

John - from Karl

2A CLASS NOTES CYBERCULTURE

CYBERSPACE IS THAT "ELECTRONIC REALM WHERE INFORMATION, IDEAS, AND IMAGINATION LINK UP AND CIRCULATE VIA DIGITAL MEANS."¹

"CYBERSPACE IS WHERE YOU ARE WHEN YOU'RE TALKING ON THE TELEPHONE".²

It is not really a place, or a space - its notional³ space. Money was the first thing to move into the digitally mediated realm of cyberspace - it has no material reality, existing as information, potential, bits & bytes.

ORIGIN OF THE TERM.

THE TERMS CYBERSPACE AND CYBERPUNK WERE COINED BY SCI-FI WRITER WILLIAM GIBSON IN HIS NOVEL "**NEUROMANCER**" -

"a consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation... A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data".

WILLIAM GIBSON'S NOVELS DEPICT A FUTURE WHERE WE EXIST ONLY IN AN ELECTRONIC, VIRTUAL WORLD.

THE PREFIX "CYBER" IS FROM THE SCIENTIFIC STUDY OF CYBERNETICS (TERM INVENTED 1942 FROM THE GREEK FOR "steersman"), AN INTERDISCIPLINARY AREA BASED ON THE SCIENCE OF CONTROL & COMMUNICATION IN THE ANIMAL AND THE MACHINE. "CONTROL" WAS SEEN TO HINGE ON KNOWLEDGE & POWER CONTAINED WITHIN INFORMATION FLOWS. FROM THIS GENERAL DISCIPLINE CAME OTHER ASSOCIATED AREAS OF STUDIES, INCLUDING BIOCYBERNETICS (BIONICS) & COMPUTER CYBERNETICS.⁴

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES/GROUPS

IN THE WAY IN WHICH "CINEMAs" ARE THE CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS FOCUSED AROUND THE TECHNOLOGY OF "FILM", CULTURAL ACTIVITIES/ORGANISATIONS/TRENDS EVOLVE AROUND THE PRACTICES AND IDEAS OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND **CYBERSPACE**.

¹ ROSS HARLEY. INTRODUCTION, "ART & CYBERCULTURE" MIA # 69 AUGUST '93.

² JOHN BARLOW - MONDO 2000 USER'S GUIDE

³ Expressing an abstract concept; speculative.

⁴ FONTANA DICTIONARY OF MODERN THOUGHT.

CYBERCULTURE

IS THE TERM USED TO COVER THE VARIED CULTURES WHICH ARE
EMERGING
TO EXIST AND OPERATE WITHIN CYBERSPACE.

SOME EXAMPLES OF CYBERCULTURES ARE:

COMPUTER HACKERS; CRACKERS⁵ ;
CYBER PUNKS; CYBER DADA; VNS MATRIX.

Huge electronic superhighways allow information/data to flow between these cultural outposts - CONVERSATIONS/DIALOGUES CARRIED ON COMPUTER NETWORKS - **the net** - through the ether (INTERNET; The WELL; Genie; HYPERNET); BBS (bulletin board systems), VIRTUAL ART GALLERIES & OTHER INFO CIRCULATE - including specialist & professional; MODELS OF VIRTUAL WORLDS WHERE WE EXIST IN CYBER SPACE AS WHATEVER CHARACTERS WE LIKE - moos & muds.

Most of these on-line services cost per month and per hour.

COMPUTER HACKERS (SOME OF WHOM MIGHT IDENTIFY AS CYBERPUNKS) HAVE AS A CREDO "INFORMATION WANTS TO BE FREE". THEY ACCESS THE VIRTUAL WORLDS OF INFORMATION WITH CURIOSITY, AND SOMETIMES WITH (POLITICALLY MOTIVATED ?) INTENT TO SABOTAGE THE GIANT MULTI-NATIONALS AND INSTITUTIONS WHICH CONTROL THE WORLD.

*Where they have grown older and straighter, they
might be superseded by crackers.*

NETWORKERS MIGHT SPEND (**LARGE!!**) AMOUNTS OF TIME RELATING TO VIRTUAL "COMMUNITIES" VIA THE NET - eg ARTISTS; INDIGENOUS GROUPS; ACADEMICS; COMPUTER BUFFS; HACKERS; PORNOGRAPHERS; USERS OF VIRTUAL SEX.

TECHNOPHILIACS & ADDICTS EXTENDING THE METAPHOR OF CYBERSPACE AS REPLACING THE CENTRAL NERVOUS SYSTEM AND PSYCHOPHYSICAL PERCEPTION OF THE "REAL" WORLD, GIVES US NOTIONS SUCH AS *VIRUS*, *ADDICTION* AND *TECHNOPHILIA*. THE USER EXISTS SOLELY THROUGH CYBERSPACE RATHER THAN IN THE "REAL", PHYSICAL WORLD. THE STEREOTYPE MIGHT BE OBLIVIOUS TO ALL ASPECTS OF PHYSICAL WELL BEING, "be pasty faced,

⁵ The new generation, who haven't been co-opted into industry. Nihilistic, into computer crime.

malodorous, asocial and with the charm of a cheese grater."⁶ NERD is the term for computer programmers and designers who forsake "outsider" standards of lifestyle: **geek** is the proud, insider term for nerd.

NOTIONS/FEATURES OF THE DEBATES SURROUNDING NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND THEIR CULTURAL APPLICATIONS.

A **HISTORY OF COMPUTING** REVEALS EARLY INTEREST IN ROBOTICS, WHICH WAS OVERTAKEN BY EXPERIMENTS & DEVELOPMENTS IN **ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**. THE INTEREST IN ROBOTICS HAS METAPHYSICAL ROOTS IN HUMANKINDS' OMNIPRESENT INTEREST IN AUTOMATA.⁷ CYBERCULTURE, SYSTEMS OF VIRTUAL REALITY AND ART PRACTICES eg **STELARC**, EXPLORE AUTOMATA IN THE SENSE OF THE USER BECOMING A PART OF THE ELECTRONIC "REALITY". CYBORGS (cybernetic organisms - PART HUMAN, PART ELECTRONIC MACHINE) ARE A RECURRENT THEME IN POPULAR CULTURE.

THE *MECHANICAL, SELF-CONTAINED HUMAN BODY* HAS BEEN REPLACED BY A HARDWIRED ONE, THE BOUNDARIES OF WHICH ARE **INFINITE** IN THEIR CAPACITY TO MERGE WITH OTHER **ELECTRONIC INTERFACES**.

THERE ARE MASSIVE IMPLICATIONS FOR NOTIONS OF SUBJECTIVITY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE INDIVIDUAL. SIGHT (THE LENS, THE OUTER WORLD) & VISION (POWER, KNOWLEDGE, INNER WORLD) ARE NOW ONE. The human body is now recognised as a continuously moving field, rather than a hard-edged, self-contained entity.⁸

CYBERSPACE CHALLENGES IDEAS ABOUT THE REAL AS IT REMINDS US THAT PERCEPTION IS A MODEL HYPERREALITY CREATED CHEMICALLY INSIDE OUR HEADS.

THE MECHANICAL & DIGITAL TOOLS ARE EXTENSION OF OUR COLLECTIVE PSYCHE. THEY ARE REVEALING NEW IDEAS ABOUT "TRUTH" AND "REALITY" AND EXPOSE THE LIMITS OF WESTERN BELIEF SYSTEMS, AND CURRENT THEORIES OF ART & MEDIA.

THE USE OF VIRTUAL REALITY TECHNOLOGIES IN THE TOURISM AND SEX INDUSTRIES. ESCAPISM AND TECHNOLOGICALLY PRODUCED

⁶ Mondo 2000 User's Guide

⁷ See Paul Charlier "Automata" West No.5

⁸ See ZONE #6 - Incorporations; BINOCULAR Focusing, Time Lapses '92 - Anne Marsh "Technobodies"; op cit MIA "Art & Cyberculture" - most articles

INTOXICATIONS. TECHNOLOGIES PROMISE TO IMMERSE THE USER IN A RESPONSIVE ENVIRONMENT, **LINKING HUMAN AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCES.** THIS MIGHT BE SAID TO REPLICATE A STAGE OF **INFANTILE DEVELOPMENT** WHERE THE PERSON HAS YET TO SEPARATE THEIR IDENTITY/SELF FROM THE ENVIRONMENT
THEY ARE STILL CONNECTED TO MOTHER/MACHINE.

The plugging of computer directly into the brain is yet to come, but the
notion foreshadows a time
when we will be able to exist totally "outside" the **material body.**

VIRTUAL REALITY⁹ AS A **SYSTEM OF REPRESENTATION -** CULTURALLY & HISTORICALLY SPECIFIC, ENCODED VISUALLY & AURALLY AND THUS FUNCTIONING AS A **MANUFACTURED CULTURAL PRODUCT.** ESPECIALLY IN LIGHT OF THE INCREASING INTERNATIONALISM OF SOFTWARE/HARDWARE AND IN THE FINANCIAL/DESIGN CONNECTIONS TO **MILITARY AND ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRIES.**

THESE LINKS ARE A DISTINCTIVE FEATURE OF THE NEW TECHNOLOGIES.

COMPUTER GENERATED AND COMPUTER-ENHANCED IMAGES FRAME NEW WAYS OF WORKING FOR **ARTISTS.** WHAT IS "ORIGINAL" MATERIAL? IS MATERIAL BEING "SOURED" OR MERELY COPIED AND RECYCLED? WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS RE NOTIONS OF QUOTING, **APPROPRIATION?** ARE OUR CULTURAL **VOCABULARIES BEING EXPANDED OR MUDDIED?**

HOW MIGHT CULTURAL DIFFERENCES INFLUENCE
COMPUTER AESTHETICS, & VICE VERSA?

"the whole fucking world is pretending that the breakthrough is in technology.the bottleneck is really in art"¹⁰

"sure the video toaster is a great tool...but boxes don't make great video.people make great video.somehow in the rush for simple technology, this basic tenet was lost...give me a les paul but i won't be eric clapton.."11

THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION & ACCESS TO ELECTRONIC MEDIA, FOR INDIGENOUS GROUPS. SPECIFICALLY, THE FACILITY TO COMMUNICATE & EXCHANGE IMAGE/TEXT/GRAPHIX OVER GREAT

⁹ Virtual reality is technology that enables to user to be emersed in an electronic environment that alters in response to his/her movements within that environment. At this stage, it represents the ultimate in psycho-physical suture.

¹⁰ Penn Jillette in WIRED Sept '94

¹¹ Letters column WIRED Sept '94

DISTANCES, ISSUES OF ACCESS/COST/EXPERTISE AND THE

IMPLICATIONS FOR MAKERS OF TRADITIONAL ART.

HOW TO CREATE MULTI-MEDIA MODELS THAT **PRESERVE** CULTURAL IDENTITIES AND DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES? ORAL TRADITIONS IN CYBERSPACE.

TECHNOLOGY DESTABILISES FRONTIERS YET CREATES VECTORS OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TERMINALS *via the superhighways*. MANY PEOPLE/COMMUNITIES MAY FEEL CAUGHT IN A NETWORK OF CULTURAL TRAJECTORIES BEYOND THEIR CONTROL.

MYTH OF THE GLOBAL VILLAGE.

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS ARE USUALLY DESCRIBED AS **INCREASING** THE USER'S POWER, IMAGINATION, FREEDOM & CHOICE. YET ALL COMPUTERS REPRESENT THE PARADIGMS CHOSEN BY THE PROGRAMMER/S. INTERFACING WITH A PREDETERMINED MODEL OF CHOICES - REAL LIBERATION OR MERELY SHAKING OFF THE ORDINARY?

TECHNO-FUTURISM

IDEA THAT THE **PROGRESSIVE SOPHISTICATION** OF TECHNOLOGY AND REPLACEMENT OF PREVIOUS HARDWARE & SYSTEMS IS ESSENTIALLY "RIGHT". UNCRITICAL FAITH NEEDS TO BE EXAMINED.

nanotechnology is the future of manufacturing technology. It may be used to create chemically stable substances at a molecular level - it is the inexpensive and complete control over matter.

WITH ANALOG TECHNOLOGY, AN IMPRINT OF THE ORIGINAL (LIGHT WAVES, SOUND WAVES) IS STORED ON FILM OR TAPE. COMPUTERS DIGITISE INFORMATION, WHICH CAN THEN BE **SENT, COPIED, STORED, REASSEMBLED, ALTERED** - THEY ARE SIMULTANEOUSLY

ARCHIVE, PRODUCER, PLAGIARISER

THERE IS NO LONGER ANY SUCH THING AS PHOTOGRAPHIC TRUTH
as scanned images are sent on-line and
(potentially) manipulated in the computer.

CYBERSPACE AIMS TO FREE US FROM **2ND NATURE** (THE NETWORK OF ROADS, BUILDINGS WHICH COVERS NATURE). INFORMATION CAN NOW MOVE FASTER THAN PEOPLE OR THINGS, WE EXIST IN A SPACE OF FLOWS (NOT PLACES), **A NETWORK THAT IS 3RD NATURE.**

POSTMODERNISM IS A CATALOGUE OF **THE SYMPTOMS** OF THIS, CYBERSPACE THE SUBJECTIVE EFFECTS.

POST MODERNISM IN THEORY & CYBERSPACE IN LITERATURE

ARE EXPLORATIONS OF THE LANDSCAPE OF **THIRD NATURE.**

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