

gene wolfe and cyberpunk

The Urth list — 7 messages, 6 voices, 12 Jun 2005

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/urth/4444>

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turin — 12 Jun 2005, 16:14

i have discussed several months ago the ambience and aesthetic similarties
i think exist between tolkien and wolfe's work and cyberpunk.

but something occured to me about genre conventions today. i was thinking about a protest in new york that i saw several years and remembered the riot gear of the police, and that got me to thinking about the recent ghost in the shell television series and the popularity of "cop drams" and the reasons why we enjoy detective stories and crime stories especiallytough and heroic cops or detectives.. who sometimes have a philosophical side and always are more vulnerable and mechancholy than they let on. (which is a role severian often plays)
one of our first reality television shows in a contemporary sense besides things like game shows, talk shows, and the news (i'll stand by the claim that the news is reality tv) was of course "cops".

in william gibson's bridge trilogy, rydell, is a policeman and then a security guard, and is a candidate for the reality tv show "cops in trouble." this is more of a joke than anything, and not very central to the story. but gibson is enamoured with mystery and crime noire. his last book "pattern recognition" was i think not even crime noire but an actual mystery.

while wolfe is definitely not cop drama, his work is as we have said a kind of detective story and that is only a short step away from crime noire which permeates cyberpunk.

arguably the first cyberpunk novel, do androids dream of electric sheep is a detective story and crime noire, and the ridley scott's film blade runner had such an effect on japan that a subgenre of scifi anime has always been cyberpunk whether as adventure or mystery.

in the case of the ghost in the shell films and recently the television series, we actually do have not only a mystery but also crime noire, cop drama, and a detective story with the theme machine transcendance if not divine transcendace (though in the as i have said oshi mamoru was trained as a catholic priest).

i find it very interesting that oshi has unlike gibson has put together a more identical set of motifs to wolfe's and yet produced something so different, though they seem to address many of the same things.

i guess what i am claiming, is that besides the bildungsroman or the "heroic quest" (i think campbell is very shallow) or spiritual meditation (i won't say allegory), a good chunk of wolfe actually is cyberpunk....

i am afraid my memory is going bad but someone just said that after reading (there are doors? which i have not read) that it was the best philip k. dick book not written by philip k. dick. that is the point i am trying to make exactly. if cyberpunk isn't looking at wolfe (and it might be though i have no evidence or thought about it much) it is looking to dick and i have not read enough dick, but i think, in his position, wolfe cannot looking at dick.

in any case, wolfe is to some degree a cyberpunk author or cyberpunk is, if any genre can cliam to be, in the same tradition as wolfe.

EOT;

thapaguru — 12 Jun 2005, 21:19 · in reply to turin

I doubt Wolfe is cyberpunk. CP mainly deals with a near future or alternate reality where technology has

created a bizarre society or people. His main works are either set so far in the future that the trappings of modern society no longer exists (BoNS,LS,SS), or in the distant and mythological past (TWK, Latro). There Are Doors is somewhat in the present, but it's purely a Philip K. Dick writing exercise, and it's more of an alternate universe than cyber-related.

Oshii isn't of a Christian or American/European background. I bet his stuff would mean much more to a person familiar with Japanese culture/traditions/beliefs. I believe your take on Wolfe to be another ode to the man's aptitude at creating a flexible framework for us to bring experiences and thoughts to.

Thapa

Jeff Wilson — 13 Jun 2005, 21:54 · in reply to thapaguru

thapaguru wrote:

I doubt Wolfe is cyberpunk. CP mainly deals with a near future or alternate reality where technology has created a bizarre society or people.

Not to mention where crime and drug use is so prominent, even among the "heroes" of the story....oh wait, have you read "The Fifth Head of Cerberus?" :)

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >

Dan — 16 Jun 2005, 08:58 · follows Jeff Wilson

At 02:10 PM 6/13/2005, you wrote:

arguably the first cyberpunk novel, do androids dream of electric sheep is a detective story and crime noire, and the ridley scott's film blade runner had such an effect on japan that a subgenre of scifi anime has always been cyberpunk whether as adventure or mystery.

I think the art direction of David Snyder and his dark depiction of the future probably had more of an impact on anime than did Scott's ponderous hollywoodization of DADoES. Certainly GitS was influenced by Blade Runner's theme. I'm looking forward to watching Stand Alone Complex, as soon as AS will reair the first four episodes so I can see it in order.

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Not sure I understand, but I recall reading in one of the interviews with Gene that he had read (and I believe liked) PKD. In fact, I'm currently reading Free Live Free and there also seems to be somewhat of a PKD flavor, but not as obvious as in There are Doors.

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if any genre can claim to be, in the same tradition as wolfe.

EOT;

I agree to the degree that it's a testament to Wolfe's ability to stretch his craft into other themes and genres. But I wouldn't pigeonhole him as a cyberpunk author or see how cyberpunk could claim him as one of their own. What little I recall of a class on the advent of cyberpunk left the impression that every so often there's some type of backlash in the literary world that spawns anew, reinvents or reintroduces a genre. The instructors maintained that cyberpunk was one of these waves that actually had its roots in SF and fantasy shorts that appeared in '70's glossies. I think that some of Wolfe's short stories may have a CP bent, such as The Other Dead Man or the HORARS of War but I'm not sure I would include them in a cyberpunk anthology unless it's titled The Tertiary Roots of Cyberpunk: The stories that influenced the well-read authors who influenced the authors that rode the crest of the Cyberpunk wave.

Dan

David Kirby — 16 Jun 2005, 19:54 · in reply to Dan

Dan wrote:

At 02:10 PM 6/13/2005, you wrote:

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sheep [. . .]

I think the art direction of David Snyder and his dark depiction of the
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ponderous hollywoodization of DADoES. Certainly GitS was influenced by
Blade Runner's theme. I'm looking forward to watching Stand Alone
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it in order.

Okay, the abbreviation "DADoES" is probably familiar enough to SF fans, even without my
inclusion above of the improbably capitalized "do androids dream of electric sheep."

But "GitS"? "AS"? I have no idea what you're talking about here. (That statement may pin me as
an ol' fogey -- the first time I've been so pinned -- but I suspect many written SF contributors will
agree with its sentiment.) These may have been explained earlier in the thread, but they aren't
explained in this message, and they should have been. One of the advantages of Usenet or
mailing lists is that a reader or participant doesn't have to know *everything* that has gone
before in order to participate. (Most Web-based discussion forums I've seen don't have or don't
encourage a ["here's what I had to say" --> "here's what you respond"] format.)

(Top-posting is also appreciated, if appropriate, although "interleaved" posting is perfectly
accepted when appropriate. Bottom-posting is not appreciated and indicates, at least to me,
that you've not read carefully the post you're responding to.)

Can we, please, try to be a bit more inclusive in future messages?

Thanks,

-- David

=====
"It is possible I already had some presentiment of my future."
== Gene Wolfe, Shadow of the Torturer
David B. Kirby, dbkirby at pressroom.com
=====

Maru Dubshinki — 16 Jun 2005, 21:27 · in reply to David Kirby

Well, there you go: he has lapsed into anime vocabularly, so don't feel bad.

In case you were wondering, GitS was discussed earlier- it is "Ghost in the Shell".
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ghost_in_the_shell

AS stands for the popular programming segment Cartoon Network airs late at night, called "Adult Swim". http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adult_Swim (The name comes from the fact that at night, the kids aren't watching so they can show more mature 'adult' stuff- kinda like a pool. Get it, adult swim=... ah never mind.)

~Maru

On a very side note, I'm surprised you don't like bottom-posting- every forum Usenet or otherwise, has told me to bottom post, and definitely not top- but you seem to prefer top, so I shall.

On 6/16/05, David Kirby <dbkirby at pressroom.com> wrote:
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Jeff Wilson — 19 Jun 2005, 00:38 · in reply to David Kirby

David Kirby wrote:
(Top-posting is also appreciated, if appropriate, although "interleaved" posting is perfectly accepted when appropriate. Bottom-posting is not appreciated and indicates, at least to me, that you've not read carefully the post you're responding to.)

This sounds backwards. By top-posting, do you somehow mean the original post on top of the reply?

<http://www.caliburn.nl/topposting.html>

<http://www.greenend.org.uk/rjk/2000/06/14/quoting.html>

Jeff Wilson - jwilson at io.com
< <http://www.io.com/~jwilson> >