



Silicon.com (by way of [/.](#)) has an interesting interview with William Gibson, he of *Neuromancer* fame and the coiner of the word **Cyberspace** (someone must be blamed). One intriguing aspect of Gibson's new book is that, unlike his earlier fare, it is set in the recent past, rather than the future. This portion of the interview focuses on the whys of that:

**silicon.com: So why not write about the future?**

Gibson: The trouble is there are enough crazy factors and wild cards on the table now that I can't convince myself of where a future might be in 10 to 15 years. I think we've been in a very long, century-long period of increasingly exponential technologically-driven change. We hit a point somewhere in the mid-18th century where we started doing what we think of technology today and it started changing things for us, changing society. Since World War II it's going literally exponential and what we are experiencing now is the real vertigo of that - we have no idea at all now where we are going.

Q&A: [William Gibson, science fiction novelist - WebWatch - Breaking Business and Technology News at silicon.com](#)

**Pawn** wrote on similar themes (past vs. future) in a 1990 story *Black Thor*:

It was just one of many times in my life that I wanted to go back, to live the past for myself, rather than through a book. It's a feeling similar to that which you get when you discover a dusty old box of post cards in the attic of your grandparent's house and you see places or scenery that is vaguely familiar. As you look at the pictures, and read the faded inscriptions on the backs, you feel a longing. It is a longing that can transport your fantasy faster than any promise can.

Perhaps it is just because it is no promise, it is something you know cannot be, that you can so freely allow yourself to drift in the arms of dreams to find yourself in a distant past, whether it be upon the top of Mount Olympus or at the front of a wagon train heading west for the Oklahoma Purchase. The past is the most faithful of seducers, for it can't mislead you, try as it might. If you believe in your own existence then you are safe.

So, when I was a child and my mother read me the works of H.G. Wells, it was not the Martians or the mutants that captured my imagination. It was the past. It was a time and place where the concept of such things as Martians and mutants was still so fresh. Perhaps the most seductive feature of the past is that it provides the most expansive frontier in which success is guaranteed. As a child, or as an adult, the future, while vast, holds as much chance of failure as of success. But the past ... the past offers only success; discovery,

invention, primacy and priority, notoriety and newness. As contradictory as it may sound, the past offers more opportunity for newness than the future, for it is always so difficult to fathom what is left to be new.