THE POETIC REPRESENTATION OF CHARACTERS' INNER WORLDS IN "VIRTUAL LIGHT"

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Abstract. This article explores how William Gibson's *Virtual Light* shows what is going on inside its characters, paying special attention to how monologue, dialogue, landscape, and portrait are used through comparisons with modernist, realist and dystopian novels.

Keywords: inner world, monologue, dialogue, landscape, portrait, characterization, cyberpunk, postmodern narrative.

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается, как роман Уильяма Гибсона *Virtual Light* раскрывает внутренний мир своих персонажей, с особым вниманием к тому, как используются монолог, диалог, пейзаж и портрет в сопоставлении с модернистскими, реалистическими и антиутопическими романами.

Ключевые слова: внутренний мир, монолог, диалог, пейзаж, портрет, характер, киберпанк, постмодернистский нарратив.

Annotatsiya. Ushbu maqolada Uilyam Gibsonning *Virtual Light* romani qahramonlarining ichki olamini qanday ochib berishi tahlil qilinadi; unda ayniqsa monolog, dialog, peysaj va portret kabi tasvir vositalarining qo'llanishiga, shuningdek, ularning modernistik, realist va antiutopik romanlar bilan qiyosiy tahliliga alohida e'tibor qaratiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: ichki dunyo, monolog, dialog, peysaj, portret, xarakter, kiberpank, postmodern badiiy asar.

William Gibson's *Virtual Light* (1993) is a near-future cyberpunk novel set-in post-earthquake San Francisco, whose narrative style emphasizes the interplay of character consciousness, social context, and physical surroundings. The novel's protagonists – Chevette Washington, a young bicycle messenger, Berry Rydell, a displaced ex-cop turned security guard, and Shinya Yamazaki, a Japanese sociologist – navigate a fractured Californian landscape (from the freewheeling Bay Bridge squatters to corporate Los Angeles) while confronting buried desires and traumas. Instead of conventional heroic adventure, Gibson's characters inhabit a gritty, hyper-real world of "stealth houses" and digital imagery. This analysis examines how *Virtual Light* evokes the inner life of its characters through interior monologue, dialogue, landscape, and portraiture, treating these as poetic literary devices. In what follows, we analyze Gibson's techniques and symbols, and we compare them to other

novelistic traditions (modernist introspection, realist psychological portrayal, dystopian commentary, etc.) that likewise employ monologue, dialogue, and setting to render a character's internal experience.

Virtual Light was written at a turning point for cyberpunk: its emphasis shifted from the lost "depth" of cyberspace to life in the ruins of the late twentieth-century city. The novel's eponymous "virtual light" refers to a pair of high-tech glasses (stolen by Chevette) that superimpose hidden corporate data on real-world sights. As Christophe Den Tandt observes, these glasses allow the wearer to "instantly decipher the corporate data that hides behind the surface of things". In other words, *Virtual Light* thematizes the idea of seeing beneath appearances – a useful metaphor for exploring inner realities. Gibson's focus is often on the surface – the external details of street life and gadgetry – yet these surfaces suggest deeper psychological and social truths. In Gibson's words, the Bridge (the squatter community on the Bay Bridge) itself becomes "another reality" with its own voice and agenda; Farnell notes that Gibson renders the Bridge as a "camera-obscura" of both the city's physical form and the characters' psyches. In effect, the landscape and architecture of *Virtual Light* are crafted so that "internal psyche[es]" become legible through external space. We will see how this interplay of inner and outer recurs across monologues, dialogues, setting, and descriptions.

The technique of the interior monologue (or stream-of-consciousness) directly portrays a character's private thoughts and feelings. Britannica defines interior monologue as a narrative device that "exhibit[s] the thoughts passing through the minds of the protagonists" and notes that it ranges from free associations to structured sequences of thought and emotion [1, p. 462]. It became especially prominent in 20th-century psychological novels, as a way to dramatize inner conflict and self-analysis. Famous examples include T. S. Eliot's monologuic poem *Prufrock* (1915) and, in fiction, the closing "yes I said yes I will Yes" soliloquy of Molly Bloom in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Virginia Woolf's modernist novels (e.g., *Mrs Dalloway*, 1925) similarly use free indirect interior monologue to immerse readers in characters' private consciousness, often shifting seamlessly between multiple minds.

In *Virtual Light*, by contrast, interior monologue is muted. The novel is told mostly in third-person and shifts among characters without lengthy soliloquies. Rather than lengthy, impressionistic thought-streams, Gibson's characters often act and speak in brisk, fragmented ways. Farnell observes that in *Virtual Light*, "surface is content": the prose is cluttered with sensory and cultural detail (a "dirty realism" of late-capitalist urban life). This attentiveness to external detail underlines present-day social conditions more than private reverie. For instance, Chevette's thoughts are seldom narrated in an extended interior monologue; instead, we learn about her past (abuse, incarceration) through brief memory fragments and through what others say about her. Rydell's inner guilt over a past shooting is likewise revealed

indirectly, via his reactions to violence and his terse confession. In short, Gibson does not often offer the reader unmediated "mind-space" of a character (unlike Joyce or Woolf); the narrative more often shows characters reacting or conversing, leaving much of their interior life implicit in the subtext.

Nonetheless, when *Virtual Light* does depict inner thought, it is sharp and concise. The novel occasionally dips into third-person limited free indirect style – a brief third-person account of a character's thoughts – but usually only in high-tension moments. For example, when Chevette first realizes the stolen glasses are important, we glimpse her mounting panic in close perspective, but Gibson refrains from an entire monologue. Instead, he gives just enough of her perception ("her stomach somersaults," say) to convey alarm, then shifts to external action. This economy contrasts with the indulgent interiority of a Molly Bloom or a Clarissa Dalloway. Critics have noted that Gibson's future worlds are played out not in characters' minds but in material environments; the internal life tends to be grounded in concrete physical events. In short, the inner world in *Virtual Light* is rarely voiced directly; it is encoded in the characters' choices and in their embeddedness in the changing city. Gibson's approach fits a kind of "postcyberpunk" emphasis on present sociopolitical texture over high-modernist introspection.

Other novels use interior monologue in more traditional ways. Modernist fiction, for instance, foregrounds psychological interiority. Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* uses a shifting stream-of-consciousness to blend Clarissa's preparations for a party with her memories and emotional undercurrents. Joyce's *Ulysses* famously devotes whole chapters to the inner musings of its characters – Leopold Bloom's and especially Molly Bloom's — exposing their desires and fears in raw monologue. As Britannica notes, Molly's soliloquy in *Ulysses* exemplifies an "apparently[ ] devoid of [the] author's selection" first-person flow [2, p. 119]. In modernist and later psychological novels, interior monologue is a lens on consciousness that Virtual Light only partially adopts. For example, Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866) immerses us in Raskolnikov's fevered doubts and justifications – arguably a forerunner of psychological interiority. Likewise, Woolf's *"To the Lighthouse"* (1927) delves deeply into characters' thoughts while the external plot is minimal. Compared to these, Gibson's style is comparatively external: *Virtual Light* tends to translate thought into dialogue and action rather than pages of private rumination.

Despite its scarcity of direct soliloquy, *Virtual Light* does signal characters' inner states through pointed internal observations. For instance, Chevette's skittish alertness (earned by past trauma) is implicit in her rapid heartbeat and her cautionary thoughts when danger approaches. Similarly, Rydell's guilt over violence emerges in flash thoughts. These brief glimpses resemble the concise interior moments in detective or noir fiction. But even these are kept minimal. Gibson prefers to let readers infer inner feeling from external behavior and context rather

than spotlight it overtly. In summary, where a Joyce or Woolf might give readers unfiltered psychological depths, Gibson uses more oblique means. He nods to the inner world via terse asides or bristling inner judgments, but the novel's "voice" is largely visual and kinetic.

Ulysses (Joyce) and Mrs Dalloway (Woolf) epitomize the modernist interior monologue [3, p. 7]. Notes from Underground (Dostoevsky, 1864) is an extended first-person rant revealing the narrator's tortured self-division. In contrast, Invisible Man (Ellison, 1952) also mixes interior monologue with symbolic, surreal episodes. In mid-20th-century dystopian fiction, 1984 (Orwell, 1949) contains Winston Smith's diary entries (the character's personal confessions) as a form of internal speech, while Brave New World (Huxley, 1932) relies more on a clinical outsider's perspective with limited access to inner thought.

Dialogue in literature is the exchange of spoken lines between characters. Well-crafted dialogue can hint at a character's unspoken feelings, beliefs, and background. A character's speech mannerisms, vocabulary, and pauses all suggest their inner world, even without explicit monologue. Gibson's dialogue often mirrors the terse, utilitarian tone of his world. Across his works, characters typically speak in clipped, rapid exchanges that reflect the urgency and disconnection of their environment. (For example, Chevette and Rydell converse in street slang and shorthand, hinting at their shared tough background.) Although Gibson himself has noted that he focuses more on setting than psychology, his dialogue still conveys subtext. A silken flirtation, a nervous pause, or a terse rebuff in conversation can subtly betray a character's hopes or fears. In *Virtual Light*, none of the protagonists is particularly eloquent: even Yamazaki, the academic, is depicted as shy and nerdy in speech. This surface awkwardness masks deeper motivations (loyalty, fear, empathy) that emerge in their actions and the outcomes of their dialogues rather than in idealized speeches.

The novel also juxtaposes different registers of speech to delineate worlds. For instance, Lucius Warbaby and his assistant speak in high-register or flamboyant computer jargon (and even insert pornographic images into someone's VR viewing as a joke), exposing a cynical detachment and taste for control. In one scene, Warbaby's assistant splices pornography into a dead man's image to "spice up" his decoded corpse [4, p. 1625] revealing a cruel humor beneath a veneer of professionalism. Meanwhile, the Bridge dwellers (like Skinner or Boomzilla) use casual, communal speech peppered with slang and humor, reflecting their improvisational, countercultural identity. These contrasts in dialogue indirectly project the characters' inner dispositions: corporate mercenaries clamor for dominance, while squatters joke even under siege.

In broader literary context, dialogue has long been a vehicle for character insight. In Jane Austen's novels, for example, witty dialogue exposes social masks and true intentions (see *Pride and Prejudice*, 1813). In realistic nineteenth-century

fiction (Dickens, Tolstoy, James), characters often reveal their class, education, and inner struggles through conversation. In contrast, some characters speak less in dialogue, suggesting internal repression or stoicism. Gibson's Rydell is a man of few words – his laconic style signals emotional restraint and discipline shaped by trauma. Chevette's chatter with children or flash-ins have more warmth, hinting at her tender core beneath a tough façade. Thus, even in Gibson's fast-paced world, what characters do *not* say aloud can be as telling as what they say. Unfortunately, detailed scholarly commentary on Gibson's dialogue style is limited. Still, one can see parallels to noir fiction: brief, hardboiled exchanges where what's left unsaid and nonverbal cues (a clenched jaw, a meaningful glance) carry as much inner weight as spoken lines.

Overall, *Virtual Light* uses dialogue in the service of plot and worldbuilding more than interior exploration. Yet patterns of speech reveal sociology and psychology. The novel's dialogue is functional – characters talk enough to move the plot or lay bare conspiracies (as in the cigarette ride to a police informant) – but not to philosophize. Comparatively, other novels might devote entire scenes to private intimate dialogue (like lovers whispering secrets) or inner responses to dialogue. Gibson's characters mainly speak for action. Still, through nuanced speech patterns and subtext, the dialogue in *Virtual Light* enriches character portrait without explicit internal narration.

In modernist classics, dialogue often intermingles with interior thought. In Mrs Dalloway, for example, conversations are swiftly followed or interrupted by each character's stream-of-consciousness commentary. In To Kill a Mockingbird (Lee, 1960), childlike speech reveals innocence and prejudice, reflecting inner moral lessons. In Neuromancer (Gibson, 1984), characters like Molly Millions or Case speak in chipped hacker argot, reflecting their guarded psyches and underworld milieu. In dystopian works like The Handmaid's Tale (Atwood, 1985), the sparse dialogue to others underscores Offred's alienation; she continually narrates her own silent mental commentary instead.

Gibson's artful use of landscape and setting in *Virtual Light* is central to representing character inner worlds. The novel's primary landscapes – the squatters' Bay Bridge city and the sanitized corporate Los Angeles – are laden with symbolic meaning. As Farnell points out, the Bay Bridge community is "a literal and metaphorical 'camera-obscura' of the physical and social city". In other words, the Bridge's make-shift architecture and social fabric project the values and conflicts of both the squatter characters and the wider society. The Bridge is described as "amorphous, startlingly organic," almost "living" with its own identity. Gibson writes of the Bridge as if it were a character: "It has its own agenda… a living, breathing autonomous entity that sings with its own voice." The Bridge-dwellers' stories and dreams are literally stamped onto objects (for example, each new inhabitant might tattoo a scrap of the structure into their skin), fusing the physical

setting with personal psychology. Through Yamazaki's outsider gaze, readers learn the Bridge was an impromptu refuge for society's "most unwanted" – and indeed, Yamazaki notes that "Skinner's mind was remarkably like the bridge" [5, p. 524]. This striking remark links a character's psyche directly to the landscape: the weary but resilient old man Skinner and the anarchic Bridge both embody survival through improvisation. Thus, Gibson embodies inner life in external form.

The contrast between environments also externalizes class and emotional divides. The high-tech LA skyscrapers ("stealth houses") are portrayed as pristine and empty – dark on the inside despite bright exteriors – hinting at superficial security built on denial. Inversely, the Bridge's messy bricolage of scrap metal and electronics is chaotic but alive, reflecting the community's solidarity amid hardship. Gibson's characters navigate both worlds, and their inner states align with these spaces. Chevette feels alienated in corporate spaces and at home among the Bridge people; Rydell, a former cop from privilege, finds uneasy kinship with Bridge life that softens his hard shell. Even the journey between SoCal and NoCal – from orderly to disorderly – mirrors their internal tensions between control and freedom. In this way, landscape *acts* upon the characters' psyches as much as they act upon it, a theme that Vivian Farnell identifies as "Ballard-like" (after J.G. Ballard's technique of making environment mirror mind).

The literary concept underlying this is often called pathetic fallacy – attributing human emotions to nature or settings. John Ruskin coined the term for poets projecting moods onto weather or scenery [6, p. 41]. In *Virtual Light*, though Gibson writes realist fiction, one can see echoes of this device: gloomy, fenced-off parts of the Bridge mirror Chevette's loneliness; sudden bursts of sunlight on the Bay can foreshadow moments of hope. (Gibson does not do it overtly like a romantic poet, but the reader intuitively senses atmospheres aligning with characters' feelings.) For example, when Chevette is trapped and fearing for Sammy's life, the Bridge is depicted as claustrophobic and twilight-dark; once they escape and shoot off, the scene opens into oppressive daylight of the world outside, reflecting the dawning terror of being caught by Loveless. These landscape cues accentuate what Chevette cannot or will not articulate.

This strategy of using landscape to suggest inner life has rich parallels. In the Brontë sisters' novels, the wild Yorkshire moors often mirror Catherine Earnshaw's passion and Heathcliff's rage. Wuthering Heights's stormy weather conveys Catherin's internal storms and her haunting. In realist fiction, Charles Dickens uses London's fog and sunlight as a barometer of his characters' spirits (e.g., the fog in *Oliver Twist*, the bright day in *David Copperfield*). Even Victorian poems assign mood to setting; Shelley's storm and sea in *Mont Blanc* reflect the speaker's awe and fear. In dystopian fiction, the ruined or regulated landscape often externalizes oppression and desire. *1984*'s dilapidated London streets (foggy, gray) match Winston's despair; in *Brave New World*, the pristine Futurama exhibits the inner

sterility of its citizens. In *Virtual Light*, Gibson's California is a "postmodern West Coast simulacrum" – an amplified projection of contemporary urban truths – yet it serves the same poetic function. His cityscapes (e.g., the L.A. of Davis's *City of Quartz* which he consciously echoes) are not mere backdrops but active containers of the characters' social and psychological states.

An often-cited example is Wuthering Heights (Bronte, 1847): Catherine describes the moors as "death" when she can't sleep, linking landscape to her lethargy and mood. In Victorian realistic fiction like Jane Eyre (Brontë, 1847), Jane's emotional growth is paralleled by English countryside scenes (fields, red room) reflecting her isolation or freedom. In modernist works, Mrs Dalloway uses weather and space (London parks, party rooms) to echo Septimus's anguish and Clarissa's introspection. Dystopias such as The Handmaid's Tale (Atwood) or The Road (McCarthy) also deploy barren or hostile environments to underscore inner despair. In each case, setting functions poetically, as it does in Gibson's *Virtual Light*.

The term portrait in literature typically refers to a detailed, static description of a character's appearance or a situation that symbolically "portrays" their nature. A well-crafted literary portrait can imply what a character feels or thinks without overt saying. In *Virtual Light,* Gibson's character imagery is sparse but sharp. Physical descriptions are often hyperbolic or haunting – intended to encapsulate essence. For instance, Loveless is introduced with a grotesque grin showing gold-capped teeth, signaling both menace and greed. Rydell's earlier career wound is described with surgical precision, and we know he wears a bulletproof vest like emotional armor. Chevette's body language and features (e.g., her mane of tangled, dyed hair or nimble fingers on her bicycle) hint at her restless defiance and streetwise agility. Such "portraits" are few lines long, but they act as poetic snapshots of identity.

More conceptually, Gibson treats the Bridge itself as a collective portrait: the shantytown is described in living terms (it grows, learns, and even gets tattooed), effectively personifying the community. Farnell notes this use of architecture-as-character, where the Bridge forms a singular organism that reflects the psychological state of its inhabitants. In doing so, he essentially paints a portrait of the community's inner solidarity and its ongoing resistance to outside control. When Chevette tattoos a fragment of the Bridge onto her back, it is a literal portrait of her belonging – a mark of internal identity bound to the external structure. These kinds of juxtapositions – personifying places, or making bodies and buildings analogous – create "portraits" that merge inner and outer. Gibson does not paint portraits on canvas, but he does on the cityscape and on human flesh, symbolically.

In classical literary portraiture, some novels explicitly frame chapters as portraits of a character's life. Henry James's "portrait of a lady" concept (as in *The Portrait of a Lady*, 1881) is psychological: the character remains enigmatic. In

Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the town of Macondo itself is almost a portrait of the Buendía family's collective unconscious. In everyday realistic narrative, writers like Balzac or Dickens spend pages on a heroine's dress or a villain's sneer, letting readers infer traits. Gibson takes a more minimalist approach: he omits lengthy looks and often leaves metaphorical interpretation to the reader. Nevertheless, even a few lines – e.g., describing Chevette's hardened fist or Rydell's haunted eyes – can serve as visual shorthand for inner emotion. These descriptions, though not as formally recognized as "portraits," function similarly by giving a concrete image through which to "read" a character's soul.

Broadly, *Virtual Light*'s literary portraiture (of people and places) tends to align with the novel's realist grounding: it is precise, gritty, and never romanticized. Scenes and faces are depicted with journalistic clarity. There is little of the high-color metaphor one sees in some speculative fiction – no lyrically lush landscapes or metaphor-laden weather. Yet this clarity itself is poetic: by detailing the concrete, Gibson invites readers to sense the intangible. Thus, Chevette's shivering back or Yamazaki's rabbit-like panic are portraits that resonate with what they cannot express. In comparison, novels explicitly known as "portraits" – for instance, Nabokov's *Lolita* (the first-person portrait of Humbert Humbert) – rely on introspective narrative; Gibson's portraits rely on objective style. But both strategies yield an interior sense, one through artifice and lyricism, the other through stark realism.

To fully appreciate *Virtual Light*'s techniques, it helps to compare with other literary traditions. Below we highlight several genres and novels where monologue, dialogue, landscape, and portraiture are used to reveal character.

Virginia Woolf, Mrs. Dalloway (1925). Woolf uses free indirect interior monologue extensively; characters' thoughts are rendered almost as the primary story. Clarissa Dalloway's memories and feelings intermingle with her perceptions of London, so that the external party scenes echo her inner turmoil. Woolf's narrative freely shifts between characters' perspectives. Gibson's style is much more objective, but both use changing perspectives to capture characters' consciousness. Similarly, in To the Lighthouse (1927), Woolf portrays time and memory internally (young James's anxiety, Lily Briscoe's artistry) while physically depicting the Isle of Skye – the landscape imbued with their consciousness.

James Joyce, Ulysses (1922). Joyce's episodic novel culminates in Molly Bloom's uninterrupted first-person monologue, a raw, rhythmic outpouring of thought. In contrast, *Virtual Light* contains no such extended soliloquies. Where Joyce meticulously crafts interior voice, Gibson favors the external. Nevertheless, the sensory layering in Gibson (lights, sounds, corporate slogans) can be seen as a nod to the multiplicity of perceptions in Joyce. Both authors also share a penchant for shifting narrative modes: Joyce's styles vary chapter to chapter (from journalistic

reports to rants to monologue); Gibson alternates between cinematic action scenes, documentary interludes (Yamazaki's notes), and terse dialogue. One might say Gibson's style is a late-20th-century analogue to Joyce's experimentation, though oriented toward cultural rather than formal content.

Fyodor Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment (1866). Dostoevsky delves deep into Raskolnikov's psyche: readers witness his feverish guilt through hallucinations and flashbacks, almost as if in a continuous interior debate. Dialogue with other characters (e.g., the intense interrogation by Porfiry) also exposes Raskolnikov's mental state. *Virtual Light* is structurally different – it is not the psychological journey of a single protagonist – but like Dostoevsky, Gibson uses the inner conflict of his characters to drive them into danger. For example, Chevette's decision to keep the glasses (driven partly by resentment and ego) echoes Raskolnikov's decision to commit murder – an act that springs from a mix of pride and self-assertion. However, whereas Dostoevsky often pauses to dissect thought (as when Raskolnikov converses with himself), Gibson would show Chevette simply drawing her weapon in silence. Another realist, Jane Austen, uses irony and dialogue to create character portraiture: in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), for example, Mr. Darcy's terse speeches and Mrs. Bennet's trivial chatter reveal them fully. Gibson's characters have no comedic talking or slow revelations: their society is too raw for social niceties.

Emily Brontë, Wuthering Heights (1847). The moors and storms mirror Catherine and Heathcliff's passions. Gibson similarly weaves weather and place into emotional tapestry. But unlike the Romantic natural imagery of the Brontës, Gibson's urban "storm" is technological – sirens, neon lights, data streams. Another Gothic novel, Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), uses London's duality (day/night, respectable/seedy streets) to reflect the character's split self. *Virtual Light* likewise shows two "faces" of California (order vs. ruin). Even the grisly portrait of Loveless with gold teeth is in some sense Gothic body-horror as inner depravity made visible.

George Orwell, 1984 (1949). Winston Smith's inner world is shown partly through his secret diary – an actual interior monologue – and partly through his reactions in forbidden conversations (with Julia, O'Brien). The novel's bleak London setting (decayed, surveilled) constantly mirrors the characters' fear. *Virtual Light*, while not classed as dystopia in Orwell's sense (the Bridge folk are not oppressed in the same way), shares the theme of a society fragmenting around technology. Margaret Atwood's The Handmaid's Tale (1985) is told in first-person (Offred's voice), but much is conveyed via silent observations of her constrained landscape. Gibson, by comparison, writes in third person; his dystopian features (corporate overreach, surveillance satellites, social stratification) are seen through the eyes of characters rather than explained authorially. In all these narratives, an oppressive order or a fringe community is depicted so richly that it feels like an

external portrait of inner tyranny or solidarity.

William Gibson, Neuromancer (1984). In this earlier novel, Gibson pioneered many techniques that he refines in *Virtual Light*. *Neuromancer* focuses on cyberspace ("the matrix") as a virtual interior; *Virtual Light* turns attention outward to the urban frontier. Neuromancer's Molly Millions, a street samurai, is sketched in brief dialogue and vivid portrait (mirror-shades, teeth implant) much like Chevette: a tough exterior hiding vulnerability. The inner city of *Neuromancer* (Chiba City's underworld) is described via both seedy environment and character emotion; this tradition continues in *Virtual Light*'s Bridge. Yet Gibson's characterization in *Virtual Light* feels more socially-driven (inspired by California punk and environmental critique) whereas *Neuromancer* was introspective about identity. Similarly, William Gibson's later Bridge novels (*Idoru* and *All Tomorrow's Parties*) revisit these characters. The sociologist Yamazaki returns (his « habit » is using a laptop to record, an "outsider" textual voice), serving as a narrative bridge (pun intended) between Gibson's technical culture and literary discourse [7, p. 25].

Gabriel García Márquez, One Hundred Years of Solitude (1967). Macondo's history is laid out almost as the inner fate of the Buendía family, with characters and landscapes becoming entwined in prophecy and memory. Like Gibson, Márquez relies on a richly imagined community (the town is a kind of "living organism"). Though *Virtual Light* lacks supernatural elements, its Bridge operates similarly as a locus of communal imagination. Likewise, in Julio Cortázar's *Hopscotch* (1963), characters flit between reality and surreal memories (sometimes conveyed through inner monologues disguised as narrative commentary), paralleling how Chevette sometimes remembers her turbulent past in sudden flashes.

Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice (1813). Although Austen is stylistically far from Gibson, she too uses dialogue as a mirror. Mr. Darcy's first proposal (monologue of repressed passion) and Elizabeth Bennet's lively responses reveal inner qualities. Austen's landscapes (long carriage rides, country estates) are mostly conventional and don't reflect inner turmoil overtly, unlike Gibson's. Yet Austen's technique of "free indirect discourse" (blending author voice and character thought) can be seen as a precursor to interior focus. Gibson essentially eschews such narrative intimacy; in *Virtual Light* we do not get Elizabeth Bennet's self-satisfied smugness, but rather, for example, Chevette's spiky resentment is shown by her actions (saving her stolen ticket) more than by self-justification.

Collectively, these comparisons show that *Virtual Light* sits at a crossroads. It inherits cyberpunk's gritty realism and capitalist critique, yet it looks back to realist and modernist concerns with inner life. Gibson's innovation is to externalize what others interiorize: architecture and technology become metaphors for feeling, actions replace introspection, and communal narratives stand in for soliloquies.

In conclusion: In *Virtual Light*, William Gibson crafts a poetic representation of inner worlds that is unconventional but profound. He does not often describe his

characters' thoughts in long monologues or lyrical soliloquies. Instead, the novel's power lies in its surface detail – the textures of city and slang, the vivid landscapes of ruin and neon – which are laden with psychological significance. Dialogue is terse but telling, hinting at hidden motivations without explicit exposition. Portraits of characters are sketched in sharp strokes, enough to catch the emotional residue of their experiences. The Bridge itself is personified as a communal alter ego to characters like Skinner. In this way, Gibson uses the environment and social space as proxies for consciousness: as Farnell notes, architecture becomes "architexture," and the Bridge works as a collective psyche.

Comparatively, Gibson's approach contrasts with the interior-driven novels of the modernist and realist canon. While Woolf or Joyce would plunge fully into Clarissa's or Leopold's headspace, Gibson plunges us into the Bay Bridge's labyrinth of junk and graffiti. Yet by focusing on the external, *Virtual Light* illuminates character inwardness indirectly but powerfully. As readers interpret Chevette's indomitable stance or Rydell's weary eyes, we are effectively reading their souls off the world around them. Ultimately, the "poetic" element in Gibson's representation is found in the synchronicity of inner and outer landscapes – a poetic layering achieved through precise detail rather than flowery rhetoric. It invites a readerly act of deciphering: to see beyond the corporate "surface" using Chevette's glasses as a metaphor (and our own narrative attention as the tool). In that sense, *Virtual Light* echoes its title; it produces a new kind of illumination – not by flashing lasers across the retina, but by letting light (social, data-driven, or otherwise) shine through the cracks in civilization so that the characters' hidden realities glow through the grime.

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