

STYLE

[Dashiell] Hammett may have been the guy who turned me on to the idea of *superspecificity*, which is largely lacking in most SF description. SF authors tend to use generics—“Then he got into his space suit”—a refusal to specify that is almost an unspoken tradition in SF... I think Hammett may have given me the idea that you don’t have to write like that, even in a popular form.

(I have no grasp of how computers *really* work—it’s been a contact high for me.) Anyway, it wasn’t until after the book [*Neuromancer*] came out that I met people who knew what a virus program actually was.

William Gibson, interview by Larry McCaffery (1986), in *Across the Wounded Galaxies: Interviews with Contemporary American Science Fiction Authors* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 135, 136.

THE 1980S CONTEXT

Modernism also thought compulsively about the new and tried to watch its coming into being...but the postmodern looks for breaks, for events rather than new worlds, for the telltale instant after which it is no longer the same; for the “When-it-all-changed,” as Gibson puts it, or, better still, for shifts and irrevocable changes in the *representation* of things and of the way they change.

This is the place to regret the absence from this book of a chapter on cyberpunk, henceforth, for many of us, the supreme *literary* expression if not of postmodernism, then of late capitalism itself.

Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), ix, 419.

Throughout the 1980s, the science-fiction subculture articulated itself both as aware of increasingly stratified divisions between its own self-identification and the demands of corporate culture, and as ironically incapable of resisting the necessity of strapping itself into the machine matrix and publishing mainstream that its members saw as feeding on the creativity and fashionability of cultures such as their own.

It is precisely this assimilation that Gibson’s text [*Neuromancer*] thematizes, by exploring the complex and always partially compromised relationship between subcultures and the corporate upper class.

Sarah Brouillette, “[Corporate Publishing and Canonization](#),” *Book History* 5 (2002): 187, 205.