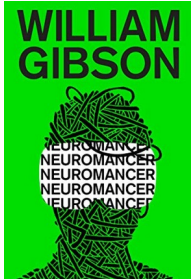




Lambda Sci-Fi

DC Area Gaylaxians



Neuromancer
By William Gibson
Discussed September 2002

Discussion Questions

1. Have you read any cyberpunk before? If so, how did *Neuromancer* compare with other cyberpunk stories/novels you've read? If this is your first experience with reading cyberpunk, what are your feelings about the cyberpunk sub-genre?
2. Read through the following excerpt. (It's sort of a "thematic overview.") Do you think it provides an accurate "high end" description of what happens in *Neuromancer*? Are there any changes you'd suggest that you think would make it a more accurate description of *Neuromancer*? If so, what would those changes be?
"The clichés of such fiction... the femme fatale, the wealthy temporary employer, the Mr. Big, and the suspicious authorities. The femme fatale is the beautiful woman who may attempt to seduce the hero, and lead him to the brink of disaster. The employer is a morally dubious, but financially successful, person who persuades the protagonist to take on a job, often against the hero's better judgement, and who never quite tells the whole story. The Mr. Big is the crime boss, the Godfather, who inevitably contacts the hero at some point to make them an offer they'd better not refuse. And as he goes about his job, skirting criminality, at some point the authorities take an interest, interposing between the hero and his goal."
3. *Neuromancer* has been described as "the key starting point for reading cyberpunk..." What makes a story "cyberpunk"? And how well does *Neuromancer* fit the "cyberpunk" classification?
4. How does *Neuromancer* compare with the cyberpunk films you may have seen (for example: *Johnny Mnemonic*, 1995; *Ghost in the Shell*, 1995 animé; and *Strange Days*, 1995)?
5. In light of the discussion of item #2 above, what influences do you think led to the development of cyberpunk in the late 1970s and early 1980s?
6. Gibson uses some very distinctive (and artistic) imagery to describe what Case sees when he's jacked into the matrix. Consider, for example, this excerpt from toward the end of Chapter 3 (pg. 52 in my edition):

"And flowed, flowered for him, fluid neon origami trick, the unfolding of his distanceless home, his country, transparent 3D chessboard extending into infinity. Inner eye opening to the stepped scarlet pyramid of the Eastern Seaboard Fission Authority burning beyond the green cubes of Mitsubishi Bank of America, and high and very far away he saw the spiral arms of military systems, forever beyond his reach."

What do you think about Gibson's "inside the matrix" images? Did Gibson's descriptions of the matrix add to or detract from your enjoyment of *Neuromancer*?

7. There are a lot of "expository lumps" in *Neuromancer*. ("Expository lumps" are passages or paragraphs where the action in the story "stops" while the author explains new and different concepts or explains to the reader how the novel's world works. Here are a couple of examples: the opening of Chapter 8 (pg. 101 in my edition) - description of the L-5 Archipelago & Freeside; toward beginning of Chapter 17 (pg. 203 in my edition) - the origin of the zaibatsus or "multinationals".) How did Gibson's frequent use of "expository lumps" affect your enjoyment of *Neuromancer*?
8. One of the "expository lumps" in *Neuromancer* is rather distinctive. Toward the end of Chapter 3 (pg. 51 in my edition) he provides some very basic background information on the origin of the web/net; and he does it by having Case "channel-surf" by a "kid's show." Got any ideas why Gibson did this?