

ISSN : 2348 – 604X (Print)
ISSN : 2348 – 6058 (Online)



ISJ

International Science Journal

(Peer-Reviewed)

Online and Print Version

| Volume 7 | Special Issue | 2020

Proceedings of the International Conference on Science and
Science Fiction Organised by Shri Mukatanand College, Gangapur,
Aurangabad, Maharashtra - India, 10th & 11th January, 2020



Published Online at : <http://www.sciencejournal.in>

INDEX

SECTION - A - SCIENCE FICTION			
Sr. No.	Title of the Paper	Writer's Name	Page No.
1	Science Fiction: Yesterday – Today and Tomorrow	A. P. Deshpande, Keynote Address	01
2	Encounter with Extra-Terrestrials in Jayant Narlikar's <i>The Message From Aristarchus</i> and <i>Virus</i>	Dr. Ratnakar & D. Bhelkar	10
3	Emerging Trend in The Indian Science Fiction: An Introspection.	Dr. Srinarahari	21
4	Geopolitical Conflict in <u>Kim Stanley Robinson's</u> <i>Red Moon</i>	Dr. Rahul & B. Kendre,	29
5	Feminist Science Fiction: Portrayal of a New Woman	Ketaki M. Chaudhari	32
6	Science-Fiction Elements in Yogavasistha: A Philosophical Engagement	Charu Thapliyal, M.Phil. Scholar, Delhi University	37
7	Mental Wounds: Analyzing Trauma in Octavia E. Butler's <i>Kindred</i>	Lavanya Dalal	38
8	Children's Literature and Time Travel: In 50S - 60s with Reference of Tom's <i>Midnight Garden and A Wrinkle in Time</i> .	Apurva Renukadas Deshmukh	39
9	Time and Space in Samit Basu's <i>Turbulence</i>	Ms. Meenal R. Kale	44
10	History of the Development of Indian Science Fiction	Navle B. A. & Mitkari S. B	51
11	Representation of Time Travelling in Indian Sci-Fi Movies	Dr. Rupali Prabhakar Palodkar,	57
12	Is There Science in Juvenile Literature?	Dr. Ramesh & B. Jaybhaye	64
13	Science Fiction in Fantasy Writings: Game of Thrones as a Case Study	Sabri Mohammed Al-Oqab	72
14	The 'Cyberpunk' Element in the 'Culture' Novels of the Science Fiction of Iain M. Banks	Mrs. Shailaja A. Changundi Associate Professor & Head.	82
15	Science Fiction Envisions a Society of the Future	Dr. Govind Digambar Kokane	89

Sr. No.	Title of the Paper	Writer's Name	Page No.
16	Importance of Science Fiction for Society	Dr. Korde Rajabhau	94
17	The Science in Science Fiction with Special Reference to Science Fiction Writing for Children	Alka S. Kausadikar	103
18	New Terminologies in Asimov's Selected Science Fiction	Dr Kittekar Utkarsh Bhikajirao	104
19	Science Fiction and its Designing	Dr. Sanjay A. Kamble	110
20	Intersections of Literature, Sport and Science: Towards Sport Science Fiction	Hatim Abdu Ali Aldhabi & Navle Balaji Anandrao	114
21	Restoring Women's Voice: Feminist Praxis in the Science Fiction of Octavia Butler	Dr. Pravin Sonune	122
22	Female Body and Technology in the Post-modern Science Fiction	Mr.Umesh Khushal Rathod	140
23	Post-modern Fiction and Science Fiction: Role and Contribution of Women	Mr. Shewale Vishnu G . Dr. Kakde Ram Daulatrao	150
24	Contours and Nuances of Science and Science Fiction in the Short Story of Mahasweta Devi's; Draupadi	Swarupa Vyawahare	165
25	Inculcation of Scientific Perspective through Science Fiction	Principal Dr. M.N.Sarnaik	173
26	Contours and Nuances of Science Fiction in <i>The Modern Prometheus</i>	Prof. Manik Bhatane	178
27	The Science Fictions of H.G. Wells	Dr. Kalyan Shidram Kokane	189
28	Accelerating Evolution of Species in Doris Lessing <i>Canopus In Argos</i> : A Critique – I	Dr. D. N. Ganjewar	197
29	<i>Anukul</i> : A Robot with Moral Consciousness	Dr. Khan Mahlaqa Afzal	215
30	Science Fiction as a Literature of Change	Dr.Bhagile Namdeo B. & Dr. Holkar D. T.	221
31	Ako and Oka Families of Elements in Multiplicative Lattices	Dr. Sachin Sarode	228

22. FEMALE BODY AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE POST-MODERN SCIENCE FICTION

Mr. Umesh Khushal Rathod

Asst. Prof. Dept. of English Sunderrao

Solanke Arts, Science & Commerce College,

Majalgaon Dist, Beed

ABSTRACT: The female body is still the focus of different and multifarious schools of feminist criticism. How does this relate to the post modern sci fi? Through examining the interactions between female bodies and technologies in close readings of William Gibson's *Neuromancer* and Greg Bear's *Queen of Angels*, we see an interesting paradox in action. On one hand naturally female body is culturally constructed according to dominant codes of femininity and racial identity, there is no way to consider the body without cultural influences coming through, but on the other, we see that the roles of women aren't the traditional, socially conditioned, and arbitrary sex roles. And often times we see an active rewriting the texts of the female body and an inversion of sexual roles. Historically the female body was constructed as a hybrid case, thus making it compatible with current notions of cyborg identity. Even today, the ambiguous constitution of the female body is strongly related to cyborg identity. To contribute to the feminist studies of science and technology, this paper offers an alternative narrative of sci fi identity and argues that the female body is always gendered and is subordinated within systems of power, yet it is not fully



determined by those systems and instead, always interacting with and resisting against these systems.

KEY WORDS: Female body, science fiction, technology, cyborg, *Neuromancer*, *Queen of Angels*

INTRODUCTION

Historically the properly feminine body was considered to be constitutionally weak and pathological. For instance, women in advertisements, are often depicted in poses that would be considered undignified for a man. Basically only one body type is preferred--- the waif look or the waif-made-voluptuous-with-reconstructed-breasts look. Yet some new ads today, for example, the new genre of physical fitness ads emphasize women's physical strength and capabilities as well as their sexuality and femininity. Ads for athletic products feature models with beautiful hair and faces, tanned skin, strong trim, and shapely bodies.

It can be argued that these new ads aim to strike balances between female athleticism and sexuality, leaving the question of empowerment up to the viewer. Yet if we cast our eyes to traditional science fiction, the picture is both monotonous and disheartening: the female body is always negatively constructed. It is gendered passive, self-denying, obedient, and self-sacrificial.

Have things changed in postmodern science fiction? For one thing, postmodern theory claims that women are rendered "other" (a notion that challenges the denotative stability of human identity) in the postmodern discourse. With this myth, "even the special erotic nature of the feminine body may disappear" (Landa, 1996, p. 28). But, on the other hand, if we look at the images of female robots in post modern movies, cartoons, comic books, TV shows, and video games, the action heroes are often designed as leather wearing, metal dressing, with big boobs, long hair, and small waists.



These sensitive issues have been brought up in today's society and their being addressed in the sci fi discourse has particular significance in that until recently, sci fi may seek to draw on the sciences for much of its inspiration, but it has also reflected the larger culture around it. The twentieth century cultural environment has been one where traditional assumptions about the roles of men and women were still unchanged. Thus, reading the body in the fields of science and technology can surely help map out the post modern society.

The female body is still the focus of different and multifarious schools of feminist criticism. Cyborg feminists like Donna Haraway subverts the beliefs in the essential unity and realizes that "female" is a highly complex term and is constructed. The concept of women is elusive: "Woman disintegrates into women in our time" (Haraway, 1991, p. 160). Women's experience is denatured. Balsamo observes that "the female body is not an essentially unchanging, given-in-nature, biological entity, but rather is symbolically constructed within different cultural discourses situated within different historical conjunctions" (Balsamo, 1999, p. 22).

NEUROMANCER

When *Neuromancer* by William Gibson was first published in 1984 it created a sensation. The plot of *Neuromancer* is roughly as follows: Case, the male protagonist, a twenty-four-year-old classic illegal hacker worked as a "thief, [who] worked for other, wealthier thieves, employers who provided the exotic software required to penetrate the bright walls of corporate systems, opening windows into rich fields of data" (Gibson, 1984, p. 5). Case has been nerve-damaged, rendering him unable to jack into cyberspace. He is recruited and healed by Corto, who wants him to steal a digital copy of Case's now-dead cowboy teacher, McCoy Pauley, and with Pauley's help, break into a corporate / family computer matrix. Corto, who was formerly a military officer named Armitage, is controlled by an Artificial Intelligence (AI) named Wintermute. Wintermute wants to merge with his other self, an AI represented as Neuromancer.



Case, the female protagonist Molly, Peter Riviera, and Armitage / Corto eventually succeed in releasing Wintermute and Neuromancer from the hardwired constraints that keep them from melding and evolving into a higher form of intelligence.

Virtual reality is at the heart of Sci fi. The opening image of the book: “The sky was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel” (Gibson, 1984, p. 3) compares nature to technology and sets the tone of the narrative. Thus Gibson creates an environment deeply rooted in technology and cyberspace. If we want to read anything into the name, “Case” could suggest detective fiction or technology. The mixture of flesh and machinery is introduced in the book through Ratz’s stainless steel teeth. In fact, the characters of the book---Wintermute, Neuromancer, McCoy Pauley, Case, Molly, the Finn, and eventually the matrix itself---are all entities who live to one degree or another in the machine, in cyberspace, or to use Gibson’s formulation, in the matrix of human knowledge “from the banks of every computer in the human system” (Gibson, 1984, p. 51). They are cyborg images.

Case treats his body as almost an alien entity with which he is not in friendly terms --- he describes the body as “meat” (Gibson, 1984, p. 6). Trapped in the physical body, Case feels himself drawn down to the “meat” level by the projection of Linda Lee. His seduction from the world of the Net down into the flesh is highly ironic. He also calls the girl in his cubicle a “meat puppet” (Gibson, 1984, p. 147). Yet his body is a kind of case for his mind and for the cyberspace with which he is jacking into, though it is only when his mind transcends its boundary of flesh that he feels unfettered and free.

The female protagonist Molly, a cyborg is our focus. What kind of person is she? What is her job? She is a street Samurai. Samurai originated as the faithful defenders of feudal lords during the Kamakura period, but as Japan fell into disorder, many of them roamed the country as “hired



swords". She is also a "working girl" (Gibson, 1984, p. 30), prostitute, though when Molly uses the term, it at first, she suggests a willingness to work as a street samurai for anyone.

Yet, overall *Neuromancer* still goes along with the trend that "inside of cyberspace, or out, the relations between these cybernetically connected bodies often recreate traditions heterosexual gender identities" (Balsamo, 1999, p. 129). So I would say in *Neuromancer*, the individual male and female bodies are coded only differently, instead of significantly different, then they are in prevailing cultural norms. However, as for Case, a counterargument could be Gibson is trying to use Cyberspace to offer white men an enticing retreat from the burdens of their cultural identities. And in fact Balsamo notices that "in the course of Gibson's *Neuromancer* trilogy, for example, not only is the hero's body eventually reconstructed from fragments of skin, so is his macho-male identity" (Balsamo, 1999, p. 129). Therefore, it seems like Gibson himself may realize Case's passivity and decide to correct it in later works.

The book's overall heterosexual gender pattern also speaks directly to the ending of the book. The ending is actually interesting: Case and Molly are back where they started: alone. It is significant that Gibson doesn't go into detail about Case and Molly's relationship after the job is done. This seems to imply that Case and Molly are cyborg selves incapable of "true love". I say this because it seems like as the action progresses Case is very concerned with Molly's well being although the reverse of that is not really shown.

Queen of Angels

It is interesting to compare Molly with Mary Choy in *Queen of Angels* (1990) by Greg Bear. This story is situated in: December 2047, the miraculous microscopic machines of nanotechnology build a clean, prosperous America; art and LitVid flourish; the robot space probe AXIS. Mary is assigned to apprehend the missing killer for mandatory therapy---



before the poet is captured by the Selectors, a network of vigilante fanatics who use neural torture on those considered mentally impure.

Mary undergoes much more transformations than Molly does. Mary changes her skin to make it “dolphinslick” (Bear, 1990, p. 5); she changes her face color to the color of “jet-black”; “Her transform chemistry could let her coast for many hours without sleep” (Bear, 1990, p. 48); she has a birth control ability in that “she would lift the voluntary gates Dr. Sumpler had grown within her and let Ernest’s seed find its way all the way” (Bear, 1990, p. 131); she can hide her nipples and bring them out (Bear, 1990, p. 135); she can even smell as she likes---“She brought out the perfume..., her smell that of jasmine, seeping from her; this was Sumpler’s masterpiece, people who could smell as they wished” (Bear, 1990, p. 132).

Often times we hear stories of women, even fabulous X-women having cosmetic surgery. What are their motives? Get a man, improve the beauty, “improve self-esteem, social status, and sometimes even professional standing” (Balsamo, 1999, p. 58) or a little of everything? But whatever the purpose is, the female body is thus reconstructed “as a signifier of ideal feminine beauty” (Balsamo, 1999, p. 58). According to Balsamo, “the female body... serves as a site of inscription, a billboard for the dominant cultural meanings” (Balsamo, 1999, p. 78), yet the Mary’s body is super inscribed with a multitude of cultural meanings, central to which would be instead, a flip of gender roles and reconstructing the female body as a power.

What it means to be human? The first thing we need to know is we are all different and there is no need to feel ashamed or guilty about being different. Yet a modern mistaken belief is that “the female body is flawed in its distinctions and perfect when differences are transformed into sameness” (Balsamo, 1999, p. 71). Hence cosmetic surgery gives beauty but the beauty reproduced in this way is the “assembly-line beauty”, because “‘difference’ is made over into sameness” (Balsamo, 1999, p.58).



Yet Mary chooses “an exotic design” (Bear, 1990, p. 8) and this design doesn’t make her look thin, frail, girlish, frivolous, and exhibitionists, silly, or any other “to do’s” based on the weak, pathological beauty standard. Instead, her design makes her distinct, exotic, unreal, though still sexual and beautiful. She is rendered “an alien” (Bear, 1990, p. 8). Her friend Theo says to her “You are a fapping *alien*” (Bear, 1990, p. 8). Ernest also says to her “You tell me she [Theo] is your friend, Mary, but I never saw such a friend. She reflects off you. Doesn’t love you. Wants to be like you, but hates you for being different” (Bear, 1990, p. 86). Mary is also cut off from her mother and her family after the surgery.

In terms of sexuality, Mary has more control over her body and more power over men than Molly. Mary’s sexual power, particularly manifests itself in her ability to choose whether or not she wants to be an active sexual being and her option of stopping her reproductive system. It prevents her from getting distracted by men or motherhood and helps her to concentrate on being a policewoman. It entitles her individual dignity.

Whereas if we compare this with Molly’s feeling of sex, we see that Case and Molly forms a functional and a sexual liaison. For instance, after Case jacks into Molly the first time, the cybernetic penetration is followed by a sexual encounter between them. We don’t get much about their sex. On Case’s side, “What did he know about her? That she was another professional; that she said her being, like his, was the thing she did to make a living” (Bear, 1990, p. 56). He can recall that “their mutual grunt of unity when he’d entered her, and that she liked her coffee black, afterward”

Female Body and Technology

Getting a transformation in Molly and Mary’s worlds doesn’t seem odd or sick, yet it is interesting if we compare the reasons that they get a surgery, because we can discern the



difference. Molly doesn't give an obvious explanation, yet we can assume this is for self image and career both. Jamie observes Molly may also "in a way use it as protection and offense". She is right. These motives also prompt Mary, though Mary at least is also prompted by a desire "to match inner her with an outer appearance that had never satisfied" (Bear, 1990, p. 8). The depiction of her process of interior struggle and gaining self-awareness and self-recognition shows Bear has a sure sense of his characters.

This relates to how to define technology in the sci fi world. What is technology? What qualifies as a technology? In the world of the near future, who will control women's bodies? Are they technologically constructed? If they are technologized, in what ways technologies construct gendered bodies? A technology that I have focused on in the paper does not refer simply to computers and other such machines, but is understood "in a Foucauldian sense---to mean not only machines and devices, but also social, economic, and institutional forces" (Balsamo, 1999, p.159). As observed by Wajcman, "technology is more than a set of physical objects or artifacts. It also fundamentally embodies a culture or set of social relations made up of certain sorts of knowledge, beliefs, desires, and practices" (Wajcman, 1991, p. 149).

Technologies always have multiple effects. Determining the meaning of those effects is not a simple process. Balsamo argues that the transformations "appearing as a form of resistance" in that "these technological body transgressions rearticulate the power relations of a dominant social order" (Balsamo, 1999, p. 54). "This is to say that when female bodies participate in bodybuilding activities that are traditionally understood to be the domain of male bodies, ... although these bodies transgress gender boundaries, they are not reconstructed according to an opposite gender identity" (Balsamo, 1999, p.55). Thus she calls our attention to "the *persistence* with which gender and race hierarchy structure, technological practices, thereby limiting the disruptive possibilities of technological transgressions" (Balsamo, 1999, p.55). She actually believes that



“certain biotechnologies are ideologically shaped by gender considerations and other beliefs about race, physical abilities, and economic and legal status” (Balsamo, 1999, book cover)

Conclusions:

Generally, critics believe that in traditional Sci fi, the female body is still gendered passive and culturally and socially constructed. They also believe this holds true for post modern sci fi. For instance, Balsamo, as we have mentioned earlier, believes that new technologies are invested with cultural significance in ways that augment dominant cultural narratives. “My aim here is to describe,” she asserts at the beginning of the book *Technologies of the Gendered Body*, “how certain technologies are, to borrow Wajcman’s phrase, ideologically shaped by the operation of gender interests and, consequently, how they serve to reinforce traditional gendered patterns of power and authority” (Balsamo, 1999, p. 10).

“In postmodern social theory, the female body has been constructed as uncontainable, unruly, and ultimately un-decidable. Just as this is a woman’s legacy, so too is it her promise” (Balsamo, 1999, p. 38). Although the phrase “the female body” has been amply used as a critical concept in feminist denunciations of man’s traditional appropriation of woman, things began to change. To contribute to the feminist studies of science and technology, this paper offers an alternative narrative of sci fi identity and argues that the female body is always gendered and is “subordinated within institutionalized systems of power and knowledge and crisscrossed by incompatible discourses, yet it is not fully determined by those systems of meaning” (Balsamo, 1999, p. 39) and instead, always interacting with and resisting against these systems.

References:

- Balsamo, Anne. (1999). *Technologies of the Gendered Body*. Durham and London: Duke UP.
Bear, Greg. (1990). *Queen of Angels*. New York, A Time Warner Company.



- Gibson, William. (1984). *Neuromancer*. New York: Ace Books.
- Haraway, Donna, J. (1991). *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge.
- Landa, Jose Angel Garcia. (1996). "Gender, I-deology and Addictive Representation: the Film of Familiarity." Chantal Cornut-Gentille D' Arcy, and Jose Angel Garcia Landa, eds. *Gender, I-deology: Essays on Theory, Fiction, and Film*. Amsterdam: Rodopi. 13-54.
- Pfeil, Fred. (1990). *Another Tale to Tell: Politics and Narrative in Postmodern Culture*. London: Verso.
- Rodriguez, Francisco Collado. (1996). "Complexity / Controversy: Some Aspects of Contemporary Women's Studies in America." Chantal Cornut-Gentille D' Arcy, and Jose Angel Garcia Landa, eds. *Gender, I-deology: Essays on Theory, Fiction, and Film*. Amsterdam: Rodopi. 107-20.
- Spencer, Nicholas. (1999). "Rethinking Ambivalence: Technopolitics and the Luddites in William Gibson and Bruce Sterling's Works." *Contemporary Literature* 40.3: 403-429.