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Editorial 1/2016

Aino-Kaisa Koistinen, Jyrki Korpua & Hanna-Riikka Roine

After two successful years of *Fafnir* the journal, we present the first issue of our journal's third year! Last year, we published nine peer-reviewed articles, three overviews, eight book reviews, three conference reports, and three *lectio praecursorias* (introductory lectures) from Finnish PhD defences.

We are also proud to introduce the new asset of our editorial staff, PhD Aino-Kaisa Koistinen (University of Jyväskylä), who replaces Päivi Väättä as editor from this issue onwards. Aino-Kaisa, our expert (among other things) on science fiction television and film, gender and media studies, is a brilliant addition to our team. Once more, we would like to thank Päivi for her valuable contribution to setting this journal up, and for her skills as a precise and patient editor. *Cheers!*

This first issue of *Fafnir*'s third year concentrates on science fiction and the concepts and discussions around it. Furthermore, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of *Star Trek* franchise by publishing an essay on the subject.

Esko Suoranta's article "The Ironic Transhumanity of William Gibson's *The Peripheral*", presents an insightful reading on William Gibson's novel *The Peripheral* (2014). The novel itself has been a subject to a lot of speculation, since it was Gibson's long expected return to the genre of science fiction, which he had abandoned in the turn of the millennium. In his article, Suoranta focuses on posthuman and transhuman developments. For Suoranta, elements interpreted here are - for example - so-called metaphorical cyborgs, and the dystopian irony of Gibson's science fiction.

Victor Grech's essay, "Remixing of Individuals Results in Doomed New Persons in *Star Trek*", celebrates the 50th anniversary of the *Star Trek* franchise by analysing three episodes of the franchise that introduce a remixing of two separate physical individuals, such that the controlling mind becomes a single and seamless character. The chosen episodes are taken from the tv-series *Star Trek: The Original Series* (1966-69), *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (1993-99), and *Star Trek: The Voyager* (1995-2001), but Grech also refers to *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987-94).

While Grech's essay focuses more on the close analyses of the remixing of individuals in the episodes than on the franchise itself, *Fafnir* would like to congratulate the *Star Trek* franchise on its 50 year old voyage to the final frontier. There is no doubt that the original *Star Trek*, perhaps more than any other television series, has had an effect on our shared cultural imaginations of future worlds and technologies - not only in the United States but beyond. The ever-growing transmedia universe constructed around the franchise is also a telling example of our lasting fascination with *Star Trek* even today. Thank you, *Star Trek*, for the explorations of strange new worlds, and thank you for your boldness to go where no human has gone before!

In addition to the article and the essay, this issue includes a book review and a seminar report. In her review, Marjut Puhakka discusses James Burton's ambitious work *The Philosophy of Science Fiction, Henri Bergson and the Fabulations of Philip K. Dick* (2015).

In his report “A United Effort of an Autonomous Island”, Jani Ylönen provides a fascinating view on the conference (or Academic Track) of Archipelacon, the Nordic science fiction and fantasy convention that was held in Mariehamn, Åland, in June 25-28, 2015. (We, on behalf of *Fafnir*, would also like to apologise for calling Mr. Ylönen *Jari* in our Editorial 4/2015. Sorry about that. *Meā culpā*.)

We hope that you enjoy this first issue of *Fafnir*’s third year! Our next issue will be published in June. It will be an excitingly international issue focusing on fantasy and speculative fiction. Meanwhile, live long and prosper, dear readers.



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The Ironic Transhumanity of William Gibson's *The Peripheral*

Esko Suoranta

Abstract: The article discusses transhuman futures in William Gibson's 2014 novel The Peripheral. Through differing depictions of transhuman characters in two timelines coming into contact, Gibson presents various characters as metaphorical cyborgs. Some appear as ironic figures struggling with a capitalist system seeking to incorporate them, others follow a schizoid ethos, embracing, and sometimes embodying, the kleptocratic logic of Gibson's worlds. Further, the novel examines the possibilities of technology to transform both individual experience and oppressive social structures. This interrogation reveals Gibson's critical attitude toward technology alone as capable of overthrowing dystopian systems. Finally, the article interrogates the idea of mysterium tremendum et fascinans in relation to transformative technologies in the novel, in turn shedding light on Gibson's criticism of singularity narratives. Through such an approach, the dystopian ironies of Gibson's futures become clear: despite miraculous advancements, the dystopia remains the same for the characters inhabiting his worlds.

Keywords: William Gibson, The Peripheral, transhumanism, cyborg, embodiment, dystopia, tremendum.

Biography and contact info: Esko Suoranta is currently working on a PhD on contemporary Anglo-American literature at the University of Helsinki. His interests include science fiction, postmodern fiction, critiques of capitalism, and more. On Twitter he appears as @Escogar.

William Gibson started his literary career with visions of a near future populated by nonconformist hackers, manipulative AI, and vistas of cyberspace as a “consensual hallucination” (*Neuromancer* 12). Since the turn of the 21st century, his novels have been increasingly about an “actual twenty-first century” that “could be unpacked with the toolkit of science fiction” (Gibson, *Distrust That Particular Flavor* 46). The novels of his Bigend trilogy, *Pattern Recognition*, *Spook Country*, and *Zero History* (2003–2010), are situated a year before their respective publication but nevertheless remain saturated with similar speculative elements that made Gibson's early work stand out from many other cyberpunk authors as well as the stagnation they saw in late 1970s science fiction.¹ Now, over thirty years after *Neuromancer* (1984), his seminal debut, Gibson has returned to science fiction in its straightforward sense of stories of worlds that are not here yet. His latest novel *The*

¹ For an overview on cyberpunk authors' views on the state of science fiction in the early 1980s see, for example, Rob Latham's 2010 essay in *Beyond Cyberpunk: New Critical Perspectives*.

Peripheral (2014) opens up not one but two distinct futures. It is ripe with ideas about how the Anthropocene, the somewhat controversially named age of humans, might turn out.

In this article, I look into transhumanity and its permutations in the two futures of *The Peripheral*. I argue that Gibson offers a profound critique of technological development as incapable of overcoming oppression of human existence, transformed or not, in conditions of inequality. Gibson does so through cyborg characters in whose portrayal the cyborg's dual nature as a technical and metaphorical construct is evident, especially when viewed through ironic and schizoid lenses of Lisa Yaszek and N. Katherine Hayles, respectively. Further, I aim to show that Gibson does not approach the developments of humanity in the novel with what Rudolf Otto (in *The Idea of the Holy* (1923, original *Das Heilige* 1917)) calls the experience of the numinous, an experience that is *tremendum et fascinans*, that is, both terrifying and fascinating. Rather, in *The Peripheral* Gibson imagines various repercussions of a transhuman advent, takes a critical stance to them, and shows that even in such conditions subjects struggle against an oppressive system that seeks to incorporate them.

My approach is linked to Neil Easterbrook's findings on Gibson's Bridge trilogy, *Virtual Light*, *Idoru*, and *All Tomorrow's Parties* (1993–1999), in which Easterbrook locates "a return to human corporeality and agency" (48) and an ethos to "exploit the right technology, not . . . to permit the technology to exploit us" (52) as opposed to the somewhat bleaker vision of Gibson's earlier novels. Tom Moylan continues in the same vein about cyberpunk in general, saying that its "popular affirmations . . . offer *not* idealist intimations of immortality but *rather* utilitarian calculations of the odds of 'making it' through speculative (ad)ventures on a rapidly reorganizing earth" (92, emphasis original) while for Fredric Jameson cyberpunk is "an expression of transnational corporate realities as it is of global paranoia" (38). All of these drives surface in *The Peripheral*, where radical transformations of corporeality, venture capitalism, and technology still give rise to questions of agency and struggle.

To understand the intricacies of transhuman existence in *The Peripheral*, an important demarcation of terms is needed. In my analysis, I follow Pramod K. Nayar in his definition of transhumanism as the strand of posthumanism that "treats technology as a means of 'adding' to already existing human qualities" and "implies that *there is a distinctive entity identifiable as the 'human'*" (6, emphasis original). For most intents and purposes, the speculative elements of *The Peripheral* appear to stem from processes related to such a view rather than from one seeing "the human as a construct enmeshed with other forms of life" (Nayar 6), the starting point for "critical posthumanism" (Nayar 8). The terminology around trans- and posthumanism is in flux and opinions on it vary, but for the purposes of this article Nayar's fairly straightforward definition appears the most useful. Furthermore, understanding what is meant by cyborg technologies, the cyborg as both a technical as well as metaphorical entity, and viewing the cyborg from ironic and schizoid perspectives work towards a revelatory analysis of Gibson's critical take on capital-driven transhumanity in *The Peripheral*.

The distant future in *The Peripheral* is, seemingly typically for Gibson, filled with advanced computing, "assemblers" (24) capable of manipulating matter at a subatomic level, and cybernetically augmented humans – communication devices are fully integrated into the body and extreme modifications to it are commonplace. Another significant commodity are the "peripheral[s]" (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 30), realistic, remotely operated humanoid avatars, around which the novel's time-travel plot centers. The intricacies of these innovations allow a view into Gibson's vision of transhuman futures. In the novel's near future inklings of these achievements are already visible: 3D-printing and drones have revolutionized production and surveillance, while

immersive virtual realities and telepresence offer both employment and a pastime with the mere flick of a phone.

The multitude of transhuman beings in the novel, from cyborg soldiers to performance artist celebrities who can pass through solid matter, represents different visions of what humanity may become should developments of our present day run their course as Gibson envisions. His two timelines also display how everyday existence and experience are redefined by technology, how the mundane, as seen at a particular moment, is but a step away from being almost alien, made anew by human endeavor. However, to the users of these transformative technologies the reality is as unimpressive as my computer-assisted act of writing this article while being socially connected to online peers and enjoying a high-definition multimedia experience from a cloud-based music database (the systems of which gather data on my activities to refine their algorithms).

At the end of the novel, protagonist Flynn Fisher notes that “having so much money for a project that it just didn’t matter, was a lot like having assemblers” (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 478) and thus highlights how transhumanity and its possibilities are connected to the material, financial realities of society. What is more, in worlds where anything can be fabricated or assembled, a sense of authenticity loses its meaning. When the copy is as good as the original, originality loses its value. The fact that the power to fabricate, to create, remains, in both of the novel’s futures, in the hands of kleptocratic elites goes to show that despite an increasingly protean nature, the development of humankind does not escape asymmetrical capital accumulation and the power structures it creates. This marks the overall tone of the novel as dystopian, despite its seemingly straightforward domestic conclusion. In *The Peripheral*, the asymmetry of capital has slowly led, by protagonist Wilf Netherton’s time, into the destruction of four in five humans, coincidentally with remarkable technological innovation. However, as Gibson shows, no matter how magical the innovation, it will not by itself bring down the oppressive, destructive structures of society.² The protagonists definitely make it in Moylan’s utilitarian sense, but the dystopia remains the same. While “the klept” (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 38) dabble in time-travel, learn to dance with peripheral instructors, and pass through walls, the common people are stuck with cosplay apparati and tapped phones inside their bodies, a predicament not too far removed from our own 21st century.

The Cyborg with a Thousand Faces

Andy Clark summarizes technical cyborgs as “human-technology symbionts: thinking and reasoning systems whose minds and selves are spread across biological brain and nonbiological circuitry” (3). To him, tools become mind-expanding, cyborg technologies when they are not merely used but start to actively adapt to humans and to how humans use them (Clark 7). This is, in fact, what current emerging technology, like the Internet of Things, consciously aspires to. In so doing, a technology approaches the condition of transparency to follow Clark’s terminology.

The Peripheral’s two futures show different stages of technology becoming transparent, that is, “so well fitted to . . . our [biological] capacities . . . as to become . . . almost invisible in use” (Clark, 37). For example, everyone in the later future has an integrated audio-video communication system, operated via a tactile interface between a magnetized tongue and one’s palate. Such a smartphone that really does not require hands to operate is in fact not a long way from the voice-activated Siri and Cortana softwares of 2015 phones. Transparency is also evident in the development of telepresence, as the peripherals too offer a seamless, wholly intuitive interface.

² I am indebted to professor Bo Pettersson for drawing my attention to the importance of Gibson’s critical stance for my overall argument.

Further, they are not only invisible in use, but can even employ themselves independently to some extent. For example, the phone is always on, feeding into social, positional, and security networks, and the peripheral can pass for a human being even without being explicitly controlled by one.

In addition to such a definition of technical cyborgs, the human-technology symbiont has a long-standing and important status as a metaphorical entity. Paraphrasing Donna Haraway, Hayles finds this “conjunction of technology and discourse” crucial (114). Were the cyborg merely a narrative construct, it might remain in the field of science fiction, while if it were only a technological practice, fields like bionics or virtual reality would be its sole territory. As a conjunctive entity, “it partakes the power of the imagination as well as of the actuality of technology” (Hayles 114–115). Hayles further points to Scott Bukatman's coinage *terminal identity* for a new subjectivity that emerges in the cybernetic loops of people like gamers and neurosurgeons, who are metaphorical cyborgs (115).

In *The Peripheral*'s early 21st century, Flynnne makes do as a professional gamer, supporting her ailing mother and attempting to gravitate away from the lucrative business of 3D-printed narcotics. Substituting for his older brother, an ex-cyber soldier now in the same gaming business, she witnesses the death of a woman in what she thinks is a visceral computer simulation but actually really happens, just not in her temporal location. Some seventy years later, 80 percent of the world's population has died as a result of a slow progression of catastrophes, ironically called “jackpot” (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 38) by the remaining cadre of immensely wealthy oligarchs. There Wilf Netherton, an alcoholic publicist, learns about the very murder mystery Flynnne witnesses decades before. Netherton's associates dabble in a new, mysterious pastime of collecting “continua” (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 40), past nooks of time they can manipulate, having learned how to send information back in time, as sandboxes for experimenting with military, economic, and political scenarios – one of the continua being Flynnne's. As this premise suggests, in *The Peripheral*, Gibson goes all-out in his speculation of potential technological development, a fact reflected also in his vision of transhuman existence in the novel.

Transhuman and cyborg beings fall into four general categories in *The Peripheral*. First, there are the augmented humans, by far the broadest category that encompasses everyone from Flynnne with her multipurpose phone to Ainsley Lowbeer with her neural access to a network of forensic AI, showing a continuum of the cyborg's transformation from metaphorical to technical. In Flynnne's time, phones remain key elements between people and various information networks, seemingly having replaced desktop computers. In Netherton's time, on the other hand, *phone* is still the central metaphor for the communication device lodged somewhere in the body. Other examples of augmented cyborg experience include the various drones in both futures, from clumsy telepresence-tablets to copter drones and remotely operated soldiers like Flynnne's brother, as well as the hyper-real peripherals. Notably, the ubiquitous technologies of communication have erased the distinction between online and offline – neither term appears in the novel – and the pieces of technology remain integral to everyday experience. For example, Flynnne touches “her own wrist and then all four pockets of her jeans before she remembered her phone [was not there]” and upon waking up the next day, instinctively “slid her hand under her pillow for her phone” (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 253, 259).

The second category is formed by metamorphosed transhumans, namely the so-called “patchers” (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 6) of the novel's 22nd century who have modified their biological make-up with, for example, decorative cancer growths and extra genitalia. They are mostly described through Netherton's point of view and their alien nature causes him to dehumanize them in disgust, thinking of them as “[p]osthuman filth” (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 6). Significantly,

they represent transhumanism taken to one of its logical conclusions, to rampant modifications of bodies in the service of a new aesthetic culture (vigorously studied by “neoprimitivist curators” (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 11)). The choice of the patchers is cast in a dystopian light, however, as it is later revealed that their whole culture and life on an island of recycled polymer has been created in the service of a monetization scheme for the plastic of which their land is made. To relieve the island of its transhuman habitants for profit, they have been infected with “endemic health issues . . . of which they aren’t yet aware” as one of the villains explains (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 468).

The patchers are juxtaposed with the third transhuman category, composed of the counter-cultural neoprimitives, who seek to escape their technologically saturated society and remain free from augmentation. As such, they seem to profess an essentialist view on humanity but in order to strive to regain this essence, they need to be de-augmented by removing their incorporated phones and reworking their immune systems to again become susceptible to, say, the common cold. Especially the latter procedure raises questions about the sense of their essentialism, akin to that of anti-vaccination movements of our 21st century.

Fourth, there are nonhuman life forms, most importantly the invisible assemblers capable of reconfiguring matter through subatomic particles, but also the various artificial intelligences and robots. None are biological, carbon-based lifeforms but, related to what Hayles states about Artificial Life research, they can be classified as “computer programs instantiating emergent or evolutionary processes,” and are as such alive from the standpoint of the software front of Artificial Life (225). Importantly, the AI are not anthropomorphic, or even personified, entities with human agendas but rather specialized, highly sophisticated software responsible for running everything from Victorian cosplay zones to crime-prevention (a version of which is already present in Flynn’s timeline). On the other hand, the robot-like Michikoids resemble humans but mainly act as autonomous servant and weapon-systems, extensions into physicality of algorithmic software.

Developing socialist analysis of work in a postindustrial cyborg society, Yaszek builds on Haraway’s idea of the “ironic cyborg” (104) which, along with Hayles’s schizoid androids, offers important insights into metaphorical cyborgs in *The Peripheral*. According to Yaszek, a worker in a cybernetic society, such as ours or Gibson’s, can “never have full control over the dominant economic system’s means of production (and thus may never achieve a fully ‘unalienated’ subjectivity), its links to other cultural and historical states of knowing at least provide it with ways to work against its full interpolation into that same system” (104). In other words, an ironic cyborg enacts a resistance against a dominant system that it cannot hope to fully escape into such an existence that would free her from the alienation a capitalist division of labor engenders. This enactment occurs through “alternative systems of meaning and work,” but the ironic cyborg is not able to “be fully invested in any single specific one” (Yaszek 104).

Such a struggle of the ironic cyborg is evident in *Neuromancer*, as Yaszek makes clear (105), but it is also a recurrent theme in Gibson’s later novels. In *The Peripheral*, its significance is especially marked in relation to Flynn and her position in the warped labor market of her near future. That is, Flynn is faced with limited options of prosperity as her native Clanton’s primary economy is based on printing illegal substances, a practice she wants no part in. However, her gamer skills open up the global information network as a source for employment, but even there she merely adds value to the gamer credibility of rich wannabes too busy to play their games themselves. Rebecca Lemov likens Flynn’s experience to those of Chinese “gold farmers” in games like *World of Warcraft* (Lemov). The cyborg labor practice of gaming thus fails to save Flynn from an oppressive system, merely relocating her struggle as an ironic cyborg into the

virtual network of online gaming. This, too, makes her resemble the actual gold farmers who might escape some of the constraints of Chinese state capitalism, but run into an asymmetric division between their gaming for subsistence and gaming for entertainment that Western players engage in.

Furthermore, Netherton's associates in the 22nd century appropriate Flynn's time in the manner of colonial imperialists. As the mystery of the murder Flynn witnesses comes to revolve around attempts to kill her, two different bands of kleptocrats begin to influence the economy of Flynn's town, country, and, ultimately, her world through venture capitalist schemes and by buying off sheriffs, governors, and government agencies. Rather than gain accumulated capital in their own future, the kleptocrats battle over control of Flynn's world as a sandbox in another time, like Flynn and other gamers do over virtual worlds in theirs. In both cases technology opens up new avenues for exploiting the value added by cyborg subjects.

Analyzing Philip K. Dick's novels from his prolific 1960s, Hayles conjures the image of the "schizoid android" to describe the characters in Dick's work that struggle with the complex interplay of cybernetics and capitalism, gender, delusion, and reality (161). According to Hayles, the schizoid android is most often intelligent, unable to feel empathy, incapable of understanding others to be humans, and gendered female. She "represents the coming together of a person who acts like a machine with a literal interpretation of that person as a machine" (Hayles 161–162).

In *The Peripheral*, this schizoid quality is emphasized in the novel's further future, especially in relation to Daedra, a performance artist super star. As an artist, Daedra constitutes her art as she repeatedly tattoos and skins herself to produce a growing collection of artiste hides. Late in the novel, it is revealed that she has surpassed the need to heed to material constraints altogether and is capable of passing through solid matter along with her male companion, responsible for the exploitation and coming extinction of the patchers. Daedra is most often depicted through Netherton's eyes through which her first appearance clearly marks her as a version of the schizoid android: "Her head was perfectly still, eyes unblinking. He imagined her ego swimming up behind them, to peer at him suspiciously, something eel-like, larval, transparently boned. . . . And then she smiled. Reflexive pleasure of the thing behind her eyes" (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 12). Importantly, Daedra embraces the twisted kleptocratic system of her time, being very much complicit in its evaluation of wealth and social status. As such, she is not only likened to a rational, unemphatic machine, but to the whole oppressive system of her time, a system that is the result of the devastatingly rational survival of the fittest, and most privileged, in the catastrophes of the jackpot. In this way, the kleptocratic system of Gibson's 22nd century enacts a dehumanizing, unemphatic, schizoid ethos.

In sum, transhuman beings in *The Peripheral* are humans augmented by various technologies, metamorphosed transhumans, that is, patchers who seem like non-human others, de-augmented humans, and technological nonhumans like assemblers, AI, and robots. These transhumans interact with the fictional world from a narrative position of metaphorical cyborgs. Some, like Flynn, act like Yaszek's ironic cyborgs, trying to struggle against incorporation to an oppressive system they cannot escape. On the other hand, following Hayles, some are schizoid androids, like Daedra, made into machine-like beings by their enmeshing with the system that has created their transhumanity.

Without Fixed Form: Embodied Transhumanity

The double-timeline structure of *The Peripheral* shows a process of *seriation* in action. Borrowing the term from archaeological anthropology, Hayles explains that historical change,

including the discipline of cybernetics, does not necessarily follow a strictly Kuhnian paradigm of thesis-antithesis-synthesis nor a Foucauldian one of “sharp epistemic breaks” (14). Rather, the pattern of a given technology, or paradigm, begins to taper off at the advent of a new innovation so that both applications exist side by side for some time. To follow Hayles’s example, the electric bulb came to the fore not by totally overthrowing wicks but rather slowly replaced them as the most convenient light source. The same can be observed in *The Peripheral*, where various technologies and permutations of transhumanity mirror each other between the two futures.

In *The Peripheral*, manufacturing, surveillance, and telecommunication are most clearly portrayed as undergoing seriated development. Whereas Flynnne’s time benefits from breakthroughs in 3D-printing, where complex items can be “fabbed,” fabricated, with little effort, Netherton’s future is mainly built on the work of assemblers, a miniature manufacturing force continuously at work to produce and modify the landscapes of his world. Production on both time levels occurs in a way reminiscent of magic for even a 20th century observer and the jargon has evolved accordingly: *making* becomes *fabbing* becomes *assembling*.

These developments have not created a surplus utopia or a fair distribution of wealth in the novel. Rather, they become new means of doing the same old tricks: the 3D-printed narcotics economy of Flynnne’s hometown is just another drug empire and the way assembler technology has failed to stop the near-extinction of the human population and is applied to, for instance, terribly gruesome weapon systems show that a revolution of production alone will not dismantle crime or the militarization of technology.

Predictably, surveillance in both futures relies on a global information network of satellites, sophisticated AI, and Big Data algorithms – so much so that by the 22nd century being surveilled is an assumption at the heart of every encounter with security apparati at the background of calls giving “the cold grue” (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 126), seemingly signifying a feeling roughly equivalent to that of being followed on the street. In Flynnne’s time, GPS is an essential tool for government surveillance, but also an important component of social media, where both location and emotional status are displayed real-time. Even advertising works with a degree of personalized surveillance with Red Bull mirrors addressing patrons by name and collecting data on their behavior. Again, impressive innovation works to emphasize the dystopian elements of both futures: issues like climate change or income equality remain unresolved while breaches of privacy are commonplace in the service of national security and targeted advertising.

With such elements, Gibson shows that seriated development in manufacturing and surveillance in fact results in increased sophistication of technologies, but it does not really challenge the overall dystopian capitalist paradigm of his science fictional worlds. For the individual, on the other hand, the possibilities of transhuman technology open up new forms of experience, but the question remains whether this is enough to dispel the oppressive aspects of the system Gibson’s characters inhabit.

In *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, Hayles argues at length that posthumanity is more than the separation of mind from the body as it has often been approached. She points out that the limits of understanding the development of cybernetics and posthumanity from a liberal humanist standpoint are indebted to the (supposedly) Cartesian divide between mind and body. For her, experiences of embodiment, that is “contextual, enmeshed within the specifics of place, time, physiology, and culture,” is “in continual interaction with constructions of the body” (Hayles 196–197). Such constructions are the normative standards relative to historical and societal criteria, that is, abstractions in which “the particularities of embodiment tend to fade from view” (Hayles 199). When focus is turned from the abstract body to

particularities of embodiment, Hayles argues, “a specific material experience emerges . . . [e]mbodiment cannot exist without a material structure that always deviates . . . from its abstract representations” (199).

This kind of embodied posthumanity is linked to the metaphorical ironic cyborg already in the first pages of *The Peripheral*. Burton, Flynn's brother and an ex-marine suffers from glitches, “like phantom limb, ghosts of the tattoos he'd worn in the war, put there to tell him when to run, when to be still, when to do the bad-ass dance, which direction and what range” (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 1). Even on disability pension, Burton still embodies the remnants of his role in the military-industrial complex that has gone fully cybernetic. He is the human made into a drone, thus another symbol for the schizoid impulse of an oppressive system where technology, militarism, and capitalism are intertwined. Even if discharged, the actual embodied reality of war and trauma is there to remind him of the impossibility of escape from the system that, in a very concrete sense, made him into what he is.

The peripheral technology further emphasizes the dystopian ironies of embodying transhumanity. The peripherals come in all shapes and sizes in the novel from homunculi that can be used to operate vehicles or heavy machinery to one-to-one replicas of people with or without complexities of digestion. The most sophisticated do everything that humans do and are constituted of the same building blocks. They can act independently or be operated from a distance as telepresence devices but they can also be controlled by cloud programs. They are “[a]t the cellular level, as human as we are. Which is fairly approximate, depending on who you're speaking to” (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 124) as Lev, the wealthy owner of Flynn's peripheral, explains. This also reveals that the definition of human depends on one's sensibilities towards transhuman existence in Lev's time. Earlier, he mentions having thought as a child that peripherals were ghosts, a seeming nod to cyborg narratives of ghosts in machines, like those in Gibson's early novels.

Even as artifacts, the peripherals are life forms minus consciousness – the attainment of which in the novel apparently does not depend on matching DNA composition. However, they gain another kind of life when taken over by a human via a neural interface that leaves the original body in a sleep-like stasis while moving cognitive faculties to the peripheral. A mindless body becomes occupied by a mind that is not strictly speaking bodiless, but rather embodied differently. This opens up possibilities for positive augmented experience, as occurs for Conner, another ex-cyber soldier and a multiple amputee from Flynn's time, who finds empowerment in taking over a peripheral in the future. At the end of the novel, he has a series of prostheses built for him, based on future peripheral technology, which becomes the fourth embodied version of Conner, the first three being his pre-disabled, disabled, and peripherally abled versions.

For Flynn, after a short period of confusion, operating her peripheral is a seamless experience, even with its futuristic phone and feed apps and fuller sensory capabilities, and she quickly becomes accustomed to the differently embodied experience. Having returned from a prolonged period of peripherality in Netherton's time, she comes to “feel some emotion there might not be a name for” but cannot be sure if it is just “being back in her body” (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 242). The passage hints at a vague connection to the peripheral that becomes even stronger when later she “couldn't imagine using a different peripheral herself” (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 480). Incidentally, by this point she has identical copies on different hemispheres to ease the logistics in Netherton's time, so she does, in fact, use different peripherals, they just happen to feel exactly the same.

A pivotal action scene at the end of *The Peripheral* shows a different version of existence without the constraints of the normative body. Finally confronting the people behind the violent

murder at the start of the novel, Flynn and Netherton see how before their very eyes two seemingly ordinary, augmented humans of the 22nd century walk through a wall. The following confused encounter follows: “‘We’re protean.’ He smiled. ‘Protein?’ ‘Without fixed form.’ He waved his hand through the wall, a demonstration.” (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 455.) Assembler technology is behind the feat, signaling a turn where the whole of the body becomes a transparent technology, Newtonian physics being a moot constraint to quantum-level transhumanity. Netherton’s confusion of protean/protein is also revealing since the two wall-hacking transhumans are, of course, the next step of transhuman evolution. The ones to take this ultimate step to incorporeal existence are the novel’s schizoid characters. Daedra’s co-conspirator sums up the capitalist rationale behind their murderous schemes as he explains why he has not changed shape to escape recognition: “Branding . . . Investment in persona. I represent the product. I’m known to the investors” (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 468). Through sufficiently advanced technology, variations of transhumanity adapt and change considerably faster than through the evolutionary process dictated by protein and DNA. In this sense, the protean “we” seems to refer to the transhuman population in general, juxtaposing its empowering possibilities, like those of the peripherals, to potential schizoid features.

The anthropomorphic peripherals underline the essential nature of embodiment for existence as the opposites of the sentient brain in a jar. They are not minds separated from bodies, a process that usually implies the death and secondary importance of the body, but rather bodies that have capabilities even without the intrusion of consciousness. Netherton’s point of view reveals the power that a peripheral’s functioning body has over its interpretation as human: “Running, he saw its beauty differently, the grace . . . somehow substituting for personality” (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 152). Later, sitting in a car with Flynn’s peripheral without Flynn, he muses that it is easy “to anthropomorphize something that looks so entirely human” and fights back his urge to offer it a cup of coffee (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 335–336). While the peripherals appear human even in AI control, as Netherton realizes early on, they gain a different set of characteristics when operated by humans. As he puts it, Flynn in her peripheral alters “the peripheral’s body language . . . its face became not hers but somehow her” (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 179), thus underlining the central view of existence where being is not the possession but embodiment of characteristics and cognition.

Rather than try to imagine a high-resolution world of disembodied minds, Gibson embraces the realization that embodiment is a central feature of existence. To dabble with embodiment can result in empowerment and added layers to experience, as Conner’s and Flynn’s feelings toward their peripherals show. On the other hand, it can also be exploited by those with a schizoid ethos, as appears evident in how Daedra and her companion become protean through their merger with assembler technology. Gibson thus continues to work out the intricacies of questions present in his fiction since *Neuromancer*, where, as Tiziana Terranova notes, Molly the cyborg warrior and Case the cyberspace cowboy represent two possible directions for human evolution, “an intensification of bodily performativity or . . . the ultimate flight from the body cage” (271), respectively.

The Terror and Charm of the Transhuman

In his encounters with transhuman existence, Netherton is faced with *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, to borrow Otto’s description of the experience of the holy (12–13, 31, 35). According to Otto, the holy is a wholly other mystery that terrifies as well as possesses “a potent charm” (31), a description which also characterizes Netherton’s attitude toward the forms of transhumanity in his time. His reactions to the mystery range from erotic fascination and awe toward peripherals to repulsion with patchers. Seeing Flynn in her peripheral for the first time he finds himself

"[u]nwilling to lose sight of her, out of something that felt at least partially like terror" and that her extended transhumanity before him "was all much stranger than he'd anticipated, like some unthinkable birth or advent" (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 179).

In her analysis of Cole Perriman's *Terminal Games*, Hayles evokes *tremendum* as what anchors "the ideology of the human" as mortal (259). For protagonist Nolan, *tremendum* is the "uniquely self-conscious, uniquely human horror and awe at the sight of a corpse . . . the ghastly mortal comprehension of the fact of death" (qtd. in Hayles 259). This may also help to explain why most characters in *The Peripheral* do not react with strong affect to different aspects of the transhuman.

In Netherton's future, *tremendum* is dampened as materiality has lost its significance in separating the alive and not-alive. The reality of assemblers breaks down the need to obey the laws of Newtonian physics, as the protean forms, like Daedra's, show. Even the novel's final confrontation ends in a peculiar anticlimax of violence as an assembler weapon leaves no traces of violence, simply having a villain "blinked to bone entirely," disintegrated seemingly without effort, as he dies (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 471). According to Hayles (259), without the sight of the corpse to signify mortality, *tremendum* is not manifest. These complications to Otto's *mysterium* also go on to explain why it is the patchers that elicit most emotions of phobic loathing in Netherton: their transhumanity is rooted in corporeality that he perceives as a corruption of embodiment that lies at the heart of humanity. Such a warped relationship between mortality, corporeality, and terror works to add to the dystopian feeling of Netherton's transhuman time.

Flynne's reactions to transhuman technologies do not appear to elicit feelings of *tremendum* in her and are thus juxtaposed with Netherton's. Flynne's approach seems more pragmatic, despite the fact that the transhumanity she encounters is literally from a wholly other world. Her time is not exempt from corporeal mortality either, so the reason for her somewhat nonchalant appropriation of transformative technologies must stem from another source. For one, she is the one going through the embodied experience of a miraculous peripheral, whereas Netherton has the opportunity to remain an observer, adding his own layers of meaning onto what he perceives as Flynne's experience. This suggests another level of juxtaposition, drawing attention to Netherton's status of a complicit member of a kleptocratic elite, a publicist by trade in control of the smooth execution of PR stunts and more for the high-ups of his time. Further, he is a privileged observer of not only Flynne in her peripheral, but also of the totality of her time that cannot really affect his own. Conversely, Flynne does not have the privilege to merely observe transhuman mysteries around her as she is too busy tackling actual threats to her well-being brought on by the meddling of colonial oligarchs from the future.

Veronica Hollinger notes that Gibson has a tendency to end his narratives in events of "profound change . . . transformation[s] implied by some radical technological event" (461). For example, two AIs attain consciousness in *Neuromancer*, a virtual pop-star becomes corporeal in *All Tomorrow's Parties*, and the ambiguous villain Bigend learns to predict the future of the shifts in the financial market in *Zero History*. As Gibson leaves out the repercussions of such events in his novels, Hollinger interprets them as impossible to imagine. For her, they mark a "technological singularity", a chasm across which it is impossible to glimpse, remaining "in thrall to the impossibility of thinking beyond [Gibson's near-futures]" (Hollinger 462, 465). Such an interpretation seems to place Gibson in a similar position as Netherton, faced with an advent that

awes and terrifies him. It might thus appear that Gibson's work, despite all its innovative speculation and astute observation, remains somewhat impartial as to the consequences of posthuman revolutions.

However, in *The Peripheral*, Gibson approaches his own singularities head on. In a general sense, the climactic events that conclude his other work have all occurred in the world of *The Peripheral*. First of all, algorithmic AI "built up over decades" act independently of their makers and it is doubtful whether "anyone today knows quite how they work, in any given instance" (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 145).³ In addition, the divide between virtual and corporeal existence is blurred already in the novel's 21st century by the increasingly important role of social networking and gaming. This is showcased by Flynne checking "Badger" (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 29) for her friends' location and emotional status as well as her previous employment playing "Operation Northwind" (*The Peripheral* 21), and her feeling toward the virtual possibilities of games in her time: "She hated that shit. Hated games. Why did they all have to be so fucking ugly?" (*The Peripheral* 52). In the later future, people can become "all feeds [with] continual access to most things" (*The Peripheral* 102), be present wherever in the world through peripherals, or surpass the restrictions of matter altogether through protean technologies.

Finally, the elite of *The Peripheral*'s future can create "subsecond extreme events in the market" (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 271) by sending information back in time in order to manipulate past worlds to their advantage. Jameson's "transnational corporate realities" (38), with which original cyberpunk was concerned, thus become transtemporal, hailing from material revolutions of information technology. This way, the future kleptocrats appear as a logical end-result of Bigend's attainment of financial clairvoyance at the conclusion of *Zero History*, when he gains the ability to see into the future of the markets. Such a conscious use of science fiction tropes Gibson helped popularize, from artificial intelligence and nanotechnology to science fictional venture capitalism, in *The Peripheral* casts doubt on Hollinger's claim that it would be impossible for him to see into worlds beyond such revolutions.

Rather than an inability to think beyond technological singularities, Gibson shows a critical attitude to singularity narratives in general. Where Hollinger interprets Gibson's anti-climactic conclusions as impasses, in fact, they serve to focus attention not on technological *deus ex machinae*, but the fact that the conditions in which particular people continue to live are defined by much more than revolutions of technology. For Gibson's characters, dystopian futures remain despite technological advances or posthuman singularities. For example, at the conclusion of *All Tomorrow's Parties*, Boomzilla witnesses first hand the emergence of Rei Toei from the computer network into the tangible world, but dismisses the miraculous event by noting that it takes more "to get anybody's attention out there, in the middle of this disaster shit" (Gibson, *All Tomorrow's Parties* 326). He casts the destruction of the San Francisco Bay Bridge, a bricolage habitat for thousands in the novel, as the life-changing event that matters for the people of the novel's world. In this manner, Gibson suggests that technologies are not life-changing if they fail to address the quotidian issues people face and they are not reason enough to experience *tremendum*. Gibson thus tackles some of the criticism he and his cyberpunk colleagues received in the 1990s, like Terranova's claim that they failed to address how "technological change can be and is being shaped by economic and political forces" (275). In fact, Gibson's skepticism toward technology seems evident also at the oft-quoted conclusion of *Neuromancer*, where the newly freed AI simply notes

³ While there are no conscious AI appearing as agents in *The Peripheral*, I believe this has more to do with Gibson's updated approach on the concept of AI rather than a failure to glimpse beyond a singularity of superintelligence. While in *Neuromancer* the AI appear as personified entities, super-computers come to life, *The Peripheral* extrapolates them from the cloud and algorithm technologies of the 2010s.

that “[t]hings aren’t different. Things are things” (316). Similarly, in *The Peripheral*, Flynn’s acquisition of future technology and the use of her peripheral are central to her struggle against the incorporating practices of her society, but they alone cannot overthrow its oppressive structures.

Conclusion

Despite its protean, radically transformative nature, transhumanity in *The Peripheral* is not a wholly other mystery. Its potential to terrify and charm is mainly manifest in Netherton’s repulsion of the patchers and his fascination with Flynn in her peripheral, both of which are deeply rooted in variations of embodiment. As the culmination of embodied transhuman existence strains toward immateriality, where embodiment is a technology that can be easily manipulated, questioning the body as mortal, *tremendum* is replaced by an anticlimax of immaterial violence that leaves no traces. By drawing attention to the various ways transhuman technologies depend on their relation to embodiment, Gibson strips them from mystery and shows them to possess potential for action rather than being mere immobilizing advents of unknowable transformation as Hollinger’s interpretation would suggest. They are portrayed as instruments of change, not its guarantees, as the advances of transhuman technologies are time and again shown to be capable of reinforcing an exploitative status quo in the novel. Netherton describes a similar discrepancy between action and innovation in telling Flynn about the slow catastrophe of the jackpot: “So everything, however deeply fucked in general, was lit increasingly by the new, by things that made people blink and sit up, but then the rest of it would just go on, deeper into the ditch” (Gibson, *The Peripheral* 321). Again, the dystopian ironies of the novel become evident, as immense profits and advancements coincide with the slow, asymmetrical catastrophe.

Transhumanity is a construct that Gibson’s characters interact with as Yaszek’s ironic cyborgs, searching for unalienated subjectivity in a system trying to incorporate them. The irony is made especially visible by the novel’s time-travel motif as Flynn, the fairly literal working-class cyber-heroine, turns even a miracle like communication with the future into a strategy of survival in the oppressive capitalist system of her time. Notably, she becomes immensely wealthy in so doing, but it is not clear whether she manages to dismantle her status as an ironic cyborg, enmeshed in a struggle against the incorporating practices of the dystopian society around her. Either her struggle continues from a new, more privileged standpoint or she becomes a complicit part of the oligarchs running her world like Netherton remains in his.

Gibson himself was surprised to see that *The Peripheral*’s somewhat domestic ending was perceived as a happy one (Gibson, interview). While it is true that Flynn’s continuum does not directly lead to Netherton’s even more dystopian one, its revolutions brought on by the discovery of information time-travel do not overthrow the basic tenets of a broken society. Netherton’s grappling with *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* of the peripherals shows that Gibson is not fazed by the unthinkable advent they represent. Instead, Gibson lays out a many-faceted view of the possibilities and dangers embodied technologies of transhumanity might lead to, bringing attention to the importance of seeing through their promises and perceiving that they themselves do not dismantle oppressive systems.

Even if lives have been changed by emerging technologies, *The Peripheral* returns to a seemingly unrevolutionized position, where Gibson’s characters may have found a modicum of peace midst their respective schizoid systems, but liberation, freedom from oppression, still remains the privilege of the chosen few. In this way, *The Peripheral* accentuates Gibson’s critical attitude toward the potential of transhuman technology in an unequal world. From an author repeatedly

lauded for his prophetic visions, such criticism could warrant a re-examination of our attitudes and relationship with technology and its relation to oppressive social structures.

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Remixing of individuals results in doomed new persons in *Star Trek*

Victor Grech

Abstract: The science fiction genre is unique in that it allows almost magical remixes, including that of two separate physical individuals, such that the controlling mind becomes a single and seamless character. This occurs in three episodes within the Star Trek franchise. It will be shown that the circumstances leading to this event are validated in a pseudo-scientific way. The new, merged personality is shown to be increasingly reluctant to relinquish existence in order to allow the two previous personalities to re-exist. However, Star Trek's respect for the sanctity of the individual's boundaries forces this separation, reifying the old status quo even at the expense of a new entity that is greater than the sum of the original parts.

Keywords: Merged Personality, Remixing of Individuals, Science Fiction, Star Trek.

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The Franchise, now in its 50s

Star Trek is a fictional possible future history that outlines the ways in which humanity might advance and develop up to the 24th century. The series and movies comprise an internally coherent metanarrative that encompasses a total of 735 hours of viewing time, and thereby provides a vast and fertile ground for the analysis of various areas of critical study. The franchise is also 50 years old this year.

The science fiction genre permits novel remixes, such as that of human with alien. One of the most famous such characters is Spock, a human-alien hybrid, a figure so ubiquitous in popular culture so as to also be familiar to individuals who are not Trek fans or even science fiction readers.

This essay will go beyond this intersection and will focus on a prospect that is, as yet, only possible in science fiction: the fusion of two separate physical individuals such that the controlling mind becomes a single and seamless character, a physical and mental remix in one novel and particular individual. This event occurs in three episodes within the franchise, and the possibilities depicted and the outcomes arrived at will be discussed.

Episodes depicting mixes

“Is There in Truth No Beauty?” (*Star Trek*, USA 1968)

An alien, non-humanoid telepathic species are said to be excellent interstellar navigators. “The Medusans have developed interstellar navigation to a fine art.” This may be because “the Medusan sensory system is radically different from ours.” However, communication with these individuals can only be achieved by using “a mind-link with the Medusans” who appear to have no organs of speech.

While carrying a Medusan passenger, “Ambassador Kollos,” the Enterprise sustains an accident and is lost in space and unable to return home. Spock (Leonard Nimoy) explains that

there is someone else aboard who might be able to help us navigate. . . . Perhaps for the purpose of this emergency I might become Kollos. . . . A fusion. A mind-link to create a double entity. Each of us would enjoy the knowledge and sensory capabilities of both. We will function as one being. . . . If the link is successful there will be a tendency to lose separate identity. A necessary risk.

The link is in fact, successful and the new mind, a composite of Spock and Kollos housed in Spock’s body, wonders at the world around him:

This is delightful. I know you. All of you. James Kirk, Captain and friend for many years. And Leonard McCoy, also of long acquaintance. And Uhura, whose name means freedom. She walks in beauty, like the night. . . . Ah, Miranda. There you are. O brave new world, that has such creatures in it. . . . My world is next for us. Captain Kirk, I speak for all of us you call Medusans. I am sorry for the trouble I’ve brought to your ship.

In so doing, Spock-Kollos accesses Spock’s memories and erudition to quote Lord George Byron’s poem “She walks in Beauty” and William Shakespeare’s Miranda from “The Tempest” to refer to Miranda (Diana Muldaur), a human passenger on the Enterprise.

Spock-Kollos effortlessly plots a course, returning the ship “so close to the point where we entered the void, the difference isn’t worth mentioning.” He also poignantly remarks on the human condition:

How compact your bodies are. And what a variety of senses you have. This thing you call language though, most remarkable. You depend on it for so very much. But is any one of you really its master? But most of all, the aloneness. You are so alone. You live out your lives in this shell of flesh. Self-contained, separate. How lonely you are. How terribly lonely.

Despite these observations, when reminded that he “must dissolve the link,” he disappointedly remarks “So soon? . . . You’re a wise Captain,” and willingly disengages into two separate minds once again.

“Facets” (*Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, USA 1995)

The alien Trill are humanoid with an important difference. Some voluntarily host a small creature, an extremely long-lived, sentient, vermiform life form known as a “symbiont,” implanted within their bodies. This “joining” results in an amalgam of two minds that share the symbiont’s memories and skills, which are derived from previous lives, since on the host’s death, the symbiont is extracted and implanted in a new host. The canon never alludes to the lifetime of a symbiont, but this exceeds that of several humans, serially.

The Trill have a unique ceremony, the “zhian’tara,” the “Trill Rite of Closure . . . a ritual where joined Trills get a chance to actually meet their previous hosts.” This is said to be “one of the most powerful experiences of [a Trill’s] life.” Jadzia the Trill protagonist (Terry Farrell) who wishes to undergo the rite and who carries the symbiont called “Dax” explains to her friends that

the memories of one of my previous hosts will be temporarily removed from the symbiont and imprinted onto you. You essentially become one of my hosts for the duration of the ritual. . . . The memories are transferred telepathically. . . . You’ll remain conscious of everything that’s going on around you, and at any time you can reassert yourself and regain control of your body. . . . It’s best to you relax and let the host’s memories emerge. The point is to give . . . the chance to interact with . . . previous hosts.

One of her friends, Odo a shapeshifter (René Auberjonois) houses Curzon, the previous host of Jadzia’s symbiont Dax, a larger-than-life character who had done great feats on behalf of the United Federation of Planets, a person who is described as “manipulative, selfish and arrogant. Most people let him get away with it because he was so charming.”

Odo’s shapeshifting abilities allow him to physically become Curzon, and because of the unique physiology of the shapeshifter, Curzon does not take over Odo but mentally merges with him. “It’s as if Odo and Curzon have been joined. It’s proving to be quite interesting experience for both of us.”

Odo-Curzon uncharacteristically indulges in drink and humour, since both are usually eschewed by the stern and sombre Odo. Odo-Curzon informs Jadzia:

I’ve decided to stay where I am, in this body. And I’m not just speaking as Curzon. This is Odo’s decision as well. We like what we’ve become and neither of us wants to go back to the way things were. . . . I’m sorry. I realise this is difficult for you, but you’ll get over it. Trust me, it’s better this way.

Their stunned friends are informed that “there’s no way to remove Curzon’s memories from Odo without his cooperation. He has to give them up willingly” in order for the memories and personality to return to the Dax symbiont and hence become accessible once more to Jadzia.

Jadzia confronts him. “I want my memories back. . . . You’re both living out a life you never could have had otherwise. But it’s my life you’re living. Those should be my memories. . . . You’re a part of me and I want you back. That way, Jadzia and Curzon can be together the way they should be, through Dax.”

Odo-Curzon gives in and the dual personality is split back into the original components.

“Tuvix” (*Star Trek: Voyager*, USA 1996)

A dramatic accident occurs when two alien humanoid crewmen attempt to return to their ship (*The Voyager*) using the matter transporter. The crewmen are Tuvok, a Vulcan (Tim Russ) and Neelix, Talaxian (Ethan Phillips). In terms of character, they are opposites. Tuvok is the ship’s security officer and a typical Vulcan, stoic with suppressed emotions. Neelix is a jovial extrovert whose multiple roles include ship’s ambassador, morale officer and chef.

The malfunction is noted by the transport operator who observes only one pattern and that this is a merged pattern, a mixture of the two. The transportation results in a creature that is half Vulcan and half Talaxian, wearing a mish-mash of the two’s original clothing. This new being (Tom Wright) identifies himself as “I am Lieutenant Tuvok. And I am Neelix.”

The ship’s doctor (Robert Picardo) discovers that

all biological matter was merged on a molecular level. Proteins, enzymes, DNA sequences. The man you see before you is literally a fusion of two men. But he's surprisingly healthy considering the circumstances. All vital signs are stable. . . . I'm also picking up traces of a third genetic pattern. It appears to be plant-based.

Tuvok and Neelix had gathered plants resembling orchids and the doctor observes "they're part of your genetic structure now. But they don't appear to be affecting your biochemistry."

The being decides to call himself "Tuvix" and notes that "I do have the memories of both men, but I seem to have a single consciousness." Tuvix feels well and indeed, "exhilarated," and "he possesses Tuvok's knowledge and expertise. He also possesses Tuvok's irritating sense of intellectual superiority and Neelix's annoying ebullience."

Further investigation reveals that "there's never been an accident like this recorded in the entire history of transporter technology." An explanation is eventually found in that the orchid's "lysosomal enzymes" (used to break down intra- or extra-cellular materials) "interacted with their DNA while they were in the matter stream, it might have caused their patterns to merge."

Further work on Tuvix's condition is discouraging. The doctor confesses "I won't lie to you. I'm not optimistic. It could take months, even years, to find a solution. And we must face the possibility that this condition is simply untreatable. I feel as though I've lost two patients. I'm sorry."

Captain Janeway's (Kate Mulgrew) log notes that after

two weeks . . . while it's still not entirely clear that he's with us permanently, he's certainly been doing his best to settle in. The crew seems to be growing accustomed to his presence, and he's proving to be a very able tactical officer who isn't afraid to express his opinions. . . . He's forging relationships with many of the officers . . . I've found him to be an able advisor who skilfully uses humour to make his points. And although I feel a bit guilty saying it, his cooking is better than Neelix's.

A potential solution is eventually found. The doctor discovers "a radioisotope that could selectively attach itself to specific DNA sequences . . . that attaches itself to the DNA of one of the merged species, but not the other. . . . Then we simply beam out the selected DNA and segregate the two merged species." Simulations are successful and the doctor assures the subject that "there's nothing to worry about. We've accounted for every variable," to which Tuvix replies "except one. I don't want to die."

Captain Janeway finds herself riven with a moral dilemma.

If we'd had the ability to separate Tuvok and Neelix the moment Tuvix came aboard, I wouldn't have hesitated. . . . But now, in the past few weeks, he's begun to make a life for himself on this ship. He's taken on responsibilities, made friends. . . . So at what point, did he become an individual and not a transporter accident?

Janeway calls for Tuvix and an interesting conversation ensues.

Tuvix: I feel as though I have been dragged in front of the . . . Inquisition. . . .

Janeway: I thought it was important to get your perspective before making a decision.

Tuvix: Are you suggesting that this is your decision to make?

Janeway: I am the Captain of this ship.

Tuvix: . . . Isn't it my decision?

Janeway: Aren't there two other lives to consider here? What about Tuvok and Neelix? Two voices that we can't hear right now. As Captain, I must be their voice, and I believe they would want to live.

Tuvix: But they are living in a way, inside me.

Janeway: It's not the same and I think you'd agree with me. They have families, friends, people who love them and miss them and want them back, just as I do.

Tuvix: But restoring their lives means sacrificing mine. Captain, what you're considering is an execution. An execution, like they used to do to murderers centuries ago. And I've committed no crime at all.

Janeway: Aren't you arguing for an execution too? Of Tuvok and Neelix.

Tuvix: I'm here, alive. Unfortunate as it may be, they're gone.

Janeway: And I have an opportunity to bring them back.

Tuvix: Don't you think that I care about Tuvok and Neelix? Of course I do. Without them, I wouldn't exist. In a way, I think of them as my parents. I feel like I know them intimately.

Janeway: Then you know Tuvok was a man who would gladly give his life to save another. And I believe the same was true of Neelix.

Tuvix: You're right, Captain. That is the Starfleet way. And I know there'll be some people who, who'll call me a coward because I didn't sacrifice myself willingly. Believe me, I've thought of that. But I have the will to live of two men. Look at me, Captain. When I'm happy, I laugh. When I'm sad, I cry. When I stub my toe, I yell out in pain. I'm flesh and blood, and I have the right to live.

Janeway decides to go ahead with the procedure but Tuvix has to be physically restrained and forced to proceed to sickbay. He makes an impassioned appeal to the bridge crew before being dragged off:

Commander, are you going to stand by and do nothing while she commits murder? Mister Ayala. Yes, Lieutenant Paris. You. Doesn't anyone see that this is wrong? . . . Each of you is going to have to live with this, and I'm sorry for that, for you are all good, good people. My colleagues, my friends, I forgive you.

Even the doctor, who has come to know Tuvix over the previous two weeks, balks at the procedure. "I'm sorry, Captain, but I cannot perform the surgical separation. I am a physician, and a physician must do no harm. I will not take Mister Tuvix's life against his will." Janeway then resolutely carries out the procedure herself, successfully.

Discussion

The fusion of two individuals into one has both biological and mythological antecedents, and these episodes accede mostly to the latter. For example, in biology, *Polycephaly* is a medical condition resulting in more than one head. Bicephaly and dicephaly both refer to two heads, and it may be presumed that two separate brains mixed within one body would potentially conflict if they had different desires (McGirr et al.). Mythology however is replete with two-headed or two faced beings. A variant of *polycephaly* is *diprosopus*, a creature born with two faces on a single head. Perhaps the best known example in Greek mythology is Janus, the god of beginnings, endings and transitions. This dual attribute in myth implies the ability to have different thoughts simultaneously, an attribute not dissimilar to that depicted in the above mentioned episodes.

The subordination of myth to science fiction has been noted at least as far back as the 1930s, when Olaf Stapledon noted in his introduction to *Last and First Men* (1930) that his novel was "an essay in myth creation." This is not to say that science fiction intends to place "an equal sign between modern myth creation and science fiction" (Chernyshova 354), but rather to point out that science fiction is both a surrogate for myth as well as a modern and postmodern replacement. Thus, the *Star Trek*,

universe in which Captains Kirk, Picard, Janeway, Sisko, and Archer are still one with Jason, Odysseus, Sinbad, Columbus, Cook, Ahab, Armstrong, and every other sea- or spacefarer, real or fictional, that has ever left (or will ever leave) the comfort and safety of home port in search of what's lurking "out there" and waiting to be discovered (Pilkington 54).

Darko Suvin defined science fiction as “the literature of cognitive estrangement”, with narratives in which there is embedded “a strange newness, a novum” (372). The genre thus “elaborates, deepens, and psychologizes already existing “mythological” themes and situations, the already classical themes of alien visitations, extraterrestrial civilizations and their relations, or near-light speed space travel” (Chernyshova 355), and makes these almost plausible by invoking the seeming magic of science. In the above mentioned *Star Trek* episodes, apart from the peripheral science fictional tropes that are implicit (such as the existence of aliens and faster-than-light travel), the novum is the outcome of the amalgamation of two minds within one body.

More cogently, psychoanalysis has historically recognized the notion that the mind is an amalgam of different parts. For example, Sigmund Freud divided the self into the conscious and the unconscious mind. The latter was further divided into id (instincts and drive) and superego (conscience). The unconscious mind is not usually accessible to the conscious mind and includes socially unacceptable components.

Carl Jung further developed this notion, dividing the unconscious into a personal and a collective unconscious comprised of archetypes shared by the entire race. Archetypes are universal templates that embrace common classes of memories and interpretations and may be used to interpret behaviours. Jung delineated five major archetypes within the individual such as the Self (the control centre), the Shadow (which contains objects with which the ego does not consciously or readily identify), the Anima (the feminine image in a man’s psyche) or the Animus (the masculine image in a woman’s psyche) and the Persona (the mask which the individual presents to the world).

This concept is alluded to in the *Star Trek* canon when Captain Picard (Patrick Stewart) muses that “inside us are many voices, each with its own desires, its own style, its own view of the world” (“The Chase”, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, USA 1993). The episodes I have mentioned above go one step further, hypothesizing the potential outcomes of the complete fusion of two minds.

However, the *Star Trek* franchise, like most of the genre, continues to be bound by the dictates of John W. Campbell (1910-1971), the editor of *Astounding Science Fiction* (later renamed *Analog Science Fiction and Fact*) from 1937 until his death. Campbell “wanted hard, logical science, presented in the context of real, believable characters. He . . . urged [writers] to dream clearly . . . to examine the world that was and to extrapolate what it might be” (Latham vii). Thus, in each of these episodes, the event that merges two minds is variously explained – and thereby lightly glossed over – as a mind-meld between two exotic aliens who each possess an equally exotic telepathic ability, an alien rite that also involves telepathy and goes awry due to the unexpected effect that it has on a shapeshifter, and an accident involving a transporter and exotic alien plants (Grech, “The Trick”).

However, a number of scientific errors are clearly evident and not explained, such as the loss of mass when Tuvok and Neelix are merged into Tuvix (“Tuvix”). Such inaccuracies are usually ignored or glossed over with technobabble, a strategy that the cooperative fan understands and accepts in the interests of the creation of an exciting episode with novel concepts.

These episodes also force the viewer to face notions that are relevant to everyday life. For example, Spock (at the time the original *Star Trek* was aired) was a unique being, a Vulcan-human hybrid with feet in both worlds, eternally struggling to suppress his emotional human half in order to project himself as stoically and authentically Vulcan. The plight of lonely individuals is highlighted by the Spock-Kollos union, who laments “the aloneness. You are so alone. . . . Self-contained, separate. How lonely you are. How terribly lonely.”

More interestingly, the three episodes analyzed here reflect a trend towards increasing reluctance for the merged individual to allow himself to be split into the two original components. Specifically, the 1968 episode (“Is There in Truth No Beauty?”) shows Spock-Kollos disengaging with just a trace of wistfulness. The 1995 episode (“Facets”) has an Odo-Curzon amalgam who is

reluctant to separate: “I’ve decided to stay where I am, in this body. And I’m not just speaking as Curzon. This is Odo’s decision as well. We like what we’ve become and neither of us wants to go back to the way things were.” Persuasion leading to separation is merely vocal, equivalent to a moderate altercation in intensity. The 1996 episode (“Tuvix”) is even more dramatic, with Tuvix emotionally and physically attempting to halt the separation procedure, denouncing it as an “execution” of a man who has “committed no crime at all,” concluding “I have the right to live.”

The sanctity of the personage and the fear of the obliteration of one’s distinctiveness are recurrent themes in the *Star Trek* franchise, fraught with a dread that is most notably evoked by the Borg “who constitute a relentless inhuman tide that threatens to violently overwhelm every species by assimilating all individual beings into the Borg collective, stifling their *élan vital* and incorporating them as part of a hive mind” (Grech, “Pinocchio” 13). In the remix-fusion scenario, the Federation – symbolized by the respective captains or Starfleet crews – strives to reacquire the previous two individuals who had been temporarily obliterated in order for a new individual to be created, since failure to do so would be tantamount to failure “to respect the individuality that is so highly prized in the Federation world” (Conslavo 142), a central tenet and keystone of Federation morals.

In conclusion, the *Star Trek* canon has firmly placed itself on the side of the individual, emphasizing the boundaries and sanctity of the mind even at the cost a novel, merged being who may be superior to the sum of the original parts. Furthermore, “the modern mythological picture of the world has already taken shape, and will probably remain so in the future” (Chernyshova 355), so in lieu of ancient myths, science fiction creates “new ‘unknowns’ . . . outer space and far-away planets . . . populated . . . with monsters and ogres that could well be the close relatives of the trolls and ogres of folklore fame. In that sense . . . sf is modern folklore” (Schelde 4), reimagining myths in the now all-too-familiar environment of high-tech science, a familiar and hence palatable and acceptable milieu for the modern reader/viewer.

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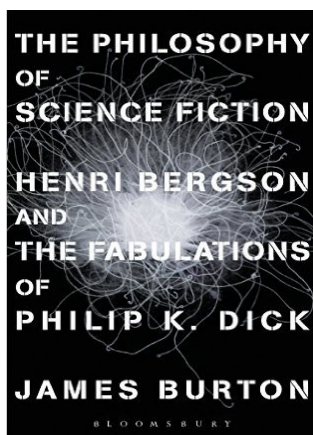


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A Book Review: James Burton – *The Philosophy of Science Fiction. Henri Bergson and the Fabulations of Philip K. Dick.*

Marjut Puhakka



James Burton: *The Philosophy of Science Fiction. Henri Bergson and the Fabulations of Philip K. Dick.* London: BLOOMSBURY, 2015. ISBN 978-1-47422-766-7.

There are many ways we can try to change the world through writing. For one thing, one might try to categorize natural and cultural phenomena by using the tools offered by philosophy. Another way is to write a story that affects the reader's minds and, thus, expands our knowledge of the world by creating stories of possible and impossible worlds. Moreover, a literature scholar may study how written expressions (fictional or scientific) explain the world and human behaviour. All of these ways are somehow present in James Burton's book *The Philosophy of Science Fiction. Henri Bergson and the Fabulations of Philip K. Dick*, published in 2015.

The book is constructed of many layers; each offering us insight into the writing (and of course thinking) processes behind science fiction stories. However, as Burton focuses merely in Philip K. Dick's literary production, the book is not (and is not supposed to be) an attempt to map the whole field of science fiction. Still, the fact that Burton studies a single author's writings, gives room to study not only literature but also Henri Bergson's philosophical theories. Burton nevertheless does not limit his analysis solely to Bergson and Dick, but reflects on the ideas of contemporary philosophers, such as Alain Badiou and Gilles Deleuze, as well.

Burton starts the first chapter by looking at Bergson's *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1932). In this book Bergson defines fabulation as something that might save humanity from the mechanization of the modern era. The survival of humanity in the midst of vast and quick technological developments (and the urban environment that the human race lives in) is an issue that has, indeed, inspired many science fiction writers, as well, especially Philip K. Dick. Burton uses the term fabulation not referring to fabula and syuzhet know from the Russian formalists but to any act of fictionalizing. As he marks in the introduction part, fabulation could be translated as "the wisdom of mythopoetic love". He makes an interesting point here: stories reflect the way the

storytellers view the world they are living in. In other words, stories generate our individual and cultural knowledge in a narrative form. This is the knowledge that Burton is trying to get his hands on through the term of fabulation; generating ideas into the form of a story. From Bergson Burton continues to the reading of Dick's early novels: *Solar Lottery* (1955), *The World Jones Made* (1956), *Vulcan's Hammer* (1960), and *Time Out of Joint* (1959). His other objects of study from Dick's extensive body of work are *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), *Galactic Pot-Healer* (1969), *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968), and obviously *Valis* (1981), which I do not think could be bypassed when talking of Dick, the experience of reality and philosophy together.

Why, then, mix science fiction and philosophy? One might say that science fiction is merely fiction, but as most science fiction fans know, the genre's stories are splendid in studying contemporary problems and issues, distancing them by situating them in other time, other dimensions and other possible worlds. Hence, in many ways, science fiction is a literary form that explores philosophical questions and, in many cases, tries to solve them – or at least bring something new to the discourse. This is how Burton justifies his choice of reading philosophy and literature side by side.

One cannot deny that Burton's book is ambitious. At first it feels like the author is trying to combine two quite different worlds together by force, but after the first part, filled with theory, the two worlds of the book start to harmonize. If the beginning is more about the theory of philosophy, the last part of the book focuses in analysing Philip K. Dick's stories. The theoretical framework continues to be utilized in the reading of Dick's fiction, but mostly the discussion with Bergson and the reading of Dick are differentiated into separate chapters. This way they both get their own space, which I find a practical decision – but this also makes the two parts of the book a bit uneven. Could there have been a way to construct the book more as a choir of two voices as now it resembles a duet where Dick and Bergson have their say in turns?

I consider Philip K. Dick an excellent choice to be studied with the terminology of philosophy, as it is common for his stories to explore the fine line between the real and the unreal. Burton's choice for the theoretical or philosophical framework of his study, Henri Bergson, is a good one, as well. According to Bergson, rationalistic thinking was not a good tool for understand our reality. Rather, he preferred intuition. This creates a connection between Dick and Bergson: they both refuse to make a clear separation between materialism and spiritualism, immanence and transcendence.

At times Burton's book might be a bit heavy to read because it requires the reader to have some kind of knowledge of the developments in the field of philosophy within the past hundred years or so. However, some readers might enjoy the way that Burton tickles the educated mind through his conversations with Bergson's philosophy. Others, on the contrary, may find the analysis of Dick's novels more intriguing. All in all, through the use of an ample amount of research materials, Burton succeeds to establish that science fiction can certainly be read as philosophy in a fabulated form.



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A United Effort on an Autonomous Island – A Report from Archipelacon

Jani Ylönen

Year 2015 saw a Nordic alliance on the Convention front. Instead of hosting their own events on their respective mainlands, Swedish and Finnish fandoms joined forces to hold a con together. They chose the most neutral area possible, Åland, an autonomous and demilitarised Finnish island group, as the site of Archipelacon, a four day international con that ran from June 25th to 28th.

On Thursday 25th, entourages of fans, artists and scholars from both shores and beyond headed out to Åland. For some this journey already contained the first events as one of the organizing forces behind the event, the Finnish Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy Research, or FINFAR, began their academic endeavour on the ferry. Some twenty scholars that varied from degree students to senior researchers huddled in the confines of Silja Galaxy discussing their academic papers ranging from morals in zombie fiction to the ethical choices players face in video games while the archipelago flowed past. This was, however, only a warm up to Åland, where the guests barely had the time to find their bearings in Marienhamn's harbour before the official program roared off with the opening ceremony including the guests of honour, a brass orchestra, and plenty of excitement.

The first day, while only a half in length, encapsulated some of the central interests and strands that ran through the whole con from the charismatic guests of honour to topical issues such as problems with rabid canines and, overall, to a constant flow between genre boundaries and the media. The first guests of honour under fire were the Nordic literary ones, Karin Tidbeck and Johanna Sinisalo, who in an interview defined inter-Nordic genre boundaries among other things. Also, those not yet familiar with the debacle were brought up to date with the Hugo award affair by panels both discussing the cultural phenomena connected to it and the works actually short-listed for the awards. Finally, the short but information-packed day was brought to an end by a chamber music orchestra Quinsonitus featuring Sanja Iljin who played some of the most beloved SF&F themes and songs from the audiovisual history of the genre.

The second day began early and ended late with the program running in seven locations from ten in the morning to nine in the evening. The dawn saw the beginning of the extensive Academic Track that covered scholarly work from various points and fields of interests throughout the whole conference. The track began with a strong dose of genre theory provided by Farah Mendlesohn, Hanna-Riikka Roine and Audrey Taylor who discussed the features and definitions of speculative fictions from novels to short stories. The theory heavy beginning was balanced in the later presentations where the field broadened, for example, into comics and games including two presentations from the fairly recent “Ducktor”¹ Katja Kontturi, who discussed Duckburg for the benefit of both scholars and general attendance. However, as expected the biggest crowds were

¹ “Ducktor”, since Kontturi did her doctoral dissertation in 2014 on Don Rosa's Disney comics featuring duck characters (editor's comment).

drawn by one of the most anticipated guests of honour and probably the most well-known speculative writer alive, George R.R. Martin, whose reading of a chapter from the future release in *The Songs of Ice and Fire* series gathered hordes of fans to the main auditorium. On the other hand, smaller venues gathered respectable audiences throughout Archipelacon with presentations on scenes outside the well-beaten path of Anglophone SF offering glimpses, for example, into Chinese and Latvian scenes, both born in interesting cultural environments. However, at the end of the day it was time to return to Westeros, when characters created by Mr. Martin marched on stages with tassels and thongs in the form of a burlesque show.

On the third day, or Saturday to the outside world, the Academic Track started with technological visions of artificial intelligences, from where it continued into the realms of dystopias and fantastic races. Stefan Ekman, one of the organizers of the academic program, also found time to present on how fantasy maps relate to the rest of the text. Later, he also chaired the key note speech by the academic guest of honour Gary Wolfe, who delved into genre theory. Sadly, his quite interesting speech, which mainly discussed how boundaries have been drawn between different speculative fictions, was only the first part of a larger work with the latter part aiming for fresher perspective. The day also included the guest of honour speech by Karin Tidbeck where she revealed her dark past in roleplaying and its effects on her fiction, which was a few days earlier categorized as Nordic Weird. Later, George R.R. hosted a screening of an episode of the *Game of Thrones* television series followed by a Q&A about the adaptation of the novel and writing a screenplay. This linked nicely with Archipelacon's other sessions on adaptations, for example, from screen to comics and vice versa, each discussing the flux between different mediums so relevant in speculative fiction today. Once more the program for the day ended with costumes, albeit ones more family friendly, as the final show, before the pool party that is, was a masquerade.

While the three days full of program and parties had clearly taken their toll on the participants, many managed to drag themselves to Sunday's academic sessions, which ranked among the most popular ones of the whole Archipelacon. Anna Leena Harinen's presentation on the adaptation of *Song of Ice and Fire* characters in the *Game of Thrones* filled the seats and later presentation by Cheryl Morgan on the reception of one of Neil Gaiman's works in LGBT community filled the entire room. However, neither should one neglect to mention Anders Sandberg, a rare non-literary/-cultural studies scholar, whose fascinating presentation on augmented intelligence in SF texts was between the two. Finally, the academic track was wrapped up by Merja Polvinen's, who as one of the organizers had also spoken the introductory words in the first session, presentation on a novelette by Catherynne M. Valente, which would no doubt have garnered even more attention had the author's presence in 2016's Finncon been already announced. Before the closing ceremony, Gary Wolfe and Niall Harrison discussed literary critique, one of the final missing pieces in a very thorough and informative convention. Archipelacon ended with a note of happiness and a hope, which might for some turn into a nightmare, that the party will continue in 2017 with a World Con in Helsinki (which it will!).