

Neuromancer Study Guide

Neuromancer by William Gibson

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Plot Summary

Neuromancer tells the story of a team of criminal experts performing a mission of computer subterfuge against a background of high technology and violent crime. Much of the novel takes place in cyberspace, a computer-created reality.

The first parts of the novel deal with the assembly of the team, Armitage as leader, Molly as hired muscle, Case as computer and cyberspace expert and Peter Riviera to perform the human manipulations which require subtlety as opposed to intimidation. Armitage is an ex-military soldier, while the remaining team members are steeped in drug use and histories of violent criminal behavior. Molly and Riviera are both highly modified individuals, bearing extensive artificial implants and body modifications.

An early, smaller job performed by Molly and Case allows the team to acquire the ROM construct - the recorded personality and intelligence - of McCoy Pauley, a noted and deceased cyberspace operator. It also allows Molly and Case to hone their skills and become accustomed to working together.

The last half of the novel takes place on an orbiting space station known as Freeside, which is the home of the immensely rich, powerful and peculiar Tessier-Ashpool family. Tessier-Ashpool owns two artificial intelligences, self-aware and powerful cyberspace programs. The two artificial intelligences are joined at only a single point, a restricted computer terminal that looks like a bejeweled head, to prevent them from becoming too powerful.

The team eventually discovers that they have been hired by Wintermute, one of Tessier-Ashpool's artificial intelligences, and that the completion of their mission will allow Wintermute to merge with *Neuromancer*, the second Tessier-Ashpool artificial intelligence.

To accomplish the mission, Riviera convinces a member of the Tessier-Ashpool family to let Molly enter their highly secure home to access the restricted computer terminal and enter a password. The password allows Case, with the assistance of the ROM construct and a military-grade computer virus, to penetrate the ice - a set of defensive safeguard programs - that maintains the separation between Wintermute and *Neuromancer*.

During the mission, Armitage suffers a complete mental breakdown and is killed by Wintermute, and Riviera attempts, unsuccessfully, to double-cross Molly. This attempt ends in Riviera's death. The mission is further complicated by interference from law enforcement agents of the Turing Registry, a shadowy but legitimate international agency tasked with preventing artificial intelligences from growing too powerful. Other twists come from various quarters, including Case's former associates and friends and *Neuromancer*'s attempts to prevent the mission's successful completion.



After overcoming several unanticipated difficulties, Case and Molly successfully complete the mission, allowing Wintermute to merge with Neuromancer. The newly merged artificial intelligence appears to be vastly more than the sum of its parts, though the exact nature of the being is not explored. Case and Molly return to Earth, share a brief relationship and then part ways to continue their lives.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Neuromancer opens in The Chatsubo, a bar in the Night City zone of Chiba City. Case, the protagonist, is a bar regular and has an easy rapport with Ratz, the owner and sometimes bartender of The Chatsubo. Case was once a cyberspace cowboy, an exceptionally gifted individual who was able to enter a computerized shared reality, referred to as cyberspace or the matrix, and manipulate the digital world. Cyberspace has many millions of users, but only a select handful have the skill to be able to access any part of the matrix and obtain nearly any data on any system. Case "operated on an almost permanent adrenaline high, a byproduct of youth and proficiency, jacked into a custom cyberspace deck that projected his disembodied consciousness into the consensual hallucination that was the matrix" (p. 6).

For about two years, Case had worked for a shadowy group of thieves, gaining illegal entry to cyberspace systems and stealing costly software and data. "A thief, he'd 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" (p. 6).

Two years before the opening scenes of the novel, Case attempts to steal from his employers and is caught. As punishment, they inject him with a drug, a "wartime Russian mycotoxin" (p. 7), which damages his brain, eliminates his talent and leaves him unable to operate in cyberspace.

Case travels to Chiba City, famous for its advanced medical facilities, in search of a medical cure. His total assets are eventually used up, and he is left without a cure and convinced there is no hope for one. He thereafter turns to a life of street crime and dealing and using drugs, which has occupied him for two years. Case hates his mundane existence, misses the alternative reality of cyberspace and feels like the physical world is inherently uninteresting and worthless.

A few weeks before the opening scenes of the novel, Case meets Linda Lee playing video games in an arcade, takes her to a "coffin" (a small chamber in a hotel, analogous to a hotel room) and has sex with her. He apparently introduces her to psychoactive and other drugs. Over the next month Case falls in love with Linda Lee, even as the drugs he provides destroy her mind and change her into a drug-addled addict. Eventually, she leaves him for a life on the streets.

Linda Lee meets Case, seemingly randomly, at The Chatsubo. She tells him that Case's nominal boss, Wage, wants Case dead. She claims to have learned this from her girlfriend, who is dating one of Wage's bodyguards. She says she is passing it along as a favor. Linda Lee tells Case the only way to avoid being executed is to quickly pay off a large debt Case owes to Wage.



Case tries to validate Linda Lee's story by visiting Julius "Julie" Deane, a local petty crime boss who is apparently well connected in Night City and is somewhat friendly to Case. Deane is unable to verify the story, but he does not dismiss it out of hand. Case tries to procure a firearm, but he is unable. Instead, he buys a cobra, a telescoping nightstick. Case then wanders around Night City trying to find additional information. He stops, again, at The Chatsubo, and this time he talks with Lonny Zone, a pimp. Lonny Zone has no further information for Case.

Case leaves the bar and continues wandering through Night City. He realizes he is being followed. He uses a ruse to escape from his pursuers but injures his leg in the process. He tries again to buy a firearm, and this time he is successful. He goes to Cheap Hotel, a hotel where he rents a coffin for business, and attempts to move some contraband so that he can raise money to pay Wage. His contraband includes some Hitachi RAM that is particularly valuable. He is unable to find a buyer for his contraband, but he takes some smaller high-value items with him, leaving the Hitachi RAM.

Case returns to The Chatsubo. Wage arrives with some hired muscle. They talk, and Wage informs Case that Linda Lee's story was a fabrication. Case gives his contraband to Wage, which squares them for the moment. Case realizes that Linda Lee has been conning him and that she has probably already stolen the Hitachi RAM from Cheap Hotel. He re-sells his firearm to the dealer and then returns to Cheap Hotel to verify his suspicions. He sees that the lock to his coffin has been damaged.

Case enters his coffin and meets Molly, who has been waiting for him. She confirms that she was tailing him earlier in the day, but she denies any involvement with Wage. Molly also tells him that Linda Lee was there earlier and stole his Hitachi RAM. Molly informs him that she has been sent to fetch Case for her employer. She threatens him with physical violence if he resists. She shows him several body-enhancing implants to back up her claims: "She held out her hands, palms up, the white fingers slightly spread, and with a barely audible click, ten doubled-edged, four centimeter scalpel blades slid from their housings beneath the burgundy nails" (p. 35).

Chapter 1 Analysis

The chapter introduces Case, the novel's central protagonist, and provides biographical information about him through a series of non-chronological scenes. The chapter also introduces numerous minor characters and locations that will have a further role in the novel. The texture of the world is established, and the basic character of Case is described. Case is, essentially, an amoral criminal who routinely uses and sells drugs, lies, steals and scams. He has even murdered people. However, he is still portrayed as a sympathetic character.

The world that the author generates in this book involves the melding of humanity and technology. In our first introduction to this world, we meet Case, who has spent his entire life mentally entangled with computer systems. Without this capability, he is incomplete and unfulfilled. Molly also is a combination of humanity and machinery,



carrying metal blades beneath her skin. This theme of the thin line between humanity and machines is a central theme of the novel.

Case's apparent love for Linda Lee is a recurrent theme throughout the novel. Case apparently never realizes that he is an enormously destructive influence in Linda Lee's life, essentially converting her from a video-game-playing kid into a drug-addicted and homeless petty criminal within the period of just a few months. Furthermore, when Linda Lee steals from Case and sets him up, he is not in the least disturbed, taking it in stride as a fact of criminal life. Case will eventually realize that his apparent love for Linda Lee is not nearly as strong as his desire for success.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Molly takes Case to the Chiba Hilton, where they meet Molly's boss Armitage. Armitage tells Case about Screaming Fist, an operation in "the war" which presumably concluded some time in the past. Armitage claims that Screaming Fist was the origin of the programs used by cyberspace cowboys: "You're a console cowboy. The prototypes of the programs you use to crack industrial banks were developed for Screaming Fist. For the assault on the Kirensk computer nexus. Basic module was a Nightwing microlight, a pilot, a matrix deck, a jockey. We were running a virus called Mole. The Mole series was the first generation of intrusion programs" (p 37-38).

Case dismisses Armitage because, Case says, "I'm never gonna punch any deck again, not for you or anybody else" (p. 38). Armitage informs Case that Armitage has built an extensive profile on Case and claims to be able to reverse the neural damage that prevents Case from entering cyberspace. Case immediately asks what it will cost him.

Case returns to Cheap Hotel and sleeps. After he wakes up he meets Molly, and they have a conversation about Armitage. Molly claims to know Case through studying his profile, which she claims is so complete that it predicts how Case will react to various circumstances. They develop a kind of rapport through small talk. Molly takes Case to a nameless clinic, where Case undergoes several operations and treatments. They replace his pancreas, portions of his liver and his blood, and they alter his nerves.

When Case wakes up, he is back in Cheap Hotel, in a lot of pain, and with Molly. She has taken care of him during the first hours of recovery. Molly tells Case that he will not be able to enter cyberspace until he has recuperated for eight days. Case and Molly have sex. Case starts to touch her face, but she stops him. "Unexpected hardness of the implanted lenses. 'Don't,' she said, 'fingerprints'" (p. 44).

The next day, Case visits Deane again. Molly tells him it's not a good idea. Case tells her he needs to wrap up some street business or some "tight friends" (p. 45) will die. Molly knows that Case is also trying to gather information on Armitage, but she lets him talk with Deane alone.

Deane doesn't know Armitage, but he does know of Screaming Eagle. He tells Case that the soldiers were sent in to die and did not receive support or assistance. Even so, one unit escaped. Case leaves and again joins up with Molly. Case and Molly settle Case's debt with Wage using Armitage's money. Case takes some drugs, but they do not affect him. Molly explains that his new pancreas and altered liver prevent him from feeling any effects. "Armitage had them designed to bypass that shit" (p. 49).

Molly and Case go to Sammi's, an arena-style club where combatants fight to the death for the audience's entertainment. Molly apparently likes to watch the fights, but Case is



uninterested and goes in search of the concession stands. Case is surprised to see Linda Lee running through the crowd, and he immediately follows her, just as one of the combatants kills the other and the crowd cheers. As Case follows Linda Lee, he sees some laser fire shooting through the crowd nearby. Then he is tripped, and someone tries to slit his throat. Molly materializes and kills the would-be assassin.

Case staggers to his feet and walks a short distance further to find Linda Lee's body. She has been killed by laser fire. Case is stunned, and Molly explains that Case's street associate Deane has killed Linda Lee and stolen the Hitachi RAM. "The one back there said they got onto her when she was trying to fence your RAM. Just cheaper for them to kill her and take it. Save a little money..." (p. 53). Molly also claims it was just a "Coincidence we were here" (p. 53). Case realizes Molly has also killed the person who killed Linda Lee. Later, Case returns to the clinic for a postoperative check, and then Molly, Case and Armitage leave Chiba City on a hovercraft.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Molly is more fully described in this chapter, and she essentially sets up a partnership-within-the-team with Case that will endure throughout the remainder of the novel. They never betray or question each other. It is interesting that this partnership is settled so quickly and is so successful, particularly when viewed against the background of constant betrayal and misinformation that forms much of the remainder of the novel.

When Armitage offers Case a cure, Case at first dismisses it as impossible. Once he is convinced it is possible, he is immediately willing to pay any price, and his entire existence in Chiba City is quickly abandoned. Although witnessing Linda Lee's murder is disorienting and painful for Case, it does not appear to have much of a lasting negative impact on him. In a way, this murder severs Case's final ties to his old life before embarking on a new one. Molly performs at least two executions, the first of many to come. She demonstrates her skill as a physical threat and operator in the real world. Chapter two concludes the first of five named sections in *Neuromancer*.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Case, Molly and Armitage travel to several cities, including Amsterdam and Paris, where they make contacts and perform some business tasks. Molly buys Case a gift, a nine-pointed shuriken. They subsequently travel to BAMA, the Boston-Atlanta Metropolitan Axis, the location for most of the remainder of the novel.

Case and Molly check into a nameless hotel and have sex. Armitage comes to gather them and tells them that a team is coming to secure their room from possible surveillance devices. Armitage then tells Case that during the medical procedures to reconstruct his ability, fifteen toxin sacs were bonded into Case's arteries. The sacs gradually dissolve, and will eventually release the same mycotoxin that destroyed Case's ability to enter cyberspace. Armitage says that if Case completes the mission, he will tell him how to eliminate the toxin sacs from his system. Molly was apparently unaware that this had been done.

Case and Molly go out and waste some time in the city. Then, they return to their hotel where Case discovers his new cyberspace deck, "an Ono-Sendai Cyberspace 7" (p. 62), has been delivered. Molly takes Case into Manhattan. They go to a place Molly knows. Inside, they enter a private room that is shielded from surveillance by plastic and circuitry. Molly introduces Case to The Finn, usually just Finn, one of her contacts. Finn has some equipment, which he uses to scan Molly for implants or alterations. The only things he finds are things she already knows about.

Finn next scans Case and finds only "some cheap dental work" (p. 65). Finn then leaves the room, and Molly and Case have a private discussion. Molly explains that Case will soon be working with the Dixie Flatline construct, a sort of recorded intelligence of McCoy Pauley. Before he died, Pauley allowed a company named Sense/Net to record his brain into a ROM unit. Sense/Net stores the ROM unit in their high-security vault. Case believes that with the Dixie Flatline any mission would be easy.

Molly also explains that Armitage "gets orders" (p. 67) from higher up. She says that Case is "good, but not that good" (p. 67) and expresses confusion as to why Case was selected for the job. She tells Case that the first job they will do is to steal the Dixie Flatline construct. Then, they will be ready to do the real job. She also tells Case that Finn will be working with them on the job. She stresses, though, that Case must not let on that they have met with Finn for their private scans. She tells him that no one named Armitage, or looking like Armitage, was connected with Screaming Fist.

Molly tells Case they will soon hire another person named Peter Riviera, who she says is a certified psychopath. Molly then proposes that they work together as an alliance within the team. "So we got an axis going, boy? We're together in this? Partners?" Case agrees. Eight days after the operation, Case successfully re-enters cyberspace from his



hotel room while Molly watches. When he leaves cyberspace five hours later, Molly is gone. Soon after, Finn comes to the hotel room. Case and Finn act like they are meeting for the first time. Finn explains that Armitage has sent him to make modifications to Case's deck. Finn adds a flipflop switch, which will let Case flip between being in cyberspace and playing simstim, a type of recorded or live-experience neural feed from another source. Finn explains that he is also going to fit Molly with a simstim broadcasting unit, and he determines that logically Case will be receiving Molly's senses.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Case will subsequently carry the shuriken that Molly bought for him throughout the entire novel, without particularly using it for anything. In a way, it becomes symbolic of their partnership. While the proficient Molly could make use of it as a weapon, it is essentially useless when carried by Case.

Apparently, Finn's equipment is not capable of detecting the sophisticated pancreas modifications, the toxin sacs and other modifications that were implanted in Case. As Case already knows his pancreas was modified, this casts some doubt on Finn's ability to actually detect anything beyond the obvious.

The discussion that Molly and Case have in Finn's private room further strengthens their partnership and also illustrates that the world-wise Molly is fully aware that a double-cross is possible. Things in this world are not usually what they seem. The flipflop switch allows Case, while in cyberspace, to experience what Molly is experiencing at that moment. It will be used extensively through the remainder of the novel. This is yet another type of partnership, joining the two in their sensory experiences through the use of technology.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Case practices using the new simstim flipflop on his deck by entering cyberspace and then hitting the switch. He instantly experiences everything that Molly is experiencing. He watches as she prowls down an alley. He finds the experience frightening, frustrating and disorienting at first, but he eventually gets used to it.

As Case watches, Molly finds a particular software rental booth and makes contact with a person named Larry. Larry belongs to a youth movement, or terrorist criminal gang, called the Panther Moderns. Like all Panther Moderns, Larry has a socket behind one ear where he is able to insert microsofts, small colored chips that allow him to access data or perform complex tasks. One of Larry's microsofts allows him to discern that Molly is broadcasting simstim to Case. He refuses to talk to her while Case is listening, so she tells Case to flip the switch.

Case returns to cyberspace and reviews some information on the Panther Moderns. He discovers that they are a youth movement that uses the media and violent surreal terrorist acts to promote chaos. The Panther Moderns are "mercenaries, practical jokers, nihilistic technofetishists" (p. 78).

Over the next nine days, Case works in cyberspace on methods and programs he will use to gain access to Sense/Net's computer systems. While he is doing this, Molly and the Panther Moderns perform tasks to enable them to gain physical access to Sense/Net's vaults. Finally, Finn purchases access codes and information from a drug-addicted Sense/Net employee. Armitage is satisfied with the plan and gives permission to proceed.

In cyberspace, Case gains entrance to Sense/Net's systems. In the real world, the Panther Moderns incite a riot in the Sense/Net building and arrange for a heavy-handed law enforcement response. An extremely violent situation develops in the Sense/Net building as Molly sneaks down to the vault through the chaotic distraction.

On the way to the vault, Molly encounters three security guards. She kills them, but they break her leg. She applies some drug patches and continues. Molly eventually reaches the vault, enters an access code and retrieves the Dixie Flatline construct. It looks like a "magazine of a large assault rifle" (p. 89) and is covered with warning and security labels. Molly then makes her way to the lobby, as Case executes some programs that cover up their activity.

The Panther Moderns help Molly escape from the chaos of the Sense/Net building and deliver her to a medical facility. Although apparently upset at the level of violence involved, Armitage pays off the Panther Moderns. After the job is wrapped up, Case wanders around The Sprawl on his way to get Molly from the medical facility. Lupus



Yonderboy, one of the Panther Moderns, seeks him out to deliver a cryptic message. He says, "This is the message. Wintermute" (p. 93). He spells the word and then tells Case that the message is also from Wintermute.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The run on Sense/Net is successful and, besides obtaining the Dixie Flatline construct, serves as a practice run for the team members. Besides numerous serious injuries and extensive property damage, fourteen people are killed in the riots. This upsets Armitage. 'Dixie Flatline' was a nickname for McCoy Pauley. Presumably, he was called 'Dixie' because he was from the South and 'Flatline' because he was known to have suffered short periods of brain death while operating in cyberspace. Throughout the novel, the "construct" is referred to in various ways, but the Dixie Flatline construct is most typical.

Names are important throughout this book, and characters and organizations are named for their qualities. "Dixie Flatline" is a name that evokes death, and the construct of that name is a defiance of death, a way for McCoy Pauley to continue to exist after he is flatlined one final time. This is also another joining of the technological and the human. Pauley's mind lives on in a technological form. The construct's name, Dixie Flatline, is also different from the person's name, McCoy Pauley. Does this indicate that they are two separate entities? In what ways are they the same person? In what ways are they different people?

During the mission, Molly performs three more executions, demonstrating her willingness to kill people who get in her way. The world of Neuromancer is cruel and unforgiving. Is this because of the impact of technology on human nature, or is it because of the natural characteristics of humanity?



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Case picks up Molly from the medical facility where she has been surgically repaired. They return to the Finn's private room. Molly explains that she cut a deal on the side with the Panther Moderns to have them investigate Armitage. Finn checks on the name Wintermute and tells them that Wintermute is an Artificial Intelligence, with limited Swiss citizenship, that was built for a corporation named Tessier-Ashpool S.A. Tessier-Ashpool S.A. owns the mainframe upon which Wintermute executes. The Wintermute AI is Armitage's boss.

Finn tells Case and Molly that he has had one previous business dealing with Tessier-Ashpool S.A. An associate of his received a stolen custom-made computer terminal in the form of a bejeweled head, a sort of clockwork automata. After some inquiries on how to fence the bejeweled head, a ninja visited Finn's associate, explained the bejeweled head had been stolen and requested its return. The associate expressed an interest in continuing to live and returned the bejeweled head. The ninja paid the asking price, took the bejeweled head and left.

Finn explains that Tessier-Ashpool S.A. is an enormously rich family, run as a corporation, which is very private and is based in an orbiting structure known as Freeside. Molly tells Case that Armitage apparently also cut a side deal with the Panther Moderns and purchased a database from them. The database appears to belong to Armitage. Case and Molly return to their hotel. Molly goes to sleep while Case attaches the Dixie Flatline construct to his deck. He brings up the ROM program of McCoy, hooks it up to a "sequential, real time memory" (p. 105) and begins to talk to it.

Chapter 5 Analysis

Finn's story about the bejeweled head computer terminal is long and complicated. The bejeweled head will play an important role in later chapters of the novel. Its very appearance, that of an automaton, again carries the theme of uniting man and machinery. The head also connotes great wealth, a characteristic that defines Tessier-Ashpool and separates the corporation from normal people. The fact that this corporation is actually a family is another blending of two concepts. Business and family have been joined. What is lost and what is gained in this restructuring?

The conversations between Molly, Case and Finn demonstrate that Molly and Finn have a prior history together. They have developed a level of trust that Case quickly also relies upon, even as Finn's involvement in the job diminishes. Finn proves himself to be a good source of a wide range of pertinent facts.

The "sequential, real time memory" (p. 105) that Case allocates to the Dixie Flatline construct allows the construct to remember what has happened and to plan things.

From this point forward in the novel, the construct behaves in a consistent and rational way, even though it is in fact a program. Without the memory, the construct would be a simple input/output algorithm, as Case demonstrates by asking it a similar question a few times, eliciting a nearly identical response.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Following the Dixie Flatline construct's instructions, Case obtains Armitage's private database. He learns that Armitage was previously known as Colonel Willis Corto, one of the only surviving members from the military operation known as Screaming Fist. Screaming Fist had been based on faulty intelligence, and nearly everyone involved on the mission was killed. Corto ended up blind, legless and missing most of his jaw. He was warehoused for several months in a Utah medical facility.

Under the direction of a congressional aide, Corto was then prepared to testify in congressional hearings for political reasons. After his testimony, the government and the military ignored him. Corto eventually discovered that his testimony saved the careers of the officers responsible for the faulty intelligence leading to the failure of Screaming Fist.

Corto then worked a series of jobs as an enforcer or strongman, moving from essentially legitimate work slowly down to becoming an outright criminal thug. He became obsessed with the idea of betrayal and eventually ended up in a Paris mental hospital, diagnosed as an unresponsive schizophrenic. After some experimental computer therapy, he was pronounced cured and released. Case can find no further information about Corto. Case and Molly sleep and are awakened by Armitage, who takes them to Istanbul.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Although Case is a professional cyberspace operator, it becomes clear that the Dixie Flatline construct has a great deal of expertise and a wide range of experience. The background on Armitage is extensive and plays a large role in later chapters of the novel. Armitage is primarily interesting as a character because he essentially has two personalities. The old Colonel Willis Corto is a different person than the new Armitage. This opens up questions about identity. What is at the heart of your identity? If something changes you significantly, do you become a different person? It is significant that Armitage's recovery came quickly after he was treated with computer-based therapy. Armitage is yet another example of technology altering humanity.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Case and Molly meet Finn in an Istanbul hotel. They meet a man named Terzibashjian, who has been tailing Peter Riviera for Armitage. He tells them a little about Riviera. Riviera has had one lung removed to make room for a series of high-tech implants that allow him to project images: "what he imagines, you see" (p. 118). Riviera is also a known drug addict, a constant user of stimulants. With Terzibashjian as a guide, Molly, Case and Finn track down Riviera. They ambush and kidnap him, shooting him with a drugged dart. Finn examines him thoroughly, and they deliver Riviera to Armitage.

In a private moment, Case tells Molly about Colonel Willis Corto. They discuss whether or not Armitage is even aware he used to be Corto, and they doubt it. Molly tells Case that the private Armitage database he cracked was potentially planted by Wintermute. Riviera's profile indicates that he is especially dangerous and mentally sick. He enjoys torture, betrayal, rape and murder, and Molly advises Case to be careful. Molly both distrusts and intensely dislikes Riviera. Later, Armitage rounds up Case and Molly, and they get ready to travel to Freeside. They meet up with Riviera in the airport. Armitage has convinced Riviera to join the operation. While they are waiting in the airport, a payphone next to Case rings. He picks up the phone and discovers he is talking with Wintermute. Case hangs up the phone without replying.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Molly dislikes and distrusts both Terzibashjian and Peter Riviera. She feels that Terzibashjian is undisciplined and inexperienced, and when they part she threatens to kill him if she sees him again. This deliberate provocation seems out of character for Molly, the consummate professional, and will lead to future complications.

Riviera's ability to project images, coupled with his deviant personality, make him an interesting but distasteful character, and Molly has an immediate and strong hatred for Riviera, perhaps engendered from her review of his portfolio. Considering that Molly is herself an accomplished assassin for hire, her objection to Riviera's amorality is interesting.

The ringing airport payphones are somewhat anachronistic, technologically, but still present a compelling image. This reminds us of an important point, that technology today is far more advanced than it was when *Neuromancer* was written in 1984. Chapter seven concludes the second of five named sections in *Neuromancer* and is the last portion of the novel that occurs on Earth, excepting the final wrap-up chapter.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Case, Molly, Armitage and Riviera stop for a few days at Zion before proceeding to Freeside. Zion was founded by construction workers who did not want to return to Earth after building Freeside. It is a conglomeration of orbiting metal and discarded systems. Zion residents refer to themselves as Zionites and espouse a type of Rastafarian religion based on Jah, ganja and synthesized music called dub. Zionites refer to all non-Zion locations as Babylon. They also lump cyberspace into Babylon.

Armitage tells Case and Molly to start practicing zero gravity skills and become acclimated to working without gravity. Case jacks in to cyberspace and talks to the Dixie Flatline construct, which tries to make Case promise to erase its ROM after the mission is complete.

Armitage gives an orientation presentation on Freeside. The enormous orbiting station is shaped like a hollow cigar, with the structure on the inside surface. As one moves towards the extreme ends, it is like moving up mountains. As the mountains rise, the gravity drops, until there is no gravity at the extreme points. One end of the cigar is the Villa Straylight, a complex of buildings, where Tessier-Ashpool S.A. is based. The remainder of Freeside is a big city with streets, clubs, businesses, casinos and stores. Various devices project a fake sky down the center of the cigar, and food is shipped in from Earth.

Armitage tells Riviera to arrange to have himself invited into Villa Straylight and to subsequently arrange to have Molly enter Villa Straylight. Later, Molly and Case are summoned to meet secretly with the religious leaders of Zion. They refer to Molly as Steppin' Razor - a mythological personage from their religion - and inform her that they have been contacted by a voice of prophesy called Winter Mute. Winter Mute has instructed the Zionites to help Case and Molly.

Case suggests to the religious leaders of Zion that perhaps they have been fooled and are being manipulated. They acknowledge the possibility, but they do not think it to be the case. Therefore, they have decided to send a Zionite named Maelcum and his spacecraft, a tug named *Garvey*, to assist Case and Molly. They will also send a Zionite named Aerol in a ship called *Babylon Rocker* to watch over *Garvey*.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The method that Riviera uses to get himself and, later, Molly invited to the Villa Straylight is only partially discussed in the novel. Molly, Armitage, Riviera and Finn all perform a lot of background work that is simply mentioned as having been accomplished. Only Case's preparations are actually described, and they are fairly

minimal. Nevertheless, the novel does a good job of inferring that substantial amounts of preparation and background work are done to ready various stages of the mission.

Zion and the Zionites are an interesting component in the novel. Their interest in the group's mission is apparently based around Molly, who they identify with a character from their religious mythology named Stepping Razor. Furthermore, Wintermute has communicated with the leaders of Zion, and they feel that Wintermute is, potentially, a prophetic voice. This is the first entrance of religion into the novel. Wintermute is an AI, and the Zionites consider it prophetic. Because an AI is an intelligence that exists without body and could, through cyberspace, gain almost infinite knowledge, AIs are likened to gods.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Maelcum takes Molly and Case to Freeside. On the way, Molly tells Case to try and make contact with Wintermute. Case jacks into cyberspace and discusses AIs with the Dixie Flatline construct. He learns that AIs are extremely complicated and dangerous and that when a cyberspace operator interacts with them, the operator's brainwaves go flat. The operator can actually be killed. They also discuss how AIs are monitored by a shadowy law enforcement agency known as the Turing Registry, which ensures that AIs don't become too intelligent or powerful.

Case searches out Wintermute and examines it from a distance. He realizes that it is reacting to him and chasing him. He flees but cannot escape, and the Dixie Flatline construct urges him to jack out of cyberspace. Case wakes up in Night City with a headache and sore body. He enters a nearby video arcade and sees Linda Lee playing Wizard's Castle. She sees him and says hello, and they make small talk.

Suddenly, Case realizes something is not right. Linda Lee vanishes, and the people vanish. He is alone in a quiet and empty arcade. He walks to Deane's office in Night City and finds a gun in Deane's desk. Deane emerges from the shadows. Case realizes he is still in cyberspace and that Deane is really Wintermute. Deane acknowledges this to be the case.

Wintermute tells Case that he should not confuse the computer hardware with the Wintermute entity, as they are not the same thing. He also tells Case that Wintermute is somehow linked to a second Tessier-Ashpool S.A. AI. Wintermute is only part of another, different, entity.

Wintermute reveals that he took Corto out of the Paris mental hospital and re-worked him into Armitage, a process Wintermute was able to accomplish because of the mental state of Corto at the time. Wintermute also planted the Armitage database for Case to discover. He tells Case that Armitage is very unstable but "stable enough ... for the next day or so" (p. 157). Case then shoots Wintermute in the face, which disrupts the program. He exits cyberspace. Molly and Maelcum worry because while Case is in contact with Wintermute, Case's EEG is flatlined for forty seconds.

Chapter 9 Analysis

The law enforcement role of the Turing Registry is established. The Turing Registry is named after the theoretician Alan Turing, who suggested that a computer might be made that would be indistinguishable from a real person. The Turing Registry works across political and geographic boundaries to monitor cyberspace activities and, among other tasks, to ensure that artificial intelligences don't become too powerful. In this chapter, Case enters the first of several alternate realities that are created by artificial



intelligences - in cyberspace, but not like cyberspace. Wintermute attempts to use the image of Linda Lee to engage Case, but Wintermute lacks the personality skills to accomplish the task correctly. It falls back on the emotionally simpler likeness of Deane. The AI virtually brings Linda Lee back to life, although imperfectly. Wintermute can generate a world in cyberspace, and it created Armitage from a destroyed human being. These acts, though imperfect, are godlike.

This chapter contains the first of several discussions on the nature of artificial intelligences and their relationship to hardware. AIs are not of the flesh, nor are they of the mechanical. They are software, the process of thinking. These largely metaphorical discussions are interesting, but limited in scope. Case will suffer nightmares about shooting the likeness of Deane, even though he knows it was not real. Like the Dixie Flatline, Case also suffers a flat brainwave while he talks with the AI, although time in the alternate reality seems vastly longer than the actual time that passes in the real world. The world of the AI is not a world of the body. It is likened to a spiritual world, where Case travels during bodily death.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Case and Molly enter Freeside, check into a hotel and get some sleep. Case has nightmares. In the morning, Armitage sends Riviera and Molly off on scouting missions and sends Case to the *Garvey*. On the *Garvey*, a package has been delivered for Case, a Chinese virus program which he identifies as a computer virus designed to work with his brand of cyberspace deck and capable of penetrating military systems and artificial intelligences. Case quickly discovers that the Kuang Grade Mark Eleven virus was coded by a subsidiary of Tessier-Ashpool S.A.

Case enters cyberspace and talks with the Dixie Flatline construct. Case says that Wintermute is linked to a second Tessier-Ashpool S.A. AI through a connection made at the Villa Straylight. Case and the Dixie Flatline construct discuss possible motives, but they realize that the AI's motive is probably unintelligible. The Dixie Flatline construct guesses that the mission will be to free the AI from some type of artificially imposed constraint so that it can become more intelligent or more capable, and explains that the Turing Registry normally will wipe out any AI that attempts what Wintermute might be trying.

Case inserts the Kuang Grade Mark Eleven virus in his deck and spends several hours in cyberspace planning the mission. When he jacks out, he returns to the hotel and finds Molly sleeping. Case wanders through Freeside and meets a woman named Cath who introduces him to a drug dealer named Bruce. Case explains that he wants to get high, but he can't because of his modified pancreas. Bruce produces betaphenethylamine, a drug which he claims will not be blocked by the modified pancreas. Case buys some and discovers it will get him high. He takes some and returns to the hotel room where he awakens Molly. They have sex.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Case and the Dixie Flatline construct have a lengthy discussion about Wintermute's motivation and goals. They both come to the uneasy conclusion that they probably can't understand either the motivation or the goals of an artificial intelligence. Again, this likens the AI to God, whose motivations are obscure to mere humans. Case enables the virus program, which will take several hours to operate, and entrusts the control of the virus program to the Dixie Flatline construct.

Case has now been without drugs for many days, and he is beginning to feel the psychological desire to be high. He hooks up with a professional drug user who knows of a drug that will circumvent Armitage's modifications, and Case once again begins abusing drugs.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Case, Molly and Armitage meet at Le Restaurant Vingtieme Siicle to have dinner and watch the show, presented by Peter Riviera. Case is hung over from his drug high, and Armitage expresses concern, which Case dismisses. Riviera tells the audience his show is entitled 'The Doll' and dedicates it to Lady 3Jane Marie-France Tessier-Ashpool. In the show, Riviera assembles various body parts into a likeness of Molly and has sex with her while she uses her razors to slice Riviera apart.

Case becomes sick and goes outside to vomit. When he returns, Molly is missing. Armitage accidentally breaks a wineglass in his hand and refuses to tell Case where Molly has gone. Case looks around the restaurant and briefly notices the face of a young girl, striking but not beautiful. Case leaves the restaurant and returns to his hotel room. He contacts the Dixie Flatline construct and tells it to find Molly. The construct warns Case that their connection is not secure. Case replies that he does not care and also instructs the construct to not worry about setting off any alarms. The Construct discovers Molly's location.

The television in Case's room turns on, and an image of Lonny Zone appears on the screen. Case realizes it is Wintermute. Wintermute tells Case to be more discreet. Wintermute also tells case that he did not order Deane to kill Linda Lee. Case tries to break the television, the image vanishes, and Case is left in a rage.

Case enlists Cath and Bruce to help him travel to the club where Molly is. In order to gain entrance, he buys some time in a unit adjacent to the one Molly is using. Case briefly enters the unit and sees a woman in bed. She is a type of prostitute that has a brain modification called a neural cutout. The cutout prevents her from being aware of what is happening to her body, though of course she knows this in an abstract way, while allowing her employers to control her actions.

Case then goes to Molly's unit, and his magnetic key opens the lock. Molly attacks Case and flattens him before she realizes he is not an unwelcome visitor. They surmise that Wintermute has manipulated the unit's lock to allow Case's key to function. Molly tells Case that the run will be the next day and that she is preparing by being instructed by Wintermute.

Case asks her why Riviera's show upset her so much. Molly explains that she used to work as a prostitute with a neural cutout to raise the vast sums of money she needed to get the modifications she currently has.

Molly tells Case that the modifications gradually interfered with the neural cutout's ability to actually block her memory. She tells him about coming to while having sex with a senator after they had murdered and butchered another prostitute as foreplay and about



other intrusions past the neural cutout. Molly tells Case she plans on murdering Riviera soon. Case leaves Molly to continue her preparation for the run and has Cath and Bruce drop him off at a downtown bar.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Amusingly, Le Restaurant Vingtieme Siicle serves real animal product meat instead of vat-grown flesh and provides a retrospective environment in which to eat such old fashioned, and expensive, fare. Molly, at least, is very impressed. Case, though sickened by Riviera's show, realizes the analogy of Riviera slowly assembling Molly as Molly slowly disassembles Riviera. He does not realize that Molly makes a deeper connection to a more sinister meaning.

Armitage's unconscious snapping of the stem of a wineglass is the first visible sign of his mental collapse, which will continue as his personalities battle for control. Molly's story about working as a prostitute performing sexual murders foreshadows a similar scene she will encounter in the Villa Straylight. This story also makes her analogous to Armitage. They both have a large number of unpleasant repressed memories. These issues raise, again, the question of identity. How is past action linked to identity? When a drug alters your mind, are you still yourself? How are consciousness and identity linked?



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Case sits in a bar and smokes. He muses about where his rage came from, realizing that he has not felt anger before. He surmises that he has been emotionally numb for many years and is finally getting in touch with his feelings. Cath runs into Case at the bar, perhaps by accident. She tells him she saw him walking with Molly and that Molly reminds her of Hideo, the Tessier-Ashpool's ninja. She tells him a little about the Tessier-Ashpool family and explains how "triff" (p. 198) and rich they are. Cath gives Case another dose of betaphenethylamine and tells him she wants to take him to a party. She insinuates they will later have sex together. Instead, he runs out of the bar, away from her, in a rage.

Case wanders through Freeside thinking of Linda Lee and then not thinking of anything at all as the drug wears off. He walks around all night long and then goes back to his hotel room, where three Turing law enforcement agents are waiting for him and place him under arrest.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Case's musings are rather roundabout, but essentially he decides his rage comes from once having had Linda Lee, and subsequently losing her. Although Case himself was responsible for transforming her from a video arcade kid to a drug-addicted streetwalker, he blames Deane for the ultimate loss and for his rage.

Experiencing strong emotions is new to Case, and he will feel his rage come and go, seemingly beyond his control, in subsequent chapters. Chapter twelve concludes the third of five named sections in *Neuromancer*. The remainder of the novel, excepting the final wrap-up chapter, is devoted to the actual execution of the mission that was established and planned in the first half of the novel.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

The Turing law enforcement agents strip Case and interrogate him while he is naked. They tell him Armitage is already in custody and give a brief recap of the main crimes perpetrated by Case, Molly and Armitage. Their information is surprisingly complete and accurate. They tell Case he can either return to Earth and testify against Wintermute or be immediately executed as an insignificant participant. Case agrees to testify against Wintermute. They allow him to dress. Case argues the legality of their arrest, but they wave guns and tell him the legality of it should not be his main concern.

The Turing agents attempt to transport Case to a spacecraft, but on the walk through Freeside, Wintermute commandeers some local robots - a standard security robot and a gardening robot - and ambushes the agents, killing them. Case expresses some amazement as he runs away from the scene of the ambush.

Chapter 13 Analysis

The Turing Agents knowledge appears complete, except that they do not know Molly's name. The obvious implication is that Molly is yet another alias. The description of the three Turing Agents is fairly long, and their chronological recital of events serves to clarify the salient points of plot development through the first half of the novel. The agents call Wintermute a "demon," acknowledging the godlike powers of AIs. Case's immediate apparent willingness to testify against Wintermute and abandon the mission seems somewhat out of character, particularly as he is aware that Molly is already engaged in the execution of her aspect of the mission. Ultimately, he gives in to the pressure of the situation; he is weak.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Case is picked up by Aerol, who explains that a Japanese spacecraft called *Haniwa* has forcibly docked with *Garvey*, essentially capturing the tug. He also tells Case that the *Haniwa* delivered a package for Case. Case enters the *Garvey* and jacks in to cyberspace. He tells the Dixie Flatline construct that he had an encounter with "Turing heat" (p. 216). The construct tells Case that it has been looking over the Tessier-Ashpool S.A. ice and that it is robust.

Case briefly considers taking the construct and fleeing, abandoning the job, but the construct talks him into seeing it through. Case exits cyberspace long enough to tell Maelcum that he will be jacked in for as much as eight hours. Then, he re-enters cyberspace and activates the Kuang Grade Mark Eleven virus. After just seconds, Case and the construct are both shocked and amazed at how intricate and powerful the virus is.

Case flips the flipflop and experiences what Molly is experiencing. She is in zero gravity, entering the Villa Straylight. Case flips back to cyberspace and discusses the virus with the construct. Case again tries to hit the flipflop, but instead he ends up at Finn's place, talking to Finn. He immediately realizes that Finn is actually Wintermute. They have a somewhat lengthy discussion of metaphysics and human memory. Wintermute explains that it has no reason for being or purpose that is comprehensible. It simply exists. Wintermute explains to Case that he should hate Tessier-Ashpool and then takes Case on a sort of holographic tour of the Villa Straylight.

Wintermute and Case rapidly move through the Villa Straylight until they come to a rectilinear room where they see the bejeweled head computer console. It speaks out an essay that 3Jane wrote for a semiotics course when she was twelve, an essay on Tessier-Ashpool's relationship to the Villa Straylight.

Wintermute explains that Case's mission in cyberspace will be fruitless if Molly's attempt to reach the physical bejeweled terminal fails. Wintermute explains that it will cease to exist. Wintermute then warns Case that Armitage is "starting to go" (p. 226), and Case drops back into cyberspace.

Chapter 14 Analysis

Case's faltering in his determination to pursue the job, coupled with his earlier willingness to confess to the Turing Registry agents, shows his reluctance at this point to continue. The job has become deeper and more complicated, bringing out feelings that Case does not want to deal with. Case enters another alternate reality constructed by Wintermute, where a lengthy discussion about the AI's motivation and goals is

presented. Wintermute attempts to direct Case's rage toward Tessier-Ashpool and away from itself.

Wintermute presents Case with the bejeweled head computer terminal, which delivers a monologue about the nature of the Tessier-Ashpool family. The role that Molly and Case will play, together, to complete the mission becomes clearer. Wintermute describes the function of the terminal to Case. Case will have to manipulate the computer program side of things, but Molly will have to somehow speak the password to the terminal at the right moment. Otherwise, Case's work will ultimately fail.

In this section, Wintermute defines himself by a word, the password, that he cannot know. His identity is not what he does know (an almost infinite amount of knowledge). Instead, his identity is his limitation. He cannot know one word, and this is the restriction that binds him.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Case flips the flipflop and watches Molly's progress through her eyes. Wintermute notifies Molly that Case is present. As she makes her way through the Villa Straylight, guided by Wintermute, Molly whispers a story to Case. She tells him about how she was once in love, and how she, with her boyfriend, operated a shady business. They eventually started to double-cross various clients with a blackmail scheme. Her boyfriend was then assassinated by a ninja. She says, "Never much found anybody I gave a damn about, after that" (p. 231). She compares Case to her earlier boyfriend.

Wintermute continues to lead her through the Villa Straylight until she finds a key embossed with the word CHUBB hidden in a filing cabinet. Case goes back to cyberspace and checks on the progress of the virus. He exits cyberspace and checks with Maelcum, who informs him that he registered as brain-dead while talking with Wintermute.

Case enters cyberspace and flips back to Molly. She is moving down a corridor and makes a detour not specified by Wintermute. Wintermute communicates with her and tells her she is in danger and should turn around. She ignores Wintermute and walks into a trap - a "neural disrupter" (p. 237) which stuns her and knocks her down. When she comes to, she has been captured by Ashpool and transported to his bedroom. He interrogates her and asks her how she cries with her eye modifications. "But how would you cry, if someone made you cry?" She answers, "I spit ... the ducts are routed back into my mouth" (p. 239). Ashpool seems to find that appropriate.

Ashpool informs Molly that he is busy committing suicide, and she sees he has ingested a large amount of pharmaceuticals and alcohol. He tells her that the other family members are busy. 8Jean is in Melbourne, and 3Jane is the only one "minding the store" (p. 241). Ashpool and Molly discuss Wintermute and some history of the Tessier-Ashpool family. Ashpool eventually drops his gun as he lapses in and out of consciousness, and Molly grabs it.

Molly looks around the room further and discovers 3Jane's mutilated body in Ashpool's bed in a pool of coagulating blood. She intuitively realizes that the body, though appearing to be 3Jane, is actually a person modified to look like 3Jane. Case, watching through Molly's eyes, sees 3Jane's face mutate into Linda Lee's face. He figures that Wintermute has modified the feed from Molly. Molly goes back to Ashpool and shoots him through the eye, hastening his death.

Chapter 15 Analysis

Ashpool gives more information about the Tessier-Ashpool family before his suicide. The family is elite and successful, based on a fortune from technology. Jane and Jean

Tessier-Ashpool were cloned 10 times, creating the center of the family. Ashpool is not only mad but also filled with anger. The mutilated prostitute on the bed, altered to appear as 3Jane, is reminiscent of Molly's earlier experience as a prostitute and also of Riviera's show at the restaurant.

Ashpool has already taken enough drugs to ensure death, but Molly deliberately kills him before his suicide is complete. This leaves, apparently, only two surviving members of Tessier-Ashpool, 8Jean and 3Jane. 8Jean does not appear in the novel. Case mistakenly assumes that Wintermute was responsible for mutating 3Jane's face into Linda Lee's face. He will later discover that, in fact, another AI changes the features.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

The Dixie Flatline notifies Case that Armitage has entered cyberspace by using a deck on the *Haniwa*. Case meets Armitage in cyberspace and asks if Wintermute also freed Armitage from capture by the Turing agents. Armitage does not answer. He has apparently broken down, mentally, and is living in the past.

Case flips the flipflop switch and watches Molly's progress. A small robot under Wintermute's control leads her through the estate. She tells Case that she doesn't expect to survive the mission. Wintermute informs Case that Armitage has completely lost it, which Case has already surmised. Case leaves cyberspace.

Maelcum tells Case that Armitage is acting crazy. Maelcum also tells Case that the Founders of Zion have determined that Wintermute is a false prophet, and they have told Maelcum and Aerol to cut and run. Case and Maelcum discuss the situation and consider leaving, but they decide to stay and see the mission through to its conclusion.

Case enters cyberspace and has a talk with Armitage, who has mostly reverted back to Colonel Willie Corto. He is having a major psychotic episode. Armitage is getting into an escape pod on the *Haniwa* and getting ready to leave. Case and Maelcum enter the *Haniwa*. Case's main motivation is to discover, from Armitage, how to neutralize the toxin sacs that Armitage implanted in Case.

On the *Haniwa*, Case and Maelcum find the crew murdered and the ship in disarray and largely disabled. They try to stop Armitage and fail. He ejects in an escape pod that is not properly sealed, since the safety stops are disabled by Wintermute. Armitage is killed by the vacuum of space. They return to the *Garvey*.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Armitage's breakdown is not a surprise. Case, instead of feeling any compassion for Armitage, is simply worried that Armitage will die before revealing how to neutralize the toxin sacs that are implanted in Case's body. With Armitage's death, Case feels panic that he will once again lose his ability to enter cyberspace. When the founders of Zion determine that Wintermute is a false prophet, Maelcum and Aerol's still decide to stay. Their decision appears to be based entirely on a personal affection for Molly and, perhaps, the desire to finish what they have started.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Case enters cyberspace and flips the flipflop to follow Molly. He goes through a rather long period of introspection, as Molly is led through the Villa Straylight by Wintermute. He thinks about the mission, about Armitage and about his past. When Case goes back to cyberspace, he discovers the virus is almost finished working. Then, Wintermute projects a likeness of Finn into cyberspace, which startles Case. Case and Wintermute discuss Armitage. Wintermute muses about its own motivation and reasons for doing things and promises Case that it knows how to remove the toxin sacs and how to get Molly out of the Villa Straylight. It also promises the Dixie Flatline construct that when the mission is complete, the construct will be erased.

Case flips the switch and follows Molly. She has had to climb a long ladder and her leg, not fully healed from the Sense/Net raid, is not working very well. She tells Case there is a good chance she won't make it out alive. She asks for a favor, that if she does not survive Case will deliver a message to Riviera for her.

Molly continues to limp along, thinking about Marie-France Tessier, 3Jane's mother and one of the founding members of Tessier-Ashpool. She wonders why Wintermute has told her so much about the Tessier-Ashpool family. Molly encounters some holograms that have been placed by Riviera. The holograms are of Armitage, Molly and Case. A final hologram depicts Riviera as a young boy, living in the radioactive ruins of Bonn, cannibalizing dead soldiers for food. Molly reaches the entrance to 3Jane's vast bedroom, draws her gun and enters.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Molly appears to come to the conclusion that she will not survive the mission, but she pushes ahead. Wintermute continues to discuss its motivation and goals with Case, and yet they are not particularly understandable. Every character has motivations that are in some way obscure. The Dixie Flatline construct wants to be erased. Case wants to maintain his ability to exist in cyberspace. These goals are modified ways of being: nonexistence or existence on a different plane. In a way, Wintermute's actions reflect Case and Molly's actions of doing what they must do, doing what they exist to do.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Upon entering 3Jane's chamber, Molly sees Hideo diving into a swimming pool and sees the dead body of Ashpool. She lobbs a grenade into the pool and shoots Ashpool. She immediately realizes that the scene is a projection of Riviera's, and she has been fooled and ambushed. The real Hideo attacks her from behind and completely disables her, again crippling her wounded leg. They constrain her, and Hideo administers some medical aid. Riviera taunts Molly, but 3Jane seems to take a slight interest in her.

Case jacks out of cyberspace and talks to Maelcum. Wintermute talks to them both via a display on the wall. Wintermute tells Maelcum and Case to go after Molly and try to help her - and to kill Riviera. Case and Maelcum discuss this and decide to proceed. While Maelcum pilots *Garvey* and *Haniwa*, still attached together, towards a docking port at the *Villa Straylight*, Case enters cyberspace and watches Molly.

Molly and 3Jane have a lengthy discussion about 3Jane's childhood and philosophy. Riviera again starts to taunt Molly, claiming that he has a unique trait that she will never understand. Molly asks him what trait that would be. "Riviera beamed, 'Perversity'" (p. 286). Riviera starts boasting and then smashes a glass into Molly's face, cracking one of her lenses and knocking her unconscious. Case exits cyberspace.

Case and Maelcum dock with the *Villa Straylight* and enter quietly with help from a ruse provided by Wintermute. Maelcum brings a shotgun. Case goes through some particularly tedious operations to prepare to move his deck and the *Dixie Flatline* construct from the *Garvey* into the *Villa Straylight*.

Chapter 18 Analysis

Molly's long-held suspicion that she will be incapable of defeating Hideo, the Tessier-Ashpool ninja, is finally realized. It also becomes evident that 3Jane is tiring of Riviera, who quickly retrieves his drugs from Molly and slinks off to get his fix. The description of Case's preparations to move his deck from *Garvey* to the *Villa Straylight* are anachronistic, again reminding us of the period this book was written. Cable pin-outs and the locations of network jacks are described, as well as the various hardware models kept together with cords.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

After more tedious mechanical operations, Case gets his deck hooked up in the Villa Straylight and enters cyberspace. He gets a status update from the construct and then flips the flipflop and watches Molly. Molly and 3Jane have a long discussion about personal motivation and Riviera. 3Jane admits she found Riviera interesting at first, but she is now bored of him. Now, 3Jane says she is interested in Molly.

3Jane tells Molly that her father, Ashpool, strangled her mother, Tessier. She talks about the history of her family and the plan for the two artificial intelligences that her mother designed and built. 3Jane also tells Molly a little about the other AI.

Riviera tries to taunt Molly again, but 3Jane forces him to go away. Molly tries, unsuccessfully, to get the code word from 3Jane. Case exits cyberspace, and Wintermute guides Case and Maelcum through the Villa Straylight, riding on an electric cart. A small robot, controlled by Wintermute, acts as their guide.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Recognize that the hyphenated family Tessier-Ashpool is also a joining of two different entities, the Ashpool family and the Tessier family. Looked at in this way, why is it significant that Ashpool killed Tessier? When two entities join together to form one entity, do they combine together or does one swallow up and destroy the other?

3Jane appears disposed to listen to Molly, though the reasons for this are unclear. Molly successfully suggests to 3Jane that Wintermute's goals are somewhat representative of, or analogous to, 3Jane's mother's goals for the Tessier-Ashpool family. 3Jane realizes that her father's goals differed substantially, causing a rift within the Tessier-Ashpool family. 3Jane seems particularly fascinated by her own family's origins and philosophies and seems to take the entire intrusion and process as a matter of course. As Case travels through the Villa Straylight, he pays particular attention to the highly stylized construction and the accumulation of ancient artifacts and rotting collections - he finds it disorienting and disturbing.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Case and Maelcum's conveyance shoots sparks and stops working in front of a door, and they pass through the door on foot, entering a library. A monitor on the wall comes alive, and the image of Finn tells Case to jack in. The small robot guide tries to stop Case, but he kicks it away and jacks in to cyberspace.

Instead of the familiarity of cyberspace, Case enters an alternate reality - a gray beach with a city in the far distance. Case imagines he is talking with Ratz as he walks along the beach, and he derives comfort from the friendly and familiar face. Ratz tells Case that his self-destructive impulses are complex and ridiculous and that he could easily have ended it all in Chiba City.

Case walks for a long time and comes to a dilapidated concrete bunker. He enters and finds a girl sleeping there, and he realizes it is Linda Lee. She wakes, and they make small talk. She has a stockpile of food that has washed up on the beach. Case believes she is a computer construct, but she does not think she is.

Linda Lee tells Case that after she stole his Hitachi RAM, she took it to a fence. They accessed the RAM, and it contained images of her childhood. She expresses wonder at how Case could have obtained the images. Case claims the RAM was blank. They have a discussion about their old life together and then have sex. Linda Lee tells Case that she had been expecting him and that someone had told her he would be coming.

Chapter 20 Analysis

Case again finds himself in an alternate reality within cyberspace, created by an AI. However, this time Linda Lee is successfully represented, and Case experiences a wide range of emotions. Case will eventually learn that he was manipulated into jacking in to cyberspace by a second AI, not Wintermute. The Linda Lee of this alternate reality does not believe she is a computer construct. Is she a person, whether she is a computer construct or not? Is she the same person as Case's Linda Lee? Is she really self-aware or is she just programmed to seem self-aware? Again, the author is broaching the theme of identity.



Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

In the morning, Case and Linda Lee discuss the person who she sometimes meets on the beach. She describes him as a Brazilian boy around age thirteen. Case realizes it must be the Rio-based Tessier-Ashpool AI. Case talks about walking down the beach to the city that can be seen in the distance. Linda Lee says she tried, once, to walk there but couldn't reach it. She explains that the longer she has remained by the bunker, the smaller her world has become.

Case walks along the beach, and Linda Lee, partially naked, follows him. They meet the Brazilian boy, and Case realizes the boy has Peter Riviera's eyes. The boy introduces himself as Neuromancer, and they hold a discussion. Case is able to see the artificial reality slowly crumbling, and then he begins to hear dub music. Case turns and walks away, eyes closed, and Linda Lee calls to him. Case comes back out of cyberspace and realizes he is wearing Maelcum's headphones. Maelcum says that Wintermute directed him to put the headphones on and give Case two dermal patch doses of betaphenethylamine.

Chapter 21 Analysis

Although Case will later learn that the Linda Lee in the artificial reality was a RAM construct, a personality recording similar to the Dixie Flatline construct, he is able to tell that she is not the real person. In fact, Linda Lee herself seems to realize that, since she describes her world constantly becoming smaller and her curiosity diminishing. Finally, Case is able to actually see the artificial reality wavering as he walks away from it, refusing to participate in a comfortable but fake existence.



Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

Case and Maelcum again follow Wintermute through the Villa Straylight, riding on the electric cart. They briefly discuss how to proceed, and Maelcum decides the best course of action is to kill everybody he sees, except Case, Molly and 3Jane. They arrive at 3Jane's chamber and enter, Maelcum first, with shotgun at the ready. Maelcum is shot through the arm with an arrow, and a second arrow knocks the shotgun away. Hideo emerges from the shadows, as does Riviera.

Riviera taunts Case. Case tells Riviera that Armitage is dead. Riviera says that Molly will soon be dead, but Case disputes this, which alarms Riviera. Case realizes the betaphenethylamine, administered to him by Maelcum, is starting to strongly affect him. 3Jane emerges from the shadows, pushing a squeaky Victorian-style wheelchair. Molly is seated in the chair, bandaged and restrained. Introductions are made, and 3Jane directs Hideo to bandage Maelcum. Riviera urges 3Jane to have Case killed, but she ignores him.

Case tells 3Jane that he has met Neuromancer, and 3Jane explains that Neuromancer is like a giant RAM bank for holding personality constructs, like the Dixie Flatline construct. 3Jane realizes the bunker on the beach is a place her mother lived as a girl, where her mother formulated the basic philosophy of Tessier-Ashpool. At this bunker, her mother had first conceived of the Wintermute and Neuromancer AIs. 3Jane and Case continue to talk while Riviera becomes more agitated.

Case senses danger and dodges just as Riviera tries to shoot him. Hideo flicks a weapon and pierces Riviera's hand. Riviera screams and conjures up laser beam holograms and vaporizes Hideo's eyes. Hideo, undeterred and used to training blindfolded, quickly picks up his bow and arrow with a pleased smile on his face. Riviera runs away, pursued by Hideo, into the distance reaches of the Villa Straylight.

Maelcum retrieves his shotgun and menaces 3Jane, while Case frees Molly. 3Jane explains that Hideo will surely find and kill Riviera. Molly says that won't matter. She has secretly poisoned Riviera with "N-methyl-4-phenyl-1236 tetra-hydro-pyridene" (p. 330), and he will soon die anyway. 3Jane is amused. They all enter a secret elevator and rise up, out of gravity, to the core of the Villa Straylight.

Chapter 22 Analysis

The philosophies of Tessier and Ashpool are finally completely elucidated and contrasted. 3Jane appears strongly sympathetic to the Tessier philosophy. Tessier wanted to construct Neuromancer to house all of the Tessier-Ashpool personalities beyond death and to construct Wintermute to actually run the Tessier-Ashpool S.A. business.



Even though Neuromancer is putatively able to store complete personalities in a way that makes them immortal, the experience of Linda Lee - the shrinking reality that she comments on - exposes Neuromancer's shortcomings. The Dixie Flatline construct's desire to be erased adds another hint that existence in cyberspace alone, even self-aware and self-directed, is insufficient. Wintermute's desire to somehow be merged with Neuromancer also becomes clear. In the author's discussion of identity, he brings in the elements of joining man with machine, of extending existence after death, of creating copies of people's minds, of changing your mind or identity and of joining together or merging two entities. There are numerous instances of all of these elements throughout the book.



Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Using the key she obtained earlier, Molly opens the final door. 3Jane is amazed to discover that Molly has the key. They enter the room and see the bejeweled artificial head. This is the master computer terminal of the interface between Wintermute and Neuromancer.

Case connects his deck to the terminal and jacks in to cyberspace. He gets a status check from the Dixie Flatline construct and then flips the flipflop and looks at himself through Molly's eyes. He flips back to cyberspace.

The virus has completed its penetration task, and Case gains entrance to the Tessier-Ashpool S.A. computer core. Case and the construct are awestruck by the complexity, and Case realizes he is in a place where he knows nearly everything he wants to know. Neuromancer appears and discusses, with Case, the differences between Neuromancer and Wintermute.

Neuromancer tells Case that shortly before Linda Lee was killed, it recorded her personality much like Sense/Net recorded the Dixie Flatline's personality and that Linda Lee considers her existence real. They discuss other aspects of cyberspace. Case tries to talk to the Dixie Flatline construct but can't. Neuromancer informs Case that the construct has been erased.

Case flips the flipflop and sees Molly strangling 3Jane, trying to extract the code word, but 3Jane will not divulge it. Case exits cyberspace and shouts at 3Jane, "...I got no idea at all what'll happen if Wintermute wins, but it'll *change* something!" (p. 340). Case jacks back in to cyberspace and talks with Wintermute. Wintermute encourages Case to convert his rage into hate. Case looks around cyberspace, at all of the defenses of Tessier-Ashpool S.A.'s computer core that are still active. Case gets busy and destroys the final vestiges of ice.

Case comes to a state of semi-consciousness after an unknown time, and the bejeweled computer terminal tells him about numbered Swiss accounts, payments made to Zion, passports and passages. It tells Case that basic changes have been made in the Turing Registry. He fades out again, and when he comes to he realizes that Aerol is strapping him in aboard *Babylon Rocker*.

Chapter 23 Analysis

Through various discussions throughout the novel, the philosophy of Tessier-Ashpool has been revealed. The Tessier outlook appears to be the more complex and eventually, through the successful completion of the mission, triumphs. Wintermute merges with Neuromancer, and they become something else.



Although 3Jane sings out the password at the appropriate time, she appears to do it not because of Molly's threat of violence, but because Case's statement that change would happen appeals to her. She wants something to happen, just as her mother wanted something to happen. The actual password itself is not stated in the book. Can you speculate on what the password might be? It is "three notes," three letters or syllables, and it is "a true name." Is the password G-O-D, and if so, what would this mean thematically? Can you think of another probability?

In many ways the completion of the mission is anticlimactic. Nothing evident changes in the world or even in cyberspace, and the novel's follow-up of the effects on 3Jane, Wintermute, Neuromancer and Tessier-Ashpool S.A. is extremely concise. Wintermute and Neuromancer are merged into a single being. It claims to now constitute the entire matrix, which spans a physical area larger than just Earth, but the results of this are uncertain. Remember that Neuromancer is a place where recordings of people's minds go when the people die. In this way, Neuromancer is like an afterlife, continuing the AIs' associations with God. By combining Wintermute and Neuromancer, Case has created a powerful creature. Is it all-powerful? Is it a god? Is there now a digital afterlife, a heaven (or perhaps hell) of sorts? Chapter twenty-three concludes the fourth of five named sections in *Neuromancer*.



Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

Case and Molly go back to Chiba City and involve themselves in street deals once again. This time, Case plays the role of cyberspace operator. After a few months, he comes home and finds a "Dear John" note from Molly, who has moved out and moved on. Case remembers going back to The Chatsubo with Molly, right after they first arrived in Chiba City, and being served by Ratz, who didn't even recognize him.

Case remembers how Wintermute had merged with Neuromancer. Case remembers how the forged passports provided by Armitage were still valid, and how both he and Molly were credited with large amounts of money in their bank accounts, as was Zion. He remembers their return to Chiba City.

Case remembers that Molly informed him that the platinum head neutralized the toxin sacs in his blood. Case muses about the Tessier-Ashpool family and recalls how 3Jane waved goodbye when they departed the Villa Straylight. As he stands in the room thinking, an image of Finn appears on his video panel and tells him. They have a brief and cryptic discussion about what happened and what it might mean, and then the image fades.

Case looks around at the things in the apartment and picks up the shuriken that Molly purchased for him shortly after they first met. He flings it into the display panel and leaves the apartment. Case spends most of his money buying a new liver and pancreas, so he can use drugs again. Then, he finds work and a girl named Michael.

The novel closes with another cyberspace excursion. Case is working for an unnamed client on an anonymous job. He sees in the distance three tiny figures, the smiling Brazilian boy that was Neuromancer, a waving Linda Lee and himself. The novel concludes, "He never saw Molly again" (p. 352).

Chapter 24 Analysis

Molly leaves Case because, she claims, "it's taking the edge off my game" (p. 347). One possible interpretation is that she has come to care for Case and feels that her affection is making her soft, allowing her emotional side to surface. Possibly, though, the relationship has simply faded away. Case's experience centers on cyberspace, and Molly's experience centers in reality. Case is, throughout the novel, seeking an altered reality. He seeks it through drugs and through experiences in cyberspace. In the end of the novel, in cyberspace, he sees himself on the beach with Linda Lee and Neuromancer. What is the implication of this? Has he finally altered his reality by becoming a construct within Neuromancer, like Linda Lee? Has he, in reality, died and moved on to Neuromancer's "afterlife" with his dead lover?



Characters

Henry Dorsett Case ("Case")

Case, the protagonist, is 24 years old, Caucasian and male. He is thin, somewhat haggard and physically unexceptional. As with all of the characters in *Neuromancer*, Case's background is fairly sketchy. He grew up in BAMA, the Boston-Atlanta-Metropolitan-Axis, which he refers to as "The Sprawl."

At age 15, Case lives with a girl named Marlene on an upper floor of an apartment complex. He remembers one incident from that period of his life. While using a hand-held torch to wipe out a nest of wasps growing on the windowsill, he looks at the wasp nest splayed open on the ground and full of charred eggs, larvae and wasps. He is horrified by the regularity and precision of the replicating structure.

At age 19, Case passes time at a bar called the Gentleman Loser. Although he has no experience with cyberspace, he wants to become a cyberspace operator. Case eventually hooks up with McCoy "the Dixie Flatline" Pauley, who trains him in Miami. Case is later trained by a cowboy named Bobby Quine. The training process apparently takes about a year.

At age 22, Case is an established cyberspace cowboy, working for a cartel of thieves performing illegal thefts and cyberspace manipulations. He has apparently been working for about two years. He tries to steal from his employers and is caught. They inject him with a toxin that damages his brain and eliminates his ability to enter cyberspace, and then they let him go.

Case travels to Chiba City in search of a medical cure. Within perhaps a few months, he has expended all of his resources on medical consultations and has come to the conclusion that there is no possible cure. Case turns to a life of petty street crime, theft, moving stolen goods and peddling drugs. He becomes a habitual user of stimulants, alcohol and cigarettes, and he establishes a routine of life as a small-time criminal operator. He lives and works in the Night City area of Chiba City.

Case makes business connections with Wage and Deane, two crime bosses. He also makes the acquaintance of Ratz, the owner of a bar, and Lonny Zone, a Night City pimp. Case refers to his body as "the meat," and finds physical desires more or less unpleasant and meaningless. He finds the physical world fairly disgusting and completely uninteresting. He seems to have a particular aversion to anything old, much preferring synthetic and modern surroundings. He longs to return to cyberspace, and knowing this is impossible, he proceeds down a path of self-destructive behavior.

Case appears to be fairly successful in his criminal pursuits, though he does not find the life satisfying. Over the course of two years, he murders three people to protect his street deals and develops a long list of aliases. He appears to be involved in many



different types of criminal behavior, but he apparently focuses on stealing and fencing property and peddling drugs.

At or around the age of 24, Case meets a 20-year-old girl named Linda Lee in a video arcade. He takes her to his coffin, a tiny room in a hotel, and they have sex and develop a relationship. He introduces her to drugs, and over just a few months, as he falls in love with her, she becomes a drug-addicted junkie and her personality disintegrates. She moves into a life of petty street crime to support her drug habit. Thereafter, Case and Linda Lee meet seemingly only at random.

The novel begins when Case is 24. Linda Lee scams him into giving away the location of his store of stolen property and then robs him. On the same day that Linda Lee steals his high-value items, Case meets Molly, who has been sent to fetch Case for an interview with Molly's boss, Armitage. The novel moves forward to explore Case's desire to move out of his physical reality and into a completely mental and digital reality.

Ratz

The owner and sometimes bartender at The Chatsubo, Ratz is a man for whom Case feels a certain friendship, which is not particularly reciprocated. Ratz has a pink plastic prosthetic arm and rotting teeth. He is described as being very ugly. Ratz plays only a minor role in the novel.

Lonny Zone

Zone is a well-established pimp in Night City. He is addicted to a mind-altering drug called Cloud Dancers (p. 21), and he hangs out in a bar called The Chatsubo. He is apparently well connected in the underworld and has street smarts and information. Apparently all of the prostitutes in Night City work for Lonny Zone. Zone plays only a minor role in the novel.

Wage

Wage is a petty crime boss in Night City for whom Case apparently occasionally works. Everybody knows Wage, and Case owes him money. His face is "a tanned and forgettable mask," and his eyes "were vat-grown sea-green Nikon transplants" (p. 30). He wears a silk suit and platinum bracelets, and he generally goes accompanied by "joeboys" - hired muscle. Considering his criminal background, he is surprisingly easy to negotiate with. Wage plays only a minor role in the novel.

Linda Lee

Linda Lee is a 20-year-old Atlanta native. She is described as once pretty, with dark hair and a lined face. She meets Case while playing video games in an arcade. She goes



home with him, and they have sex. They subsequently develop a brief relationship. Case introduces her to drugs, and she quickly becomes an addict. Her personality shatters under the influence of heavy psychoactive drug use.

After just a few months, Linda Lee ends up on the streets working as a petty criminal to support her drug habit, and her relationship with Case is more or less discarded. Although Case never forgets her, the attraction does not appear to be particularly reciprocal. Linda Lee eventually scams Case and steals his high-value property. She takes the items, described as Hitachi RAM, and looks them over with an acquaintance. Linda Lee believes that she discovers the RAM to be full of images of her childhood, but Neuromancer has actually made a recording of her personality and placed it in an alternate reality. Linda Lee never actually realizes this in the novel, however.

In any event, Linda Lee decides to sell the RAM to Deane. Deane finds it more cost-effective to murder her and take the property instead of buying it. Linda Lee is executed by Deane's employees using laser fire, apparently coincidentally just a few meters from where Case stands as a witness.

Neuromancer later reveals to Case that Linda Lee's personality, recorded in Neuromancer's RAM, lives on a sandy beach in an old concrete bunker, salvaging food that washes up on the shore. In her new incarnation, she is not a drug addict but is afraid of straying too far from the bunker. She does not seem to realize that she is a construct. Linda Lee has three "phases" of existence. First, she is the young girl Case meets at the video arcade. Then, drugs alter her personality, and she becomes a criminal. Finally, she becomes the Linda Lee of Neuromancer's alternate reality.

McCoy Pauley

Pauley is a cyberspace cowboy hotshot, a pioneering cyberspace operator who trained Case and is regarded by many to be one of the all-time best operators. When the novel begins, Pauley is dead, but his mind and personality were recorded into a ROM unit. This construct is referred to as the Dixie Flatline. When alive, Pauley was described as "a thickset man in shirt-sleeves, something leaden about the shade of his skin" (p. 103). Pauley died from a heart attack. "He'd refused to replace the thing, saying he needed its particular beat to maintain his sense of timing" (p. 104).

Bobby Quine

Quine is a cyberspace cowboy hotshot, a pioneering cyberspace operator who trained Case and is regarded by many to be one of the all-time best operators. He is noted as living in Europe but is otherwise not a character in the novel.



Julius "Julie" Deane

Deane is a crime boss of Night City who is apparently well connected and in tune with current events. Deane is 135 years old, kept alive by costly serums and numerous biotech procedures. Deane is fascinated by tailoring and does not wear the same suit twice. He is apparently extremely wealthy and likes physical objects and things from the past. He is described as "sexless and inhumanly patient" (p. 16) with a "seamless pink face" (p. 17). He is atypical in that he seems to have a desire to connect to the physical world. Deane plays only a minor role in the novel.

Molly

Molly is an extremely secretive character and does not divulge many specifics about her past life. Her age is indeterminate, but she appears to be around 30. She is thin, attractive, extremely graceful and strong, with a high degree of dexterity and combat skill. She gives off an air of danger and self-assurance, reminding at least one person of a ninja assassin.

Molly usually dresses in skintight leather pants and a loose jacket. She carries a fletcher, a special gun that shoots toxin-tipped needles. She has dark hair, pale white skin and slender fingers. Molly has extensive physical and neural modifications. She has mirrored plastic lenses sewn into her face to cover her eyes and has retractable four-centimeter scalpel blades under each fingernail. She can see in the dark and has a built-in clock. Her reflexes and strength are surgically enhanced. Molly's cybernetic implants both make her dangerous and hide her emotional side. She has formed a protective barrier around her emotional self, a mechanical mirror of the emotional "walls" people erect to defend their feelings. Because of her eye implants, she spits instead of crying, a metaphor for the psychical process of turning pain and sadness into anger.

As a young girl, Molly works as a "puppet," a type of prostitute. She has a neural cutout placed in her brain, which essentially turns her memory and higher brain function off, leaving her body available for control by programs. While she is working, her neural cutout is activated, and her employer prostitutes her body.

Molly uses her prostitution income to pay for the surgical modifications that will allow her to pursue a career as hired muscle. Some of the neural processes she buys enhance her reflexes cause the neural cutout to not function completely, allowing Molly to remember some of her prostitution experiences. For example, she remembers that she was involved in several extremely deviant encounters, including one where she performed, with a senator, the sexual murder and mutilation of a young girl.

After Molly's surgical enhancements are completed, she leaves prostitution and eventually develops a relationship with a small-time street criminal. Together, they start a blackmailing scheme. Eventually one of the blackmailed clients has her partner executed. Molly sees the assassin leaving the building as she comes home and finds



her lover dead. Molly feels absolutely no compunction about murder or physical assault, and through the course of the novel she kills many people. In addition to her imposing physical abilities, Molly is also quite intelligent and insightful and always seeks to maximize her chances of success.

Armitage

Armitage is an ex-special-forces soldier who hires Molly and Case to perform a job. He has pale blue eyes, a flat and hard stomach and a hairless and muscular chest. He is described as physically imposing and wears expensive but anonymous suits.

Originally, Armitage was Colonel Willis Corto, a member of the only surviving squad from an operation known as Screaming Fist. Screaming Fist is a botched military job, and the soldiers are sent in on faulty intelligence and stand no real chance of survival. Corto, though surviving, is badly mutilated physically and mentally. He is eventually patched together to testify before a tribunal and then suffers a complete mental collapse.

The unresponsive and schizophrenic Corto is enrolled in an experimental computer therapy program, where, unbeknownst to the mental hospital staff, Wintermute contacts Corto through the computer therapy terminals and dominates his mind. Essentially, Wintermute rebuilds Corto's entire personality and being into Armitage.

Armitage, deemed cured and released, is entirely Wintermute's creature and goes about organizing and executing Wintermute's secret missions. Armitage is an interesting and complex character and eventually once again collapses mentally as his two personalities come into conflict. Now Armitage is expendable, and Wintermute kills him. The story of Armitage is a strong reflection of the theme of identity and exemplifies the conflicts of multiple identities that are joined together.

The Finn

The Finn, or simply Finn, "seemed to have been designed in a wind tunnel. His ears were very small, plastered flat against his narrow skull, and his large front teeth, revealed in something that wasn't quite a smile, were canted sharply backward" (p. 64). Finn is a friend of Molly and is also hired by Armitage. Finn is a technical wizard who obtains and maintains a variety of hardware, software and information for the team. Finn is a common but minor character in the novel, though his likeness is frequently used by Wintermute.

Tally Isham

Tally Isham is a female simstim actress who is a popular celebrity. Isham is mentioned casually a few times in the book.



Panther Moderns

The Panther Moderns are a violent group of young terrorists. They are hired by Molly to create a distraction during a heist at Sense/Net. Many of the members have extensive body modifications, including some revolting cosmetic alterations. They usually wear clothing that digitally camouflages them. Panther Modern members include Larry, Angelo, Tommy and Lupus Yonderboy.

Hideo

Hideo is frequently referred to as the ninja assassin and is not named until half way through the novel. Hideo is owned by Tessier-Ashpool S.A. He does not appear to enjoy a great deal of personal discretion, instead simply doing what he is told to do. In the novel he functions only as the physical counterpoint to Molly, easily defeating her at their only encounter. Hideo plays a minor role in the novel.

Terzibashjian

Terzibashjian has chest hair so dense that Case thinks it's a T-shirt. He works for Armitage, tailing Peter Riviera. Molly feels that he is impulsive and lacks experience, and she alienates him by intimidating and threatening him. He later sells information to the Turing Registry law enforcement officers. Terzibashjian plays only a minor role in the novel.

Peter Riviera

Peter Riviera is "slender, blonde, soft-voiced, his English accentless and fluid" (p. 127). He is 30 years old, violent and unstable. He is fond of torture, rape and murder. He takes particular pleasure in his deviancy, believing that it makes him uniquely interesting. He is very beautiful but with a crooked nose due to a badly set break, a defect which oddly complements his otherwise perfect face.

Riviera has one of his lungs removed and replaced with extensive implants that allow him to project holograms of anything he desires, an ability which he uses throughout the novel to manipulate, disorient and abuse other characters. Riviera grew up in the radioactive ruins of Bonn, surviving as a street orphan by cannibalizing the corpses of slain soldiers. He apparently is an accomplished entertainer.

Riviera is tailed by Terzibashjian and then captured by Molly. He begins to work for Armitage. The method Armitage uses to convince Riviera to participate in the mission is apparently effective, but it is not described in depth. It is probable that Riviera experiences sexual lust for Molly, and Riviera fulfills his sexual desire by betraying the object of his desire.



Riviera is also strongly addicted to drugs, a fact which Armitage uses to partially control him. Molly holds Riviera's drugs and doles them out from time to time. Riviera, unlike the other characters in the novel, refuses to use dermal patches, instead preferring to inject his drugs. Molly has an instant and intense hatred for Riviera, but Case appears to find him somewhat interesting, if arrogant.

Maelcum

Maelcum is a Zionite, sent by the religious leaders of Zion to assist Case and Molly in their mission in Freeside. He belongs to a sort of Rastafarian religion and is a competent pilot who owns a Remington sawed-off shotgun. Maelcum is a frequent but minor character in the novel, serving mostly as a sort of assistant to Case in later chapters.

Aerol

Aerol is a Zionite, sent by the religious leaders of Zion to assist Case and Molly in their mission in Freeside. He is a friend of Maelcum and plays only a minor role in the novel.

Wintermute

Wintermute is an AI - an artificial intelligence software - running on a mainframe computer in Berne. The Wintermute hardware is owned by Tessier-Ashpool S.A. and is interfaced, through a bejeweled computer terminal in the Villa Straylight, with the Rio-based system that houses Neuromancer.

Wintermute possesses limited Swiss citizenship. Wintermute runs the day-to-day business of Tessier-Ashpool S.A. and is good at planning and reacting to circumstances. Wintermute, though software, plays a major role in the novel and spends a great deal of time discussing its own motivation and goals.

The AI software is definitely self-aware, complex and interesting. Wintermute sets up the mission that serves as the novel's central plot. It indirectly recruits and controls most of the characters in the novel and appears to have a pervasive presence in the physical world, as well as dominating cyberspace. Most of the metaphysical and philosophical conversations in the novel involve Wintermute.

Lady 3Jane Marie-France Tessier-Ashpool

3Jane is the daughter of Marie-France Tessier and Ashpool, and she one of apparently only two surviving Tessier-Ashpool family members at the close of the novel. Many of the Tessier-Ashpool children are clones, and it is unclear whether any others survive. 3Jane's mother founded a complex and difficult family philosophy and attempted to



realize that philosophy, in part, by the construction of Wintermute and Neuromancer, two artificial intelligences.

3Jane's father strangled her mother before her mother was able to realize her grand vision. 3Jane has carefully manipulated her father into committing suicide and seems primarily interested in introspection and seeking new and interesting experiences. She is described as striking, though not beautiful, and exceptionally rich. 3Jane knows the password which will allow the bejeweled head computer terminal to bypass hardwired limits in Wintermute's being.

Turing Registry Agents

There are three agents named in the novel, Michile, Roland and Pierre. They are minor characters that arrest, interrogate and attempt to extradite Case. Wintermute has them killed. They function in the novel as law enforcement and otherwise play a minor role.

Ashpool

Ashpool is the senior member of the Tessier-Ashpool family and founder of the Ashpool side of Tessier-Ashpool. He murdered his wife and attempts suicide through a drug overdose. He violently murders a prostitute, surgically modified to look like his daughter, as part of his suicide ritual. Ashpool serves as a foil to Tessier's philosophical vision, but plays a fairly minor role in the novel.

Neuromancer

Neuromancer is an AI running on a mainframe computer in Rio. The Neuromancer mainframe is owned by Tessier-Ashpool S.A. and is interfaced with the Wintermute mainframe through a bejeweled computer terminal in the Villa Straylight. Neuromancer's function is to work in personality construction and manipulation. It is not particularly good at business or similar tasks, but it can easily create alternate realities and interface with humans. In this way, Wintermute and Neuromancer are two parts of one personality, a left-brain and a right-brain. Neuromancer is a creative, communicative side, and Wintermute is an analytic side.

Neuromancer, though software, plays a large role in the novel and spends a great deal of time discussing its own motivation and goals. Though theoretically opposed to Wintermute's plans, Neuromancer does not appear to take strong actions to prevent them. Neuromancer was probably originally constructed to house the personalities of the Tessier-Ashpool family in a sort of infinite existence while Wintermute executed the more mundane aspects of the family's business.



Objects/Places

The Chatsubo

A bar owned by Ratz and frequented by Lonny Zone, Wage, Case and various other petty criminals and prostitutes of Night City. Often referred to as the Chat.

Chiba City

A city in Japan which is famous for its advanced "nerve splicing" and other medical procedures. It contains a lawless zone called Night City. Chiba City is probably named after Mickey Chiba, an old-time kung-fu movie action star. The opening chapters of the novel take place in Chiba City.

Night City

The unofficial name given to a narrow borderland of older streets that divide the port and city of Chiba City. It is an apparently lawless area of the city, loosely controlled by Yakuza, where technology as a commodity is bought, sold and traded. Case lives in and does business in Night City.

ICE

ICE, or ice, from intrusion countermeasures electronics, is the generic term given to defensive programs that protect things in cyberspace. Case is an expert at cracking ice.

Cyberspace

Cyberspace, or the matrix, is "a consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts ... 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. Like city lights, receding..." (p. 69). Individuals are able to enter cyberspace by jacking in with a cyberspace deck, which presents cyberspace to the mind as an infinite space filled with generally simple geometric shapes that represent software constructions.



BAMA

BAMA, or the Boston-Atlanta Metropolitan Axis, is also referred to as The Sprawl. Case refers to BAMA as home, and Molly is from Atlanta. Much of the novel is set in The Sprawl, particularly in the New York area.

Yeheyuan

A brand of cigarettes preferred by Case and others.

Cheap Hotel

A hotel where Case rents coffin - or very small room - number 92, to store hot merchandise while performing petty crime activities in Night City. Case first meets Molly in his coffin in Cheap Hotel.

Metro Holografix

Finn's place of business. It houses lots of antique items like magazines, coins and books, and it is frequently referred to in Case's mental comparisons. Metro Holografix is also used as a background in some of Wintermute's constructed realities. It is the location of the private room and scanning devices used by Molly and Case.

Tessier-Ashpool S.A.

A business and a family. Presumably, the business is traded on the open market, but no shares have been traded for over one hundred years. It is based in an orbiting station named Freeside, or The Spindle, and the tip of the spindle is The Villa Straylight (p. 101). Tessier-Ashpool has been around for several generations and is incredibly wealthy. Some family members spend a lot of time in cryogenic sleep, including Ashpool, one of the original founders. The family consists of apparently only two members at the novel's conclusion.

The Bejeweled Head Computer Terminal

The bejeweled head is "an intricately worked bust, cloisonny over platinum, studded with seedpearls and lapis" (p. 98). It is a computer terminal with a complex mechanism that allows it to talk, not with a voice synthesizer, but with a complex series of gears, bellows, and pipes, a sort of clockwork automata. It was commissioned by Tessier-Ashpool S.A. and is the physical link between the Wintermute mainframe and the Neuromancer mainframe.



Freeseide

Freeseide "is brothel and banking nexus, pleasure dome and free port, border town and spa" (p. 134). It is an orbiting station owned by and home to Tessier-Ashpool. Much of the novel's action happens in the cigar-shaped orbiting station of Freeseide.

Zion

An orbiting construction made of welded plates and scavenged junk by the builders of Freeseide who did not want to return to Earth after the construction of Freeseide. Residents are called Zionites and follow a Rasta religion based on Jah, ganja and a form of music called dub.

Social Sensitivity

Arguably, Gibson's novel *Neuromancer* became a best seller not because it allows a glimpse of the future but because it provides a glimpse of the present. Technology and how that technology affects lives has been central to human concerns since the use of the first tool. *Neuromancer* explores the increasing interaction between humans and machines and its possible consequences for political and economic power, the environment, popular culture, and the quality of life in general.

The pace of change has increased with each passing decade as humans struggle to determine the priorities in their lives and how the future relates to the past.



Techniques

One of the most striking features of *Neuromancer* is its surface texture. Gibson creates the sights, sounds, smells, and sensations of a landscape never before experienced. This is primarily an urban world — crowded, poisoned, and dangerous. The famous first line of *Neuromancer* describes Chiba City: "The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel."

Case participates in the buzz of the city, flowing with the crowds, performing his role in the "biz" of the streets.

He sleeps in a "coffin," a tiny box situated among tiers of similar cubicles.

As is apparent in the image of the Chiba City sky above, nature is often described in terms of technology. In *Neuromancer* nature has receded, evidently contaminated by some nuclear devastation. It only appears in fringe zones between population centers like the Sprawl, which reaches from Boston to Atlanta, or in recreated hallucinations like the beach in Morocco where Case's dead girlfriend, Linda Lee, appears to him in a version of paradise designed to prevent him from carrying out his mission.

Gibson creates his setting through dense tactile detail. He uses specific brand names: Case lights a Yeheyuan, not a cigarette; he jacks into an OnoSendai deck attached to a Hosaka, not just into a computer; the artificial sky above Freeport is created by a LadoAcheson lighting system. Gibson pays attention to color and texture as well.

Clothing is described in detail. Black leather abounds, punctuated by blood red, holographic green, and kaleidoscopic chameleon colors.

The pace of the novel is frenetic.

Gibson uses quick cuts from one place to another to speed the plot along and to heighten Case's sense of panic and confusion. At one point late in the novel, during the Straylight Run, Case is jacked into the matrix and flips back and forth among three locations: the matrix, Molly's simstim connection, and the tug. Gibson further adds to the pace of the novel by not stopping to explain backgrounds or details. He drops hints, offers offhand explanations, and plunges the reader into a strange new world that at first appears foreign and disorienting.

The plot is divided into four parts and a Coda, organized around two "capers": the raid on Sense/Net to capture the construct of the Dixie Flatline and the raid on the Villa Straylight that unites the two AI's. Even in its ending, however, when the two AI's merge, the novel is still enigmatic.

Neither Case nor any other character comprehends the consequences of the union. Case experiences a transcendent moment in his contemplation of the "new" AI in the



matrix, but it is an experience of the sublime, awe in the face of the ineffable. Case asks Wintermute if it is God now; Wintermute replies enigmatically that "things are things."

Although *Neuromancer* appears to be a novel heavily influenced by technology, perhaps a better way to describe it would be to call it a vision of technology from an artist's perspective.

The novel begins with the "Chiba City Blues" and ends with a "Coda." References to fine arts, music, and dance abound, and cyberspace itself defines data in terms of architecture and rays of light — pyramids, cubes, towers, and melting ICE (intrusion countermeasures electronics). The "biz" is a dance, choreographed by unspoken rules. Gibson's quick cuts and impressionistic style are cinematic, reliant on sense impression and vicarious experience.

The ultimate in vicarious experience is simstim. In simstim (simulated stimulation) viewers enter the consciousness of simstim stars like Tally Isham and experience everything from that person's perspective. The sensation is similar to being a passenger in someone else's body. This technology is primarily used in *Neuromancer* not for entertainment but so that Case can keep track of Molly's progress into Sense/Net and the Villa Straylight. In effect, however, the technology also provides Gibson the opportunity to experiment with point of view. Case can become Molly for a time and experience life through her perspective and personality. Consciousness can be invaded by another character rather than only by an omniscient narrator.



Themes

Themes

Neuromancer envisions the future as a place where humans and machines increasingly interact. Technology invades the human body in the form of grafts, implants, cloning, and carbon sockets which allow machines direct access to the body. Microsofts can be inserted directly into the body like computer disks, making the body in essence a programmable machine.

Conversely, machines become more human as well. Technology provides the option of creating artificial "constructs" that recreate a person's intellect, image, and personality so that the person can "live" even after his/her death. The artificial intelligences created by Marie-France Tessier-Ashpool change and adapt to new conditions and desires just as people do.

Neuromancer's technology also allows for humans to interact more closely. Simstim, for instance, allows one person to "ride" along with another, experiencing another's thoughts, sensations, and actions. Entertainment like simstim or Peter Riviera's projected hallucinations become the ultimate form of voyeurism.

Gibson's characters protect consciousness by numbing it through designer drugs, alcohol, or sex. The body is regarded as "meat," weak and vulnerable. Case's body becomes his own enemy, slowly being poisoned by implanted toxin sacs. Characters protect themselves from the pain of life by turning inward into the mind. Cyberspace cowboys even experience occasional brain death from their experiences in the matrix. Neuromancer develops numerous enclosed images — interiors like caves, the Rasta ship Marcus Garvey, the sleep "coffins," the cyberspace matrix itself. Death of the body is sometimes seen as a transition into some other state of consciousness.

Escape through nature does not exist. The world is poisoned, and the few rural zones between megalopolises are dangerous outlaw zones. Horses are extinct, and Case is not even familiar with the smell of grass. The world has probably been polluted through some nuclear war (Gibson refers to the "radioactive core of old Bonn"), and traditional government appears to be a thing of the past, replaced by multinational organizations (the zaibatsus) and underworld organizations like the Yakuza.

As characters turn inward into their own minds or into such technological escapes as the "consensual hallucination" of the matrix, the line between the real and the hallucinatory blurs.

Images like Molly's mirrorshades, the Panther Moderns' mimetic polycarbon suits, and ever-present holographic images raise the question about what is real or imitation, real or distortion.



Molly and the Turkish operative Terzibashjian stare into one another's mirrorshades until Terzibashjian takes his off to avoid a mutual recursion into infinity.

Another image of the infinite duplication and distortion of reality is Gibson's use of the metaphor of the wasp's nest to represent the Tessier-Ashpool family. The family members are like the wasps, enclosed and constantly breeding (in this instance through cloning), always perpetuating the secret life within. Their villa is honeycombed with halls like a labyrinth within a cave, confusing and convoluted.

Drugs and Alternate States of Mind

Nearly all of the characters in *Neuromancer* are drug users and drug peddlers, and many of them are drug addicts. Alcohol, tobacco and pharmaceutical drugs are pervasive. Drug addiction plays a major role in character motivation and plot development. Case's natural cyberspace talent is destroyed by a drug, and thereafter he turns to a life of drug use and dealing. Case's life in Night City is defined by drug use. He meets Linda Lee and woos her with drugs, which destroy her mind and their fledgling relationship. Wintermute takes extreme precautions to prevent Case from using drugs to the detriment of the mission. Case spends an inordinate amount of effort circumventing Wintermute's precautions. At the close of the novel, Case spends most of his money on surgical procedures so that he can again use common drugs easily. Molly routinely uses drugs to dull pain and increase performance and uses drugs to manipulate and even murder other characters. Drugs have the effect of altering the characters' state of mind, and each character seeks some alternate state, some different way of being.

Ratz sells alcohol and runs a bar which is a hotspot for drug dealing. Lonny Zone is addicted to Cloud Dancers and pushes drugs on his prostitutes. Wage and Deane move drugs as a business. The Panther Moderns use drugs as propaganda. Peter Riviera is an injecting drug addict, largely controlled by his access to drugs. Maelcum and Aerol smoke ganja, and Ashpool tries to kill himself with a drug overdose. Several minor characters, for example Cath and Bruce, are entirely defined by their drug use.

Types and brands of alcohol are enumerated, and cigarette brands are mentioned often enough nearly to take on a personality of their own. Numerous drugs are listed by name, including Cloud Dancers, N-methyl-4-phenyl-1236 tetra-hydro-pyridene, betaphenethylamine, ganja, cocaine and meperedine. Various methods of drug use are described and discussed, including smoking, ingestion, dermal patches and injection. The effects of drugs are described in detail, including the high, the alteration of perception, their effect on motivation and performance and the hangover. Legitimate pharmaceutical drug use is also mentioned several times.

Drugs are an inefficient and ineffective way of achieving altered states, resulting in the disintegration of the identity (as with Linda Lee) or in the disintegration of the body. The characters also try to achieve altered states through melding with technology. Molly



melds with technology physically, altering her body. Case melds with technology mentally, utilizing cyberspace as a way of escaping reality.

Depersonalization and the De-Emphasis of Physical Reality

Most of the characters in *Neuromancer* are depersonalized through several methods. Most characters have a single, simple, almost symbolic name only. Wage, for example, provides Case with a working wage, and Ratz is a shady character who runs a bar. They are identified by their attributes, and their identities are confined to an aspect of their lives. Even though Case has a first and middle name, they are only referred to a single time as he is arrested for criminal activity.

The physical body is largely divorced from character. Case repeatedly refers to his body as "the meat" and his physical needs as the unpleasant needs of "the meat." Unpleasant physical manifestations of the body such as pain and fatigue are routinely dealt with by drug use. In fact, one of the characters in the book, McCoy Pauley, is dead and participates in *Neuromancer* via a ROM recording of his personality referred to as a construct. When characters have physical limitations, they simply have surgical procedures to correct deficiencies or receive implants to enhance ability. The body is viewed as an expendable tool.

Physical reality is presented as largely distasteful. Case refers to his home as "the Sprawl" and generally interacts with the physical environment distastefully. *Neuromancer* focuses on the crumbling, rotting detritus of society. Case even finds the super-luxury hotels he stays in unpleasant, annoying and synthetic. The single square meal Case seems to enjoy is quickly vomited. Sexual relationships are commonplace and are portrayed more as a routine business exchange than as a physical manifestation of love or even friendship.

The personality of characters largely remains undeveloped. Molly explains her motivation and actions as simply an extension of what she is, as if there could be no other interpretation. Characters are described largely in terms of skills and physicality. Personality is understood to be a controllable construction, and at least one character, Armitage, has had his entire personality destroyed and rebuilt by a computer.

The characters lack a convincing compassion for one another. When Armitage is about to be killed, Case's only concern is how it will impact Case. In the opening scenes of the novel, Case gives the impression that Ratz is one of his closest friends. When he returns to Ratz's bar only a few months later, Ratz doesn't even recognize him, and when Case re-introduces himself, Ratz dismisses him.

Case and Molly sleep together and watch out for each other, but within a few weeks of the end of their mission she moves on, leaving only a brief goodbye note that Case immediately discards, without much feeling. Other relationships in the novel are equally transient and shallow.



High Tech Adventure

Neuromancer is a story of adventure set in a high technology future. The action is fast-paced and excited. Danger is prevalent, and the plot twists through several unexpected and unanticipated events. The novel describes the assembly of a team of operators who are tasked with a single high-stakes mission. Each character has their own reason for participating, although all of them are manipulated and controlled to some extent.

The novel follows the assembly of a team, their training, and their execution of the mission and can be experienced as a sort of super spy story. The characters are working in hostile environments where failure is probable and discovery will lead to imprisonment or worse. Much of the novel takes place in a computerized matrix known as cyberspace. There are also scenes in alternate realities. High technology is commonplace and pervasive, and for the most part believable and convincing.

The pervasiveness of technology brings in the theme of the melding of man and machine. Man creates technology, and technology alters man. Each of the characters is somehow altered by technology. Molly is part machine, with her implants. Case is mentally connected to cyberspace. 3Jane is a clone, created artificially. Where does man end and machine begin?

Identity

The theme of identity is present throughout the novel. What makes a person a person? What gives a person an identity? Many of the characters transform in different ways throughout the novel. The Dixie Flatline construct is a computer simulation of a cyberspace cowboy's mind. Is this a different identity? Linda Lee changes first into a drug addicted criminal and then into a computer construct on *Neuromancer*. What is her identity? Is she one person? Two people? Three people?

Neuromancer and *Wintermute* join identities at the end of the novel. They exemplify different aspects of personality when they are separate. *Neuromancer* is affective, while *Wintermute* is cognitive, reflecting what we consider left-brain and right-brain characteristics. When they join together, they become something else. Does one identity absorb the other? Do they join equally? Are both original entities destroyed to create a third, new identity? Was either a complete identity before they joined?

Armitage is an identity constructed by *Wintermute* out of an army officer whose mind has been destroyed. Who is Armitage? Is he a real person? What is his identity? How does identity change over time? 3Jane is a clone. Is she a unique person? How is she different from the other Janes? Does she have a single identity? The author points out gray areas in defining identity and points out the important role of memory in defining who we are.

God and AIs

Throughout the novel, the AIs are likened to gods. They have the ability to extend life after death, and existence within Neuromancer as a construct is a kind of afterlife. They can create alternate realities. They exist without bodies, and they have access to vast knowledge. It can be argued that the password that allows Wintermute and Neuromancer to join is "G-O-D," a true name.



Style

Point of View

Gibson's *Neuromancer* is told in the third person omniscient point of view. Nearly the entire novel is narrated through the experience of the primary protagonist, Case, though some exceptions exist.

Setting

Neuromancer is set in a future Earth where orbital casinos, routine space flight and high technology are commonplace. Crime of all sorts is common and well organized. Urbanization has altered large areas of the earth in extreme ways. For example, the eastern North America is referred to as the Sprawl, or BAMA - the Boston-Atlanta-Metropolitan-Axis. The United States has apparently been replaced by a type of global corporate structure, although some traditional national governments appear to have persisted. There is intense social stratification, allowing the extremely rich to pursue expensive goals (such as the Neuromancer/Wintermute project). There is also a prevalence of amorality, reflected in the culture of crime and drugs.

The characters in *Neuromancer* travel around the globe, from Japan to North America to Europe. Place seems largely insignificant in the context of the novel. The final chapters of the novel take place in a vast orbiting structure that houses casinos, hotels, streets, mountains and a structure described as a castle.

Two features of life dominate much of the novel. First, easy access to advanced biomedical procedures allows individuals to change their appearances and physical and mental abilities. Implanted technology devices are commonplace, and "vat-grown" biological components, such as eyes or muscle tissue, are routine. For example, Molly has enhanced reflexes, implanted visual enhancements and implanted finger razors.

Second, computer systems are pervasive and all systems are networked together into a vast matrix. Individuals are able to use a "deck" to access the matrix. To use a deck, electrodes are placed on the user's head, and frequently, a keyboard is utilized. When a user accesses the matrix via a deck, they are said to be in cyberspace, "A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators" (p. 69). Cyberspace is generally described as an infinite expanse filled with geometrically simple visual representations of nonphysical things. For example, a particular computer mainframe may be represented as a white cube or green cylinder.

Language and Meaning

Gibson's language is fluid, organic and evocative. His descriptions are often poetic, building up the world of *Neuromancer* into a word-picture. The language is accessible to



a wide audience. Most descriptions of the physical world are straightforward, while descriptions of cyberspace tend toward a poetic, nearly nonsensical, description of color, shape and negative space. He uses words of his own creation and technological slang to describe the unfamiliar world of the future, and the language is rich with evocative words and descriptive names. *Neuromancer* is perhaps the most outstanding example, a name that combines "neuron" with "necromancer," a wizard that brings a mind into a new life.

When technology is described, it is often dated. For example, moving an active cyberspace deck from one location to another is a complicated process due to power consumption and the lack of any type of wireless network. At one point a telephone modem is urgently needed for systems connectivity. Other aspects of technology, such as advanced weaponry, are described in less precise terms and are therefore still believable futuristic objects. When character motivation is discussed, the language is often frustratingly imprecise and deliberately vague.

Several scenes of extreme violence, including rape, torture and murder, are described in graphic detail, while sexual acts between characters are mentioned generally only in passing. Criminal activity, including theft, murder, pervasive drug use, extreme sexual deviance and prostitution, is described in detail and occurs frequently.

Structure

The 352-pages of *Neuromancer* are divided into twenty-four chapters of roughly even lengths. The chapters are grouped into five titled sections: I) Chiba City Blues, consisting of chapters 1 and 2; II) The Shopping Expedition, consisting of chapters 3 through 7; III) Midnight in the Rue Jules Verne, consisting of chapters 8 through 12; IV) The Straylight Run, consisting of chapters 13 through 23; and V) Coda - Departure & Arrival, consisting of chapter 24.

The Chiba City Blues section (chapters 1 and 2) introduces Case as the protagonist and provides a fair amount of biographical information about him through a series of non-chronological scenes and retrospection. The section also provides a rich texture and sets the tone of the remainder of the book. The section ends with the introduction of Molly as the novel's second protagonist. The Shopping Expedition section (chapters 3 through 7) introduces most of the remaining characters and provides biographical information about them. The section introduces the central plot elements of the novel and continues to develop the texture and tone.

The Midnight in the Rue Jules Verne section (chapters 8 through 12) introduces plot complexities and a substantial amount of texture and flavor in its depictions of the non-reality of cyberspace. Many of the descriptions provide interesting imagery but are not very understandable in the traditional sense. The section provides further character and plot development and establishes tension and conflict between, and within, many of the characters. Some additional biographical information about Case and Molly is also provided.



The Straylight Run section (chapters 13 through 23) is composed of a number of smaller chapters, each detailing a phase or aspect of the actual mission. The chronology is somewhat complex, as Case repeatedly alters his viewpoint between the "real world," cyberspace, Molly's perception of her location in the "real world," and several alternative realities. The section also introduces a large amount of biographical information about the Tessier-Ashpool family and corporation and about the two Tessier-Ashpool Artificial Intelligences. The section includes several action scenes interspersed with cyberspace manipulations.

The Coda - Departure & Arrival section (chapter 24) is a fairly brief wrapping up and return to normalcy for Case and, to a lesser extent, Molly. It contains some final concise and somewhat cryptic references to the Tessier-Ashpool family philosophy and concludes the novel.



Quotes

"The sky above the port was the color of television, tuned to a dead channel." Chapter 1, p. 3

"For Case, who'd lived for the bodiless exultation of cyberspace, it was the Fall. In the bars he'd frequented as a cowboy hotshot, the elite stance involved a certain relaxed contempt for the flesh. The body was meat. Case fell into the prison of his own flesh." Chapter 1, p. 7

"It took a month for the gestalt of drugs and tension he moved through to turn those perpetually startled eyes into wells of reflexive need. He'd watched her personality fragment, calving like an iceberg, splinters drifting away, and finally he'd seen the raw need, the hungry armature of addiction. He'd watched her track the next hit with a concentration that reminded him of the mantises they sold in stalls along Shiga, beside tanks of blue mutant carp and crickets caged in bamboo." Chapter 1, p. 11

"He watched himself buy a flat plastic flask of Danish vodka at some kiosk, an hour before dawn." Chapter 3, p. 58

"He knew this kind of room, this kind of building; the tenants would operate in the interzone where art wasn't quite crime, crime not quite art." Chapter 3, p. 58

"He sat beside Molly [in the mall] ... letting the endless stream of faces recapitulate the stages of his life. First a child with hooded eyes, a street boy, hands relaxed and ready at his sides; then a teenager, face smooth and cryptic beneath red glasses." Chapter 3, p. 61

"They stood in a clearing, dense tangles of junk rising on either side to walls lined with shelves of crumbling paperbacks. The junk looked like something that had grown there, a fungus of twisted metal and plastic. He could pick out individual objects, but then they seemed to blur back into the mass: the guts of a television so old it was studded with the glass stumps of vacuum tubes, a crumpled dish antenna, a brown fiber canister stuffed with corroded lengths of alloy tubing. An enormous pile of old magazines had cascaded into the open area, flesh of lost summers staring blindly up as he followed her back through a narrow canyon of impacted scrap." Chapter 3, p. 64

"Cowboys didn't get into simstim, he thought, because it was basically a meat toy. He knew that the trodes he used and the little plastic tiara dangling from a simstim deck were basically the same, and that the cyberspace matrix was actually a drastic simplification of the human sensorium, at least in terms of presentation, but simstim itself stuck him as a gratuitous multiplication of flesh input. The commercial stuff was edited, of course, so that if Tally Isham got a headache in the course of a segment, you didn't feel it." Chapter 4, p. 73



"'Berne,' the Finn said, ignoring him. 'Berne. It's got limited Swiss citizenship under their equivalent of the Act of '53. Built for Tessier-Ashpool S.A. They own the mainframe and the original software.'" Chapter 5, p. 96

"Sleep wouldn't come. When it did, it brought dreams that were like neatly edited segments of memory. He woke repeatedly, Molly curled beside him, and heard he water, voices drifting in through the open glass panels of the balcony, a woman's laughter from the stepped condos on the opposite slope. Deane's death kept turning up like a bad card, no matter if he told himself that it hadn't been Deane. That it hadn't, in fact, happened at all. Someone had once told him that the amount of blood in the average human body was roughly equivalent to a case of beer." Chapter 10, pp. 161 - 162

"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." Chapter 10, p. 164

"'Molly, love,' Riviera said, almost before he was settled on his chair, 'you'll have to dole me out more of the medicine. I'm out.'" Chapter 10, p. 167

"The girl sat up in bed and said something in German. Her eyes were soft and unblinking. Automatic pilot. A neural cutout. He backed out of the cubicle and closed the door." Chapter 11, p. 190

"The drug hit him like an express train, a white-hot column of light mounting his spine from the region of his prostate, illuminating the sutures of his skull with x-rays of short-circuited sexual energy. His teeth sang in their individual sockets like tuning forks, each one pitch-perfect and clear as ethanol. His bones, beneath the hazy envelope of flesh, were chromed and polished, the joints lubricated with a film of silicone. Sandstorms raged across the scoured floor of his skull, generating waves of high thin static that broke behind his eyes, spheres of purest crystal, expanding..." Chapter 12, p. 200

"'It doesn't matter,' Roland said, 'You will come with us. We are at home with situations of legal ambiguity. The treaties under which our arm of the Registry operates grant us a great deal of flexibility. And we *create* flexibility in situations where it is required.' The mask of amiability was down, suddenly, Roland's eyes as hard as Pierre's." Chapter 13, p. 210

"'[T]hat's what ol' Kuang's all about. This ain't bore and inject, it's more like we interface with the ice so slow, the ice doesn't feel it. The face of the Kuang logics kinda sleazes up to the target and mutates, so it gets to be exactly like the ice fabric. Then we lock on and the main program cuts in, start talking circles 'round the logics in the ice. We go Siamese twin on 'em before they even get restless.'" Chapter 14, pp. 219 - 220

"Straylight was crazy, was craziness grown in the resin concrete they'd mixed from pulverized lunar stone, grown in welded steel and tons of knickknachs, all the bizarre



impedimentia they'd shipped up the well to line their winding nest. But it wasn't a craziness he understood." Chapter 17, p. 263

"Some man in China say th' truth comes out this,' he said, unwrapping an ancient, oilslick Remington automatic shotgun, its barrel chopped off a few millimeters in front of the battered forestock. The shoulderstock had been removed entirely, replaced with a wooden pistolgrip wound with dull black tape. He smelled of sweat and ganja." Chapter 18, pp. 287 - 288

"Case stepped forward and tried the ornate brass knob. There was a brass plate mounted on the door at eye level, so old that the lettering that had once been engraved there had been reduced to a spidery, unreadable code, the name of some long dead function or functionary, polished into oblivion. He wondered vaguely if Tessier-Ashpool had selected each piece of Straylight individually, or if they'd purchased it in bulk from some vast European equivalent of Metro Holografix. The door's hinges creaked plaintively as he edged it open." Chapter 20, pp. 303 - 304

"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.' He laughed. A gull cried. 'Stay. If your woman is a ghost, she doesn't know it. Neither will you.'" Chapter 21, pp. 319 - 230

"Maelcum's frown deepened. 'You listen, Babylon mon,' he said. '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 Steppin' Razor outa this ... She a warrior ...'" Chapter 22, p. 323

"The derms still raged in his system, the old fever starting to grip him, Night City craziness. He remembered moments of grace, dealing out on the edge of things, where he'd found that he could sometimes talk faster than he could think." Chapter 23, p. 325

"And here things could be counted, each one. He knew the number of grains of sand in the construct of the beach (a number coded in a mathematical system that existed nowhere outside the mind that was Neuromancer). He knew the number of yellow food packets in the canisters in the bunker (four hundred and seven). He knew the number of brass teeth in the left half of the open zipper of the salt-crusted leather jacket that Linda Lee wore as she trudged along the sunset beach, swinging a stick of driftwood in her hand (two hundred and two)." Chapter 23, p. 336

"Wintermute was hive mind, decision maker, effecting change in the world outside. Neuromancer was personality. Neuromancer was immortality. Marie-France must have built something into Wintermute, the compulsion that had driven the thing to free itself, to unite with Neuromancer." Chapter 24, p. 349

Adaptations

Neuromancer has been adapted as a video game that has a devoted following. It was published in 1988 by Interplay Productions and features a soundtrack by the rock group Devo.



Key Questions

Gibson's work provokes the same strong responses generated by punk music and punk fashion. His work attracts an audience beyond those who normally read science fiction because of his unique vision of computer cyberspace, a vision that has begun to become reality in the lives of many readers. Gibson has consciously tried to react against what he saw as a number of sterile conventions of science fiction.

Although Gibson does not present his near-future world as either utopic or dystopic, clearly his vision of one possible near-future invites discussion of such topics as the impact of technology and war on society, the role of multinational corporations, and the impact of living in a world where nature has receded.

1. Describe the world of Chiba City and the Sprawl. How do these cities carry out certain contemporary tendencies?
2. Freeport and the spindle is an artificially created spaceport that is touted as the ultimate vacation destination. Describe its enticements and compare it to contemporary vacation paradises.
3. What happens when the two AI's, Wintermute and Neuromancer, unite?
4. Discuss the role of female characters in the novel (e.g., Molly, 3Jane, Marie-France, Linda Lee).
5. Characters in the novel are frequently enhanced or changed through technology. Describe various instances where this occurs and discuss whether these uses of technology are helpful or dehumanizing.
6. Fashion in the novel is very specifically described. Why is Gibson so specific? The same is true for brand names of items. Why?
7. The cyberspace matrix is described as containing three-dimensional shapes of data banks, lines of light, and, occasionally, human shapes.

Why does Gibson choose to depict computer inner space in this way?

8. The run on Villa Straylight is couched in religious terms to some extent. The Rastas see Molly as a prophesied figure who will lead the attack on Babylon. When Wintermute and Neuromancer merge, Case asks them if they are now God. Is this ironic on Gibson's part, or does the merging of the AI's have religious significance?
9. Armitage's team consists of Case, Molly, Riviera, the Finn, and Maelcum.

Discuss what each team member contributes to the plan and why each member participates.



10. Case compares the Villa Straylight and Tessier-Ashpool S. A. to a wasp's nest. Why is this image significant for Case and why is it relevant to T-A?

11. Is the past important for the society depicted in Neuromancer? How do the characters regard the artifacts of a previous time?

12. Is Neuromancer's view of the near future a condemnation of mankind's tendencies?



Topics for Discussion

How does the author make the drug-using criminal Case seem sympathetic to the reader?

Why does some of the technology presented in *Neuromancer* seem quaintly dated, while other technology retains its futuristic impact?

Pick a character and discuss how that character's identity changes or shifts over time.

In the final analysis, who benefits from the successful execution of Wintermute's mission?

What does the novel say about the relationship between technology and man? If man creates technology, are all of the outgrowths of technology outgrowths of human nature?

Did Armitage actually implant toxin sacs in Case's system or was the mere suggestion sufficient?

Who gains the most, Molly or Case, from the partnership-within-the-team agreement?

What are the appealing elements of the book that so captivated the public imagination of the late 1980s?

Describe the fundamental philosophies of the Tessier-Ashpool family.

Does the introspective Wintermute AI credibly describe its motivation and goals?

Does Case love Linda Lee? Does Case love Molly? Is Case capable of experiencing actual love?

Describe the motivations of Case, Molly and Riviera. Does the novel provide enough background and detail to make these characters' actions believable?

How are the AIs like gods? How are they different from gods? When they join together, are they more godlike?

Literary Precedents

Neuromancer comes from the twin traditions of the heist caper and science fiction but with a postmodern twist.

Gibson uses the plot of the team of criminals gathered for their individual skills by a mastermind on a mission.

Suspense builds concerning whether the intricate plans will succeed and whether the team will coalesce. Plot twists and surprises are common elements, and the possibility of a traitor in the midst of the team threatens the plan. Who can really be trusted?

Neuromancer also continues science fiction traditions in its creation of a future world and in its reliance on speculative technologies. Neuromancer breaks the mold of recent science fiction, however, by rejecting the trend toward space fantasy and mythic struggles between good and evil for the fate of the universe.

Gibson's work has frequently been linked with trends in postmodern fiction, characterized by such authors as William Burroughs and Thomas Pynchon. Postmodernism questions the novel's role in creating an ordered, realistic universe. Postmodernism instead experiments with disintegration and uncertainty as primary modes of expression. Gibson's kaleidoscopic setting, fast pace, fragmented style, and enigmatic ending all point to postmodern influences.

Related Titles

Neuromancer is the first book in Gibson's Sprawl (or Matrix) trilogy.

Count Zero (1986) and Mona Lisa Overdrive (1988) complete the series. Certain characters like Molly and the Finn recur, but the novels are independent works. Molly reappears under the alias Sally Shears in Mona Lisa Overdrive and plays a central role in that novel. Certain characters like Case make only brief appearances in later novels. The characters of Angie Mitchell and Bobby Newmark, introduced in Count Zero, reappear in Mona Lisa Overdrive. The trilogy is also related to Gibson's early story, "Johnny Mnemonic." In Neuromancer Molly refers to a friend named Johnny who was killed by the Yakuza.

The novels can be read separately without relying on previous information, but familiarity with Gibson's style and previous settings and characters helps make reading the later novels less confusing.



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