar with the rest of the cast.” (Dano Cavallaro i [http://is.muni.cz/www/175193/25476916/Cyberpunk\\_and\\_Cyberculture\\_\\_Science\\_Fiction\\_and\\_the\\_Work.pdf](http://is.muni.cz/www/175193/25476916/Cyberpunk_and_Cyberculture__Science_Fiction_and_the_Work.pdf); lesedato 06.05.13)

“Technology and mythology are primarily brought together by their shared attitudes to the body as the object of alternately magnifying and minimizing practices. Mythology empowers the body through figures such as gods, titans and giants and simultaneously dwarfs it through figures such as invisible spirits and diminutive goblins. Technology likewise enhances the body’s faculties, by means of cosmetic surgery, genetic engineering and prosthetics, and concurrently swamps it in a deluge of abstract information, representations and data. Drawing on both mythology and technology, cyberpunk emphasizes the body’s centrality. Pivotal to the genre is the notion that cultural transformations are performed first and foremost on the stage of the human body. Gibson offers contrasting readings of this state of affairs. On the one hand, the fusion of the biological and the technological signals the disappearance of the body, its reduction to lifeless meat. On the other, it opens up fresh opportunities for experiment, recombination and play. Cyberpunk presents a bleak vision of a future in which people are subjected to ruthless communications networks, are totally disconnected from one another and long to leave the body behind, yet are trapped in a physical maze of junk. At the same time, it dissolves conventional notions of corporeality, inaugurates novel forms of intersubjectivity and alternative ways of figuring space. Though the physical dimension is often marginalized by digital technology, both the biological body and the body of the posturban megalopolis go on presenting eminently material traits, intensified by their lacerations and vulnerabilities. The bodies generated by cyberpunk are simultaneously mythological, as products of imagination and fantasy, technological, as products of science and ideology, and Gothic, as products of psychotic and fragmented environments, of physical and mental disarray, of deviance and transgression.” (Dano Cavallaro i [http://is.muni.cz/www/175193/25476916/Cyberpunk\\_and\\_Cyberculture\\_\\_Science\\_Fiction\\_and\\_the\\_Work.pdf](http://is.muni.cz/www/175193/25476916/Cyberpunk_and_Cyberculture__Science_Fiction_and_the_Work.pdf); lesedato 06.05.13)

“Cyberpunk has been described as ‘hip, poetic, and posthuman’ (Targowsky); as ‘a postmodern literary-cultural style that projects a computerized future’ (Heim); as a ‘ubiquitous datasphere of computerized information’ (Person); as ‘a return to roots’ (Sterling); as the ‘supreme literary expression if not of postmodernism, then of late capitalism itself’ (Jameson); as ‘a new form of existence, loosed from the bonds of the physical body’ (Jeschke); and as the ‘collision of punk sensibility – the unrest, the rebellion – with desk-top computers’ (Cadigan). The multi-accentuality of cyberpunk is paralleled by that of the related phenomena of cyberspace and virtual reality. Disparaged by some critics for fostering individualism and depersonalized

forms of intercourse and by some for perpetuating illusions of mastery and stereotypical power structures, cyberspace and virtual reality are celebrated by others as a means of establishing new communities unhampered by traditional prejudices.” (Dano Cavallaro i [http://is.muni.cz/www/175193/25476916/Cyberpunk\\_and\\_Cyberculture\\_\\_Science\\_Fiction\\_and\\_the\\_Work.pdf](http://is.muni.cz/www/175193/25476916/Cyberpunk_and_Cyberculture__Science_Fiction_and_the_Work.pdf); lesedato 06.05.13)

“Gibson’s cyberpunk takes virtual technology several steps further by positing the possibility of a direct neural connection between the human brain and the computer. This connection is effected by means of electrodes or sockets, situated behind the ear, that can receive chips and thus give access to digital memory. Once these gadgets are in place, human bodies and minds are not only in a position to enter an intimate relationship with computers. They also become able to access the ultimate virtual space, cyberspace, and interact with other bodies and minds in the construction of whole worlds out of data. As Katherine Hayles observes, ‘Cyberspace is created by transforming a data matrix into a landscape in which narratives can happen.’ The human body immersed in a virtual environment is made harder and shinier by its fusion with technology. Yet it also crosses over into the domain of the hybrid, for its humanity is indissolubly linked to non-human apparatuses. The responses elicited by such an interpenetration of the organic and the inorganic are ambivalent; on the one hand, technology is viewed as a kind of magical mirror capable of multiplying human powers *ad infinitum* and of reflecting humanity in an idealized form; on the other, technology is associated with the engulfment of the human by the non-human. Either way, the ‘hyper-texted’ body constructed via technology, ‘with its microflesh, multi-media channelled ports, cybernetic fingers, and bubbling neuro-brain’, displaces the binary opposition between wired corporeality and organic corporeality. The hyper-texted body is both: it is, according to Arthur Kroker and Michael Weinstein, ‘a wired nervous system embedded in living (dedicated) flesh’. In cyberculture, our bodies are not simply ‘interfaced to the Net through modems and external software’. In fact, they become *nets* in their own right, for in cruising cyberspace we are physically involved with oceans of data and images that impact directly on our sensorium.” (Dano Cavallaro i [http://is.muni.cz/www/175193/25476916/Cyberpunk\\_and\\_Cyberculture\\_\\_Science\\_Fiction\\_and\\_the\\_Work.pdf](http://is.muni.cz/www/175193/25476916/Cyberpunk_and_Cyberculture__Science_Fiction_and_the_Work.pdf); lesedato 06.05.13)

Den engelske forfatteren Warren Ellis og den amerikanske tegneren Darick Robertson har skapt cyberpunk-tegneserien *Transmetropolitan* (1997 og senere). “If you want to delve into one of the best graphic novels that cyberpunk has to offer, look no further than *Transmetropolitan*. [...] Infamous journalist, Spider Jerusalem, has been out of the game for five years, living in peace on his cabin in the mountains, when threats of lawsuits for unfinished work bring him back to the city. [...] In an unspecified distant dystopic future, America has become a place where there is the City, and then everything else. The City (no name is given or required) is a humongous massive sprawl, where every type of lowlife imaginable eaks out their miserable existence as best they can. Half the population in the city is

doped up on all sorts of mild-altering, hallucinogenic drugs available. Body modifications are all the rage. Extra breasts, werewolf teeth, transplanting one's mind into the body of a dog – nothing is too weird or forbidding. Many people called transients are slowly transforming themselves into aliens by injecting alien DNA to replace their own. Deviant religions abound – everything from religions celebrating pedophiles to continuous sex are intermixed with judgmental rants and insane prophecies. The rich and powerful live an idyllic existence in this new world order. Corporations and politicians both have the same goals – to fuck the population for their own benefits and gratification. Media feeds of all varieties abound in the Transmetropolitan future. The City is fully wired and monitored so that every happening can be recorded and played back for national amusement. Talk shows have even gotten more deviant than they already are today. It is in this environment that Spider Jerusalem conducts his unique brand of journalism.” (<http://www.cyberpunkreview.com/books/graphic-novels/transmetropolitan-10-volumes/>; lesedato 10.12.13)

“Jonathan Dotse (Doe-chay) is a professional student and aspiring science fiction writer living in Accra, Ghana. He is currently working on his debut novel, a cyberpunk mystery/thriller set in the sprawling metropolis of Accra in the middle of the 21st century.” (<https://afrocyberpunk.wordpress.com/>; lesedato 16.12.15) På en blogg uttalte Dotse i 2010: “I’m working on a novel set in Accra, Ghana circa 2060 AD, at a time when clinical neuroscience has reverse-engineered the human brain and uncovered the inner workings of the mind. Two-thirds of the world’s population are implanted with biocores – organic computer interfaces between the brain and cyberspace which link billions of people worldwide to the Internet. The novel explores the psychological consequences of mind altering technology through the interwoven stories of a data thief, a computer programmer, and a cyber crime investigator who are drawn inextricably into the heart of a dark conspiracy in one turbulent night on the streets of Accra.” (<https://afrocyberpunk.wordpress.com/>; lesedato 17.12.15)

“Whatever Gibson’s (best) intentions, his work has created a desire for cyberspace technologies in advance of their production (1993:186).” (Philip Hayward sitert fra Sefton-Green 1998 s. 138)

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