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**Cy(ber)borgs and Netizens:
(Re)Configuring the Post/Human Body in the Nodal Intersections of
ScyberFiction and Cyberspace**

by

Graham J. Murphy



**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

Department of English

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 2002



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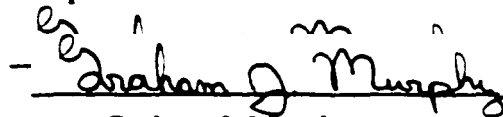
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Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

Year this Degree Granted 2002

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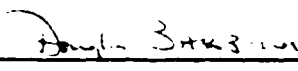
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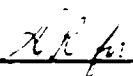
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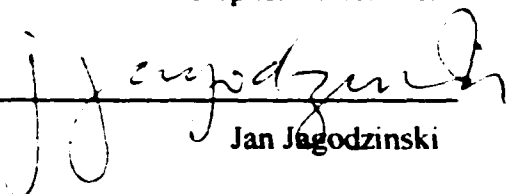
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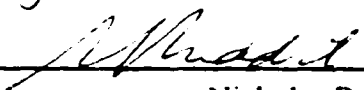
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Dedication

“Cy(ber)borgs and Netizens” is dedicated to a host of individuals and the immense support they have provided over the past several years. First and foremost, this dissertation would not have been possible without the steadfast love and support of my wife, Jennifer. Her faith in me and my project was unwavering and, on occasion, she kept the faith for both of us. She is the silent second author of this dissertation. Of course, the success of this project is also due to the involvement of my parents, Don and Sharon, who guided me through the years and provided support and confidence. Without them, I would have been unable to begin, much less finish, this voyage. To the rest of my family, including Sandi, Paul, Donald, and the entire, Murphy, Smith, Dudley, and Pym clans, thank you very much for your perseverance. It was much appreciated. Finally, a warm and heartfelt thanks to my supervisor, Douglas Barbour, and the rest of my committee – David Miall, Stephen Reimer, Jan Jagodzinski, and Nicholas Ruddick – who were the best graduate committee a student could ever want. Your guidance was invaluable.

Abstract

Towards the end of “A Cyborg Manifesto,” Donna J. Haraway asks the following question: “Why should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?” (178). With the advent of the Internet and cyberspace identities, cyberculture theorists — including Nicole Stenger, Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, Jean Baudrillard, Sherry Turkle, Christopher Dewdney, and John Perry Barlow — are addressing this question and positing that the move into cyberspace is initiating a shift from the human to the posthuman, the evolution of the species heading towards cyberspatial disembodiment where digital pattern is given priority over corporeal presence. This dissertation directly addresses this popularized notion of disembodiment by exploring the fictional and functional domains of cyberspace; in particular, I argue that embodiment is central to a post/human future, the virgule of post/human a corporeal intrusion into the apparent seamlessness of a disembodied posthuman.

As proof of cyberspace’s marvels, cyberculture often draws upon Haraway’s cyborg and the science fiction genre of cyberpunk to chart the cartographic/cryptographic route of disembodiment. Yet, as I demonstrate in the early chapters, the cy(ber)borg must replace the cyborg and ScyberFiction must overwrite cyberpunk in order to challenge the loss of the body. Using William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* trilogy, Walter Jon Williams’s *Hardwired*, Charles Platt’s *The Silicon Man*, and Tad Williams’s *Otherland*, I demonstrate how corporeal embodiment is reinforced as foundational to the cyberspatial experience. In the remaining chapters, I use Melissa Scott’s *Trouble and Her Friends*,

Gibson's Bridge sequence (*Virtual Light*, *Idoru*, *All Tomorrow's Parties*), Pat Cadigan's fiction (*Mindplayers*, *Synners*, *Fools*, *Tea from an Empty Cup*, and *Dervish is Digital*), and the Wachowski Brothers' *The Matrix* to demonstrate the different forms of this new digital embodiment, offering up the body-plus-virtualization and addressing such corporeal markers as gender, sexuality, and race. Finally, interspersed with the ScyberFiction are discussions of our contemporary Internet and how such venues as MUDS, Chat groups, virtual sex, the privileging of virtuality over simulation, and the rise of cyberplaces can collectively challenge disembodiment by demonstrating that our bodies often do extend outside the skin to encapsulate others, but not at our epidermal expense.

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Introduction

I open with three seemingly unrelated stories that serve to contextualize the social, cultural, and technological environment from which “Cy(ber)borgs and Netizens: (Re)Configuring the Post/Human Body in the Nodal Intersections of ScyberFiction and Cyberspace” emerges. The first involves one of the earliest tales of cyberspace and its online communities, one of the first instances of cyberspatial lore that, to those familiar with MUDs (Multi-User Domain), chatting, and online digital representations (avatars) is encapsulated by one avatar’s name: Mr. Bungle. Mr. Bungle was cast as the dark side of a common childhood figure, an avatar that Julian Dibbell, in his account of the Bungle affair, describes as “a fat, oleaginous, Bisquick-faced clown dressed in cum-stained harlequin garb and girdled with a mistletoe-and-hemlock belt whose buckle bore the quaint inscription ‘KISS ME UNDER THIS, BITCH!’” (239). Mr. Bungle’s claim to fame stemmed from his tendency to stalk the corridors of the MUD site LambdaMOO, sexually assaulting other online avatars, notably legba, a “Haitian trickster spirit of indeterminate gender, brown skinned and wearing an expensive pearl gray suit, top hat, and dark glasses,” and Starsinger, “a rather pointedly nondescript female character, tall, stout, and brown-haired . . .” (Dibbell 239). Mr. Bungle’s assaults were carried out via a voodoo doll he carried with him, a “subprogram that served the not exactly kosher purpose of attributing actions to other characters that their users did not actually write” (Dibbell 242). As a result, legba, completely against the user’s wishes, was forced to “sexually service him in a variety of more or less conventional ways” (Dibbell 239) while

the user behind the Starsinger avatar (as well as those others logged onto the site) was forced to watch text scrolling across the screen that described, among other things, Starsinger jabbing “a steak knife up her ass, causing immense joy. You hear Mr. Bungle laughing evilly in the distance” (Dibbell 242). Following the assault and the subsequent loss of the Internet’s innocence, LambdaMOO was buzzing with calls for the punishment and expulsion of Mr. Bungle, cyberjustice necessarily meted out by an online mob that was the closest representative of justice available. Interestingly, Dibbell interviewed the anonymous user behind legba, who confided that, behind her angry calls for punishment, “posttraumatic tears were streaming down her face a real-life fact that should suffice to prove that the words’ emotional content was no mere playacting” (242).

The second story involves what *Washington Post* journalist Rick Weiss calls “the Holy Grail of biology, the Book of Life, the instruction manual for making a person” (A1), namely, the mapping of the human genome. In late spring 2000, newspapers across North America were abuzz regarding impending announcements from rivals Celera Corp. and the International Human Genome Project that both groups were expected to release a draft of the human genome. While it will be several years before every letter of the human genetic code is put into place with complete accuracy and still many more decades before the intricacies of the genome, including the role of so-called “junk” DNA, are fully understood, Weiss reports that the first practical impact will be felt in the areas of health and disease. In his interview with Weiss, Francis Collins, chief of the National Human Genome Research Institute, said that researchers, within three to five years, will “find

most of the genes that individually cause diseases” and, within the next five to seven years, “the project will uncover most of the genes that play major roles in heart disease, diabetes, asthma, manic depression and the many other diseases that are caused not by single genes but by multiple genes along with environmental factors.”

Francis Collins’s reference to the genetic structure of diabetes has a personal import and provides a segue to my final story, an incident that took place in the winter of 1997. In a class devoted to feminist post-colonialism, the discussion veered towards the commonplace issues of subject position and the placement of the corporeal body amidst the competing theoretical discourses of postmodernism, poststructuralism, and postcolonialism. One participant expressed anxiety regarding her subject position within this pool of theoretical discourses. Essentially, she claimed she had lost any sense of her body as, on a daily basis, her identity seemed divorced from her (corpo)reality because she fluctuated among the subject positions of *lover, academic, daughter, woman, feminist, lesbian*, and so on. She opened up her experiences to the class and inquired as to whether everyone else felt the same way. Floating in a sea of mostly agreeing, nodding, some vaguely buoyant, heads, I vehemently disagreed with that assessment, the implied concomitant loss of the body within discourse. I clarified my position thus: diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes mere months after my first birthday, I have developed a relationship of mutual understanding with my body, an operational language comprised of calculated injections of insulin, multiple blood glucose readings drawn on a daily basis, and the counting of carbohydrates for every meal, snack, or craving. In addition to the

technical aspects, I also possess a biological imperative that, I have found, in conversation with other diabetics, is in no way unique. Specifically, I (and other diabetics alike) can physically feel when my blood sugar levels are fluctuating or remaining stable, a sense of my own corporeality that is difficult to express to non-diabetics. As a result of the disease, I recognize that my body is in possession of a biological VETO; put another way, should I forget or choose to deliberately ignore the agreement struck among me, myself, and I, my body will remind me hyperglycemicly (high blood sugar levels) or hypoglycemicly (low blood sugar that could trigger reactions, coma, and even death). This is irrespective of the venue, whether I am actively engaged in a virtual reality or gaming simulation, researching on the Internet, playing volleyball or any other physical activity, and even sleeping. These types of reminders reinforce my sense that my identity, woven into the very fabric of a disease that I have lived with since infancy, is complicated as it is encapsulated by both the medical research that followed on the heels of Fredrick Banting, Charles Best, and James Collip's pancreatic extraction of insulin in the early 1920s and my personal experiences of the world that are enhanced, restricted, and ultimately influenced by my diabetes. In the end, it does not matter what subject position has been chosen or interpellated by or for me, whether *husband*, *son*, *student*, *teacher*, or *diabetic patient*, I feel always already in excess of those subject-position markers and the discourses that surround and engage them. My identity is an ambiguous construction, a sense of self enmeshed in the tangible corporeal complexities and intangible medical discourse of a diabetes whose long-term complications can include impotence, blindness,

amputation, and kidney disease.

Presence vs. Pattern: Techno-Dialectics of the Post/Human

This ambiguity of my identity underlies “Cy(ber)borgs and Netizens.” In particular, Mr. Bungle’s assaults on legba and Starsinger demonstrate the corporeal ambiguity that has emerged between *digital* (read “online”) and *analogue* (read “offline”) experiences, and point directly to the defining dialectic of our increasingly computerized age in and on the Internet; namely, the *presence* of the computer user seated at the terminal versus the *pattern* of the online avatar s/he manipulates. As an avatar, legba existed solely within the digital constraints of the digital medium of LambdaMOO. Or did she? Given the user’s emotional investment in legba and her subsequent emotionalism that Dibbell observes and conveys, the ambiguity of identity emerges. Is legba solely restricted to LambdaMOO? Is she nothing more than imagination? Or is she both a psychic manifestation and an emotional projection that exists simultaneously in the digital and analogue recesses of social interaction?

It is this supposed emotional content, however, that Mark Slouka finds particularly insulting to victims of analogue sexual assault and rape. In *War of the Worlds: Cyberspace and the High-Tech Assault on Reality*, Slouka writes that legba’s so-called rape had been nothing more than a modernized version of the obscene phone call: “One had only to talk to women in the ‘engendered flesh’ who had suffered the real thing to understand the full fatuousness — not to mention ethical irresponsibility — of the

long-winded discussions on the Net concerning Mr. Bungle's 'crime'" (52). The dichotomy between the posttraumatic tears of the user-as-presence versus the assault on the avatar-as-pattern charts the ground occupied by what I describe (and explain in Chapter One) as the cy(ber)borg; namely, while there is some veracity in Slouka's position that a physical assault did not take place and may not be equivalent to rape in the traditional sense of the term, a patterned attack that pierced to the psyche of the user and triggered an emotional response did take place. In fact, Slouka admits, in contradiction to his assessment of the digital rape as a high-tech obscene phone call, that cyberspace is a place where "sticks and stones were made of air, but words could definitely hurt you" (50).

Arguably, the competing discourses of *pattern* and *presence* are not entirely new; rather, as N. Katherine Hayles outlines in *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, diverse technological developments — digital transfer of money, surrogacy and in vitro fertilization, automated factories, DNA identification of criminals, computer hacking and the Internet — indicate that pattern and presence have been jockeying with one another for at least the past few decades.

Part of the difficulties involving the interplay of presence and pattern, however, is the apparent dominance of pattern over presence and the troubling rise of the spectre of disembodiment. In *How We Became Posthuman*, Hayles writes that "[t]hrough the development of information technologies, the interplay between pattern and randomness became a feature of everyday life" (25) and, today, "the focus shifts to questions about

pattern and randomness” (27). As Hayles argues in her convincing corpus of published work, the shift from the analogue presence towards digital pattern is inaugurating the era of the posthuman, a new subjectivity emerging from the interface of corporeality and computers: “The displacement of presence/absence,” Hayles writes in “How Cyberspace Signifies: Taking Immortality Literally,” “by pattern/randomness is visually evident in new scientific imaging technologies that interface human and computers, such as positron emission tomography, or PET” (112). The implications of Hayles’s use of the PET is particularly relevant to Chapter Four and will be discussed in greater detail at that point; suffice to say, the patterning of the body into apparently replicable code has helped fuel the fire of disembodiment, a vision disseminated through such diverse venues as science fiction (SF) literature, Hollywood films, cybernetics, and robotics. As Mark Dery explains it in *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of the Century*, disembodiment in all these arenas symbolizes “godlike immortality and power rather than an embodiment of humanist anxiety” (309).

Visions of techno-immortality are popularized by such scientists as Hans Moravec, a principal research scientist at the Robotics Institute at Carnegie Mellon University. Moravec is quite possibly the most influential proponent of disembodiment, proposing the eventual downloading of human consciousness into robot bodies and artificial brains, an argument widely popularized in his 1988 text *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence* and, as Dery demonstrates throughout *Escape Velocity*, a mainstay of Moravec’s work. Recently in the December 1999 edition of

Scientific American, Moravec provides a rough timeline for the emergence of the artificial brain, speculating that

by 2010 we will see mobile robots as big as people but with cognitive abilities similar in many respects to those of a lizard. The machines will be capable of carrying out simple chores, such as vacuuming, dusting, delivering packages and taking out the garbage. By 2040, I believe, we will finally achieve the original goal of robotics and a thematic mainstay of science fiction: a freely moving machine with the intellectual capabilities of a human being. (126)

Accompanying the technological developments in robotics, Moravec believes human consciousness will follow suit and eventually have a wide array of robot bodies from which to choose. In *Escape Velocity*, however, Dery critically illuminates Moravec's position, demonstrating that "downloading human consciousness into computers is one of Moravec's strategies for keeping pace with our supercrowded creations" and that to achieve this feat requires the equally complex and invasive task of allowing a robot surgeon to remove "the crown of a person's skull and using high-resolution magnetic resonance measurements to create a computer simulacrum of the subject's neural architecture," working through successive layers of brain tissue until every corner of wetware is scanned, simulated, and processed. As a result, the final frontier of outer space will open up to the disincorporate Captain Kirk since, as Moravec explains to Dery, "if you found life on a neutron star and wished to make a field trip, you might devise a way to build a robot there of neutron stuff, then transmit your mind to it" (301).

Tellingly, Moravec betrays a troubling prejudice when, in Dery's text, the famed roboticist dismisses the issue of socio-economics: "Well, I think what you would call the socioeconomic implications of the developments I imagine are . . . largely irrelevant." Moravec goes on to note that the evolution of humanity has had to contend with "unhappy lives, horrible deaths, and failed projects" and, in the end, what really matters in the long run is what's left over You see, many cultures are gone; the Maori of New Zealand are gone, as are most of our ancestors or near relatives — *Australopithecus*, *Homo erectus*, Neanderthal man" (307).¹

Based on my experiences as a Type I Diabetic, my consciousness is not divorced from my corporeal body when I access cyberspace or virtual reality environments. Perhaps in the far future Moravec's vision will be realized, but I suspect I will have long been dead by the time researchers can adequately explain the minute intricacies of the human brain and be able to construct computerized cases that perfectly mimic the millions of synaptic connections of *Homo Sapiens*. Until then, how can the corporeal body return to centre stage amidst these discourses of disembodiment? As it happens, the clue may reside in the manner by which researchers and scientists are using computerized technologies to crack the human genome. On one hand, Weiss's description of such new scientific fields as computational genomics that are emerging in conjunction with the growing understanding of DNA's function suggests the continued dominance of pattern and the replacing of the liberal humanist subject with the posthuman figure. As *The Bloomsbury Guide to English Literature* describes it, the humanism that arose from the

fifteenth and sixteenth centuries makes the assumption that “man’s command of scientific knowledge has rendered religion largely redundant. Its central principle is that ‘man is the measure of all things’” (608). The autonomy and individuality of the liberal humanist subject is bound with a *presence*, a bodily evocation of “Here I am!,” a physical force with which to be reckoned. With *pattern*, however, the Brobdingnagian presence of the human subject is reduced to the Lilliputian level of pattern, the coded mysteries of the human genome scientifically hacked and gradually decoded into a 3-billion bit string of computer code flagged by the familiar lexicon of As, Cs, Gs, and Ts that represent the biochemical base found on strings of DNA.

This view of DNA as merely a different type of patterning, however, overlooks the fundamental importance of the corporeal presence, a wild card that Jesper Hoffmeyer repeatedly focuses upon in *Signs of Meaning in the Universe (Advances in Semiotics)*. In particular, Hoffmeyer notes that every life form exists simultaneously as a coded organism *as well* as an organism of flesh and blood; therefore, “[w]e can say that what is alive, the organism, is different from what survives, the genetic material. It is the coded version, the genetic material, that is passed on to the next generation by means of procreation, while the organism must die. So what survives is in fact a code for something else, an image of the subject — not the subject itself. Life is survival in coded form” (16). Put another way, Moravec’s vision of consciousness uploaded into computer networks or roboticized bodies does not mean that we will necessarily live forever; rather, an image of the subject and not the subject itself will bounce through the atmosphere and

outer space to occupy the proxy bodies Moravec envisions.

What makes the dialectical tension and ongoing debates between the duality of pattern and presence especially piquant in our current age, however, is the positioning of computers and cyberspace in a forum that has included such relatively incomprehensible and specialized arenas as in vitro fertilization, automated factories, PET scans, artificial intelligence research, advanced robotics, and the digital economy. In other words, the issues of these scientifically high-brow realms are now brought forth to the general public via the computer and the Internet. Put another way, the computer, cyberspace, and the cy(ber)borg have allowed the duality of pattern and presence to infiltrate into the home where the significations of the corporeal body can be engaged in such areas as computer software, imaginative fiction, and digital avatars, the human and posthuman becoming, in the digital age, the post/human.

Intruding on Discourse: Splicing Into The Post/Human

In *How We Became Posthuman*, Hayles makes several references to posthumanism, a condition or state deriving from Ihab Hassan's "Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture?" In Hassan's description, posthumanism "may appear variously as a dubious neologism, the latest slogan, or simply another image of man's recurrent self hate" (212). As such, posthumanism seems to have become absorbed into the academic *postal* system of postcolonialism, poststructuralism, and postmodernism; yet, Hassan, seeking to extricate it from its academic cousins, is hopeful

for posthumanism as it “may also hint at a potential in our culture, hint at a tendency to become more than a trend” (212). Hassan goes on to note that the human form and its concomitant desires and representations “may be changing radically, and thus must be revisioned. We need to understand that five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end, as humanism transforms itself into something that we must helplessly call posthumanism . . .” (212). Since the publication of “Prometheus as Performer,” others have taken up the posthumanist banner, notably Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingstone, who write in their Introduction to *Posthuman Bodies* that “posthuman bodies are not slaves to master discourses, but emerge at nodes where bodies, bodies of discourse, and discourse of bodies intersect to foreclose any easy distinction between actor and stage, between sender/receiver, channel, code, message, context” (2).

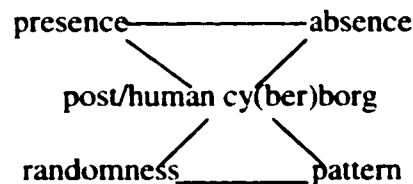
Posthumanism, however, is also a double-edged sword as it can be deployed in the advocacy of disembodiment and the privileging of pattern over presence. Hayles recognizes this possible direction when, in *How We Became Posthuman*, she writes that some of the interpretations of posthumanism have included the privileging of “informational pattern over material instantiation, so that embodiment in a biological substrate is seen as an accident of history rather than an inevitability of life . . . [and] the posthuman view thinks of the body as the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate, so that extending or replacing the body with other prostheses becomes a continuation of a process that began before we were born” (2-3). More explicit is the posthuman commentary in Arthur and Marilouise Kroker’s *Hacking the Future: Stories for the*

Flesh-Eating 90s: “This age is typified by a relentless effort on the part of the virtual class to force a wholesale abandonment of the body, to dump sensuous experience into the trashbin, substituting instead a disembodied world of empty data flows” (79). As the Krokiers see it, the age of the virtual class is all about “digital technology [which] works to discredit bodily experience, to make us feel humiliated and inferior to the virtual rendering of the body in its different electronic formats . . .” (80). Finally, Christopher Dewdney, in his disjointed *Last Flesh: Life in the Transhuman Era*, proposes that digital avatars called cybermorphs may become advanced enough to accept the uploading of consciousness: “Providing hardware receptacles for uploaded beings will then lose its priority. It might well transpire that the race for sufficient complexity will be between biotechnology and virtual (artificial) biology” (177).²

Pushing at the boundaries of gender discourse, Judith Butler, in her text *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*, writes that “for discourse to materialize a set of *effects*, ‘discourse’ itself must be understood as complex and convergent chains in which ‘effects’ are vectors of power. In this sense, what is constituted in discourse is not fixed in or by discourse, but becomes the condition and occasion for a further action” (187). In other words, as a discourse, the posthuman is constructed by the theoretical attempts to identify it as a discourse. Based on this assessment, I deliberately intrude upon the perceived unity of the posthuman and insert a virgule between *post* and *human* to form the post/human. This is no trifling matter of semantics but an attempt to highlight the post/human as both a condition and an occasion. In this context, the virgule is

deployed in its *and* function rather than its *or* function, a splicing together of post and human that harkens to the ambiguities I expressed earlier regarding legba's status of user-as-presence and avatar-as-pattern in the cyberspatial age; in other words, the virgule-as-splice is suggestive of an interstitial realm that cannot be wholly encapsulated by the seemingly solid terminology of posthuman. Second, the splice draws attention to both *human* and the *post* of the discourse. In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "post" is defined in its adverbial and prepositional sense as "after, behind. In L., prefixed adverbially to verbs as *posthab_re* to hold or esteem after, *postp_n_re* to place after, postpone" Thus, it is in this sense that current academic dissension takes place regarding the position of such discourses as *postmodernism*, *poststructuralism*, *postcolonialism* as following after or behind modernism, structuralism, and colonialism (respectively). Yet, as a noun, post also has several specific meanings: "The place where a soldier is stationed; sometimes, a sentinel's or sentry's beat or round . . . **b.** *transf.* and *fig.* The appointed place; the place of duty . . . **2. Mil. a.** A position taken; a place at which a body of soldiers is stationed, or the force occupying this; *esp.* a strategic position taken by a commander . . . **c. transf.** A place occupied for purposes of trade, *esp.* in an uncivilized or unsettled country." Drawing on *post*'s status as a noun that I insert the splice to form post/human, calling attention to the *post* in both an adverbial/prepositional meaning but also in its sense as an appointed place of duty, a place where *a body* of soldiers is stationed, a site for the human sentinel, and, finally, a place of trade in Halberstam and Livingstone's sense of intersection. Indebted to and inspired by Hayles's work on the

semiotic square in “The Materiality of Informatics” and *How We Became Posthuman*, I agree that the interdependent tension between presence (and its partner, absence) and pattern (with its partner, randomness) and the location of the post/human cy(ber)borg can be imaged as a visual interplay:



In essence, the cy(ber)borg is a strategic location as an intersection of presence and pattern while also a *post* of the human body that is stationed, garrisoned, followed, and surpassed within a cyberspatial medium that resides in both the software programs of the computer age and the imaginative visions of SF’s authors.

As both SF and cyberculture continue to engage with the various interpretations of post/humanism, I find myself returning to my postcolonial feminism class. Admittedly influenced by my diseased and dis-eased diabetic body, “Cy(ber)borgs and Netizens” locates corporeality within those cultural intersections of cyberspace, SF, the cy(ber)borg, and the post/human, demonstrating that post/human forms of the body and embodiment have always been, and continue to be, central in the discussions of cyberspace. Written from the subject position of a Diabetic acutely aware of the indeterminate position of the body amidst the materiality of the diseased corporeal form and the medical discourses that reduce such corporeality to the mathematical calculations of insulin levels and

hemoglobin A1 blood readings, “Cy(ber)borgs and Netizens” attempts to demonstrate the central role of embodiment in the codes of text and hypertext, theory and practice, fact and fiction.

In particular, Chapter One (“Cyber-Trinity and Giving up the Ghost (in the Machine):Cy(ber)borgs and ScyberFiction”) outlines the necessity of replacing Donna Haraway’s cyborg with the cy(ber)borg. Then, shifting to SF as the testbed for the post/human, I demonstrate the necessity of moving from the anachronistic stereotypes that plague the term “cyberpunk” towards a less-restrictive terminology for cyberspace-oriented SF: ScyberFiction. Chapter Two (“Making the Point (of View): (Dis)Embodiment and Body-Image in ScyberFiction”) engages the issue of the body-as-pattern and its concomitant disembodiment by reinserting embodiment into key fictions by William Gibson, Walter Jon Williams, Charles Platt, and Tad Williams. Moving away from the fictional realms of SF, Chapter Three (“Here’s MUD in Your I: Identity, Interformativity, and Screening the S(t)imulated Body”) explores the issue of identity and interformativity, examining how embodiment operates in such text- and graphics-dominated areas of the Internet as MUDs, CHAT sites, and Tinysex. Chapter Four (“Surfing Beneath *The Matrix*: A Case for the Body-plus-Simulation Virtualization”) explores the differences between the “virtual” and the “simulation” by replacing N. Katherine Hayles’s notion of the body-plus-simulation with the body-plus-virtualization, dramatized on the big screen in such films as *Lost in Space* and, more importantly, *The Matrix*. Chapter Five (“Penetrating ScyberFiction: Penetration, Regeneration, and

Alternate Synchrospace(s)”) engages the issue of the impenetrable masculine body, heterosexual “penetration,” reproduction vs. regeneration, and alternate synchrospaces in Melissa Scott’s *Trouble and Her Friends* and William Gibson’s *Neuromancer*. This acts as a leaping-off point for Chapter Six (“A Bridge Too Far: Molecular Community and Interstitial Possibility in Gibson’s Bridge Sequence”), an examination of the themes of body-plus-virtualization, penetration, corporeality, and the differences between molecular and molar spaces in William Gibson’s recent Bridge trilogy (*Virtual Light*, *Idoru*, *All Tomorrow’s Parties*). Shifting gears once again away from fiction, Chapter Seven (“Laying Down the Law and Locating Jim: Agora(phobia), The Digital Frontier, and Cyberplace”) addresses molecular and molar theories by examining some of the dominant images of cyberspace and inquiring: where is Jim, the memorable companion to Mark Twain’s Huckleberry Finn? The answer to this question may reside in cyberplace. Finally, Chapter Eight (“I’ve Got You Under My Skin: The Core of Cadigan’s Point of View”) ends with Pat Cadigan’s work in *Synners* and *Tea from an Empty Cup*, demonstrating how her work explores the multitude of issues outlined in “Cy(ber)borgs and Netizens” by addressing such corporeal issues as gender, race, nationalism, and Japanese mythology to demonstrate that pattern may have some virtues after all.

Chapter One:

Cyber-Trinity and Giving up the Ghost (in the Machine):

Cy(ber)borgs and ScyberFiction

Cyborgs do not stay still. Already in the few decades that they have existed, they have mutated, in fact and fiction, into second-order entities like genomic and electronic databases and the other denizens of the zone called cyberspace.

(Haraway, "Cyborgs and Symbionts" xix)

The cyberpunks are perhaps the first SF generation to grow up not only within the literary tradition of science fiction but in a truly science-fictional world. For them, the techniques of classical "hard SF" — extrapolation, technological literacy — are not just literary tools but an aid to daily life. They are a means of understanding, and highly valued.

(Sterling, *Mirrorshades* Preface xi)

Whether it was the stars aligning in a specific pattern, a menagerie of creative forces cycling through the atmosphere, or the experience of living within Sterling's evocation of a science-fictional world, the early 1980s (especially 1983-1986) proved to be a very creative period for key metaphors and concepts that inform "Cy(ber)borgs and Netizens." In particular, this dissertation emerges from the body of discursive material circling the trinity of *cyber*: cyborg, cyberspace, and cyberpunk. Influenced by

developments in such diverse areas as cybernetics, postmodernism, SF literature, and feminist critical theory, William Gibson and Donna Haraway individually captured attention and sparked debate in a host of circles following the publication of their seminal works: Gibson's 1984 novel *Neuromancer*, which popularized the term cyberspace as well as heralding the SF mode of cyberpunk, and Donna Haraway's 1985 essay "Manifesto for cyborgs: science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980s" (reprinted in her text *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* as "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century") which took the cyborg figure of popular SF and melded it with feminist thought and practice.¹

Sterling's commentary, in the epigraph, regarding the classic tools of hard SF as an aid or a means of understanding ordinary life is especially relevant to our contemporary age as computers and the computer-generated realms of the Internet are becoming increasingly ubiquitous, at least in Westernized nations. In particular, the increasing wiring of the world into larger data networks is facilitating communication among a host of divergent individuals; for example, Chat groups, which are examined in Chapter Three, allow strangers to develop virtual friendships without ever having to meet in person. At its heart, the Internet is a means of communication, whether in the form of textual transmission and ongoing discussion or, in the case of online banners and ads, the marketing and selling of products through the World Wide Web.

In the role as a mediator of communication, computers and the Internet function as tools, a point Haraway makes explicit, in her verbosely-titled text

Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan©_Meets_OncoMouse™, writing that “‘the computer’ is a trope, a part-for-whole figure, for a world of actors and actants, and not a Thing Acting Alone. ‘Computers’ cause nothing, but the human and nonhuman hybrids troped by the figure of the information machine remake worlds” (126). The importance of these points cannot be overemphasized, for it is the ability of the computer, in conjunction with the human actors and actants, to remake worlds that is a key to the ongoing interest in the Internet and the focus of this dissertation. Most importantly, Haraway’s evocation of the role of actors and actants puts a human face onto the Internet, pointing out that the signifiers of cyberspace are bound by human interpretation.

The function of the human interpreter is central to any system of communication given that signs must be shared among the participants, a point Jesper Hoffmeyer repeatedly focuses upon in *Signs of Meaning in the Universe (Advances in Semiotics)*. In that text, Hoffmeyer, exploring the work of Charles Sanders Peirce, writes that logic and, by extension, communication can only take place when a third element, most often an interpretant or, in social environments, the surrounding context, is brought into the equation, shifting the communication process from a dyadic relationship to a triadic one: “Thus, in Peirce’s work, valid thought always presupposes a relation between three things. This could, for example, be cause and effect *plus* the observer who connects these two” (Hoffmeyer 17). In this sense, there are no “givens” when it comes to communication and the function of a triad reveals “that one cannot, in all conscience, ignore the fact that there is always ‘someone’ (e.g., the observer) to draw the inferences which we hold to be true” (Hoffmeyer 18). Finally, Hoffmeyer takes the triad structure

and applies it to semiosis as a whole:

In the general instance then, the sign represents a relation between three factors:

(1) this primary sign — the sign vehicle — i.e., the bearer or manifestation of the sign regardless of its significance . . . ; (2) the object (physical or nonphysical) to which the sign vehicle refers . . . and (3) “the interpretant” i.e., the system which construes the sign vehicle’s relationship to its object To be a sign in Peirce’s sense of the word all three of these elements must be present. (19)

Given this function of the triad structure, the Internet not only emerges in the communications taking place between computers and the online users but, by extension, the semiotic meaning users are attributing to the system that is cyberspace. As I address more thoroughly in later chapters, cyberspace possesses an ontological dimension that allows for the redeployment of semiotics, the possibility to directly engage with online signs and to shape the ongoing semiotics of cyberspace. With its various permutations in our contemporary reality or the science fictional universes extrapolated by the genre’s authors, cyberspace is becoming a network of signs encompassing such fields as fiction, non-fiction, psychoanalytic theory, feminism, race relations, and global economics.

It is within this network of signs that Haraway’s notions of the cyborg and the cyberpunk genre of SF appear to emerge as applicable concepts for thinking about cyberspace and post/human embodiment. Yet, despite the influence of these works, there are difficulties with their critical deployment and the resultant effects. In particular, the applicability of Haraway’s cyborg to the realm of cyberculture can serve to reinforce gender designations that run counter to the intention of Haraway’s critical project while,

at the other end of the scale, the emergence of cyberpunk has become so ubiquitous that its referential power has become simultaneously neutralized and restrictive. In the end, both the cyborg and cyberpunk must be adapted to current conditions, tweaked and recontextualized for the new cyber-millennium; therefore, my exploration on the semiotic network structuring the Internet steers away from the cyborg and cyberpunk literature in favour of two neologisms: the cy(ber)borg and ScyberFiction.

A Case for the Cy(ber)borg

What do Gaia, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and a little white rat have in common? According to Haraway, they are all examples of cyborgs, millennial manifestations wherein hybridity is the order of the new age and ongoing transborder crossings are blurring traditional boundaries into increasing obscurity. As Haraway writes, in “Cyborgs and Symbionts: Living Together in the New World Order,” James Lovelock’s Gaia hypothesis of the 1960s framed the Earth in a new manner that was distinctly different from the “vegetarian feminist mystic suspicious of the cold war’s military-industrial complex and its patriarchal terminology.” In effect, Haraway continues, Gaia is “a cyborg, a complex auto-poietic system that terminally blurred the boundaries among the geological, the organic, and the technological” (xiii). Down on the cyborg scale, Arnold Schwarzenegger’s role as the evil hunter-killer cyborg in the successful 1984 film *The Terminator* popularized the man-machine hybrid with a general audience of SF and non-SF fans alike. In the film, a battle-scarred Earth has been overrun by machines commanded by an Artificial Intelligence that seeks to eradicate all vestiges of humanity.

Under the guidance of John Connor, humanity is fighting back in violent guerilla skirmishes that force the Intelligence to send a muscle-bound, monosyllabic Terminator cyborg (a flesh-covered killing mechanism) back through time to kill Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton) and prevent John Connor's birth. Thanks to human protector Kyle Reese (Michael Bein), a soldier sent back through time that, in a brief interlude with Sarah, results in her becoming pregnant with John, the Terminator fails in its mission. Unlike Gaia which is a life-affirming cyborg, in Haraway's view the sculpted Terminator is "the sign of the beast on the face of postmodern culture, the sign of the Sacred Image of the Same" ("Cyborgs and Symbionts" xv). In other words, despite the popularity of *The Terminator*, which, ironically, propelled Schwarzenegger to a host of heroic roles (including *Predator*, *Total Recall*, and *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* wherein he is a reprogrammed Terminator sent back to protect the teenage John Connor from a liquid-based Terminator), the Terminator cyborg re-embodies a patriarchal nomenclature that reenforces the concepts of domination, hyper-masculinity, and unstoppable scientific force. Finally, given a stature that defies its size, the little white rat occupies a privileged position as a pioneering subject in the intertwining of human and cyborg history. Whereas rats once stowed away "on the masted ships of Europe's imperial age of exploration," Haraway observes they now "have gone into the unexplored regions in the first great travel narratives of Western technoscience." Haraway continues to note that the lab rat was the first instantiation of Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline's cyborg as these pioneering scientists in cyborg research implanted their rodent "with an osmotic pump designed to inject chemicals continuously to modify and regulate homeostatic

states” (Haraway, “Cyborgs and Symbionts” xv).

The unifying principle of these three figures is the difficulty in defining strict borders and boundaries. Such indecisiveness and boundary confusion is the key concept for the Harawayian cyborg as it prompts an ontological probing of the surrounding world. As Haraway writes in “A Cyborg Manifesto,” the cyborg is “a hybrid of machine and organism” (149) that posits new conceptual and material possibilities. The cyborg emerges from Haraway’s observations that border crossings are erasing key boundaries in nature, particularly the boundary between human-animal, human-machine, and the physical and non-physical. Such transgressions can, for example, be harnessed for feminist goals and agendas, the boundary discretions of the cyborg figure serving to extricate women from a women=Nature equation that, in Haraway’s opinion, has plagued feminist thought and action. In other words, rather than fall back upon a rural, naturalist, or Earth-mother association that rests upon the notion of some original feminine unity, Haraway’s cyborg feminism “skips the step of original unity, of identification with nature in the Western sense” (“A Cyborg Manifesto” 151). This break with nature is a turn towards technology, and is actually about “transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work”(Haraway, “Cyborg Manifesto” 154). Haraway argues that the politics of such a cyborg consciousness threatens to “make Man and Woman so problematic, subverting the structure of desire, the force imagined to generate language and gender, and so subverting the structure and modes of reproduction of ‘Western’ identity . . .” (“Cyborg Manifesto” 176). Outlining the defining characteristics of the informatics of

domination, Haraway writes that “the dichotomies between mind and body, animal and human, organism and machine, public and private, nature and culture, men and women, primitive and civilized are all in question ideologically . . . [and, in the end,] cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves” (“Cyborg Manifesto” 181).

As cyborgs in the 1980s were not readily available nor familiar in a daily context, Haraway draws extensively on SF for her cyborg imagery, noting that her cyborg is a hybrid figure, “a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (“Cyborg Manifesto” 149). In particular, the cyborgs of feminist SF author Joanna Russ’s *Picnic on Paradise* and *The Female Man* inform her writing since both Alyx and Jael Reasoner, modified by cyborg enhancements, are re-positioned in such non-feminine roles as assassins. Later, in *Modest_Witness*, Haraway writes that *The Female Man* highlights “the fact that there has never been any such thing as a ‘woman’ who made it into the really good stories . . . [and] the *female* man is literally a contradiction in kind” (71). In Haraway’s account, the cyborg consciousness embodied in *The Female Man* marks the text as the “antithesis of a utopian or dystopian novel; the book, in form and content, is the disruption of the expectations of those and many other central gendered categories of linguistic production in white European and American writing technologies” (*Modest* 70).²

With the advent of the new millennium, the cyborg is increasingly leaving behind its days as a creature of fiction and putting down stakes in our own neighbourhoods. This is certainly the case regarding the communicative potential of contemporary computers, a

feature (along with biotechnology) Haraway recognized early: “[C]ommunications technologies and biotechnologies are the crucial tools recrafting our bodies. These tools embody and enforce new social relations for women worldwide” (“Manifesto” 164). The proliferation of computers since the 1980s, the subsequent explosion in the home-computing market, Western society’s increasing reliance on computers, and the growth of technology sectors feeding into the computer circuit are recrafting both the physical and imaginative possibilities of bodies, challenging the social, political, and economic landscape. This is the thrust of Derrick de Kerckhove’s analysis, in *Connected Intelligence: The Arrival of the Web Society*, of the function of interactivity: “Interactive systems, in creating a new continuity between the body and the machine, clearly help to reinforce the network of connections that expand our central nervous systems beyond our bodies to the exterior world” (13). Indeed, while we may not be enhanced assassins, robotic Terminators nor osmotically-enhanced lab rats, cyborgs are ubiquitous as individuals metaphorically merge with computers and the Internet, turning into cyberspace-cyborgs, cyber-cyborgs, cy(ber)borgs.

The necessity of modifying Haraway’s cyborg into the cy(ber)borg stems from the appropriation and deployment of the cyborg into the stream(ing)s of cyberculture that, ironically, threaten to undercut the cyborg’s ontological function. Specifically, essays by both Deborah Lupton and noted cyberculture theorist Allucquère Rosanne (Sandy) Stone restrict the cyborg’s ontological efficacy by invoking a gendered binary between the digital world of cyberspace and the analogue world of a material reality. In “The Embodied Computer User,” Lupton deconstructs some of the powerful myths

surrounding computer hackers and their fascination with computers and cyberspace, noting that the relationship between a computer and its user is a complex mixture of fascination and dread that, in Lupton's estimation, calls to mind Julia Kristeva's work on the abject. As Kristeva describes it in *Powers of Horror*, the abject, a realm that is neither subject nor object, refers to the process of identity formation that is necessarily external to both subject and object but equally contingent upon that subject's desire:

The abject has only one quality of the object — that of being opposed to *I*. If the object, however, through its opposition, settles me within the fragile texture of a desire for meaning, which, as a matter of fact, makes me ceaselessly and infinitely homologous to it, what is *abject*, on the contrary, the jettisoned object, is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses. (1-2).

In Lupton's account, the abject "inspires both desire and repulsion. It challenges, as it defines, the boundaries of the clean, proper, contained body, the dichotomy between inside and outside" (110). Lupton sees this desire and repulsion woven into the very circuits of the computer, given that "an intimate relationship with others involves ambivalence: fear as well as pleasure. As we do with people we feel are close to us, we invest part of ourselves in PCs. We struggle with the pleasures and fears of dependency: to trust is to reap the rewards of security, but it is also to render ourselves vulnerable to risk" (110). Drawing upon Kristeva's assessment of the maternal body and the sexual body as loci abjectionification, Lupton associates the metaphorical imagery of computer hackers penetrating and plundering the fluidic networks with the loci of women, sexuality, and the maternal body:

Computer users, therefore, are both attracted towards the promises of cyberspace, in the utopian freedom from the flesh, its denial of the body, the opportunity to achieve a cyborgian seamlessness and to “connect” with others, but are also threatened by its potential to engulf the self and expose one’s vulnerability to the penetration of enemy others. As with the female body, a site of intense desire and emotional security but also threatening engulfment, the inside of the computer body is dark and enigmatic, potentially leaky, harbouring danger and contamination, vulnerable to invasion. (111)

The association of woman and computer is quite overt in Lupton’s estimation; as a result, the cyborg relationship is undermined to the degree that the merging of technology and corporeality that Haraway envisions as a boundary-crossing feature of the cyborg is reduced to a male/user and female/computer paradigm, thereby reinscribing a gendered binary that undercuts the ontological probing of boundaries, leaving it in a static state, a cybersymbolic systems crash. Notably missing from Lupton’s analysis, however, is any discussion of female relationships with the computer and its networks. Do women approach the computer with the same mix of longing and trepidation that Lupton identifies in the male? Do women view the internal system as dark and enigmatic? Do they view the computer as maternal and wish to penetrate it? Are computer users inherently male? Unfortunately, Lupton’s analysis avoids these questions by focussing exclusively on a woman = computer = abject and man = user = penetrator series of assumptions.

In “Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?” Sandy Stone broaches similar terrain,

remarking that the seduction of cyberspace, the allure of an infinite, omnipotent source of power for the (often) adolescent male hacker, is rooted in gender: "The experience of unlimited power is both gendered, and, for the male, fraught with the need for control, producing an unresolvable need for reconciliation with an always absent structure of personality" (108). Like Lupton, Stone never really engages female relationships with computer systems; in fact, the closest she comes to the topic is the blatantly essentialist statement that "it seems to be the engagement of the adolescent male within humans *of both sexes* that is responsible for the seductiveness of the cybernetic mode" ("Will" 108; emphasis added). Stone even goes so far as to identify the "desire to cross the human/machine boundary, to penetrate and merge, which is part of the evocation of cyberspace" as an "inarticulate longing of the male for the female" which can be characterized as "*cyborg envy*" ("Will" 108). Finally, Stone brings this feminization of the cyborg's movement into cyberspace into distinct relief when she writes that to enter "cyberspace is to physically *put on* cyberspace. To become the cyborg, to put on the seductive and dangerous cybernetic space like a garment, is to put on the *female*" ("Will" 109). In a similar vein to Lupton's analysis, Stone has restricted the possibility for the cyborg to escape from under the weight of gendered divisions of (cyber)space.

One can certainly understand why both Lupton and Stone identify the typical computer hacker as an adolescent male given the masculine dominance of the early computer era and the overall dearth of women on computer systems in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In this new millennium, however, women are outnumbering men in the number of new computer users. This is bolstered by the publication of *Face of the Web*,

an extensive survey conducted by Ipsos Reid that identified women and children as the largest groups flocking to the Internet. While 59% of current Internet users are male compared to 41% for female, Ipsos Reid note that 54% of new users going online in 2001 are/will be female, compared to 41% for male. Even more telling, the percentage of women jumps to 60% in such countries as the U.S., Canada, Australia, Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Clearly, both Lupton's and Stone's papers appear somewhat dated given the ever-growing presence of female users putting on the garment of cyberspace.

Nevertheless, regardless of ever-changing percentages, the association of the cyborg and cyberspace as icons of some enigmatic femininity is troubling for cyberculture discourse. While Haraway promotes the cyborg as enabling an overhaul of socialist-feminism and a disruption of gender paradigms, Lupton and Stone seem to be heading in the opposite direction by evoking images of a dark and enigmatic femininity contained within a mysteriously-wired box metaphorically penetrated by masculine/masculinized hackers. In the end, this division of gender roles crashes the ontological efficacy of the cyborg and partitions the discourse into quasi-essentialized masculine and feminine realms that are antithetical to Haraway's boundary-crossing intent.³

In addition to the problematics of Lupton and Stone, Haraway's own recent work on the cyborg necessitates a specificity of the cy(ber)borg. Placing a greater focus upon material instantiations of cyborgs than the metaphors of SF, Haraway's *Modest_Witness* is a thorough exploration of those cyborg elements and figures of our contemporary,

technoscientific age. Therefore, Haraway's text explores, among other topics, transuranic elements (those elements, such as plutonium, whose atomic numbers surpass uranium's 92, the highest natural element), transgenetic organisms (e.g., genetically-engineered foods), the OncoMouse (Dupont's infamous patented mouse that, injected with a transplanted tumour-producing gene, is propelling cancer research), human gene mapping, and synthetic DNA. For the most part, these cyborgs reside somewhere beyond the comprehension of most individuals; for example, I hazard to say the majority of people in Western civilization may appreciate the draft of the human genome but will not thoroughly understand it. Similarly, the implications of transgenetic organisms or the ups-and-downs of OncoMouse may not be immediately perceptible nor of interest to those without the specialized knowledge.

Although computers are not the primary focus in *Modest_Witness*, Haraway does turn her eye to the specific function of the computer. In a vein reminiscent of her representation of cyborgs as both social reality and creatures of fiction, Haraway describes the structures of cyberspace as "simultaneously fiercely material realities and imaginary zones" (*Modest* 100).⁴ These computer-based cy(ber)borgs are more graspable than transuranic elements or gene mapping and the issues they raise may be unrelated to synthetic tomatoes or banana/zucchini hybrids; for that reason, the differentiation between cy(ber)borg and cyborg is necessary. Furthermore, since the mid-1990s, personal computers and the growth of the Internet (notably the graphics-laden World Wide Web) have instantiated new modes of relating to technology, complex relationships among computers, cyberspace, and users that are giving birth to identities that are

founded on crossing borders, the state of the cy(ber)borg. Therefore, the cy(ber)borg is not the assassin Jael in *The Female Man*, the hyper-masculinized Terminator, the osmotically modified mouse of Clynes and Kline, Dupont's patented OncoMouse, or a figure with an atomic number greater than 92. Rather, the cy(ber)borgs of "Cy(ber)borgs and Netizens" are those individuals who integrate analogue and digital worlds, downloading information from digital domains and uploading sectors of their analogue lives into the computer. In a state of flux, as both computer technologies and networks continue to develop and grow, cy(ber)borgs adapt and respond to the ongoing changes to computer hardware, modem or cable connections, Web pages, cyber-communities, and other online users, all the while treading the diffuse world of actors and actants that exist simultaneously within both digital and analogue worlds.

A Case for ScyberFiction

One of the earliest texts in cyberculture to directly address the then-emerging realm of cyberspace was Michael Benedikt's 1991 volume *Cyberspace: First Steps*. In his mathematically-slanted article, "Cyberspace: Some Proposals," Benedikt defines cyberspace as

a globally networked, computer-sustained, computer-accessed, and computer-generated multidimensional, artificial, or "virtual" reality. In this reality, to which every computer is a window, seen or heard objects are neither physical nor, necessarily, representations of physical objects but are, rather in form, character and action, made up of data, of pure information. (122-23)

Benedikt's description of a world entirely of pure data implicitly calls to mind the manipulation of that data, its deconstruction and reconstruction to form new metaphors, new worlds, new expressions of this multidimensional realm. In fact, this ontological potential is exactly what drives cyber-enthusiast Howard Rheingold's fascination with the Internet and online communities. Throughout *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*, Rheingold provides a first-person account of the online worlds he encounters, in particular the Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link (WELL), and the digital relationships he forms: "I soon discovered I was audience, performer, and scriptwriter, along with my companions, in an ongoing improvisation. A full-scale subculture was growing on the other side of my telephone jack, and they invited me to help create something new" (2).

Rheingold's scriptwriting function is particular interesting as it draws attention to the creative function of language and writing in constructing cyberspace, whether it be the language of shared communication or the computer language that supports the overall cyberspatial structure. In both contexts, language is deployed as a world-building device, a means of constructing new social environments that are shared among online users or as software programs that give shape to online sites. It is this world-building function of language that is the link between cyberspace and SF, for both mediums require language to envision the unfamiliar and SF is often the blueprint or testbed upon which the possibilities for cyberspace are explored and made manifest.

As Darren Tofts explains, in *Memory Trade: The Prehistory of Cyberculture*, language and writing serve an ontological function of (re)constructing the surrounding

world; conversely, the implementation of alien language or unknown linguistic codes is a valuable act of defamiliarization that is “a figurative mode of perception to help us reflect critically on something that enables us to think the way we do To regard writing as unfamiliar is a strategy to make it strange, alien, to enable us to see it as if for the first time. Formalist literary critics refer to this strategy as *ostranenie*, or estrangement . . .” (36). This *ostranenie* process is relevant to the point Delany makes in *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw: Notes on the Language of Science Fiction*, when he writes, in the essay “Critical Methods/Speculative Fiction,” that a SF author takes on the “practically incantatory task of naming nonexistent objects, then investing them with reality by a host of methods, technological and pseudo-technological explanations, imbedding them in dramatic situations, or just inculcating them by pure repetition . . .” (142). Given this speculative or extrapolative investment, Delany goes on to note in the essay that “s-f became able to reflect, focus, and diffract relations between man and his universe, as it included all that man could create, all that he could conceive” (143).

Part of the effect of such a critical reflection of the universe is the creation of a SF intertextual field, a repository of SF tropes that influence subsequent SF narratives and provide allusions to previous work in the SF field. Damien Broderick describes the function of the mega-text in his critical study *Reading by Starlight: Postmodern Science Fiction*: “When novelties like hyperspace and cyberspace, memex and AI (Artificial Intelligence), nanotech and plug-in personality agents are very quickly taken up as the common property of a number of independent stories and authors, we have the beginnings of a new mega-text”(59). This mega-text serves as a grounding, allowing

authors to contribute to the SF field by building upon one another and exploring future issues without, literally speaking, remaking the wheel in every new book.

A recent example of this intertextual mega-text is Rudy Rucker's *Ware* quartet (*Software*, *Wetware*, *Freeware*, *Realware*) wherein robotic lifeforms have evolved from the clunky metallic bodies of *Software* to become shape-shifting entities: "Marie was a moldie: an artificial life form made of a soft plastic that was mottled and veined with gene-tweaked molds and algae" (*Freeware* 1). In *Software*, the first book of the series, a large community of boppers resides on the Moon where, out of a deep sense of fear and self-preservation, they have minimal contact with humans. In Rucker's future, boppers and humans are innately antagonistic as "[t]he boppers knew only too well that many humans would jump at the chance to destroy the robots' carefully evolved intelligence. The mass of humans were born slavedrivers. Just look at the Asimov priorities: Protect humans, Obey humans, Protect yourself" (*Software* 27). Indeed, bopper protagonist Ralph Numbers, an intertextual play on Hugo Gernsback's 1911 novel *Ralph 124C 41+*, is disgusted by the notion of boppers serving humans mindlessly since "[t]hanks to his own efforts, the boppers had long since discarded the ugly, human-chauvinist priorities of Asimov: To protect humans, To obey humans, To protect robots . . . in that order. These days any protection or obedience the humans got from boppers was strictly on a pay-as-you-go basis" (*Software* 53).⁵ These references are, of course, intertextual nods to Isaac Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics,⁶ introduced and developed in the short stories bundled in the *I, Robot* collection and repeatedly referenced throughout SF's development. The presence of Asimov's Laws and Rucker's reference to them help to

establish the space within which the *Ware* quartet takes place while giving it an authorial twist; namely, robot/human interactions are of the Asimovian lineage but modified with molds and algae to serve the unique social setting of Rucker's future.

It is because of this linguistic defamiliarization, world-building function, and intertextual referencing that postmodernist critics have been drawn towards the ontological field of SF. In fact, postmodernist critic Brian McHale is practically jubilant about the function of SF as a mode of postmodernist thinking, writing in *Constructing Postmodernism* that

sf is openly and avowedly ontological in its orientation, i.e., "like mainstream" postmodernist writing it is self-consciously "world-building" fiction, laying bare the process of fictional world-making itself. Secondly, SF constitutes a particularly clear and demonstrable example of an intertextual field, one in which models, materials, images, "ideas," etc. circulate openly from text to text, and are conspicuously cited, analyzed, combined, revised, and reconfigured It is precisely this relative openness of intertextual circulation in SF that makes it so valuable as a heuristic model of literature in general, and postmodernist literature in particular. (12)

Specifically, critics make the link between postmodernism and SF most insistently with the 1980s SF mode of cyberpunk. Fredric Jameson, in an excerpt from *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* that is reprinted in Larry McCaffery's *Storming the Reality Studio: A Casebook of Cyberpunk and Postmodern Fiction*, writes:

The technology of contemporary society is therefore mesmerizing and fascinating,

not so much in its own right, but because it seems to offer some privileged representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control even more difficult for our minds and imaginations to grasp — namely the whole new decentered global network of the third stage of capital itself. This is a figural process presently best observed in a whole mode of contemporary entertainment literature, which one is tempted to characterize as “high tech paranoia,” in which the circuits and networks of some putative global computer hook-up are narratively mobilized by a labyrinthine conspiracies of autonomous but deadly interlocking and competing information agencies in a complexity often beyond the normal reading mind. (226)

Although Jameson never explicitly uses the term *cyberpunk*, the essay clearly evokes this fiction, especially since it was written in 1984, the publication date of *Neuromancer*, and Jameson’s high tech paranoia, decentred global networks, and information agencies are staples of the “entertainment literature” that was the cyberpunk of that period. Other critics are more overt in their association of postmodernism and cyberpunk, notably Lance Olsen, in “Cyberpunk and the Crisis of Postmodernity,” remarking that “cyberpunk is one of the last strongholds of a postmodern consciousness” (149) and Claire Sponsler, writing, in “William Gibson and the Death of Cyberpunk,” that “cyberpunk’s obsession with the object world, its fixation on appearances and surfaces, signals its postmodern sensibility” (47).

The rise of cyberpunk is directly attributable to the writings of William Gibson (in particular, his award-winning 1984 novel *Neuromancer*) as well as Bruce Sterling’s

editorial work on the science fiction magazine *Cheap Truth* and, later, *Mirrorshades: The Cyberpunk Anthology*. In Gibson's case, his name had been circulating through the corridors of early 1980s SF upon the publication of such short stories as "Johnny Mnemonic" and "Burning Chrome" (which introduced the term cyberspace); yet, the meteoric success of *Neuromancer* quickly catapulted him into the spotlight given that his novel won the Hugo, Nebula, and Philip K. Dick awards. Gibson's *Neuromancer* offers a startling claustrophobic vision of a near-future dominated by multinational conglomerates, the computer-mediated realm of the cyberspatial matrix, street hustlers and assassins as protagonists, Artificial Intelligence entities operating behind the scenes, and a condensed, even frenetic, writing style. In summary, the narrative involves console cowboy Case who is recruited by Molly Millions (from Gibson's short story "Johnny Mnemonic") to help free the Wintermute Artificial Intelligence and allow it to merge with its brother, the Neuromancer Intelligence. Along the way, Case, Molly, and a host of other partners encounter a menagerie of tattooed, street-hustling, marginalized figures (not always alive) to assist in the venture. In a trademarked ambivalence and an undercutting of any sense of transcendence or closure, the post-mission world that emerges is remarkably unchanged and, as sequels *Count Zero* and *Mona Lisa Overdrive* demonstrate, continues forward at a slumbering pace.

Although Gibson is often credited with coining the word "cyberspace," he was by no means the originator of the computerized realm, nor does he make that claim. As Bruce Sterling remarks in his Preface to Gibson's short story collection, *Burning Chrome*, Gibson "is not a table-pounding revolutionary, but a practical, hands-on

retrofitter” (xii) whose SF narratives and “extrapolative techniques are those of classic hard sf, but his demonstration of them is pure New Wave” (xi). Gibson’s cyberspatial progenitors can be found scattered throughout the library of SF: Arthur C. Clarke (*The City and the Stars*) depicts a future where immortality and rebirth are attained by uploading the human consciousness into a giant computer; Alfred Bester’s Gully Foyle (*The Stars My Destination*) and Delany’s Lorq von Ray (*Nova*) are emotionally unstable rebellious protagonists; Thomas Pynchon depicts an alternative subculture subverting the established bureaucracy of the postal service in *The Crying of Lot 49*; James Tiptree, Jr. writes about the transference of consciousness from one proxy body to the next in “The Girl Who Was Plugged In”; John Brunner’s *The Shockwave Rider* features on-the-lam Nickie Haflinger whose (phreaking) abilities allow him to change his identity and fight to wrest control of the information network from government institutions; finally, Vernor Vinge’s *True Names* features its own computer network populated by magical entities vying for power all the while pursued by government forces.⁷

Sterling’s description of Gibson’s early fiction as rooted in classic hard SF but stylistically inspired by the 1960s New Wave is indicative of the boundary-crossing trope of cyberpunk’s literary mode and its use of alternate media formats for textual referencing. In Gibson’s case, Molly Millions is explicitly tailored after Chrissie Hynde (lead singer of *The Pretenders*), the Dixie Flatline is reminiscent of William S. Burroughs, and the text is littered with a host of allusions to punk-rock, Lou Reed and the Velvet Underground, reggae, and political activist Marcus Garvey. Gibson’s promiscuous appropriation of other media for his fiction quickly became one of the

defining stamps of the cyberpunk mode as a whole. Indeed, as Sterling notes in his Preface to *Mirrorshades*, cyberpunk is about capturing something

crucial to the work of these writers, something crucial to the decade as a whole: a new kind of integration. The overlapping of worlds that were formerly separate: the realm of high tech, and the modern pop underground Cyberpunk comes from the realm where the computer hacker and the rocker overlap, a cultural Petri dish where writhing gene lines splice. Some find the results bizarre, even monstrous; for others this integration is a powerful source of hope. (xi/xiii)

In Sterling's accounting of the punk sensibility, cyberpunk themes include bodily invasion, prosthetic limbs, implanted circuits, cybernetic interfaces, computer simulations, and cosmetic surgery, all while the authors grapple with the imaginative ideas of SF.

Even though Gibson is the most recognizable figure spearheading the cyberpunk mode of SF, Sterling is its most ubiquitous promotional agent. Sterling's irreplaceable involvement in cyberpunk's ascension began with the publication of his fanzine *Cheap Truth* which Tom Maddox describes, in the online essay "After the Deluge: Cyberpunk in the '80s and '90s," as a rigorously postmodern medium." In the essay, Maddox goes on to describe the articles in *Cheap Truth* as "a series of guerrilla raids on sf. Accuracy of aim and incisiveness varied, of course; these raids were polemical, occasional, essentially temperamental. Altogether, *Cheap Truth* stirred up some action, riled some people, made others aware of each other." This awareness was particularly fundamental to draw together the quintet of cyberpunk authors — William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, Lewis

Shiner, Rudy Rucker, and John Shirley. From an apparent first-hand perspective, Stephen P. Brown, in his essay "Before the Lights Came On: Observation of a Synergy," charts the formative links of those core figures.⁸ For example, Brown apparently met Sterling at the 1974 Clarion Writers Workshop and introduced him to the work of John Shirley. Later, Lewis Shiner worked on Sterling's *Cheap Truth*, under the pseudonym Sue Denim, and Rudy Rucker contributed regular columns. Gibson, meanwhile, found himself on a panel at a Vancouver conference with Shirley, who convinced Gibson to submit his short stories for publication and then introduced Gibson to Sterling. As Brown writes, "it was a vital and unique form of cross-fertilization, and for a brief moment it all happened away from the spotlight" (175). The glare of the spotlight came in the guise of Gardner Dozois who appropriated the title of Bruce Bethke's short story "Cyberpunk" (teenage quartet Michael, Lisa, Georgie, and Rayno hack into computer systems, thumb their collective nose at established authority, and engage in cyber-criminal activities) and applying it to these authors.

Given the name-brand recognition of the neologism *cyberpunk*, the question arises: why replace it with the neologism *ScyberFiction*? Why take the risk of using a new term that is not as well-known as cyberpunk? If cyberpunk does conjure up a generally-accepted retinue of texts, why risk complicating matters? Of course, every neologism, including cyberpunk, runs the risk of drawing lines in the sand, establishing borders of inclusivity and exclusivity and positioning books in terms of those borders. With its focus upon those SF novels wherein cyberspace plays a central role, *ScyberFiction* continues this neologistic trend; yet, this term is as much about defining

borders as it is about extricating oneself from the referential quagmire that now accompanies the previous neologism of cyberpunk. In particular, cyberpunk possesses extraordinarily heavy baggage that necessitates, perhaps even demands, a neologism like ScyberFiction.

The most significant problem with cyberpunk is in regards to its representational function. First, there is the matter of the diversity of the texts that have been grouped within this seemingly all-encompassing mode; the term “cyberpunk” overlooks authorial differences in praise of similarities. Take, for example, Sterling’s *The Artificial Kid* and Gibson’s *Neuromancer*. Granted, the multinational conglomerates and floating orbital platforms that are refuge sites for the ultra-rich are common motifs in both novels. Still, Sterling’s text is more interested in the global effects of a television-based culture on the planet Reverie than a future Earth dominated by computers and cyber-networks. As well, there is an implication of evolutionary transcendence in *The Artificial Kid*, embodied in the biological Mass that appears towards the end of the novel, that the ambiguous and anti-climactic ending of *Neuromancer* lacks. In the words of *The Artificial Kid*’s Crossbow, the Mass is “a gigantic Petri dish, that covers whole square miles. Then the genes are recombined, they form a new organism, which is nurtured by the nutrients in molds and yeasts Don’t you realize — the Mass has defeated determinism! It has broken the right chains of evolution! It has become teleological! It’s the quintessence of life — it is the enemy of entropy!” (Sterling 264-266). At the end of *Neuromancer*, however, the new Wintermute/Neuromancer entity responds to Case’s queries into its godlike abilities simply by saying “Things are things” (270). The differences between

these two pivotal figures in the cyberpunk oeuvre do not end there; the near-future setting of the *Neuromancer* trilogy is a far cry from Sterling's Shaper/Mechanist stories (accumulated as *Schismatrix Plus*) that are far-future narratives. Scott Bukatman, comparing Sterling and Gibson in *Terminal Identity*, writes that "Sterling's narrative structures are less derivative of other genres, and there is little of the literary quality of Gibson's prose, which is replete with echoes of his literary antecedents and pop culture forebears" (273). Expanding beyond Sterling and Gibson, Andrew Ross, in *Strange Weather: Culture, Science, and Technology in the Age of Limits*, samples the cyberpunk authors and makes several conclusions, writing that John Shirley's *Eclipse* sequence is more concerned with the political rather than economical shape of the future and Sterling's *Islands in the Net* is much more political with its situating of Third World countries in the wired world (156-58). Aside from Bukatman's or Ross's interpretations, cyberpunk author Lewis Shiner displays complex variety in his fiction, notably in his use of Mayan codices and the cultural wealth of Mayan cosmology that makes *Deserted Cities of the Heart* thematically closer to Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead* than any other cyberpunk work.

Tellingly, this diversity within the ranks illuminates the failure of the cyberpunk label to account fully for the narrative diversity of the literary quintet. As a result, cyberpunk has become a term that is simultaneously anachronistic and vacuous. On one hand, given Gibson's success, there is the tendency for critics to compress cyberpunk into Gibson's fiction at the expense of other authors' literary output. Examples include the following academic studies: Bukatman's *Terminal Identity* makes statements about the

cyberpunk mode and then repeatedly turns to Gibson's work as textual proof; George Slusser and Tom Shippey's *Fiction 2000: Cyberpunk and the Future of Narrative* assembles essays that are predominantly about Gibson's fiction, prompting Rob Latham to entitle his book review "Cyberpunk=Gibson=*Neuromancer*"; Dani Cavallaro's recent *Cyberpunk and Cyberculture* is subtitled *Science Fiction and the Work of William Gibson* where, as the subtitle indicates, Gibson dominates; finally, Gibson is abundantly represented in the analytical essays of Mike Featherstone and Roger Burrows's *Cyberspace/Cyberbodies/Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Embodiment*.

While academic discussions of cyberpunk have increasingly conflated it with Gibson's fiction, cyberpunk has, simultaneously, been deployed to such a wide-ranging and diverse field of literature that it is increasingly difficult to determine the membership list. For example, despite the thorough work Bukatman undertakes in *Terminal Identity*, his cyberpunk bibliography includes Pat Cadigan's *Synners* (1991) but makes no mention of *Mindplayers* (1987), a text Bruce Sterling, on the Library category of the recently-defunct The Cyberpunk Project website (<http://www.cyberpunkproject.org/lib/>), lists as a canonical text. Furthermore, Bukatman replaces Greg Bear's *Mirrorshades* contribution "Petra" with *Blood Music*, includes first-time nominees Dan Simmons (*Hyperion*) and Jack Womack (*Ambient*), and, in an inexplicable move, omits quintet member Lewis Shiner altogether.

On the Internet, the situation has gotten worse as websites and newsgroups devoted to cyberpunk have further muddled the waters and allowed the term to balloon to such proportions that any author can seemingly qualify as cyberpunk. Take, for example,

the Cyberpunk website (<http://www.euro.net/mark-space/Cyberpunk.html>) whose curious cyberpunk bibliography includes James Luceno (*The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles, Book One: The Mata Hari Affair*), Brian Aldiss (*Helliconia* trilogy), Samuel Delany (*Babel 17*), Greg Egan (*Diaspora*), Paul J. McAuley (*Red Dust*), Lisa Mason (*Arachne*), and Kim Stanley Robinson (*Red Mars*). Complicating matters is the cyberpunk reading list posted on the newsgroup alt.cyberpunk (<http://www.cs.ubc.ca/spider/harrison/Cyberpunk/cyberpunk.html>) that includes Stephen King's pseudonym Richard Bachman ("The Running Man"), Gregory Benford (*Great Sky River*), Ray Bradbury (*Fahrenheit 451*), Anthony Burgess (*A Clockwork Orange*), Stanislaw Lem (*Fiasco*), and Mary Shelley (*Frankenstein*).

ScyberFiction may not be a perfect neologism, but it attempts to rectify, or at least avoid, the baggage that has been associated with cyberpunk by making tough cuts. With its focus upon those science fiction novels that use cyberspace as a fundamental component of the narrative, the neologism is restrictive, but hopefully in a productive manner. Therefore, a text such as Stephen King's "The Running Man" would not be ScyberFiction because, in spite of its dark overtones, near-future setting, and interest in the spectacle of television, there is no cyberspace component to be found in the narrative.

Granted, there are similarities to Sterling's *The Artificial Kid*, but that novel too would not make the grade because cyberspace does not figure in that early text of Sterling's career. Other examples of novels cut from ScyberFiction include Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* — where the boundaries of the human body may be of paramount interest, but there is an absence of cybernetic networks or digital environments — and Shiner's

Deserted Cities of the Heart.

Given the danger of creating and popularizing the ScyberFiction neologism and the questions that necessarily accompany the formation of such a category of fiction (e.g., how much cyberspace must a text possess to be included on the list?), why not simply rewrite cyberpunk? Why not correct the errors of days gone by? The problem with cyberpunk is its mutation into different forms and its adoption by other media. In other words, the literary cyberpunk professed to be emerging in the 1980s has become an entity unto itself, apparently separated from any distinct grounding in specific literary works of SF. This is part of the problem Lewis Shiner has with the term, noting, in "Inside the Movement: Past, Present, and Future," that cyberpunk has become unmoored from any true referential function it may have possessed in its early coinage, turning

into something of a Frankenstein's monster. In the last year I've seen the *New York Times* use the word as a synonym for *hacker*. I've seen lists of "core cyberpunk" writers that contain the most improbable names: Lucius Shepard, Michael Swanwick, Greg Benford, even Kim Stanley Robinson. There is the aforementioned cyberpunk issue of *Keyboard* magazine featuring interviews with, well, basically a lot of guys in black leather who use synthesizers, MIDI's (that's instrumental digital interface to the unhip), and digital sampling. There are the comics, the games, the magazine articles, the angry letters. (19)

In essence, Shiner sees cyberpunk as a cookie cutter that reduces the diverse complexities of SF's authors into digestible bites. He continues his rant against the corporate packaging of cyberpunk in "Confession of an Ex-Cyberpunk," remarking that by the mid-

1980s “cyberpunk had become a cliché. Other writers had turned the form into formula: implant wetware (biological computer chips), government by multinational corporations, street-wise, leather-jacketed, amphetamine-loving protagonists and decayed orbital colonies.” Shiner laments that the cyberpunk movement had been diluted to a “sci-fiberpunk” co-opted by other media formats to supply “power fantasies, the same dead-end thrills we get from video games and blockbuster movies like ‘Rambo’ and ‘Aliens.’ It gives Nature up for dead, accepts violence and greed as inevitable and promotes the cult of the loner.” This dilution that Shiner charts helps explain why a host of SF critics and theorists have gone to great lengths to pronounce literary cyberpunk dead or, at the very least, in serious decline, including Claire Sponsler (“William Gibson and the Death of Cyberpunk”), Neil Easterbrook (“The Arc of Our Destruction: Reversal and Erasure in Cyberpunk”), and Ross Farnell (“Posthuman Topologies: William Gibson’s ‘Architexture’ in *Virtual Light* and *Idoru*”).

The appropriation of cyberpunk by a host of new media outlets is particular evident in such productions as the movie *Johnny Mnemonic* (starring Keanu Reeves), Epic’s *Neuromancer* graphic novel (<http://www.8op.com/gibson/en/neurocomic.html>), the *Neuromancer* game by Interplay (released in 1988 for Apple II, Commodore C64, and IBM/PC computers), and ex-punk rocker (and former Generation X frontman) Billy Idol’s 1993 CD release *Cyberpunk*. Perhaps tellingly, both *Johnny Mnemonic* and Idol’s *Cyberpunk* were failures in their respective media fields. The low box-office returns of *Johnny Mnemonic* prompted Arthur and Marilouise Kroker to write, in *Hacking the Future*, that “**Johnny Mnemonic**, the movie, is the day cyberpunk died Killed by

sheer acceleration, by the fact that 80s cyberpunk metaphors don't really work anymore in the virtual 90s, the popular failure of **Johnny Mnemonic** testifies to the end of the charismatic phase of digital reality . . ." (50); similarly, Billy Idol's *Cyberpunk* was both a commercial and critical failure, prompting Mark Dery to describe the CD as "an appropriation of every bald-faced cyberpunk cliché that wasn't nailed down"(76). In the end, all these extraneous images of cyberpunk that Shiner bemoans have resulted in the term becoming somewhat anachronistic, a narrow appellation that, conversely, is applied to an increasingly wide variety of media. In other words, cyberpunk has become a stamp that is bandied about relatively indiscriminately and uncritically conjures up images of Shiner's disaffected guys in black leather⁹ wailing away against some form of authority on their synthesizers or computer keyboards.

Even assuming literary cyberpunk could be divorced from the host of other arenas that continue to poach on the recognition of the term, the meteoric rise of the label and the emptying out of cyberpunk's referential power has forced key authors from within the mode itself to extricate themselves from beneath cyberpunk's weight. Given Shiner's vocal opposition, it is quite obvious that he has long since relinquished the cyberpunk appellation, claiming that cyberpunk had died and its "new incarnation had turned technology into an end in itself and lost its original impulse." Joining Shiner is none other than William Gibson who, in an interview with Larry McCaffery, reveals his desire to move beyond a mode that was "mainly a marketing strategy — and one that I've come to feel trivializes what I do All that really happened was that a bunch of work by some new authors landed on some publishers' desks at the same time. People didn't

know what to make of us, so they gave us this tag" (279-80). As a result, Gibson's latest fiction (*Virtual Light*, *Idoru*, *All Tomorrow's Parties*) has replaced the frenetic energy of *Neuromancer* with complex, multi-plot narratives while Shiner's recent work is not even SF but mainstream fiction. Bruce Bethke, the originator of the term itself, even satirizes cyberpunk in his near-future novel *Headcrash*, writing that by 2005, "it is perhaps time to admit that cyberpunk is no longer a radical vision of the future, but rather a marketing label, and more importantly, a *fashion modality*, every bit as strict in its own way as the blue-suit-and-wingtip look of IBM or the propellor-beanie-and-Rockport style of Hewlett-Apple" (171).

It is the problematic images that cyberpunk conjures that necessitates giving up the ghost in the machine. For these reasons, "Cy(ber)borgs and Netizens" uses ScyberFiction in place of cyberpunk as a means of talking about Gibson's work in the same philosophical vein as Melissa Scott's *Trouble and Her Friends* or Pat Cadigan's *Tea from an Empty Cup*. These three books, for example, have many similarities by virtue of their digital environments, but the focus upon lesbian politics in Scott's novel and that upon the connections among race and mythology in Cadigan's text clearly indicate they are of a different type than Gibson's and, thus, the cyberpunk label would do a terrible disservice to them. ScyberFiction allows the early novels of the 1980s to come into play when looking at the recent offerings of Scott, Cadigan, Charles Platt, and Tad Williams, without Lewis Shiner's disaffected, leather-clad, live hard and die young, punk-rock figures obstructing the lines of communication.

In his essay, "Bet On It: Cyber/video/punk Performance," Brooks Landon calls

cyberpunk a “useful handle for creative and destructive acts across a range of media” (240). Taking the cue, ScyberFiction is also a handle for the SF cyber-fiction under consideration, for it must be remembered that in the discourse of computers and cyberculture, a handle is an identity, a *nom du guerre*, an adoption by a user that is tenuous and always open to rewrites, revisions, and cut 'n paste edits. While cyberpunk may be a useful litmus test of a particular period in SF's timeline, ScyberFiction hopefully gets cyberspatial discourse out of the console cowboy mindset and allows dialogues among texts to take place without the (Billy) Idolized baggage associated with cyberpunk returning to haunt the (cyber)terrain.

Chapter Two:
Making the Point (of View)
(Dis)Embodiment and Body-Image in ScyberFiction

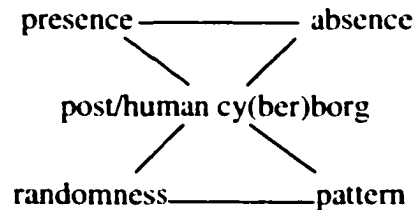
“You don’t have to die any more,” Bobby says silkily. Music bounces under his words. “It’s beautiful in here. The dreams can be as real as you want them to be. And if you want to be, you can be with me.”

(Cadigan, “Pretty Boy Crossover” 132)

In her short story “Pretty Boy Crossover,” Pat Cadigan accurately captures the dance scene of the 1980s where disco mutated into industrialized and digitalized dance music, dancers became live-action models appealing to a voyeuristic sensibility, ultra-exclusive dance clubs (such as New York’s infamous *Club 54*) slotted themselves into a social hierarchy, and the disco ball was replaced by strobing video screens. The protagonist, Pretty Boy, frequents these night clubs, attracting the attention of those around him by virtue of his “pretty boy” status; yet, Pretty Boy is also searching for his former lover, Bobby, who, as another pretty boy, was chosen to be translated into video image, immortalized in a digital dance club that allows him to be the constant centre of attention for the analogue dancers who enviously stare at the video screen while trying their best to get noticed. As Bobby says when Pretty Boy finds him, “‘Blip on a chip, your ass. I’m a universe now, I’m, like, *everything*. And, hey dig — I’m on every channel.’ Bobby laughs. ‘I’m happy I’m sad!’ ‘S-A-D,’ comes in the older man. ‘Self-

Aware Data’” (Cadigan, “Pretty Boy” 136). Nevertheless, Pretty Boy himself passes on the offer to achieve the same sort of immortalized transcendence, walking away from the club and leaving it behind, self-aware that his little private sense of rebellion may not make a difference in the grand scheme of the club lifestyle, but “as long as they don’t have him, he makes a difference. As long as he has flesh to shake and flaunt and feel with, he makes a pretty goddam big difference to *them*. Even after they don’t want him any more, he will still be the one they didn’t get. He rubs his hands together against the chill, feeling the skin rubbing skin, really *feeling* it for the first time in a long time . . .” (Cadigan, “Pretty Boy” 138).

Cadigan’s short story of the timeless party demonstrates a popular topic within the discourse of the post/human cy(ber)borg: disembodiment. The corporeal conflict that separates Pretty Boy from Bobby draws attention to the



dialectic as Bobby is pure pattern while Pretty Boy embraces the presence of his corporeal body. Unfortunately, ScyberFiction is often identified as promoting disembodiment, the discarding of the corporeal form in favour of some digital immortality. In particular, William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* is positioned as the ur-text of a postmodern, cyberspatial disembodiment that informs ScyberFiction and a growing

cyberculture discourse. For example, N. Katherine Hayles writes, in “Embodied Virtuality,” that cyberspace is often portrayed as a disembodied medium and that “[t]estimonies to this effect are everywhere, from William Gibson’s fictional representation of the ‘bodiless exultation of cyberspace’ to John Perry Barlow’s description of his virtual reality (VR) experience as ‘my everything has been amputated’” (1). Similarly, Derrick de Kerckhove paints cyberpunk with a wide brush in *The Skin of Culture* when, in his discussion of Australian industrial artist Stelarc (whose artwork bears an uncanny resemblance to that of Gibson’s character Slick from *Mona Lisa Overdrive*), he writes that Stelarc’s art “suggests, like Hans Moravec and the cyberpunk generation, that the body is obsolete, and should be entirely replaced by technology” (186-87). John Christie writes, in “Of AIs and Others,” that “[t]he cyberspatial body, all nerve and cerebral cortex, persists as a subjective location within the matrix, but it moves with the mathematical precision and velocity demanded by survival in the matrix and is shorn of the demands and conditions of meat: hunger and age do not matter” (174-75). Finally, John Clute, in his entry on Gibson for *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, writes that the *Neuromancer* trilogy is “all about escaping the flesh” (494). In response to cyberculture’s assessing of disembodiment’s popularity in *ScyberFiction*, the differentiated notions of *point-of-view* and *pov*, applied to Gibson’s *Neuromancer* trilogy, Walter Jon Williams’s *Hardwired*, Charles Platt’s *The Silicon Man*, and Tad Williams’s *Otherland*, demonstrate that disembodiment is not the preferred mode of post/human embodiment. Rather, in an attempt to answer Donna Haraway’s question as to “[w]hy should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?”

(178), key texts in the oeuvre of ScyberFiction propose not a discarding of the body but, rather, its extension beyond analogue corporeality to encompass an emergent digital embodiment.

Putting the "Point" Back in POV

The assessments of Gibson's status as some sort of "disembodyst" are not without a degree of merit since disembodiment does feature prominently in his short stories and the *Neuromancer* sequence. The Gibsonian repertoire of cyberspace, console cowboys, zaibatsus, and such figures as Molly Millions, the Finn, Tally Isham, and Bobby Quine are first introduced in his Sprawl trilogy of stories ("Johnny Mnemonic," "New Rose Hotel," and "Burning Chrome") as well as "The Winter Market." In Gibson's "Burning Chrome," Automatic Jack, the "hardware" protagonist partnered with the console cowboy Bobby Quine, describes their cyber-mission to burn (hack) the Chrome database in a distinctly disembodied fashion: "Bodiless, we swerve into Chrome's castle of ice. And we're fast, fast. It feels like we're surfing the crest of the invading program, hanging ten above the seething glitch systems as they mutate. We're sentient patches of oil swept along corridors of shadow. Somewhere we have bodies, very far away, in a crowded loft roofed with steel and glass" (173). As console cowboys surf bodiless through cyberspace, Gibson distances their corporeal bodies, dismissing their presence in favour of the patterns of cyberspace where the burning, the source of the action, is taking place. What is important when burning Chrome is the console cowboy as a sentient patch of oil and not the body jacked into the terminal. Gibson takes the

disembodiment one step further in “The Winter Market,” offering up Lise as a disabled woman who “merged with the net, crossed over for good” (117), taking advantage of the technology and uploading herself into the cyberspatial network, throwing “away that poor sad body with a cry of release, free of the bonds of polycarbon and hated flesh” (140).¹

Lise’s hated flesh of “The Winter Market” is toned down into a relaxed contempt for the meat in Gibson’s debut novel *Neuromancer*. The disembodiment of cyberspace is embodied in cy(ber)borg Case, a console cowboy who, as a result of a double-cross, has had his access to the matrix burned out by a Russian mycotoxin, “black fire [finding] the branching tributaries of the nerves, pain beyond anything to which the name of pain is given . . .” (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 31). For Case, the meat is an encumbrance brought about via his neuro-chemical transformation that, when compared with the “bodiless exultation of cyberspace . . . was the Fall. In the bars he’d frequented as a cowboy hotshot, the elite stance involved a certain relaxed contempt for the flesh. The body was meat. Case fell into the prison of his own flesh” (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 6).

To reinforce the image of disembodied cyberspace, Gibson peoples his trilogy with digital environments and ROM constructs. Thus, when Turner is blown up in the opening paragraphs of *Count Zero*, he is kept alive in a ROM-generated environment while a new body is grown for him: “He spent most of those three months in a ROM-generated simstim construct of an idealized New England boyhood of the previous century. The Dutchman’s visits were grey dawn dreams, nightmares that faded as the sky lightened beyond his second-floor bedroom window” (Gibson, 1-2). Similarly, Josef Virek, the ultra-rich corporate antagonist of *Count Zero*, resides entirely within simulated

environments (e.g., Güell Park) as the cells of his corporeal form have ““opted for the quixotic pursuit of individual careers””(Gibson 14) and he is ““confined for over a decade to a vat. In some hideous industrial suburb of Stockholm. Or perhaps hell”” (Gibson 13). Finally, Bobby Newmark, the Case-in-training of *Count Zero*, seeks the upper echelons of console cowboy status to escape the socio-economic restrictions of Barrytown. By the end of *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, he opts to leave his body behind and, with *Count Zero*’s Angie Mitchell, upload himself into an aleph, “a single lump of biochip . . . [whose] storage capacity was virtually infinite; it would’ve been unthinkable expensive to manufacture. It was, Gentry said, a fairly strange thing for anyone to have built at all, although such things were rumored to exist and to have their uses, most particularly in the storage of vast amounts of confidential data. With no link to the global matrix, the data was immune to every kind of attack via cyberspace” (Gibson 154). With the aleph’s power sustained via battery-cells that Sally Shears (*Neuromancer*’s renamed Molly Millions) maintains in analogue reality, Bobby and Angie join the paired-off digital entities of Colin, Continuity, 3Jane, and the Finn to embark on a quest to make contact with “others” from the Centauri system.

The equation of cyberspace with the bed of immortality, the apparent allure of disembodied surfers skimming through cyberspace unencumbered by physical limitations, the overlapping of the ontological function shared among cyberspace, postmodernism, and ScyberFiction, the data gloves and simulated terrains of Virtual Reality that result in everything being amputated, and the postmodernist embrace of cyberpunk texts as a stronghold of postmodernist thought have created a powerful

discursive texture that, much like Case's initial experience in *Neuromancer*, leaves the body located at a distance in its own metaphorical loft of glass. Various kinds of disembodiment circulate through the overlapping terrains of cyberculture and Gibson's cyberpunk branch of ScyberFiction; thus, critics like Deborah Lupton can write that a "central utopian discourse around the computer technology is the potential offered by computers for humans to escape the body. This discourse of disembodiment has been central in the writings of influential cyberpunk novelist William Gibson and the cultural theorist and feminist Donna Haraway" (100).

Lupton's statement about Haraway is curious and deserves a second-glance. In "A Cyborg Manifesto," Haraway does ask "[w]hy should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?" (178). Perhaps it is this question that has Lupton claiming Haraway advocates disembodiment? Granted, Haraway's initial evocation of a cyborg politics is partially based upon the images and metaphors of cyborgs that are derived from SF, prompting her to note that the cyborg is both a product of fiction and social reality. Nevertheless, Haraway writes that "[s]ocial reality is lived social relations" ("A Cyborg Manifesto" 149), and, just a few pages later, "a cyborg world might be about *lived social and bodily realities* in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints" ("A Cyborg Manifesto" 154; emphasis added). Haraway's stance seems quite clear; she does not advocate some form of disembodiment but stresses, in her context as both a feminist and critic of scientific discourse, the bodies that matter, the corporeality of women.

Given Lupton's misinterpretation of Haraway's stance on embodiment, could she be exhibiting a similar flaw in her interpretation of Gibson? This is certainly more difficult given the disembodied figures of Gibson's *Neuromancer* and Case's initial resentment of his meat. Still, when given the option towards the end of *Neuromancer* to forgo the Straylight Run and live in Neuromancer's cyberspatial utopia with his deceased lover Linda Lee, Case opts to reject the temptation the Artificial Intelligence offers him. Instead, he chooses to follow the dub music that Maelcum, a Rastafarian ally, plays to disrupt the system and allow Case to find his way back to analogue reality and continue his cyber-assault on the ICE (Intrusion Countermeasures Electronic) that is protecting and housing the Neuromancer Intelligence. Furthermore, Gibson has an interesting description of Case's initial contempt for the physical form, described in *Neuromancer's* opening pages as an elite stance taken by the cowboy hotshots surfing the matrix (6); in other words Gibson implies that the position Case occupies may be nothing more than a *stance* held by elite cowboys cracking computer systems or, in the case of *Count Zero's* Bobby Newmark, the aspiring cowboy. Since the reader of *Neuromancer* gets no narrative viewpoint into cyberspace outside of Case's highly-mediated perception, Gibson raises the possibility that the elite stance of corporeal contempt may be nothing more than a hierarchical badge of honour, a fiction promoted and maintained by the upper echelons of computer crackers.

But what about the digital representation within the computer network itself? Is it a corporeal amputation? As it stands, Gibson carries out a subtle, yet immensely important, move that eventually serves to undercut his stance on disembodiment. In *How*

We Became Posthuman, Hayles credits Gibson with a literary invention beyond that of cyberspace: the pov. In Hayles's reading, the pov is "a subtle modification in point of view . . . a substantive noun that constitutes the character's subjectivity by serving as a positional marker substituting for his absent body" (*How* 37). Comparing the Gibsonian pov to the (Henry) Jamesonian point-of-view, Hayles concludes that "instead of an embodied consciousness looking through the window at a scene, consciousness moves *through* the screen to become the pov, leaving behind the body as an unoccupied shell. In cyberspace, point of view does not emanate from a character; rather, the pov literally *is* the character" (*How* 38).

The differences between point-of-view and pov are exemplified when comparing the online adventures in *Neuromancer* to, say, those in Venor Vinge's *True Names*. In *True Names*, the protagonist Roger Pollack accesses the cyberspatial realm known as the Other Plane in the online avatar of Mr. Slippery, a high-ranking hacker who has access to a heavily-fortified hideaway, the Coven. Working his way to the Coven (imaged as a medieval castle with requisite moat), "it took all Mr. Slippery's skill to avoid falling into the noisome waters that surrounded him. Fortunately, after another hundred meters or so, the trail rose out of the water, and he was walking on shallow mud" (Vinge 61). This is distinctly different from Gibson's description of cyberspace in *Neuromancer* as "a consensual hallucination experienced by billions of legitimate operators, . . . [a] graphical representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data" (51). In the former, mud and water exist while the latter contains

nothing but unthinkable complexity. Similarly, upon Mr. Slippery's arrival in the Coven, he is seated in a room shared by other online figures: "Most of the others, with the notable exception of Erythrina, had already arrived. Robin Hood, dressed in green and looking like Errol Flynn, sat across the hall in very close conversation with a remarkably good-looking female (but then they could all be remarkably good-looking here) who seemed unsure whether to project blonde or brunette" (Vinge 64). Once again, this is in vivid contrast to Case's cyber-excursions as Gibson never gives a description of Case within the online environment; in effect, Case is pure gaze, the disembodied pov that Hayles identifies as the character of *Neuromancer*.

Gibson is not the sole author working within ScyberFiction to engage the matter of pov and point-of-view. In particular, Walter Jon Williams also broaches the topics of disembodiment and pov in *Hardwired*, a text less interested in cyberspace but still deploying cyberpunk's familiar tropes. In the novel, North America has been balkanized and information flow is controlled by the upper-class elite circulating in orbit. The sole form of resistance comes from data smugglers who carry data from one state to the next, all the while evading detection and harsh retribution for their crimes. Of particular interest is the tense relationship between data smuggler Cowboy and information hacker Reno. In particular, Cowboy distrusts Reno and similar buttonheads because of their tendency to lose themselves in the information networks:

Who is speaking? Cowboy wonders. Reno or that mass of crystal lodged in his skull? Reno is living in the eye-face of every moment now, and Cowboy wonders if he's lost himself in there, if too much of his personality has been sucked into

the machine part of him, if control has shifted from his brain to the crystal

They can confuse the electron image with the reality it images, diffusing themselves through the information net, racing at the speed of light along its patterns until their egos fade away, become so thin as to become intangible.

(W. Williams 134)

As it turns out, Cowboy's thoughts are prophetic as, indeed, Reno does lose himself in the machine when he is killed by bigger forces. Much as with the Dixie Flatline, however, death seems to be a momentary obstacle as the cybernetic network wiring the world accidentally bestows Reno with immortality, his buttonhead point-of-view replaced with a disembodied pov: "'I'm in the public crystal, Cowboy. In Pittsburgh, in Maryland . . . I've got parts of me all over. Libraries, minimum security datafiles , unused telephone addresses. Banks where I've opened accounts and had the passwords'" (W. Williams 244-45).

Immortality achieved, however, does not necessarily mean immortality sustained. In particular, both Gibson and Williams opt to undercut this corporeal migration of the postmodern, disembodied pov and re-instill an embodied point-of-view. In Gibson's narrative, there is a subtle, yet vitally important, differentiation of disembodiment that takes place when Case first meets the newly-acquired Dixie Flatline, "a hardwired ROM cassette replicating a dead man's skills, obsessions, knee-jerk responses . . ." (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 76-7). Loading the Flatline construct is particularly unnerving for Case because Pauley McCoy, the human original upon which the Flatline is a recording, has been transformed from a point-of-view into a disembodied pov that, in the Dixie's

repetitive replies to Case's questions, is somewhat mechanized:

He coughed. "Dix? McCoy? That you man?" His throat was tight.

"Hey, bro," said a directionless voice.

"It's Case, man. Remember?"

"Miami, joeboy, quick study."

"What's the last thing you remember before I spoke to you, Dix?"

"Nothin.'"

"Hang on." He disconnected the construct. The presence was gone. He reconnected it. "Dix? Who am I?"

"You got me hung, Jack. Who the fuck are you?"

"Ca — your buddy. Partner. What's happening, man?"

"Good question."

"Remember being here, a second ago?"

"No."

"Know how a ROM personality matrix works?"

"Sure, bro, it's a firmware construct."

"So I jack it into the bank I'm using. I can give it sequential, real time memory?"

"Guess so," said the construct.

"Okay, Dix. You *are* a ROM construct. Got me?"

"If you say so," said the construct. "Who are you?"

"Case."

“Miami,” said the voice. “joeboy, quick study.” (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 78-9)

The Dixie’s response to Case’s doubled introduction is identical, suggesting that the Dixie, despite achieving the immortality of digital disembodiment and the apparent subjectivity of a pov, is, in fact, mechanized, a post/humanism wherein the presence of the *human* has been deleted. This is repeatedly reinforced through the text by Dixie’s inhuman laughter and Gibson’s tendency to call the Dixie Flatline “the construct.” Finally, when the plans to break into the Villa Straylight are revealed, the Dixie informs Case that “[w]hat bothers me is, nothin’ does . . . This scam of yours, when it’s over, you erase this goddam thing” (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 105-06).

The lack of emotion the disembodied Dixie exhibits throughout the novel is in stark contrast to the growing emotional transformation Case undergoes. When *Neuromancer* begins, Case is speeding his way through Night City, actively pursuing his own death in suicidal business transactions:

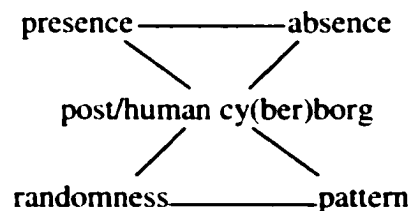
He no longer carried a weapon, no longer took the basic precautions. He ran the fastest, loosest deals on the street, and he had a reputation for being able to get whatever you wanted. A part of him knew that the arc of his self-destruction was glaringly obvious to his customers, who grew steadily fewer, but that same part of him basked in the knowledge that it was only a matter of time. And that was the part of him, smug in its expectation of death, that most hated the thought of Linda Lee. (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 7-8).

Although Linda Lee appears sporadically, Case’s memory of his recently-murdered former lover provides a key marker of his emotional transition. In particular, Case’s

redemption is carried out not via the console deck that allows him to re-access cyberspace but, quite the contrary, thanks to an emerging emotionalism that is explicitly linked to the presence of the corporeal meat.

Struggling with his ambivalence regarding the state of the Dixie Flatline, Case is repeatedly contacted by the Wintermute AI via the manipulation of his memories. In other words, when Wintermute appears in Case's memories as acquaintances, friends, and, most importantly, a former lover, his violent response to Wintermute's mental intrusions triggers a re-awakening of his emotional centre: "He'd been numb a long time, years. All his nights down Ninsei, his nights with Linda, numb in bed and numb in the cold sweating center of his every drug deal. But now he'd found this warm thing, this chip of murder. *Meat*, some part of him said. *It's the meat talking, ignore it.*" Case is beginning to come alive again, the "simple animal promise of food, warmth, a place to sleep" (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 152) the intrusion of presence upon the patterns of pov.

This intrusion of the presence of a point of view upon the pattern of a pov suggests a gradual implosion of the presence/pattern circuit of the



dialectic, the poles dissolving and binding presence and pattern in an inextricable, co-dependent relationship. This is made readily apparent in *Neuromancer*'s attempted seduction of Case with a cyber-utopia intended to halt the burning of the Tessier-Ashpool

ICE. To carry out the seduction, the utopian setting and its narrative description appeal to the senses of a digitally embodied point-of-view rather than a digitally disembodied pov: "A wind was rising. Sand stung his cheek. He put his face against his knees and wept, the sound of his sobbing as distant and alien as the cry of the searching gull. Hot urine soaked his jeans, dribbled on the sand, and quickly cooled in the wind off the water. When his tears were gone, his throat ached"(Gibson, *Neuromancer* 233-34). This is no disembodied pov nor a corporeal amputation. Rather, Case has been re-embodied, albeit in a digital medium, and his senses are alive to the environment: sand stings his cheek; he hears his own sobbing and the cry of the gull; he feels the warmth of his urine and the cool touch of the wind; and, his throat aches from the experience. Gibson seems to be answering Haraway's "why should our bodies end at the skin?" by suggesting that the cy(ber)borg can extend bodily sensations into the cybernetic medium without leaving the corporeal frame of reference behind. Gibson reinforces the point with the offerings of food and water, the physical sensations of daylight and the passing of time, and the love of Linda Lee as further incentives to keep a digitally embodied Case safely ensconced in *Neuromancer's* utopia.

Neuromancer's shift from the pov to the point-of-view is a watershed moment in Gibson's fiction as his subsequent novels cement a digital embodiment, a reinscribed point-of-view achieved by entwining presence and pattern, creating a *presence-through-pattern* sequence. As Turner recuperates in the ROM construct following his dismemberment in *Count Zero*, he can "smell the lilacs late at night. He read Conan Doyle by the light of a sixty-watt bulb behind a parchment shade printed with clipper

ships. He masturbated in the smell of clean cotton sheets and thought about cheerleaders” (Gibson 1-2). Similarly, when Slick first accesses the aleph of *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, Gibson describes the digital scene from a point-of-view position:

His boots crunched gravel.

Opened his eyes and looked down; the gravel drive smooth in the dawn, cleaner than anything in Dog Solitude. He looked up and saw where it curved away, and beyond green and spreading trees the pitched slate roof of a house half the size of a Factory. There were statues near him in the long wet grass. A deer made of iron, and a broken figure of a man’s body carved from white stone, no head or arms or legs. Birds were singing and that was the only sound. (180)

Like Turner in his recuperative environment, Slick, standing before the mansion, is no pov but a digitally re-embodied subject, one who “studies the backs of his hands. Scars, ingrained grime, black half-moons of grease under his broken nails. The grease got in and made them soft, so they broke easy” (Gibson, *Mona* 180). When Slick encounters Bobby Newmark, this most recent figure possesses a definitive embodied point-of-view, described as standing “in front of a vast fireplace, wearing tight black jeans and a white T-shirt. His feet were bare and he held a fat glass bulb of liquor in his right hand” (Gibson, *Mona* 181). Similarly, when Bobby and Angie depart for the Centauri system (or its virtual representation) at the end of *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, the scene is very much grounded in familiar spatial images:

They waited in the drive at midnight, because Bobby had promised her an answer.

As the clocks in the house struck twelve, she heard the hiss of tires over gravel.

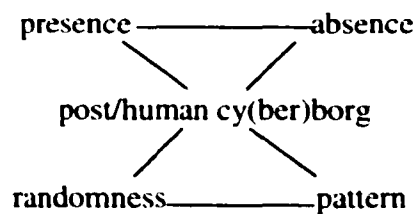
The car was long, low and gray.

Its driver was the Finn.

In the backseat sat the young man she recalled from her glimpse of the impossible horse and its three mismatched riders. He smiled at her, but said nothing. (Gibson 307)

Once again, Gibson appeals to familiarly embodied senses: the Finn wears a “decrepit jacket [exuding] a complex odor of stale smoke, ancient solder, and pickled herring” (*Mona* 306); the virtual construct of Colin sits in the limousine brushing away his brown forelock; and, Continuity appears as a young Japanese girl on horseback.

In Walter Jon Williams’s case, the depiction of the pov is a much more distressing occurrence and its resolution more conservative than Gibson’s entwining of the



cybernetic circuit. Unlike Gibson, who suggests that Case’s contempt for the meat seduces him into initially desiring the pov and disembodied consciousness of the matrix, Williams depicts disembodiment as a site of trauma. Following his death, Reno contacts Cowboy and is panic-stricken by his terminal state:

“I was faced through my house crystal, through memory boxes. I’ve got all that data. But I’m so scattered out that I can’t use it very well. And I’ve lost so much

else.” Reno’s voice is a child’s whimper. Cowboy thinks of Lupe, of the scream bottled in her throat at the touch of Roon’s hand.

“Cowboy,” Reno says, “I’ve forgotten things. I’ve forgotten how to be a person. I remember it boiling away. My brain boiling in the fire. Help me, Cowboy.” (W. Williams 245)

As with the Dixie Flatline, Reno is now a construct himself, an entity of pure informational pattern. Unlike the Flatline, however, the emotional trauma Reno experiences, brought on by the scattering and his inability to hold himself together, suggests that Reno is the digital embodiment of randomness, the complement to pattern. Given his inexperience, randomness poses a serious peril to Reno, the patterning of his digital totality in danger of data dissolution as he is randomly scattered across the intricate network of wires and databases. Trapped in *Hardwired*’s matrix, Reno’s pov, as Cowboy acutely observes, is “a lost program, stealing comp time where he can find it, hiding from the system that will kill him without knowing what he is. Running forever, losing bits of himself in inefficient transfers until there’s almost nothing left, just a ghost wind touching the interface with its electron breath” (W. Williams 248). Unlike Gibson’s presence-through-pattern approach, Williams opts for a more conservative move and re-integrates a point-of-view by means of an analogue embodiment; thus, with the assistance of the illegal Black Mind software program, Reno is uploaded into the body of Roon, replacing the evil personality of this corporate antagonist with a point-of-view that has had a taste of the nightmarish world of the pov.

Faustian Bargain: Digital Deities, Boredom, and Megalomania

Part of what drives figures such as Case or the pairs at the end of *Mona Lisa Overdrive* to strive at least initially for disembodiment is the image of immortality that cyberspace, or, at least, its fictional representations in ScyberFiction, appears to offer. Indeed, in *Terminal Identity*, Scott Bukatman remarks that the underlying drive for cyberspace is an issue of power; specifically, the power for humanity to control the universe and humanity's place in that universe. The freedom of disembodiment that appears to be associated with cyberspace is, in Bukatman's insightful analysis, related to a Freudian analysis of the omnipotence of thought. As Bukatman outlines, Freud viewed the evolution of human consciousness as a three-tiered evolution, clawing upwards from an animistic stage wherein "men ascribe omnipotence to *themselves*" into the religious stage where men "transfer it to the gods but do not seriously abandon it themselves, for they reserve the power of influencing the gods in a variety of ways according to their wishes" and, finally, the scientific viewpoint that holds an acknowledgement of man's smallness as he succumbs to the facticity of "death and to the other necessities of nature" (209). What is interesting in the cyberspatial age, according to Bukatman, is the looping of omnipotence *back* to the animistic stage via the scientific. In other words, cyberspace and the ontological worlds contained within the wires involve a return of the animistic via the scientific: "Cyberspace represents the return of the animistic view of the universe *within* the scientific paradigm. Consciousness becomes separated from the body — it becomes a body *itself* — as its power spreads throughout the global electronic space of terminal culture" (Bukatman 210).

If animism is returning via science and, by implication, carrying disembodiment with it, neither Williams nor Gibson seem to be embracing it. After all, Reno is traumatized and under threat of dissolution. Although slightly more ambiguous, the apparent disembodiment at the end of *Mona Lisa Overdrive* depends on the corporeal body as Molly/Sally must find a way of keeping the aleph's batteries perpetually recharging, thereby suggesting the travelers within it are far from omnipotent.² These types of doubts and ambiguities regarding animism-via-science and omnipotence run rampant through Charles Platt's *The Silicon Man*. In particular, the novel's protagonist, James Bayley, is akin to Williams's Reno given the sense of trauma, fear, and utter despondency that accompanies his disembodiment. Unlike either *Neuromancer* or *Hardwired*, Platt's *The Silicon Man* introduces unique emotions into the experience of disembodiment and the pursuit of digital immortality: boredom and megalomania.

First and foremost, Charles Platt graciously acknowledges his indebtedness to Hans Moravec's *Mind Children* in the Afterword to the re-release of *The Silicon Man* by the now-defunct Wired Books. Thus, one would expect to find glowing support throughout *The Silicon Man* for the notions of disembodiment, the dissection of the human brain, and the transference of human consciousness from one source or vessel to the next. Surprisingly, such accolades are missing from Platt's text as his narrative depicts the work of four scientists — Rosalind Finch, Michael Butterworth, Jeremy Porter, Hans Voss — attempting to extend the scientific principles of disembodiment. All four work on the Lifescan project under the tutelage of the Moravec-inspired Dr. Leo Gottbaum, a scientist who envisions a method by which the pattern of the human brain

can be mapped and uploaded as infomorphs (digital avatars) that reside on the MAPHIS computer network. To raise the funds to carry out their research, however, the scientists must sell illegal arms on the black market, an action that eventually attracts the attention of FBI Agent James Bayley who uncovers part of the plot and unwittingly becomes a guinea pig, testing the transference program before the scientists undergo the procedure.

Bayley is the chief figure of the narrative; thus, throughout the novel, the experience of existing as a disembodied infomorph is related via his narrative perception.

First, Bayley exists not as a pov but as a point-of-view, the MAPHIS system appealing to his newly-digitized senses: "He got up onto his feet and looked down at his body. He was wearing the same clothes as when he'd visited Gottbaum: white shirt, brown pants, sandals. He still had his watch and his wedding ring" (Platt 178). Bayley continues to explore his newfound surroundings, unsure whether the transference was a success or where he has been moved following his capture. During the reconnoiter, however, he is not omnipotent by any stretch of the imagination nor does he achieve the animism-through-science that Bukatman talks about in *Terminal Velocity*, given that "the hunger in his stomach became a persistent, hollow pain, and he felt increasingly weak" and then, chased by some hybrid of dog and bear, "the straps of his sandals cut into his skin as he punted across the hard concrete. His lungs ached He was so exhausted, his legs were buckling under him"(Platt 179). Finally, Bayley escapes to safety to find himself in a room lit by a fluorescent light with a sink, stove, refrigerator, bed, and, most important to his famished eyes, a chocolate cake: "He was light-headed, salivating wildly, as if he had gone for days without food. He closed his lips around his finger, sucked the frosting

into his mouth — and started to choke. It tasted foul, like rotten meat or rancid cheese. The flavor filled his mouth and made his stomach heave” (Platt 180).

Initially, the only companion Bayley can rely upon is the MAPHIS system itself, a computerized “magic genie” that provides Bayley with nearly every wish he may desire, including the construction of a pseudomorph (an avatar that is not inhabited by human consciousness) that can fulfill his desires:

She was pretty and very young, with blue eyes, a turned-up nose, generous lips, long wavy blond hair escaping from under her cap and flowing to her shoulders. Her uniform was tight around her body, which was slim but big-breasted. She gave him a smile as she came over and sat beside him on the bed. Bayley went on staring at her. She was an adolescent fantasy brought to life. (Platt 189)

Nevertheless, Bayley is discouraged, even traumatized, by his newfound status as a digital entity, the circuit board seductions of power and fantasy an unequal exchange for the loss of his corporeal state: “‘MAPHIS, take her away. I don’t want her. I’m not interested in — in pseudomorphs, and I don’t want any of this . . . I want to be back in my own life,’ he said, feeling a sudden wave of self-pity” (Platt 190).³ Unfortunately, it is too late for Bayley as the transference process requires the gradual dissection of the human brain. Given the situation, Platt repeatedly depicts Bayley as trapped within MAPHIS for the duration of his seemingly-omnipotent, immortal life.

Bayley, however, is not alone in MAPHIS: he is soon joined by Gottbaum, Voss, Porter, and Finch, leaving only Butterworth to remain back in analogue reality. Needless to say, Bayley is not pleased with Gottbaum and does confront him, at which point

Gottbaum reveals that each infomorph has a personal domain where ““you have complete control over your environment and no other infomorphs can intrude against your will”” (Platt 240). It is here the animism-through-science becomes pertinent for, as Bayley discovers upon entering Finch’s domain, becoming an individual infomorph is akin to achieving godhood. Finch is the Queen of her domain, constructing her personal space in the mode of a Roman-era epic, her inner sanctum comprised of white stone and a floor etched with intricate mosaic designs: “Gold serving dishes were mounded with fruit and delicacies. Elegant, long-haired women were reclining on cushions, lazy and bored, dressed in diaphanous white dresses and extravagant jewelry. Men in togas were moving among them, serving food and drink” (Platt 286). The motivation behind Finch’s desire to be uploaded into MAPHIS stems from the same drive that impels Lise (“The Winter Market”) and Erythrina (*True Names*); namely, a degenerative disease is slowly killing her. Yet, despite the power and immortality of MAPHIS, Finch admits that ““I’ve been going out of my mind with boredom, Mr. Bayley. I simply wanted someone to talk to”” (Platt 294). The omnipotent, animism-through-science power to manipulate reality at her whim turns out to be a Faustian bargain. While her life has been spared from her degenerative disease, the price is the reduction of that life to endless triviality: ““I’ve been in here for ten subjective years, remember? You saw that fantasy I was living in. There have been others. They were fun for a while. I indulged myself in every way I could. But, after ten years . . .” (Platt 294).⁴

While Finch twiddles her thumbs in boredom, the MAPHIS is shaken by an ongoing power struggle between Gottbaum and Porter, for while everyone may be equal

in his or her godlike power and personal domain, some are more equal than others. Specifically, Gottbaum has reserved to himself the ability to intrude upon other domains and instill his godlike authority upon the will of such lesser digital deities as Finch, Bayley, and Porter. This is clearly the case when Bayley first encounters Gottbaum within MAPHIS:

“You seem to be nursing some resentments, Mr. Bayley.”

He laughed bitterly. “Do you blame me?”

“No. But maybe I can calm you down a little.”

Bayley felt something change inside him as if his mind was being washed from within. His emotions literally drained away. Within a few seconds he was tranquil, no longer caught between the instinct to run and the impulse to lash out.

(Platt 237-38)

As Gottbaum puts it, “‘not all infomorphs are created equal’”(Platt 238) and he has the power to both manipulate the digital dimensions of MAPHIS as well as those infomorphs housed on the system.

Given that some infomorphs are more equal than others, Porter attempts to wrest control over MAPHIS from Gottbaum, but fails in the process. Platt complicates his narrative even further by unsettling Gottbaum’s sanity and positioning him as mentally askew in his underlying anarchic goals. This is evidenced by Gottbaum’s personal mission to crash the world’s computer networks by copying his infomorph into every government, corporate, and military database. Platt has taken disembodiment and animism-via-science and turned them into an account of megalomania. The omnipotent

power Gottbaum possesses pushes him into godhood: “‘I’m more of a benevolent deity than anything people believe in in [sic] the outside world. I’ve already given you everlasting life, immunity from disease, unlimited wealth, and the ability to change bodies and personalities as easily as changing into a different suit of clothes. You shouldn’t be resenting me, Bayley. You should be worshipping me’”(Platt 249). The problem that Gottbaum cannot perceive and Finch has readily ascertained, is the lack of any challenge in MAPHIS; namely, with the will power to manipulate reality, there is no value in human life. Furthermore, as Bayley’s struggle demonstrates, the digital simulation, for all of its verisimilitude, lacks a fundamental quality or texture seemingly inherent in analogue reality. Where Gottbaum views MAPHIS as an idealized realm, both Bayley and recently-converted Finch perceive MAPHIS as extremely limiting in its bestowing of seemingly-omnipotent power.⁵

What the MAPHIS represents for both Gottbaum and, at first, Rosalind Finch is the escape from mortal finitude. For Finch, she can escape her debilitating disease by dismissing her corporeal self. Gottbaum, on the other hand, contends with the inevitability of aging and desires the MAPHIS to escape the breakdown of his own eighty-one-year-old body; thus, MAPHIS is the fountain of youth where his “scrawny neck became thicker, stronger. In less than a minute Gottbaum was transformed from a man of eighty-one to a man in his twenties”(Platt 240). This desire of the infirm and elderly to seek corporeal rejuvenation in cyberspatial networks and the prices they are willing to pay are themes underlying current works of ScyberFiction. Notably, grappling with mortality and the corporeal body is a key principle behind Tad Williams’s

Otherland quartet. An extended narrative spanning four books (*City of Golden Shadow*, *River of Blue Fire*, *Mountain of Black Glass*, *Sea of Silver Light*) and over 3000 pages, Williams's opus involves a cyberspatial network dubbed Otherland that, much like Platt's MAPHIS, is subdivided into individual domains that include the conflict between the Greeks and Trojans, a darkly-violent Oz, a labyrinthine castle, and an insect dominated world reminiscent of Gulliver's Lilliput. A series of figures— Orlando Gardiner, Sam Fredricks, Paul Jonas, bushman !Xabbu, Renie Sulaweyo, and a host of others — move through these alternate domains, shifting from one to the other, in search of answers to the origins and intent of the Otherland network. Williams slowly reveals that the network is a product of Felix Jongleur and the Grail Brotherhood, an enclave of the ultra-rich, who have been working for decades and using their wealth and resources to establish an independent network wherein they can upload themselves and achieve everlasting life. Much like the domains of Platt's *The Silicon Man*, the different domains of Otherland are designed to appeal to the godly wishes of the Grail Brotherhood that all too often stretch into perversity and violence.

The role of Orlando Gardiner in the *Otherland* sequence is particularly interesting. As in many depictions of online worlds in ScyberFiction, Orlando surfs the public gaming network as a Conan the Barbarian warrior, Thargor. Orlando-as-Thargor has achieved legendary status until a glance at the enigmatic golden city of *Volume One: City of Golden Shadow* results in his online death. Obsessed with finding this city, Orlando, embodied in a new Thargor that is significantly younger than his original, enlists the aid of his online friend, Fredericks. Along with a small group of other people,

however, they become trapped in the digital environment, unable to disconnect from the system without suffering intense pain that forces a reconnection. Meanwhile, in the analogue world it appears both Orlando and Fredericks are comatose, afflicted with a strange malady that has stricken children throughout the world. This is the megalomaniacal cost of immortality as children are lured into the system, caught in the web of the Brotherhood, and then fed into the Otherland network while their analogue bodies remain comatose.

One of Orlando's functions in the sequence, however, is as a perpetual visual reminder that the corporeal body is still tethered to the system. This is reinforced via Orlando's diseased body; namely, Fredricks informs the fellow travelers in *Volume One: City of Golden Shadow* that Orlando suffers from Progeria, a disease that prematurely ages young children in "every way you can think of. Lose your hair, muscles shrink up, you get wrinkly and bony, and then you die of a heart attack or pneumonia . . . or something else that kills old people. Most of us don't make it to eighteen" (T. Williams 615). As a result of his disease, Orlando is unable to escape the limitations that his corporeal body places upon his online interactions and adventures as Thargor:

"He looks very sick," Renie said.

"He is." The slender man named Fredericks looked up from his seat by Orlando's side. "He's real sick."

"What is it? Is it something he caught outside — RL, I mean? Or is it some effect from coming onto the network?"

Frederick's shook his head morosely. "He's got something bad. In real life.

It's a disease where you get old too soon — he told me the name, but I forgot.”

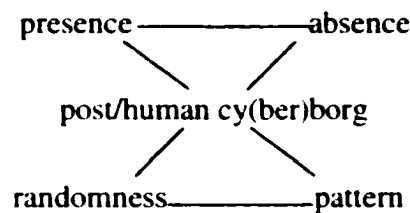
He rubbed his eyes; when he spoke again, his voice was faint. “I think right now he's got pneumonia. He said . . . he said he was dying.” (T. Williams, *City* 764)

Thus, while Orlando slowly succumbs to the pneumonia killing his analogue body, the digital Thargor is equally weakened, unable to stand upright or protect himself.

Similarly, when physicians stabilize Orlando's life signs, Thargor slowly regains his energy, becoming an active contributor in *River of Blue Fire*. Nevertheless, Orlando must carefully pace himself and ensure he does not do further damage to either his corporeal presence or his digital pattern; as a result, he is relatively ineffectual in his role as Achilles during the battles the Greeks and Trojans wage in the closing chapters of *Mountain of Black Glass*. In a narrative sequence that has a multitude of plot threads, Williams also explores megalomania, the morally bankrupt corporate leaders of society making deals with the devil (in this case, the murderous psychotic Dread) to stage the quest for digital immortality. The success of the *Otherland* rests upon the very souls of the world's innocents, a predatory older generation requiring a sacrifice of the young to achieve their desired goal of corporeal transcendence, a battle against the passage of time, pattern deleting presence. On the other hand, figures such as the dis/eased Orlando, the blind Martine Desroubins who, by virtue of her blindness, has a deeper perception of Otherland, and !Xabbu, a bushman who also can access a deeper structural level of the network through his cultural outlook, are perpetual reminders of the corporeal resilience of presence that informs and influences the digital patterns of and in Otherland.⁶

As the ScyberFiction in this chapter demonstrates, digital embodiment is often

bound to corporeal senses as the digital realm triggers analogue cues such as hunger, the stinging of wind, headaches, seizures, and other such analogue senses that repeatedly reinforce embodiment in both analogue and digital contexts. In those instances when disembodiment is desired and apparently reached, there follows the trauma of dissolution, the mania of godlike power, the stultifying boredom of immortality, or the costly price of corporeal transcendence. In many respects, ScyberFiction consistently struggles with the ambivalence of computerized technologies and cyberspatial networks and the circuit of the



dialectic where poles are not so much shifting but drawing together. The problem stems not so much from the function of pattern and presence, but from the misinterpretations by those that think ScyberFiction promotes disembodiment and digital pattern at the expense of analogue presence. The texts by Gibson, Walter Jon Williams, Platt, and Tad Williams problematize the privileging of pattern at the expense of presence, clearly demonstrating that corporeal and digital embodiment is implicated in the patterns of cyberspace, the circuit of pattern and presence much more integrated than the misreadings of ScyberFiction and the critical enthusiasm for disembodiment.

Chapter Three:

Here's MUD in Your I:

Identity, Interformativity, and Screening the S(t)imulated Body

"Val, *we* can say the words that everyone else will be saying two weeks later. We can do that. We don't have to wait until we're grown up and safely put away in some career."

"Peter, you're *twelve*."

"Not on the nets I'm not. On the nets I can name myself anything I want, and so can you."

"On the nets we are clearly identified as students, and we can't even get into the real discussions except in audience mode, which means we can't *say* anything anyway."

"I have a plan."

(Card, *Ender's Game* 129)

Without exaggeration, cyberspace can be seen as the new bomb, a pacific blaze that will project the imprint of our disembodied selves on the walls of eternity. . . . On the other side of our data gloves, we become creatures of colored light in motion, pulsing with golden particles. Forget about Andy Warhol's petty promise of fame for fifteen minutes. We will all become angels, and for eternity!

(Stenger, "Mind" 51/52)

At first glance, Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game* may appear to be an odd text to

include in this emerging network of ScyberFiction, the Internet, and, overall, the texts of the cy(ber)borg. After all, as John Clute describes the novel in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, *Ender's Game* is about a "young boy who, along with his siblings, is the result of an experiment in eugenics . . . authorized by the government of Earth, which is apprehensive that alien Buggers will return from interstellar space and continue what seems a xenocidal assault upon humanity . . ." (195). The bulk of *Ender's Game* details Ender's growth from child prodigy to still youthful military hero who, trained in a series of virtual reality simulations, unknowingly destroys the Buggers in what he believes is another training exercise. Overlooked and underrated, however, is the relationship of Ender's siblings, Peter and Valentine, who take on the guises of Demosthenes (Val) and Locke (Peter) and undertake to change the world around them.

Despite the primary focus upon a boy called to war, the novel's depiction of Valentine and Peter's ongoing involvement in the socio-political development of their surrounding world is emblematic of Hoffmeyer's discussion of the communications triad. In Card's novel, communication takes place in the relationship among the addresser and addressee that is facilitated and enabled via the "language" of the communications Nets that allow children to become adults. Put another way, the language of the network is the social context that allows these children to become adults and political leaders. Even more important, however, is the relationship between the analogue and digital worlds and the manner by which they are entwined. In *Ender's Game*, the materiality of the analogue world is directly influenced by the discussions and political forums that materialize in the digital domain; therefore, much like my discussion of legba and

Starsinger in the Introduction, there is no clear division between analogue and digital worlds as they both saturate one another.

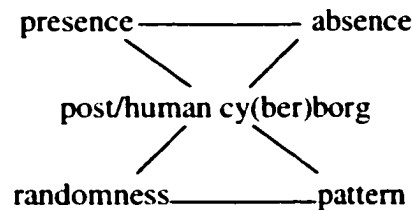
Of course, our own contemporary Internet is a far cry from the communication Nets that Card depicts or the online environments of Gibson's matrix, Platt's MAPHIS, or Tad Williams's Otherland. Indeed, our interfacing technology is rudimentary compared with ScyberFiction's cy(ber)borg enhancements that allow console cowboys to jack into cyberspace or successfully upload human consciousness into infomorphs. The differences between what can take place on the printed page and what can take place in our contemporary world, however, do not negate the key issues regarding the corporeal body and the technological interface that are as relevant to our own rudimentary Internet as they are to the near-future settings of ScyberFiction. In particular, the entwining of analogue and digital realms that Card depicts in *Ender's Game* is fundamentally applicable to the Internet and, as Hoffmeyer explains in *Signs of Meaning in the Universe*, semiosis as a whole.

In his text, Hoffmeyer notes that the relationship between analogue and digital is not confined strictly to the realm of computers and cyberspace. Hoffmeyer writes that "[t]he word *digital* comes from the Latin word *digitus* meaning finger. And the main point about digital codes is that they are disjointed, much in the same way as the five fingers on a hand, which are separated from one another by spaces just like the numbers 1-2-3-4-5. . . ." (43). Hoffmeyer uses digital and analogue watches as a visual exemplar of his account, noting that the digital numerals on a watch are merely dashes assembled into a coherent pattern whereas the hands of an analogue watch are based on a similarity.

In this case, the similarity resides in the representations of the sun's movement: "On an 'old-fashioned' watch the small hand's journey around the watch face is an analog for the sun's apparent journey around the Earth. On a digital watch the movement of the sun is represented instead by a series of disjointed points each of which is defined as a combination of figures indicating hours, minutes, and seconds" (44).

Hoffmeyer's account of analogue and digital is particularly interesting as, in my case, my Timex Expedition Indiglo watch is *both* analogue and digital. While the majority of the face is indeed analogue with the requisite second, minute, and hour hands apparently rotating with the sun's movement, the bottom portion of the face contains a digital component wherein I can change the readout from the current time to a 24 hour clock, the date, a stop watch, and an alarm. In this case, Timex, much like Card's novel, has brought together both analogue and digital components into one functioning unit, the digital watch a reflection of the analogue procession of the sun and the analogue watch greatly enhanced by the functions of the digital abstraction of time. The mutual indebtedness of analogue and digital that my Timex exemplifies is especially important to Hoffmeyer's overall account of life and its signification: "Life is dependent on this semiotic interplay between the analogic and digital versions of the message — in other words, on *code duality* — and 'the self' can only refer to the union of these two versions within an organism. Just as the self in a human being involves both the physical and linguistic element, 'the biological self' involves both the cytoplasm and the DNA" (44-5).

In other words, the



dialectic that was explored in the ScyberFiction of Chapter One is very much the code duality of analogue and digital that Hoffmeyer details in semiosis. Presence is the analogue that possesses a relativity to the material world or, in the earlier discussions of the genome, the human subject; digital is the pattern, the coded strands passed along down through the generations in the biology of DNA sequences or the linguistics of written texts. Hoffmeyer makes a key observation regarding analogue and digital that is pertinent to the Internet, ScyberFiction, and this dissertation. While not downplaying the significant function of the analogic code in the conveyance of signs, Hoffmeyer admits that a “forte of digital codes such as DNA sequences and texts is that they are *not* contingent upon similarity with the ‘reality’ in question. By virtue of this ‘alienness’ or split, the digital code frees human beings from the chains of actuality; that is to say it opens the door to creativity and imagination” (49). Hoffmeyer explains his account by noting that the fictional worlds of the text allow for the laws of Nature to be utterly severed, a function related to my earlier outlining of the *ostranenie* process of language that is foundational to SF. In the realms of DNA, Hoffmeyer notes that combining a hen with a cockerel will not produce a chicken: “[t]he messages in analogic code are quite inflexible. Combining the two means resorting to the digital code. And, as everyone knows, combining hen and cockerel in chromosome form is as easy as pie” (50).

Hoffmeyer's exposition of digital and analogue is the environment of the post/human as the digital allows for a flexibility of bodily contours while the analogue grounds the subject in a corporeality that the proponents of disembodiment have forgotten about, ignored, or casually discarded.

Setting aside the genetic miscegenation of hens and cockerels, the point to be taken from Hoffmeyer's account of analogue and digital is the flexibility of digital terrains and, as *Ender's Game* demonstrates, the influence of both realities upon one another and, by extension, the post/human. In the case of "Cy(ber)Borg and Netizens," the analogue and digital realities pertain directly to the offline and online realities of the Internet age as the Hoffmeyerian flexibility of the digital Internet shapes and modifies the significations of the analogue world housing the cy(ber)borg. In *Terminal Identity*, Scott Bukatman draws upon the ideas of Samuel R. Delany to explore the relationship between the ontology of the digital and the epistemology of the analogue, writing that "cyberspace is clearly a *paraspace*, . . . [a] space that exists parallel to the normal space of the diegesis — a rhetorically heightened 'other realm'" (157). Bukatman goes on to chart the ontological possibilities of cyberspace that allow individuals to "redefine and extend the realms of experience and human definition in contradistinction to the possibilities inherent in normal space" (166).

Granted, Bukatman is restricting his description of the cyberspatial paraspace to those representations in fiction, notably Gibson's work. Yet the analysis still holds firm given that our contemporary Internet allows for similar contradistinctions of normal space to take place. Paraspace, however, is a misnomer given that Westernized lifestyles

are increasingly involved with computers and online databases; thus, bills can be paid over the Internet, dates can be made with virtual strangers, research can be conducted across cities and countries, contests can be waged without leaving the home, and work can be completed outside the traditional office structure. The entwining of digital and analogue lifestyles is most acutely felt when those relationships are damaged or prevented. In other words, the lives of Western citizens can be greatly affected by the breakdown of the home computer, the error message on the local ATM, or, on June 8, 2001, the failure of a software upgrade that suspended trading on the New York Stock Exchange for nearly 1 ½ hours. A paraspace may be a parallel realm, but digital reality does not run parallel to the analogue world. Instead, digital and analogue realities intersect, running synchronous to one another, the Internet better described as a *synchrospace*.

As I noted in the Introduction, the popularity of this ontologically-based synchrospace has a dark side: disembodiment. Many theorists approaching the Internet as a site of ontological potentiality have taken the step further into an advocacy of disembodiment. This is the thrust of the Nicole Stenger epigraph which, in spite of the hyperbole, has to do with new ways of thinking about the human body. Stenger litters "Mind is a Leaking Rainbow" with notions of a new acuity and an expansion of bodily contours that await the post/human cy(ber)borg; unfortunately, this new acuity appears to be divorced from the analogue subject. Stenger imagines a future where the subject is "unforgettable in terms of computer memory. In this cubic fortress of pixels that is cyberspace, we will be, as in dreams, everything: the Dragon, the Princess, and the

Sword” (52). She is not alone. Arthur and Marilouise Kroker’s *Hacking the Future* implodes the corporeal body with ongoing developments in online technologies to offer the post/human an emergent “tech flesh” that is the next evolutionary step: “Now is the time of intelligent, distributive skin that abandons its loyalty to localized bodies and goes electronic” (52). Anne Basalmo rightly concludes, in *Technologies of the Gendered Body*, that the Krokers view the body as “simply obsolete, replaced by numerous technological extensions of its senses” and “[d]iscourse, now objectified as communications technologies, literally replaces the maternal body with simulated body senses” (28). Recently, Christopher Dewdney, Canadian poet and Fellow at the McLuhan Institute of Technology, comments, in *Last Flesh: Life in the Transhuman Age*, that “[o]ur familiarity with discarnate perception and sensory teleportation means that we are beginning to accept ourselves as discorporate, free-floating consciousnesses” and, furthermore, “[b]y extending our senses beyond our bodies through the electronic media, we have initiated a migration out of our bodies” (130). Finally, one of the more sustained arguments for cyberspatial disembodiment comes from John Perry Barlow, who, in his online treatise “A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace,” writes: “Cyberspace consists of transactions, relationships, and thought itself, arrayed like a standing wave in the web of our communications. Ours is a world that is both everywhere and nowhere, but it is not where bodies live. . . . In our world, whatever the human mind may create can be reproduced and distributed infinitely, at no cost We will create a civilization of the Mind in Cyberspace.”

The evocation of a collective “we” in Barlow’s account of this new society of the

mind points back to the triad structure of the medium; in other words, what the digital realm of cyberspace signifies for the cy(ber)borgs wired into it depends entirely upon the agency of the cy(ber)borgs themselves and the semiotic meaning that is attached to the Internet . Put another way, the ontological possibilities and explorations of the post/human cy(ber)borg do not emerge from this synchrospace merely as a random by-product; rather, as Michael Benedikt notes, in his Introduction to *Cyberspace: First Steps*,

[t]he door to cyberspace is open, and I believe that poetically and scientifically minded architects can and will step through it in significant numbers. For cyberspace will require constant planning and organization. The structures proliferating within it will require *design*, and the people who design these structures will be called *cyberspace architects*. . . . And all the while such designers will be *rereализing* in a virtual world many vital aspects of the physical world. (18)

This design and construction of cyberspace emerges from the *work* that cyberculture theorists are undertaking as cyberspace continues to grow and expand. Disembodiment and the new tech-flesh of the cy(ber)borg are not a *fait accompli*; instead, this digital architecture is a construction in the dualistic sense that Samuel Delany identifies:

“Construction: to build, to create from former materials./ And: Construction: to construe, to understand, to analyze, to tear down into its constituent parts” (“Reading” 98).

MUD-Wrestling: Identity and the Internet

We can find in the communication Nets of Card's novel a parallel to the anonymity available in textual communities, such as MUDs or Chats, that currently populate our own contemporary Internet. In particular, the apparent loosening of the corporeal body to become, in Stenger's terms, creatures of coloured light in motion, allows people from divergent communities, social backgrounds, and geographic locales to interact, chat, argue, debate, challenge, and even have sex with one another. In her essay "Virtual Worlds: Culture and Imagination," Elizabeth Reid writes that MUDs, a term coined by Richard Bartle and Roy Trubshaw, are "networked, multiparticipant, user-extensible systems . . . [consisting] of a database of textual descriptions of a fantastic world of the swords and sorcery genre" (165). When they first appeared online, MUDs were relatively sparse, constructed according to a narrow set of expectations, and entirely based in textual intercourse. Given the continued success of textual MUDs and the recent upsurge in hybridized MUDs (those incorporating the traditional text with the visual component of the World Wide Web), the term MUD has shifted from its original Multi-User Dungeon designation to Multi-User Domain or Multi-User Dimension. Nevertheless, whether constructed out of text or incorporating visual cues, MUDs, in Reid's analysis, "allow the depiction of a physical environment that can be laden with cultural and communicative meaning. They allow imagination and creativity to furnish the void of cyberspace with socially significant indicators" (167).

Both the anonymity and fluidity of MUDs presumably allow cy(ber)borgs to construct and project themselves into social situations in any guise that may strike an

individual's fancy; thus, as with Card's Demosthenes and Locke, the virtual reality of MUDs allow users to "give themselves names, describe themselves, and furnish themselves with a background. . . . How a MUD user 'looks' to another user is entirely dependent on information each chooses to give" (Reid, 178). Without a doubt, there can be an aspect of the superficial involved in the construction of identities within MUD environments; after all, at one level the environment may be nothing more than a gaming environment. Assuming that there is nothing but superficiality to MUD environments, however, is dismissing the code duality of analogue and digital and is akin to Mark Slouka's dismissal of legba and Starsinger's rape that I outlined in the Introduction. In essence, given the investment and, in Delany's sense, *work* involved in the construction of online representative figures, there can be direct psychological connections between the user at the terminal and his/her Demosthenes (or Locke) on the Internet.

This psychological facet and its implications for the construction of identity is the angle Sherry Turkle engages in *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. In particular, Turkle writes that a MUD is a site that translates high-brow philosophy and psychoanalytic theories of identity construction into a graspable cultural form. In other words, Turkle considers MUDs as the instantiation of "computer-mediated experiences bringing philosophy down to earth"(17). In her case studies-cum-textual analysis, Turkle repeatedly gives examples of individuals who engage with fears, predilections, inhibitions, and past traumas in an attempt to grasp the underlying threads of identity. As Turkle notes, "[p]lay has always been an important aspect of our individual efforts to build identity" (184). Surfing through the corridors of MUDs and/or Chat communities

as an online figure is a form of play that allows for just such an exploration of identity, a Delanyian construction wherein identity is both built and created while also torn down and analyzed. In terms of psychotherapy, Turkle views the Internet as a means to both act out and work through psychological issues: "In acting out we stage our old conflicts in new settings, we reenact our past in fruitless repetition. In contrast, working through usually involves a moratorium on action in order to think about our habitual reactions in a new way. . . . MUDs provide rich spaces for both acting out and working through" (200).

Investment is, of course, the key to cyberspace and identity. After all, if a user resolutely avoids identifying with his or her online persona, it is unlikely s/he will view the online figure as an extension of identity. Yet once that investment *is* made, it becomes difficult to simply divorce the experiences of Internet-based analogue and digital realities. In "The Psychology of Avatars and Graphical Space in Multimedia Chat Communities," psychologist Dr. John Suler notes that an avatar takes on a psychological imprint as it becomes a visual Rorschach inkblot wherein individuals "project their personality into it [sic] — who they are, who they wish to be, what they fear, what moves them." In effect, avatars "hide and reveal at the same time. Behind it, people can conceal some personal things about themselves, but the av also selectively amplifies other aspects of their personalities." As with Turkle's observations of patients using the Internet to work through or act out identity issues, Suler's statements about identity and the Internet are grounded in the online communities that are accessible to surfing post/humans. Put another way, the relationship between the Internet and post/humanity creates a

psychological venue that is an extension of the internal psyche but projected outward into observable terrains. In particular, Suler notes that an avatar “reflects a distinct aspect of the individual’s personality and lifestyle — whether it is a mood, an interest pattern, a social role, one’s attitudes and values, or a wished-for state of being.” It is for this reason that the rape of legba and Starsinger is so troubling and complicated. While the rape is obviously not equivalent to an analogue rape where violence and penetration are only the first traumas a victim can expect to undergo in (usually) her lifetime, the psychological investment the user has made into that Rorschach-like online persona removes the incident from merely the realm of play acting. Both legba and Starsinger were synchrospatial extensions of identity that contained the psychological investment of their users, thereby minimizing the gap between the analogue user at the terminal and the digital figure on-screen. Indeed, legba and Starsinger are not isolated cases but representatives of a synchrospace that allows the user to invest a portion of his or her life into a post/human subject(ivity) that is tangible in its digital extensions. In fact, Turkle notes that “[t]raditional role-playing games, the kinds that take place in physical space with participants ‘face to face,’ are psychologically evocative. MUDs are even more so because they further blur the line between the game and real life . . . In sum, MUDs blur the boundaries between self and game, self and role, self and simulation”(186/192).¹

The blurring of boundaries and the manipulations of self and identity that take place in MUDDing and Chatting seem to reinvest cyberspatial discourse with the notion of disembodiment. As MUDs and Chatting environments allow the post/human cy(ber)borg to construct aspects (e.g., height, age, gender) of his or her personae that may

be in direct contradiction to his or her corporeal embodiment, the playfulness of such an investment can create an impression for the user of a corporeal disembodiment. As Reid notes, MUDs and similar sites become an ideal “arena for experimentation with gender specific social roles and debate over the ethics of such experimentation” (181). Lisa Nakamura’s study of the signification of race in MUDs, particularly LambdaMOO, seems to reinforce this stress upon disembodiment. After all, she does write, in “Race In/For Cyberspace,” that “[u]sers of the Internet represent themselves within it [cyberspace] solely through the medium of keystrokes and mouse-clicks; . . . they perform their bodies as text” (181). This performance of the body as text is evocative of a disembodiment stance as the medium suggests the body can be reduced to nothing more than a textual transmission. Therefore, my status as a diabetic appears to have no importance or authority on the newsgroup alt.support.diabetes given that the materiality of the disease in the online forum is regulated and restricted by textual descriptions, a problematic notion to which I will return later.

Nakamura’s description of the body performed as text also calls to mind Judith Butler’s work on performance, notably in such texts as *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* and *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler analyzes the discursive history of gender, sex, and the body, working her way through such theorists as Simone de Beauvoir, Michel Foucault, and Monique Wittig. In her analysis of the heterosexual economy of the Western world and the disjunction between gender and sex, Butler concludes that there is no *natural* assignation of gender roles with biological and anatomical sex; rather, gender is

constructed through repetitive acts and gestures that produce the illusion of gender upon the corporeal body:

Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. . . . In other words, acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core, an illusion discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality. (*Gender Trouble* 136)

As a litmus test of this system of performative practices, Butler looks toward the transgressive presence of drag culture, a display of the dichotomy between the supposed gender core that is on display in the physical guise of clothing, makeup, and gestures and the apparent anatomical facticity of sex that purports to serve as the legitimate ground for gender roles. For Butler, performing drag “plays upon the distinction between anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. But we are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance” (*Gender Trouble* 137).

Although Butler is not talking about cyberspace, the language she uses is suggestive of the Internet given that a similar performativity is taking place in the online chats and MUDs. In her text *Virtual Spaces: Sex and the Cyber Citizen*, Cleo Odzer points to this performative aspect when, detailing her personal adventures, she writes that “[o]ne thing I noticed from gender bending on the MOO is the conditioning society

forces on us to make us into girls or boys. To be convincing as a female (where insiders know that half the women are really men) I giggle and blush and avoid being too aggressive. On the other hand, when I log on as a male, I don't giggle and I'm demanding, suggestive, and bold" (106-07). In those social corners of the Internet where exchange takes place, the gender performativity that Odzer outlines is akin to one very large drag strip where avatars create tension regarding the relationship among anatomy, gender identity, and gender performance.

These social corners, however, necessitate a minor retooling of Butler's theory of performativity as this immense drag strip requires the participation of others to implement the performative act. In comparison, the disruptive presence of a drag queen in analogue reality has minimal ontological effect on gender boundaries so long as s/he remains indoors, a solipsistic admiration of performance carried out in the private sphere.

Wider issues of gender construction of the biologically sexed body remain unchallenged if the subject of the drag performance remains secluded from the social environment; the drag queen requires some form of acknowledgement and (mis)recognition from others for the performance to push at the gender register. The same holds true for the cy(ber)borg and online communities, whether the cy(ber)borg is actively challenging social norms or his/her own notions of identity. For example, if cyberspace allows the timid individual to find his/her voice and become self-assured, how will the cy(ber)borg achieve that sense of self-assuredness unless s/he engages with other online users? Performance on the Internet requires an acknowledgement and/or the interaction of a social arena if ontological queries into identity-formation are to be raised. Without that interaction with

other cy(ber)borgs, the male-pretending-to-be-female or the timid-becoming-self-assured (or any other performances) might as well send e-mail messages to himself. Richard C. MacKinnon, in "Searching for Leviathan in Usenet," argues a similar point in his analysis of the Usenet computer conferencing network when he notes that Descartes's famous phrase must be modified to "'I am perceived, therefore I am.' Suddenly the Usenet user is no longer alone, for to be perceived requires another. . . . The visible response is evidence of perception" (119). It is not so much performativity but *interformativity* that best describes identity and the Internet, a response of another cy(ber)borg to the performance with a reciprocal performance of his/her own, an environment constructed around the interplay of performativity and interaction.

The significative function of interformativity — namely, to explore the boundaries and borders of those apparently always already corporeal signs that pertain to such markers of gender, sexuality, race, or (dis)ability — does pose a problem to me and my diseased body. Surfing the corridors of alt.support.diabetes, must I now contend with the possibility that all these Diabetic cy(ber)borgs are, in fact, interforming *as* diabetics? Am I the only Diabetic online? How can my diseased body be written into a post/humanity that is based upon textual transmission? At first glance, it appears quite bleak as, mirroring Card's novel where online adults are actually genius-level children, my confessionals about hypoglycemia and glaucoma may be to youngsters. A solution, however, resides in an offhand comment that Cleo Odzer remarks when detailing one of her online sexual escapades. In the encounter, Copper_Guest, the male avatar, is using a dildo to perform anal sex upon Olive_Guest (Odzer) when Rosy_Guest teleports into the

chamber. Copper_Guest immediately removes the dildo and performs vaginal penetration upon Olive_Guest, prompting the following comment from Odzer: “Though I’d suspected that Copper_Guest was male, this move convinced me. Egads, every female would shriek at the guaranteed E. coli infection, virtual or not” (49). As Odzer’s comment demonstrates, language can, and often does, betray a body. In this case, the use of language has revealed a greater likelihood that Copper_Guest is male; similarly, clues regarding corporeality are deposited throughout language if the individual is willing to pay attention and do the work. For example, the spelling of “favor” or “honor” as opposed to “favour” or “honour” suggests an American as opposed to a Briton, Canadian, or Australian; also, Kraft Dinner is an unknown product in England while Snickers chocolate bars are unknown in the United States. Quite often, the clues that locate and identify corporeality are scattered throughout the language the cy(ber)borg uses to sustain the interformative relationship. Therefore, I can screen out the non-diabetics from alt.support.diabetes with a relative degree of accuracy given the descriptions scrawling across my computer screen — for example, non-diabetics are those who comment upon their allergy to sugar (diabetes is not a sugar allergy) or the trials and tribulations of injecting insulin into the vein (diabetics injecting insulin into their veins would not be long for this world).

In addition to the linguistic clues that are echoes of corporeality, there is a healthy skepticism among online participants regarding online revelations. This recognition that there is more beneath the surface of the online figure serves to re-introduce a sense of the corporeal back into those social corners of cyberspace. In particular, cy(ber)borgs surfing

through MUDs and Chat sites are often not content with remaining at the surface level of the screen; instead, there is the desire to reach behind the screen and, much like the characters Vernor Vinge depicts in *True Names*, discover the “true name” and the concomitant corporeal markers of the cy(ber)borg at the other end of the line. Thus, simple questions like “a/s/l” (age/sex/location) and “m/f” (male/female) are queries as to the corporeal makeup of the cy(ber)borg. Put another way, everyone is fully aware that there are corporeal bodies at work in such environments and, despite the disembodied hyperbole, the corporeal body has a presence as a digitally embodied, if absent, figure. Given the work and investment, the Internet can allow for a reconsideration of bodily markers and explorations of how signification works to situate the corporeal body in discourses of masculinity, femininity, race, or economics; yet, much like the revelatory power of language and the corporeal clues it provides, the corporeal body is not automatically lost in the equation nor reduced to nothing but interformativity or mouse-clicks by fiat.

I Feel Like Being a (Tiny)Sex Machine: Interformativity and Tinysex

The inseparability of the corporeal body in interformative digital encounters is perhaps best exemplified in the realm of online sex, known commonly as Tinysex, Netsex, or the memorable teledildonics. In particular, Tinysex highlights the relationship between the cy(ber)borg’s digital and analogue realities via the point-of-view and the masturbatory culmination of the terminal user. In spite of the hyperbole surrounding disembodiment, Tinysex has bodily restrictions that are grounded in a projection of

corporeality and draw attention to digital embodiment, requiring the user be aware of the spatial location of others involved in the Tinysex encounter. Cleo Odzer points to this cognitive work when she writes that “MOO actions required an imagination adept at maintaining the vision of who was where in relation to whom, the location of all the legs and arms, and all the changes in position” (78). Thus, one cannot be engaged in a Tinysex orgy, for example, and begin “fucking” an avatar up against a wall when, mere moments beforehand, that avatar actually walked to the other side of the room and began performing oral sex on someone else. Negotiations of both digital space and bodies come into play in the interformative environment of Tinysex as spatial mapping takes place simultaneously with digital copulation.

Similarly, the arousal that takes place at the terminal reinserts the corporeality of the cy(ber)borg as physical stimulus goes hand-in-hand with the imaginative act(s) taking place on- screen. As McRae notes, this awareness of the digital avatar engaged in sexual activity with a partner of dubious gender coupled with the analogue arousal of the terminal user intensifies an awareness of bodily contours, a magnified perception requiring “a constant phasing between the virtual and the actual, a simultaneous awareness not only of the corporeal body at the keyboard, the emoting, speaking self on the screen, but also the existence of another individual, real and projected, who is similarly engaged” (83). McRae describes this simultaneous awareness as a doubling of the body; yet, that doubled awareness is itself doubled because the user can be aware of his or her own body, the digital avatar s/he uses to mediate the experience, the digital avatar s/he is engaging with in the sexual encounter, and a mysterious body that is known

to be behind that partnered avatar. The post/human cy(ber)borg is, in fact, a *doubling*² in which Tinysex highlights the multi-locationality of the body. Tinysex exemplifies the doubling² since both the corporeal and digital interact in an interstitial domain impacted by the pattern of the online environment and the presence of corporeal and digital bodies. In essence, the post/human interstice is played out in the s(t)imulated environments of computer screen, imagination, and sexual gratification.

Aside from the immediacy of sexual gratification, the significative function of Tinysex can serve to initiate an engagement with such wider concerns as masculine and feminine norms and the construction of identity. In “Women and Children First: Gender and the Settling of the Electronic Frontier,” Laura Miller convincingly argues that the formation of online, even stereotyped, gender roles can be viewed as a defensive mechanism since one can “see in the relentless attempts to interpret on-line interactions as highly gendered, an intimation of just how artificial, how created, our gender system is. If it comes ‘naturally,’ why does it need to be perpetually defended and reasserted?” (53). Shannon McRae supports Miller’s position, remarking in her own analysis of Tinysex that “[i]f boys can be girls and straights can be queers and dykes can be fags and two lesbian lovers can turn out to be both men in real life, then ‘straight’ or ‘queer,’ ‘male’ or ‘female’ become unreliable as markers of identity” (79).

Part of the reason that Tinysex and the doubling² of embodiment do actively question and/or probe the acquisition of gender norms involves the function of penetration. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues that the performance of gender roles and the resultant masculine and feminine norms serve a heterosexual impulse of concealing

“gender’s performative character and the performative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinist domination and compulsory heterosexuality” (141). Returning to this point, Butler wonders in *Bodies that Matter* if identity-formulating terms like masculine or feminine would “still signify in stable ways, or would the relaxing of the taboos against stray penetration destabilize those gendered positions in serious ways?” (51). Butler also goes on to further argue that the issue of penetration is key to the formation of human gender identity for, as her analysis of Luce Irigaray and Plato suggests, “the logic of non-contradiction . . . is one which establishes the ‘he’ through this exclusive position as penetrator and the ‘she’ through this exclusive position as penetrated. . . . [W]ithout this heterosexual *matrix*, as it were, it appears that the stability of these gendered positions would be called into question” (50-51).

The unreliability of gender as a stable marker of identity that McRae ascribes to Tinysex and the Internet is tied into Butler’s thoughts about penetration and, overall, the play of power. As McRae notes, “it is not so much that gender roles or sexual preferences actually change as that cross-gender role play troubles the link between gender and desire from which we, usually unquestioningly, construct our identities as sexual beings” (79-80). In the confusion over penetrator/penetrated, the control can be relinquished by any of the analogue users, the penetrator become the object, the less-powerful be penetrated. This divestiture of power creates a unique environment wherein the delineation of penetrator and penetrated, in conjunction with their gender assignments, is called into question as penetrators can penetrate other penetrators,

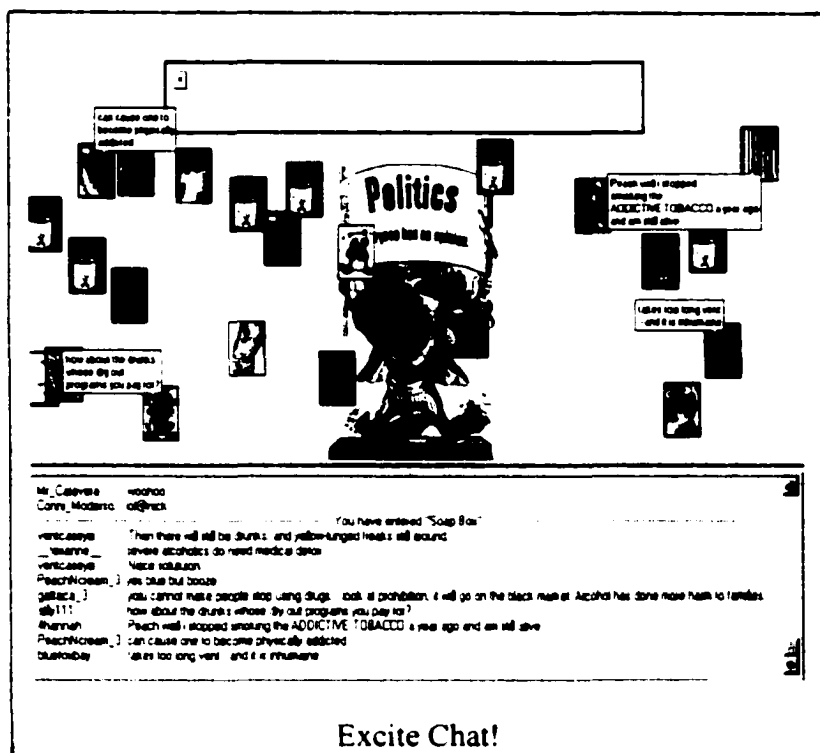
penetrateds can be penetrated by other penetrateds, and a host of other penetrable options are available with the ongoing subject/object shift.

Once again, the function of Tinysex resides in the investiture of work that takes place among the participants and the danger of re-inscribing analogue markers of gender: "In order to enact 'female' and hope to attract partners, one must not only assume the pronouns, but craft a description that falls within the realm of what is considered attractive" (McRae 81). On the other hand, the degree of investment that both McRae and, more thoroughly, Turkle outline demonstrate the productive possibilities of trading gender in digital environments. McRae notes that "[s]ome individuals, however, come to find themselves occupying the opposite gender with such intensity that they discover aspects of themselves that they may not otherwise have encountered" (81-82). Turkle is more grounded in her psychological test cases, writing that "gender swapping is an opportunity to explore conflicts raised by one's biological gender" (213) and the Tinysex encounter highlights the construction of gendered expectations in sexual encounters. For example, Turkle writes about Case who, posing as a woman, discovered that "if you are assertive as man, it is coded as 'being a bastard.' If you are assertive as a woman, it is coded as 'modern and together'" (219) or, more likely, a "bitch." Beyond identity, however, Tinysex also probes at those foundational emotions underlying relationships, such as love, fidelity, and trust. In Turkle's analysis, men caught in Tinysex encounters by their wives probe the very foundation of relationships: "TinySex poses the question of what is at the heart of sex and fidelity. Is it the physical action? Is it the feeling of emotional intimacy with someone other than one's primary partner? Is infidelity in the

head or in the body?" (225). These are questions which have no easy solutions as the code duality of analogue and digital continue to impact upon the ongoing emergence of the post/human in the interstices of both analogue and digital corporealities.

It's The End Of The Worlds.com As We Know It (And I Feel Fine)

The popularity of Tinysex venues is only the tip of the sexual iceberg as the advent of the World Wide Web has modified digital embodiment from the early days of text-based forums. In particular, digital avatars now possess a visual accompaniment that, in spite of the medium's possibilities, are products of a human agency that can undercut ontological, philosophical, or psychological pursuits in favour of a repetition of stereotypes and unimaginative approaches to online options. For example, female personas often appear as "hot babes" inscribed with the idealized body dimensions of the best women of the video game market. Similarly, male personas can be the height of masculinity with rippling muscles and equally-perfected bodies. Shannon McRae writes, in "Flesh Made Word: Sex, Text and the Virtual Body," that "[v]oluptuous breasts, slim waists, flowing hair, etc. proliferate as quickly in virtual reality as in any Barbie Doll factory" (81). With the advent of the World Wide Web and the growing shift from pure-text social environments to a hybrid of text and visual imagery, Barbie Doll factory representations have become more numerous and easier to enact. On the World Wide Web, such venues as, for example, Excite CHAT!² offer forums divided up into categories (Teens; Peers; Interests; Regions; General Chat; Special Events; Adults Only) with drop-down menus listing specific rooms of interest. Logging into an



individual room, the cy(ber)borgs chatting away are represented by small iconic representations. Balloon-dialogue boxes, of the type seen in comic books, appear above the icon to indicate participation in an ongoing conversation; in conjunction with the balloon, a more traditional box at the

bottom contains a textual rendition ordered sequentially. The variety of avatar types available are numerous as images of dogs, anime figures, flowers, and cute stuffed animals are only a few of the thousands of options available. The choice of avatars is limited only by the availability of images on the World Wide Web or the scanning hardware and software an individual utilizes to translate hard copy photographs to jpeg, gif, or bitmap images. This is an ambiguous function given that such free interactions and discussions presumably unaffected by the distractions of gender or race erase the corporeal history of social, cultural, and political struggles that accompany and influence identity-construction.

While the variety of images available as avatars are seemingly endless, male and female avatars tend to dominate, including media celebrities, models in various states of

undress, and, in the XXX-rated forums, full-frontal nudity, erect penises, and women performing fellatio. As a result of the increasing popularity of avatars, web sites devoted strictly to the collection, display, and distribution of avatars have become increasingly more numerous. One such site is Romany's Realm of Avatars (<http://www.romanysrealm.com>), a site whose avatars are divided into categories and thumbnail images that make it incredibly easy to navigate in search of the best representative of one's sense of identity or fantastical desires.³ Yet a cursory glance (taken place on June 22, 2001) at the categories of Romany's avatars reveals a demonstrative gender and racial divide taking place. For example, under the Bikinis section of Ladies Wear, users have 14 pages of blondes, 11 pages of brunettes, 4 pages of redheads, and 5 pages of ladies of colour to navigate. Each page contains approximately 20 thumbnail images; thus, there are a total of 680 images of bikini-clad women available from which to choose. This is significantly different from the Men's Wear section wherein the Skins (Bare-Chested Men) category contains only 3 pages of blondes, 9 pages of brunettes, and 3 pages of men of colour, amounting to 300 thumbnail images. The same discrepancies hold true for nearly every category save, ironically, the Anatomy category, which features 20 images each of chests, crotches, and buttocks. Racially, both Women of Color and Men of Color are greatly outnumbered by Caucasian avatars (blondes, brunettes, etc...) while no individual categories exist for Latin, Asian, or other ethnic identities. While there are some minority figures represented in the Specialty Wear section, which includes such categories as wedding, uniforms, animals, flowers, and muppets, they are worked into the greater whole and are, for the most part, lost in a

sea of Caucasian skin. In the end, digital avatars of this type pose some significant problems as they do nothing to challenge stereotyped phantasy images of men and women as slim, athletic, beautiful, sculpted (whether naturally or surgically), sexual(ized), and (mostly) light-skinned objects of desire. If, as Benedikt asserts, cyberspace architects are designing cyberspace, there will be a vast area of the digital world that looks remarkably like the tired designs of our analogue existence.

Ironically, the increasing number of avatars on the World Wide Web does trouble the notion of digital disembodiment given that the stereotypes of half-naked women and abdominal-muscled men situate corporeal embodiment front-and-centre, reinforcing embodiment at the same time that sexualized stereotypes are repeated. It cannot be overemphasized that, in and of itself, cyberspace is merely bits housed in databases. What is of prime import, as Haraway notes in *Modest_Witness*, is the realization that the medium is a tool for actors and actants to explore, and possibly challenge, the ongoing configuration of post/humanism. As the Internet continues to expand and develop, the post/human bodies that are emerging are interstitial products reflecting the code duality of digital and analogue realities. Put another way, the network of cy(ber)borg, cyberspace and ScyberFiction is predicated upon human agency or actants in the synchrospatial circuit.

As a result of this human agency, the conservatism of avatars on the World Wide Web can be understood as a predictable by-product of new technology. Nigel Clark, in "The Recursive Generation of the Cyberbody," notes that both Marshall McLuhan and Walter Benjamin identified a general recursivity that often emerges when society is faced

with technological advances. In Clark's analysis, "[i]t was Marshall McLuhan who discerned a generalized 'rear-view mirrorism' as a response to the disconcerting effects of techno-cultural transformation, suggesting that we do tend to 'look at the present through the spectacles of the preceding age (1987:243). Several decades earlier, Walter Benjamin offered the striking image of the 'angel of history' perpetually backing his way into the future, with eyes affixed to the accumulating debris of progress which fills the past and present (1969: 247-8)" (114). As we back into the future, it is only natural that the familiar motifs, images, and tropes should initially dominate a medium that has only begun to explore the artistic possibilities of, for example, hypertext-based art and narratives.

While the stereotypes of bikini-clad women and bare-chested men currently circulating on the Internet do not appear to be read against the grain of masculine and feminine stereotypes of the idealized body, the proliferation of such images can point to their function as parody and, perhaps in a quite unwilling manner, destabilize the very codes the images initially solidified. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler positions parody as a key manner of disrupting gender codes:

[G]ender parody reveals that the original identity after which gender fashions itself is an imitation without an origin. To be more precise, it is a production which, in effect . . . postures as an imitation. This perpetual displacement constitutes a fluidity of identities that suggests an openness to resignification and recontextualization; parodic proliferation deprives hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalized or essentialist gender identities. (138)

Lisa Nakamura hints at this sense of parody when she notes that the proliferation of Asian stereotypes in the text-based LambdaMOO clearly indicates the appropriation of anachronistic and fantasy-laden images: "This type of Orientalized theatricality is a form of identity tourism; players who choose to perform this type of racial play are almost always white, and their appropriation of stereotyped male Asiatic samurai figures allows them to indulge in a dream of crossing over racial boundaries temporarily and recreationally." In fact, these fantasy figures are telling for what they reveal about the analogue body behind the persona: "Choosing these stereotypes tips their interlocutors off to the fact that they are not 'really' Asian; they are instead 'playing' in an already familiar type of performance" (Nakamura 184-85). On the one hand, this adoption of Asiatic samurai figures reinscribes traditional notions of an exotic Otherness; on the other hand, Nakamura's reading of these figures reinvests them as parodic markers of the fact that an Asiatic identity is more than merely the samurai figure that any whitebread, middle-class, teenage boy can put on.

Neal Stephenson's 1991 novel *Snow Crash* is particularly useful in demonstrating the function of parody in cyberspace. In a similar vein to *True Names* or *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, the Metaverse of Stephenson's text is constructed around point-of-view figures rather than the disembodied pov. Thus, a user can access the cyberspatial realm of *Snow Crash* via an avatar that "can look any way you want it to, up to the limitations of your equipment. If you're ugly, you can make your avatar beautiful. If you've just gotten out of bed, your avatar can still be wearing beautiful clothes and professionally applied makeup. You can look like a gorilla or a dragon or a giant talking penis in the

Metaverse” (Stephenson 36). While such avatars as giant gorillas and walking penises point to corporeal indeterminacy, the parody is especially evident in the proliferation of specific mass-market avatars. As Hiro Protagonist, the aptly named hero of *Snow Crash*, observes avatars disembarking from a monorail, Stephenson describes two specific digital couples. While the first girl “would be considered quite the fashion statement among the K-Tel set” looking like “she has bought the Avatar Construction Set™ and put together her own, customized model out of miscellaneous parts,” the second girl and her date are notable by virtue of their ubiquity in the virtual realm: “The other girl is a Brandy. Her date is a Clint. Brandy and Clint are both popular, off-the-shelf models. When white-trash high school girls are going on a date in the Metaverse, they invariably run down to the computer games section of the local Wal-Mart and buy a copy of Brandy.” Both Brandy and Clint are ambivalent figures as, on one hand, they do very little to challenge gender ideals of feminine and masculine while, on the other hand, the sheer replication of these avatars parodies and destabilizes identity-ascription and gender roles based on anatomical sex. Thus, in regards to Brandy, the user

can select three breast sizes: improbable, impossible, and ludicrous. Brandy has a limited repertoire of facial expressions: cute and pouty; cute and sultry; perky and interested; smiling and receptive; cute and spacy. Her eyelashes are half an inch long, and the software is so cheap that they are rendered as solid ebony chips.

When a Brandy flutters her eyelashes, you can almost feel the breeze.

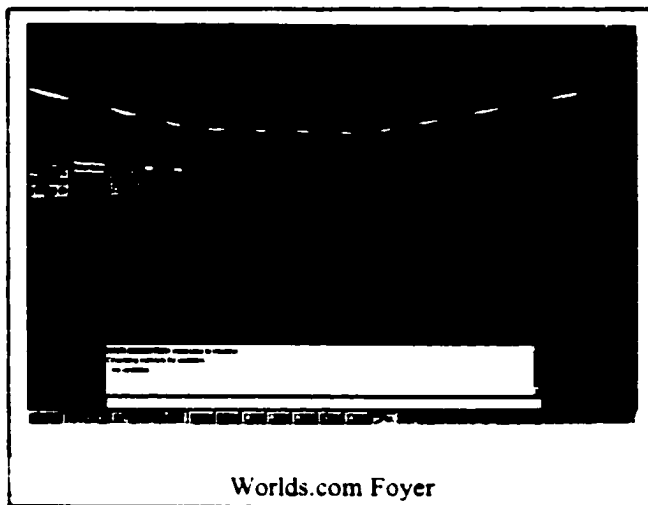
(Stephenson, *Snow Crash* 37)

Stephenson’s text parodies those physical attributes that go toward the signification of

femininity and, in Clint's case, masculinity. In essence, while both Brandy and Clint are stereotypes, they are so obvious *as* stereotypes in the ubiquity of their ludicrous imaging that gender-identification is unstable and misrepresentable. After all, "there are enough Clints and Brandys" in *Snow Crash's* Metaverse "to found a new ethnic group" (Stephenson 38).

We have a long way to go before we have reached the stage of uploading into digital avatars and engaging in the type of Metaversal environment *Snow Crash* describes. Or do we? The advent of increasingly more complex hardware and software, coupled with the popularity of video games and the increasing interest in digital avatars, is laying down the groundwork for the Metaversal extrapolation that Stephenson charts. Interestingly, embodiment is of paramount interest and Clark, in his essay, demonstrates that "[i]f cyberspace takes shape as a networked, immersive and three-dimensional environment, then it is likely that body depiction will acquire a push-button mutability This is not freedom from the 'meat', any more than the frenetic codes of fashion constitute freedom from clothing. Cyberspace will demand a constant attentiveness to the flesh that comes with the capacity to retune the body's signifying surfaces from one moment to the next" (127).

This constant attention to digital embodiment is exemplified in Worlds.com (<http://www.worlds.com>), an online chat site that incorporates portions of the video game environment to offer chatters the availability of digital avatars that individuals manoeuvre through the various rooms of the digital locale. Upon entry to the subscription-based



Worlds.com Foyer

Worlds.com, the user encounters a foyer, a general meeting-area where 3-dimensional avatars can stand and talk. Unlike the Excite Chat! system, however, the avatars can be repositioned within the foyer by using the arrow keys on a standard keyboard; in other words, the digital

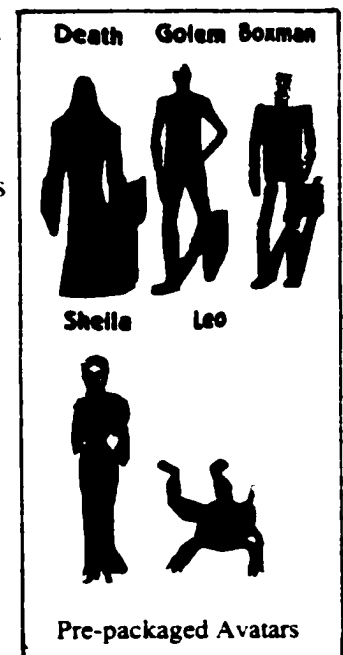
body can be moved around in a manner akin to video games. Worlds.com has taken digital point-of-view and developed it further, offering complete digital bodies that walk around rooms, bump into walls, pass through doorways, look at watches, and perform other bodily activities. The positions of both analogue user and digital avatar are particularly complicated in Worlds.com given that the user can opt to choose a disembodied pov and, much like Case in *Neuromancer*, manoeuvre through the site as pure gaze. On the other hand, point-of-view positions dominate as the majority of options include the digital body within the field of vision: low first-person, waist, shoulder, head, overhead, behind, wide-angle. Even in the seemingly disembodied pov of Worlds.com, physical laws restrict movement; therefore, the disembodied is still impacted by laws of embodiment



Worlds.com Standard Avatar Gallery
Clints and Brandys Proliferate

since the pure gaze of a pov avatar cannot move through walls nor fly through the ceiling. Finally, although the user may choose the pure gaze of pov, it is, ultimately, only his or her gaze which is "pure" since his or her avatar is readily apparent to other users. While the site does play with pattern, presence, pov, and point-of-view, there is subtle privileging of visual presence that takes place thanks to the patterns of the digital medium.

As with the text-based system, the digital aspect of Worlds.com continues to elicit the same sorts of questions regarding age, sex, and location of the corporeal user. These queries regarding the analogue-based cy(ber)borg insert a doubled corporeality: the digital embodiment of the avatar serves as a potential access port to the embodied user at the terminal. There are a variety of options that, much like the textual MUDs Turkle outlines, allow for identity-exploration. The default avatar when first logging onto the site is a penguin; yet, in the Avatar Gallery, many options are available. Standard options *à la* Stephenson's Clint and Brandy line the entrance to the Avatars gallery, but creative avatars are found in a separate foyer where separate entrances lead to theme rooms (VIP Creatures and Demons; VIP Animals; VIP People; Gallery of Metamorphics; VIP Strange People; VIP Air Things; Animals) where the bulk of avatars that are available are pre-packaged Brandys and Clints, such as Death, Golem, Boxman, Sheila, and Leo. Nevertheless,



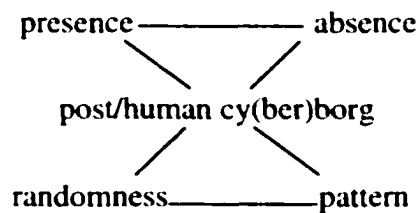
cy(ber)borgs can also choose to customize their avatars, choosing to represent themselves as humans, humanoid figures, or animals of various sizes, shapes, and descriptions. In particular, the Gallery of Metamorphics allows for an alteration of the avatars by choosing specific body parts for substitution. This is where the video game aspect and avatars part company because video game figures offer a range of pre-fabricated characters from a relatively limited menu; avatars allow the individual a wide choice of options that can individuate the avatar and make it an extension of one's personality. In a manner that is reminiscent of Clark's speculations on the future of the Internet, the options for body parts are numerous and, in some instances, dizzying, because they include a variety of heads (male, female, animal, winged, surreal, cartoon), skin colours, hair, shirt, coat, dress, pants, left glove, right glove, left shoe, right shoe, and even the size of a head. In my own case, I surf Worlds.com as a graduate. My decision obviously derives from the psychological investment of my identity in the education system. Nevertheless, I am not restricted to merely the cap-and-gowned figure pre-packaged as the graduate since I can opt to modify my online avatar in a variety of ways, replacing the staid gown with a Hawaiian shirt and the youthful face with a wizened, bearded visage.⁴

The ease with which body parts can be inserted, reassessed, and then replaced with other body parts is double-edged and, once again, has implications for how avatars read and are read. A site such as Worlds.com implicitly works along a disembodied axis as analogue corporeal markers such as race or gender can simply be put on, displayed, and then replaced with other markers. In providing a rolodex of options, these avatar

bodies deny the struggles of personal history and the influence of cultural context that are instrumental to analogue identity-formation. At the other end of the spectrum, however, these sorts of avatars can be productive for the cy(ber)borg. In her essay, "The Appended Subject: Race and Identity as Digital Assemblage," Jennifer González notes that such avatars are not divorced from the terminal cy(ber)borg as they can be "understood as somehow appended to a real person who resides elsewhere, in front of a keyboard. In each case a body is constructed or assembled in order to stand in for, or become an extension of, a subject in an artificial but nevertheless inhabited world" (28). Although she appears to be reading the avatar in a fashion reminiscent of Turkle's promotion of text-dominant MUDs, Gonzalez and Turkle are poles apart. For Turkle, the transcendent power of the computer resides in its postmodern sensibility and its power to take "us beyond a world of dreams and beasts because it enables us to contemplate mental life that exists apart from our bodies" (22). Gonzalez, on the other hand, abandons Turkle's disembodied approach to a mental life. In a more productive manner that reinscribes corporeal presence and reaffirms the synchrospatial function of the Internet, she sees the extension of identity into the digital realm "as a progressive assertion that identities are always inseparable from corporeal encounters and the symbolic inscription of bodily signs" (37). While it is quite premature to make any conclusions regarding the end-result of interformative play upon the network, it seems safe to say that conservatism will continue to dominate on the World Wide Web for the foreseeable near-future as the Web initially caters to the familiar images of playmates lounging in hot tubs, bare-chested firemen tightly grasping their hoses, and mainstream ideas of femininity and masculinity

continue to proliferate. Nevertheless, I am an optimist regarding the ontological potential of cyberspace; after all, the synchrospace emerging from the semiotic interplay of cyberspace, cy(ber)borgs, and ScyberFiction is, as Haraway notes, predicated on actors and actants and thus always already ripe for change.

This chapter has attempted to address the notion of disembodiment as it pertains to our contemporary Internet, demonstrating that the code duality of analogue and digital is responsible for writing the corporeal body back into the cyberspatial equation, even in those moments when it appears embodiment has been deleted. The types of interformative explorations that such cyberspace venues as MUDs, Chats, or Tinysex enable often implode the



dialectic. On the one hand, interformativity allows the cy(ber)borg to engage in online social interactions by adopting a digital appendage to the analogue body, a modification of bodily markers that can have profound value as a means of psychological, sociological, and philosophical probing into identity. After all, Sandy Stone, in “Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?”, does note that such cases of identity-deception are “productive interventions into our cultural belief that the unmarked social unit, besides being white and male, is a single self in a single body” (75). On the other hand, such digital appendages bring embodiment into focus in such arenas as Tinysex, where

doubling² takes place, or in such visually-based sites as Worlds.com where the avatar is, as both Gonzalez and Clark argue, an extension of corporeal embodiment. While Stone is correct that identity-deception and interformativity do result in a destabilizing of the notion of a single self in a single body, a disembodied pov is not the logical conclusion or end-result. In the post/humanism where the code duality of analogue presence and digital pattern are brought into sharp relief, corporeal presence still persists in the complex choices a terminal cy(ber)borg makes when constructing his or her digital point-of-view.

Chapter Four:

Surfing Beneath *The Matrix*:

A Case for the Body-Plus-Simulation Virtualization

“What is real? How do you define real? If you’re talking about what you can feel, what you can smell, what you can taste and see, then real is simply electrical signals interpreted by your brain. This is the world that you know, the world as it was at the end of the twentieth century. It exists now only as part of a neural interactive simulation that we call the matrix. You’ve been living in a dream world, Neo.”

(Morpheus speaking to Neo, *The Matrix*)

In the previous chapter, I attempted to demonstrate how the code duality of analogue and digital is foundational to the post/human body. In essence, the extension of the corporeal body into cyberspace, the adoption of digital appendages, the doubling² that takes place in Tinysex, the psychological explorations of identity-formation, and the ontological probings into the construction and investment of experiential reality locate embodiment in an interstitial ambiguity. Put simply, embodiment is occupying two places at once: online in the digital terrain and offline at the computer terminal. This multi-locationality of the cy(ber)borg is not a matter of semantics; rather, it demonstrates how computerized technologies are addressing the issue of bodily boundaries possibly

extending beyond the skin. As both analogue and digital, the post/human body is a *plus*, but a body-plus-what? The ambiguity surrounding the location of the post/human body and identity ascription is what N. Katherine Hayles, in "How Cyberspace Signifies: Taking Immortality Literally," clarifies and develops in her analysis of medical technologies. Specifically, Hayles looks at those "scientific imaging technologies that interface humans and computers, such as positron emission tomography, or PET" (112). According to Hayles, in PET scans, radioactive forms of biological substrates are injected into a patient suffering from a possible neurological disorder. The absorption of such radioactive particles by the corporeal body allows doctors to map a patient's brain by tracking the radioactivity. Neurologists can then use a computer and terminal screen to construct a holographic double of the patient's brain. On that digital screen, the neurologist can peer into those recesses corresponding to the analogue brain and determine the extent of neurological damage and possible treatments. In Hayles's account, the PET has melded the digital pattern of the terminal brain with the analogue corporeality of the flesh-'n-blood brain, superimposing one upon the other in a manner that transforms the body into a *body-plus-simulation*, an interface of both digital and analogue realities.

A visual example of the body-plus-simulation, and one that may be more graspable than complicated medical procedures, is staged in Hollywood's uninspired, but guiltily enjoyable, *Lost in Space*. In the 1998 film, the deceitful machinations of Dr. Smith (Gary Oldman), whose reprogramming of Robot causes the Jupiter II spacecraft to

hurtle towards the sun, threatens everyone aboard. Faced with his own inevitable demise, Smith opts to release the Robinson family from cryo-stasis. As Major West (Matt LeBlanc) and Dr. Robinson (William Hurt) struggle to regain control of the ship, it falls upon Smith to revive Dr. Judy Robinson (Heather Graham), whose cryo-stasis tube has malfunctioned. Extricated from deep-freeze, Judy's lifeless body is taken to the infirmary where a digitally-holographic projection of Judy's prone frame, including her internal organs and green-hued skeletal structure, appears several feet above the medical bed she rests upon. It is here that the body-plus-simulation emerges as the hologram descends and is superimposed over Judy's corporeal body, forming an eerily doubled image of the patient. Judy's analogue body is not obstructed by the hologram but is clearly visible beneath the digital skeletal structure, forming an odd hybrid of the post/human. This analogue and digital doubling is reinforced by the image of Judy's arrested heart, visually enhanced by blood-red colouring and a spinning digital cube. The organ is repeatedly shocked by a bolt of energy striking at the very heart of both the digital cube and Judy's chest, stimulating Judy and her holographic twin in unison. Moments before the scene jump-cuts to the out-of-control ship, Judy's digital and analogue face fills the screen.

Later in the movie, a similar image of the body-plus-simulation dominates as key members of the crew, exploring an apparently derelict rescue ship, are attacked by vicious alien arachnids. The team is seemingly defenseless until youthful prodigy Will Robinson (Jack Johnson), secure in the comforts of Jupiter II, interfaces with the (re)reprogrammed Robot to defend the team and provide them with a means of escape. Like Judy's body-

plus-simulation, the scene is doubled as a digital representation of the Robot is overlaid upon Will's analogue body. From within the Jupiter II, Will physically fights off the virtual arachnids, breaking a sweat as he flails his arms and legs in determination. As the digital overlay of the Robot remains glued to Will's bodily movements, the analogue Robot carries out the same actions on the derelict ship, warding off the arachnid hordes. Once again, in an eerie transposition, the arachnids that cling to the Robot's body are translated as digital avatars that similarly cling to Will's body back in the Jupiter II.

PET technology is a far cry from *Lost in Space*; yet, the latter helps elucidate the imagery of the body-plus-simulation that Hayles identifies in the former. The key, as Hayles notes, to the body-plus-simulation is that the "[r]econstituted body-plus-simulation is neither flesh nor computer image, but a new kind of entity" ("How" 113), an interstitial hybrid of digital code and strands of analogue DNA. A similar process of projection, reflection, and overlay is taking place with the invested cy(ber)borg given that the interformative encounters of social exchange, whether in the form of MUDs, Chats, or Tinysex, are projected outwards both into and onto the computer screen, absorbed by other cy(ber)borgs through nerve cells and physical stimulus into the realm of imagination, and then reciprocated in the cy(ber)borg's doubling². Although the Internet may differ in scale from Hayles's PET or the technologies on board the Jupiter II, a similar body-plus-simulation is evoked in the outward projection and subsequent internalization taking place on a host of small-scale terminal screens. In the end, the body-plus-simulation (or s(t)imulation in some cases) may not be the same in all three

instances, but they are *of a kind* that places them at the apex of an intersection between digital and analogue realities.

There is a problem with the use of the body-plus-simulation as a referential term to describe the ongoing travails of the cy(ber)borg. Basically, is *simulation* an accurate or productive description of cyberspace and the cy(ber)borg? Or, does *simulation* do more harm than good? Of course, the use of simulation calls to mind the postmodern theoretical work of Jean Baudrillard, especially the notions of the simulacrum and hyperreal that have been absorbed into popular culture. In particular, Baudrillard writes, in *Simulations*, that the ubiquity of communications systems (particularly television) and their ability to reproduce objects and messages has displaced any notion of the real, substituting successive layers, or orders, of simulacra: "Abstraction today is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (1-2). The result of living in a society where simulations proliferate is the era of the hyperreal, an age where "the boundaries between reality and unreality blur, the 'artificial' becomes 'realer' than the 'real' itself, and 'reality' as simulacrum is produced as an effect from the models and codes that precede it" (Best 247).

From hyperreal to hypertext, it seems inevitable that digital domains should attract Baudrillard's attention and draw forth further layers of simulation and the simulacrum's apparent disavowal of the (corpo)real. Indeed, the Internet appears to continue the

hyperreal trend as images are easily reproduced, distributed, and downloaded across the networks simultaneous with postmodern critics, such as John Perry Barlow, Nicole Stenger, or Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, advocating disembodiment as the next techno-evolutionary stage. Mark Poster, in "Theorizing Virtual Reality: Baudrillard and Derrida", writes that Baudrillard, in the text *Le Crime parfait*, "understands the passage from the hyperreal to virtual reality as an intensification in kind rather than a new direction" (47). Baudrillard pushes the limits of cyberspace and virtual reality in his 1998 essay "In the Shadow of the Millennium (Or the Suspense of the Year 2000)," writing that the focus during the late 1990s upon the then-upcoming millennium erased the notions of progress and succession. Progress and succession used to be indicative of a temporal and historical progression; yet, the forward-looking gaze of the late-1990s skipped over the remaining years of the old millennium and replaced progression with a regressive countdown towards the new millennium: "We are no longer living according to a projected vision of progress or production. The final illusion of history has disappeared since history is now encapsulated in a numerical countdown. . . . Counting the seconds from now to the end means that the end is near, that one has already gone beyond the end" ("In the Shadow"). Projecting into this future that, with the advent of the new millennium, is now our present, Baudrillard seizes on cyberspace and virtual realities: "What's beyond the end? Well, beyond the end, there is virtual reality, that is to say, the horizon of a programmed reality in which all our physiological and social functions (memory, affect, intelligence, sexuality, work) gradually become useless" ("In

the Shadow”).¹

It is no stretch to see how Baudrillard’s postmodernist theory of hyperreality can be adopted by cyberculture critics to describe the digital sites of a cyberspatial environment that, with the advent of the World Wide Web and web browsers, is becoming increasingly dominated by images and point-and-click hyperlinks. In fact, the changeover from a medium dominated by textual commands to the current state of navigable graphics-based space parallels a shift from transparent to opaque technologies. In *Life on the Screen*, Turkle differentiates between transparent and opaque technologies by drawing upon the development of the Apple II and Macintosh computers. In Turkle’s analysis, the Apple II was a transparent technology, a computer system reflecting a modernist sensibility wherein seemingly complex processing systems could be understood by working at the skeletal structure of computer codes and commands: “My stripped-down Apple II both embodied and symbolized a theory that it was possible to understand by discovering the hidden mechanisms that made things work” (33). In essence, the Apple II was intelligible because the system operated according to manual commands inputted by the user, much like the old MS-DOS machines where commands such as “cd” (change directory), “copy”, and “run” were necessary for the system to operate. In contrast, the Macintosh computer, introduced five years after Turkle acquired her modernist Apple II, changed the ontological foundations of the industry by introducing a postmodernist sensibility of opaque technology. For Turkle, the GUI (Graphic User Interface) of her Mac coated the modernist transparency of the computer

with a simulation that “encouraged users to stay at a surface level of visual representation and gave no hint of inner mechanisms” (34). Her Mac was a computer “opposed and even hostile to the traditional modernist expectation that one could take a technology, open the hood, and see inside. The distinctiveness of the Macintosh was precisely that it did not encourage such fantasies; it made the computer screen a world unto itself. It encouraged play and tinkering” (35). For Turkle, the dichotomy of the Apple II and the Macintosh pitted modernism and transparency against postmodernism and opacity as “[p]ostmodern theorists have suggested that the search for depth and mechanism is futile and that it is more realistic to explore the world of shifting surfaces than to embark on a search for origins and structure. Culturally, the Macintosh has served as a carrier object for such ideas” (36).

This postmodernizing of computers seems to find its correlation in the simulating of the Internet; in other words, the Internet, as a digital reality, seems to be undergoing a shift from the modernist position of transparency to a postmodern sensibility of opaque technology. Gone are the days of using such text-based search engines as Gopher or Archie to locate information or connecting to remote computers by typing telnet addresses. The advent of Web browsers, hypertext coding, and point-and-click navigation has, much like the GUI differentiating the Mac and Apple II computer, replaced the cyber-spatial gears of the medium with a simulational universe a user can surf. It is here that Baudrillard’s simulation seems to be emerging for, as C. J. Keep notes, in his online essay “Knocking on Heaven’s Door: Leibniz, Baudrillard and Virtual

Reality,” cyberculture critics view the digital environments of cyberspace (as well as immersion-based virtual realities) “as the apotheosis of Baudrillard’s concept of the hyperreal, and in one sense that is justified; VR strives to simulate not only the look of the real, but also its feel.”

There are key differences, however, in how simulations work in cyberspace and why Hayles’s body-plus-simulation is particularly problematic for the cy(ber)borg. First, it cannot be overemphasized that it is the *body-plus-simulation*, the corporeality of the user reinforced by the technology. Poster writes that VR, whether as the goggled and helmeted computer environment or the terminal-based Internet, may compose digital terrains that exclude a bodily presence but “in either case is not disembodied since the messages or signals are composed by human beings” (44). In “The Materiality of Informatics,” Hayles even goes so far as to demonstrate how data gloves and goggles depend on proprioception to achieve a sense of disembodiment. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines proprioception as “the reception of information by proprioceptors and its interpretation” where proprioceptors are “any sensory structure which receives stimuli arising from within the tissues (other, usually, than the viscera); *esp.* one concerned with the sense of position and movement of a part of the body.” Given the corporeal function of proprioception, Hayles astutely observes that sensations in VR environments must be conveyed via a manipulation of proprioceptive senses, senses and receptors grounded in analogue bodies: “The hand closes to grasp a simulated bird, and something happens in the user’s visual field as a result of that action. The hand itself, however, has felt none of

the material resistance it would if it grasped an actual bird. Proprioceptive sense flows out of the body to meet the artifact, but since there is no material object, it returns in a feedback loop that acts to dematerialize the body” (“Materiality” 168). The implication of the relationship between proprioception and disembodiment is rather obvious: not only does disembodiment assume one has a body to escape from, disembodiment also *requires* a body’s proprioceptive circuit to convey the very feeling of disembodiment in the first place. As such, the *body* is the ground for the body-plus-simulation. Without the patient’s analogue brain, the radioactive particles in PET scans are wasted; without Judy Robinson’s body, the holographic projection cannot exist; without Will Robinson, Robot cannot defend the team; without the proprioceptive senses, disembodiment cannot be achieved; and, without the physicality and doubling² of the analogue user, the cy(ber)borg cannot engage the digital medium.

The second reason the body-plus-simulation is particularly problematic relates to the interformative skepticism of the cy(ber)borg that I outlined in Chapter Two. To reiterate, cy(ber)borgs often use such questions as “a/s/I” to peer behind the screen of the simulation and find the *body*-plus-simulation. This desire get behind the screen is an important function because it represents an active involvement with the medium and its simulations. Unlike television, which is a relatively unidirectional transmission, the Internet can provide the cy(ber)borg the opportunity to engage with the sign itself. Once again, this relates to the triad function of semiosis wherein data and information are constructed according to the participants in the communicative medium. Returning to the

analogy of a watch, Hoffmeyer remarks that

data is, of course, by no means part of the natural world. Right now, for instance, my watch gives the time as 11.44.06. That is data. But, for obvious reasons, these six digits are not in themselves a part of nature — or what we would normally understand by that word. For one thing, time itself does not consist of digits, much less seconds, does it? And for another the digits are “wrong” because my watch is running approximately half a minute fast. If, however, all the people in the world agreed to push 00.00.00 hours half a minute forward, then the data provided would be correct. So correct answers are arrived at by agreements reached between people. And so on and so forth. (90)

The point to be taken from Hoffmeyer’s timely account is the mutability or tangibility of the digital data itself, and, in many respects, the interformativity I outlined in the previous chapter is a representation of just such an engagement. The signs of meaning that are conveyed in the digital interactions among cy(ber)borgs are open to acceptance, doubt, probing, or reconstruction that can actively transform the cy(ber)borg from passive observer or consumer into an active participant in the environment. This participation is exactly what C. J. Keep identifies as the fundamental difference between Baudrillard’s *simulation* and cyberspace’s *virtual*: “Where the *hyperreal* is constituted by the play of surfaces, by a paralytic fascination with exteriority, the *virtual* offers images with depth, images which one can enter, explore, and, perhaps most importantly, with which one can interact. . . .VR’s depth is self-reflexively fictional, tentative, open to change and

adaptation.” As a *virtual* reality that allows interactivity and interformativity, cyberspace is not simply an extension of hyperreality into a digital domain. This potential for interactivity with the elements of the digital realm is a vitally important feature of cyberspace that Poster stresses, writing that Baudrillard’s focus on the simulacrum was on the technologies of reproduction that produced culture as signs ready-made for consumption, in particular, the transmission and absorption of culture through the heavily-reproduced mediums of the avant-garde (art, design) and mass-culture (television, film):

Simulations are coherent sets of meanings, even if they are detached from referents and precede their objects. From first-level simulations like maps to third-level simulations like the televised Gulf War, this cultural form retains its fixed matrix of meanings. TV shows and theme parks *organized* a cultural world that the individual consumes. What distinguishes VR from simulation is its transformational structure: subjects and objects interactively/immersively construct cultural spaces and events. (50)

In other words, signs in cyberspace are not necessarily ready-made for cultural consumption; thus, while it may be somewhat amusing to manipulate images on the computer screen, virtuality provides the cy(ber)borg with an opportunity to rewrite such signs in an attempt to transmit new content and social, cultural, or political messages. In *Connected Intelligence*, Derrick de Kerckhove sees this virtuality as a critically empowering function and compares the computer to the television. “The eye of the TV

watcher,” de Kerckhove writes, “is not turned inward, but outward. . . . All meanings are controlled by the outside sources and the critical role of the viewer is merely to integrate the meaning as sensation in context.” He goes on to note that “with computers, in spite of, or perhaps because of, the interactive nature of the process, there is an intermediate stage of information-processing between what is behind the screen and the mind. There is consequently a considerable inversion of our psychology as it is moving from within, outward” (149). Granted, this intermediate stage and movement outwards may not be a return to the modernist real that Baudrillard claims the simulacrum has replaced; yet, neither does it mark the dominance of a postmodern simulation based on the consumption of signs as cultural artifacts. The body becomes a *plus* given virtualization, but it is not Hayles’s body-plus-simulation; rather, it is the *body-plus-virtualization*.

The modernist-inspired virtuality of digital realms helps explain why hackers, rightly or not, are often popularized, even heroic, figures in literature and film. In essence, these so-called anti-conformists are the proto-modernists of our contemporary age, rebellious figures working beneath the surface-level of the postmodern simulation to manipulate the computer codes and write virtuality back into the system. This is especially the case in the recent ScyberFilm, *The Matrix*, where the Wachowski Brothers, drawing equally upon cyberpunk-inspired themes and a traditional mythological structure, depict the emergence of the body-plus-virtualization as tantamount to resisting a Baudrillard-inspired simulational universe. The protagonist of *The Matrix* is Neo (Keanu Reeves), a computer hacker who learns that the world he occupies (along with every other

human on Earth) is one very large computer simulation kept by AIs to imprison a defeated humanity. Neo is awakened to the true nature of existence by Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne), a legendary hacker who, along with a rag-tag group of supporters that include Trinity (Carrie-Anne Moss), Cypher (Joe Pantoliano), and Tank (Marcus Chong), shows Neo that humans are born, raised, and bred by the AIs as living bio-electric generators. Unable to draw solar energy, the machines dominating the Earth rely upon the bio-electricity of living humans to recharge their metallic batteries. To facilitate this charge, almost all humans are plugged into a vast computer simulation while, unbeknown to humanity, individual analogue bodies are harvested for power, housed in a techno-embryonic womb from birth to death.

Pulling Neo out of the simulation and into an analogue world that is a cross of *Blade Runner*, *Mad Max*, and *Alien*, Morpheus reveals that he believes Neo is the One, the prophesized saviour of humanity who will overthrow the AIs and regenerate a dying humanity. Throughout the bulk of the visually-stunning film, Neo struggles with the faith Morpheus and his followers have in him (a faith Neo does not initially share). While Neo grapples with his destiny, he and his compatriots must avoid the Agents, advanced black-suited software constructs that police the simulation and seek to capture Morpheus and discern the location of Zion, the last stronghold of an analogue humanity.

Throughout the film, the Brothers tip their hat to a variety of sources that Paul 'nEo' Martin details in his online exploration "Postmodern Motifs and Ambience in Cyberpunk Films":

The directors play with viewers, making them guess the original sources — and those are numerous. From the Kafkaesque scene of Neo's interrogation to the shooting scene that resembles of [sic] Arnold Schwarzenegger entering the police station in the first *Terminator*. From antagonists in the form of mysterious agents, resembling of a modern myth of Men in Black to Neo playing Superman in the final scene. Or from the Alien-like scene of debugging Neo to the reversed version of the Snow White [sic]. Not to mention quoting *Through the Looking Glass* and *The Wizard of Oz*.

In particular, however, the Wachowski Brothers openly acknowledge Baudrillard when, at the beginning of the film, Neo places money he has received for a bootleg computer program into a hollowed-out copy of *Simulations and Simulacra*. Similarly, when Morpheus reveals the truth about Earth and its post-apocalyptic condition, he says, “[w]elcome to the desert of the real,” another reference to Baudrillard.

These references to Baudrillard prompt Dani Cavallaro to write, in *Cyberpunk and Cyberculture*, that “*The Matrix* highlights the notion of hyperreality by presenting, scene after scene, very physical and indeed violent confrontations among people who are not actually people but digital representations of bodies lying on simstim chairs” (211-12). Simstim cocoons would be a more appropriate designation, but the point is well-taken and more-or-less accurate. Yet Cavallaro's assessment that the people in *The Matrix* are not actually people because they are digital representations is misleading; in fact, *The Matrix* reinforces the concept that these digital figures *are* people. Morpheus points to

this connection in his explanation to Neo that the online mind cannot live without the hooked-up body; thus, while the security guards that Neo and femme-fatale Trinity kill towards movie's end may only be digital representations, their real bodies surely die in their individual cocoons. This is visually emphasized when Neo gains confidence in his abilities and takes on the unstoppable Agent Smith (Hugo Weaving) in a *mano a mano* martial arts confrontation. During the battle, Smith gains the upper hand due to his (its?) experience and pummels Neo in the chest; in analogue reality, Neo's uplinked body writhes in its hook-up, spitting out blood as he bruises from the digital impact.

On the flip side, however, the digital body in the matrix cannot live without the mind of its analogue host, a point made clear when Cypher, the traitorous member of Morpheus's rebels, alerts the Agents to their online location. In analogue reality, Cypher stands above the still-connected bodies of Switch and Tank and forcibly disconnects them, pulling the phallic-interface out of their skull sockets before they can properly disengage, thereby killing them. Interestingly, when Cypher does force them off-line, their online bodies collapse to the ground rather than wink out of existence, reinforcing the body-plus-simulation existence of the matrix as both mind *and* body must be engaged for the simulation to operate. As Cavallaro writes, "the film emphasizes that the physical body is not transcended by such means: one can *die* in an electronically simulated scenario as easily as in a dark alley. If the sensorium is shattered by a simstim experience, the body accordingly collapses, for mind and body, it is maintained, cannot survive without each other" (212).

Cavallaro does not go far enough in her analysis of *The Matrix*, however, for the film hints at the breakdown of the hyperreal simulation with the rise of the tactile virtual. When Neo surprises Cypher prior to the betrayal, the matrix appears on Cypher's computer screens as strings of green encrypted code (actually reversed numbers and Japanese figures). Neo, still trying to absorb all he has learned about humanity and the simulation, asks if Cypher always looks at the matrix as encoded strings of data. "Well you have to," Cypher replies. "The image translators work for the construct program. But there's way too much information to decode the matrix." There may be way too much information, but that does not prevent the rebel hackers from deciphering the code: "You get used to it," Cypher continues. "I-I don't even see the code. All I see is blond, brunette, redhead." This is not to say that Cypher *cannot* see the code behind opaque layers of postmodern simulation; rather, he has gotten used to the coded nature of the system and sees *through* it in a transparent fashion, recognizing the strings for what they digitally represent.² Similarly, when Cypher meets Agent Smith inside the matrix to finalize the betrayal, he notes that he *knows* the steak dinner he is eating is unreal and *how* the system operates to convey the taste and texture to fool his bodily reactions. Cavallaro argues that Baudrillard's simulation is "an illusion, yet its principal aim is to make us forget that this is the case. It constructs us as passive consumers of assorted false promises and manages to keep us in its thrall by making us forget that we are the world's inmates rather than free agents" (212). Yet Cypher is not fooled by the simulation nor is he a passive consumer of this fictional simulacrum; rather, he displays a

modernist awareness of transparency in his ability to see beyond the opaque world Agent Smith and his fellow AIs offer humanity. In particular, he perceives the matrix as green lines of code for, unlike the bulk of humanity, he can read the coding of the world on his screen and get under the surface of simulation and open up the modernist hood to see how that world operates.

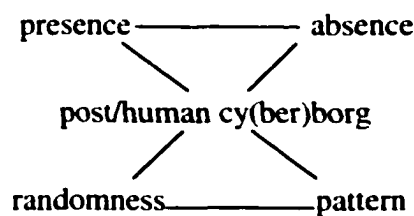
Where Cypher can perceive the coding of the matrix from outside the system, Neo makes the biggest transition from opaque simulation to transparent virtual, accomplished in the movie's concluding battle with Agent Smith. Running towards an exit-point located in a hotel room in the matrix, Neo is ambushed by Smith and shot several times in the chest, effectively killing him in both digital and analogue realities. Yet with the power of Trinity's love (foretold by the mystical Oracle) and in confirmation of his status as a contemporary mythic hero, Neo is brought back to life in a Christ-like resurrection that confirms he is the anagram of his name, the One.³ The post-resurrection Neo, however, is significantly different from the pre-resurrection Neo given that he has made the transition from opaque simulation to transparent virtuality. This is made readily obvious in Neo's perception of the matrix that the audience observes through his eyes. Unlike Cypher, who decodes the matrix from outside the system, Neo now sees the matrix as lines of green code from within the matrix; thus, as he looks at three Agents at the other end of the hotel hallway, he sees lines of code stringing the walls, floor, ceiling, and within the Agents' bodies. Neo is no longer restricted to the surface level of simulation as he can now look under the hood in cyber-modernist fashion and manipulate

the coding language. Thus, when the Agents proceed to fire their guns in an attempt to once again kill the black-clad hero, Neo manipulates his surrounding reality and stops the series of bullets in mid-air, casually picking one out of the air and holding it to his face, scrutinizing it before he lets them all drop harmlessly to the ground. Agent Smith attempts to once again best Neo in a hand-to-hand combat, yet Neo easily defeats Smith by standing perfectly still and, with a look of bored disinterest, defending himself with one hand while Agent Smith employs every martial arts move he can muster. Finally, Neo demonstrates his ultimate manipulation of the coding by disappearing into Smith's body and splitting him apart from the inside, scattering the Agent's fragmented code across the hotel and scaring the remaining two Agents away.

By movie's end, Neo is no longer the postmodern subject resigned to a level of opaque simulation but a modernist agent working at the transparent level of the virtual, manipulating the code that structures this reality. As a result, *The Matrix* (the first of an upcoming trilogy) ends with Neo calling the mainframe and indicating that he will "show these people what you don't want them to see. I'm going to show them a world without you." In heroic fashion, Neo then stands on the street, puts on his stylish-yet-slightly-mirrorshaded sunglasses, and flies off into the sky. In this respect, *The Matrix* achieves a transcendent ending that differs in tone from the apathy of, say, Gibson's novels. In particular, where the world Gibson depicts at the end of *Neuromancer* and the beginning of *Count Zero* remains unchanged following the merging of the Wintermute and Neuromance Artificial Intelligences, the emergence of the One in *The Matrix* hints at a

profound change in humanity that will presumably be explored in *The Matrix 2: Reloaded* and *The Matrix 3*, slated respectively for 2003 and 2004 release.

Having actively resisted the notions of disembodiment circulating through some of the popularized readings of both *ScyberFiction* and cyberspace, I have attempted in this chapter to indicate that the multi-locationality of the cy(ber)borg requires thinking of the post/human body as an extension beyond, but not a discarding of, the skin. The post/human body that finds itself interstitially positioned in its extensions into cyberspace, adoption of digitally embodied appendages, and doubling² sexual interludes is a body-plus-virtualization, an actant of the triad that directly impacts the code duality of analogue and digital worlds. Neo's transformation into an entity that is neither disembodied (the wounds his analogue self receives from the digital Agent Smith reinforces this fact) nor a passive consumer of the simulational universe metaphorically charts the shift from the body-plus-simulation to the body-plus- virtualization. As Keep, Poster, and de Kerckhove demonstrate, virtuality allows for a direct engagement with the signs of cyberspace, a manipulation and interaction quite unlike the hyperreality that dominates Baudrillard's universe of simulations. The end-result of just such manipulation or engagement with the signs is not only an alteration of digital domains but, given the entwining of code duality and the



dialectic, the analogue world as well. As *The Matrix* subtly demonstrates, the body-plus-virtualization needs only an awakening to allow our contemporary cy(ber)borgs to not only peel back the simulation to reveal the green strings of code but, with the requisite training and self-confidence, rewrite those strings altogether.

Chapter Five:

Penetrating ScyberFiction:

Penetration, Regeneration, and Alternate Synchrospace(s)

She finds a protruding bit of code, a defect, where the image has been corrupted — perhaps by collateral damage from their fight, perhaps just by wear and tear, by constant usage; whatever the cause, she catches hold of it, levers away the skin of the image. It comes away with a ripping sound, just a small patch of the illusion, perhaps as big as a man's outspread hand. In that one spot, the codewall lies exposed, and she frowns, studying its pattern.

(Scott, *Trouble* 330-31, italics in original)

I would suggest that cyborgs have more to do with regeneration and are suspicious of the reproductive matrix and of most birthing.

(Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" 181)

In the previous chapter, I outlined how *The Matrix* stages the difference between the body-plus-simulation and the body-plus-virtualization by allowing Neo to eventually see behind the digital facade of the world surrounding him. Even more important, Neo is then able to manipulate the very fabric of the coding itself, the simulation becoming tactile and allowing virtuality to emerge as Neo manipulates the structure of the digital environment. In *The Matrix*, Neo becomes the body-plus-virtualization, scribing a certain amount of tactility into a system that has, in Morpheus's terms, been pulled over

his eyes. Interestingly, the conclusion of *The Matrix* is very reminiscent of Melissa Scott's 1994 novel *Trouble and Her Friends*; in particular, the epigraph, taken from the conclusion of Scott's novel, depicts one of her protagonists, Cerise, also staring behind the digital facade, peering into the computer coding that she, along with her partner Trouble, will later manipulate to gain control over the digital world. In fact, while *Trouble and Her Friends* deals with such by-now familiar themes as cyberspace, point-of-view, body-plus-virtualization, interformativity, and virtual sex, the novel is unique in that it explores the post/human politics of cyberspace by addressing the functions of sexuality, corporeal penetration, and regeneration.

One of the criticisms that has been leveled against the problematic cyberpunk-branch of ScyberFiction has been its reinforcement of a dominant masculinity and the subsequent marginalization, or complete deletion, of non-heterosexual relationships. In "Feminist Cyberpunk," Karen Cadora remarks that such an absence of alternative sexualities reinforces a futuristic status quo: "Populated almost exclusively by men and located in the male-dominated field of computers, science, and sf, masculinist cyberpunk is ripe for the homoerotic. Sadly, fierce queens and flaming queers are absent from the pages of traditional cyberpunk. Indeed, cyberpunk is characterized by its rather rampant heterosexuality" (361). Drawing upon her lesbian background, Scott redresses this absence by populating her novel with gay and lesbian figures. In particular, her two protagonists, Cerise and Trouble, are not "console cowboys" but lesbian console cowgirls, former lovers brought together through cyber-circumstance and forced to rely upon one another to unravel the plot that threatens them.

Part of that plot involves the politics of power; yet, unlike other ScyberFiction, Scott's text recognizes that multinational conglomerates will not necessarily hoard all the political strength. Rather, Scott is well-aware such traditional avenues as the United States Legislature will continue to hold power, a fact reinforced recently by the antitrust allegations against Microsoft. In the novel, the cyberspatial world has been fractured by Evans-Tindale, a piece of legislation isolating the American digital network from the global nets and thereby creating "a new entity within the Treasury Department that will have enforcement responsibility on the nets, replacing the patchwork system currently in place. In a nutshell, Evans-Tindale, like the Nunberg Act before it, redefines so-called cyberspace as a particular legal jurisdiction, and establishes a code of law governing these electronic transactions" (Scott, *Trouble* 15). Part of this jurisdictional imposition arises from the controversial brainworm technology that allows cutting-edge access to the networks. The interface of the brainworm, however, does have its risks because "implantation and direct-to-brain wiring was always tricky, could leave you a mental cripple if the operation went wrong, and the oldsters had never quite been able to face that possibility" (Scott, *Trouble* 29). As a result of the dangers associated with the brainworm, an ideological divide has occurred within the hacker world, a schism between the old guard, who rely strictly on hacking abilities, and the new guard, who have an advantage by virtue of their in-depth wiring. This schism prompts the old netwalkers to throw their support behind the Evans-Tindale legislation and the subsequent criminalization of the brainworm. Not coincidentally, the legislation has the pleasant side-effect of cementing the status of the old netwalkers who, by virtue of the superior

brainworm, faces extinction: *“The old netwalkers are out of touch with the new conditions, with the better, faster, and wider-band dollie-slots and especially with the brainworm; of course they’d support this law as a way to keep their own power supreme”* (17, italics in original).

In an interesting move, Scott’s brainworm allows post/human corporeality to be written into the digital network in two distinct manners. First, the brainworm sustains a sense of the corporeal body as Scott’s cy(ber)borgs are repeatedly reminded of their physical selves hooked into the digital system. This is perhaps best exemplified in an online “lesbian” sexual encounter that takes place between Cerise and newcomer Silk. Bothered by the ambiguity and tension that has accompanied Trouble’s return to the network, Cerise is willingly seduced into an online liaison by Silk, a female user that strikes her fancy:

She takes a few steps forward, and Silk pulls herself gracefully upright, leaving just enough room for Cerise to step past her. She knows perfectly well what the mock-gazebo must contain, what she would consent to — the programs aren’t difficult to find, are simplicity to write when both parties are on the wire, no need for complex suits and gloves, just the brainworm turning suggested fantasy to direct, directed input. She brushes past Silk, deliberately trailing a hand across the girl-shape’s hip. She feels leather, cool and smooth as Silk’s name against her palm, and Silk laughs and follows her in, offers her hand and in it a key.

(Scott, *Trouble* 236, italics in original)

Moments after she and Silk embrace, Silk performs cunnilingus and Scott’s description

of Cerise's growing excitement is grounded in the corporeal body: "*It's been a long time since she's played this game, a long time since there's been a presence on the net that excited her, and she is startled once again when she feels the distant ache between her legs, her body waking to stimulus, lagging behind the unreal sensations*" (236-37, italics in original). Although the body may lag behind the stimulus, Scott clearly evokes the physical body in a sexual encounter between two point-of-views that blends the code duality of unreal sensation (pattern) and body climaxing (presence). Even after Silk mysteriously disappears following Cerise's orgasm, Cerise "*can feel her body trembling still, muscles relaxing only slowly in the aftermath of orgasm . . .*" (Scott, *Trouble* 237, italics in original).

Interestingly, the corporeal presence effected by the "direct, directed input" of the brainworm is not directionally restricted; in other words, corporeality and stimulus travel back-and-forth through the wires to write embodiment into the networks. Throughout the novel (and prefiguring the writing of code towards the end), Cerise and Trouble can "feel" the coding that underwrites the digital system. For example, Cerise comes upon a message posted by Trouble: "*Cerise reaches for it, feeling the familiar flicker of codes against her fingers — Trouble's work, no mistake, no forgery, the real thing, not the pale imitation of the new Trouble's work — and the message spills into the air*" (Scott, *Trouble* 147, italics in original). This digital tactility defines brainworm access to the networks since, throughout the novel, Scott repeatedly draws forth embodied sensations by allowing her figures to taste, touch, and smell the digital environment. Reversing the flow, however, avatars can also get a sense of another avatar's analogue corporeality,

especially those who are using the brainworm: "She sighed — it was much more fun working fully wired, but the brainworm inevitably leaked some feedback into the system; a good syscop could tell whether or not another netwalker was on the wire . . ." (Scott, *Trouble* 53). Similarly, towards the end of the novel when Trouble confronts her enemy, Scott goes so far as to suggest that emotion can be transmitted across the system: "*He stands on the first platform like a priest, high enough to dominate, not so high that he cannot reach her, and Trouble curls her lip at him, lets the worm carry her contempt, strong enough that even he must feel it*" (*Trouble* 322, italics in original). Sensation is repeatedly evoked through *Trouble and Her Friends* as a reminder that corporeality is not left at the screen but, quite the opposite, is a central accompaniment to the cyberspatial experience.

The brainworm technology is particularly central to Scott's *Trouble and Her Friends* because it is the focus of the novel's sexual politics and divisions of power; in particular, the brainworm opens the door to the issue of penetration and its functioning as a herald of both masculinity and heterosexuality. At this point, Judith Butler's interpretation of penetration must be reiterated for she writes, in *Bodies That Matter*, that the function of penetration serves a heterosexual aim by defining the masculine as the penetrator and the feminine as the penetrated. Much like the Tinysex described in Chapter Three, Butler believes the signification of the masculine body as inviolable and powerful is achieved through its penetrative power; yet, opening that body to penetration is an invitation to question the assumptions of power. In Butler's estimation, destabilizing the function of penetration would problematize this 'heterosexual *matrix* . . .

[and] it appears that the stability of these gendered positions would be called into question” (*Bodies* 51).

Butler’s use of the term *matrix* to describe the heterosexual paradigm is particularly interesting because it calls to mind Gibson’s description of cyberspace as a matrix and, by extension, the gendered politics of penetration. As Cadora notes above, the perceived gendering of cyberpunk as masculine has generated critical responses from feminists who argue that Gibson, tattooed as the *ur*-cyberpunk author, deploys the issues of penetration and gender in problematic ways. First off, part of the difficulties stems from the etymological origins of matrix, which, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is derived from the Latin *mater*, meaning uterus or womb but also “a place or medium in which something is ‘bred’, produced, or developed.” With that in mind, Nicola Nixon writes, in “Cyberpunk: Preparing the Ground for Revolution or Keeping the Boys Satisfied?,” that the language of Gibson’s fiction is indebted to masculine penetration: “The console cowboys may ‘jack in,’ but they are constantly in danger of hitting ICE (Intrusion Countermeasures Electronics), a sort of metaphoric hymenal membrane which can kill them if they don’t successfully ‘eat through it’ with extremely sophisticated contraband hacking equipment in order to ‘penetrate’ the data systems of such organizations as T-A (Tessier-Ashpool)” (226).

In *Trouble and Her Friends*, Scott uses the brainworm to trouble the penetrating issue Nixon outlines in Gibson’s work and draw more attention to the centrality of the sexual dynamics that surround her lesbian cy(ber)borgs and the antagonists opposing them. Specifically, newTrouble is revealed to be James Tilsen, known to Cerise as Silk,

a fact that initially embarrasses her given the earlier sexual encounter. The greater threat, however, is the Mayor of Seahaven, a fabled cyber-spatial site that remains the last online Freetown where the hacker elite can congregate. Notably, the Mayor is a hallowed figure of the old netwalkers who supported Evans-Tindale and continue to oppose the ongoing use of the now-illegal brainworm; thus, in the final confrontation with Trouble, the Mayor reveals his contempt for the brainworm: “**And who do you think you are?* the Mayor demands, stung at last into real response. *You're nobody, just another half-competent bitch queer who thinks she's good because she has a brainworm. You haven't earned what you have, you haven't worked for it the way the rest of us have, the real crackers, you just had it handed to you direct-to-brain**” (323, italics in original).

The Mayor's derisive critique of Trouble as a half-competent bitch queer on the brainworm is telling in that it compresses the paradigms of sexual politics, technological access, and online power. Specifically, Scott *overtly* troubles the heterosexual paradigm and dominance on the networks via the lesbian status of her two protagonists and *covertly* troubles the heterosexual matrix by working at the technological level of the brainworm. Unlike the dollie slots, which are text-based and mainly used by the old netwalkers, the brainworm achieves its disruptive function by virtue of its penetrative function, thereby threatening to destabilize the position of masculinity as penetrator:

Once you plugged yourself into the system — either via the implanted dollie-box and dollie-slot, the direct-on-line image processor system, which gave a text-speech-and-symbol interface, or through the full-sense brainworm, with its molecular wires running directly into the brain that let you experience virtuality as

though it were real — it was easy enough to find your way around the nets.

(Scott, *Trouble* 14).

The dollie-slots, of course, may initiate the penetrability of the (masculine) body, but the strength and power of the dollie-slotted cy(ber)borgs reside in those code-cracking skills rooted in text and speech interfaces. The brainworm, however, initiates a deeper, more thorough, penetration, engaging the fleshy pulp of the brain itself: “The worm entailed risks: implantation and direct-to-brain wiring was always tricky, could leave you a mental cripple if the operation went wrong . . . The dollie-slots and the associated implants didn’t touch the brain, ran along existing nerves — less of a risk, and more of a challenge to use, or so the oldsters said” (Scott, *Trouble* 29-30).

This reticence about having the machinery penetrate the fleshy brain and actually meld the biological with mechanical is reinforced when it is revealed that the oldsters who support the Evans-Tindale legislation are male:

This was what she hated most about the on-line world, the shadows as much as the bright lights of the legal nets: too many men assumed that the nets were exclusively their province, and were startled and angry to find out that it wasn’t. They were the same people who feared the brainworm, feared the intensity of its sensations, data translated not as image and words alone, but as the full range of feeling, the entire response of the body, and, rather, than ever admit fear, they walked with raised hackles, looking for a fight. (120)

The fear the masculine old guard has of the penetrative brainworm can be interpreted as a fear or hatred of the body, a contempt for the meat. Prior to the invention of the

brainworm, access to the networks did not involve intensity of sensation but was based on the play of images and words alone. Now, as I explained above, the brainworm brings corporeality into the networks by allowing hackers on the worm to experience the nets with a full range of senses. Such inclusion of bodily sensations disrupts the sanctity of the inviolable masculine body because control shifts from the male cy(ber)borg penetrating the network to a new cy(ber)borg penetrated by the network.

The Mayor reinforces this fear of the inviolable masculine body's erosion when he repeatedly links the brainworm to lesbianism. Arabesque reports the Mayor's mood to Cerise and Trouble, explaining, *"*he says you should be the one to be shopped, not newTrouble — you're not really one of us, he says, just another dyke on the wire, using it 'cause you're not good enough to run the net bare*" (Scott, Trouble 234, italics in original)*. Then, posing as Sasquatch, the Mayor writes a message on Seahaven's communications board and accuses Trouble of being political. Cerise recognizes this accusation as *"a familiar euphemism, one that had never failed to draw at least a sour smile. Translated, Cerise thought, Sasquatch is saying she's a dyke and on the wire, and we don't have to take care of her"* (Scott, *Trouble* 239). Finally, the Mayor feels betrayed when he learns that his protégée, James Tilsen,¹ is also on the wire:

**You little bastard,* the Mayor says, voice flat again, the anger damped to a hint of sulphur. *When— How— ?* And he stops, with what would have been the shake of a head if he'd himself been on the wire.*

**I'm sorry,* Silk/newTrouble says again, and sounds terribly young.*

**You cunt,* the Mayor says, and the icon's working hand convulses. *Go*

home. The fabric of Seahaven warps again, twists and distorts and in an eyeblink wraps itself around Silk/newTrouble's icon.* (328, italics in original)

Tilsen's use of the brainworm is particularly troubling for the Mayor as the young protégé envelops both penetrator and penetrated, divesting himself of his masculine function as penetrator by submitting himself to the penetrative surgery that installs the brainworm and the corporeal sensations that accompany it. Scott's brainworm functions to destabilize the sanctity of (white, male) oldster hackers by interfacing directly with corporeality and involving the body in the cyberspatial environment, reinforcing online experiences with an intensity of physical sensation.

To further polarize the issue, the brainworm is particularly appealing to those displaced cy(ber)borgs who, already marked by their bodies, are immune to the panic of bodily transgression: "Maybe that was why it was almost always the underclasses, the women, the people of color, the gay people, the ones who were already stigmatized as being vulnerable, available, trapped by the body, who took the risk of the wire" (Scott, *Trouble* 128-29). As Scott depicts them, the new generation of netwalkers are those individuals whose corporeality is threaded in the sexual, social, racial, political, and economic fabrics. Unwilling or unable to give up their corporeal bodies, the next generation of netwalkers factor corporeality into the digital equation via a brainworm technology that (re)embodies the body in the digital interface.

To further structure her text, Scott also troubles gender ascription via the online avatars Cerise and Trouble use in the network. When Cerise returns to the hacker refuge of Seahaven and begins walking its streets, she dons an icon that makes her look like a

“comic-book woman, all tits and hips and Barbie-doll waist, but done in one dimension only, exactly like a comic book, so that the shape is paper thin, absolutely flat from certain angles” (Scott, *Trouble* 147). Scott’s description of Cerise donning her avatar is reminiscent of the material I covered in Chapter Three where, in the case of those avatars that are so obvious *as* avatars, parody can be used to destabilize the usual forms of gender-identification in cyberspace. In Scott’s case, she allows Cerise to wrap the “tits and hips and Barbie-doll waist” into a comic-book woman that is conveyed in an entirely appropriate one-dimensionality. Cerise’s icon may not be the parody of mass production that is outlined in the Clint and Brandy products of Stephenson’s *Snow Crash*, but her digital embodiment does carry a subtle critique of gender on the networks as she visually displays online gender as nothing more than a cartoonish convention that, in its one-dimensionality, is paper-thin.

Once again, it must be pointed out that the cyberspace Scott depicts is one where the old netwalkers (i.e., male) are victorious with Evans-Tindale and the banning of the brainworm; essentially, Scott’s cyberspace is a predominantly male cyberspace. Seahaven is particularly so given that the Mayor is a male. Thus, the function of paper-thin avatars as critiques of a male-dominant cyberspace is repeatedly made throughout the novel, notably in the concluding battle that finds Cerise and Trouble squaring off against the Mayor. In this final sequence, Seahaven is digitally remade, turning into an assemblage of cliched imagery and equally one-dimensional Western motifs: “It is remade today in stark simplicity, dirt road and sunlight and flat-fronted wooden buildings, a double line of them along the single road, the only road today, that leads

straight to the Mayor's Aztec temple." The entire showdown is straight out of *High Noon* or a Sergio Leone spaghetti western, a link reinforced when Trouble recognizes the scene as "the grade-B western's final scene" (Scott, *Trouble* 320). The final association takes place when both Cerise and Trouble change their icons to adapt to their surroundings:

Cerise grins, and triggers a sequence, spinning an image into the air around them. Her touch is clumsy, but the shape that forms is recognizable enough: a gunfighter's silhouette, battered ten-gallon hat and loose cap-shouldered duster, dark against the Mayor's walls. . . . After a moment Trouble nods, and reaches for the icon, drawing it over herself like a suit of clothes. Cerise spins a second copy for herself — she keeps the black hat, but her kerchief is her own hot fuchsia, a single point of vivid contrast — and dons it, too. (Scott, *Trouble* 330, italics in original)

From the one-dimensionality of Cerise's icon to the cardboard cut-out Western town, Scott's choice of representational imagery throughout the novel can be seen to critique the simulational quality of male-dominant networks as, in postmodern fashion, there is no depth behind the surface. Further still, Scott deploys the virtual by allowing her figures to respond to, engage, and manipulate those selfsame surfaces. Thanks to the function of the brainworm, Cerise and Trouble are exemplars of the body-plus-virtualization as the corporeal body is not cut adrift from the online experience nor are the cy(ber)borgs constrained to passively consuming the images around them.

The conclusion of *Trouble and Her Friends* is particularly interesting as it further entrenches the transformative possibilities of virtual space and introduces the difference

between regeneration and reproduction, two terms introduced in the second epigraph and distinguished by Haraway in "A Cyborg Manifesto." Among its many definitions of reproduction, the *Oxford English Dictionary* includes "*trans.* To bring again into material existence; to create or form anew; *spec.* in *Biol.* to form (a lost limb or organ) afresh; to generate (new individuals)." Also included: "To produce again by means of combination or change . . . To bring about again; to effect, exhibit, or present anew; to repeat in some fashion." In a similar vein, regeneration covers similar ground, but with some important value judgements: "1. a. The action of regenerating; the process or fact of being regenerated; re-creation, re-formation, etc. b. *fig.* Revival; renascence, re-constitution on a higher level. 1. a. *trans.* In religious use: To cause to be born again in a spiritual sense; to invest with a new and higher spiritual nature. Also *refl.* b. To reform completely; to effect a thorough moral change in (a person or state of things, etc.). c. To convert *into* something better." It is this sense of a regenerative higher level, something born again with a higher spiritual nature, that is of importance for Haraway's cyborg feminist politics: "We require regeneration, not rebirth, and the possibilities for our reconstitution include the utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous world without gender" ("A Cyborg" 181).

While there may be a fine line between regeneration and reproduction, Scott positions Seahaven and cyberspace as just such a site of regeneration. Upon the defeat of the Mayor, it falls upon Trouble to take leadership of Seahaven, regenerating an alternate synchrospace to the dominant government-controlled nets of the novel. As a lesbian cy(ber)borg that is not interested in heterosexual reproduction, Trouble takes on the task

of using Seahaven to envision an ontological change to the entire U.S. digital system:

But the idea was tempting to have Seahaven for herself, to take over that space, that status, for her own. . . . And there would be other opportunities too — maybe Mabry wouldn't approve, and Starling, Treasury, certainly wouldn't, but the possibilities cut both ways, not just not to return to the shadows, she'd come too far for that anyway, but to redefine the bright lights, begin again the action Evans-Tindale has cut short. From Seahaven, with Seahaven's sanctuary as a base and a passport, she could do anything. (Scott, *Trouble* 370).

In her novel, Scott suggests that Seahaven represents a starting point for a new perception of cyberspace, a regeneration of the online realm. Cadora writes, in "Feminist Cyberpunk," that the subversion of the heterosexual paradigm "has serious implications for notions of reproduction" (363), and Scott's novel demonstrates those implications on a digital and social scale. At the end of *Trouble and Her Friends*, reproduction is not the order of business; rather, regeneration is the dominant motif with Seahaven positioned as a site of regeneration controlled not by male privilege and old guard access but by lesbian cy(ber)borgs and the penetrative technology of the brainworm. In the end, the penetration of the hacker body, the lesbian status of the novel's protagonists, the online identity swapping, the one-dimensionality of networked gender roles, the corporeality of the body-plus-virtualization, and the regenerative Seahaven all serve to destabilize a paradigm of heterosexual penetration. In *Trouble and Her Friends*, Scott clearly sees the ontological value of cyberspace, particularly in the central position of Seahaven, but is cognizant that the politics of corporeal bodies are as important to the medium's future

development as the technological hardware that facilitates access.

A Million(s) To One: Penetrating Molly in Gibson's Neuromancer Trilogy

Scott's depiction of a regenerative cyberspace, embodied in the form of an alternate synchrospace that is Seahaven, seems to have come a long way from Gibson's fiction; for, if the definition of regeneration involves a reconstitution at a higher level (spiritual, moral, technological), then the resilience of Gibson's cyberspace throughout the *Neuromancer* trilogy is suggestive of a reproductive model. After all, the seven years from *Neuromancer* to *Count Zero*, and then the additional seven years from *Count Zero* to *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, find cyberspace and the near-future remarkably unchanged. At the end of *Neuromancer*, the merged AI entity of Wintermute/Neuromancer expresses interest in making contact with an alien race from the Centauri system. What happens to cyberspace and the world at large following the merge of Wintermute and Neuromancer?

As *Count Zero* demonstrates so effectively, nothing! While individual characters may end up better or worse, the status quo effectively remains unaffected. In *Count Zero*, Gibson returns to a cyberspace still ruled by a hierarchical system of entrepreneurs, freelancers, contracted agents, and multinational conglomerates. The street is still finding its uses for things and the world still feels like "a deranged experiment in social Darwinism" (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 6). Granted, cyberspace appears to be populated by voodoo loas, the Wintermute/Neuromancer entity fractured into a series of AI Jrs., but the environment of *Neuromancer* has been simply transported seven years into the future.

With the end of *Count Zero*, *Mona Lisa Overdrive* is a flash-forward seven more

years where Gibson presents us with a world that has once again refused to move forward, effectively frozen in time by the zaibatsus, multinationals, and orbital platforms. In Gibson's depictions of the Sprawl, the reader finds a terrain that is remarkable only in its hibernated state, its hybernesis. The conclusion of *Mona Lisa Overdrive* is equally suggestive that nothing will change. Mona, a street-level hustler, becomes the newly-improved Angie Mitchell, a fresh body to be exploited by the simstim market. Similarly, most of the actors are hooked into an aleph, ready to make their own cyberspatial voyage to Centauri. Yet, will this trip to Centauri achieve anything more than Wintermute/Neuromancer's contact? Why should it? Given that Gibson undercuts any notion of transcendence at the end of *Neuromancer* with two subsequent texts situated in a world of hybernesis, he may, in fact, be situating Alpha Centauri as a red herring, a possibility suggestive in the playful language of *Mona Lisa Overdrive*'s conclusion:

"The other one was somewhere else," Bobby said.

"Centauri," Colin said.

Can they be teasing her? Is this some joke of Bobby's?

"So it's kinda hard to explain why the matrix split up into all those hoodoos 'n' shit, when it met this other one," the Finn said, "but when we get there, you'll sorta get the idea. . . ."

My own feeling," Colin said, "is that it's all so much more amusing, this way. . . ."

"Are you telling me the truth?"

"Be there in a New York minute," said the Finn, "no shit." (Gibson, 308)

Aside from the playful banter that conceals more than it reveals, the future possibilities that supposedly await in Centauri must be tempered with the realization that the aleph itself is not even connected to the matrix: "With no link to the global matrix, the data was immune to every kind of attack via cyberspace. The catch, of course, was that you couldn't access it via the matrix; it was dead storage" (Gibson, *Mona* 154); or, as we learn at the end, storage for the dead. Finally, as I previously noted, the aleph is run on a battery-pack equipped with solar cells; thus, any hope for salvation, transcendence, or a world regenerated via the digital medium of *Mona Lisa Overdrive* is overly optimistic in the face of a solar eclipse or cloudy weather.

Given the seemingly reconstructive environment of zaibatsus, cyberspace, console cowboys, and bodily invasion that is pervasive throughout *Neuromancer*, *Count Zero*, and *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, Nicola Nixon's earlier criticism of *Neuromancer*, a text that perpetuates masculine domination over the feminine with a penetrative language bordering on rape, does seem to work at one level. With Gibson's fiction, however, nothing comes easy, there is rarely anything ever cut and dried, and the surface often conceals a more tumultuous current underneath. Therefore, does corporeal penetration and subsequent destabilizing of the heterosexual matrix, outlined in Scott's novel, *never* take place in the *Neuromancer* trilogy? Has Gibson written a sequence of texts that are resolutely reconstructive, as opposed to regenerative, in their outlook?

Granted, cyberspace in the *Neuromancer* trilogy is not constructed as a regenerative site for ontological change. It is, perhaps, for this reason that Molly Millions never once accesses cyberspace. After all, if, as Haraway argues, cyborgs are

suspicious of any reproductive matrix, then Molly's avoidance of Gibson's matrix is understandable. Nevertheless, Molly Millions is of central importance in *Neuromancer* and, to a lesser extent, *Mona Lisa Overdrive* because of the difficulty in firmly situating Gibson's street-samurai, razorgirl assassin within a masculine/feminine binary. Moreover, Molly's slippery status problematizes, but does not solve, the matter of penetration and its connection to gender.

Unlike Case, who, in his role as a console cowboy, rates as a cyborg virgin,² Molly's cyborg status is clearly evident to characters and readers alike. Notable are her eyes, the inset mirrorshades that are an icon of 1980s cyberpunk: "He realized that the glasses were surgically inset, sealing her sockets. The silver lenses seemed to grow from smooth pale skin above her cheekbones, framed by dark hair cut into a rough shag" (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 24). More important, however, are her wiring, the accelerated nervous system that makes her a formidable assassin, and the inset surgical blades housed beneath her fingernails: "She held out her hands, palms up, the white fingers slightly spread, and with a barely audible click, ten double-edged, four-centimeter scalpel blades slid from their housings beneath the burgundy nails" (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 25). These cyborg enhancements complicate her symbolic status in the novel by putting a strain on any gender divide for, as Lauraine Leblanc argues, in "Razor Girls: Genre and Gender in Cyberpunk Fiction," Molly is "somewhat more than human and certainly less than feminine; she is faster, tougher and stronger than any of the male characters of the novel, none of whom sport cyborg augmentations to the same degree as hers" (72).

The issue of penetration surrounds Molly at every turn for she is both the

penetrated and the penetrator. Her status as penetrator is epitomized by the razorblades, which serve to penetrate the flesh of other individuals. Gibson introduces Molly in "Johnny Mnemonic" and immediately positions her as a penetrator, her status as the *active* razorgirl, slicing 'n dicing her way through any notions of the passive woman, solidified with a flick of the wrist:

Lewis snorted his exasperation and tried to slap her out of the chair. Somehow he didn't quite connect, and her hand came up and seemed to brush his wrist as it passed. Bright blood sprayed the table. He was clutching his wrist white-knuckle tight, blood trickling from between his fingers.

But hadn't her hand been empty? (Gibson 5)

Molly's penetrative function is reinforced as she physically penetrates the housings of the multinational conglomerates of *Neuromancer*, breaking into Sense/Net to steal the Dixie Flatline and then breaking into the Villa Straylight to confront Jane Tessier-Ashpool.

Nothing comes free in Gibson's fiction, however, as cost always works its way into the equation. For example, the end of "Johnny Mnemonic" finds Johnny thinking he has evaded the grasp of the Yakuza, only to be killed in the intervening time period between that story and *Neuromancer*. Similarly, Lise, the disfigured woman of "The Winter Market," can only achieve her cybernetic immortality with a clause: "...she needs money bad. She's taking up a lot of ROM on some corporate mainframe, and her share of *Kings* won't come close to paying for what they had to do to put her there" (Gibson 141). In Molly's case, the cost for her penetrative enhancements was assuming the role of the penetrated in a familiar market:

“This cost a lot,” she said, extending her right hand as though it held an invisible fruit. The five blades slid out, then retracted smoothly. “Costs to go to Chiba, costs to get the surgery, costs to have them jack your nervous system up so you’ll have the reflexes to go with the gear. . . . You know how I got the money, when I was starting out? Here. Not here, but a place like it, in the Sprawl. Joke, to start with, ‘cause once they plant the cut-out chip, it seems like free money. Wake up sore, sometimes, but that’s it. Renting the goods, is all.”

(Gibson, *Neuromancer* 147)

For all the penetrative power Molly may possess, her status is stained by her initial reduction to a fleshy receptacle of sexual penetration, a meat puppet. Tellingly, Molly embodies both light and dark sides of the Harawayian cyborg, her cyborganic body the “joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities” and the “imposition of a grid of control” (“A Cyborg” 154), the control of male desire and the prostitution industry.

In her assessment of Molly Millions, Leblanc does Molly a disservice by arguing that her signification in *Neuromancer* does little to deconstruct the gender divide: “Molly’s character can best be described as a reversal of traditional gender roles . . . in this sense, Gibson has presented us with a nominally female character, but one who uses her cyborg identity not to rethink what it means to be a woman, but rather one who does little but take on a masculine role” (73). Of course, part of Leblanc’s argument is in response to Joan Gordon’s analysis of Molly. In the essay “Yin and Yang Duke It Out,” Gordon completely erases the issue of gender identity by arguing that Molly exemplifies

a *covert* feminism as

[t]o some extent she's a man in women's clothing . . . the most facile and least thoughtful representation of the liberated woman. But to some extent, also, she is simply a human being in women's clothing, one of the two standard issue uniforms for the species. It seems to me that for a woman to enter the human army as an average soldier with no distinction in rank, privilege, or job position is, on the covert level, a feminist act. (198)

Or, as it turns out, an act of complete erasure, deleting the corporeal marker of gender altogether. It is a troubling notion if covert feminism requires an erasing of the feminine body and an uncritical acceptance of the two standard issue uniforms, and this is where Leblanc takes issue with Gordon.

Yet, what both Gordon and Leblanc are aiming at, even if they do miss the mark, is the interstitial quality of Molly as a post/human figure in Gibson's fiction. It seems both critics are striving to find clear indications that Molly is Haraway's cyborg, but this is not Gibson's intent. Gibson's text does not set out to embody Haraway's cyborg by writing a feminist SF novel; rather, *Neuromancer* explores the interaction of hyper-capitalist markets, computer technologies, and corporeal bodies on a broad scale. The critical use of Molly to engage issues of gender ascription is the beneficial by-product of *Neuromancer*, not the engine driving the text. Furthermore, her elusive "nature" is a key reason why she is such a popular figure in ScyberFiction. In particular, Molly takes centre-stage in *Neuromancer* for she is the active figure of the text: *she* is dispatched into Night City to track down Case; *she* effortlessly moves through the Sprawl; *she* breaks

into the Sense/Net complex, despite a broken leg, to retrieve the Dixie Flatline construct; and, finally, *she* penetrates the Villa Straylight to extract the code that will enable the merge of the Wintermute and Neuromancer Artificial Intelligences.

Molly's mobility is equally pronounced in *Mona Lisa Overdrive*. Dubbed Sally Shears, our cyborg protagonist has been blackmailed into an elaborate plot that involves protecting Yakuza daughter Kumiko Yanaka, kidnapping simstim star Angie Mitchell, and faking Angie's death by substituting the surgically altered corpse of street-level hustler Mona. Orchestrating the plot is Jane Tessier-Ashpool, the key antagonist from *Neuromancer*. The narrative structure of *Mona Lisa Overdrive* is much more complex than either *Neuromancer* or *Count Zero* in that Gibson develops four parallel stories that interweave and come together at the text's conclusion. This narrative separation is particularly important to Sally's development and the charting of her mobility since she comes to signify different things to different individuals. Regarding the Kumiko storyline, Sally is very much a matriarchal figure, a substitute for Kumiko's dead mother; thus, from that standpoint, Sally's substitute matriarchal function does little to disrupt gender conventions. In spite of her motherly role, Sally's self-description is notable:

"Sally, what is it you do? Your friend asked if you were still retired. . . ."

"I'm a businesswoman."

"And my father is a businessman?"

"Your father *is* a businessman, honey. No, not like that. I'm an indie. I make investments, mostly." (Gibson, *Mona* 68)

Molly has renamed herself Sally, choosing to retire from her previous life as a razorgirl

and emerge as an indie businesswoman; thus, she defines herself, opting to regenerate her identity rather than be reconstructed, interpellated, or slotted by Gibson's fast-paced world. Sally's emergence, however, is in keeping with her active status in *Neuromancer*; namely, her business operations, which include a casino, take place at the management level where she retains power over others and assumes an active position behind the scenes.

Molly's decision to rename herself Sally Shears, however, indicates that she has not completely abandoned her previous life as the penetrative razorgirl, for shears is an oblique reference to those sharpened cyborg-enhancements underneath her fingernails. Yet in a curious move, Sally/Molly never once unsheaths her scalpels in *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, preferring to rely on more refined methods of unraveling the plot encompassing her. Part of her active manoeuvres involves returning with Kumiko to the Sprawl, and it is here that an interesting identity-shift takes place. In all the scenes involving Sally and Kumiko, Sally is *always* Sally, even after the all-too-obvious connection between Sally and Molly is made explicit. Even Gibson refrains from calling her Molly. Yet when Sally engages with such Sprawl figures as the ROM-construct of the Finn, Angie Mitchell and Mona, or, towards the end, the post-industrial figures of Gentry and Slick, she is called Molly by both the characters and Gibson's narrative voice. For example, Molly turns the tables on 3Jane's plans and captures both Angie and Mona, shuttling them into a car to pull them out of the Sprawl. Describing the event, Gibson writes: "Molly was out there opening those big doors. Pulling down these yellow plastic ramp things. . . . They weren't heavy. [Mona] pulled herself up behind the car and helped

Molly pull the doors shut” (Gibson, *Mona* 240). Yet, a handful of pages later, Molly contacts Kumiko and the Sally identity is reasserted by both Kumiko and Gibson:

“Sally! Sally, where are you?”

“New Jersey. Hey. Baby? Baby, what’s happening?”

“I can’t see you, Sally, the screen’s blank!”

“Phoning from a booth. New Jersey. What’s up?”

“I have so much to tell you . . .”

“Shoot,” Sally said. “It’s my nickel.” (Gibson, *Mona* 269-70)

Naturally, we would expect Kumiko to refer to Molly as Sally; yet, in the minor “Sally said” notation, Gibson reinforces the notion that Sally is not merely a disguised Molly but an extension of her identity, an aspect that marks a fluidic shift from Molly-the-razorgirl to Sally-the-businesswoman that indicates her indeterminate and elusive narrative status.

Gibson’s sense of *Neuromancer*’s Molly as a fleshed-out character is especially noticeable when compared with Case, the other key figure of *Neuromancer*. In fact, Molly’s surpassing of Case as the key figure in *Neuromancer* is partly the result of Case’s initial lack of subjectivity. First, Case’s full name is Henry Dorsett Case, but the characters in the text repeatedly refer to him strictly by his surname. That, in itself, is not enough for a reduction in subjectivity, unless, of course, one’s surname is particularly bland. A case is merely packaging, the container holding something inside. As in a computer terminal, the case is a nondescript box containing the switches and chips, the heart of the machine. *Neuromancer*’s Case is emblematic of his name given that his initial disgust with the meat is a disgust of the external case holding the important inner

(read “mental”) material together. His subjectivity is also eroded by his various addictions. In *Terminal Identity*, Scott Bukatman makes an interesting observation regarding the difference between addiction and free will:

[T]he *addict* is constructed as the opposite of the *subject*. The subject is defined through a mythos of self-reliance, free will, and nondependency; . . . such characters attempt to preserve their free will, even within the dataspace that defines and delimits the major arena of social control. To merge with the data, then, is acceptable only as long as the subject remains the locus of control. While the *subject* is thus defined as a willed and (relatively) autonomous force, the *addict* (as elad, buttonhead, wirehead, or “persona bum”) is portrayed as radically *de-centered* — passively buffeted by the data rather than remaining proudly (if only partially) resistant to its lures. (286)

The opening scenes of *Neuromancer* minimize Case’s subjectivity because his suicidal life is depicted as an out-of-control spiral; he is a victim of his addiction to the narcotic of cyberspace. Due to his addiction, Case is attempting to substitute analogue sensations (or loss of sensations) for the digital domain: “Get just wasted enough, find yourself in some desperate but strangely arbitrary field of trouble, and it was possible to see Ninsei as a field of data. . . . Then you could throw yourself into a highspeed drift and skid, totally engaged but set apart from it all, and all around you the dance of biz, information interacting, data made flesh in the mazes of the black market . . .” (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 16).

Even after Case has been saved from his suicidal slide by Molly, he remains

effectively powerless in spite of his skills as a console cowboy. While he is responsible for writing the software program that will disable Sense/Net's security, once the software is written, Case's *direct* involvement is minimized and he becomes a passenger: "His program had reached the fifth gate. He *watched* as his icebreaker strobed and shifted in front of him, only faintly aware of his hands playing across the deck, making *minor* adjustments" (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 61, emphasis added). Accessing the system, Case then keys "the sequence *the Finn had purchased* from a mid-echelon sarariman with severe drug problems" (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 63, emphasis added), triggers a sub-program, slowly backs out of the system, and awaits the proper timing to send a command to a virus that will mask the theft of the Dixie Flatline. This type of backseat driving occurs throughout the novel as Case repeatedly relies on others to enable his participation. For example, during the Straylight Run, Case and the Dixie Flatline unleash the Kuang Grade Mark Eleven icebreaker to uncover the true name that will release the Neuromancer AI. Yet for the bulk of the operation, Case uses his simulated stimulation switch, or *simstim*, to bounce from person to person: he talks with Molly about her past history with Johnny Mnemonic; he receives updates from the Flatline regarding the icebreaker's progress; he witnesses Wintermute's dispatch of Armitage; finally, he himself needs Maelcum's dub music to assist him in rejecting Neuromancer's cyber-utopia. For the most part, Case occupies a passive position, watching from the background or sidelines while other participants (notably Molly) carry out the bulk of the action.

This differentiation of Molly and Case is vitally important to the issue of

regeneration vs. reproduction because Gibson is not reproducing gender roles; the figures are not, to paraphrase the *Oxford* definition, producing again or repeating in some fashion. Molly is certainly not a passive figure and her identity is neither static nor defined by her relationships with males; Case, on the other hand, is a weakened figure and clearly passive for most of *Neuromancer*, fronting as the anti-hero but, in reality, a passenger. This is especially evident in those scenes involving simstim where Case “rides” Molly’s body. In “The Self Regained,” Sharon Stockton finds such simstim scenes particularly problematic in that she equates simstim to

at best, an extension of traditional narrative omniscience and, at worst, a figurative celebration of rape. This penetrability is unidirectional: Case can penetrate or withdraw from Molly’s mind; she has little access to his. He is described as “riding” Molly’s augmented body, a body thus constructed as subject to outside penetration and modification, not stable and autonomous as is his own. She is trapped in a panoptic material world; his terrain enables movement even as it shields him from outside view. Molly is the avenue to the mythic land of free circulation; Case is the cowboy/entrepreneur who walks down that avenue, ultimately invulnerable. (601)

Stockton’s negative accounting of simstim is not without its justifications for Gibson portrays this penetrative medium in a disparaging fashion throughout the *Neuromancer* trilogy. For example, Bobby Newmark’s mother, in *Count Zero*, is addicted to soap-opera versions of simstim: “He knew her, yeah, how she’d come through the door with a wrapped bottle under her arm, not even take her coat off, just go straight over and jack

into the Hitachi, soap her brains out good for six solid hours. Her eyes would unfocus, and sometimes, if it was a really good episode, she'd drool a little" (33). Similarly, the addictive qualities of simstim are reinforced, in *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, when Mona, the surgically-altered carbon-copy of simstim star Angie Mitchell, snorts an unknown powdered drug to feel "*Rapture. Rapture's coming*" (283). A few pages later, Mona is introduced to the world of simstim, discovering there, as well, that "*Rapture. Rapture's coming*" (297).

In spite of Stockton's analysis, a closer reading of these moments reveals Case to be very much a passenger:

The abrupt jolt into other flesh. Matrix gone, a wave of sound and color. . . . She was moving through a crowded street, past stalls vending discount software, prices felt-penned on sheets of plastic, fragments of music from countless speakers. Smells of urine, free monomers, perfume, patties of frying krill. For a few frightened seconds he fought helplessly to control her body. Then he willed himself into passivity, became the passenger behind the eyes.

(Gibson, *Neuromancer* 56)

Contrary to Stockton's analysis, this scene does not support her claims that Molly is trapped while Case remains in a state of free-flowing movement. Granted, Case can choose to disengage the simstim and exit Molly's body, but those few frightened seconds in which Case attempts to exert control indicate that Molly is in control of the situation, not Case.

While Case may be symbolically penetrating Molly, he has become an impotent

figure. Stockton's argument that this technological intrusion is a figurative rape is invalid because the presumed victim is actually in control while Case, the supposed perpetrator, is powerless and quite vulnerable. This vulnerability is reinforced in two scenes: first, Molly playfully taunts Case by stimulating her own nipple: "She slid a hand into her jacket, a fingertip circling a nipple under warm silk. The sensation made him catch his breath" (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 56); second, Case jacks into Molly moments after her leg has been broken during the Sense/Net run: "Case hit the simstim switch. And flipped into the agony of broken bone. Molly was braced against the blank grey wall of a long corridor, her breath coming ragged and uneven. Case was back in the matrix instantly, a white-hot line of pain fading in his left thigh" (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 64). In this painful instant, Case reveals his overall vulnerability and weakness; he is unable to sustain the pain that Molly bears. A later simstim scene helps support the matter. When Molly, carrying Case along with her, breaks into Straylight, "Molly paid little attention to the cabinets and their contents, which irritated him. He had to satisfy himself with her disinterested glances, which gave him fragments of pottery, antique weapons, a thing so densely studded with rusted nails that it was unrecognizable, frayed sections of tapestry. . . ." (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 176).

In these simstim scenes, Gibson problematizes the notion of male penetrability as it is the feminine/feminist cyborg figure of Molly who has power-via-penetration whereas the masculinized, jacked-up cy(ber)borg figure of Case lacks that selfsame power by virtue of his own techno-penetration. This is reinforced by the Intrusions Countermeasures Electronic (ICE) that continually threaten the console cowboys; this is

the same ICE that Nixon finds problematic, given that cowboys must penetrate its hymenal membrane to get to the core of the corporate database. One cannot deny the compelling evidence Nixon provides; yet for all of the penetration taking place, the console cowboys are exposed to invasion themselves and risk having their neural synapses burned out by cyberspace's defense mechanism, essentially being penetrated themselves by the online matrix. This is exactly the case with Bobby Newmark in the opening pages of *Count Zero* who learns just such a lesson when he faces his own imminent demise: "His heart stopped. It seemed to him that it fell sideways, kicked like an animal in a cartoon. Sixteenth second of Bobby Newmark's death. His hotdogger's death" (Gibson 18). Tellingly, Newmark is saved by Angie Mitchell who, due to her unique physiology and ability to surf the net *sans* cyberspace deck, pulls him from the brink of neural collapse. In the end, Gibson offers up regeneration, as opposed to reconstruction, throughout his novels given that the signification of his characters, especially Molly, is difficult to authoritatively pinpoint and penetration itself is positioned by Gibson as a free-floating signifier that is not always already ascribed to males and their hard-edged decks.

The penetration of hymenal membranes and jacking into cyberspace that Gibson details calls to mind the uterine associations of the matrix and male penetration into this sacred realm. To support her critique of Gibson's penetrative intrusion, Nicola Nixon relies upon Gibson's acknowledgement of Joanna Russ's SF work. Part of Molly's efficacy stems from her obvious connection to Jael Reasoner of Russ's *The Female Man*; the resemblance between the two figures is striking. As Samuel Delany succinctly

summarizes, in Takayuki Tatsumi's "Some Real Mothers," "[b]oth of them have retractable claws in their fingers. Both of them wear black. Both enjoy their sex with men. And there's a similar harshness in their attitude" (8). While the nod to Russ may be relatively oblique in *Neuromancer*, it is much more overt in *Mona Lisa Overdrive*. In particular, the "When It Changed" of *Mona Lisa Overdrive* is a direct reference to the Russ short story of that title. Russ's "When It Changed" tells of the utopia of Whileaway, a futuristic space devoid of males. Disrupting the utopic dynamic is the appearance of two males from an alternate Earth. Thus, Russ's feminist exploration involves charting the cultural shift of a feminine world that becomes infected by the misogynistic expectations of feminine domesticity that plague a masculine-dominated Earth. In Russ's text, the "When It Changed" of the title is an explicit reference to the masculinist imposition upon a previously feminine space.

In Gibson's *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, several references are made to a cyberspatial "When It Changed": "Bobby had told her about a general consensus among the old cowboys that there had been a day when things had changed, although there was disagreement as to how and when. When It Changed, they called it . . ." (Gibson, *Mona* 127). This description of "When It Changed" prompts Nixon to remark that Gibson's "When It Changed" is rooted in penetration as it "is also gender specific: the uncontrollable feminizing of the matrix, the uncheckable transformation of viral software technology into a feminine Other, complete with ghosts and the prevailing influences of Mamman Brigitte and 3Jane — respectively, the Queen of the Dead and the dead queen of the Tessier-Ashpool empire" (227). Thus, Nixon is positing a correlation between the

“When It Changed” moment of masculine penetration into Russ’s Whileaway with an obverse “When It Changed” moment in Gibson’s fiction. In other words, Nixon identifies the “When It Changed” that Bobby Newmark and other console cowboys refer to in *Mona Lisa Overdrive* as a feminization of the matrix which then prompts a masculine reassertion over the cyberspatial matrix: “If Gibson posits the obverse of Russ’s patriarchal imperialism as a kind of female infection and (viral) takeover of original masculine space, he also suggests that the matrix turf can potentially be won back, reconquered” (227).

On closer examination of Gibson’s narrative, however, the sequence of events is not as linear as Nixon would have us believe. Specifically, the feminizing “When It Changed” that Bobby refers to is the merging of the Wintermute and Neuromancer AIs at the end of *Neuromancer* and their subsequent return as the fragmented voodoo loas of *Count Zero* and *Mona Lisa Overdrive*. This development runs counter to the feminizing of cyberspace that Nixon outlines. While Nixon’s analysis is compelling, the examples of techno-misogyny in *Neuromancer* that she describes all occur *prior* to the “When It Changed” event at the end of the novel. Put another way, Nixon posits a pre-“When It Changed” feminine cyberspace (as described by the penetrations of *Neuromancer*’s console cowboys into the matrix) apparently feminized by the “When It Changed” moment of Wintermute/Neuromancer’s split into voodoo loas which, working retroactively, must then (re)configure the feminine pre-“When It Changed” *as* masculine *instead* of feminine to account for “When It Changed” feminizing cyberspace in the first place. Wholly circular in its logic, Nixon’s argument actually records an extreme

ambiguity regarding the issue of penetration and gendering of cyberspace in Gibson's sequence of novels.

The gendering becomes even more complicated when the role of the voodoo loas and their relationship to simstim star Angie Mitchell, in both *Count Zero* and *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, are taken into account. In *Count Zero*, Christopher Mitchell is the hybridoma chief of Maas Biolabs who is defecting from Maas to rival conglomerate Hosaka; however, Turner, the extraction freelancer hired for the smuggling job, learns that he has actually arranged for the defection of Angie Mitchell. As it turns out, Angie has been growing up since childhood with circuitry, implanted by her father, that allows her to access cyberspace without a console deck. Directing Christopher Mitchell's implantation of this biosoft hardware were the voodoo loas. Therefore, this seems to reinforce the feminization/penetrated argument as Angie does not require the penetrative hardware to access the software of cyberspace; in fact, much like Molly's cyborg enhancements, the cy(ber)borg hardware has penetrated her: "The cowboys have to 'interface' with the matrix through 'slotting into' the feminized cyberspace decks; certain females, however, require no such mediation: they are already, by implication, a part of it" (Nixon 277). The flipside of Angie's arrangement, however, is that the voodoo loas populating a cyberspace that Nixon identifies as feminine, given the "When It Changed" moment of *Neuromancer*'s conclusion, can leave the digital reality behind and access the analogue world, literally possessing Angie's body and corporeal senses. In another twist of Nixon's argument, the voodoo loas, the residents of this now-feminized post-"When It Changed" cyberspace, act remarkably like penetrating agents of their own, reaching into

Angie's body and appropriating it for their own uses. In fact, the two key loas are the King and Queen, Baron Samedi and Mamman Brigitte. In essence, if these entities are occupying a feminine, post-"When It Changed" cyberspace that is under the onslaught of masculine penetration, why are they acting in a masculine/penetrative manner by riding Angie? If Sharon Stockton attributes Case's riding of Molly as a figurative rape, then could not her assessment be applied to the loas' riding of Angie? In spite of the attempts to gender cyberspace according to a pre- and post-When It Changed or to account for penetration as symbolic rape, Gibson's cyberspace is much more fluid and complex than either Nixon or Stockton are willing to admit as reproduction is not the dominant order of the narrative sequence.

As colleagues in ScyberFiction, both Scott and Gibson address the familiar thematics of embodiment vs. disembodiment, the code duality of analogue and digital, and the effects of the technological interface upon post/human bodies. Furthermore, they also individually engage regeneration and reproduction by complicating the masculine and feminine connection to the descriptors of penetrator and penetrated. In *Trouble and Her Friends*, Scott uses penetration to address the function of sexual politics in cyberspace and, with the alternate synchrospace that is Seahaven and the resultant change in leadership, the ontology of regeneration is firmly situated. Gibson, on the other hand, avoids depicting a regenerative cyberspatial medium in the *Neuromancer* sequence, preferring to use penetration to complicate the post/human bodies of his near-future environment and demonstrate that the occupants of his hyper-capitalist future do not necessarily fit into tidy boxes labelled *masculine* or *feminine*. It is, however, with the

publication of *Virtual Light*, the first in the Bridge sequence, that Gibson's perspective on the possibilities of digital regeneration changes, and that sequence is the topic of Chapter Six.

Chapter Six:

A Bridge Too Far:

Molecular Community and Interstitial Possibility in Gibson's Bridge Sequence

"We have never developed a sinister view of technology, Mr. Laney. It is an aspect of the natural, of oneness. Through our efforts, oneness perfects itself."

Kuwayama smiled. "And popular culture," he said, "is the testbed of our futurity."

(Gibson, *Idoru* 314)

[They] emerged again into that wet light, but here it ran not across the stalls and vendors of memory, but across the red-and-white front of a modular convenience store, chucked down front and center across the entrance to the bridge's two levels, LUCKY DRAGON and the shudder of video up the trademark tower of screens.

"Fucking hell," said Tessa, "how interstitial is that?"

(Gibson, *All Tomorrow's Parties* 66)

As I noted towards the end of Chapter Five, the conclusion of William Gibson's *Neuromancer* is somewhat ambivalent in the sense that the merging of the Wintermute and Neuromancer Artificial Intelligences has very little effect upon the characters in the novel. In the words of this new entity, "'[t]hings aren't different. Things are things'" (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 270). Much like the rest of the environment Gibson depicts in

that first sequence, whatever has happened by novel's conclusion takes place at a level far above the experiences of those individuals living in the belly of a hyper-capitalist zaibatsu organism. This is the core of Gibson's struggle with post/humanism and technological change. In Larry McCaffery's "An Interview with William Gibson," Gibson agrees with McCaffery's assessment that his novels reflect his overall outlook on technology: "My feelings about technology are *totally* ambivalent — which seems to me to be the only way to relate to what's happening today. . . . My aim isn't to provide specific predictions or judgments so much as to find a suitable fictional context in which to examine the very mixed blessings of technology" (274). Given Gibson's feelings toward technology, it comes as no surprise that ambiguity is woven into the very threads of the *Neuromancer* sequence, which is why, frankly, the regeneration of an alternate synchrospace, in the manner of Melissa Scott's *Trouble and Her Friends*, is not evident.

Thankfully, the years have been kind to Gibson and his stance regarding technology, while certainly still marked by ambiguity, has softened. In a 1999 interview with Cory Doctorow,¹ Gibson admits that he is "guilty of wishful thinking. The absence of the interstitial I find unbearable. But not as unbearable as the idea that interstitial [sic] is necessarily as banal as the infrastructure, so I think of what I do with that stuff as a glorification of possibility." Although still looking at those mixed blessings of technology, Gibson expresses an underlying desire to explore the transformative possibilities that reside in the cracks of the cultural pavement, veins of hope that still resonates with the punk sensibility of resisting the megacorporate mainstream: "To the extent that I can still believe in Bohemia, which I think is very important to me in some

ways that I don't yet really understand, to the extent that I still believe in that, I have to believe that there are viable degrees of freedom inherent if not realised in interstitial areas."

Gibson's second sequence of novels — *Virtual Light* (1993), *Idoru* (1996), and *All Tomorrow's Parties* (2000) — embody his emerging interstitial hope by engaging with a host of issues buffeting a near-future that is closer to our own contemporary age than that of the *Neuromancer* trilogy. As might be expected, the Bridge sequence is replete with Gibson's stock-in-trade pop-culture tropes, from the ubiquitous corporate presence of niche market television, the almighty tourist dollar, and Lucky Dragon convenience stores to frenzied bicycle couriers, urban punk-rock environments, and disembodied media celebrities. Gibson's pacing in the Bridge sequence is slower than the *Neuromancer* trilogy, offering a subtly complex engagement with the tapestry of presence, pattern, simulation, virtuality, embodiment, and regeneration. Indeed, if "the street has its uses for things" is the mantra behind the *Neuromancer* trilogy, then the "popular culture is the testbed of our futurity" epigraph from *Idoru* is surely applicable to the whole sequence.

Gibson's Bridge sequence has very little to do with the cyberspace of the *Neuromancer* trilogy. In fact, Ross Farnell writes, in "Posthuman Technologies: William Gibson's 'Architexture' in *Virtual Light* and *Idoru*," that the commodification of the cyberpunk genre and the vacuity of the term (as I outlined in Chapter One) spoiled cyberspace, for "the notion of 'cyberspace,' if not completely discredited, had at least fallen into the realm of predictable cliché, a standardized trope of cyberpunk fiction.

Like cyberpunk itself, the novum of cyberspace had moved from potent narrative device to cynical marketing technique. . .” (462). Indeed, Gibson replaces cyberspace in the Bridge sequence with a cybernetic realm, called DatAmerica, that is in distinct opposition to the familiar console-cowboy habitat. While digital space may be on the decline, digital embodiment is of central importance, especially in *Idoru* and *All Tomorrow's Parties*. The key figure of digital embodiment is Rei Toei, a virtual media construct that is the idoru of the second novel's title, a loose translation of idol-singer. Toei, according to Yamazaki, is “a personality-construct, a congeries of software agents, the creation of information-designers. She is akin to what I believe they call a ‘synthespian,’ in Hollywood” (Gibson, *Idoru* 121). Later, in *All Tomorrow's Parties*, Yamazaki's ruminations on Toei offer a more tangible sense of the idoru: “She is a voice, a face, familiar to millions. She is a sea of code, the ultimate expression of entertainment software. Her audience knows that she does not walk among them; that she is media, purely. And that is a large part of her appeal” (Gibson, 55). And, as it turns out, that is a large part of the Bridge sequence's appeal; namely, Gibson's pastiche narrative style ties the digital star to an omnipresent media cityscape. The apparent simulational state of both star and environment are emblems of a culturally-coded, entertainment-obsessed society extrapolated to the n^{th} degree.

There are certain similarities between the Bridge sequence and the *Neuromancer* trilogy; in particular, *Idoru* offers a near-future urban sprawl always already constructed around the packaging of niche markets for public consumption. Whereas the *Neuromancer* trilogy features simstim markets voraciously devouring the celebrity

experiences of Tally Isham or Lise (“The Winter Market”), reality-programming is the order of the Bridge sequence. Such fodder as *Cops in Trouble*, *Slitscan*, *A Calm and Deliberate Fashion*, and *Out of Control* are beamed to the “vicious, lazy, profoundly ignorant, perpetually hungry organism craving the warm-god flesh of the annointed” that is the singular-celled entity known as the audience (Gibson, *Idoru* 35).² With our contemporary interest in such reality-programming entertainment as *Survivor*, *Big Brother*, *Cops*, or *Temptation Island*, Gibson’s terrain is achingly familiar. It is a future that has been compressed into our own present, shifting the reader’s sense of time as the book both *is* and *is not* the world around us. This compression blurs the chronological fields of *present* and *future*, making them meaningless in a condition that Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. calls a futuristic flu: “Paradoxically, this inaccessible and unintelligible future is actually *now*; the rules of the future are beginning to unfold now. And hence there is no real present; there are no norms sufficient for the here and now, only perpetual starting points of the future” (30).

Colin Laney, the protagonist of *Idoru*, has a unique, albeit chemically-triggered, ability to sift through the reams of data flowing through DatAmerica, a network that exists in both an offline solidity and the online construct of DatAmerica. Laney is valuable to such entertainment monoliths as *Slitscan* because he can follow the data trails of celebrities and anticipate where the events are going to happen for maximum celebrity exposure. On a larger scale, though, he is able to discern data constellations, known as nodal points, that indicate potential changes in this hyperreal world where pre-packaged society has come to replace history: “[i]t was impossible to work at Slitscan without a

sense of participating in history, or else in what Kathy Torrance would argue has *replaced* history. Slitscan itself, Laney suspected, might be one of those larger nodal points he sometimes found himself trying to imagine, an informational peculiarity opening into some unthinkable deeper structure” (Gibson, *Idoru* 51). Unfortunately, Laney’s perception is misguided as reality-programming like *Slitscan* does not open onto a deeper structure but is, in its extreme superficiality, symptomatic of the cultural structure itself.

This structure of the mass media(ted) celebrity culture is epitomized in the impending marriage of Rei Toei, *Idoru*’s digital synthespian, and rock-god Rez, the Mick Jagger-like lead-singer of Lo/Rez. Laney’s initial involvement in the narrative is to scour the data nodes for Paragon Asia Dataflow, the multinational that owns Rez, to determine if his unique marriage proposal is part of some nefarious plot. This scanning of informational patterns is key to the digital divide of simulation and virtuality. Laney scans the nodes for both Rez and Toei, and the result describes both media figures as “sculpted in duration” (Gibson, *Idoru* 33). In Rez’s case, his popularity has exceeded his grasp, to the point where it broaches disembodiment. In other words, the stardom now eclipses the star:

Laney notices something then that he knew from his encounters with celebs at Slitscan: that binary flicker in his mind between image and reality, between the mediated face and the face there in front of him. He’d noticed how it always seemed to speed up, that alternation, until the two somehow merged, the resulting composite becoming your new idea of the person. (Gibson, *Idoru* 216-17)

This new idea of the person, however, is eventually divorced from Rez himself as Yamazaki recollects in *All Tomorrow's Parties*: "He understands that Rez exists as thoroughly, in the realm of the digital, as it is possible for a living human to exist. If Rez-the-man were to die, today, Rez-the-icon would certainly live on" (Gibson 55). Rez's transformation enacts a shift from presence to pattern as the celebrity stardom of the Rez-pattern takes on a life of its own, conforming the corporeal Rez to the rock-god pattern rather than the pattern conforming to Rez. Essentially, the presence of Rez is lost amidst the corporate patterns surrounding his iconic status, exemplified when Laney is unable to separate Rez from the corporate swirl of patterns: "'That isn't a person. That's a corporation. . . . I don't know who he is. I can't make him out against the rest of it. He's not leaving any traces that make the patterns I need'" (Gibson, *Idoru* 154). The traces Laney needs are the patterns left behind by the presence of the individual; yet, because he is an iconified product packaged for mass consumption, the hyperreal patterns that circulate in, around, and through Rez indicate that *nothing but pattern* exists anymore. In essence, Rez has become Baudrillard's simulacrum since his celebrity status exists irrespective of him. This is hinted at when young Chia Pet McKenzie, a fourteen-year-old fan of Lo/Rez, looks at her posters and other paraphernalia that display the Lo/Rez band as immortalized by their first CD release some two decades earlier: "The wall opposite Chia's bed was decorated with a six-by-six laser blowup of the cover of *Lo Rez Skyline*, their first album. Not the one you got if you bought it today, but the original, the group shot they'd done for that crucial first release on the indie Dog Soup label. She'd pulled the file off the club's site the week she'd joined. . . ." (Gibson, *Idoru* 16). The irony

is that she does not have the *original* but a simulacrum that has replaced it and, by virtue of *Lo Rez Skyline* re-issues, become a valuable commodity in its own right. Thus, when Chia meets Rez, she is unsettled by his aged appearance for, in her mind and in the media images she has bought, Rez is the youthful singer of her album cover and not a flesh-and-blood entity afflicted by age.

Toei's case is the exact antithesis of Rez as her stardom is built upon a lack of a physical presence, mass adoration directed towards a pattern with no original presence or corporeal embodiment. When Laney first meets the holographic Toei, his nodal perception kicks into overdrive in a way that is distinctly opposite to his earlier scouring of Rez's pattern. Unlike the hyperreal pattern that *is* Rez, Toei's complexity nearly overwhelms Laney's senses, forcing him to avoid direct eye-to-eye contact with the virtual construct: "Don't look at the idoru's face. She is not flesh; she is information. She is the tip of an iceberg, no, an Antarctica of information. Looking at her face would trigger it again; she was some unthinkable volume of information. She induced the nodal vision in some unprecedented way; she induced it as narrative" (Gibson, *Idoru* 233). Unlike the thoroughly corporealized Rez who loses himself in the media(ted) patterns of his celebrity-dom, Toei is expanding beyond her initial construct as a virtual idol, Gibson providing her with a vague history that is suggestive of a depth behind the corporate image:

He seemed to cross a line. In the very structures of her face, in geometries of underlying bones, lay coded histories of dynastic flight, privation, terrible migrations. He saw stone tombs in alpine meadows, their lintels traced with

snow. A line of shaggy pack ponies, their breath white with cold, followed a trail above a canyon. The curves of the river below were strokes of distant silver. Iron harness bells clanked in the blue dusk. (*Idoru*, 230)

The meaning behind these images emerges in a conversation with Michio Kuwayama, the chief executive officer of Toei's corporate entity. Interrogating Laney regarding what he saw behind Toei's eyes, Kuwayama reveals that the mountains and snow are more than simply stills of the idoru's videos: "'We don't 'make' Rei's videos,' Kuwayama said, 'not in the usual sense. They emerge directly from her ongoing experience of the world. They are her dreams, if you will'" (Gibson, *Idoru* 312).

Ultimately, it is Gibson's positioning of Toei as the antithesis of Rez that necessitates the eventual failure of their marriage for, if Rez is the simulation consumed by the adoring public, Toei is virtual, a digital construct in possession of depth and an ability to grow that Rez seems to lack. This depth and continued growth (the subject of *All Tomorrow's Parties*) is made clear through Laney's perception of data nodal points. With Rez, Laney can see that his data pattern begins "as something very minor, the first hints of his career. And growing, as it progressed, to something braided, multi-stranded. . . . But then it began to get smaller again, Laney saw, the strands loosening. . . ." The loosening of those strands are a result of Rez "taking up celebrity space just because he was a celebrity." In Toei's case, however, the opposite is taking place: "The idoru's data began somewhere after that, and it began as something smoothly formed, deliberate, but lacking complexity. But at the points where it had swerved closest to Rez's data, he saw that it had begun to acquire a sort of complexity. Or randomness, he thought. The

human thing. That's how she learns" (Gibson *Idoru* 331).

Unlike the trauma that greeted Reno's disembodiment in Walter Jon Williams's *Hardwired*, Toei's acquisition of randomness (i.e., the human thing) is a key element in her evolution towards a post/human presence for, as N. Katherine Hayles writes in "How Cyberspace Signifies," "if pattern is the realization of a certain strand of possibilities, randomness is the much, much larger set of everything else, from phenomena that cannot be rendered coherent by any given system's organization to those the system cannot perceive at all" (286). The vital importance of randomness in this context is perhaps best exemplified by comparing Toei to a series of cyber-siblings in our contemporary analogue reality; namely, the cyber-sorority of digital idorus that include Kyoko Date (a.k.a. dk96), *Tomb Raider*'s Lara Croft, and British newscaster Ananova.

Cyber-Sorority: Living the ~~High~~Digital Life

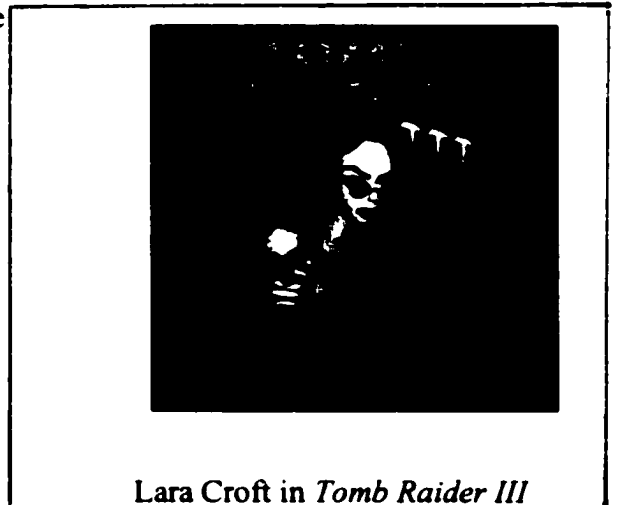
In Michael Goldberg's "Junk Collage, Nodal Points & Cognitive Dissonance," Gibson said that he had "run across somewhere the story, apparently true story, of a real idoru in Japan who hadn't existed, hadn't existed at all . . . [a]nd because of that, she had actually gotten a very special kind of cult following. A lot of people were really hot for her because she didn't exist. And I found that idea deeply resonant in terms of mounting a kind of investigation of the mechanisms of celebrity in the late 20th century." Unacknowledged in Gibson's account, the idoru he encountered is most likely dk-96 of HoriPro Inc., a Japanese corporation specializing in such entertainment industries as computer software, books, and music. HoriPro, interested in capitalizing on the

increasing popularity of computer graphics and the idolatry of the Japanese teen and tween markets, set up the *digital kid* project and released Kyoko Date in 1996 (hence, dk-96) to a fanfare of Japanese publicity. Date recorded a CD single, *Love Communication*, and released it as an Enhanced CD featuring a video track depicting her strolls through the (simulated) streets of Tokyo and New York City. To enhance her verisimilitude, Date was provided a biography; thus, Nicole Gaouette, in her online essay “Sirens of Cyberspace,” writes, “she was born near the US Army’s Yokota Military Base not far from Tokyo. She spends most of her day taking dancing and singing lessons and has always been athletic. She was a soccer player in high school and liked to play three-on-three basketball games, too. She’s a big Mariah Carey fan and has a crush on Christian Slater.”

Date exists as a particular manifestation of Hayles’s body-plus-simulation because her construction within the cybernetic currents of HoriPro’s mainframe computers is a synthesis of computer coding and corporeal recording. For her stroll through the streets of New York, Date’s movements derive from Full Motion Capture, a popular recording technique used extensively by Hollywood’s FX experts and computer gaming companies to record the intricacies of embodied movement. Such embodied movement can be tracked, mapped, and translated onto a digital framework of a simulated body. In Date’s case, facial movements, body language, and overall mobility stem directly from anonymous models captured by the computerized system, the *presence* of muscles and cartilage downloaded into alphanumerical strings of digital *pattern*. In essence, Date has as much to owe to the models providing her with embodied

movements as to the computer programmers stringing her together. Yet, the anonymity of the models grounding Date's digital body deletes any referent behind her signification; in other words, Date is entirely a simulation as there is no one original corporeal model upon which she is based. Her simulational status is further reinforced by the fact that she lacks that randomness factor inflecting the complexity of Gibson's virtual idol. While both "women" may be digital constructs, the idoru in Gibson's fiction is in the process of outgrowing her original programming, shifting from simulation to virtuality in a manner that her corporate sister, Kyoko Date, cannot achieve. Moreover, unlike Gibson's virtual idol, Date's popularity has faded since her initial introduction and, at last reports, she had been sold by HoriPro to a Korean media company.³

Whereas Date is, or was, relatively unknown outside of the Asian markets, Western society is not without its own idoru envy, epitomized most recently in the figure of *Tomb Raider*'s Lara Croft. Lara Croft is the action heroine of Eidos Interactive's immensely popular *Tomb Raider* video games and, in an industry dominated by hyper-masculine action heroes and predominantly male gamers, Croft's success and popularity as a stand-alone character is unprecedented.⁴ Like Date, Croft is a simulational amalgam of analogue models and computer coding merged into one entity; yet, unlike Date, the process is not unidirectional since Croft has capitalized on her popularity with a vengeance, stepping



Lara Croft in *Tomb Raider III*

Lara Croft® and *Tomb Raider*® are the property of Eidos Interactive, Inc.® Used with permission.

out of the video games to stake out terrain on web sites, at gaming conferences, and, most recently, in Paramount Pictures's *Tomb Raider* movie, starring Angelina Jolie.

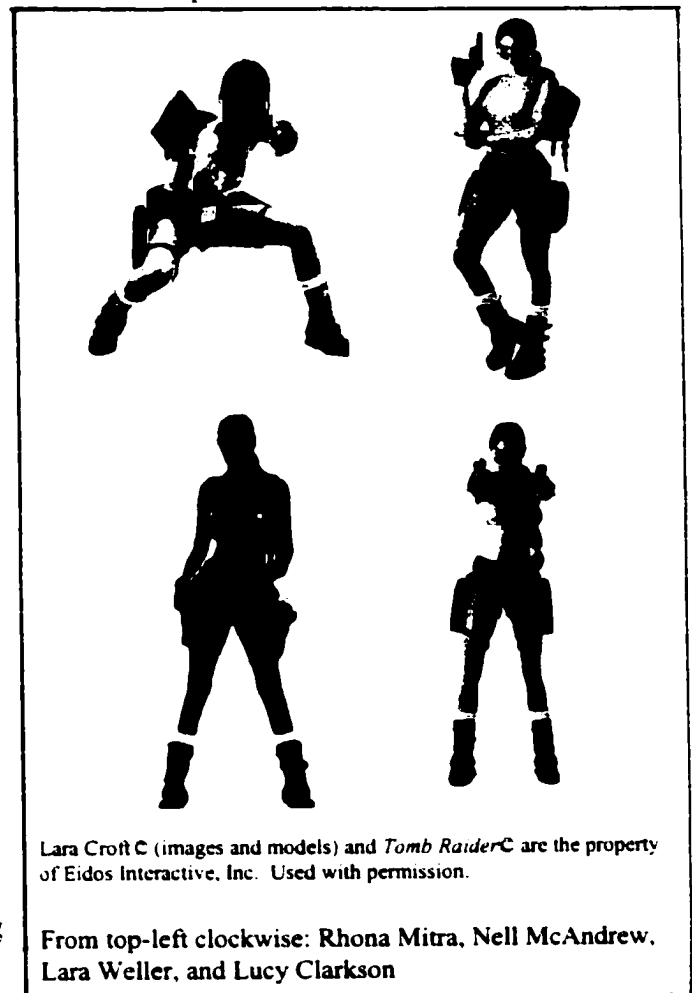
In an unique manner, Croft manipulates the circuit by forcing the *presence* of the corporeal models to fit into the mold of the video *pattern*, subtly altering the body-plus-simulation. In particular, Eidos Interactive includes on its *Tomb Raider* website (<http://www.tombraider.com>) a link to a Lara Croft forum, Lara's World, where users can download wallpaper, read press clippings, and join Lara's fan club. Particularly interesting is the link to the images of the four models who have portrayed Croft at the multitude of gaming conventions and promotional expositions: Rhona Mitra, Nell

McAndrew, Lara Weller, and

Lucy Clarkson. All four women (as well as Jolie) have been responsible for carrying the Croft banner, taking up the digital persona and providing it with flesh.

The casting of the four models, and in particular McAndrew, Weller, and Clarkson, is reflexively surreal since taking up the Croft mantle has not been based on the latter models' (McAndrew, Weller, Clarkson)

resemblance to Mitra, the closest thing



to an original referent since she was the first model, but to the digital idoru of Croft. In other words, the simulation becomes the model upon which the analogue models are weighed, judged, and ultimately chosen. In fact, cosmetic alterations are used to achieve the desired embodiment of digital pattern (Mitra is silicon-enhanced; McAndrew's blonde, short-cropped hair is covered by a wig to achieve the desired effect; and Angelina Jolie wore a padded bra in the movie version of *Tomb Raider*).

Part of the Croft phenomenon's success, in fact, has to do with the programming of desire that has accompanied her coronation as the world's first digital sex symbol. Gen-X author Douglas Coupland, in *Lara's Book: Lara Croft and the Tomb Raider™ Phenomenon*, adds a disturbing edge in his analysis-cum-promotional copy-cum-gaming manual. *Lara's Book* uses a first-person narrative voice, ostensibly allowing Croft to speak for herself, in the graphics-laden, oddly-structured text:

Some days

I don't really even feel like

myself. . .

I feel kind of, what's the word . . .

. . . *meshy*.

I feel like there's

somebody out there

controlling my motion.

I feel like there's

somebody out there
who makes my decisions
for me.

. . . This niggling feeling that
somehow this is all just a big game.

And this got me to thinking . . .
Let's just imagine that there really
is somebody out there pushing my buttons . . .

Let's just imagine that there really
is somebody out there making me jump . . .

. . . and shoot
. . . and kill
. . . and run
?

And then let's also imagine that it's **not**
maybe just one solitary person pushing my buttons.

. . . Maybe there are millions of people all working to control me.

. . . Maybe there are **millions** of people
all working to make me do all these things
that a girl just has to do

And well . . .

If that were true then just think . . .

They wouldn't be controlling me at all . . .

I'd be controlling . . .

them.

(Coupland 1-8)⁵

Coupland clearly evokes Baudrillard's notion of the hyperreal as the supposedly living Croft herself realizes that she occupies a celebrity space into which people invest time, money, and energy, a digital space that reflects back and influences the analogue gamers. Essentially, Croft's successful video games have allowed this figure to move beyond her video game origins and take up residence in the psyche of pop culture:

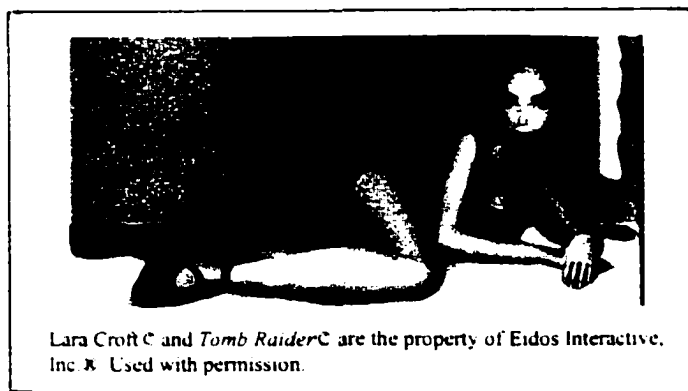
And then I got to thinking that if enough people were doing this, then I would have effectively become as much a part of all of these people as though I'd donated them a heart or a kidney.

And therefore even if I were to die or somehow not even be a real person, I would always be real — or more real than real: *hyper* real —

because my essence had expanded itself so hugely. And this would make me something strange indeed . . .

. . . something eternal. (Coupland 13).

Coupland/Croft is not far off the mark as a general Internet search, using such engines as Google, Hotbot, or Lycos, reveals more than 100,000 websites devoted to every stitch of Lara Croft's digital existence. Such sites range from Eidos Interactive's official site to individual fan pages and chat forums. Quite possibly the most bizarre site, however, has to do with a patch program manufactured by Game Revolution. The patch is a download that can be installed into the *Tomb Raider* game directory. Once activated, it allows users to play *Tomb Raider* with a nude Lara Croft (<http://www.game-revolution.com/download/lara.htm>). These nude images of the heroine have also proliferated onto the Internet, resulting in *Nude Raider*-themed material becoming almost as popular as *Tomb Raider*. Of course, Eidos Interactive is not entirely



without blame in this proliferation of Croft's phantasy status since the opening page to Lara's World does not feature the woman-of-action that Croft digitally embodies or

the Croft models simulate in their poses; rather, the page features a passive Croft reclining on a couch with a low-cut, high-slit dress revealing generous amounts of sim-skin.⁶ This programming of digital desire is ambiguous as she apparently deflects voyeurism and objectification into the seemingly safe venue of computer-generated femininity. A heroic figure in the context of her *Tomb Raider* games, Croft is domesticated and seductively laid out as predominantly male gamers, used to thumbing their joysticks in the *Tomb Raider* games, visit her site; yet, Croft is *no* woman at all but a symbolic amalgam of absent *women* (Mitra, McAndrew, Weller, Clarkson) and computer programming that, as Coupland hints, is coding the desire of analogue users.

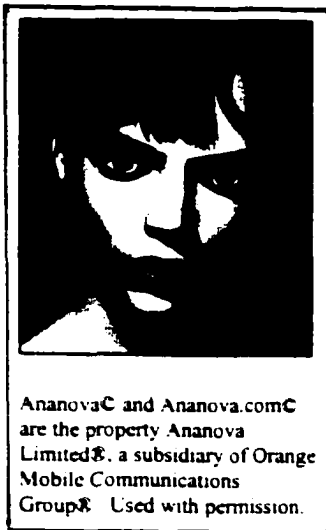
Gibson charts a similar link between sex symbol(ism) and the pattern of digital figures in both *Idoru* and *All Tomorrow's Parties* via Rei Toei's popularity.⁷ When Toei appears in the novels, she digitally embodies desire by reading the surrounding environment and appearing in an appropriate guise. In *All Tomorrow's Parties*, the former rent-a-cop Rydell, who is acting as Laney's legs, activates the container that contains Toei and she appears wearing "an outfit that exactly mirrored his own, though everything she wore fit her perfectly, and of course looked very different on her. . . . But the hair on his arms was up because he *knew*, he had seen, he had, that in the first instant of her being there, she'd crouched before him naked" (Gibson 153). In their conversation, the dynamic between Toei and Rydell becomes even more complex as "she rolled over, gorgeous and quite literally glowing, in her incongruous mirroring of what he wore, which looked, on her, like the first and purest expression of some irresistible new fashion, and fixed him with a sorrowful stare. He would, in that moment, have happily

and willingly locked eyes with her for however long she wanted and have sat there, effectively, forever” (Gibson, *All* 154). Toei’s reading of the environment and Rydell’s attraction towards her can best be described as uncanny; after all, Dani Cavallaro writes that humanoid figures are unsettling for the “uncanny is disquieting not because it takes us into utterly foreign worlds but rather because it gives the familiar an unexpected twist and thus reminds us that mystery dwells in our very minds” (168). As a result, such an uncanny figure “subversively magnifies the very elements that classic realism endeavours to keep at bay: inhibited, ambiguous entities that simultaneously disgust and fascinate us”(Cavallaro 170).

How Toei and Croft part company, however, is similar to the manner in which Toei and Date do; that is, for all of her uses in various media, Croft lacks the randomness that Gibson identifies in *Idoru* as the human thing. In other words, both Date and Croft demonstrate a top-down hierarchical structure wherein computer codes regulate the construct within predefined borders of acceptability. Toei, however, expands beyond her initial operating system and, as Laney recollects in *All Tomorrow's Parties*, becomes “an emergent system, a self continually being iterated from experiential input . . . that river into which one can never step twice. As she became more herself, through the inputting of experience, through human interaction, she grew and changed” (Gibson 163). While Toei may feed off the desire of those around her to structure her digital appearance in Gibson’s analogue world, she is not restricted by the desire of others; rather, she uses it to further her post/humanist goals. Essentially, Toei’s coding may be the ground from whence she emerges, but throughout the rest of the Bridge sequence, she grasps the

fundamentals of randomness and carries out independent, self-determined decisions, reinforcing the difference between the simulations of Date and Croft and the virtuality of Toei.

This emergence via experiential input calls to mind the final cyber-sibling: Ananova. As a digital newscaster developed by the British Press Association (PA) New Media, and recently purchased by the UK's Orange Mobile Communications Group and re-launched as Ananova Limited, Ananova is designed to read short news segments twenty-four hours per day, seven days a week over the Internet (<http://www.ananova.com>), never having to bother with contract negotiations, holidays, or sick leave. Interestingly, Ananova possesses a Toei-like system for seeking out experiential data, her abilities based on a real-time computer system and search engine which, according to Ananova, "helps me track down the latest stories on the web. It is much faster than traditional search engines because it is very specific, targeting only the latest news and sports updates. Each news story or piece of information is tagged in lots of different ways to give me the clues I need to read it properly."⁸ Ananova is particular



interesting because she points to the increasingly popular proliferation of *morphing* technologies that Donna Haraway critiques as erasing cultural history. Haraway's criticism of morphing stems from the *Time* magazine's Fall 1993 cover on multiculturalism in the United States of America. The cover depicted a computer generated ethnic woman, whom Haraway dubs SimEve, that is an

amalgamation of ethnic snapshots wallpapering the magazine's background. Haraway sees this morphing of a multitude of races into SimEve as evacuating the historical traces of domination and resistance:

All the bloody history caught by the word *miscegenation* is missing in the sanitized term *morphing*. Multiculturalism and racial mixing in *Time* magazine are less achievements against the odds of so much pain than a recipe for being innocently raptured out of mundane into redeemed time. It is the resolute absence of history, of the fleshy body that bleeds, that scares me. (*Modest* 264)

Surely, then, Ananova must frighten Haraway since Ananova's team has eliminated the unified body, digital or otherwise, by restricting Ananova to a head-and-shoulders existence, revealing nothing of any import below the shoulders, unlike Croft and Date. Furthermore, Ananova reenacts *Time* magazine's morphing technique as her designers "looked through hundreds of photographs of people, both famous and ordinary. They then picked out the most striking features of their faces and used them as a starting point for the sketch they eventually came up with."⁹ Like SimEve, Ananova is racially ambiguous, a postmodern pastiche of striking features that has coded away explicit ethnicity, simulated or otherwise.

In *Idoru*, Gibson demonstrates how Toei transcends the Ananova morphing techniques when Laney is preparing to first meet the idoru, believing she must be "some industrial-strength synthesis of Japan's last three dozen top female media faces. That was usually the way in Hollywood, and the formula tended to be even more rigid, in the case of software agents — *eigenheads*, their features algorithmically derived from some

human mean of proven popularity” (229-30). Laney quickly discovers his error as “she was nothing like that. Her black hair, rough-cut and shining, brushed pale bare shoulders as she turned her head. She had no eyebrows, and both her lids and lashes seemed to have been dusted with something white, leaving her dark pupils in stark contrast” (Gibson, *Idoru* 230). It is this first gaze into Toei’s features that leads him into a discovery not of an amalgamated beauty of simulation but of the virtual, a depth that draws him forward. By looking at such cyber-siblings as Date, Croft, and Ananova, we can see how Gibson positions Toei throughout *Idoru* and *All Tomorrow’s Parties* as a virtual figure with depth and randomness and not a hyperreal simulation that resides entirely on the surface.

Molecular Bonding Through Digital Space

One of the key narrative threads in *All Tomorrow’s Parties* is the end-result of that virtuality: Toei’s emergence from the strictly digital realm into an analogue reality. This emergence is the final play of her randomness that results in her achieving a (corpo)realization as an analogue subject. Specifically, the nanofax assembler that becomes a staple of every Lucky Dragon convenience store facilitates her emergence into the world. Ironically, Toei’s presence in the world is founded on the replication of her digital pattern, a replication that results in multiple Toei’s emerging at the end of *All Tomorrow’s Parties*, her presence copied and distributed across the globe. Boomzilla, the only witness to Toei’s corporealizing, “sees her on every last screen, walking out of every Lucky Dragon in the world, wearing that same smile” (Gibson, *All* 269). In other

words, Gibson uses Toei to entwine the post/human in an amalgamation of presence and pattern, her digital pattern copied and distributed into the presence of corporeal multiplicity. In his commentary on *Idoru*, Farnell writes that “rather than ‘abandoning the meat,’ Rei inverts the usual cyberspatial trope of transcendence: created initially as digital code, she moves towards the corporeality of Rez and the complexity of analog information, desiring to escape the confines of the *digital* prison via some inconclusive transcendence *toward* the flesh” (472). Written prior to *All Tomorrow's Parties*, Farnell’s essay concludes that Toei “places the ‘human’ under constant interrogation, granting a non-linearly genealogy that opens multiple possible (affirmative) futures and permutations” (473).

Tellingly, Gibson continues his trademark ambiguity by leaving the implications of Toei’s multiple emergence at the end of *All Tomorrow's Parties* undeveloped and unanswered. Ironically, the only figure who has an inkling of the possibilities that the nanofax assembler and Toei’s emergence may possess for post/humanity is the street-urchin Boomzilla who notices the assembler “has a hatch on the front Boomzilla could fit through, he wanted to, and he wonders would that make more Boomzillas other places and could he trust those motherfuckers? If he could, he’d have a tight posse but he doesn’t trust anybody, why should they?” (Gibson, *All* 268). Gibson has set the stage for a post/human interrogation of the patterning of presence. However, he leaves those implications to his readers to think through, dampening Boomzilla’s potential epiphany in favour of more immediate concerns: “Boomzilla still thinking about this when his Marlboro’s done, but thinks it’s time for a Lucky Dragon Muff-Lette microwave, he

thinks of that as his businessman's breakfast, and he's got the money but when he gets in they got no Muff-Lette, fucking firemen ate them all" (Gibson, *All* 269).

This low-key yet dramatic shift away from the implications of a future post/humanity to a microwave snack in the Lucky Dragon also symbolizes a theme that runs throughout the Bridge sequence, a theme that is as important to Toei's emergence as the nanofax assemblers themselves. Throughout the novel, Gibson stages a conflict between *molecular* and *molar* technologies. Molecular and molar technologies are concepts that Pierre Lévy, in *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*, defines in the following manner: "In contrast to *molar* technologies, which manage objects in bulk, in the mass, blindly, and entropically, *molecular* technology will manage the objects and processes it controls on a much finer level of detail. It will avoid mass production" (40–42). In elaboration, Lévy identifies molar technologies as artificial selection, thermodynamics, mediatization, and transcendence while molecular technologies include genetic engineering, digitization, and, particularly relevant to *All Tomorrow's Parties*, nanotechnologies.

While Lévy's text is somewhat problematic given his uncritical enthusiasm for a cyberspatial collective intelligence, molecular sites of community that do not subscribe to the hierarchical thinking that gives rise to molar technologies are particularly relevant to Gibson's fiction and, based on his interview with Cory Doctorow, are indicative of interstitial sites of potentiality. The first molecular site is the digital domain of the Walled City. In *Idoru*, exposure to the closed-off digital world of the Walled City is mediated by Chia Pet McKenzie who, through her interactions with the Japanese branch

of the Lo/Rez fanclub, comes into contact with Mashahiko. A regular netizen of the Walled City, Mashahiko describes the Walled City as “Hak Nam . . . ‘City of darkness.’ Between the walls of the world” (Gibson, *Idoru* 238).¹⁰ Trying to wrap her mind around this enigmatic description, McKenzie likens it to a MUD: “‘It’s a MUD, right?’ . . . But people played games in MUDs; they made up characters for themselves and pretended. Little kids did it, and lonely people” (Gibson, *Idoru* 238-39). Mashahiko corrects McKenzie and identifies its interstitial nature: “‘Walled City is of the net, but not on it. There are no laws here, only agreements . . . Interstitial’” (Gibson, *Idoru* 276). Gibson’s Walled City is a digital alternative to the molar world of a corporate DatAmerica, a synchrospace carved off the main network. There, much as in Melissa Scott’s Seahaven, a regenerative alternative culture lives and thrives:

The Walled City’s whereabouts, the conceptual mechanisms by which its citizens have opted to secede from the human datascape at large are the place’s central and most closely held secret. The Walled City is a universe unto itself, a subversive rumor, the stuff of legend. . . . Something in the underlying code of the Walled City’s creation introduces a metaphysical vertigo, and the visual representation is tediously aggressive, as though one were caught in some art school video production with infinitely high production values. Nothing is ever straightforward, in the Walled City; nothing is ever presented as written, but filtered instead through half a dozen species of carefully cultivated bit rot, as though the inhabitants were determined to express their massive attitude right down into the fractal texture of the place. (Gibson, *All* 193)

As Zone, a disfigured character who spends every waking hour online, explains it to Chia, the Walled City emerged from people who “‘were angry, because the net had been very free, you could do what you wanted, but then the governments and the companies, they had different ideas of what you could, what you couldn’t do. So these people, they found a way to unravel something. A little place, a piece, like cloth. They made something like a killfile of *everything*, everything they didn’t like, and they turned that inside out’” (Gibson, *Idoru* 292).

Equating the Walled City to an art school production in *All Tomorrow’s Parties* subtly identifies this interstitial site as a regenerative realm of resistance echoing an early scene in *Idoru*. Upon first entering the employ of Paragon Asia Dataflow, Laney is given two videos to assist in his background research on Rez’s life. One of the videos is an art school production leaving Laney confused and disoriented: “Why did people make things like this? There was no narration, no apparent structure; some of the same fragments kept repeating throughout at different speeds. . . . The logic of these cut-ups, he supposed, was that by making one you could somehow push back at the medium” (Gibson, *Idoru* 123). Unbeknownst to Laney, he is observing molecular technology at work, the video format subverted and twisted in upon itself to construct an ontological narrative that pushes back at the medium. Gibson’s Walled City, with its comparisons to an art school video, also symbolizes the metaphysical push against the hyperreal environment of *Cops in Trouble* and *Slitscan*, as well as the molar space dominated by corporations. Essentially, the Walled City is one large molecular site that is not bound by a hierarchical top-down structure. This identification of the Walled City as molecular is

reinforced at the end of *Idoru* when molecular-based nanotechnology retranslates the cyberspatial fabric of the Walled City into analogue reality, “an island city ‘grown’ from the reconstituted kipple dumped into Tokyo Bay” (Gibson 474). Thanks to the interaction of nanotechnology and kipple, the ontologically- and molecular-minded Walled City of Kowloon is being regrown at the end of *Idoru*, a molecular “thing of random human accretion, monstrous and superb, it is being reconstituted here, retranslated from its later incarnation as a realm of consensual fantasy” (Gibson 380).

Shifting from the consensual hallucination of *Neuromancer*’s cyberspatial matrix to the consensual fantasy of *Idoru*’s Walled City, Gibson sprinkles *All Tomorrow’s Parties* with sporadic appearances of the digital Walled City and two of its netizens, whose assistance helps create the right environment for Toei’s emergence. Yet, Gibson abandons *Idoru*’s floating island of gomi in favour of a more permanent structure, the second molecular site of the Bridge sequence: the San Francisco Bay bridge of *Virtual Light*. In *Virtual Light*, the steel structure of the Bay Bridge is organicized, transformed into a hybrid steel-and-sinew entity that has its jaws clamped tight into the superstructure:

Yamazaki felt something, some message of vast, obscure moment, shiver up through the relic-smooth dorsal hump. The storm, surely; the bridge itself was capable of considerable mobility; it expanded with heat and cold; the great steel teeth of the piers were sunk into bedrock beneath the Bay mud, bedrock that has scarcely moved even in the Little Grande. (Gibson 226-27)

The Bridge houses the refuse of society within its interstitial and trans-border embrace, the techno-marginalized masses that are the dispossessed of (Dat)America’s cybernetic

world. On the Bridge, the marginalized are in the spotlight as Gibson attempts to convey a feeling for the socially interstitial, the multitudinous horde of the dispossessed who have carved out a molecular interstice in reality: "It is a world within the world, and, if there be such places between the things of the world, places built in the gaps, then surely there are things there, and places between them, and things in those places too" (Gibson, *All Tomorrow* 80-1). Drawing upon the postmodern work of Fredric Jameson's *The Seeds of Time*, Farnell writes that the Bridge is a symbol of the neo-regional local as opposed to the global:

Neoregional writers claim the "microscopic and inconsequential," which the dominant institutions reject as insignificant, in a strategy to reclaim an "authentic" space of localized legitimacy in which individual subjects can live and act *outside* the dominant discourse This is the Bridge society, a place of Otherness that represents a "war on totality," a heterotopology and paraspace that imagines "radical alternatives to late-capitalism" (149-50). (466)

Indeed, the manner by which the Bridge has grown in a multitude of directions, including on top of itself, reflects its molecular predecessors and companions, especially historic Kowloon Walled City and its digital incarnation: "But none of it had been done to any plan, not that he could see. Not like a mall, where they plug a business into a slot and wait to see whether it works or not. This place had just *grown*, it looked like, one thing patched onto the next, until the whole span wrapped in this formless mass of *stuff*, and no two pieces of it matched" (Gibson, *Virtual* 194). The contrast the Bridge and a mall reveals the former as a site that grows with no regard to hierarchical thinking, wrapping

in upon itself in a claustrophobia of ramshackle shops, layered concourses, and epoxy-strung residences. It is for this reason that Toei stages her own molecular emergence in *All Tomorrow's Parties* on the Bridge, for it is within the embrace of a molecular site that a molecular post/human emerges.

There is an irony in Toei's emergence from the nanofax assembler given that the molecular technology that allows for her transformation is in the possession of the Lucky Dragon, a paradigmatic molar corporation standing in strict antithesis to the atom-by-atom restructuring the molecular apparently advocates. In fact, Gibson's resurrection of *Virtual Light's* Bridge in *All Tomorrow's Parties* stages a conflict between molecular and molar, the molar attempting by a corporate system to commodify and package the molecularity of the interstice. First, this theme operates on an individual level. In *All Tomorrow's Parties*, Chevette, the bicycle courier from *Virtual Light*, escapes her stalking ex-boyfriend by returning to the Bridge. Accompanying her is Tessa, a media student who wants to film a documentary about the Bridge and its molecular inhabitants: "The documentary Tessa wanted to make was about interstitial communities, and Tessa said Chevette had lived in one, because Chevette had lived on the bridge. Interstitial meant in between things, and Chevette figured that made a lot of sense, anyway" (Gibson, *All* 33). Throughout the novel, Tessa records her experiences on the Bridge, hoping to capture the interstitial quality on celluloid. In Chevette's and Tessa's approaches, the Bridge takes on two different representations that reflect the molecular and molar divide. Chevette sees the Bridge as a site of refuge and community while Tessa, using a floating camera nicknamed God's Little Toy, seeks to capture a panoptic

view of the interstice, envisioning it as fruitful terrain for her documentary, untapped raw material to be recorded and subjected to her editing skills: “She had her head full of the docu they were going to make, and she could work it out as she drove, telling Chevette about the different communities she wanted to cover and how she was going to cut it all together” (Gibson, *All* 47). Tessa is a microcosm of molar technology because she already sees the Bridge conforming to her vision of the documentary rather than vice-versa. This is reinforced towards the end of *All Tomorrow's Parties* when Gibson announces that Tessa's documentary of the Bridge is a hit and executives sign her to direct big-budget action films.

The imposition of molar thinking upon molecular space that Tessa represents, however, is minor in comparison with the invasion of the corporate Lucky Dragon convenience store chain. In *Virtual Light*, corporate mogul Harwood attempts to harness the abilities of molecular nanotechnology to reconstruct San Francisco, as Rydell learns: “‘They’re going to rebuild San Francisco. . . . They’ll start by layering a grid of seventeen complexes into the existing infrastructure. Eighty-story office/residential, retail/residence in the base. Completely self-sufficient. Variable-pitch parabolic reflectors, steam-generators. New buildings, man; they’ll eat their own sewage’” (Gibson 275). Failing in this attempt, Harwood takes a more subtle approach in *All Tomorrow's Parties* by seeking to capitalize on the Bridge's growing popularity and exploiting its potential for tourism; thus, one of the first structures Tessa and Chevette encounter upon entering the molecular Bridge is the molar presence of a Lucky Dragon, the second epigraph of this chapter signaling the disappointment at seeing corporate America's advances. While

business has always been a feature of the Bridge, it has been confined to the Mom 'n' Pop style independents; now, however, Gibson charts the corporate presence as an intrusion into the interstice, a seemingly inevitable imposition of molar corporations upon the molecular organicism of the Bridge, the interstice repackaged and marketed as "the city's number-one postcard" (*All* 67). Perhaps dismayed by an increasing corporate presence upon our own cyberspace, Gibson's *All Tomorrow's Parties* narrates corporate invasion of another synchrospace as his characters stoically face what seems to be a corporate inevitability: "But maybe Lucky Dragon knew something people didn't, he [Rydell] thought. Things could change. His father, for instance, used to swear that Times Square had been a really dangerous place" (Gibson, *All* 88).

It is in the implementation of Harwood's plans that Gibson's interest in bohemia, expressed in the interview with Cory Doctorow, comes to the fore. As Laney discovers, Harwood is intent on continuing the corporate swallowing of markets that informs the hyperreal locale of the Bridge sequence: "'Bohemia. Alternative subcultures. They were a crucial aspect of industrial civilization in the two previous centuries. They were where industrial civilization went to dream. A sort of unconscious R&D, exploring alternate societal strategies'" (Gibson, *All* 174). As an enactment of corporate digestion, Harwood's placement of the Lucky Dragon near the entrance of the Bridge is no accident: "'[O]ur studies indicated that positioning it there would encourage walk-on tourism, and that is a crucial aspect of normalization" (Gibson, *All* 174).

Once again, Harwood is not unaware of the danger of losing bohemian zones of interstitiality: "'We started picking them before they could ripen. A certain crucial

growing period was lost, as marketing evolved and the mechanisms of recommodification became quicker, more rapacious. Authentic subcultures required backwaters, and time, and there are no more backwaters''' (Gibson, *All* 174). Like Laney, Harwood possesses an ability to see potential nodal points. Therefore, recognizing the Bridge and the idoru as nodally instrumental in the normalization process, Harwood is "seeking an outcome in which Harwood Levine will not have become four meaningless syllables. If the world is to be reborn, I wish to be reborn in it, as something akin to what I am today'" (Gibson, *All* 175). Harwood seems to epitomize the adage that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

In the closing sections of *All Tomorrow's Parties*, Gibson does sprinkle hope, or potentiality, into the recipe. For example, while Harwood's molar corporate shell is attempting to swallow the molecular Bridge, he does admit that such an absorption is not without the threat of pollution: "'Autonomous zones do offer a certain insulation from the monoculture, but they seem not to lend themselves to recommodification, not in the same way. We don't know why exactly'" (Gibson, *All* 174-75). Also, despite the displacing of history that is apparently achieved via the hyperreality of *Idoru*, Harwood's unnamed assassin in *All Tomorrow's Parties* does recognize the ties the Bridge has with a historical lineage, an echo of the past guiding the future: "The bridge, behind him now, perhaps forever, is a medium of transport become a destination: salt air, scavenged neon, the sliding cries of gulls. He has glimpsed the edges of a life that he feels is somehow ancient and eternal. Apparent disorder in some deeper, some unthinkable fashion" (Gibson 273). Finally, Gibson's fascination with bidding for antique watches on eBay

makes its way into *All Tomorrow's Parties* as Silencio, a mute boy hiding in Fontaine's pawn shop, metaphorically restores time itself, symbolized by an antique rusted watch that is reconstructed at the molecular level and made anew: "Silencio places the watch on the bed. They watch as it rises smoothly on edge, as if of its own accord, and then seems to sink, impossibly, as if through the shallow bed and the glass beneath. . . . In nine minutes it will rise again, bright and perfect as the day it first left its factory in Switzerland" (Gibson 277).

The frenetic pace of Gibson's early writing style is not the only thing to have changed from his days as the young Turk of *Neuromancer*. As the Bridge sequence demonstrates, Gibson's work has become increasingly refined, all the while dealing with such issues as simulation, virtualization, interstitiality, molecular, and molar levels of reconstitution. At one end, the simulations of Kyoko Date, Lara Croft, and Ananova indicate a top-down, molar, hierarchical level of representation that is akin to Baudrillard's simulation, the reception of pre-packaged signs that herald the age of postmodern hyperreality. At the other end, the molecular system represented by Rei Toei, the interstitiality of the Walled City and the Bridge, and the tension between molecular and molar sites serve, much like an art house video production, to challenge prescribed epistemological expectations. Finally, Gibson appears to have abandoned the "unthinkable complexity" of *Neuromancer*'s cyberspace in his explorations of the digital Walled City, a *cyberplace* that is akin to Melissa Scott's Seahaven and, as I demonstrate in Chapter Seven, indicative of changing conceptualizations of our contemporary online environments.

Chapter Seven:

Laying Down the Law and Locating Jim:

Agora(phobia), The Digital Frontier, and Cyberplace

The agora — the ancient Athenian market where the citizens of the first democracy gathered to buy and sell — was more than the site of transactions; it was also a place where people met and sized up one another. It's where the word got around about those who transgress norms, break contracts.

(Rheingold, *Virtual Community* 60)

The frontier metaphor suggests the possibility of a vast, unexplored territory. Computer enthusiasts, also known as hackers, populate frontier villages; advance scouts/pilgrims include the by now infamous computer viruses, worms, and Trojan horses that were designed very simply to “map” the network into which they were released.

(Basalmo, *Technologies* 116)

To this point, ScyberFiction has demonstrated a gradual maturation as an increasing number of sf authors engage the ontological possibilities of computer-generated environments and the queries that such spaces, in conjunction with those technologies that help make such sites both possible and accessible, pose regarding configurations and significations of the post/human body. Since Gibson's *Neuromancer*,

ScyberFiction has grown more complex by engaging with thematics of immortality, sexuality, virtuality, and the code duality of analogue and digital. Most recently, texts by such authors as Gibson, Scott, Tad Williams, and the collection of novellas assembled in *The Web: 2027* have begun fleshing out the digital obscurity of cyberspace, carving off synchrospaces from the whole of the advanced computer networks to form new digital locales. As I noted at the end of the previous chapter, we can chart in such changes in ScyberFiction a replacing of cyberspace, that realm of “unthinkable complexity” and “[l]ines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind” (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 51), with *cyberplace*, the sites of Seahaven, the Walled City, or, in similar contexts, Tad Williams’s Otherland network, the private domains of Charles Platt’s *The Silicon Man*, and the BIN of Dennis Danvers’s *Circuit of Heaven* and *End of Days*.

Yet, what about that other participant in the network that is cyberspace discourse? While ScyberFiction increasingly maps out cyberplaces, is there a parallel cartography taking place on our own Internet? It turns out that such a shift from cyberspace to cyberplace is quite common in our own analogue Internet development; notions of place have been instrumental in popularizing the Internet over the past decade. After all, Michael Benedikt, in his Introduction to *Cyberspace: First Steps*, did promote the ongoing development of cyberspace as a project that “will require design, and the people who design these structures will be called *cyberspace architects*” (18). It turns out that cyberspace architects have not been restricted to the imaginative realm of SF; rather, cyberculture theorists continue to promote, and debate, cyberspace in architectural imagery. In fact, the epigraphs to this chapter detail two of the most popular cyberplaces

that dominate the imaging of the Internet: the agora and the virtual frontier.

In *Writing Diaspora*, Rey Chow notes that “the invention of new techniques of reproduction and communication is always accompanied by the dream of a more open, more radical politics” (170). The Internet is no different. One of the earliest cyber-enthusiasts was Howard Rheingold. In his 1993 text *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*, Rheingold speculates enthusiastically about the transformative potential that online communication is making possible; in particular, he grounds his account in his own experiences as a netizen of the San Francisco-based online community The Whole Earth ‘Lectronic Link, or the WELL. Although Rheingold does evoke Western imagery with the use of *homesteading* and *frontier* in his text’s subtitle, it is the agora that draws the focus of his imagination because the agora is a site interwoven with the notions of democracy, freedom of expression, and political activism: “In the original democracy, Athens, the agora was the marketplace, and more — it was where citizens met to talk, gossip, argue, size each other up, find the weak spots in political ideas by debating about them” (14). In Rheingold’s account, it is in the marketplace, the agora of the Athenians or the agora of our digital age, that the seeds of rebellion and opposition are planted, for it is in the agora that “the word got around about those who transgress norms, break contracts. Markets and gossip are historically and inextricably connected” (60).

In many senses, certain sectors of the Internet subscribe to this vision of the agora; for example, Usenet newsgroups devoted to a host of topics allow for uncensored conversation among a diverse range of individuals. Everything from the banal

(alt.toys.gi-joe, alt.binaries.pictures.centrefolds.playboy, rec.collecting.beer.bottles) to the politically inspired (alt.politics.democrats, alt.censorship.canada, alt.feminism, soc.culture.intercultural) can be found in this digital marketplace accessible to netizens from across the globe. This sharing of information regardless of, for example, geographic borders continues to invest the agora and its democratic potential with representational energy, a function of particular importance to those expatriates or migrants who may have been forced to leave their countries but have not abandoned them altogether.

Most recently, French philosopher and anthropologist Pierre Lévy enthusiastically deployed the imagery of the agora in *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace*, in which he argues for a radical social politics. Specifically, he places a great amount of stock in the trans-national communicative potential of the Internet, adopting a self-confessed utopian stance in which he claimed that online mediums herald the emergence of a collective intelligence, a “*universally distributed intelligence*” constantly enhanced, coordinated in real time, and resulting in the mobilization of skills” (13). Such a collective intelligence is based upon the real-time sharing of information among global participants; this sharing will then allow knowledge to be both distributed through the system and enhanced by those logged onto it; finally, individual skills will be identified and effectively mobilized to form a new democratic consciousness. In a manner mirroring Rheingold’s earlier account, Lévy sees this digital agora as a site of interchange and communication that is not an unified system of thought superimposed on the networks nor does it “imply a sovereign people, one that is reified, fetishized,

attached to a territory, identified by soil or blood, but a strong people, one perpetually engaged in the process of self-knowing and self-creation, a people in labor, a people yet to come” (88-89). In other words, the molecular spaces of Gibson’s Bridge sequence (outlined in the previous chapter) can be found in our own emergent cyberspace that resists the molar structures of national politics, government institutions, and corporate mission statements.

Lévy’s notions of the Internet as heralding a new political sensibility based on (cyber)communal membership is, in fact, not new. Sandy Stone, in *The War of Desire and Technology*, gives a thorough account of the Internet’s history and demonstrates that Lévy’s future vision of the collective intelligence is grounded in a historical gaze stretching into the past, an embodiment of the general recursivity I outlined in Chapter Three. Stone’s history details those grass-roots computer companies of the 1970s that displayed their molecular thinking by extricating themselves from military and corporate-based molar outlooks on computer technologies. In particular, the 1970s laid the groundwork for the molecular Internet. First, Stone notes, computer programmers, such as John James and Dean Gengle, began insisting that computer bulletin board systems (BBS) were “potentially a new kind of community, a community that James felt could transform existing society and facilitate the emergence of new social forms” (Stone, *War* 100). Second, the anti-authoritarian attitudes of First-generation computer programmers and similar “geeks” increasingly speckled the corporate and military corridors formerly dominated by a homogeneity of staid officers. Finally, computer programmers working for the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) began envisioning

alternate possibilities for the military-based hardware they were contracted to develop. In the end, the 1970s saw the emergence of the CommuniTree Group, a collection of like-minded scientists and computer programmers intent on constructing a tree-structured BBS: "Each branch of the tree was to be a separate conference that grew naturally out of its root message by virtue of each subsequent message that was attached to it. . . . Because each reader could choose a unique thread of the discourse to develop, such a reader also became ipso facto an author . . . (Stone, *War* 109). A molecular sensibility saturated CommuniTree as a grouping of individuals made novel use of corporate tools originally designed for military or corporate communications. As Stone tells it, the programmers and participants of CommuniTree "even envisioned the operation as symbiotic — an electronic crocodile bird plucking useful data from between DARPA's teeth" (*War* 109).

One does not need to go into the past nor the future to see embodiments of molecular communities; rather, the current furor over peer-to-peer (p2p) file-sharing has brought the opposition between molecular politics and molar corporations into sharp focus. Once again, p2p is nothing new. For example, FTP software has allowed netizens logged into smaller, locally-based bulletin board systems to share files, producing a digital bazaar capable of trading images, sound files, programs, and other such material. The relatively recent development of audio files, known as MP3's, however, triggered an onslaught of debate regarding, users' rights, artists' rights, music companies' rights, and copyright violations. Essentially, MP3 (MPEG layer 3) files are computer files very similar to .wav audio files in that they provide a near-CD quality that, unlike .wav, are

tightly compressed packages easily transmitted over computer networks. Given their current popularity, the fact that MP3 files have a lower sound quality than .wav files seems to be of negligible concern to those people downloading free music from the Internet.

Hot on the heels of MP3 development came Napster, a file-sharing service that allowed individual users to freely share MP3 files through their computers. Napster, however, does not contain the songs on its server; rather, it scans a computer's hard drive, gathers a listing of all the songs on that hard drive, compiles those songs into a mega-list contained on the Napster servers, allows other users to scan that mega-listing in search of song titles, and enables a direct connection from computer to computer for the purpose of music swapping. Napster's initial appearance as a facilitator among computer users was akin to an operator who places a call to allow communication between two parties, only the conversation is the sharing of MP3s. The early manifestation of Napster revealed a molecular-based mindset as it allowed users to bypass the molar structure of music companies and retail outlets and enabled them to download music. Napster's initial popularity and success even resulted in the service winning the "Disruptive Technology" award and Shawn Fanning, Napster founder, ePerson of the Year at the 2001 MIT Sloan eBusiness Awards.¹

In Lévy's or Rheingold's imagery, Napster could, at least initially, be identified as the marketplace where individuals met and traded musical wares, a molecular site that was divorced from overarching corporate control. In the marketplace, however, there is a fine line between sharing and stealing and my use of the past tense to refer to Napster's

beginnings indicates a change in cyber-climate. Specifically, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) sued Napster, claiming the service facilitated copyright violations. In a series of complicated motions, the court appeared to support the RIAA, and Napster has had to introduce filtering software in preparation for its re-launch as a subscription-based service that can pay royalties to artists and, more importantly, record companies. In a direct sense, the p2p file-sharing system embodied by Napster staged a battle between molar corporate interests and the pursuit of music by molecular cy(ber)borgs, and the latter lost. Or have they? Tellingly, the demise of a molecular-inspired Napster may make media headlines but it has very few repercussions for those individuals who are fully aware of the methods by which a molecular-based Internet can survive. What made Napster extremely popular was its ease of use and the centralized server allowing for prompt searches and downloads. This is also what made it particularly easy to target since deleting the centralized server, which contains the music mega-lists, eliminates the means by which users can access one another's stored audio files. Put another way, it would be equivalent to firing the operator who places the telephone calls or, in Lévy and Rheingold's agora, policing the marketplace and allowing only authorized transactions to take place.

The problem facing molar interests, however, is how to deal with de-centralized software that allows an individual's home PC to become its own server. In particular, software engineers Justin Frankel and Tom Pepper of Nullsoft, a subsidiary of the multiconglomerate America Online (AOL), secretly developed a p2p file-sharing program called Gnutella that does not require centralized servers.² As a result, shutting

down a Gnutella protocol is extremely difficult because it requires the monitoring of individual computers and their users. While AOL, fearing lawsuits based on the foreseeable copyright violations, quickly shut down Nullsoft after the release of Gnutella 0.56, the program had been on the Internet long enough for individuals to download copies, work the code backwards, and refine new programs. In a (g)nutshell, Gnutella 0.56 has been retooled and circulates the Internet in a variety of windows-based programs — including Bearshare, Limewire, ToadNoad, Newtella, Gnotella, and CuteMX — that are more than willing to fill the molecular gap left by Napster's legal difficulties. Whereas molar intrusion can shut down a centralized marketplace like Napster, it is more difficult to control hosts of decentralized individuals who are trading files from their digital backyards or basements.

Competing against the popularity of the agora and p2p marketplaces is, as the Anne Basalmo epigraph indicates, the imaging of the Internet as a virtual frontier. From its early days in both cyberculture and ScyberFiction, frontier mythology has been attached to the Internet and the development of cyberspace. This frontier mythos is one of the structuring principles of Melissa Scott's *Trouble and Her Friends* and, on her website (<http://www.rscs.net/~ms001/mainpage.html>), she writes of the frontier's influence "as a metaphor for the internet [sic], virtual reality, and its imagined successors." The frontier imagery is especially pervasive in cyberculture, from the subtitle of Howard Rheingold's *Virtual Community* to the frontier symbolism evoked by Scott Bukatman (*Terminal Identity*) and Mark Slouka (*War of the Worlds*). In an interview extract sporadically broadcast on Canada's *Space: The Imagination Station*,

John Perry Barlow embeds his history of the Internet within the frontier mystique, describing computer hackers as “a lot like natives. They were the people who’d grown up there. They were the aboriginal people. They were the Indians. They understood the terms and conditions of the place. They knew the country. And now we see the settlers coming and the settlers are doing what settlers always do, which is trying to replicate all of the dimensions of their society in this new environment.”³

This frontier image of ScyberFiction and cyberculture obviously draws upon a historical tradition that Scott, on her website, clearly indicates is woven into the American tapestry of history, science, and technology: “Here in the US, that [frontier] idea carries an enormous freight, a complex blend of history, myth and reality that is only rarely examined in any depth.” Edward James makes this clear, writing in *Science Fiction in the 20th Century*, that “[i]n the nineteenth century the American belief in progress depended in part on the expanding frontiers in the West; in the twentieth century it was the expanding frontiers of science and space which offered the possibilities for optimism” (61). Linking this “belief in progress” to the rise of science fiction as a literary genre, Brooks Landon, in *Science Fiction After 1900: From the Steam Man to the Stars*, writes that the dime novels of the early 20th century “played an interesting role in the transition in public consciousness between the Romantic worldview in which pioneers and cowboys were America’s mythic heroes and the modern, machine-dominated worldview in which engineers and inventors took their part in the new mythology. . .” (44). With the expansion of the Internet, both camps have come together in the network of cyberspace as the cowboys of yesteryear and the engineers of yesterday

merge into the hackers and console cowboys of our contemporary future-world.

Aside from its appeal to an American historical sensibility that saw waves of colonial settlers heading Westward, part of the success of the frontier symbol to describe cyberspace is attributed to Bruce Sterling's *The Hacker Crackdown: Law and Disorder on the Electronic Frontier*. According to Salvatore Proietti, Sterling's text helped solidify the digital Wild Wild West by virtue of a coincidental time and place: Chicago, 1893. In "The Informatic Jeremiad: The Virtual Frontier and US Cyberculture," Proietti notes that Sterling identifies 1893 Chicago as a crux in the wiring of America because this was where the first step was taken to wire Western America into a telephone network that, nearly a century later, became the backbone of the Internet. Proietti also notes, however, that it was in 1893 Chicago that Frederick Jameson Turner delivered "The Significance of the Frontier in American History" to the American Historical Association. In that analysis of the frontier mentality, now available online, Turner noted "the appeal of the undiscovered is strong in America. For three centuries the fundamental process in its history was the westward movement, the discovery and occupation of the vast free spaces of the continent. We are the first generation of Americans who can look back upon that era as a historic movement now coming to its end." Turner noted, however, that new frontiers awaited the American people: "In place of old frontiers of wilderness, there are new frontiers of unwon fields of science, fruitful for the needs of the race; there are frontiers of better social domains yet unexplored. Let us hold to our attitude of faith and courage, and creative zeal. Let us dream as our fathers dreamt and let us make our dreams come true."⁴ Proietti evaluates Turner's overall

presentation and determines that, as a frontier, science represented “the last hope for the US” (117) once the wilderness had been settled. It is in the digital frontier that the settlers of yesteryear become metonymically linked with the hackers of today, an association Anne Basalmo clearly recognizes in the opening epigraph. In Proietti’s terms, “[t]he virtual frontier becomes a viable rhetorical tool precisely *because* of its association with ‘opposition’ figures such as the hackers. With them, the space of immaterial expansion finds its agents, its contemporary bards, and its vanished legendary heroes” (120). Of course, Proietti’s claim that hackers are contemporary bards or legendary heroes is forced, especially given the highly-publicized reports of hacked credit card numbers openly posted on the World Wide Web.

Barlow’s use of the imagery of the West and, in particular, the waves of settlers now venturing into the Wild Wild Web is especially evocative because, as a task in the replication of the dimensions of society in the new environment, settlement is about marking off space, charting and mapping out territories that will transform space into place, staking out plots and allowing for new villages and communities to grow. In spite of the problem with the frontier imagery, which I explore below, Barlow is somewhat accurate in his interpretation that this new cartographic project of space-to-place has now been applied to the digital frontier. Yet, such a transition from cyberspace to cyberplace is, for the most part, not terribly surprising; after all, each and every cy(ber)borg who ventures onto the Internet is, in some way, a migrant entering into new territory. In “Lines of Communication: Meaning in the Migrant Environment,” Paul Carter examines traditional migrancy in Australia, remarking that “[t]he meaning and significance we

attribute to our lives are closely bound up with a sense of place. Places — memorable arrangements of buildings and spaces — give us a sense of orientation” (9). Granted, Carter is discussing the function of analogue architecture, but the principles are very similar when it comes to cyberspace. Those MUD, Chat, or gaming environments outlined in Chapter Three are the digital parallels to the migrant experience, places that help create a sense of orientation as the cy(ber)borg locates his or her post/human body-plus-virtualization within a wider grid of communal relations. In other words, the shift from cyberspace to cyberplace is effected when the randomness and chaotic nature of open space is replaced with definitive signposts of place, most notably in URLs that denote the cyber-specific location of web pages, such search utilities as Google.com or Yahoo.com that allow users to navigate through cyberspace in a somewhat ordered manner, the Web portals that accumulate and load personalized information upon start-up, or the newsgroups that are accessible through their alt-, comp-, or rec- designations.

In his account of migrancy in Australia, Carter goes on to note that “[i]ntegration with the built environment is not achieved visually, but *haptically*: by experiencing the place you live in with your body rather than by simply looking at it through a car windscreen. Haptic spaces are those that satisfactorily externalize our deep emotional need for community; they create places to embrace and inhabit, places that speak to us” (9). Once again, similar principles are applicable to cyberspace as the frequenting of MUDs, Chats, or Web spaces, in conjunction with differing levels of interformativity and interaction, help cement the notion of community as located in a cyberplace. This is perhaps best exemplified on gaming sites wherein users’ relationships among one another

are based on the shared experience of navigating a digital embodiment through a constructed environment, whether a medieval castle or, in the case of Worlds.com, a series of forums. Even text-based newsgroups offer the sense of a place as they are the nexus for communication across a variety of topics among individuals that would have no common physical meeting ground. Thus, while rec.arts.sf.written or alt.cyberpunk have no physical location, there is a sense of place evoked when the user logs onto the sites and participates in the discussions.

Carter's haptic evocation also helps explain the popular growth of avatar adoption given that these icons are a method of experiencing the environment in a digitally-embodied manner; thus, when negotiating Worlds.com, the experience is grounded in embodiment because, as I noted in Chapter Three, certain rules of physics continue to apply. Similarly, in the Tinysex venues, a spatial geography is at play as the location of potential participants helps facilitate the overall experience. It seems only natural that cy(ber)borgs re-envision cyberspace as a cyberplace, shifting away from a delocalized digital infinitude, represented by Gibson's unthinkable complexity or Stenger's pacific blaze that will herald disembodiment, in favour of more concrete, architecturally-minded metaphors of cyberplace.

The popular evocation of the agora and the Wild Wild Web as methods of envisioning cyberplace do not, however, come without problems. First off, the popularity of Wild Wild Westernized hackers, explorers, and subsequent digital settlers working to construct new worlds that are outside the distinct jurisdictions of established authority is nowhere more hyperbolized than in Barlow's "A Declaration of the Independence of

Cyberspace,” a portion of which appeared in Chapter Three. In addition to constructing the country of the Mind, Barlow’s Declaration also evokes the molecular sensibilities of Lévy’s and Rheingold’s agora and the vastness of the frontier. For example, Barlow opposes governmental intrusion upon the Internet, writing that “[y]ou [governments] do not know our culture, our ethics, or the unwritten codes that already provide our society more order than could be obtained by any of your impositions. . . . We are forming our own Social Contract . This governance will arise according to the conditions of our world, not yours. Our world is different.” To help his cause, Barlow draws upon the historical lineage of apparently righteous figures who helped found an earlier nation:

In the United States, you have today created a law, the Telecommunications Reform Act, which repudiates your own Constitution and insults the dreams of Jefferson, Washington, Mill, Madison, de Toqueville, and Brandeis. These dreams must now be born anew in us . . . These increasingly hostile and colonial measures place us in the same position as those previous lovers of freedom and self-determination who had to reject the authorities of distant, uninformed powers. We must declare our virtual selves immune to your sovereignty, even as we continue to consent to your rule over our bodies. We will spread ourselves across the Planet so that no one can arrest our thoughts.”

Finally, this nation that is being built in, and from, cyberspace “consists of transactions, relationships, and thought itself. . . . Ours is a world that is both everywhere and nowhere, but it is not where bodies live.”

If we embrace Barlow’s vision of cyberspace, race becomes a moot issue since

“we are creating a world where anyone, anywhere may express his or her beliefs, no matter how singular, without fear of being coerced into silence or conformity. We are creating a world that all may enter without privilege or prejudice accorded by race, economic power, military force, or station of birth.” But, if Dave Healy, in “Cyberspace and Place,” is correct in his assessment that *we* are all Huck Finns “lighting out for the territories in an endless quest for elbow room” (66), the question arises: *where is Jim?* According to Barlow, that question is irrelevant because this new cyber-country is open to all.

Of course, Barlow’s stance is predicated on a presumption of privilege that assumes his social status is representative of the new world order. Yet as Cameron Bailey astutely notes, in “Virtual Skin: Articulating Race in Cyberspace,” even the democratic agora that has been trumpeted by Rheingold and Lévy was reserved for the elite: “Like the democracy of the ancient Greeks, today’s digital democracy is reserved for an elite with the means to enjoy it. So it is with race. Existing racial discourses find their way into cyberspace, not simply as content but as a part of the structure shaping the place” (31). Put another way, the agora serves its function so long as an individual can access that market in the first place; otherwise, voices are absent. Contrary to what Barlow may envision, cyberspace is entirely predicated on the privileges or prejudices accorded by such analogue factors as race, economic power, or station of birth.

This same type of oversight takes place in Lévy’s envisioning of a wired world that will allow for the growth of molecular communities and a new (demo)dynamic system of politics. Proving Chow’s point regarding the association of new technologies

and dreams of radical politics, Lévy believes a new digital democracy will rise, a politics emerging from “the interconnection of computers and storage systems over standard telephone lines and the extension of digital transmission networks [that] continue to expand a global cyberspace in which elements of information are in virtual contact with one another and with anyone who happens to be connected” (xxix-xx). Once again, the stipulation for this new democracy is connectivity, and that seems to be an issue that is often overlooked by such cyber-enthusiasts as Rheingold, Lévy, and Barlow who assume Internet access is ubiquitous and unimpeded by social factors. After all, Derrick de Kerckhove, in his 1997 Lévy-rejoinder *Connected Intelligence: The Arrival of the Web Society*, notes three important facts: first, the total number of computers in the world compared against the global population puts access rates to networks at 3%; second, the average wired family in the United States earned in excess of \$75,000; third, 75% of the world’s main telephone lines serviced less than 15% of the world’s population (178).

Times change, and the specifics of de Kerckhove’s observations may have changed since he first researched *Connected Intelligence*. On the other hand, even as the Internet is spreading into such venues as coffeehouses, schools, and local libraries, access is still unevenly distributed across racial and economic lines. In fact, Bailey notes a division between suburban and urban access, writing that the netiquette dictating the proper method of online conversing and interaction is coded as “something of the culture of suburban America; one gets the sense that these structures are in place not simply to order cyberspace but to keep chaos (the urban sphere) out. It is no stretch to suggest that in turning to cyberspace, the white middle-class men who first populated it sought refuge

from the hostile forces in physical, urban space — crime, poor people, desperate neighbourhoods, and the black and brown” (38). Bailey is correct in drawing attention to this digital divide; for example, public and separate schools in Ontario crystallize this digital divide. While new schools built in upper-income suburban areas of Toronto and Ottawa — the former the epitome of Canadian urban sprawl; the latter, due to the high-tech boom in suburban Kanata, dubbed Silicon Valley North — are wired with multiple A-class computers in each classroom, inner city schools that are populated by the less-privileged are retrofitted with fewer, less powerful computers in comparison to their suburban cousins. In essence, despite any pronouncements to the contrary, cyberspace depends on such analogue issues of economic power, stations of birth, and mundane, but very real, cost considerations.

Based on the obvious inequality of access, Joe Lockard, in “Babel Machines and Electronic Universalism,” remarks that “[p]reexisting economic disadvantages translate into a new electronic differential, which in turn reinforces the old symbolic order through a new structural racism of limited or absent Internet access” (179). While Lockard may seem somewhat fatalistic in his overall assessment of the Internet’s potential, his cautions are valid and clearly indicate that Internet access, and this new Social Contract that Barlow alludes to, is more than simply a technological issue; rather, it is a socio-political issue, grounded in both digital and analogue reality.

In addition to the problems surrounding the issue of social privilege in this digital agora, Barlow’s declarative evocation of such American figures as Jefferson, Washington, or de Toqueville indicates two key problems with frontier symbolism. First,

these male historical figures help cement the Internet as a site dominated by male cy(ber)borgs; similarly, Dave Healy's association of cy(ber)borgs as Huck Finns or Daniel Boones heading Westward is obviously gendered. Apparently Annie Oakley and Calamity Jane are not welcome on this new frontier that has been dominated by console cowboys. To reinforce this point, Laura Miller notes, in "Women and Children First: Gender and the Settling of the Electronic Frontier," that the masculine Wild Wild West figure resurfaces in the console cowboys of cyberspace: "The computer hacker is a spiritual descendent of these literary predecessors" (66).

Helping gender matters, pornography, always willing to recognize an explosive medium, has embraced the graphic possibilities the Web offers for reaching new consumers. The prevalence of porn's infiltration into the World Wide Web is clearly evident in the ongoing media coverage of the Internet — including mainstream sources such as *Newsweek*, *Dateline NBC*, and *The Oprah Winfrey Show* — that repeatedly dwell on the availability and dangerous presence of cyber-porn and online pedophiles.⁵ This perceived prevalence of online pornography reached a climax in the mid-1990s when American Senator Jim Exon (D) of Nebraska, responding to a *Dateline NBC* story, attempted to persuade the U.S. Congress to shut down Internet Service Providers. Cate C. Corcoran writes, in the online article "From DC To Cyberspace," that Exon used a binder full of pornographic material downloaded off the Internet to push the Communications Decency Act through the Senate in July, 1995. The Act included: fines of up to US\$100,000 and prison terms for material considered to be obscene and indecent; the Federal Communications Commission using broad powers to regulate the

Net; and, local Internet Service Providers legally responsible for material posted to the Net via their access portals. In protest, websites went black with a digital blue-ribbon campaign to protest government incursions upon civil liberties. As Corcoran outlines, the Act may have passed the Senate with a vote of 84 to 16, but the Newt Gingrich-controlled House of Representatives squashed the Act and opened the door to a series of amendments. Amidst legal wrangling from the American Civil Liberties Union, a retooled Communications Decency Act was signed into law on February 8, 1996 then in 1997 deemed unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court.

Male (console) cowboys, western frontiers, and the digitalized skin trade together represent a mindset that prompts calls for intervention and a taming of the Wild Wild Web to make it safe for women and children. This is increasingly the case because, as I noted in Chapter One, Ipsos Reid's *The Face of the Web* identifies women and children as outpacing men in the number of new Internet users. In Miller's assessment, this all represents a predictable pattern: "[i]ntroduce women and children into a frontier town and the law must follow because women and children must be protected. Women, in fact, are usually the most vocal proponents of the conversion from frontier justice to civil society" (52). In other words, the Wild Wild Web must be tamed to make women and children safe; children must be sheltered and protected from the dual dangers of online pornography and the stalking appetites of pedophiles; and, women must be protected from misogynist abuses that stem from a medium previously dominated by men. While there is a certain veracity in the calls to impose some legal accountability on the Net, especially in the area of children's safety, Miller finds women's safety particularly

problematic as “[t]hese requests have a long cultural tradition, based on the idea that women, like children, constitute a peculiarly vulnerable class of people who require special protection from the elements of society men are expected to confront alone” (52).

In other words, Wyatt Earp-like lawmen are exploiting a gendered perception of women and children as fragile in order to regulate the medium in a manner antithetical to its origins and its molecular possibilities.

The second function of the frontier mentality is, as can be deduced by now, the colonial sentiment of an American-centric mental space that is not easily digested by other countries. For example, Canada’s psychic history stems not from a frontier past but, as Margaret Atwood argues in her seminal *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, a wilderness sensibility and the constant struggle with the land: “The central symbol for Canada — and this is based on numerous instances of its occurrence in both English and French Canadian literature — is undoubtedly *Survival*, *la Survivance*. . . . Our stories are likely to be tales not of those who made it but of those who make it back, from that awful experience — the North, the snowstorm, the sinking ship — that killed everyone else” (33). Similarly, the Australian psyche, according to Duncan Graham’s *Being Whitefella*, is a quest for identity that “seems to be more concerned with the defeat of Gallipoli, myths of mateship and the outback, colonial and convict origins and, more recently, multi-culturalism” (19). The American dominance sustained by the frontier imagery is exactly the message of Canadian critics Arthur and Marilouise Kroker in one of the more lucid moments of *Hacking the Future*: “As the software that provides system-operating codes for global culture, America powers up the 21st century. When

McLuhan said that America *is* the world environment, he is to be taken literally” (11).

Once again, this is not all that surprising given America’s central position in developing the Internet and the programming codes that run it: “[T]he computer scientists who designed personal computers and the Internet did so on the basis of American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) Code, which made computing in other alphabets or character sets inconvenient or impossible” (Warschauer 156).

The ongoing dominance of America over the cyberspatial world environment can be seen in a variety of surveys analyzing the medium. Specifically, recent statistical surveys conducted by Global Reach (<http://www.glreach.com/globstats/index.php3>), an online marketing company, breaks down Internet access by such factors as nationalities and language groups. According to information amassed in the year 2000, the number of English-speaking Internet surfers totaled 47.6% (approximately 192 million) while the non-English percentage was 52.4% (approximately 211 million). At first glance, this seems promising given that those non-English cy(ber)borgs outnumber the English ones.

On closer inspection, however, the largest *single* non-English language group was Japanese, which numbered only 9.6%, or 38.5 million users. In other words, the percentage of non-English users may outnumber English ones, but English still retains its dominant position as the largest *individual* language group.⁶ More tellingly,

approximately 144 million of those 192 million English-speaking users (75%) reside in the United States; the rest of the top-5 English-language locales were rounded out by the United Kingdom (19.47M), Canada (whose 9.5M are heavily influenced by its American neighbours), Australia (8.4M), and, interestingly, India (4.5M). While online survey

results are always inclined to change with the times, Global Market's information is reinforced by Ipsos Reid's *The Face of the Web* wherein the United States was identified as having the greatest estimated home PC ownership, most total Internet users, highest Internet trial, highest Internet knowledge, highest Internet usage, and greatest number of future users (33 million new users expected within 12 months).⁷

Despite the popularity of the frontier imagery and the romantic idealization of hackers who, for the most part, are engaged in mischief rather than socio-political resistance, the Western mythos has always been a troubling, if not inappropriate, metaphor for imaging the Internet. In fact, in spite of Barlow's description of the old-time hacker natives and the frontier impulse, Rheingold's description of online communities as virtual homesteading, or the modernizing of Turner's evocation of science as the new frontiers that Proietti observes, the Internet was never a frontier. The cyberspatial landscape did not exist in a primordial realm of timeless abandon that awaited the first Neil Armstrong-like footstep on the alien landscape; rather, the medium was constructed in the very act of building the computer industry. The frontier was not "out there" awaiting discovery, exploration, and settlement; rather, it was initially created by the interplay of the American cultural psyche and the developing computer industry. Miller makes a similar point when she writes that "[t]he land of the American frontiers did not become a 'frontier' until Europeans determined to conquer it, but the continent existed before the intention to settle it. Unlike land, the Net was created by its pioneers" (51).

In fact, the evocations of the agora or the frontier that are taking place in the

construction of cyberspace are grounded in an anachronistic evocation of the past, stepping backwards into the future.⁸ After all, both Lévy and Rheingold refer to a centuries-old agora to actively image this ongoing cyberspatial terrain; the frontier metaphor calls to mind a specific geographic locale that, much like the ghost towns of Hollywood cinema, has been abandoned for upscale living; and, the difficulty of online consumerism to make a profit on the Internet using tried-and-true analogue marketing strategies — evidenced in the Nasdaq plunge of dot-com companies in 2001 and the financial difficulties of such online ventures as Amazon.com, Go.com (a division of Walt Disney), eToys.com, or Chapters.ca — indicate a particularly retrospective, possibly outdated, approach to the online medium.

In spite of its problems, however, the overall development of cyberplaces do offer the potential for locating Jim, as well as the host of other cy(ber)borgs inflected by discourses that are tethered to corporeal markers. In “Cyberspace and Place,” Healy looks at the Americanizing of the Internet and draws forth a useful symbol that is not restricted to the United States: the railroad. Specifically, the notion of the railroad situates the Internet as a means of transportation rather than the end-destination; in other words, the point is not the cyberspatial railroad itself but the means by which the digital spikes, rails, and engine can create a network, bring together disparate communities, and deposit them in common, if digital, locales. Arturo Escobar, in “Gender, Place & Networks,” teases out the railroad analogy, writing that the railway lines of yesterday are the networks of today and the means by which we travel those networked lines evoke both a global sensibility while also grounding an oft-overlooked locality: “A railroad is

neither local nor global. It is, in fact, local at all points; yet it is global, since it takes you to many places (which is different from being universal, since it does not take you just anywhere)” (37). By extension, the Internet can become an express lane to cyberplaces that serve a *variety* of invested functions: the Tinysex and stray penetration of interformative forums that evoke new ways of thinking about gender; gaming networks that place social interformativity within a task-oriented context; or, the means by which global populations — i.e., populations spread across the globe and across town — can find common political ground. Thus, Chat rooms, newsgroups, and politically-thematic sites can undercut the deterritorialized image of the Net as a medium divorced from soil or blood that Lévy and other prognosticators may envision.

Much like the bonds that unite participants in such newsgroup forums as rec.arts.sf.written or alt.movies, the formation of such cyberplaces also helps to cement a sense of political community among participants. Gordon Graham, in *The Internet://A Philosophical Inquiry*, writes on the function of cyber-communities, arguing that virtual reality

can properly be conceived of as a distinctive mode of existence, a mode that is not just a game, but a world of its own in which a significant if limited range of things can be accomplished and lost. If we now add to this minimal claim the reminder that the Internet is at a very early stage of development, there is reason to think the future of cyberspace will bring metaphysical novelties — that virtual reality interpreted via the virtual community is to some extent a new world and one that we are on the edge of. (163)

Graham is careful in his analysis to retain an objectivity that is often lost by cyber-enthusiasts. In other words, he is no technophile subscribing to Barlow's vision of a cyber-country or cyber-communities divorced from corporeal bodies and available to all regardless of social access, but, quite the contrary, is critical of such hyperbolized embraces: "The possibilities of virtual reality may well bring added benefits, but without the context of ordinary life, to live one's life primarily on the Internet would be a poor way to be" (166). Graham walks a fine line in his text, promoting the possibilities of virtual reality for constructing new forms of digital community while, simultaneously, ensuring that analogue life is not lost in the shuffle.

This blend of the digital and analogue to form cyberspatial communities that are new worlds and grounded in the context of ordinary life are coming to the fore as cyberculture matures and begins to address social, political, and ethnic issues. For example, Wendy Harcourt's recent collection *Women@Internet: Creating New Cultures in Cyberspace* demonstrates the extent of just such an endeavour as the essays discuss the use of Internet forums to unite and share the political work of women — indigenous and otherwise — of such nations as Iran, Asia, and Australia. These women are able to construct cyberplaces grounded in political activism that is clearly linked to social, cultural, political, and racial climates of analogue reality. In many cases, the participants are envoys of a larger social community that may not have access to the Internet, liaisons between the cy(ber)borgs discussing political activism in online venues and political activists working in the various national legislatures. On a more local level, Mark Warschauer, in "Language, Identity, and the Internet," charts how the Internet and, more

specifically, Usenet newsgroups have helped keep ethnic languages alive. In particular, Warschauer demonstrates how online cyberplaces have sustained and spread such languages as the Polynesian and Maori dialects of Hawai'i and the Navajo language of mainland United States. Finally, David Silver, in "Margins in the Wires," analyzes the function of the Blacksburg Electronic Village intranet where "over 70 percent of the town's residents [Blacksburg, Virginia] congregate, communicate, and consume using the town's unique community network. . . . They come together in mailing lists, local Usenet newsgroups, and chat rooms to discuss issues both local and global" (133). These cases are very much expressions of Dave Healy's cyberspatial locomotive, the Internet allowing the means by which communities exist in both a digital and analogue format without excluding one from the other, a place evoked in the coding of cartography and cryptography.

This is not to say, however, that cyberplace does not have its problematic implications. Silver notes, for example, that the Blacksburg Electronic Village (BEV) lacks forums that challenge a white, masculinist assumption of membership: "[T]he link to the Alliance of Lesbian and Gay Organizations of Western Virginia is dead, and there are no links whatsoever to race- or gender-based communities of any kind . . . the lack of race-, gender-, and sexuality-based communities within the BEV helps to code its participants as the digital default: white, male, and heterosexual" (143). In a similar manner, Tara McPherson, in "I'll Take My Stand in Dixie-Net: White Guys, the South, and Cyberspace," expresses reservations at the homogeneous racial climate infusing such Southern neo-Confederate and neo-Dixie websites as the politically separatist DixieNet

(<http://www.dixienet.org>) and The Heritage Preservation Association

(<http://www.hpa.org>). In particular, McPherson observes that Confederacy pages have shifted away from the divisive racial politics of an Aryan white nation and embraced the popularity of ethnic struggle, placing Southerners and their secessionist initiatives on par with other apparently oppressed peoples in Scotland, Italy, Croatia, and Quebec: "Though neo-Confederate organizations have existed throughout the twentieth century, these Internet communities signal a new level of awareness of the functions of publicity. These sites understand that successful publicity now requires an evasion of questions of race and racial representations" (125). There is more than just a degree of preaching to the converted taking place on such politically-inspired sites. For example, the members of such politically controversial groups as The National Association for the Advancement of White People (<http://http://www.naawp.com/>) do not necessarily debate with competing theories nor strive for a reconsideration of the function of corporeal markers and identity. Quite the contrary, NAAWP members remain firmly ensconced within their political ideology, communicating with others who have paid the US\$35.00 annual membership. The NAAWP may be an extreme example, but the same holds true for most cyberplaces since most individuals frequenting the sites are deliberately seeking the familiarity of pre-established sensibilities.

Both Silver and McPherson do propose solutions to the problems they outlined in their respective essays. In Silver's case, community networks "must not only acknowledge the presence of users' races, genders, and sexualities, but also build that presence directly into the network" (148). Similarly, McPherson wonders if shifting

attention away from the Internet as a site of representational play and multiplicity to engage such notions as community or politics might lead “toward a Southern cybercitizen less bound by the nostalgic racial politics of Dixie and toward new theories of cyberspace less trapped in the covert racial representations that seem all too familiar today” (129). So, what happens to interformativity? Does working to wire race or sexuality into the Internet necessarily spell the demise of interformativity? On one hand, interformativity offers some interesting possibilities for racial discourse. In an online dialogue with Barlow, bell hooks, author of such texts as *Black Looks: Race and Representation* and *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics*, expresses interest in the communicative possibilities of not being bound by racial stereotyping:

One of the things I think about is what it means to be communicating when you’re not aware of the specifics of who people are. You can’t respond to their looks, which are so central to the mechanisms of domination in our society. We judge on the basis of what somebody looks like, skin color, whether we think they’re beautiful or not. That space on the Internet allows you to converse with somebody with none of those things involved.

Of course, this is as much a double-edged sword as Barlow’s evocation of a bodiless country of the Mind in “A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace.” Namely, while hooks does see some advantages with a medium that allows for the free flow of information exchange minus the knee-jerk prejudices afforded by race, gender, (dis)ability, and other such bodily markers, the deletion of the corporeal body from the cyberspatial equation leads, as both Silver and McPherson demonstrate, to the

perpetuation of social marginalization.

All too often, the debate is boiled down to choosing a side between embodiment and disembodiment. Yet as the doubling², interformativity, and investment taking place in the synchrospatial relationship between analogue and digital realities indicate, the Internet reflects investment and work. Given the information outlined in this chapter, it seems rather obvious that cyberspace is becoming cyberplace, so the question arises: why shouldn't the Internet be different things to different people? The diversity of cyberplaces emerging in, from, and on the Internet clearly indicates the Internet is no homogeneous realm; rather, much like the carving off that has been outlined in the alternate synchrospaces of ScyberFiction, the Internet is becoming increasingly more complex. As the number of cyberspace architects continues to increase, different interests of these global subjects will provide new, and more divergent, angles to the architecture of cyberspace. As the Internet continues to develop, it seems, despite Lévy's envisioning of a cybernetic community divorced from the social, cultural, and racial politics of analogue reality, Healy's Huck Finn will no longer be alone on his digital raft because issues, such as race, gender, or sexuality will spark ongoing, but not necessarily unanimous, explorations of the functions of corporeal markers, interformativity, and the Internet. In the end, Arturo Escobar succinctly sums up the hope that those corners of the Internet, where cyberspace is in transition to cyberplace, can "launch a defence of place and place-based ecological and cultural practices which might, in turn, transform the worlds that the dominant networks help to create" (33).

Chapter Eight:

I've Got You Under My Skin:

The Core of Cadigan's Point of View

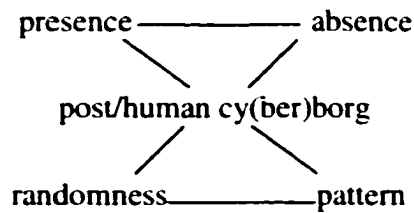
"You want the stone-fucking-truth, I couldn't have stayed. Mark was born to do that. I was just born." She grinned. "Only the embodied can *really* boogie all night in a hit-and-run, or jump off a roof attached to bungi cords."

(Cadigan, *Synners* 433)

"All peoples have a source," said Body Sativa. "We are re-constructing ours, not in soil and rock and ocean, but in flesh and blood, nerve and synapse. Can't you feel it?"

(Cadigan, *Tea from an Empty Cup* 219)

The threads of presence, pattern, cyberspace, cyberplace, race, gender, and identity that have woven through "Cy(ber)borgs and Netizens" find their most cogent development in the work of ScyberFiction novelist Pat Cadigan. For this reason, it is only fitting that the final chapter be devoted to her work, a corpus of fiction that explores and challenges notions of identity and corporeality while providing challenging interpretations of the function of race and mythology. In particular, Cadigan's *Synners* and *Tea from an Empty Cup* embrace the corporeal markers of gender and race to work the racial body-plus-virtualization back into the technological equation of the



dialectic.

Although *Mindplayers*, Cadigan's debut novel, appeared in the 1984-1988 bracket of cyberpunk's life, *Synners* is the most cyberpunkish of her novels as it is replete with the tropes of cyberpunk: computer networks have wired the world; an artificial intelligence resides within the system; the Marmosa strip is the beached version of Gibson's *Sprawl*, the marginalized zone of hacker rebellion; and, corporate multinationals seemingly dictate the future. Where *Synners* differs from other texts of the period, however, is in the role gender plays in the narrative structure. In particular, the *presence* of *Synners* is initially occupied by the two key women of the novel, Sam and Gina, while the *pattern* pole is occupied by the two key males, Mark and Gabe. This gender division is deliberate as Cadigan, "speaking" with Miss M. in an online interview for the *Virtual Futures 96 Datablead*, states: "When I was writing *Synners*, I realized that I was delineating two different types of people. One type, like Visual Mark, wanted to crawl into Virtual Reality and have the door shut behind him. The other, like Gina, wanted to climb out and pull it all out with her. Display it outside. So there are the inner-directed and the outer-directed."¹ The inner- and outer-directed fall along gender lines in the novel and this demarcation is what prompts Anne Basalmo, in her essay "Feminism for the Incurably Informed," to write that Sam and Gina "actively *manipulate*

the dimensions of cybernetic space in order to communicate with other people” while Gabe and Visual Mark “are *addicted* to cyberspace for the release it offers from the loneliness of their material bodies” (136-37).

Indeed, the addiction angle is readily apparent as Gabe, a stunted visual artist working in the R&D division of Diversifications Inc., wastes his life away in a computer simulation featuring his two favourite cyber-babes, Marly and Caritha: “He kept spreading the time he spent evenly among his assignments, and the times grew longer and longer, and Manny started making noises about lowered productivity, and still he’d been unable to go a day without spending at least an hour in simulation with Marly and Caritha. An hour? More like four hours; it was so easy to lose track of time” (Cadigan, *Synners* 42). Visual Mark, on the other hand, unlike Gabe, has broader ambitions, *devoting* his life to the prospect of uploading his consciousness into the network. To carry out this feat, Mark submits himself to a surgery that will enhance the socket technology he currently uses to access the network. This new socket merges technology with synthetic neurons that will, presumably, allow him to discard the meat:

He spread his awareness out cautiously. It was like being in many places at once, taking in the information that came at the speed of light and working in nanoseconds as matter-of-factly as he had once worked in minutes and hours to shape it into something understandable for him. He was already accustomed to the idea of having multiple awareness and a single concentrated core that were both the essence of self. The old meat organ would not have been able to cope with that kind of reality, but out here he appropriated more capacity the way he once

might have exchanged a smaller shirt for a larger one.

(Cadigan, *Synners* 325)

The significant difference between Gabe and Mark is another manifestation of the lack of subjectivity that Bukatman, in *Terminal Identity*, views as accompanying the addict; also, these two figures illustrate the difference between an embodied point-of-view and a seemingly-disembodied pov. Specifically, an increasingly hermetic Gabe retains a point-of-view while engaged in his video-gaming world with Marly and Caritha while Mark actively embraces the disembodied pov, slowly separating himself from his corporeal body. The difference between point-of-view and pov is written into *Synners*'s conclusion: Gabe is able to kick his addiction and embrace his corporeal subjectivity, moving to a farm and settling down with Gina and Sam; Mark remains disembodied within cyberspace and must merge with an artificial intelligence and other digital entities to ensure his continued existence, born in cyberspace as one part of Markt.

What is of particular interest in *Synners*, and remains underrated, is not so much the attempts by Mark to disembody himself but, on the contrary, the obstinate determination of his corporeal form to remain in the picture. In particular, Mark's body was almost its own personality, rejecting Mark's casual dismissal of it as meat. While Mark moves toward disembodiment, Cadigan describes his corporeal body resisting the move, sending "out feeble signals, dumb animal semaphore: come back to me, little Sheba. Even if this was what he'd been born to do, that didn't make it exactly natural." As opposed to an automatic disembodiment, Mark must actively move towards "the one-way door then. What did he have to lose? Only the meat, and he already knew that he

didn't miss that. He didn't. He *wouldn't*. Even if the meat missed him" (Cadigan, *Synners* 253). Albeit in a relatively basic manner, Cadigan personalizes the meat as some alternate entity, giving it a voice ("come back to me, little Sheba") and, more important, power and quasi-intentionality since Mark cannot complete his digital upload without some corporeal assistance: "[H]e couldn't access any of the commands from where he was. The commands only took orders from the meat, and that poor old meat wasn't about to cut him loose. It was back there in the pit dreaming that it was something bigger and more wonderful than it actually was, and if it disconnected, the dream would be over" (Cadigan, *Synners* 253). Cadigan takes the Cartesian mind/body dualism to an extreme as the network offers both Mark *and* his body the opportunity to live outside the skin. Once the meat is plugged in, it too has its plans, asserting itself and culminating in a (sentient?) stroke that is translated into computer code: "The meat had stroked out, but he was separated from it, and that wasn't the natural order of things, as far as the stroke was concerned; it wasn't meaning to spare him. So it was coming for him, following his own trail as well as it could. There had been a few missteps, but as it spread, it had become more precise, more knowledgeable" (304). Admittedly, Mark finally does achieve the disembodied state he desires by helping to form the entity Markt and the stroke is defeated.

Throughout *Synners*, the figures of Sam and Gina are juxtaposed against Gabe and Mark. Basalmo argues, in "Feminism for the Incurably Informed," that Sam, Gabe's daughter, is an atypical hacker in that she "shuns the heroic cowboy role. And for the most part, she is content to provide the power while others, namely Gina and Gabe, go in

for the final showdown” (133). It is she providing the power that is particularly relevant; namely, her insulin-pump chip reader, a device extrapolated from current methods of Diabetes management, “is the only noninfected access point to the net” following the viral crisis of Mark’s digital stroke (Basalmo, “Feminism” 133). Much as the aleph of Gibson’s *Mona Lisa Overdrive* depends on the embodied Sally/Molly to devise a method of recharging the battery-pack, the cy(ber)borgs of *Synners* rely on Sam to sustain their cybernetic current. Gina, on the other hand, offers a comparative parallel to Mark as they both work in the music/video industry. Unlike her compatriot Mark, however, Gina is not immersed in the socket technology that has consumed Mark’s mind, body, and (quite possibly) soul: “But she didn’t feel the pull the way he did. . . . It was more than just the difference between them — he wanted to go where the pictures were, she wanted the pictures to come out to where she was — because he knew for sure now” (Cadigan, *Synners* 252). The inability to meet on common ground regarding the technological interface is a key source of tension between them: “He [Mark] didn’t understand how she could continue to cling to the heavy flesh even after knowing how the mind could be freed. But then, it didn’t seem to happen the same way for her as it did for him. He knew that just by looking at her videos. Maybe her system would always be contained within herself and never spread out; maybe there was no other way for her to keep from getting lost” (Cadigan, *Synners* 234).

What is unique in Gina’s unwillingness to submerge herself into the network and seek the same type of disembodiment that Mark strives to achieve is Cadigan’s subtle, yet vitally important, construction of Gina as the racially marked, non-Caucasian body of the

text. This racial body prompts Basalmo to classify Gina as the marked body of *Synners*, positioned in a dynamic relationship with the body that labours (Sam), the repressed body (Gabe), and the disappearing body (Mark). The importance of Gina's awareness is, according to Basalmo, evidenced when Mark, plugged into the system prior to his uploading, allows Gina to watch his dreams ("Feminism" 134). Therefore, while Gina watches Mark's inner visions projected upon a computer monitor, she sees "the texture of her dreadlocks next to his pale, drawn flesh, finally moving on to the contrast of her deep brown skin" (Cadigan, *Synners* 216). This is a key positioning of racial difference that further differentiates Gina's and Mark's approaches to cyberspace. In one sense, Gina is very much like Sam as they both approach the networks from an ideological viewpoint informed by their own embodied systems: Sam's insulin-pump chip reader feeds off her physical energy while Gina's awareness of her racially marked body allows her to differentiate between analogue and digital realities. In fact, this is what the *Synners* epigraph indicates, Gina insisting on the limitations of a cyberspatial disembodiment that substitutes the sensations of dancing or bungee jumping for the real thing.

Beyond Basalmo's analysis, however, the scene itself is vital as it offers both an implicit and explicit prelude to Mark's disembodiment. Explicitly, Mark's disembodiment is announced when, recovering from the socket/brain surgery, he tells Gina that

[s]omeday you're gonna come into a room, and you're gonna see this funny-looking thing, a piece of flesh clutching into naked console, and you're gonna stop and stare, because you won't be sure where the flesh stops and the chips and

the circuits begin. They'll be, like, melted into each other, and some of the console'll be as alive as flesh and some of the flesh'll be dead as console, and that'll be me. (Cadigan, *Synners* 214).

Implicitly, Mark's prediction is evoked in the language Cadigan uses to describe his dreamlike voyage into his own mind and Gina's viewing of the spectacle. Cadigan's description begins as a point-of-view that includes Lou Reed's "Coney Island Baby," a song the two of them shared in their past as lovers. Yet, the shifting scene quickly finds the shared "Coney Island Baby" replaced with a bed and sheeted figures: "What faded back in wasn't Coney Island, a freaky spot that she had been to but the program director had not. Instead, the point of view was traveling low and slow over a terrain she recognized as a hypermagnified carpet. . . . It reached the side of a rumpled, unmade bed and rose, still moving as slowly as the music, to a shape under the sheets" (Cadigan, *Synners* 216). As we learn a few paragraphs later, the shape is actually Gina and Mark lying together; yet, the moment the bed (and its as-yet unknown occupants) is introduced, the point-of-view is abandoned and replaced by Mark's pov: "Gina made herself keep watching as the pov tracked along the shape, seeming to study the twists and dips in the bedclothes that concealed it. Abruptly the scene cut to an aerial view of a ragged gathering of people in a parking lot at night, and then the pov was tracking the folds in the covers again, winding along" (Cadigan, *Synners* 216). Tracking through his own mind, Mark's point-of-view fades into a pov, a foreshadowing of his upcoming disembodiment made explicit when the pov comes across Mark's prone figure: ". . . the scene cut back to the bed and Mark's sleeping face. It wasn't a peaceful face; drained, if

anything, worn out, a preview of a more final sort of rest" (Cadigan, *Synners* 216).

Cadigan's language suggests that Mark's peace is also a type of death; in this case, it is a death of the corporeal form as Mark does eventually achieve disembodiment but, in the process, also risks his own demise as his body follows him in the transfer. Tellingly, Mark emerges from this dreamlike voyage as a human synthesizer, a synner, and offers to hook Gina up so she can experience a similar inner voyage; yet, Gina passes on the synning experience, resigning herself to the physicality of a brief sexual encounter with Mark, her final goodbye as, soon after, Mark achieves disembodiment and leaves his corporeal form behind

The gendered division Cadigan sketches out in *Synners* is not without its problems. In particular, Jenny Wolmark argues, in *Aliens and Others*, that the too-easy breakdown of male and female approaches to cyberspace demonstrates Cadigan's avoidance of serious gender considerations: "In fact, gender relations are sidestepped by Cadigan, who concentrates instead on the more general question of relations between the organic and the inorganic through the central metaphor of synthesis" (125). Wolmark's accusations, however, are themselves problematic since Cadigan was the only recognized female author of the so-called cyberpunk generation and the mere inclusion of gender paradigms in the fiction represented a distinctive shift in cyberpunk content.

Furthermore, as Cadigan admits in an online dialogue, feminist SF authors "had a major effect on me, but by the time I was writing seriously a lot of those battles had been fought or were already in progress and I was certainly cheering them on from the sidelines and it opened it up such that female Science Fiction writers are not the oddity that they were at

one time” (“Exchange”). What *Synners* represents is a posing of questions that had gone mostly unasked in work of the same period: how are gender or race factored into cyberspace? or, in what ways do corporeal markers affect the approach to cyberspatial technologies? As Cadigan remarks to Stephanie Jennsen, “ I have always underlined that I am more interested in the question than the answer because asking questions is a way to try to get more information — giving answers means you’ve stopped asking.”

From its enigmatic title based on a riddle to which no definitive answer exists, *Tea from an Empty Cup* (1998) continues to pose questions while all the while struggling to avoid providing answers. What is significant about the novel is its divergence away from the issues of gender that dominate *Synners* towards an interest in race and the corporeal body, all the while subverting cyberpunk tropes and engaging Japanese mythology. *Tea from an Empty Cup* is constructed around a doubled narrative involving a murder in both analogue and digital realities. The novel follows Lt. Dore Konstantin’s investigation of the apparent analogue death of Tomoyuki Iguchi who has been found in an artificial reality (AR) booth with a slashed throat. Delving into the investigation, Konstantin discovers a series of similar deaths that feature the familiar pattern of an online avatar dying and the user’s body following suit and dying in analogue reality. In this most recent case, Tomoyuki Iguchi’s avatar, Shantih Love, had her throat slashed in a manner mirroring his actual death while he was engaged in the shared gaming environment of post-Apocalyptic Noo Yawk Sitty. The description of Shantih Love’s digital death is particularly vivid and triggers revulsion in the police lieutenant, serving Cadigan’s purpose in shortening the distance between analogue and digital realities:

“Shantih Love coughed and gargled at the sky, not trying to twist away from the bandaged hand that still held his/her chin. Blood pulsed upward from the artery in an exaggerated display . . . this looked real enough to make Konstantin gag. She put a hand over her mouth as she froze the screen and turned away, breathing deeply and slowly through her nose, willing her nausea to fade” (*Tea* 53). Faced with a brick wall in her investigation, Konstantin must venture into artificial reality and track down a mysterious figure, Body Sativa, who, according to cyberspace legend, knows everything about the multitude of online gaming environments.

Paralleling Konstantin’s investigation is the story of Yuki, a young Asian girl looking for her friend, Tomoyuki Iguchi, who has gone missing. The sole clue Yuki possesses regarding Tomoyuki’s whereabouts rests with the brothel-figure, Joy Flower, who commands a retinue of young boys, called Joy’s Boyz, surgically altered to look Japanese. Mysteriously, Yuki is hired by Joy as some sort of an assistant and furnished with a hotsuit to enable AR access. A layer of Joy’s motives is uncovered when Yuki discovers first-hand that the hotsuit allows Joy’s clients to accompany or ride her Boyz in their AR adventures. Unfortunately for Yuki and the Boyz, the simstim-like accompaniment is tailored to the sadistic pleasures of the clients and not the comfort of the Boyz: “Her hand moved on its own, but she refused to open her eyes. Somehow, with her eyes closed, she couldn’t tell exactly what her hand was doing, but if she concentrated hard enough, she would feel the source of the impulse to move. Like the sensation of the upholstery, it was under her skin, but in a much more profound way. It felt as someone was wearing her hand as a glove —” (Cadigan, *Tea* 141). This sensation

of analogue and digital riding is the key to Konstantin's murder investigation since it is revealed that all those murdered victims were attempting to rid themselves of the body riding under the skin.

Tea from an Empty Cup is an interesting inversion of two key tropes that helped popularize cyberpunk in the 1980s and continues to inform much contemporary ScyberFiction. First, while Japanese motifs are dominant in the novel, Cadigan has fractured Japan itself with a series of well-placed earthquakes, turning it into smaller islands: "Grandma Naoka had been among the last to visit the islands before the last earthquake had shattered them into bits too small or too ravaged to support even one small city. Yuki couldn't imagine the Japan Naoka had told her stories of, with a Tokyo so overcrowded that transit trains needed special employees to push and shove and pack the masses of people inside each car" (*Tea* 64). In Cadigan's future, the Japanese diaspora is scattered across the globe with a recognizable homeland evoked only in the memories of those old enough to recall the geographic Japan.

In her online interview with Jennsen, Cadigan reveals her interest in engaging notions of nationalism into her fiction: "Some of the general issues I deal with in it [*Tea from an Empty Cup*] are what it means to be of a nation and a nationality after the nation in question no longer physically exists. And I'm not talking about the dilemma of where to hold the elections." This investigation into the nature of nationality and ethnicity is particularly evident in a heated conversation between Ash and Yuki. Ash dismisses Yuki's Japanese racial heritage, arguing that she wasn't "raised ethnic. Hardly anyone is anymore. After all, what would be the point?" The scene continues and Yuki is upset by

Ash's Westernized reduction of ethnicity to a moot issue: "'Well, maybe not in America or some places in Western Europe, Ash, but I don't think they see it that way in other countries. Like Japan.'" As Cadigan's voice on the matter, Yuki goes on to note that, despite the geographical fracturing of Japan, nationality is more than the cartographic terrain of the island: "'Doesn't mean Japan is dead. It just means everyone's left the geographical coordinates that once marked the location of the country that was called Japan. It doesn't mean there isn't a Japan. Somewhere'" (Cadigan, *Tea* 67). As I demonstrate below, the investigation of the location of that "somewhere" takes on an important significance in Yuki's story.

The second inversion of traditional tropes involves the characterization of both Konstantin and Yuki. Unlike the expertise of console cowboys such as Case, or, for that matter, Cadigan's cyber-savvy Gina and Sam, both women in *Tea from an Empty Cup* blunder their way through the world of post-Apocalyptic Noo Yawk Sitty. They are repeatedly tagged by other avatars they encounter as newbies, novice netwalkers. This is clearly evident in a particularly ambiguous scene where Konstantin, having adopted the now-vacant Shantih Love avatar that belongs to the deceased Tomoyuki, attempts to elicit information about Body Sativa from a guitar-playing avatar she encounters in a subway:

"I want to find the locator utility. How do I do that?"

"You only have to ask."

"Who do I ask?"

"Me."

Konstantin hesitated. "All right. How do I find the locator utility?"

"You only have to ask," he said again serenely, fingers picking at the strings of the guitar again.

"I just *did*," Konstantin said testily. "How —" She cut off as understanding flooded through her. "*Where is Body Sativa?*" (Cadigan, *Tea* 166)

Konstantin is repeatedly fooled by the intricate, yet unuttered, codes of the site, an oversight that the guitar-player makes evident: "'What you want is simple. All you had to do was state it in the proper place at the proper moment. In the proper form, of course. That's just elementary programming'" (Cadigan, *Tea* 166-67).

Konstantin need not worry since Yuki fares no better, initially wandering "for what felt like hours, looking for a door out of the enormous indefinite place she was in, whatever it was supposed to be. The walls of the place were deceptively far away. Sometimes she thought she was drawing close to one of the tall windows only to find that the floor had somehow stretched under her feet, or rolled like a treadmill, and she was no closer" (Cadigan, *Tea* 102). In a scene mirroring Konstantin's confusing conversation with the guitar-player, Yuki is also caught in a roundabout conversation when she attempts to locate Tomoyuki on the network:

"It says 'transferred' here. What does that mean?"

The cherub head pursed its rosy lips thoughtfully. "Identity transferred on-line."

"*What identity?*" Yuki demanded, all but screaming. "His name and appearance or his on-line character?"

“One is the same as the other, on-line,” replied the cherub, in a kindly voice.

“But Tomeyuki Iguchi is his *real* name, not his on-line name.”

The head tilted to one side and winked cutely at her. “On-line names *are* real names. On-line.” (Cadigan, *Tea* 104)

The perplexing conversation continues and, as Yuki quickly discovers, leads nowhere, posing questions, in Cadigan’s style, that have no definitive answers.

The myriad of identities and instances of identity adoption in *Tea from an Empty Cup* all point to the issue of identity and its development, an enduring trait of Cadigan’s fiction, especially in the thematically-related *Mindplayers* and *Fools*. Although *Mindplayers* and *Fools* are set in a different, non-cyberspatial environment that places them outside the designation of ScyberFiction, these early texts help to illustrate the debates that Cadigan continues to address in such ScyberFiction texts as *Synners* and, in particular, *Tea from an Empty Cup*; in other words, whether writing ScyberFiction or not, Cadigan struggles with the positioning of an essential core, or identity-kernel, whose loss, discovery, and recovery are the grounding of her fiction. Interestingly, *Mindplayers* and *Fools* take a distinctly different approach than *Tea from an Empty Cup* when the concepts of presence and pattern are factored into the analysis.

First, *Mindplayers* narrates the experiences of Alexandra Victoria Haas, otherwise known as the emotionally-introspective Deadpan Allie. Thanks to rehabilitation following her arrest for the use of an illegal mindcap, Allie operates as a pathosfinder, a mindplayer probing into the psyche of other individuals in need of mental assistance, therapy, or counselling. The environment Cadigan offers in *Mindplayers* is a world

dominated by the purchasing, wiping, copying, bootlegging, and restoring of downloadable identities: "'You can be enfranchised!' crowed the narration. 'It's simple, it's fun, and it's not as expensive as you'd think. Due to the breakneck pace of scientific and technological research, personality rental is the most reasonable it has ever been — and with our seasonal specials, you can pay even less!'" (93). Allie was first introduced to the illegal mindcap by Jerry Wirejammer, a cyberpunk-ish figure seduced by the possibilities of fame and money that can accompany the marketing of a successful persona. Wirejammer opts to allow the multiconglomerate Power Players to record his persona, but he also sells a version of it to the black market and, circumventing both Power Players and the underground, also bootlegs it for private sale. The end-result is very similar to the hyperreal celebrity status that accompanies Rez in Gibson's *Idoru*; namely, the Wirejammer persona is so popular in all these markets that Wirejammer repeatedly impinges upon Allie to recover repressed memories that he can then sell as add-on features.

Of greater interest, however, are the series of patients Allie treats and the subsequent patterning of her psyche. Whereas Wirejammer sells his psychic pattern to market forces, Allie has to learn to integrate the pattern of her own psyche with those of her patients, a theme put into motion during her training sessions when she is introduced to McFloy. As Allie discovers, McFloy is the victim of a mindsuck wherein his entire personality has been removed from his corporeal self, packaged as pattern and sold in an underground market for those desiring the skills, abilities, and suaveness of up-and-coming celebrities:

It happened, mostly to artists of some kind, holographers, composers, dancers, actors, writers, generally just as they were about to achieve their first recognition. Full-blown celebrities were more inaccessible and their minds more traceable to the chop shops where mindsuckers parted them out and sold off the memories and talents to people who craved the overlay of someone else's experience on their own. (Cadigan, *Mindplayers* 70-71)

As treatment for the mental invasion, McFloy is hospitalized and quarantined where "a new mind had grown into the vacant neurons and axons — and behold the man, McFloy, born full-grown from his own empty forehead. In his own words, a prodigy" (Cadigan, *Mindplayers* 71). It is through the mediation of pathosfinders, such as Allie, that fractured consciousnesses and wiped memories are reconstructed and reintegrated into new, unified identities that can survive in a world overrun by persona envy.

The bulk of the dramatic tension in *Mindplayers* is Allie's in attempts to achieve both a unified psychic state and an integrated personality amidst the psychological chaos of her patients. This proves difficult as Allie's patients are in increasingly greater need of mental unification, culminating in Rand Gladney — a composer who, mindsucked by a fan who wanted to *be* Gladney, is left with a psychic tabula rasa — and the Ladybugs, an artistically symbiotic partnership between Jord Coor and Revian Lam that has been fractured and is in desperate need of resolution. For both Gladney and the Ladybugs, disparate portions of the Self must be integrated to form a whole identity, a complete psyche that heralds stability. For example, Allie mediates the reintegration of the composer Gladney by bringing together the tabula rasa of Gladney-that-is with the

repressed remnants of the victimized Gladney, the Gladney-that-had-been:

The images began to blend into each other, flickering and flapping. Gladney and his delusion flashed on and off in a variety of positions, Gladney still holding on, as though they were wrestling or dancing. Or both. The music went from slow-motion subsonic to recognizable melody, both Gladneys dancing-struggling in time to it. . . . After some unmeasurable mental time, the tumbling began to slow with the music. And when it stopped, there was only one figure, not two. He drifted in emptiness, excited and drained all at once.

(Cadigan, *Mindplayers* 217/18)

Ironically, the stability that Allie enables in her patients is in direct proportion to her sense of psychic loss. With every treatment, she finds her own identity slowly fraying, the confused mental remnants of her patients bleeding into her sense of self.

While identities are readily purchasable through such conglomerates as Power Players, the resolution of Allie's own psychic flux resides in her integration of a core that lies beneath the surface. For example, when Allie is in training, she reaches out of herself and, conversely, senses the "core" of identity that resides in both her fellow pathosfinders and herself:

The sensation of his presence made me think of bubbles touching. There was the surface tension of his personality, his *Segretti-ness*, all the things that revolved around his actively being who he was, meeting my *Allie-ness*, the container that was me and the me the container contained, and which materials went into the container and which into the thing contained — it was the most powerful sense of

identity I'd ever had in my life. (Cadigan, *Mindplayers* 20)

Allie gradually accepts that the psyche and identity are a contradictory blend of fluidic change and irrepressible solidity. This is a fact she later tries to impress upon Wirejammer who, in his pursuit of persona celebrity-dom, has become both a schizophrenic and a target: "'I'm cloning my own memories and passing them out while I clone memories from other people and lay them over my own. That way, if they catch me and put in a probe, they'll find all these memories from other people and think I'm somebody else. And if *my* memories start showing up all over town, maybe they'll think someone else got me and parted me out.'" Increasingly aware of the psychic core, Allie attempts to point out the substantive flaw in Wirejammer's plan: "'[U]nderneath all the memories is your unmistakable configuration — your Jerry Wirejammer-ness'" (Cadigan, *Mindplayers* 193). Similarly, towards the end of the text when Allie is carrying out the final stages of her own mental unification, she (re)encounters the disembodied artificial entity Pyotr Francis, a being from her pathosfinding training days, who summarizes the mental contradi(stin)ction: "*Do you see now?*" he asked. *Do you see that even though you alter yourself, you alter as yourself?* . . . Choose: A whole self, or just an accumulation of elements that wouldn't be more than the sum of their parts. Madness. Fragmentation. Jerry Wirejammer" (Cadigan, *Mindplayers* 271-72).

The focus on psychic balance, however, does not mean that Cadigan has abandoned the corporeal body; rather, she uses Wirejammer's repeated wiping and pathosfinding to outline the physical ramifications of downloadable identities: "Organ fatigue. . . . The mental strain was beginning to translate into something physical — too

much memory-wiping, too many strolls down memory lane to get falsified memories. Probably stripping the myelin sheathing off his axons like cheap paint. He was losing himself” (Cadigan, *Mindplayers* 148). Nevertheless, despite carefully treading a fine balance between presence and pattern, *Mindplayers* does place preference upon the mental state, or the *pattern*, of human identity. Given Wirejammer’s mental-marketing and the mindsucking of such figures as McFloy or Gladney, Cadigan positions the core of human identity as a pattern that is each definitely unique but not necessarily grounded in the corporeal body itself. The pattern of the mind is not constrained by the presence of the brain, a dichotomy made explicit in a very short dialogue between Segretti, Allie’s pathosfinding trainer, and Allie: ““After that first night you brought me here, I had this — aftertaste in my brain —/ ‘In your mind’” (Cadigan, *Mindplayers* 42). Segretti corrects Allie, ensuring she does not conflate the *brain* with the *mind* since the mind, in Allie’s consciousness, is equated with a cathedral, a sacred site that is the basis of human identity. It is in the cathedral of the mind that the operational core of humanity in *Mindplayers* resides. Although Cadigan recognizes the physical effects the hardware has upon the corporeal body, *Mindplayers* repeatedly stages a preference for the software, the personalities that can be removed, copied, inserted, partitioned off, and integrated as the operating system of the corporeal shell.

Cadigan continues to explore alternate mental states and the patterning of the human core in *Fools*, a novel returning the reader to the world of (dis)enfranchised personalities, Brain Police, mindsucking, and patterned identities. *Fools* is a twisting, Möbius strip of identity-confusion that compresses multiplicity and the function of

psychic integration into one figure. The novel has replaced Power Players with Some Very Nice People (SVNP), a legitimate enfranchising operation. SVNP, however, also has a black-market division that has come to the attention of the Brain Police. To carry out the black-market enfranchising, SVNP employs Escorts who assist individuals in committing persona suicides. The Escorts, however, also illegally absorb copies of those personas into their own personalities to be mindwiped by SVNP and then repackaged for the public market. In *Fools*, the initial character is Mersine, a Brain Police officer working to gather evidence against SVNP and prove that the corporation is copying personas of up-and-coming actors. To infiltrate the acting community and expose herself to SVNP, Mersine overlays the personality of a Method actor, Marva. By nature, Method actors efface their own personalities by overlaying the personality of the character they are trying to portray on screen or stage. In this case, officer Mersine has uploaded the identity of Method actor Marva, who then turns around and uploads other identities for the sake of artistic production. In conjunction with a mind-to-mind contact with fellow Method actor Sovay, Marva discovers an aberrant personality in her psyche that is presumed to be a remnant from a previous Method acting assignment but, unbeknownst to her, is actually the “true” personality of officer Mersine. Marva opts to engage the services of Marceline, a SVNP Escort, to have the aberration mindwiped, not realizing that, as per SVNP’s black market, Marceline will also copy Marva’s personality. Fortunately or unfortunately for everyone involved, officer Mersine’s personality survives the mindwiping encounter and, along with the Marva personality, is transferred into Escort Marceline’s body. By the end of the encounter, Marceline switches among

three distinct personalities (signified by Cadigan's change in typographic font): Escort Marceline, officer Mersine, and Method actress Marva. Part I is spent with all three women trying to sort out their psyches and fill in the gaps of a memory amnesia afflicting them. Never one to take the easy route, Cadigan further complicates matters to reveal that another version of Marva continues to occupy the body that was originally officer Mersine. Thus, throughout *Fools*, the first-person narration shifts among officer Mersine, two different versions of Marva, Escort Marceline, and, later in the text, Marya. The conclusion of the novel indicates the Brain Police are just as corrupt as SVNPs because the authorities have been secretly depositing Brain Police personas throughout the sprawling Downs, creating a secret agency of spies that are illegally, and beyond the conscious knowledge of the hosts, collecting and amassing information on the lower-class citizens that fly under the radar of social recognition.

In a text that attempts to differentiate the personalities through the alteration of font type, Cadigan's novel is extremely claustrophobic and folds in upon itself in a continuing maze of identity-crisis. *Fools* is a novel of split personality from the perspective of a society where personalities are bought and sold and multiple personality disorder is not necessarily a sign of the insane. Yet for all the wiping and overlaying that takes place, the core personalities of Escort worker Marceline and officer Mersine are the only two authentic voices, intruding into the other narratives. For example, when Marva is the dominant voice in the body that also houses officer Mersine and Escort Marceline, she can *feel* officer Mersine scratching beneath the surface of body and mind: "The left side of my vision became unusually vivid. I could feel a sort of mental searching or

groping, as if I were trying to remember something. Except I wasn't" (Cadigan, *Fools* 71). Similarly, "[m]y head went from side to side. 'The cop was the real thing. And —' / — *and she's still here*" (Cadigan, *Fools* 74). Cadigan's change in font is the only visual clue indicating a shift in the narrative voice, a shifting that, nonetheless, leaves the reader swirling in a sea of conflicted identities. What the text depicts is, once again, a patterning of human identities as personalities are traded back and forth, seemingly at random. In *Mindplayers* and *Fools*, Cadigan encapsulates the human core within patterns of distributable personalities, mindwiping, reality affixing, mental reconstruction minds, Method acting, and mind-to-mind contact.

The seeds of *Tea from an Empty Cup* are scattered throughout *Mindplayers* and *Fools* as the identity issues — pattern, presence, claustrophobia, doubt, adoption, enfranchising — of the former novels are blended with the cyberspace of *Synners* and re-wrapped into the labyrinthine environment of *Tea from an Empty Cup*'s Artificial Reality. The adoption of identities displayed in *Mindplayers* and *Fools* appears in *Tea from an Empty Cup* in the form of the online avatars that perpetually surround online identity with doubt. Thus, Konstantin, a newbie to the online world of AR, works her way through post-Apocalyptic Noo Yawk Sitty as Shantih Love, adopting the avatar of the deceased victim in the hopes of tracking down Body Sativa. Similarly, Yuki decides to adopt Tomoyuki's image while online; after all, "[m]aybe flashing Tom's face around his last known location would stir something up. Maybe even raise the dead" (Cadigan, *Tea* 106). Later, Yuki accesses the much-envied nightclub Waxe24 and, recognizing Ash amidst the throng of wannabes trying to enter, invites him in, hoping he may have further

information about Tomoyuki's disappearance: "'You know Shantih Love?' Yuki asked sharply. 'Tell me all about him. Or it, or whatever Tom's supposed to be under that name. Tell me about the ca—' she stopped as something that Ash had said earlier finally registered on her. *Yuki, if that's really you. . . / Sure, it's me, Ash. But is that you?*" (Cadigan, *Tea* 137, italics in original). Yuki is able to trick Ash into revealing that he is *not* Ash, prompting her to ask why someone would pretend to be someone s/he is not: "*Why would he be is the more logical question. You look like Tom and you're not him, so why should someone who looked like Ash be Ash?*" (Cadigan, *Tea* 139). Finally, it turns out that the victim of the crime Konstantin is investigating is Ash, an obsessed gamer who purchased Tomoyuki's identity as well as Tomoyuki's Shantih Love avatar, accessing post-Apocalyptic Noo Yawk Sitty in the form of Ash-as-Tomoyuki-as-Shantih Love.

The identity-confusion that Yuki repeatedly encounters is particularly enlightening as it is not restricted to online realms; rather, Yuki quickly discovers that her own identity is fractured and in doubt. She, in fact, is Tom. The clues are scattered throughout the novel. There is, of course, the semblance in names between Yuki and Tomoyuki and the fact that Yuki and Tom have never met in person. Also, when Yuki first puts on Joy Flower's hotsuit, "[s]he left the genital area of the 'suit inactive. While her sex life left a lot to be desired lately, she wasn't in the mood for a virtual encounter in a strange 'suit'" (Cadigan, *Tea* 66). Of course, a sexual encounter would have alerted her to her male physiology. A few moments later, Yuki runs her hand through her recently cropped hair, remembering that "Ash had told her it made her look like a sex-change of

indeterminate direction — asexual and apathetic” (Cadigan, *Tea* 66). The most compelling clues, however, are within the AR environment itself as Yuki repeatedly encounters Tom in a variety of images haunting her through mirrors and store-front windows: “Her eyes narrowed. ‘Tom Iguchi is missing and presumed dead. In here.’/ ‘But not in *here*, not through the old looking glass.’ The image gestured behind him. ‘And for that matter, not where you are, either. *You’re* Tom now’” (Cadigan, *Tea* 123).

The identity confusion that is at the heart of Tomo/Yuki speaks to Cadigan’s interest in ethnicity and the state of the nation while also initiating a dramatic shift from the dominance of pattern in *Mindplayers* and *Fools* towards the presence of the human core in *Tea from an Empty Cup*. In particular, Cadigan constructs a cyberplace that is carved off from the whole of the cybernetic network. Tellingly, this cyberplace is described as Old Japan, a digital site of convergence for the Japanese diaspora of her novel, an alternate higher-level realm of AR accessible to those of Japanese ancestry. Allusions to Old Japan are made when Konstantin encounters a samurai-sword wielding Japanese avatar who refers to the seemingly mythical site of Old Japan as “an old world that has nothing to do with what this world has become, this world, or the one it’s contained in, or the one that *that* one is contained in. Boxes within boxes within boxes, all the way to infinity’” (Cadigan, *Tea* 151).

The myth of a higher level realm of AR permeates *Tea from an Empty Cup* for AR cy(ber)borgs believe that higher-speed access will result in the opening of new doors of perception. This is the reason Ash purchased the identities of both Shantih Love and Tomoyuki Iguchi, hoping to hide behind a Japanese ancestry placed behind the digital

face of Shantih Love. Nick the Schick, an avatar Yuki (disguised as the image of Tomoyuki) encounters, explains that "'[t]hey say you get going fast enough, you can find the Out Door. Somebody said they thought you did that.' He took on a stupidly casual air. 'So, how about it? *Can* you get higher? Did you do it already? Did you get anything new when you did?'" (Cadigan, *Tea* 116).

It turns out Nick the Shick is accurate; a higher realm achieved via some magical out door does exist in the novel. This access to Old Japan, however, is reserved for those individuals in possession of three vital features: first, a specially-designed AR hotsuit that increases the AR experience; second, a chemical accelerant injected into the body via the souped-up hotsuit; and, most important, verification of Japanese ancestry that the hotsuit can accomplish via the injection process. Body Sativa explains that despite possessing the technology, Ash cannot disguise the fact that he lacked the corporeal marker of his genetic makeup and, as a result, was killed trying to reach Old Japan: "'Iguchi Tomoyuki tried to sell his birthright. The one who purchased it was set upon by a demon, who killed him'" (217). In distinct contradiction to Ash's experience, the accelerated hotsuit poses no threat to Tomo/Yuki as s/he is full-blooded Japanese. It is this racial trait that prompted Joy Flowers, a woman described as "a mixture of Mongol and Japanese, with a hint of a Siberian forebear" (Cadigan, *Tea* 33), to hire Yuki, in the hopes of accessing Old Japan and manipulating it to her own interests:

"The real, the true Old Japan. We were bringing it back to fruition, we were nurturing it with the life of our blood and tissue and the afterlife of our souls when Joy Flower came looking for us."

“How? She’s not Japanese,” Yuki said.

“Many of her Boyz were, and are. Tom is. You are. We know. Your tissue was sampled when you were injected. We tasted you.” (Cadigan, *Tea* 218)

Nationality and corporeality are merged in *Tea from an Empty Cup* as Cadigan removes the geographical terrain as the sole signifier of nationality to resituate it in the very corporeal structure of the ethnic subject. Tellingly, Old Japan, quite unlike Gibson’s Walled City or Scott’s Seahaven, is a molecular site in the very essence of the name, this synchrospace founded on a molecular scan of the cyberspatial user’s DNA. For Body Sativa, who transforms into the spiritual Benten, goddess of the arts, the transparency of the genetic code allows for the reconstruction of Japan, knitting together the diasporic members of a scattered island community by virtue not of the *pattern* of their online avatars but the *presence* of their genetic tissue: “‘All peoples have a source,’ said Body Sativa. ‘We are re-constructing ours, not in soil and rock and ocean, but in flesh and blood, nerve and synapses’” (Cadigan, *Tea* 219).

It is this racial identity that Tomoyuki must re-attain because, until the psychic split, he was more interested in the superficial trappings of AR: “‘He didn’t believe Old Japan could be revived. He believed in amusement parks’” (Cadigan, *Tea* 220). This is reinforced at the beginning of the novel when the unnamed Ash, purchasing Tomoyuki’s AR access, is possessed by a mysterious voice to impart a moral lesson to Tomoyuki: “‘The white guy’s face emptied of all expression. ‘What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul?’” (*Tea* 24). As a new personality, however, Tomo/Yuki charts a new road, evident when Body Sativa marks off the fundamental difference

between Tom and Yuki: “People can believe in the most absurd things, like Out Doors, or that Joy Flower’s whores do not mind that people put on their sensations like hotsuits, for the pleasure of feeling powerful. Or that the Japanese would *want* a post-Apocalyptic city open only to us. We’ve had that, thank you. You’re not the ignorant *sansei* that Tom is, that you didn’t know, are you?” (Cadigan, *Tea* 220). Indeed, Yuki is not the ignorant non-believer and her search for Tomoyuki is, in fact, Tomo/yuki’s search for him/herself, an attempt to fill an empty cup with what s/he lacks by giving herself to a greater cause: “*Yes, Japan lives*. She closed her eyes again and waited for Japan to take the offering of herself” (Cadigan, *Tea* 251). Thus, the end of the novel features Tom/Yuki consuming Japanese tea that begins the process of regenerating a fractured personality: “Though it smelled even more strongly now, it didn’t have much taste at first, though the more she drank, the stronger the taste of it on her tongue became. And it must have been a much larger cup than she had thought, for it seemed as if she drank forever before stopping, and yet she still had not finished the tea” (Cadigan, *Tea* 253).

Tea from an Empty Cup’s ending is particularly ambiguous for, once again, Cadigan expresses an interest in the questions rather than the answers. As a result, while Konstantin seeks to wrap up her murder mystery, Yuki’s storyline takes a dramatic shift out of Artificial Reality and into the realm of Japanese mythology, initiated by Body Sativa’s emergence as the goddess Benten. Tellingly, Benten is also connected to the sea and is a water goddess and, according to the online *Encyclopedia Mythica*, Enoshima Island arose to meet her footsteps. Cadigan’s Old Japan is the retelling of a similar Enoshima-like rise. Yuki’s involvement is her transformation, her full-blooded status

allowing for a regeneration into a bodhisattva, a Japanese figure who, according to *The Oxford English Dictionary*, is “destined to become a Buddha; a Buddhist saint who, having only one birth to undergo before attaining Nirvana, consents to be reborn for the sake of suffering mankind; a superhuman being of infinite wisdom and compassion.” The key to this rebirth is through *bunraku*, an ancient form of Japanese puppetry: “‘If Tom’s still in here,’ Yuki said, careful to keep her voice even, ‘why can’t you find him? Or do you already have him — out there — and he just won’t talk?’/ ‘— we would forgive him, we would make him part of *bunraku*. As you are.’/ ‘*Bunraku*,’ Yuki repeated, mystified” (Cadigan, *Tea* 218). *Bunraku* continues to reappear in the final pages of the text, and is of interest to Cadigan for, as she says on the *Media in Transition* website, “people are not just manipulated in virtual reality, they are being manipulated in virtual reality from the outside. There was a very broad hint in the original title for the book, ‘*Bunraku*,’ which is a type of Japanese puppet theater which takes three puppeteers and one puppet.”

Cadigan’s *bunraku*, however, is not one of manipulation but of mutual participation. When the online Yuki enters what can best be described as a dream state, she participates in a new form of *bunraku* that allows her to connect with the puppeteers: “They stood motionless and she knew that they weren’t going to reach for her or position her. In this *bunraku*, she would have to make the first move. Moving carefully, she turned around, raised her arms to shoulder height, and leaned back. She felt them catch her, hold her, and then felt herself encompass them, include them, contain Old Japan” (Cadigan, *Tea* 232). The Japanese creation myth comes full circle in this *bunraku* as

Yuki recalls Amaterasu, the goddess of light who, upset with Susanowo's ravaging of the earth, retreated to a cave and threatened to plunge the world into everlasting darkness. It is a creation myth that Tomoyuki attempted to impart to Ash, selling the Japanese creation myth despite the warnings of the possessed Ash, presumably occupied by Benten. In Yuki's vision, it is Tom, not Amaterasu, that retreats to the cave. While Cadigan is not explicit, it can be argued that the Tom side of Tomo/Yuki is an embodiment of Susanowo, given that Amaterasu and Susanowo were consorts, complementary gods (yin and yang, light and dark, good and evil), and, more important, blood kin, descendants of the same parentage. This kinship mirrors Yuki's repeated comments throughout the novel that she and Tom were both full-blooded Japanese and goes to reinforcing that Tom is Yuki's mirror, her dark side, the other half of her personality. As the newly enlightened bodhisattva, Yuki banishes her Susanowo personality, divorcing herself from her previous life as the impetuous and shallow Tomoyuki, a person who "didn't believe Old Japan could be revived. He believed in amusement parks. People can believe in the most absurd things . . ." (Cadigan, *Tea* 220).

This allows Yuki's final emergence to take place and the novel to come to a close:

She lay back and found herself staring at another person also lying on a futon, somehow suspended on the ceiling. Or perhaps *she* was the one on the ceiling and the other person was the normal one, lying on the floor. There was actually no way to tell which of them was up and which was down, no matter how long she stared, or how much she thought about it. . . . Eventually someone else did come. A woman stood over her and, taking no notice whatsoever of the person on

the overhead futon, told her she was actually a young man named Iguchi Tomoyuki who had been lost in a strange country for a long time. And for another long time, Yuki found no reason to doubt her. (Cadigan, *Tea* 254)

The implications for Yuki's transformation into a bodhisattva are left undeveloped at the end of *Tea from an Empty Cup*, laying groundwork for future development. This is sustained given that Yuki makes two brief appearances in Cadigan's follow-up novel, *Dervish is Digital*. Konstantin returns for a second outing having incarcerated Joy Flower and now in pursuit of Hastings Dervish, a cyber-stalker that, much like Visual Mark, is attempting to go digital. Early in the novel, however, Konstantin makes one of two visits to a hospitalized Yuki: ". . . Konstantin could forsee the time when Flower would eventually walk free, while poor Yuki Something-Or-Other persisted in the non-conscious state that the neurologists insisted wasn't exactly a coma" (Cadigan, *Dervish* 34). Yuki now remains a mystery for both Konstantin and her doctors, given that "her body continued to age and breathe on its own, the foetal curling that was typical of the comatose nowhere near as pronounced as it should have been. Brain activity was strange as well; something was happening in there, the doctors said, but it wasn't the sort of thing that manifested as the usual waves by an EEG" (34). Cadigan gives no hints regarding *what* is happening to Yuki; rather, *Dervish is Digital* is merely a transition text for Yuki's development and a subtle reminder about the threads Cadigan left loose at the end of *Tea from an Empty Cup*.

Continuing her tendency of posing questions with very few answers, Cadigan does complicate Yuki's corporeality. Notably, Konstantin sees Yuki as a Japanese

woman, which contradicts Yuki's position as a male in *Tea from an Empty Cup*. Or does it? On one hand, Konstantin could merely be mistaken, believing that Yuki Something-or-Other — an indication that Konstantin is not intimate with the person in the hospital bed — is female when, in fact, she is actually male. Yuki's male gender and Konstantin's error seems to run counter to the association of Yuki's Amaterasu personality, given that Amaterasu was a goddess. Another interpretation at this early juncture, however, involves Cadigan's expressed interest in violating boundaries: "I think I deal a lot with themes that range from smudging of boundaries to outright violation of boundaries" (*Media*). With this mindset, Cadigan, in both *Tea from an Empty Cup* and *Dervish is Digital*, repeatedly interrogates the boundaries separating, among others, the realms of analogue and digital reality. This is one of the thrusts of Cadigan's fiction, one she is intent on exploring: Tellingly, she goes on to note that computers and virtual reality remind her of dreaming and shape-shifting:

One of the things about artificial reality or virtual reality is that the idea of the body you have becomes less important than your imagination or your ingenuity.

It is not that I think we will, or that we should, completely abandon our physical lives, it's just that that's not all there is to being alive. That's apparent in the fact that we do dream and we often dream ourselves into different forms. (*Media*)

As a result, it is not surprising that Yuki remains in an inexplicable state that is akin to a coma but, all the while, displaying heightened brain wave patterns. After all, it is in this state of semi-dreaming that a transformation appears to be under way, the identity of Yuki asserting itself over the physiology of Tomoyuki. In any case, while it is still early

to make a judgement regarding Cadigan's future direction with the theme, it seems suggestive that the identity transformation that is common in the online realms depicted in *Tea from an Empty Cup* or Yuki's possible shape-shifting in *Dervish is Digital* are increasingly violating the analogue and digital borders at the fundamental level of the corporeal, allowing for a regeneration, but not dismissal, of the post/human body.²

In spite of the unresolved threads that, as shown in *Dervish is Digital*, are indicative of future development, *Tea from an Empty Cup* is a well-structured novel that balances a surface-level narrative of murder and identity adoption with an underlying mythological frame of reference, speaking directly to the issues of presence, pattern, cyberplace, and race. For Cadigan, *Synners* and *Tea from an Empty Cup* are indicative of her position that corporeal markers, such as gender in the former and race in the latter, cannot, and should not, be reduced to wholly discursive adoptions of identity tourism. While it may be difficult to translate gender and race *into* the cyberspatial medium, Cadigan is wholly aware of the corporeal body at the interface of computer terminal or AR hotsuit, and that body does translate *onto* cyberspace and cyberplace. While we still have some miles to travel before the ubiquitous future technologies of Cadigan's future are realized, both *Synners* and *Tea from an Empty Cup* starkly remind, even implore, the user not to forget the corporeal vehicle by which we travel the route.

Summary

The message of the medium of cyberspace is touch, body, identity. These are precisely the three areas of our being that pessimistic critics say we are losing to technology. But isn't it clear, too, that to put them in jeopardy is also to bring them out in the open? Until now the body. . . is that thing we often only get to know when it stops functioning. By losing something of their physical presence on-line, people are made aware of the fact that they *have* a body and that they are lucky to have one.

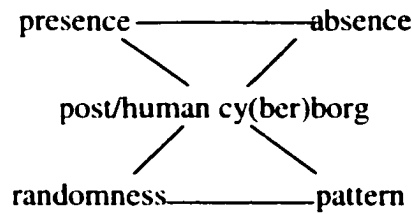
(de Kerckhove, *Connected Intelligence* 51)

The epigraph above is accurate regarding the pessimism or fear that cyberspace, in conjunction with emerging digital technologies, elicits. Unfortunately, given the enthusiasm regarding disembodiment and digital realms of simulation that critics like Nicole Stenger, Arthur and Marilouise Kroker, Christopher Dewdney, Jean Baudrillard, or Hans Moravec, regularly express, disembodiment is still a popular notion. There can be no doubt that pattern is becoming an increasingly prevalent factor in Western society, but the problem resides in the valuing of that pattern *at the expense* of presence, a reduction of post/human corporeality by a posthumanism that dismisses, and projects, the body as nothing more than a piece of luggage, carbon-encased Samsonite.

Admittedly, my interest in cyberspace and corporeality stems directly from the stories that I outlined in the Introduction: the interplay of digital and analogue that the Mr.

Bungle assault highlights; the exploration of the human genome that computerized technologies continue to facilitate; and, the ambiguously interstitial identity that emerges from the interplay of corporeal conditions (presence) and medical discourses (pattern) that define Diabetes. Inspired and influenced by these three factors, my intent has been to locate embodiment in those interstitial realms of analogue and digital realities that are neither fully presence nor absolute pattern. The tack of “Cy(ber)borgs and Netizens: (Re)Constructing the Post/Human Body in the Nodal Intersections of ScyberFiction and Cyberspace” has been twofold. First, it has attempted to reaffirm the value of corporeality by demonstrating how key texts in ScyberFiction — including William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* trilogy and Bridge sequence, Pat Cadigan’s work in such texts as *Synners* and *Tea from an Empty Cup*, Walter Jon Williams’s *Hardwired*, Melissa Scott’s *Trouble and Her Friends*, Charles Platt’s *The Silicon Man*, and Tad Williams’s *Otherland* — have centralized the presence of the post/human body, making its corporeality of chief concern when exploring the digital patterns of synchrospatial cyberspace(s). ScyberFiction alone, however, is not the sole venue for the explorations into cyberspatial post/humanity; rather, our contemporary cyberspace and cy(ber)borgs offer a venue for seeing SF speculation put into practice. That has been the second tack of “Cy(ber)borgs and Netizens,” straddling the divide between “fiction” and “reality” to demonstrate the bleeding of one into the other, the code duality of analogue and digital played out not only in ScyberFiction but also in the venues of MUDS, Chats, Tinysex, and the transitions of cyberspace to cyberplace.

“Cy(ber)borgs and Netizens” is structured conceptually, preferring to draw on a multitude of sources rather than rely upon one single author (e.g., William Gibson), jumping from ScyberFiction to our contemporary considerations of the Internet and back again to outline the thematic material. In another sense, however, “Cy(ber)borgs and Netizens” does chart a traditionally straight line through the material, linking the material thematically and using those links to initiate the transition from one chapter to the next. First, “Cyber-Trinity and Giving up the Ghost (in the Machine): Cy(ber)borgs and ScyberFiction” outlines the difficulties associated with the term “cyborg” and “cyberpunk” and offers to replace them with cy(ber)borgs and ScyberFiction. Second, “Making the Point (of View): (Dis)Embodiment and Body-Image in ScyberFiction” takes the cy(ber)borg into ScyberFiction, demonstrating how the corporeal body is not lost in the fictionalized depictions of digital transfers into cyberspace. In fact, despite the claims of disembodiment, the shift from pov to an embodied point-of-view is quite prevalent, stretching from Gibson’s *Neuromancer* through to Walter Jon Williams’s *Hardwired*, Charles Platt’s *The Silicon Man*, and Tad Williams’s *Otherland*. Third, “Here’s MUD in Your I: Identity, Interformativity, and Screening the S(t)imulated Body” describes the analogue parallels of “Making the Point (of View),” outlining the manoeuvres by which the body is challenged, but not lost, in some of our own cyberspatial environments. The code duality of analogue and digital appear particularly relevant as the interdependency of the



dialectic is quite explicit in the semiotic network that is cyberspace. Then, “Surfing Beneath *The Matrix*: A Case for the Body-plus-Simulation Virtualization” moves interformativity into a general consideration of the issues of simulation and virtuality, offering up the Wachowski Brothers’ ScyberFilm, *The Matrix*, as an ideal visual representation of the body-plus-virtualization, the cy(ber)borg shifting away from the surface level to directly engage with those green lines of code that structure cyberspace. The manipulation of code that Neo achieves at the end of *The Matrix* parallels a similar scene near the end of Melissa Scott’s *Trouble and Her Friends*, allowing “Penetrating ScyberFiction: Penetration, Regeneration, and Alternate Synchronospace(s)” to discuss the function of penetration, regeneration, reconstruction, and alternate synchronospaces in Scott and Gibson. Following on the heels of alternate synchronospaces, “A Bridge Too Far: Molecular Community and Interstitial Possibility in Gibson’s Bridge Sequence” demonstrates how Gibson has taken simulation, virtuality, the body-plus-virtualization, and alternate synchronospaces and woven them into a narrative founded on the politics of molecular and molar sites of interstitiality. These molecular and molar politics, in conjunction with the transformation of cyberspace to cyberplace, signals the haptic experience of the corporealized body-plus-virtualization as “Laying Down the Law and Locating Jim: Agora(phobia), The Digital Frontier, and Cyberplace” addresses the

metaphors of the Internet, raising concern over the American-centric language and the place of race and community. Finally, this dissertation concludes with “I’ve Got You Under My Skin: The Core of Cadigan’s Point of View,” an exploration of most of the dissertation’s themes — including presence vs. pattern, interformativity, identity confusion, alternate synchrospaces, gender, and race — that are woven into the fabric of Cadigan’s literary output, from her first novel, *Mindplayers*, to the recent *Tea from an Empty Cup* and *Dervish is Digital*.

On a whole, “Cy(ber)borgs and Netizens” has been interested in the emerging worlds of actors and actants that are found behind the screen of the literary page, the computer terminal, or the merging of the two. They are worlds marked by cy(ber)borgs; the possibilities of the post/human body emerging from the synchrospatial ontology of cyberspace. In her exploration of gender, sex, and feminism, Judith Butler, in *Bodies that Matter*, writes that “[t]o problematize the matter of bodies may entail an initial loss of epistemological certainty, but a loss of certainty is not the same as political nihilism. On the contrary, such a loss may well indicate a significant and promising shift in political thinking. This unsettling of ‘matter’ can be understood as initiating new possibilities, new ways for bodies to matter” (30). The cyberspace(s) explored in *ScyberFiction* and cyberculture can be equally invested in new ways for bodies to matter, exploring the interrelated, and interdependent, functions of pattern and presence without one necessarily supplanting the other. In a similar vein to Butler’s comments, “Cy(ber)borgs and Netizens” demonstrates that the cyberspatial explorers and architects are not

suggesting that a cyberspatial loss of epistemological certainty necessarily heralds a transcendental effacement, rather that the corporeal is of central concern and import in the future of post/human cy(ber)borgs.

Introduction

¹ Moravec's statement regarding the Maori is so incorrect as to cast in doubt the validity of his other ideas. Notably, despite Moravec's obituary, the Maori of New Zealand continue to thrive in the 21st century, and such award-winning Maori novelists as Witi Ihimaera (*The Matriach*), Keri Hulme (*The Bone People*), or Patricia Grace (*Waiariki*) would obviously contest Moravec's claims as to their demise.

² There is a fundamental contradiction in *Last Flesh*. Early in the text, Dewdney argues that the condition of transhumanism is a transitional state, lasting between 50 and 500 years, that lies between humanism and a future posthumanism. In particular, while Dewdney believes transhumanism has been going on for centuries in rudimentary forms, he firmly states that "the defining event signalling its unequivocal arrival will be the first neural implant" (3). Later in the text, however, he notes that the 1990s chess matches between world chess champion Garry Kasparov and the IBM supercomputer Deep Blue were particularly instructive. Specifically, the 1997 rematch between the contestants ended with two wins for the computer, two wins for Kasparov, and two draws. In Dewdney's words, "The posthuman era had dawned" (112). Therein lies the contradiction. Dewdney seems unsure just where he wants to place posthumanism. If it follows after the transhuman era's defining moment of the first neural implant and the resultant 50 to 500 years, how can the posthuman era be dawning with Deep Blue and a

chess board?

Chapter One

¹ Gibson's and Haraway's roots can, of course, be found throughout a host of disciplines and texts that precede the 1980s: Norbert Wiener and the Macy Conferences of the 1950s spawned the new scientific discipline of cybernetics; NASA's Apollo 4 photos of the Earth in 1967 prompted James Lovelock to announce in 1969 that Gaia (i.e., the Earth) was a complex homeostatic system and its human denizens cogs in one large cyborganic relationship; Descartes and Cartesian philosophy partitioned the human mind from its body, placing emphasis upon the mental possibilities of human evolution; and, Manfred E. Clynes and Nathan S. Kline, coining the term cyborgs in "Cyborgs and Space," offered up the image of reconstructed astronauts ideally designed for space travel.

² The sporadic SF work of Marge Piercy has also proved instrumental in Haraway's work as she often cites Piercy's 1973 novel *Woman on the Edge of Time* as instrumental for inspiring women to work together to force the sciences to recognize, and engage in, feminist work.

³ This danger of the cyborg's ontological dead-end is, in fact, a possibility that Haraway warns about in "A Cyborg Manifesto" when she writes that the irony of the cyborg is its potential to equally serve nefarious and liberatory purposes:

From one perspective, a cyborg world is about the final imposition of a grid of control on the planet, about the final abstraction embodied in a Star Wars apocalypse waged in the name of defence. . . . From another perspective, a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints. The political struggle is to see from both perspectives at once because each reveals both dominations and possibilities unimaginable from the other vantage point. (154)

Of course, the irony of this statement resides in Samuel Delany's accusations that Haraway did not heed her own advice, preferring to divert her gaze away from the force of the cyborg's "dark side" in favour of outlining only its positive attributes. In "Reading at Work," Delany writes that "what seems to be missing, at least from Haraway's introductory move, is any sense of the darker, even tragic side of this situation — a side we enter with the graffiti from Joanna Russ' science fiction novel *We Who Are About To*. . . : 'Money doesn't matter/When control is somewhere else!'" (90-1).

⁴ This comment may be, in part, a response to Delany's "Reading at Work" and his evaluation that Haraway does not attribute work to the ontological status of the cyborg: This is a point that repeatedly needs stressing, for the cyborg's ability to (re/de)construct boundaries is fine so long as "we're willing to work at reading, to read at work. But cyborg imagery will not *do* the work, will not promote the necessary analytic vigilance, *for us*" (Delany, "Reading" 117).

⁵ Other examples of this intertextual field are: Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War*, a reply to the pro-military stance of Robert A. Heinlein's *Starship Troopers*; Laura J. Mixon drawing upon Heinlein's *Waldo: A Genius in Orbit* to write about her own waldoes in both *Glass Houses* and *Proxies*; Gibson's recognition of Joanna Russ's Jael in the construction of Molly Millions for his *Neuromancer* trilogy; and, Alexander Beshers's setting of his virtual reality novel *Rim* in a (substandard) re-write of Gibson's Chiba City.

⁶ In the entry on "robots" in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, Brian Stableford summarizes Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics as "(1) a robot may not injure a human being, or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm; (2) a robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law; (3) a robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law" (1018).

⁷ In *True Names*, Vinge imagines a cyberspatial network called the Other Plane wherein users who can achieve "a certain amount of self-denial — or at least self-hypnosis . . . [can] make the ascent" into the computer network (58). On a par with *Neuromancer* but predating the text by several years, *True Names* is populated with digital figures, government forces (in place of multinational conglomerates), Artificial Intelligence entities, and a crippled woman seeking the solace of computerized immortality and power. Unlike Gibson in *Neuromancer*, however, Vinge populates his

terrain with magical, even mystical, figures and imagery even though “there was nothing supernatural about them or about the Other Plane, that the magical jargon was at best a romantic convenience and at worst obscurantism” (Vinge 60-1). As Scott Bukatman remarks in *Terminal Identity*, the use of magic is “quite clever, in that it preserves the invisible manipulations of cybernetic power while grounding that invisibility in the familiar guise of individual power” (202). Furthermore, Vinge’s narrative is much more restrained than the frenetic pace of Gibson’s *Neuromancer*, possibly, as Bukatman claims, because Vinge “is familiar with computer operations in a way that Gibson isn’t, and so his language is less hyperbolic and more logical” (203).

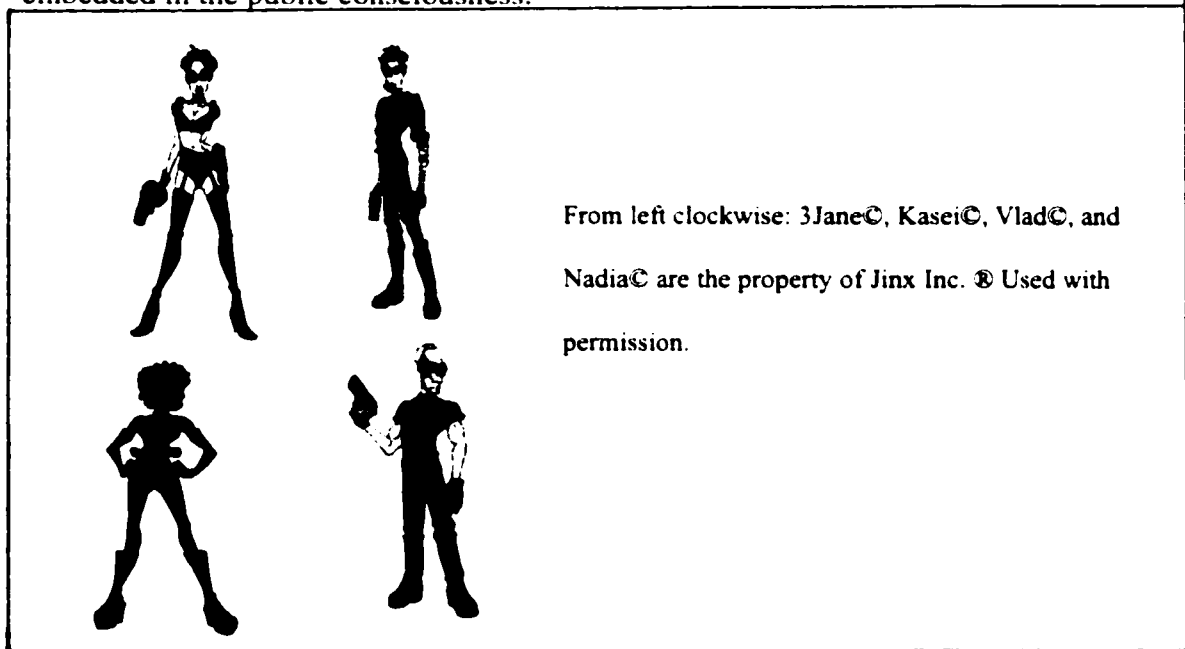
⁸ Interestingly, the undercurrent of the essay seems to be an attempt by Brown to be included, albeit retrospectively, in the core grouping of William Gibson, Bruce Sterling, John Shirley, Rudy Rucker, and Lewis Shiner. As a result, the essay repeatedly focuses on how Brown worked to pull these various figures together and his interactions with them. For example, Brown writes of his voyage to the 1974 Clarion Writers Workshop, “I went in search of kindred souls interested in the kind of thunderclaps of the imagination that life with John had accustomed me to” (174). Following *Neuromancer*’s win of the 1984 Nebula, Brown once again inserts himself in the narrative: “The after-Nebula cocktail party was a dull and pointless exercise in content-free social exchanges, so the group snuck out to the street and hailed a cab. There were too many people for the cabbie to legally drive us, so I laid on the floor, balancing Gibson’s Nebula — a Lucite cube containing a stylized galaxy — on my stomach” (176-77).

⁹ A visual example helps solidify this promiscuous spread of cyberpunk. Until recently (April 1, 2001), the *Playboy* website had a link to a “digital age” section (hosted by playmate Gillian Bonner) that included material on video games, cinema, SF authors, computers, high-tech toys, and other related topics of interest. Included on the site was a game that allowed the user to create his/her own cyberpunk character via a multiple choice survey. Some of the questions included the following:

- Your job defines you: Street Samurai/ Underground Media Star/ Rogue Hacker/ Corporate Commando or Bodyguard
- Who’s the Boss: Zaibatsu/ Megacorps/ Transnationals/ Orbital Colonies
- What’s Happening?: Corporate Defection/ Technology Piracy/ Biotech Breakthrough/ Arms Deal
- Home Sweet Home: Sprawl/ Metroplex/ Arcology/ Burbclave
- Choose Your Poison: Synthehol/ Omegendorph/ Cortical Shock/ G-Flash Eyedrops
- Your Ride: Suborbital Hop Ticket/ Transcontinental Bullet Train/ Rented Personal VTOL/ Nuclear Dirigible
- Sponsored by: Ono-Sendai/ Sony Panpacific/ Mercedes Kia/ Transmeta
- Your Handle: 3Jane/ Kasei/ Vlad/ Nadia

Following the submission of answers to these and a host of other questions, the program then constructed a cyberpunk mini-narrative while also providing the user with an image of his/her cyberpunk character (see below). Illustrated by Edward Artinian and digital

studio Jinx Inc., the figures embody a narrow cyberpunk mentality that has been embedded in the public consciousness.



Chapter Two

¹ Gibson is not alone in making cyberspace attractive to the disabled. Vernor Vinge carried out similar tactics in *True Names* when he has Deborah Charteris, a. k. a. Erythrina, opt to upload herself into the Other Plane: “‘My kernel is out there in the System. Every time I’m there, I transfer a little more of myself. The kernel is growing into a true Erythrina, who is also truly me. When this body dies,’ she squeezed his hand with hers, ‘when this body dies, *I* will still be, and you can still talk to me’” (127). The reason for Charteris’s wish is her diseased and wheel-chair bound body: “‘As such, they were perfectly competitive on the job market, yet old prejudices often kept them out of normal society. Many of these types retreated into the Other Plane, where one could completely control one’s appearance’” (Vinge 114).

² In fact, the (re)appearance of the Neuromancer/Wintermute entity as a series of voodoo loas in both *Count Zero* and *Mona Lisa Overdrive* suggests Gibson's text may be depicting the second stage of the three-tiered hierarchy, a religious-via-scientific loop as Gibson's matrix becomes invested, or infested, with gods that have technologically surpassed the accessing console cowboy cy(ber)borgs.

³ Bayley even goes so far as to create and program a pseudomorph in the exact likeness of his wife, Sharon. Yet, after his investing (infinite) time and (boundless) energy into the project, the Sharon pseudomorph is no better than, as Platt describes it, a Talking Teddy, a child's toy that mimics the actions and phrases of its owner.

⁴ The boredom of godlike cyber-immortality is one of the structuring images in Dennis Danvers's recent novels *Circuit of Heaven* and its sequel *End of Days*. In *Circuit of Heaven*, Danvers introduces the Bin (a nickname for Alternate Life Medium Assembly), a virtual storage system created by the appropriately-named Newman Rogers that reproduces a digitalized version of analogue reality without the negative features of an Earth scarred by economic and environmental collapse. The Bin is accessible to everyone, but the uploading process is unidirectional as the corporeal body is then recycled for its constituent elements. As a medium embodying point-of-view, the Bin is a carbon-copy of analogue reality, replete with monorails that shuttle its netizens back and forth, suburban homes with well-maintained lawns and gardens, and digital bodies

that, as it turns out, are an absolute necessity: “Nemo had always figured they could just zap people around in the Bin anywhere they wanted without the fiction of trains or planes. But that wouldn’t be real, and reality was what the Bin was all about — reality, only better. They’d found that people needed space and time and the illusion of a body moving through both, or they’d often go crazy” (Danvers, *Circuit* 36-7). In Danvers’s digital society, however, immortality is an option rather than a default as the netizens have the freedom to choose suicide if they so desire it: “You couldn’t murder anyone in the Bin. The only true violence allowed was suicide. Everyone, Nemo’s government teacher had intoned, has the right to die, if they so chose” (Danvers, *Circuit* 37).

Fanatical religious groups, however, consider the Bin a product of Satan and Nemo is caught in a neo-religious war with the result that the Bin, and its billions of inhabitants, is apparently destroyed. In fact, this is not the case as the Bin is merely hidden from the eyes of the world and continues to thrive until its re-appearance 70 years later in the novel *End of Days*. *End of Days* picks up the threads of *Circuit of Heaven* as Gabriel, the religious leader residing in New Jerusalem (Washington), learns of the Bin’s continued existence and mounts a religious war to end the final threat of Satan. The novel’s narrative focus is on the apocalyptic religious war, the decision by some Bin netizens to return to corporeal host bodies, and the transcendent Christ figures who rise in opposition to Gabriel. In the Bin, however, Newman Rogers is found to be alive and, much like Gottbaum, in possession of godlike powers to remake the digital world. Unlike Gottbaum, however, Newman is not seduced by the power at his disposal but bears it as a responsibility; in fact, much like Finch, he is unhappy with the digital legacy

he has left humanity and is bored with the Bin's direction. Thus, at the novel's end, he relinquishes control of his digital utopia to the people who inhabit it: "'For a hundred years, I've been running things. Somebody had to do it, I thought, and I'm the one who created this mess. . . . Truth is, nobody has to run things. You can run this place yourselves. And it's time for you to do just that, because I'm leaving, moving on — whatever you want to call it'" (Danvers, *End* 329-30).

⁵ Throughout *The Silicon Man*, Platt clearly describes disembodiment as a less-than-idealized state: Bayley is unhappy about his situation; Finch becomes bored and isolated; Porter attempts to initiate a power coup; and Gottbaum is mentally unbalanced in his striving for godhood. Yet the text is burdened with an overly optimistic ending that is out-of-place given the pessimism of the overall novel. Platt is clear that the cyberspatial MAPHIS is not a utopia of disembodied minds — after all, Butterworth opts to avoid the uploading process because, in his words, "'Some people — computer people, especially — tell me I have a mystical outlook. I study Zen Buddhism. I believe in the unity of mind and body. Digitizing my brain, shutting it in a box, is not my personal path to nirvana'" (Platt 246) — and the actions of his infomorphs are hopelessly pathetic. In spite of the cynicism Platt displays regarding disembodiment and omnipotence, the final chapter is projected twenty years into the future where everything is surprisingly cheery: the MAPHIS procedure has been perfected and is now completely safe; everyone has access to the immortality of the MAPHIS; Bayley has been reunited with his newly digitalized wife and children; and the worldwide crash initiated by Gottbaum has resulted

in a better world. Platt's final chapter is a disappointing afterthought that is in strict contradiction to the overall tone of the text, an upbeat ending tacked onto the novel to give the resolutely negative images and assessments of disembodiment, omnipotence, and Moravec's notions of an uploaded consciousness a positive spin.

⁶ These themes also run through the British series of *Web* books aimed at the youth market. *The Web: 2027* is an anthology collecting the first six novellas, written by Stephen Baxter (*Gulliverzone*), Stephen Bowkett (*Dreamcastle*), Eric Brown (*Untouchable*), Graham Joyce (*Spiderbite*), Peter F. Hamilton (*Lightstorm*), and Maggie Furey (*Sorceress*). In these interwoven stories, online access and interaction must be *timed* to prevent the body from undergoing online side-effects, known as Websickness: "You get it if you wear your suit for too long. You see, we aren't really moving around, although it looks as if we are. . . . No matter what we do in the Web, our bodies are just lying still, out there in Realworld. It's a sort of gap, you see. After a while, it catches up with you, and your body can't cope" (Baxter 46). The body in *The Web: 2027* may be lying around, but that does not mean it is factored out of the Web-access equation.

Much like the Grail Brotherhood, powerful people are preying upon children in a bid for immortality. A recurring character in *The Web: 2027* is the Sorceress, a figure who, much like Felix Jongleur, is prepared to pay for digital immortality with the lives of others: "She's an old woman who's now very frightened of dying. She wants to transfer her mind into the Web where she'll go on living for ever" (Hamilton 469). The bulk of the stories in *The Web: 2027* involve children eluding her clutches and, in the process,

freeing other children who face their own demise should the Sorceress succeed.

Since the publication of the first *Web* series, a second series of novellas has been published that, presumably, will be bundled as *The Web: 2028*. One such novella is Pat Cadigan's *Avatar* wherein Sarah Jane, a young girl, opts to upload herself into the Web and, conversely, allows an alien that exists entirely within the digital medium to occupy her analogue body. What is of interest, however, is the disabled protagonist, Max, who is paralyzed following a diving accident. Much like the simstim of Gibson's *Neuromancer* sequence, Max engages the world around him through Sarah's sensations, tagging along with her body. Max soon senses a change in Sarah and uncovers the truth about the transfer and her recently-odd behaviour. Given the opportunity to upload his consciousness and escape the confines of his paralyzed body, Max, unlike either Gibson's Lise or Vinge's Erythrina, declines the offer in favour of the analogue world that he desperately wants to feel again: "'I want to feel the sun on my face. I want to smell the wind. I want to be too warm sometimes and too cold other times. I want to go outside'" (Cadigan, *Avatar* 92). Instead, Max puts his hope in the ongoing field of prosthetics that proposes an entirely prosthetic body in the not-too-distant-future.

Chapter Three

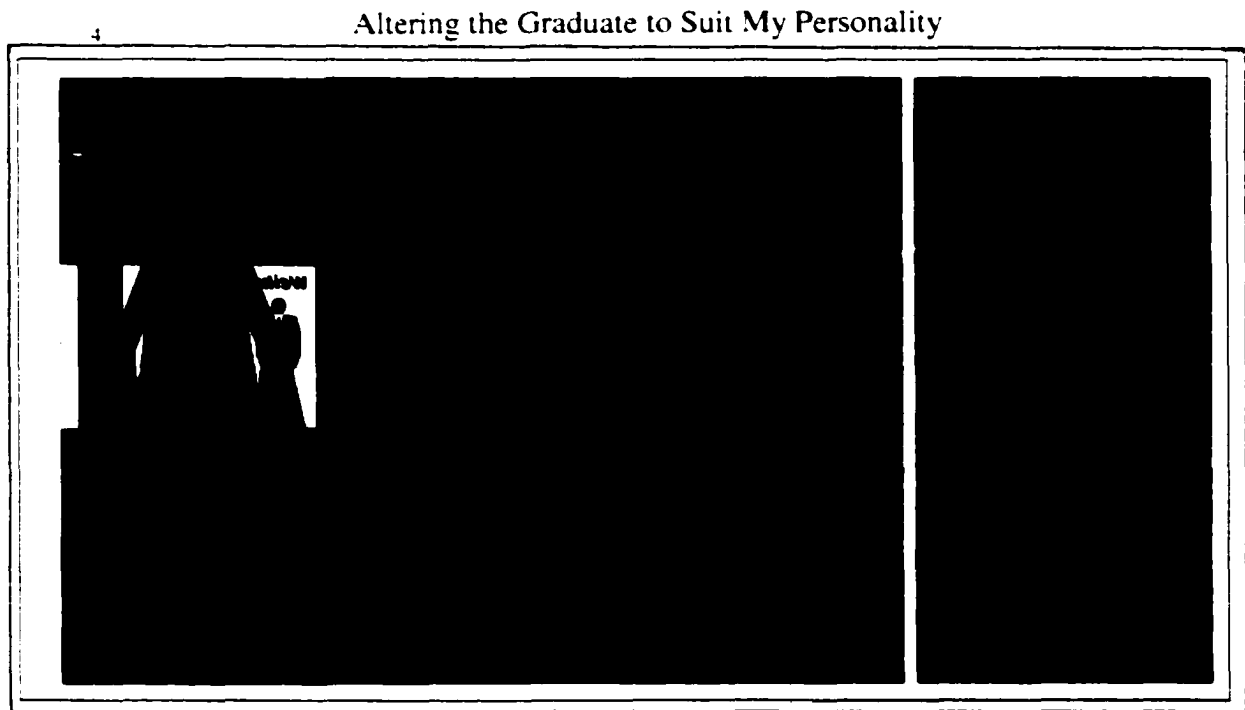
¹ This blurring of boundaries and its psychological implications of investment pertain to the "Julie" incident of cyberspace's mythos. In *The War of Desire and Technology*, Sandy Stone recounts one of the earliest deceptive encounters, the (cyber)infamous Julie, an apparently crippled neuropsychologist who befriended a host of female cy(ber)borgs

in the early days of CompuServe, circa 1982. Julie explained that her crippled status and disfigurement led her to live her life as a recluse, turning to the computer and the social interactions CompuServe made possible to fill a gap in her life. Julie, however, was the alter-ego of Dr. Sanford Lewin, a New York psychiatrist who reasoned that he could altruistically counsel other women on the network if they believed they were confessing their life's problems to a fellow woman. Julie/Lewin even went so far as to create a women's discussion group on CompuServe and, during her/his online time, used her/his psychological training to offer free advice to her/his fellow cy(ber)borgs.

As Stone details, however, Julie also served a psychological function for Lewin, who found that he could begin discussions with virtual strangers in the digital realm whereas in analogue he was painfully shy and nervous: "Where Julie was a freewheeling and jazzy, Sanford was subdued and shy. Julie was a confirmed atheist, an articulate firebrand of rationality, while Sanford was a devout conservative Jew. . . .[a]nd to complete the insult, Julie had fantastic luck with sex on-line, while when it came to erotics Sanford was a hopeless klutz who didn't know a vagina from a virginal" (*War* 77). Eventually, Sanford was outed, sparking cries from within CompuServe of violation, embarrassment, and anger. Stone outlines, however, that a profound sense of mourning afflicted CompuServe because some of those betrayed felt the loss of Julie's presence on the nets while Sanford himself mourned for the death of his digital pattern.

² http://reg.excite.com/mps/login?a=a&pname=chat&brand=excite&select=1&targeturl=http%3A%2F%2Fchatads.excite.com%2Flogin%3Fp%3D8Ci*MSjo5Voxq2nz9SUAO&pstr=Excite+Chat

³ Romany's Realm of Avatars lacks the XXX-themes avatars that are used to frequent virtual sex forums; yet, there is a link to Lucylastics Fantasy and Erotic Avatars (<http://members.home.net/lucylastic/>) where XXX-rated avatars (particularly women performing fellatio) are readily available.



¹ The use of such terms as virtual reality and cyberspace can be particularly confusing as the former is associated with immersion-based equipment (goggles, bodysuits, data gloves) while the latter is restricted to computer terminals. Yet as Poster

notes, virtual reality has grown from such a restrictive image to “include first certain communication facilities on the Internet — bulletin boards, MUDs, MOOs, Internet Relay Chat — and then to the Internet more broadly — including e-mail, databases, newsgroups, and so forth — also known as ‘cyberspace’” (43-4).

² This is reinforced later when Tank is at the helm of the system and, from his vantage outside the matrix, can observe the movements of Neo, Morpheus, and Trinity within the green-encoded system.

³ In addition to the references to Baudrillard, mythology runs rampant in *The Matrix*. Some examples are the following: Morpheus is named after the god of dreams; Christlike imagery surrounds Neo (the One); Thomas Anderson, Neo’s other identity, is a doubting Thomas (named after the apostle who doubted Christ’s resurrection) who initially doubts the world Morpheus shows him; Trinity is a biblical reference to the balance of the Holy Spirit mediating between Father (God/Morpheus) and Son (Jesus/Neo); and, Morpheus’s ship, the *Nebuchadnezzar*, is named after the biblical king who was visited by God in his dreams. Tellingly, however, Neo’s development from an isolated hacker to the One also follows the path of the mythic hero. In his seminal work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, noted mythologist Joseph Campbell charts a series of steps that traditionally follow the development of the mythic hero. Not coincidentally, Neo’s development also follows these stages: The Call to Adventure (Neo is first approached by Trinity and then called by Morpheus over the cell phone); Refusal of the Call (alone on the window ledge,

Neo rejects Morpheus's instructions and returns to his office and the awaiting Agents); Supernatural Aid (Neo is rescued by Trinity and de-bugged); The Crossing of the First Threshold (Neo swallows the caplet and emerges from the matrix); The Belly of the Whale (Neo's ravaged body is slowly rebuilt in this transitional phase); The Road of Trials (Neo is trained by Morpheus); The Meeting with the Goddess (Neo meets the Oracle); Woman as Temptress (the Oracle appears to confirm Neo's assessment that he is *not* the One); Atonement with the Father (Neo must keep the secret of his "true" nature and balance his knowledge with Morpheus's faith); Apotheosis (Neo travels back to the hotel with Morpheus and Trinity to disengage from the matrix); The Ultimate Boon (Neo returns to analogue reality having lost Morpheus to the Agents but, at the same time, realizing a truth of the Oracle's prophecy); Refusal of the Return (Neo refuses to give up on Morpheus and, with Trinity's help, decides to stage an unthinkable raid and rescue Morpheus); The Magic Flight (Neo rescues Morpheus with the aid of Trinity and a helicopter); Rescue from Without (Neo, gaining confidence, attempts to defeat Agent Smith but then needs Trinity and Morpheus's analogue help in escaping the matrix); The Crossing of the Return Threshold (Neo is shot by Agent Smith but, bolstered by Trinity's love, returns to life and assumes his position as the One); Master of Two Worlds (Neo/the One controls the matrix and easily vanquishes Agent Smith before disengaging); and, finally, Freedom to Live (Neo calls the AI to inform it that he will begin awakening humanity to a world "without you in it").

Chapter Five

¹ As a quasi-partner to Trouble, Treasury Agent Mabry reveals that the Mayor's analogue identity is Eytan Novross and James Tilsen is his 17-year-old houseboy; yet, on two separate occasion, Mabry repeatedly insists that Novross is not sleeping with Tilsen:

“We knew that Novross — the Mayor — was paying to house and feed this kid, a kid, anyway. We looked into pretty thoroughly, of course — the boy was well underage — but everything was scrupulously aboveboard. Novross lives elsewhere — he's on the move a lot, but he rents in Harborside or by the Parade, anyplace he can get power for the hardware — and does not, absolutely does not, sleep with the kid.” (Scott, *Trouble* 311)

² Case's cyborg virgin status is explained in a meeting among the Finn, Molly, and Case. Scanning for bodily implants, the Finn remarks about Case that the “[g]uy's a virgin. . . . Some cheap dental work, is all” (Gibson, *Neuromancer* 49).

Chapter Six

¹ Doctorow's published interview can be found in *The Globe and Mail*, but it is also available, along with an unedited version, on Doctorow's website at <http://www.craphound.com/nonfic/transcript.html>.

² Neal Stephenson's short story “Spew” offers a very similar universe wherein television niches are the currency and means of social mobility in this future world.

Stephenson's world is populated by Profile Auditors who scan the feeds of the Spew and accumulate data on the individuals who access the programming, what products they purchase, and what untapped markets may be on the horizon. Stephenson depicts the Auditors' work as hungry and alert, always attuned to the Spew in the hopes of becoming the next Adderson who, as a Profile Auditor, discovered the trend of the "Post-Graduate Existentialists who *started going to church*. You heard me: Adderson single-handedly discovered the New Complacency." Within hours of determining that such a market would appeal to one-hundredth of one percent of the population, "Adderson had descended upon the subject's moho with a Rapid Deployment Team of entertainment lawyers and development assistants and launched the fastest-growing new channel ever to wend its way into the thick braid of the Spew" ("Spew" 210).

³ Date need not worry about loneliness because Korea is the home of the biblically-named Adam, an idoru of Adamsoft Co. Inc. In her essay, Gaouette explains that Adam, a 20-year-old living in EDEN (Eastern Digital Network), has released two CD's (*Genesis, Exodus*) of his own, appeared in television commercials with human actors, and has even sung about lost love on the single "Love Not In The World."

⁴ This is not to say, however, that strong-willed female heroines are completely absent from video games; rather, as gamers familiar with *Street Fighter* or *Mortal Kombat* can attest, female avatars do inhabit the gaming universe. Nevertheless, male (or alien male-like) avatars still outnumber female avatars.

⁵ Coupland's text is not poetry, but the dialogue per page is fragmented given the visual graphics that dominate each page. For example, the final page, with the words “. . . I'd be controlling them” superimposed over an image of a bikini-clad Croft holding a gun, completes a segmented sentence begun on the previous page. For this reason, reproducing the dialogue as accurately as possible in a poetic format best exemplifies the progression through the first eight pages of the text.

⁶ Both Rhona Mitra and Nell McAndrew have also helped popularize the Croft fantasy. Mitra repeatedly poses for such men's fashion magazines as *Maxim*; as a result, Eidos has capitalized on the sexual(ized) association of Croft and Mitra. Clicking the Next arrow after the Mitra-as-Croft photo on Lara's World, the user is greeted with bikini- and lingerie-clad photos of Mitra. In McAndrew's case, she has parlayed her fame into similar modeling assignments and a *Playboy* spread.

⁷ The techno-eroticism of computers and digital environments is nothing new. After all, Aldous Huxley, in his classic *Brave New World*, depicts Lenina taking John, the Savage who has begun learning about the new world around him, to the feelies. John is disgusted by the manner the feelies trigger artificial sensations: “A few minutes after the first Ooh's and Aah's (a duet having been sung and a little love made on that famous bearskin, every hair of which — the Assistant Predestinator was perfectly right — could be separately and distinctly felt), the Negro had a helicopter accident, fell on his head.

Thump! what a twinge through the forehead! A chorus of *ow*'s and *aie*'s went up from the audience" (152). More recently, Candace Jane Dorsey, in her short story "(Learning About) Machine Sex," juxtaposes sex and computers: "A *naked woman* working at a computer. Which attracts you most? It was a measure of Whitman that, as he entered the room, his eyes went first to the unfolded machine gleaming small and awkward in the light of the long-armed desk lamp; he'd seen the woman before" (158). Thus, at the end of Dorsey's story, Angel, the female protagonist, puts the theory of sex and computers to the test and pitches a computer system of programmed orgasms to her corporate employers: "Secretly, because she wouldn't give the satisfaction of agreement, she too thought they would not go that low. *That's right*, she told herself, *trying to sell it is all right — but they will never buy it*. But they did" (177).

⁸ The page used to be located at <http://www.ananova.com/a-files/afiles3.html?>. Since my initial research on the Ananova phenomenon, the A-Files pages are now defunct, replaced with "About Ananova" that, as it turns out, offers very little information about Ananova at all.

⁹ Formerly available at <http://www.ananova.com/a-files/afiles1.html?>

¹⁰ Gibson based the digital Walled City upon his reading of the now-demolished Kowloon Walled City, a popular site of contemporary mythology immortalized in Greg Girard and Ian Lambrot's obscure *City of Darkness: Life in Kowloon Walled City*. In the mid-1800s, China took over governing the Kowloon peninsula from Great Britain, save the Walled City, a sprawling locale that existed in



political limbo as a minimally-governed area within Hong Kong. The Walled City grew to encompass nearly 300 buildings that, over the years, were redesigned, interlinked, and increasingly claustrophobic. Eventually, Kowloon was evacuated in the early 1990s and demolished in 1993, replaced with Kowloon Walled City Park. At the time of its demolition, estimates suggest between 30,000 and 50,000 people lived in a tumorous 6.5



acre community populated by residences, illegal factories, unregulated medical and dental clinics, and hundreds of restaurants and shops. For further photos and details of the last days of Kowloon Walled City, visit the Kowloon Walled City website at <http://www.twenty4.co.uk/on-line/issue001/project02/KWC/>.

Chapter Seven

¹ <<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/news/archive/2001/04/24/financial1219EDT0160.DTL>>

² Essentially, a computer equipped with the Gnutella protocol will automatically scan the Internet looking for other computers with the protocol and make a connection and those computers become servers in and of themselves. For example, if Murphy logs onto the computer and wants the U2 audio file “Bad,” his computer will search for other computers within a particular radius that also has the gnutella protocol installed. If Murphy finds 3 computers (Jones, Smith, Pym), it will log onto those three computers and search Jones, Smith, and Pym for “Bad.” If “Bad” does not appear, Murphy will then connect to every computer Jones, Smith, and Pym are connected to at that moment. Therefore, through Jones, Smith, and Pym, Murphy could then connect with 9 other computers and search for “Bad.” If those 9 computers do not have the song, the system will connect to every computer those 9 are connected to, and so on. The system will automatically continue linking to other computers until the song is located on someone’s hard drive; then, Murphy will make a direct connection with that remote computer and download “Bad.”

³ Barlow even goes so far as to claim that digital homesteading may not be an easy task: “[U]nlike previous frontiers, there may not be a nice way to do that [homestead].” Barlow obviously displays a certain historical blindspot as overwhelming (post)colonial

evidence clearly demonstrates that the history of indigenous cultural destruction and violent colonial encounters did not make previous homesteading “easy” or “nice” by any stretch of the imagination.

⁴ The hypertext version of Turner’s *The Frontier in American History* is part of the American Studies @ The University of Virginia hypertext project. The specific quotes are from “The West and American Ideals” (Chapter XI).

⁵ With the decline of Napster and the rise of alternate p2p software, the call for vigilance has been renewed. Unlike Napster, a program such as Bearshare or Limewire allows for the transmission of a multitude of files, including image files (.jpeg, .gif) and video files (.mpeg, .mov). Consequently, amidst the transmission of music files, pornography is also freely available, and interested parties have begun sounding the alarm that the pornography invasion continues unabated.

⁶ This may not be entirely accurate given the number of Chinese citizens accessing online environments. In his July 21 article for *The Toronto Star*, Martin Regg Cohn remarks that, with approximately four billion speakers, the Chinese language is on course to surpass English as the dominant online language. However, China has its own large-scale, government-controlled intranet that, in Cohn’s terms, is actively building the Great Firewall. Therefore, while the Chinese may have a higher proportion of online users, those users do not have access to the global Internet, given China’s Communist policies.

⁷ Specific information can be found at Ipsos Reid's media site for *The Face of the Web*: http://www.ipsos-reid.com/media/content/displaypr.cfm?id_to_view=1001

⁸ There is one other image that also often serves the Internet: the sword and sorcery of Dungeons 'n Dragons. In MUDs and gaming areas, images of barbarians, warriors, wizards, mages, and other such pseudo-medieval figures tend to dominate. Similarly, ScyberFiction also reflects such imagery as Tad Williams' *Otherland* saga initially features Orlando as the barbarian Thargor and Fredericks, his gaming partner, as Thargor's companion Pithlit. Also, Mark Fabi's *Wyrms* evokes the same wizardry figures in his narrative of computer viruses. While a far cry from the cowboy Western, this imagery also reinforces a male dominance as the original Dungeons 'n Dragons role-playing game was heavily dominated by male figures, early male programmers of the Internet played the game across the growing network, and the characters of the game are predominantly male (helping to explain why Fredericks hides her identity as a girl beneath the male guise of Pithlit).

Chapter Eight

¹ The full interview can be found at <http://www.t0.or.at/pcadigan/intervw.htm>.

² Interestingly, part of Cadigan's mythological work in *Tea from an Empty Cup* involves a subversion of speed and its relationship to both technology and diaspora. Rey

Chow expresses concern regarding the emergence of speed in an increasingly technological First World: "In distraction, the presence (the here-ness and togetherness) of the conventional human body — with its capacity for consciousness, concentration, and voluntary memory — gives way to modes of communication in which mass is overtaken by forces of speed. . ." (170). Given technology's increasing race for speed, Chow is concerned that the future of our contemporary world will be populated by migrants due to the elimination of homelands in favor of a techno-inspired transnational economics, politics, and mindsets that are neither indebted to geography nor to the corporeality of the labouring body: "Precisely because the chief tendency of speed is to eliminate the presence of human persons, what we have to cope with now is the weight of the eliminated mass itself. . . . It is now possible to have surplus humans working for speed technology without physically crossing borders" (179). In *Tea from an Empty Cup*, however, Cadigan subverts the notion of speed by re-integrating the *presence* of the racialized, corporeal body via the souped-up body-tasting hotsuit. As one of the conditions for Yuki's transformation into a bodhisattva, the speed is directly linked to the genetic markers of the corporeal presence; therefore, whereas Chow's examination of speed in our global context is suggestive of a cultural disintegration, Cadigan uses speed to help facilitate a reintegration.

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