

## I. Introduction

**Ph.D. Why?**

**“Byte Me! Dissident Fictions, Cyberpunk and the Landscape of Global Critique.” (personality as a template)**

**The Alchemind Society: The International Association for Cognitive Liberty**

how I came to be interested in cyberpunk

(historical utopian/dystopian relation to treatment of outsider more than science fiction per se) —drawn in by obvious outsider role of punk in our culture, that is, even as it was co-opted for commercial ends...

Interested in the methods "utopian" societies employ to control and conform unorthodox thinking and thought processes by citizens

And conversely, what happens to dissenters when the dystopian, or dark social side appears all pervasive.

Key canonical texts for me: Orwell's 1984 (perhaps not co-incidentally same year Neuromancer published); Fahrenheit 451 Community of outsiders, nomadic social refuse carrying around a bunch of obsolete (because "useless" material in their heads—hobos with "downloaded" memories of books at their beck and call...cyberpunks avant la lettre.

Issue of oppositional becoming alternative (Raymond Williams laments—but especially today, where anything remotely subversive is co-opted to sell to a target market, the question is, what does opposition look like? In many ways, cp literature imaginatively enacts what such a contestatorial landscape would be, what the already here future would make of a cynically jaded modus operandi...

Flip to Alchemind Web site/Next Slide.

I'm increasingly interested in how we, as a culture, stifle potential Dissident Mind States/Dissident Politics: in an age of increasingly global contexts for capitalism and technology. (NYT Falun Gong religious group in China example)

**Or: Anti-Legalization Drug Act (prohibiting research on illegal drugs that would be federally funded)**

So, in spite of Gibson's disclaimer about his fiction and sci fi in general, "People shouldn't look at science fiction like they look at "real" fiction. They shouldn't expect that this is what the future is going to look like. [Science fiction authors] are sort of charlatans; we come up with a few ideas and we make a living off of that."

There is an imaginative component that, as with sci fi of the past, becomes a part of everyday reality.

Sterling Quote (much same as AS on new tech)

## **II. New Technologies and Cognitive Liberty**

New technology has the potential for increasing or broadening human awareness, perception, understanding and appreciation.

To this end the Alchemind Society monitors new technological developments for their ability to increase cognition and to further the principles of cognitive liberty and autonomy.

At the same time, new technology, and the legislation that may be enacted to control it, has the potential to decrease cognitive liberty, and to infringe on cognitive privacy and freedom. Humans and new technologies have had a long history of symbiotic relations, but only recently has the possibility for genetic alterations, integrated brain-prostheses, and other technological interfaces, made the question of cognitive integrity and autonomy one of genuine consequence.

Questions we are asking, and seeking answers for, Include those you see:

What are the implications for mental autonomy when cyberware technology—technology that attempts to create a working interface

between machines/computers and the human nervous system, including (but not limited to) the brain—become commonplace, wearable computers become wet-wired to our own brains and memory is augmented by a high-speed wireless connection to the Web?

you will recognize the overlays with Neuromancer

Recent 60 minutes on:

cochlear implant for deaf children (a device mounted behind the ear, bypasses sound mechanism of ear to point where electronic impulses are transmitted to the brain—allows the brain to “hear”).

How might developments in such areas as nanotechnology, brain implants, brain fingerprinting, psychopharmacology, brain-wave monitoring and entrainment, and subliminal messaging affect cognitive liberty and autonomy?

David Presti work—ck TRP—science magazines

What role should the government take with regard to new technology that has the potential to radically augment or manipulate cognition? Will such technology be prohibited and voluntary users made criminals? And, what protections should exist to ensure that such technology is not used against people without their consent?

As you might gather, many of these issues are present or prophesied in much of cyberpunk, and particularly, Neuromancer—Case’s lethal brain implants, the sensorium he shares with Molly, and the reparative “work” he has done on his brain—these new possibilities, as they become increasingly available—if you don’t believe they will be, just read any issue of WIRED/ Industry Standard...—will require diligent monitoring.

—interns via ucd Career/Intern Center at: <http://icc.ucdavis.edu>

### **III. Webs of CP Culture**

- Literary**
- Technological**
- Subcultural**
- Criminal/Legal**

## Political (Civil Libertarian)

### IV. Cyberpunk Literature

#### Where did it come from? (click to Origenesis)

**INTERZONE:** (Burroughs book on Tangier)

In 1985, an article appeared in INTERZONE #14, called "The New Science Fiction."

"The New Science Fiction" was the first manifesto of "the cyberpunk movement."

The article was an analysis of the SF genre's history and principles; the word "cyberpunk" did not appear in it at all.

(from Sterling at:

[http://www.eff.org/pub/Misc/Publications/Bruce Sterling/Interzone columns/interzone.06](http://www.eff.org/pub/Misc/Publications/Bruce%20Sterling/Interzone%20columns/interzone.06))

#### Cheap Truth

"In the early 1980's SF author Bruce Sterling, under the pseudonym "Vincent Omniaveritas", edited a series of one-page newsletters titled Cheap Truth.

(It's usually referred to as a samizdat, after the mimeographed newsletters dissidents circulated among themselves in Communist Eastern Europe.) In them, Bruce Sterling, Lewis Shiner, Rudy Rucker, and other members of a loose-knit group of SF writers (calling themselves "the Movement") attacked what they considered the stagnant state of the time's popular science fiction and hyped their own works. As such, they document the development of the literary consciousness later dubbed "cyberpunk".

#### (click to "The Truth Cannot be Copyrighted")

Bruce Sterling's "Cheap Truth" (on-line) Newsletters attacked (then) contemporary sci fi authors for sitting on the "fatted sow" and not producing any novel ideas on image of humans in future: a continual challenge to contemporary authors to be more creative, repeatedly laudatory of writers he sees as innovative (cp).

Note that: These samizdat-style articulations of the emergent cp lit. philosophy are signed with spurs to the "data pirates" to gleefully "steal" the info written—non copyright explicitly noted.

**Freedom of information as one aspect of "resistance"—  
economic subterfuge.**

## Etymology

### The Term:

Copyright © 1980 Bruce Bethke “Cyberpunk”.

A story where word 'cyberpunk' appears first time ever. First published in AMAZING Science Fiction Stories, Volume 57, Number 4, November 1983.

The story is itself about a bunch of teenage hackers/crackers (distinction to follow)

### WORD SPLICE:

Norbert Wiener and his famous idea of Cybernetics: cybernetic systems controlled by feedback loops that adjust the system in question, be it biological or synthetic  
Cybernetics is the science studying control and communication in animal and machine

Cyber: from Norbert Wiener, meaning (from the greek), ‘governor’ or ‘steersman’—for self governing systems;

in relation to cyberpunks—could say that *self*-government becomes the manifest mantra, *anti* government positioning a subculture and political position, and government, becomes a fiction. For instance,

### Where is the government in Neuromancer?

There’s some insinuations of espionage and covert military actions on the part of character Armitage, but these seem to be again related to corporate interests.

A defining feature of Cp literature, is the noted absence of Government with a big G, and self government that means vigilante justice and cowboy-style individualism (think of Case’s “punishment” for stealing from his employer)

Cp characterized by anarchistic self-preservation in street jungle, all-pervasive global capitalism (the Sprawl) and BAMA— the Boston Atlanta Metropolitan Axis— in Neuromancer.

The “cyber” in cp, however, really refers to something much thinner these days, serving as a synonym for something machinic, or that is produced or exists via a cybernetic machine:

**Punk**—an anarchistic, fast paced, largely music based youth movement that originated around the Sex Pistols in 1970s/80s. Carried a dissident/oppositional political bent, that of anarchy

—excellent book that places Punk in relation to Situationism—an avant garde art/revolution group from a decade earlier—*Lipstick Traces*, Greil Marcus.

How cyberpunk literature can be distinguished from earlier science fiction:

**Relationship to technology:**

Tends to be two traditions in traditional sci fi:

utopian positivist relationship of humanity to technology

Examples:

dystopic, pessimistic human relations with technology

Examples:

in cyberpunk there is a sort of reckless survivalism by which many of its characters operate. So, rather than praising technology or denouncing it,

there is an acceptance of technology in its prevalence as a basic condition of existence—not as something to be promoted, but as an integrated component of everyday life.

**Other defining characteristics:** excess of representation, (its speedy punk flavor)

**Neuromancer as Key text**—supreme irony:

Gibson wrote it on a typewriter, not even a word processor.

He says:

“I'm not a techie. I don't know how these things work. But I like what they do, and the new human processes that they generate.” (<http://www.levity.com/corduroy/gibson.htm>)

—One of the processes generated has been vitriolic condemnation of cp as traditional sf writers and critics disparage cp, despair for what they assume is “irresponsible” pessimism... Tom Moylan, “ Untainted Skys, Mississippi Review collection (#47/48 Vol 16:2-3; 1988)..., Kim Stanley Robinson....

Cyberpunk is frequently criticized in relation to more clearly (moral?) oppositional literary incarnations of radical protest (as, for instance, compared to American science fiction of the 1970s).

SLIDE: OBJECTIONS TO CP: Tom Moylan, author of **Untainted Skies**, for example, complains that:

while cyberpunk settings symptomatically capture[] the 1980s ambiance of privilege and poverty, the plots and characters of most cyberpunk texts compromise that vision so that the narrative possibilities of opposition are deflected and readers are trapped in the thrilling dead-end of cynicism, left with fashionable survival or displaced rebellion. (184).

**Another critic, chastises William Gibson and Bruce Sterling, for “disparag[ing] a progressive political agenda even though their dystopian narratives offer ample cause for resisting a capitalist future.” cyberpunk writers, “put a hard dystopian spin on the post-industrial age without ever disputing its ascendance.”<sup>1</sup>**

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**But in my opinion, these critics are missing the potential of cp to inspire dissident movements that are unrecognizable by earlier standards of “radical protest”**

**(now discuss social/political influence)**

**(slide goes bk to overview) Third component I want to discuss in relation to cp literature: its Social/Political Influence:**  
“cyberspace” William Gibson’s gift to the English speaking world— was promulgated by John Perry Barlow, co-founder of Electronic Frontier Foundation among many other things—song writer for Grateful Dead—,  
In 1990, he applied William Gibson's science fiction term Cyberspace to the already-existing global electronic social space now generally referred to by that name. Until his

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<sup>1</sup>Terence Whalen, “The Future of a Commodity” (1992), 75, 76.

naming it, it had not been considered any sort of place. (plus Barlow's manifesto 1996)

Electronic Civil Disobedience—critical art ensemble, manifestos

## **V. Cyberpunk as Subculture**

(ru Sirius on all cultures as subcultures)

### **Who did it attract?**

#### **Hackers, Crackers, Phreakers in 80s/90s**

Phreakers, phone hackers (original communications tech hackers) Phone + Freak (on line magazine Phrack—phone + Freak + hack)

#### **History of term hacker:**

Hack: almost 5 pages of OED on hack to hacky

Hack comes from hackney, a tired used horse; shift to horse for hire; to coach for hire; to person as drudge for hire:

18<sup>th</sup> c. hack writers, on “Grub Street” (equivalent to modern day ghost writers—hired by a publisher to do a specific piece of work. drudge worker who will do any kind of work

From the 18c, there were

basically two writing styles: the elegant and ornate 'high' style of Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, Samuel Johnson, and the other essayists, and the 'low' style of the so-called Grub Street hacks.

promiscuous, or indiscriminate work—obvious extension, slang for prostitute. (Interesting that Molly was a prostitute)

Hack (more obvious to our sense) to chop/cut into pieces

Hacker, one who hacks: as early as 1581: “Like these cutters, and hackers, who will take the wall of men, and picke quarrels.”

“a common hacker or notorious thief.”

1649 “How comes City and Country to be filled with Drones and Rogues, our highwaies with Hackers, and all places with sloth and wickedness!”

Breaking a word, mangling its sense... like the disruption/corruption of files/computer code as language.

Legal def—slide

Plagerism vs. Appropriation—cp literature all about appropriation: the Panther  
Moderns and Finn's techno-scrap heap revamping of comp.

Hackers accd to steven Levy ( slide)

Crackers, RU Sirius in Mondo User's guide (insert slide)

## **Cowboys, nomads, & Techno-Tribalism** (cp fakebook image)

### **Dissident Manifestos—**

**in handling language, new technologies directly handle the social bond  
(Lyotard)**

**Group called “The Legion of Doom” a loose alliance of young  
computer hackers—bit of a scapegoat group for govnt repression  
in hacker crackdown of 1990) A key spokesperson, “Mentor”  
published this manifesto in “Phrack” a magazine for digital  
underground, name spliced from “phone/freak/hack”**

**1989 Knight Lightning aka Craig /nyedorf/ published an illicitly  
copied Bell communications document called E-911 in the online  
Phrack magazine.**

**No end to the troubles for all people connected with this  
document...**

**“The Conscience of a Hacker” phrack, Volume one, issue 7, phile 3  
Mentor's manifesto in full at:**

**[http://six\\_dot.tripod.com/DBB/Hacker\\_Manifesto.html](http://six_dot.tripod.com/DBB/Hacker_Manifesto.html)**

**“This is our world now... the world of the electron and the switch, the  
beauty of the baud. We make use of a service already existing  
without paying for what could be dirt-cheap if it wasn't run by  
profiteering gluttons,  
and you call us criminals.**

**We explore...**

**and you call us criminals.**

**We seek after knowledge...**

**and you call us criminals.**

**We exist without skin color, without nationality, without religious bias...**

and you call us criminals.  
You build atomic bombs, you wage wars, you murder, cheat, and lie to us  
and  
try to make us believe it's for our own good, yet...

we're the criminals.

Yes, I am a criminal. My crime is that of curiosity. My crime is that of  
judging people by what they say and think, not what they look  
like. My crime is that of outsmarting you, something that you will  
never forgive me for.

Barlow's manifesto: full text:

<http://www.eff.org/~barlow/Declaration-Final.html>

contextualize w/ the 1996 Telecommunications "Reform" Act, passed in the  
Senate with only 5 dissenting votes, would make it unlawful, and  
punishable by a \$250,000 to say "shit" online. Or, for that matter, to say any  
of the other 7 dirty words prohibited in broadcast media. Or to discuss  
abortion openly. Or to talk about any bodily function in any but the most  
clinical terms.

### A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace

Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I  
come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask  
you of the past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have  
no sovereignty where we gather...

We have no elected government, nor are we likely to have one, so I address  
you with no greater authority than that with which liberty itself always  
speaks. I declare the global social space we are building to be naturally  
independent of the tyrannies you seek to impose on us. You have no moral  
right to rule us nor do you possess any methods of enforcement we have true  
reason to fear...

Governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. You  
have neither solicited nor received ours. We did not invite you. You do not  
know us, nor do you know our world. Cyberspace does not lie within your  
borders. Do not think that you can build it, as though it were a public  
construction project. You cannot. It is an act of nature and it grows  
itself through our collective actions.

Muzzling free speech. (EFF)

Right to privacy (EFF and Cypherpunks) and Free Software

▪ Cypherpunk Manifesto (1993)

▪ GNU Manifesto (1993)

## V. Cyberpunk Politics

“Information wants to be Free” (coined by Stuart Brand) It quickly became one of the elements of [Hacker Ethics](#).

*"In fall 1984, at the first Hackers' Conference, I said in one discussion session: "On the one hand information wants to be expensive, because it's so valuable. The right information in the right place just changes your life. On the other hand, information wants to be free, because the cost of getting it out is getting lower and lower all the time. So you have these two fighting against each other." That was printed in a report/transcript from the conference in the May 1985 \*Whole Earth Review\*, p. 49.*

<http://www.anu.edu.au/people/Roger.Clarke/II/IWtbF.html>

### **Electronic Civil Disobedience: Critical Art Ensemble:**

Critical Art Ensemble is a collective of five artists of various specializations dedicated to exploring the intersections between art, technology, radical politics, and critical theory.

### **T.A.Z.: Temporary Autonomous Zone: Ontological Anarchism, Poetic Terrorism (1991) (read excerpts)**

### **Electronic Frontier Foundation ([www.eff.org](http://www.eff.org))**

#### **EFF'S HOT TOPICS:**

[Censorship & Free Expression](#) - [Content filtering](#) - [DVDs](#) -  
[Encryption](#) - [Digital Surveillance](#) - [Medical Privacy](#) - [Online Copyright & Fair Use](#) - [DNS & human rights](#) - [Junk e-mail \(spam\)](#) -  
[Cybersquatting](#)

**Cypherpunks and Issue of encryption: Crypto (Steven Levy);  
Cryptonomicon (Neal Stephenson); Biology as  
cryptography...(Blood Music)**

The Cryptomancer wb site

### **Cypherpunk Manifesto**

**“Privacy is necessary for an open society in the electronic age. Privacy is not secrecy. A private matter is something one doesn’t want the whole world to know, but a secret matter is something one doesn't want anybody to know. Privacy is the power to selectively reveal oneself to the world.”**

...

**“We cannot expect governments, corporations, or other large, faceless organizations to grant us privacy out of their beneficence. It is to their advantage to speak of us, and we should expect that they will speak. To try to prevent their speech is to fight against the realities of information.**

**Information does not just want to be free, it longs to be free...**

**We must defend our own privacy if we expect to have any. We must come together and create systems which allow anonymous transactions to take place. People have been defending their own privacy for centuries with whispers, darkness, envelopes, closed doors, secret handshakes, and couriers. The technologies of the past did not allow for strong privacy, but electronic technologies do.**

**We the Cypherpunks are dedicated to building anonymous systems. We are defending our privacy with cryptography, with anonymous mail forwarding systems, with digital signatures, and with electronic money.”**

### **Anti-property (dot-communism)**

**“The Economy of Ideas: Selling Wine Without Bottles on the Global Net” <http://www.eff.org/~barlow/EconomyOfIdeas.html> proclaims the death of intellectual property. (also Wired article October 2000) napster issue—  
by John Perry Barlow**

**The GNU Project’s aim was to develop a *complete free Unix-like system*.**

**Free Software/ copy left**

In the [GNU project](#), the aim is to give *all* users the freedom to redistribute and change GNU software. If middlemen could strip off the freedom, we might have many users, but those users would not have freedom. In other words, they would improve the program perhaps but claim proprietary rights. So instead of putting GNU software in the public domain, we ``copyleft" it. Copyleft says that anyone who redistributes the software, with or without changes, must pass along the freedom to further copy and change it. Copyleft guarantees that every user has freedom.

Proprietary software developers use copyright to take away the users' freedom; we use copyright to guarantee their freedom. That's why we reverse the name, changing ``copyright" into ``copyleft."

## **VI. Example: Sealand: A cyberpunk Island**

**[Note: weave in these ideas above: freedom islands/data havens; TAZ—politics of space]**

**Intersects with literature, technology, subculture, politics, and criminal components of cp culture.**

**Freedom islands in Gernsback years,  
Ira Levin's This perfect day**

**freedom islands/data havens in CP  
Snow Crash, "The Raft"—an outlaw zone  
Islands in the Net, oil riggers off the coast of Grenada with  
"data pirates" and third world economies making their way  
through the theft of information  
Synners**

**Subculture (crew running it are proclaimed cypherpunks)**

**Political: issue of national jurisdiction over space/British  
govnt taking offence**

**Criminal/Legal: issue of  
Information privacy/encryption**

**"Work islands"—(Synners) workstations that allow hackers to  
interface with cyberspace**

**Flatlined: “I am the Dead and their Land”—  
Neuromancer (character)**