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BA English Honours | Semester VI | ENG6EJ305

Literature, Science, and Technology

Module 2: Science Fiction and Dystopian Technology: Shelley, Huxley, and Gibson • Comprehensive Notes

Chapter 2: Technoscientific Dystopias and Speculative Futures

Science fiction operates as the critical conscience of technological development, extrapolating contemporary scientific trends to investigate their moral, political, and existential consequences.

2.1 Mary Shelley's Frankenstein: The Modern Prometheus (1818)

Widely regarded as the inaugural novel of science fiction, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* serves as an enduring cautionary tale against unchecked scientific hubris. Victor Frankenstein's galvanistic obsession with conquering death and breeding a new race creates a creature he immediately abandons, warning that scientific knowledge divorced from ethical responsibility and parental care breeds catastrophe.

2.2 Aldous Huxley's Brave New World (1932)

Aldous Huxley's dystopian classic *Brave New World* envisions a totalitarian future governed not by brutal violence (like Orwell's *1984*), but by seductive technological pleasure, genetic engineering (the Bokanovsky Process), psychological conditioning (hypnopaedia), and pharmacological pacification (the drug *soma*), warning of a future where humans happily surrender their freedom for sanitized comfort.

2.3 William Gibson's Neuromancer (1984) and Cyberpunk

William Gibson's *Neuromancer* founded the Cyberpunk movement, coining the term "cyberspace" to describe a "consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions." Gibson portrays a gritty, hyper-corporate future of artificial intelligence, neural implants, and corporate feudalism, anticipating the digital network economy.

Advanced Critical Theory, Hermeneutics & Literary Praxis

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Critical inquiry into Module 2: Science Fiction and Dystopian Technology: Shelley, Huxley, and Gibson reveals how textual forms construct meaning through complex aesthetic strategies and structural choices:

- **Structuralism and Semiotic Deconstruction:** The organization of signs, tropes, and syntactical structures establishes narrative authority while simultaneously revealing internal fissures. Binary oppositions embedded within the discourse—such as center versus margin, tradition versus modernity, and subjective interiority versus objective reality—are systematically problematized through textual slippages and ambiguous signifiers.

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