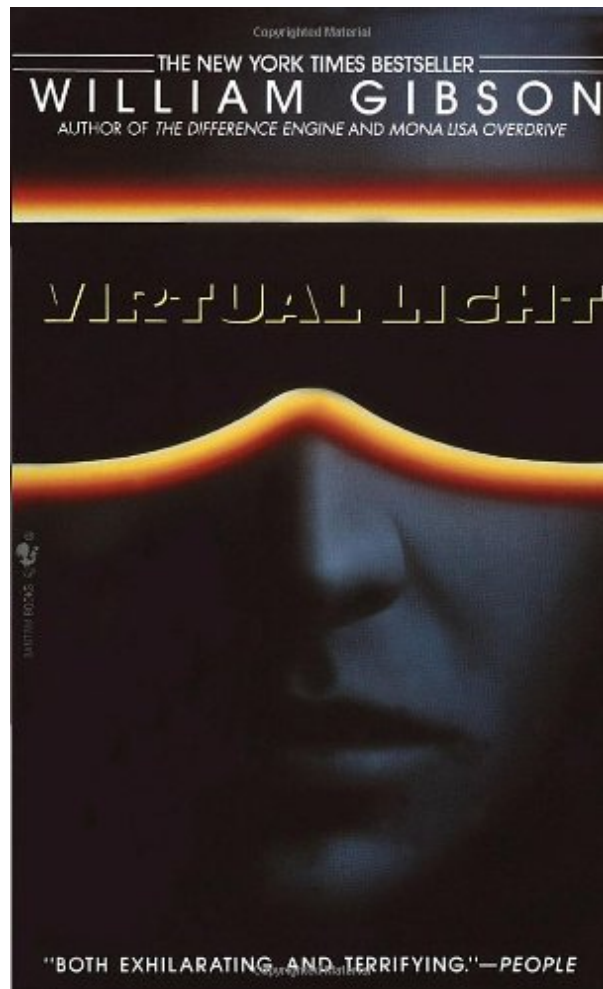
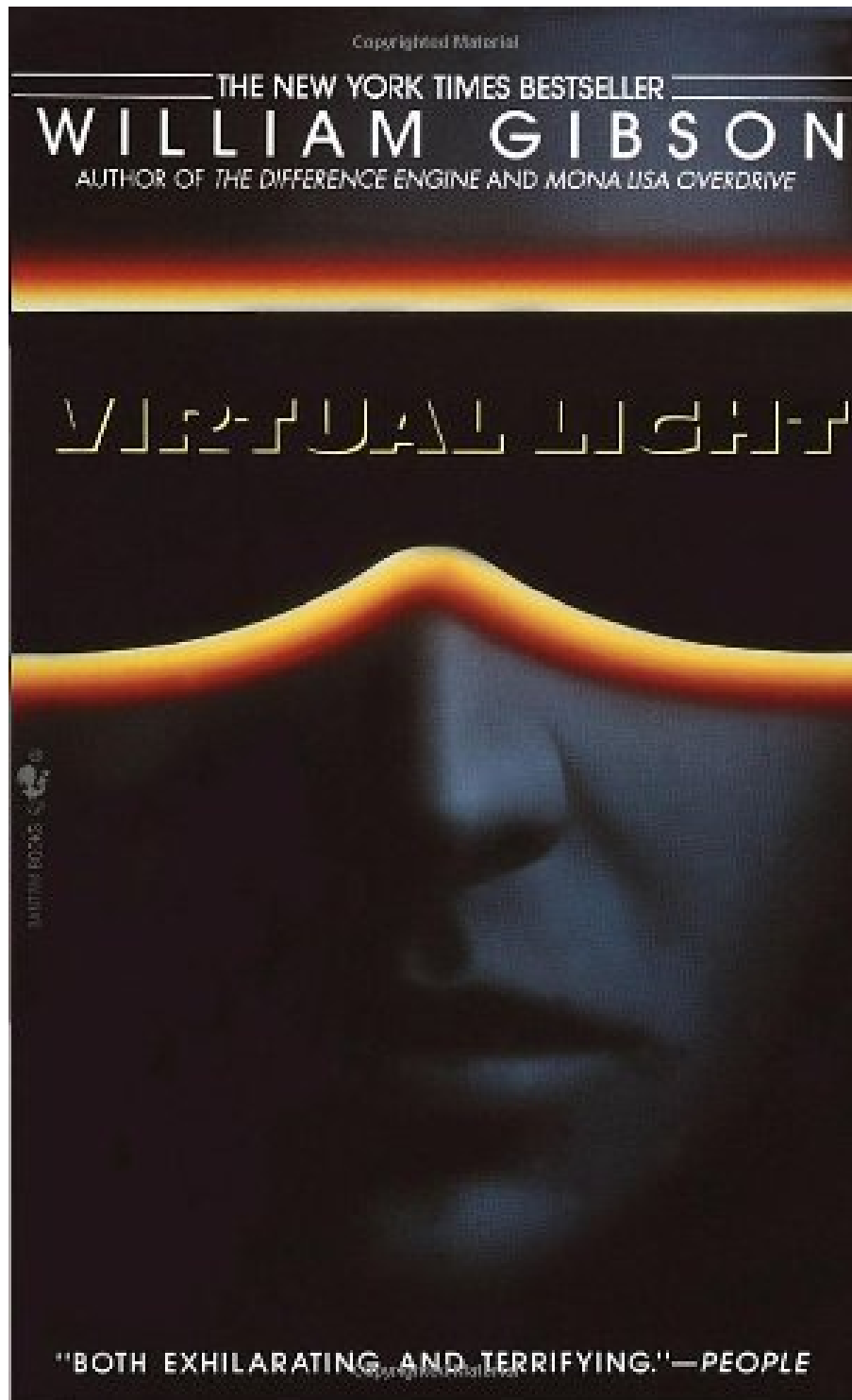


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- Great product!

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Meh

By sue

Barely interesting enough to keep reading but never gets good.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Gibson the Great does it again

By Judy Koren

This is one of Gibson's best works, as good as *Neuromancer*. It does have a few flaws, but they don't detract too much.

What's good about it? The prose style, to start with: rich, dense, polished: all the usual Gibson attributes. The plot (most of the time) tugs you along; the characters; the background; the humor (the quiet sort, that has you gently chuckling about once every two pages and is usually based on parody/satire of current trends). The richness of the weave.

Gibson is obviously an adherent of Chekhov's "gun hanging on the wall" philosophy: there isn't an unused incident in the entire complicated work, nothing that happens is just-for-local-color, everything ties up with something else. Usually with two or three something-else's, with an unspoken invitation to start thinking about the implications of this in society. A few times I found myself thinking "why is he including this?", but there was always a reason further along the line.

The book lends itself to this strand-in-the-weave approach, being written at least some of the time in very short chapters, so that we move from one scene/set of characters to another in an approach that comes to resemble the textual equivalent of sound-bites or video clips. After a series of several 1 1/2 page chapters, I found myself recalling Eliot's "The Waste Land":

These fragments have I shor'd against my ruin

Don't know if Gibson intended that particular allusion, though of course it fits in so well with the general background of the book. But the video-clip approach to writing is surely saying something about the age the book is set in.

What are the bad points? To start with, it was written in 1993, and the blurb says it's set in 2005. Reading it today, in 2003, it would be much more believable if it were set in around 2020. In general, it seems to me a bad idea to write a sci-fi novel set only 12 years in the future, if only because you're limiting the period of time during which it stays believable and therefore you can sell it. Moreover, if Gibson intended the date to be 2005, he has problems here and there with his characters: most of them are in their 20s, they can't really not remember everything from the 1990s; the one who says he wasn't born in 1980 must have been born by around 1981, which is cutting it pretty fine. And he has problems with the time-scale in general: given the

post-catastrophe setting, there hasn't been time, in 12 years, for the series of catastrophes that resulted in the present world situation, the development of the political situation as a result, the rebuilding, and the settling down into a new equilibrium, which must have existed for several years, since several of the characters don't remember what it was like before. But I think Gibson is much too experienced and intelligent a writer to make this sort of mistake, and in fact I couldn't find any reference to an exact year in the text itself. Just disregard what the blurb says.

Secondly, the ending: surprisingly weak and also rushed-over, considering how good the plot has been up to now. But by the time you get to the ending, believe me, you've had your money's worth.

Gibson makes you work hard, fitting the pieces together. In general this is a Good Thing, but occasionally degenerated to the level of irritating.

I had a slight problem with the narrator: after the first few chapters ask yourself, who is the narrator? Most chapters are told in the style used by that chapter's protagonist, which makes you feel, even though the narration is 3rd-person, that you're seeing the world through that character's eyes. But why the sparse, timeless, almost dreamlike style of the two chapters that describe the courier's action? Very far removed from his personality, if you consider his actions and believe the comments on him by the other characters. Must be a reason but I couldn't figure it out.

So why 5 stars? Because, even though nobody's perfect, not even Gibson, I've yet to see anybody else do it better.

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

Fast-paced and Suspenseful

By Deanna

Virtual Light is a good read. Although very different than Neuromancer, William Gibson's cyberpunk classic, it is still very well written. The book is not only suspenseful, fast-paced, and imaginative, but it has just a hint of humor throughout. All of these things make you want to keep turning the pages, just to see what Chevette and Rydell will do next.

Chevette is a bicycle messenger with an attitude. After some tough luck, she finally has her life pretty much on track and doesn't want to screw it up. Rydell went through some rough times too, but finally has a job that looks promising. He gets hired to help with the hunt for Chevette after she steals a pair of glasses, and something goes wrong.

The plot of the book jumps around at first. It's a bit confusing, but after a few chapters you get the hang of it, and kind of figure out what is going on. The use of technology in the book was surprisingly sparse, compared to many other cyberpunk novels. What I especially liked was Gibson's use of humor. It was thrown in, in all the right places, which really made the book more interesting.

Gibson describes all the characters in the book very vividly. It is very easy to sense what they are thinking and feeling. He also creates a vivid setting. Rydell moves from Tennessee to what used to be California, but is now NoCal and SoCal, two different states. All aspects of the setting are believable and conceivable. This is only the second Gibson novel I've read, but I liked it better than Neuromancer. Everything was much easier to believe and understand, and the entire novel was action packed. The suspense of the book wouldn't let me put it down.

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