Free repent, harlequin! said the ticktockman by harlan ellison essay sample

Technology, Development

Compare and contrast essay

" Burning Chrome" by William Gibson

As a beginning, it's important to say that both stories "'Repent, Harlequin!' Said the Ticktockman" by Harlan Ellison and " Burning Chrome" by William Gibson are real masterpieces, and each of them contains some special information encoded between the lines. The stories are playing a special part in the history of American literature. It is interesting to discuss the similarities of the texts to understand more deeply the idea that authors encoded for future generations. Also, at the first sight, the stories look completely different and incomparable, however, looking deeper, it is possible to find common details.

I would like to mention the similarities that appeared to be rather valuable for analysis. As it is not possible to analyze the texts properly without immediate contrast, I decided to provide the differences in line. The stories were completed in different genres: science fiction and cyberpunk but both showing the authors' vision of the future. Since the texts were written at 1960-1980s, the future reflected is actually our present that makes the reading and interpretation even more interesting and breathtaking.

It is worth saying that in both stories technical progress is taking place, however, this idea is implemented in different ways. Ellison mentions: " In accordance with Statute 555-7-SGH-999 governing the revocation of time per capita, all cardioplates will be keyed to the individual holder and What they had done, was devise a method of curtailing the amount of life a person could have" (Ellison 372). If a person is late too often, he can be " turned off". Here we can see that technology is a way of manipulation of people, to

make them a part of the machine that is functioning perfectly well and cannot make a mistake. In " Burning Chrome" we see the technologies are a common thing and are used by everyone.

I would like to draw attention to the main characters of the stories analyzed: In " Repent, Harlequin!" there is only one main her – Harlequin who is against the regime and doing all possible to sabotage or change it. In " Burning Chrome" we have two main characters - Automatic Jack and Bobby Quine also acting against the law but in a completely different way: they are hacking a criminal network. It is worth mentioning that in both stories main characters are using technology as a weapon against evil.

Negative characters in stories have a lot in common as well: they murder those who do not agree with them. Also, they are almost invincible, and it's a great surprise or luck that the protagonists actually reached their enemies. In " Repent, Harlequin!" the main hero paid with life for his trick with jelly beans, but he did influence the most important person, the Ticktockman, who got late for three minutes. Even if there is no Harlequin anymore, he succeeded: " you can't make an omelet without breaking a few eggs, and in every revolution, a few die who shouldn't, but they have to, because that's the way it happens, and if you make only a little change, then it seems to be worthwhile"(Ellison 377). In " Burning Chrome" Automatic Jack and Bobby Quine managed to destroy Chrome by burning her network with the help of Russian deadly virus. Here we see that the main characters successfully reached their goal and remained alive.

It is worth saying that in both stories authors put their own emphasis: in " Repent, Harlequin!" all the attention is put on the value of time and

punishment for loosing it whereas " Burning Chrome focuses on technological aspect: Towers and fields of it ranged in the colorless nonspace of the simulation matrix, the electronic consensus-hallucination that facilitates the handling and exchange of massive quantities of data" (Gibson 197).

Further, the stories have different ways of narration: " Repent, Harlequin!" begins from the middle of the plot, then the omniscient author explains the actual beginning and gives a normal ending. The audience is informed in advance, at the introductory paragraph: " Now begin in the middle, and later learn the beginning; the end will take care of itself" (Ellison 367). The author in" Burning Chrome" narrates the story chronologically and is an actual part of it – we see everything happened from the point of view of Automatic Jack – one of the main heroes. As a result, stories are oriented on different kinds of perception: omniscient author presupposes focus on the surface information, on the facts, thoughts and inner world is not so important, therefore, all information given is an objective one. Narrator being a part of the story discloses more feelings and thoughts to the reader, shows more personal that makes the whole story subjectivized.

As we can see from the above-mentioned examples, " Burning Chrome" and " Repent, Harlequin!" differ in details, but the most important is that they not reflect a similar dystopian representation of future. Both Ellison and Gibson have their ideas of the upcoming future that needed to be presented and taken into account. Now, from the point of view of the present times, we can see that both authors were partially right (in the increased use of

technologies, for instance) and wrong since were exaggerating the society

problems of their time to make the people think about the consequences.

Work Cited

Ellison, Harlan. " Repent, Harlequin! Said the Ticktockman." 1965. The

Wesleyan Anthology of Science Fiction. By Arthur B. Evans. Middletown, CT:

Wesleyan UP, 2010. 367-78. Print.

Gibson, William. " Burning Chrome." Burning Chrome. HarperCollins, 2003.

195-220. Print.