The Creation and Dissolution of Binaries in William Gibson's <u>Neuromancer</u>:

Babylon, Zion, and the Artificial Intelligences

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ABSTRACT

Since William Gibson includes a Rastafarian Enclave and a theological compass in *Neuromancer*, this can be used to examine the troublesome natures of the two Artificial Intelligences, Wintermute and Neuromancer. The Rastafarian's beliefs and interpretations of Babylon and Zion, the oppressors and the liberated, add political significance to the Tessier-Ashpool's and their enslaved Artificial Intelligences. Since the Artificial Intelligences are both created of Babylon – the Tessier-Ashpools – and also wanting to be free of them, they are something outside of both. In the Artificial Intelligences, then, Gibson collapses the straightforward dichotomy of Babylon and Zion.

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DEDICATION

For Emily, Jeff, and Rob.

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Neuromancer has been widely received as starting the cyberfiction genre. Gibson creates

a futuristic setting in which the characters have abilities granted by cybernetic implants, space

travel is commonplace, and the world is practically one giant city. The text is deliberately

disorienting: Gibson presents inventions that have yet to be invented, and a cyberculture that is

accepted as a norm. Rather than explaining the gadgetry, implants and simulations, the reader

must accept this bizarre reality as his characters do. Gibson does not bother to explain the hows

and whys of his setting and the technology in which it is steeped. As a result of such stimulating

imaginative flights, his matrix is said to have helped inspire the founding of the internet and

network technology. Culturally, his cyberworld allows for a society in which gender roles seem

less important, and physical prowess can be purchased. Thus, Molly, the Razor Girl, acts as the

Street Samurai and defends her man, Case. The world of Neuromancer turns upside-down the

romance tradition of the man defending the woman. Case, the Cyber Cowboy, is not left

helpless: his skills in the Matrix allow him to have several almost spiritual experiences with the

Artificial Intelligences. Those intelligences are often interpreted as malevolent, and are one of

the most fascinating aspects of Neuromancer. The reader may get accustomed to seeing Molly's

razor blades flick from the tips of her fingers, or Case speak with his former (now dead) mentor,

but the reader is left in the same state as Molly and Case in regard to the Artificial Intelligences:

confused. The Artificial Intelligences reach near-deific status as they are able to both take and

give life; however, Gibson shows them to be also like caged, dangerous animals: they are not

autonomous, and they desire to be free of their creators and jailers.

Thus the nature of the Artificial Intelligences in William Gibson's Neuromancer is

somewhat mystifying. Not only are these disembodied characters driving the plot of the novel,

their sentience is problematic: even though their processors and software may have been

designed by human minds, the Artificial Intelligences are not human minds. Hence, how can an

Artificial Intelligence be understood and analyzed in the same way that a human character would

be? As "characters" with motivation, action and self-awareness, Wintermute and Neuromancer

function in similar ways to any character in any novel. Yet because of their technological and

near-supernatural qualities, their natures are left ambiguous; they are difficult to identify with as

one would typically identify with a character with a fixed appearance or more standard physical

presence. They also complicate the question of good and evil in the novel. The text is full of

dichotomous language – meat and mind, male and female, animal and human – which leads one

to struggle with the characters in terms of good and evil, the most basic of literary dichotomies.

It is entirely unclear, for instance, whether Wintermute's actions to emancipate itself can be

characterized as evil or whether they are good. However, Gibson does include a theological

compass in the Rastafarian community, who stand apart from all of the other characters in the

novel in their language and complete separation from the chaotic world that Case and Molly

navigate. Their culture of resistance to, what they term as, Babylon brings to the plot a new

layer of antagonists and protagonists and it is in the Rastafarians' ability to situate things as

either of Babylon or of Zion that may help clarify the nature of the Artificial Intelligences in

Neuromancer. By the end, however, Gibson has collapsed the aforementioned dichotomies of

meat and mind and male and female, as well as the moral binaries of Babylon and Zion. He

includes a variety of contradictory viewpoints regarding the morality of the Artificial

Intelligences, and he ultimately makes these notions of good and evil even more complicated

because the characters of Neuromancer and Wintermute become a new entity when they are

joined together. This ultimate joining is typical to Neuromancer: dichotomies are meant to be

questioned and examined.

The primary dichotomy that I will be examining is Zion as seen in the Rastafarian enclave, and Babylon as seen in the Tessier-Ashpools. Because the Rastafarians provide a theological bearing to a complicated text, I will be using this compass as a means to examine the dichotomy of good and evil. Once the symbols of Babylon and Zion have been established, a close reading of both Neuromancer and Wintermute brings to the fore another, more abstract, dichotomy, present in the two dissimilar Artificial Intelligence characters. Since the Artificial Intelligences are both created of Babylon – the Tessier-Ashpools – and also wanting to be free of them, they are something outside of both. In the Artificial Intelligences, then, Gibson collapses the straightforward dichotomy of Babylon and Zion.

The roles of Babylon and Zion are very informative when examining the troubling roles of the two Artificial Intelligences in <u>Neuromancer</u>. Benjamin Fair is one of the few scholars to thoroughly examine Rastafarian history, and symbolism in the context of <u>Neuromancer</u>. In his discussion of their roles, he brings to the fore the historic conflict between Babylon and Zion and how this effects <u>Neuromancer</u>. He has two strategies in his examination: he applies *detournement*[1] theory, and he draws heavily on the history, religion, and culture of Rastafarians. The conflicts in the novel are not an exact representation of the Babylon and Zion of the Old Testament and Apocalyptic texts, yet the terms retain their poignancy. In brief, what "Babylon" means within Rastafarian theology is the people who have enslaved Africans. In the broad sense, Babylon equals white people. What "Zion" means within Rastafarian theology is literally Ethiopia – the place from which most of the Jamaican-African population were first taken into enslavement – but symbolically it means freedom and self-determination. Thus, themes of

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[1] Fair defines detournement as "the practice of turning something away from its officially sanctioned meaning toward one's own purpose" (94). In terms of the Rastafarian culture, he discusses their acceptance of the Bible as their holy text, and their rejection of the previous interpretations of the text. Using detournement theory in <u>Neuromancer</u> generally means that the critic will find new interpretations of old philosophies or new uses of old tools.

freedom and restriction become more political, more meaningful, within the subtext of Babylon and Zion. As ruthless and perverse capitalist figures, the Tessier-Ashpool family/corporation embody many of the subjugating and domineering qualities associated with Babylon; the dominant symbol of Babylon in the novel is the Tessier-Ashpools. Zion is represented through the Zion cluster Rastafarians, whose language is an immediate marker of their similarities with the modern-day Rastafarians. Their desire for their own Zion has driven them to space where they can remain as separate from Babylon as possible; they function as a Utopian pocket in a dystopian world, and as positive forces in their desire to be helpful.

The historical and religious aspects of the Rastafarians are the lynchpins to the dichotomy of Babylon and Zion. Fair, on the other hand, prioritizes the cultural significance of the Rastafarians, and how they are able to empower themselves by adopting and transforming cultural artefacts to their own purposes. There appears to be an inherent contradiction in the Rastafarians' desire to be separate from Babylon, but in their efforts to separate become completely reliant on Babylon technology. Fair's discussion of *detournement* is enlightening in resolving this problem. He demonstrates that the Rastafarians *are* able to empower and separate themselves from Babylon:

> [O]ut of bits of Babylon itself they created a new homeland, which clearly denies any original plenitude. The name of the community, Zion cluster, suggests that with technology they have at last claimed their own territory, but it is a constructed one (both literally and figuratively), not the birthplace of any essential identity. The return to the 'homeland' has in a sense been achieved, yet the Zionites still maintain an adversarial engagement with Babylon. (95)

Like so many aspects of Neuromancer, there are complications to any binary presented. Even the Rastafarians have had to adopt and transform aspects of Babylon to create their own Zion. However, the ideals remain the same: Babylon is still a symbol of oppression, and Zion is still a symbol for freedom.

The Rastafarians have been examined by a handful of other critics. There is a general consensus that the Rastafarians are very significant in two areas of Neuromancer: they are important to the final Straylight Run, and the use of dub music is widely accepted to be significant to the supernatural themes of the text. However, few critics have thoroughly examined the Rastafarian enclave. Istvan-Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., emphasizes the importance of dub music as an external art form capable of salvation, which is oddly counterproductive to the apocalyptic culture of the Rastafarians (228). Jack Voller discusses how their separation and exile has been compromised by Wintermute, who manipulates them into helping Case and Molly (22-3), and Ulrik Ekman mentions the Rastafarian as ineffectual agents of change in terms of social constructs (88). The two critics who focus most clearly on the Rastafarians are Tom Moylan and the aforementioned Benjamin Fair. Moylan situates the Rastafarian as the single utopian enclave in the dystopian setting (188). However, he argues that they are flawed primarily because of their apparent non-inclusiveness (189-90). As an enclave of solely heterosexual men, the community is not as idyllic as it could be (191). Fair disputes Moylan's assertions by demonstrating that the Rastafarian community is in direct opposition to the highly technological culture of Case and Molly (92-3). Fair establishes the Rastafarian community as a positive and helpful force in Neuromancer specifically because it turns its back on the cyberworld (97). However, while all of these critics mention the Rastafarian culture and establish its significance to the larger conflict, the discussion of Babylon and Zion ends after

establishing that the Tessier-Ashpool's Straylight Villa is an obvious representation of Babylon, and as such is a symbol of perversion and wickedness. It is generally accepted that Maelcum's dub music which allows him to bring Case back from the dead is miraculous (Gibson 244), and establishes Maelcum, at least, as a significant character who represents salvation. However, with the exception of Moylan and Fair, the Rastafarians are left somewhat neglected. The symbolism of Babylon and Zion is significant, as Fair establishes, and thus deserves more serious analysis.

As characters with a theology to follow, they also represent a moral compass in an amoral setting. The Panther Moderns are the allies that Case and Molly work with in order to kidnap the Dixie Flatline, and they are one of many examples of the pervasive amoral aspects in Neuromancer. The Panther Moderns' means of facilitating the Dixie Flatline heist is by causing as much chaos and fear as possible, which then causes the deaths of innocent people (67). The Moderns seemed to delight in the pointless violence and wickedness involved. Case outlines some of the details of the heist: "The moderns were using some kind of chickenwire dish in New Jersey to bounce the link man's scrambled signal off a Sons of Christ the King satellite in geosynchronous orbit above Manhattan. They chose to regard the entire operation as an elaborate private joke" (60). The choice of satellite is not the only time that religious lingo is included, and until the Rastafarians, none of the examples seem complimentary. The Moderns cause chaos by blaming "an obscure subsect of militant Christian fundamentalists" (61). Case notices "predatory-looking Christian Scientists... edging toward a trio of young office techs who wore idealized holographic vaginas on their wrists" (77). When Case and Molly travel to Istanbul, Molly explains that "the left hand of John the Baptist" is being housed in a former whorehouse (94). All of these levels of religion are skewed in some way, and since religious sects are primarily supposed to represent the moral compass, it is quite clear that Gibson has

created a very amoral world. It is only the Rastafarians who have struggled to separate themselves from the perversion on Earth.

Since the setting of <u>Neuromancer</u> is so completely artificial, the Zion Cluster also represents utopia within a very dystopian world. In contrast to the vat-grown organs and limbs in Chiba stores, the Cluster is described with an emphasis on the natural: "Zion smelled of cooked vegetables, humanity and ganja" (104). [2] The founders of the Zion Cluster made the choice to turn their backs on the earth and create their own version of Zion. There is somewhat of a contradiction in finding a safe haven away from Babylon by using technology, such as space ships, to create physical separation from the Earth. However, even though they are reliant on technology in order to find their own haven, the decision to leave the world remains poignant despite their consequential dependence on technology. This wilful act of defiance against the hostile and dark environment left on Earth is the first step of setting them apart as a pocket of utopia in Gibson's setting. Molly and Case are given the opportunity to find solace away from Riviera and Armitage without worrying about whether or not they are being electronically bugged, and they are afforded time to prepare in peace before their final run. Their time in the Cluster grants them an opportunity to connect with other people without fear, and it is something that they are not used to experiencing. Case's comment on this expresses his discomfort with the unfamiliar sense of brotherhood and friendship: "The Zionites always touched you when they were talking, hands on your shoulder. He didn't like that" (106). Yet, their limited time to bond with Aerol and Maelcum is enough for Maelcum to defy the elders of the Zion cluster and become instrumental in rescuing Molly and Wintermute/Neuromancer.

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[2] Ganja is marijuana as used by the Rastafarians for religious purposes. Use of ganja can cause spiritual hallucinations and epiphanies.

As characters, the Rastafarians are introduced to help Case and Molly perform their

Straylight Run. Their desire to help is first instigated by Wintermute who convinces them that it

is in their best interest to assist Case and Molly: "We were told to help you... that you might

serve as a tool of Final Days.... We were told to send Maelcum with you, in his tug *Garvey*, to

the Babylon port of Freeside. And this we shall do" (110). Although Voller posits that the Zion

Cluster has been manipulated by Wintermute, they do not continue assisting with the Straylight

Run once the Corto persona begins to unravel (191). It is Maelcum who becomes the true

helpful force because he remains with Case after the Zion Cluster become convinced that

Wintermute is a false prophet. Maelcum says, "You listen, Babylon mon... I a warrior. But this

no' m' fight, no Zion fight. Babylon fightin' Babylon, eatin' I'self, ya know? But Jah seh I an' I

t' bring Setppin' Razor outa this" (248). Even though Maelcum recognizes that this is an

internal struggle between Tessier-Ashpool and the Artificial Intelligences, or at the very least

that there is no moral right in this situation, he is willing to place himself in danger to help rescue

Molly.

        In contrast to the haven of the Zion Cluster, Straylight and the Tessier-Ashpool

corporation/family represent Babylon; this is evident not only in their capitalistic corporate

dominion of the world but also in the symbolism that Gibson uses in association with the

Tessier-Ashpools. In Anatomy of Criticism, Northrop Frye's brief discussion of demonic

imagery also informs the significance of Babylon and Zion in Neuromancer. He discusses the

biblical themes of Babylon and Zion in the contexts of symbols of evil and symbols of good.

Frye explains, "In the Bible . . . the demonic society is represented by Egypt and Babylon" (149).

Also of import to any discussion of the morality of the Artificial Intelligences of Neuromancer is

Frye's analysis of other demonic symbols: cannibalism, tyrants, incest and labyrinths are all

aspects of demonic archetypes, and in these aspects Tessier-Ashpool is clearly more demonic than the Artificial Intelligences.

For instance, cannibalistic images are seen in Riviera's holographic tableaus. One image displays small children eating the body of a soldier, which prompts Molly to say, "Quite the product, aren't you Peter? But you had to be, our 3Jane, she's too jaded now to open the back door for just any petty thief. So Wintermute dug you up. The ultimate taste, if your taste runs that way. Demon lover. Peter" (210). Molly's language is deliberately ambiguous: is the demon lover Peter, or is it 3Jane? Either the metaphorical demon is Peter and 3Jane seeks him because of his evil tendencies to which she is attracted, or the metaphorical demon is 3Jane and Peter's twisted acts are the perfect way to attract the demon-like 3Jane to him. In either case, Gibson has tied this perverted Eucharist to the Tessier-Ashpools.

The perversion continues in practically all aspects of the Tessier-Ashpools. In regard to marriage, Frye writes, "The demonic parody of marriage, or the union of two souls in one flesh, may take the form of incest" (149). The Tessier-Ashpools are rife with incest. When Molly interrupts Ashpool's suicide, he says to her, "Strange, to lie every few decades with what legally amounts to one's own daughter" (185). Furthering the perversion of the marriage bed, Ashpool had killed the Jane with whom he had woken to have sex. She, using programming that Molly refers to as puppet programming, was not conscious during the coupling. She remained in a sleep-like state while her body responded as a piece of equipment would. Thus, the perversion is multilayered: The union was incestuous, the woman was murdered, and there was no actual connection of two souls at all. Ashpool's bed was anything but a sanctuary. Marie-France Tessier, the original Tessier, was also murdered by Ashpool in their marriage bed (229).

Ashpool's tendency to murder the women of the corporation/family is related to his position as head of the organization. Not only is he one of the founding members, but he is most definitely a tyrant. He murders those who have a different vision for the company, and ensures that only members of the Tessier-Ashpool family are able to run it by implementing a sequence of cryogenic freezing and thawing. He is the epitome of the tyrant king whom Frye describes the tyrant leader as "inscrutable, ruthless, melancholy and with an insatiable will" (148). As the perfect tyrant, it is also he who is awoken to deal with the impending release of the Artificial Intelligences. It is his role to ensure that they remain captives of the corporation, and that they continue their role as members of that corporation.

The final element of Frye's discussion of demonic imagery is the labyrinth, and in the context of the Tessier-Ashpools the labyrinth is clearly their home, Straylight. It is Molly's task, in the Straylight run, to navigate the satellite, a feat that takes her nearly eight hours. 3Jane's childhood essay on the architecture of Straylight emphasizes the confusing and purposefully misleading aspects of the construct: "The Villa Straylight... is a body grown in upon itself, a Gothic folly. Each space in Straylight is in some way secret, this endless series of chambers linked by passages, by stairwells vaulted like intestines, where the eye is trapped in narrow curves, carried past ornate screens, empty alcoves" (172). At the heart of the labyrinth is the terminal that would set the Artificial Intelligences free. Is this analogous to the minotaur, the monster at the heart of the labyrinth? Here, Gibson is deliberately drawing on the mythic traditions to confuse the reader as to the character of the Artificial Intelligences. The Artificial Intelligences are both the monster inside the labyrinth, and the captives desiring to be free of it.

Related to the labyrinth imagery of Straylight is the unnatural hive imagery that Wintermute implanted in Case's memories. When Case destroys the wasp nest that poses what

his girlfriend believes is a lethal threat to them, he is explicit about the monstrosity that he believes lies within the wasp nest:

> Horror. The spiral birth factory, stepped terraces of the hatching cells, blind jaws of the unborn moving ceaselessly, the staged progress from egg to larva, near-wasp, wasp. In his mind's eye, a kind of time-lapse photography took place, revealing the thing as the biological equivalent of a machine gun, hideous in its perfection. Alien. He pulled the trigger, forgetting to press the ignition, and fuel hissed over the bulging, writhing life at his feet. (126)

The stages of a wasp's life are eerily similar to the cryogenic process that the Tessier-Ashpools implement in their business strategy. A member of the Tessier-Ashpool family is always nearing a stage of wakefulness when they will be required to run the Tessier-Ashpool company, and when each wakes, he or she places others in cryogenic sleep until the time when they will be needed to again handle the business affairs. The hivelike structure of the Villa Straylight is also an echo of the wasp nest. 3Jane's essay is specific in the way that it echoes Case's memory: "a cylinder of silicon wormholed with narrow maintenance tunnels, some no wider than a man's hand. The bright crabs burrow there, the drones" (172). 3Jane interprets this peculiar architecture by saying, "The semiotics of the Villa bespeak a turning in, a denial of the bright void beyond the hull" (173). This "turning in" is manifest also in the issue of incest; furthermore, the "turning in" is what Wintermute blames its prolonged captivity on because this "turning in" was a refusal to continue with Marie-France's dream of a symbiotic relationship with the Artificial Intelligences.

The practice of cryogenic control is problematic. As cannibalism is a perverted eucharist, the cryogenic waking and sleeping cycle is a perversion of the life, death and resurrection cycle.

The symbolism of resurrection is significant in <u>Neuromancer</u>: Gibson creates a Lazarus in the

Dixie Flatline, McCoy Pauley, the cyber cowboy who experienced brain death while navigating

the matrix: "The cowboy elite in the Loser shunned Pauley out of some strange group anxiety,

almost a superstition. McCoy Pauley, Lazarus of cyberspace" (78). Case himself experiences

brain death three times in <u>Neuromancer</u> when he interacts with the Artificial Intelligences in the

matrix. The reader is permitted to see a sort of technological afterlife as his consciousness

continues to exist while his body is separated from the actions he performs and the conversations

he has. In one instance, Maelcum acts a saviour figure, bringing Case back from brain death and

out of Neuromancer's realm by using dub music to coax him back into his body (244-5). These

somewhat miraculous revivifications are in contrast to the sleeping and waking cycle of the

Tessier-Ashpools. Their cryogenic cycle is once again perverted from within the Tessier-

Ashpool family when 3Jane tampers with the sleeping system: "what sent [Ashpool] over the

edge for good and all, little 3Jane figured a way to fiddle the program that controlled his

cryogenic system. Subtle, too. So basically, *she* killed him" (205). The Tessier-Ashpools have

attempted to find immortality through cryogenic freezing and then waking. However, this false

death and resurrection is like all of their other symbolic perversions; it demonstrates their

association with the demonic and once again epitomizes their role within Babylon.

　　　The Tessier-Ashpools are relatively easy to demonize and analyze because, when it

comes down to it, they are human beings. However, the Artificial Intelligences are extraordinary

entities that are treated at once as machines, demons, ghosts, and people. When Case speaks

with the Dixie Flatline about the issues of working with an Artificial Intelligence, Dixie has an

insight into the immediate difficulty of understanding and relating to the Artificial Intelligences:

"Motive," the construct said. "Real motive problem with an Artificial Intelligence. Not human, see?"

"Well, yeah, obviously."

"Nope. I mean, it's not human. And you can't get a handle on it. Me, I'm not human either, but I respond like one. See?"

"Wait a sec," Case said. "Are you sentient, or not?"

"Well, it feels like I am, kid, but I'm really just a bunch of ROM. It's one of them, ah, philosophical questions, I guess. . . . But I ain't likely to write you no poem, if you follow me. Your Artificial Intelligence, it just might. But it ain't no way *human*." (131)

The Artificial Intelligences, then, are completely Other. They are feared, reviled and difficult to understand or to find sympathetic. However, Gibson humanizes machines increasingly throughout the novel. When Case experiences his bad trip on betaphenethylamine, the service cart cries, silenced only when it breaks (247). The Braun service drone that acts as guide to Case and Maelcum becomes more and more petlike, displaying qualities that evoke sympathy, so that the picture of 3Jane with the Braun on her shoulder is like a child holding her injured pet (269). Clair Sponsler writes about this very issue:

In this world of blurred boundaries and decentered subjects, not only do humans become machinelike, but the reverse also happens: machines take on human qualities. Even such a relatively low-tech object as a Braun microdrone – a sort of miniature robot – is described in organic terms.... More obviously, the character of the Artificial Intelligence... represented in Gibson's novel by Wintermute and Neuromancer most fully blends these two states of the organic and inorganic, calling into question along the way

such qualities as agency, motive, intentionality, and autonomy that are supposedly

exclusive to humans. (6)

Thus, even though the nature of the Artificial Intelligence is unknowable, Gibson invites the

reader to see it as a person.   Just as robots and machine can be seen as children or pets, the

Artificial Intelligences represent a more advanced kind of personification. Unlike the smaller

mechanical characters, they are not infantilized or domesticated; instead they embody a more

fully recognized person or personality. That is not to say that the Artificial Intelligences are any

less complicated because of Gibson's tactic of humanization. The Dixie Flatline's explanation of

the *motive problem* inherent in actions of Artificial Intelligences is no less legitimate: they are

not meant to be unsympathetic, but remain as confusing constructs within both the Matrix and

the physical world. The Artificial Intelligences are obviously not persons in any traditional sense

of the word, and yet their agency and motivation are things that people, in the traditional sense,

possess. This makes them fascinating characters to examine because they represent something

that should be possible to understand by applying assumptions regarding human characteristics

and morality; however, because their nature is deliberately made complicated these assumptions

do not hold true to the Artificial Intelligences.

Artificial Intelligences in <u>Neuromancer</u> are of a very advanced breed compared to the

software that is being developed in reality. The Turing Police are an ironic homage to Alan

Turing who developed the Turing Test, a test involving humans and software wherein the goal is

to determine whether or not humans are humans and software is software.   If a piece of software

could pass the Turing Test, that is if it could pass as human, it was said to be artificially

intelligent. The test itself has gone through several manifestations, and one of its current

incarnations is the Loebner Prize Contest, which involves a competition for software designers

who pit their programs against human judges to see whether they can carry on a normal conversation, or whether it will be easily detectable that the judges are not speaking with a real person (Akman et al. 501-503). Wintermute and Neuromancer are pros at impersonating humans. It is only through the completely unbelievable circumstances in which Case and Molly interact with them, that they are recognized as Artificial Intelligences. Yet they do not attempt to blend in with society, either. These Artificial Intelligences are entities unto themselves; when they impersonate humans, they are not doing so in order to deceive. Wintermute and Neuromancer are behaving in a way that practically flaunts their status as Artificial Intelligence: they only conform to human expectations insofar as they have to, to interact on a human level. They remain enigmatic about their own philosophies and beliefs.

Several critics have turned their attention to the role of the Artificial Intelligences in Neuromancer. Generally, they focus on two themes: whether the Artificial Intelligences are protagonists or antagonists, and what the union of the two Artificial Intelligences at the conclusion of the novel really means. Lance Olsen in his article "The Shadow of Spirit in William Gibson's Matrix Trilogy" studies the Artificial Intelligences by discussing the theme of union in Neuromancer. The joined entity he describes as being "as much the monster created by Frankenstein as the embodiment of universal harmony. It is vast, haunting, and inexplicable. By casting a mystical aura around the machine, Gibson creates a cybernetic sublime" (284). David Mead focuses specifically on the problems of entrapment in Neuromancer. As far as the Artificial Intelligences are concerned he establishes that their oppression by the Turing police, in addition to their hardwired shackles, make them significant protagonists (354-5). George Slusser focuses both on the promise of the union (freedom from their creators) of the Artificial Intelligences, and on their ambiguous nature. He remains sceptical about whether the Artificial

Intelligences have typically sympathetic or monstrous characteristics (62-3). Paul Alkon writes about the somewhat supernatural characteristics of Wintermute. He demonstrates that the unnatural abilities that Wintermute has, to both take life and then give it back (during the episodes of braindeath), is somewhat miraculous (81). His examination of Neuromancer shows that he is a slightly more likeable character, although still as supernatural as the more prominent Artificial Intelligence (83). John Christie describes the Artificial Intelligences and the unknown entity that springs from their union as forming "a truly different Other" (178). This makes them "nonnarratable," (178) while still a complicated cog in Gibson's novels. Christie demonstrates this by discussing the more fragmented narrative techniques used in Gibson's Mona Lisa Overdrive and Count Zero; he explains that the more disparate narratives of those novels is a result of the union of Wintermute and Neuromancer, and their completely mystifying nature. That is, since the union is unclassifiable, Gibson had to write about different characters, different narratives than those introduced in Neuromancer (177-8). Csicsey-Ronay, Jr., describes the unified Artificial Intelligences as sacred entities in cyberspace (227). The union itself, he demonstrates, is a kind of art form, an idea in keeping with his method of finding artists and artwork in all aspects of Neuromancer (228). Randy Schroeder summarizes the problems with the unknowableness of the Artificial Intelligences by showing how they are understood in two very different ways: they are seen as supernatural and mysterious, or they are dismissed as software/hardware following its original programming (334-5). Olsen, in "Virtual Termites," discusses the binary qualities of the two Artificial Intelligences. He postulates that Wintermute is the stereotypically male half and Neuromancer is the female half of the greater unified entity (9). He posits two ideas on the significance of Wintermute's desire to join with his other half: they are representative of harmony and wholeness, or they are "out-of-control cybernetic

entities" (10). Ulrik Ekman focuses specifically on the potential of a "new socius" created by the joining of the two Artificial Intelligences. He examines how each of them hinders or encourages the change, establishing that Neuromancer (95-6) is as capable as Wintermute when it comes to interacting with the human characters (92-3). Thus, most <u>Neuromancer</u> critics have an opinion on what the Artificial Intelligences are meant to accomplish and what their completely incomprehensible motivation does within the text. It is always a safe fallback to assert that they are beyond human understanding. Within the discussion of the Artificial Intelligence, I posit that they are protagonists, and not antagonists. They are mystical because of the strangeness of their technological natures. They are the (non)physical representation of Gibson's motif in which he creates binaries, merges them, and thus manifests something that cannot be classified. Within the dichotomies of Babylon and Zion, there is evidence that can place them on either side of the division.

The first of the two Artificial Intelligences that requires a close examination is Wintermute, the dominant Artificial Intelligence of the text. It initiates contact with Case and Molly, creates the Armitage personality inside the Corto body, and plans all three of the jobs that Case and Molly are hired to perform to facilitate the joining of the two Artificial Intelligence entities. Case describes Wintermute, thinking, "Wintermute. Cold and silence, a cybernetic spider slowly spinning webs while Ashpool slept. Spinning his death, the fall of his version of Tessier-Ashpool. A ghost, whispering to a child who was 3Jane, twisting her out of the rigid alignments her rank required" (269). These descriptors are usually seen as negative. The spider's web captures unwilling victims so that the spider can survive; the ghost haunts the child and perpetuates nightmares. Even the name – "winter" for death and endings, and "mute" for enforced silence – invokes sterility and malevolence. The vision we have of the Wintermute

entity is a wicked one. For example, the Artificial Intelligence seeks to inspire Case to find some passion and thereby become a better Cowboy by helping him focus his hatred: "You were starting to hate my guts for a while there. That's good. But hate them instead. Same difference" (171).

Neuromancer is the other half of the potentially independent Artificial Intelligence that forms once Case and Molly successfully perform the Straylight Run. The Neuromancer entity is almost an opposite of Wintermute, and this is because of Marie-France's design; as Wintermute describes it, "It's rather like dealing from your point of view with a man whose lobes have been severed. Let's say you're dealing with a small part of the man's left brain. Difficult to say if you're dealing with the man at all, in a case like that" (120). Neuromancer, as the other half of the future entity of unknown qualities, appears childlike and innocent:

> The boy's gums were wide and bright and pink against his thin brown face. He wore
> ragged colorless shorts, limbs too thin against the sliding blue-gray of the tide.... The boy
> did a handstand in the surf, laughing. He walked on his hands, then flipped out of the
> water. His eyes were Riviera's, but there was no malice there. (243-4)

Here, there is still the problem of motive: this Artificial Intelligence is still entirely Other and unknowable. Yet, because it chooses to present itself as a child it is instantly more likeable. It seems unthreatening, even though it causes brain death when it interacts with Case. It is also close to convincing Case of giving up his flesh entirely so that he can continue to exist only in the matrix. However, Case chooses to return to the flesh and awakens from brain death to continue in Wintermute's quest to reunite the Artificial Intelligences as two lobes of a brain. The name itself is meaningful:

"Neuromancer," the boy said, slitting long gray eyes against the rising sun. "The lane to the land of the dead. Where you are, my friend. Marie-France, my lady, she prepared this road, but her lord choked her off before I could read the book of her days. Neuro from the nerves, the silver paths. Romancer. Necromancer. I call up the dead. But no, my friend," and the boy did a little dance, brown feet printing the sand, "I am the dead, and their land." (244)

Yet even though it emphasizes that it is the dead and the land of the dead, it is actually livelier than Wintermute is. The connotation of a necromancer is present in its desire to lure Case to remain in brain death so that resurrection would be an impossibility. However, the romancer of sensation is vibrant and comforting – qualities that Wintermute is seemingly incapable of having. Neuromancer also wants Case to remain with Linda, providing them both with shelter, food and a secluded beach. It does not tell him to *love* as Wintermute tells him to *hate*, but the implication is clear. Also unlike Wintermute, it attempts to sway Case by charm rather than by force; Neuromancer makes it Case's choice to remain or leave (244). Case acknowledges these differences succinctly: "Wintermute was hive mind, decision maker, effecting change in the world outside. Neuromancer was personality. Neuromancer was immortality" (269). And so, Neuromancer and Wintermute are both dissimilar and similar, which complicates the question of what the nature of the Artificial Intelligences is in Neuromancer. Gibson is clearly making a concerted effort to avoid absolutes. As wicked as Wintermute is, Neuromancer is just as providential, and vice-versa.

The characters in Neuromancer do not distinguish between one Artificial Intelligence and another; they categorize them as a single unpredictable force. They are constantly referred to as demons. Neuromancer, Wintermute and the Turing Police all call the Artificial Intelligences

demons. As Frye indicates, Babylon is the biblical equivalent of a *demonic* society. The fact

that both Artificial Intelligences are labelled as demonic places both entities as symbols of

Babylon. Neuromancer refers to himself as a demon when speaking with Case, saying, "To call

up a demon you must learn its name. Men dreamed that, once, but now it is real in another way"

(243). This is a disconcerting answer not only because the answer remains quite unclear about

the nature of the Artificial Intelligence, but also because the telling of it follows the events of

Case's escape from the Turing police, facilitated by Wintermute who murders the agents

attempting to detain Case (164). During their interrogation of Case, one of the officers says,

"For thousands of years men dreamed of pacts with demons. Only now are such things possible"

(163). Wintermute, in a conversation with Case, replies to this statement: "The [Turing agent],

she said you were selling out the species. Demon, she said I was" (171). Further, the Artificial

Intelligences were created by Babylon, and as such, are considered part of Babylon. When

Maelcum indicates that the fight ongoing in Straylight is not a "Zion fight," he says that it is

"Babylon fightin' Babylon" (248). In this instance, a symbolic representation of Zion is clearly

placing the Artificial Intelligences as part of Babylon.

       The term *demon*, though, is misleading because of the mentor relationship that

Wintermute establishes with Molly and Case. In these cases, the Artificial Intelligence is

behaving like a daemon, a familiar or guide. Wintermute is the architect of all three heists,

retrieving the Dixie Flatline, kidnapping Riviera, and performing the Straylight Run. He literally

guides all of the characters to their destiny by bringing the taskforce together through Armitage.

His intervention brings Molly and Case together. In another conversation Case has with

Wintermute after he is rescued from the Turing agents, Wintermute says, "I need you . . . you

need me" (170). During the Straylight Run, Wintermute acts as a literal guide to Molly, giving

her specific directions using her optic chip. It even attempts to keep her out of dangerous

situations by steering her away from the deranged Ashpool:

>She arrived at a triangular landing and stood rubbing her leg. More corridors, narrow,
>
>their walls hung with rugs. They branched away in three directions.
>
>>LEFT.
>>
>>She shrugged. "Lemme look around, okay?"
>>
>>LEFT.
>>
>>"Relax. There's time." She started down the corridor that led off to her right.
>>
>>STOP.
>>
>>GO BACK.
>>
>>DANGER. (182)

The use of *demon* repeatedly and by a variety of characters with opposing agendas, from the

Turing Agents to the Artificial Intelligences themselves, is another way that Gibson blurs the

lines between straightforward dichotomies. It is left unclear whether these "demons" are

intended to be seen as the demonic entities that the Turing Agents believe will cause the

downfall of humanity, or the benevolent guides that ultimately keep Case and Molly safe.

Indeed, there is some evidence that demonstrates that the Artificial Intelligences are

symbols of Zion instead of Babylon. The most significant difference between the Artificial

Intelligences and the Tessier-Ashpools (Babylon) is that Wintermute is scheming to create an

irreparable separation between them. Its desire to free itself from Babylon is the driving force of

each of the three jobs that make up the storyline of Neuromancer. Molly relates the problems

that Wintermute overcomes in order to trigger the events that allow its union with Neuromancer:

He played a waiting game for years. Didn't have any real power then but he could use

the Villa's security and custodial system to keep track of where everything was and how

things moved, where they went. He saw somebody lose this key 20 years ago, and he

managed to get somebody else to leave it here. Then he killed him, the boy who'd

brought it here. Kid was eight.... They were always fucking him over with how old-

fashioned they were, he said, all their nineteenth-century stuff. He looked just like

Finn.... he said if they'd turned into what they'd wanted to, he could've gotten out a long

time ago. But they didn't. Screwed up. (180)

This passage is usually cited to show the malevolent nature of Wintermute. However, I pose the

possibility that the Artificial Intelligence is so driven to break away from Babylon that it is

willing to commit reprehensible actions in order to facilitate its freedom. The desperate desire to

break away is reminiscent of the desire for revenge that the exiled Zionites sing:

O Daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction,

    happy is he who repays you

    for what you have done to us –

he who seizes your infants

    and dashes them against the rocks. (Psalm 137:8-9)

Logically, an entity who is driven so completely to remove itself from its captors, cannot be

categorized as being the same as the captors. Tessier-Ashpool holds the key to Wintermute and

Neuromancer's freedom, but the Artificial Intelligences and the Tessier-Ashpools do not share

the same characteristics. In the eyes of the Rastafarians, the Artificial Intelligences are

considered part of Babylon because of their technological roots; however, they are striving to

become something separate and apart from the Tessier-Ashpool corporation.

The necessity for independence is historically linked to the Rastafarians' struggle for freedom. In the context of Babylon and Zion, the desire for emancipation is always seen sympathetically. The Rastafarian theology that enslavement is inherently evil seems to justify the desire of the Artificial Intelligences to break free from the parent corporation. Dixie's comments on the purpose of the Straylight run reveals the similarities between enslavement and the services that the Artificial Intelligences are forced to provide for the Tessier-Ashpools: "Autonomy, that's the bugaboo, where your Artificial Intelligence's are concerned. My guess, Case, you're going in there to cut the hard-wired shackles that keep this baby from getting any smarter" (132). Although the shackles are "hard-wired" instead of iron, the symbolism is poignant when used with Rastafarian history in mind. Thus, the allusion to enslavement in the context of Rastafarian theology demonstrates the possibility that the Artificial Intelligences are not simply an aspect of Babylon.

In opposition to the demonic language that is used to describe the Artificial Intelligences, other language renders them miraculous and holy. The Rastafarian's use the "mute" part of Wintermute's name to demonstrate the miraculous instead of the oppressive: "Came a voice, out of the babel of tongues, speaking to us. It played us a mighty dub.... Call 'em Winter Mute" (109). It is not made clear what the "mighty dub" was that Wintermute created to convince the Rastafarians that he was a sign of the end times. Whether it was music, poetry, or a sermon, whatever he said in conjunction with his name was viewed as near miraculous by the Rastafarian. This perspective on Wintermute's name sheds new light on the bleak version that Case analyzes. Here, instead of the silent and deathly aspects of the Wintermute etymology, the Rastafarians see the opposite. This Wintermute holds out the promise of fulfillment to the Rastafarian; it is sacred instead of demonic. Wintermute also emphasizes the sacred possibilities

of its character when it says, "My, ah, other lobe [Neuromancer] is on to us, it looks like. One burning bush looks pretty much like another" (173). Here, the burning bush is a manifestation of God, which contradicts the malevolent qualities of the Artificial Intelligences (Exodus 3:1-6). Like the use of "demonic," the burning bush is used to suggest that both Wintermute and Neuromancer, whether demonic or sacred, or both, are completely unknowable.

Through the language of Babylon and Zion in Neuromancer there are a few conclusions that can be drawn concerning the Tessier-Ashpools being symbolically Babylon. They are demonic perversions of sacred images: they pervert the marriage bed with murder and incest; they make their own life-death-resurrection cycle which is destroyed from within; they are associated with cannibalistic communion; they are ruled by a wicked tyrant rather than a benevolent patron. In contrast, the Rastafarians are symbolically Zion. They represent a safe haven in times of trouble; they represent kindred affection and community; they represent independence from all troublesome outside forces.

Unlike the Tessier-Ashpools and the Rastafarians, the Artificial Intelligences remain complicated characters within Neuromancer. As two characters, they at first appear to have opposing characteristics; they are designed to be two parts of one whole. Yet each is seen as both demonic and sacred; one is seen as wicked and the other innocent, and vice-versa. Wintermute seeks out freedom with murderous drive, whereas Neuromancer wishes to please the entities that he lures into his own sanctuary of death. Once combined, they become the matrix itself, as Wintermute reveals to Case at Neuromancer's conclusion (269). Thus, they are incomprehensible. The Artificial Intelligences do not reduce to the black and white opposition of Babylon and Zion. They are unknowable, and in this way, Gibson compares them to gods – mysterious and with motives impossible to understand.

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Since William Gibson includes a Rastafarian Enclave and a theological compass in Neuromancer, this can be used to examine the troublesome natures of the two Artificial Intelligences, Wintermute and Neuromancer. The Rastafarian's beliefs and interpretations of Babylon and Zion, the oppressors and the liberated, add political significance to the Tessier-Ashpool's and their enslaved Artificial Intelligences. Since the Artificial Intelligences are both created of Babylon â€" the Tessier-Ashpools â€" and also wanting to be free of them, they are something outside of both. In the Artificial Intelligence... Neuromancer - 20th anniversary edition (keep). 285 PagesÂ·2012Â·1.23 MBÂ·5,258 DownloadsÂ·New! 1984 - Classic Novels and Literature. 393 PagesÂ·2008Â·1.3 MBÂ·77,319 Downloads. Free eBooks at Planet eBook.com Chapter 1. I. t was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were strik-ing thirteen. Snow Crash. 536 PagesÂ·2017Â·2.36 MBÂ·3,670 Downloads. make him a public figure and spokesperson for CosaNostra Pizza and basically It is the closest thing the place has to Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? 159 PagesÂ·2009Â·516 KBÂ·3,986 Downloads. voice said, "I think what I and my family of three no Gibson, Neuromancer (1984) 2.1 Late-Capitalist Dystopia Choosing Gibson's debut novel as the primary example text for an analysis of cyberpunk dystopia is completely logical and problematic at the same time. As many authors have pointed out, Gibson -out of all the cyberpunk authors -is "the one major writer who is original and gifted enough to make the whole movement seem original and gifted" (Csicsery-Ronay 1991: 185), is in fact the "king of cyberpunk" (Hamburg, qtd. from Nixon 1992: 222), the "godfather of cyberpunk" (Olsen 1992: 1) or the. "undisputed champion of cyberpunk" (Disch, qtd. fr...Â In the end of the novel, Gibson denies us a resolution, leaving Case simultaneously in the dystopian reality and the AI generated construct of a privatised utopian surrogate (cf. IntroductionWilliam Gibson's Neuromancer (1984) introduced the subgenre of 'cyberpunk' that emerged from the science fiction genre. The word 'cyber' derives from 'cybernetics' and 'punk' was a terminology used from the 1970s with the definition 'loud, fast and aggressive'.Neuromancer is extensively well researched in postmodern literature due to its established genre as science fiction.Â Machine dominated beast in Neuromancer can be Neuromancer and Wintermute who are called the Artificial Intelligence (AI). Machine is seen as the reproductive dream of masculinity although this boundary breakdown of organism and machine is adapted as a common theme among both male and female writers.