

HYBRID FEMINIST IDENTITIES: PRE-LIMINALITY, LIMINALITY, AND POST-LIMINALITY IN *SNOW CRASH*, *NEUROMANCER*, “THE LAST RIDE OF THE GLORY GIRLS,” AND “HAND IN GLOVE”

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RITA BOU KHALIL

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Notre Dame University – Louaize
Faculty of Humanities
Department of English and Translation

We hereby approve the thesis of

Rita Bou Khalil

Candidate for the degree of Type the Master of Arts in English Language and Literature -
Literature



Dr. Paul Jahshan

Supervisor, Chair



Dr. Christy Mady

Committee Member

Dedication

To my father and mother:

Youssef Bou Khalil & Jacqueline Khalil

To my brothers:

Charbel & Antonio

To my husband:

Joseph Khalil

To my Children:

Nour & Lucas

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Introduction

A. The Evolution of Feminist Writings and Feminist Representations

The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw the emergence of a proto-feminist movement which encouraged an increasing number of women to discuss feminist issues within a religious framework; prominent examples are the writings of Jane Anger, Emilia Lanier, and Rachel Speght, but behind the religious pretext of maintaining faith, Western societies still accused many women of practicing witchcraft (Walters 22). Nonetheless, feminist activism continued in the seventeenth century and writings moved from religious texts towards medical concerns. Carving a new path for writing about medical issues related to women, feminist publications concentrated on the topics of pregnancy and childbirth, providing a medical manual, such as Jane Sharp's *The Midwives Book, Or, The Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered* (1671). In the eighteenth century, representations of female issues moved into the literary realm as women's writings openly evolved with themes about marriage. Female characters and representations in novels highlighted the pressures of society in pushing women to accept arranged marriages, social imprisonment, and predefined attributes of naivety imposed on them. Publications like Eliza Fowler Haywood's *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), Mary Wollstonecraft's *Maria: or the Wrongs of Women* (1798), and Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1817) plotted the female image or character as a metaphor to relocate cultural differences and reform women's rights of marriage and education.

This fundamental shift in women's representation also invaded the literary publications of the nineteenth century. It is true that feminist writings continued to accentuate previous conceptions of womanhood through the representation of female characters in plots such as George

Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871), and feminist Gothic fiction emerged during that time as well and shed light on subversive feminine portrayals of madness or mental illnesses (Hayward 36), but while the sixteenth-century medical experimentations represented the "mad woman" in conditions of suffering (Arnaud 181), Gothic settings allowed for feminist writers to remold such characterizations. George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876) and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and *Villette* (1853) exposed, through female characters and plots, the complex network of social contradictions that fostered women's unmanaged eruption of "madness." The representation of women in plots through the vector of drama and fiction problematized predefined medical and cultural attributes about madness in relation to the image of women.

Women's representations in fiction continued to evolve during the course of the nineteenth century as the First Feminist Wave and the suffragettes began to emerge in England. The concept of the "New Woman" featured the female image in fictional narratives, moving women's representations from traditional portrayals of silence and romance towards more openness. The "New Woman" demonstrated a new version of womanhood and broadened the spectrum of female representation at that time, with figures of females in novels engaging in traditional "womanly" occupations being replaced by representations of females openly defying such pre-defined and stultifying gendered roles. Heightened sexual consciousness and expressiveness through the representation of the female body framed publications such as Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893), George Egerton's *A Cross Line* (1893), and Emma Frances Brooke's *A Superfluous Woman* (1894). As Sally Ledger writes in the context of Foucauldian constructions of sexuality, the fictional "New Woman" was a pioneering voice for the true beginnings of feminist resistance

against sexual repression (95). The “New Woman” emerged in literature during that time as a fictional character rebelling against norms related to sexual freedom, widows’ rights, and the liberty of choice to marry for love.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, as the Second Feminist Wave emerged, the representation of an emancipated female image acquired a theoretical structure. French writers, like Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1949), depicted the representation of woman in societies through a theoretico-philosophical framework inspired by the traditions of phenomenology and existentialism (Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre). Based on the existentialist notion that humans are defined by the nature of their acts, choices, and engagements in life, de Beauvoir showed that females are molded into specifically gendered representations, and deprived of the right to freely act and reveal their opinions (Beauvoir 157). Moreover, during that time, French feminist philosophers believed that the study of women’s representations in patriarchal societies required a theory that could connect the issues of social organization and cultural norms to the functioning of language, as language was considered another form of patriarchy. Inspired by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and his theoretical notion that language produces reality through creating a link between the sound/image of words (signifiers) and the meaning they evoke or refer to (signified), Hélène Cixous concentrated her poststructuralist feminist theory on the relation between language and women’s representation in society. She focused on the use of binary oppositions, or word pairs, of contrasting signs, like “Activity/Passivity, Father/Mother, Head/ Emotions” in order to show that the representation of “femininity” is always associated with inferiority and powerlessness (Cixous, Reader 37–38).

Through *Écriture Féminine*, Cixous called upon women to construct their unique feminine style of discourse through writing with their bodies. Such way of associating representational writing with the female and maternal body help women become released from patriarchal gender constructions, creating new and multiple languages or constructions for expressing themselves (Cixous 876–877). Based on Cixous' work and focusing on the image of woman as the "Other," Luce Irigaray in her theory of psychoanalytic feminism pointed at the impact of symbolic representations of gender and sexuality on the individual's psychosexual development (Irigaray *Je, Tu, Nous* 16), noting that binary oppositions in language provide opportunities for men to retain superiority and to demonize, by the same token, the representation of sexual femininity. Conjuring up an image of the independent woman through theoretical contexts also allowed for other feminist writers like Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) to comment on the restrictions imposed on the representation of American housewives. Freidan's book places de Beauvoir's theoretical analysis of women's situation within a pragmatic statistical context by associating it with real life situations taken from the media, social sciences, and consumer society. By tracing the social problems inherent to being a "woman," Freidan encouraged females to reject imposed images and "say 'no' to the feminine mystique" (330) that incarcerates the representation of women as a housewife and mother only. Through her book, she opposes idealized roles of restricting women's social performance for the fulfillment of others, encouraging their participation in domestic spheres.

Furthermore, the emergence of Black Feminist campaigns during the Second Wave, such as the *Black Women Organized for Political Action* (BWOPA) and *the National Black Feminist*

Organization (NBFO), voiced more issues surrounding women's representation (Walters 104). Considering literature as the ultimate lens for effectively criticizing identity politics, black feminist publications such as *Towards a Black Feminist Criticism* (1977) by Barbara Smith discussed the critical representation of black women by society and the intensity of oppression that black women, as lesbians or not, must cope with. Smith urges for "just one work to reflect the reality" (27) that black feminists and black lesbians face and use it as a space for breaking their silence and isolation. With the continuous rise of women's representations during the Second Wave, Lesbian Feminism also appeared with noteworthy writings such as *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence* (1980) by Adrienne Rich, which discussed concepts of heterosexuality. Rich explained "how and why women's choice of women as passionate, comrades, life partners, co-workers, lovers, tribe, has been crushed" (633) and highlighted the total neglect of representing lesbians in literary writings.

B. Feminist Representations and Postmodernism

As the Third Feminist Wave surfaced in the early 1990s, the representation of women in fiction continued to evolve and was influenced by the postmodern age; feminist writers aligned their stance with the postmodern concepts of criticizing the traditional principles of universalism, known as the crisis of legitimization (Jameson 22, 23) which rejects the notion that truth or universal knowledge exists independently from historical reference and civilization. As a consequence, the exposition of knowledge or truth changed and turned into "a new depthlessness, which finds its prolongation both in contemporary 'theory' and in a whole new culture of the image or the simulacrum" (Jameson 9). Despite the postmodern denouncement of ultimate knowledge,

feminist writers related to this “crisis of legitimization” and started to increasingly question the relationship between women’s inferior images in society and the foundations of knowledge in culture. As a result, feminists discerned a direct connection between the orientation of male patriarchy in founding knowledge and the devaluation of women’s skills and actions, specifically in scientific discourses.

To divert the latent patriarchal premises in orienting knowledge which presented women as inferiors especially in scientific fields, an innovative illustration of women developed along the literary plots of science-fiction, known as the female hybrid character. As the word hybrid refers “to the outcome of a cross between two separate species” (Brah & Coombes 3), the female hybrid image in science-fiction demonstrated a blend of either monstrous features with feminine body/face characteristics (the female alien) or a blend of technological augmentations with feminine body/face features (the female cyborg). The characteristics of each representation will be discussed separately afterward. With the influence of postmodernism, the representation of women in fiction changed from traditional images of realistic female characters to female hybrid images of aliens and cyborgs, embedding a range of postmodern ideologies. Theoretical frameworks such as Jean Baudrillard’s images or simulacra which precede and determine reality (1) gave more room for generating allegorical signifiers of identity and embodiment through illustrating the female hybrid image in physically and intellectually powerful states in science-fiction. Moreover, Fredric Jameson’s postmodern theories on the depthlessness of representation and on the loss of the hermeneutical models causing the loss of historical authenticity (11) encouraged feminist writers to work further on liberating women’s image from traditional and cultural constraints and to

present the female hybrid image in science-fiction as independent, adventurous, and able to conquer different obstacles. Also, Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of the patriarchal positioning of "woman" as the "other" in the symbolic order revived feminists' interest in illustrating, again through the female hybrid image, a new language in science-fiction, one that eliminated the encoding of patriarchy and the negative connotations pre-designated in the words "woman" and "female."

Some feminists believed that fictional narratives within postmodern modules have served as expressive resources offering maps of cultural arrangement and enactment of genderism through female hybridity, while others disagreed with such notions. Patricia Waugh argued that postmodernism and feminism share similar concerns, as "both examine the cultural consequences of the decline of a consensus aesthetics, of an effective 'literary' voice, or the absence of a strong sense of stable subjectivity" (6), affirming that women writers are able, through the female hybrid image, to experience new modes of subjectivity that provide a sense of personal autonomy and continuous identity. Similarly, in *Technologies of the Gendered Body* (1996), Anne Balsamo examined the connections between the female hybrid and postmodern frameworks. Referring to Fredric Jameson, Balsamo argued that the relationship between objects and texts is still articulated within constructed cultural and historical practices. However, the evolution of female hybrid demonstrations of aliens and cyborgs has evoked the possibility of resistance within corporate culture and the promise of control over the form of personal embodiment, as "the physical body and its social meanings can be technologically neutralized", shifting into the concept of post-

gender (128). Hybrid identity, transgressive of any cultural reference, has demonstrated a potential for disrupting dualisms and refashioning traditional thinking.

Contrariwise, Sara Ahmed, in *Differences that Matter*, offered a contrasting depiction of the relationship between feminism and postmodernism that is centered around epistemological issues and a crisis of identity. Ahmed referred to Lyotard's seminal text, *The Postmodern Condition*, to argue that postmodern notions of "crisis legitimization" have established more boundaries, as criticizing sources of universal knowledge has induced more social judgements and indirectly valued notions of "differentiation." This valuing of "differentiation" in philosophical postmodern discourses "operates as a gendered modality of enunciation" (14) and reveals gendered effects through the building of more hierarchies and oppositions in relation to the image of woman. Despite these contradictory perspectives, the intersection of cultural studies with postmodern ideologies shifted women's representations towards hybrid images in science-fiction and accelerated the evolution of the feminist science-fiction wave of the 1970s.

C. Feminist Representations and Science-Fiction

In addition to the postmodern influence as mentioned, other reasons also incited the development of the feminist science-fiction wave in the 1970s. Although science-fiction started with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818), the genre remained overwhelmingly dominated by male writers prior to the late 1960s. A true feminist science-fiction wave was thought to be needed during that time, specifically with the revival of women's portrayals in "hysterical" settings through science-fiction B-movies between the 1950s and 1960s. The discriminatory medical application of lobotomy on mentally-ill females during this period (Roth & Lerner 791) indirectly

influenced B-movies to portray women in situations of fear and screaming hysteria. The word *hysteria* means in Greek “that which proceeds from the uterus” (Maines 21); since the word already connotes elements of femalehood, women’s representations provoked referential connections to its meaning of madness and uncontrollable emotions. B-movies plots illustrated women in situations where they were screaming, fleeing, and acting overall horrified when faced with danger. Prominent movies like *This Island Earth* (1955), *Forbidden Planet* (1956), *Attack of the Crab Monsters* (1957), and others resuscitated the stereotypical representations of the “madwoman” and the “witch” from previous centuries. B-movies thus ignited also the rise of a true feminist science-fiction wave which began in 1970 and continued until after the 1990s with Third Wavers.

So, with the influence of postmodernism and B-movies, the feminist science-fiction wave evolved and developed the hybrid alien figure as a representation of women. The hybrid alien image mixed the body and facial features of women with monstrous characteristics like long tails, multi-colored skin, and tentacle-like hands. This female alien representation turned into an expressive tool for deforming patriarchal notions of woman’s social identity, her inferior role in scientific fields, and her potential roles in the body politics. During that time, *Women’s Press* published the following preface to every science-fiction book they published: “Our aim is to publish science-fiction by women and about women; to present exciting and provocative feminist images of the future that will offer an alternative vision of science and technology, and challenge male domination of the science-fiction tradition itself” (Webb 185). Prominent publications like *The Female Man* (1975) by Joanna Russ imagined a utopian world inhabited by female aliens only,

and Ursula Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) created a planet of sexless aliens as a way of opposing patriarchal notions that mark women as different. Publications like Alice B. Sheldon's *The Girl Who Was Plugged In* (1973), Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), Suzy McKee Charnas's *Motherlines* (1978), Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), and Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis* trilogy continued to present the female alien figure as a socio-cultural and political construction against patriarchy.

Different perspectives arose about the image of the female alien in science-fiction plots. Kaye Mitchell sees that science-fiction stands as a ground of discourse that gives representation a subversive quality, allowing readers to reflect upon the physical self, noting that "the body is, to a significant extent, a product of our understanding of it, a product of our thinking of 'body' and 'matter', a product of discourse" (109). Accordingly, the female alien representation of radical bodies within the realm of science-fiction reconstructs and re-negotiates the significance of "matter" as giving value to women's body. Conversely, others believed that the figure of female alien has incorporated more notions of subjectivity rather than formed egalitarian concepts. Jane Donawerth comments on the way "women science-fiction writers frequently exploit the irony of a future science that supports reversed sexual bias as natural, showing the male to be inferior or limited in his role" (542). Despite diverse viewpoints, science-fiction plots paved the way for women's representation to evolve into a hybrid figure and to continue changing towards more hybridity.

D. Feminist Representations and Cyberpunk

After the feminist science-fiction wave and the birth of the female alien construction, women's representations progressed towards more hybridity in the sub-genres of science-fiction, notably cyberpunk in the 1980s. With the nascent genre of "cyberfeminism," defined as a "philosophy which acknowledges, firstly that there are differences in power between women and men specifically in the digital discourse; and secondly that Cyberfeminists want to change that situation" (Hawthorne & Klein 11), the representation of the female moved from the alien to the cyborg, defined as "an organism that is part-human, part-machine" (Hawthorne & Klein 167), a "hybrid of machine and organism" (Haraway 149), or the concept of an identity embedded between the flesh and its technological environment. The female cyborg figure merged a feminine face and a feminine body with mechanical augmentations and prostheses.

The portrayal of female cyborgs mapped the feminist identity in various fictional themes by emphasizing creative self-expression and sociopolitical transformations; a panoply of fictional female cyborgs made to live in virtual spaces transmuted and helped better situate feminists' social and cultural issues with patriarchy. Remarkable examples are Pat Cadigan's *MindPlayers* (1987) and *Synners* (1991) which presented female cyborgs as experiencing real-world memories through digital means in cyberspace or utilizing their enhanced body to fight against humans. Other cyberfeminists like Kathy Acker in *Empire of the Senseless* (1988), Candas Jane Dorsey in *Learning About Machine Sex* (1988), and Lisa Mason in *Arachne* (1990) also presented, through the female cyborg, a powerful, liberated, and intellectual woman.

The female cyborg representation turned into a key concept in conceptualizing and discussing issues of gender. Donna Haraway in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (1991), confirms

that the influential trajectory of women's representation continued with cyberpunk representations and paved the way to a constructive feminist ground. Cyborg imagination merged with material reality stands as a conceptualization that destroys the repressive female images in historical narratives as "nature and culture are reworked; the one can no longer be the source for appropriation or incorporation by the other" (151). Haraway concentrated on concepts of reinventing nature through cyberfeminism for, as most traditional theories considered that nature could not be produced or constructed, she believed that the female cyborg image has introduced the possibility of reinventing nature and the ability to engrave women's existence in the social order.

In Haraway's terms, as the cyborg illustrates a merge of human features with technological inclinations, it denotes the collapse of borders between the real and the imagined or the embodied and disembodied. This creates a coming together of a new culture and a different nature, extricated from traditions. Such creation makes the cyborg an agency of reassembling social arrangements and predefined constructions of women's identities, away from historical and cultural experiences. The cyborg becomes a communicative model for reversing social roles and envisaging neutrality in identity representations.

Margret Grebowicz and Helen Merrick, in *Beyond the Cyborg* (2013), echoed Haraway in exploring the female cyborg's relevance to contemporary epistemological, ethical, and political theories. Grebowicz and Merrick argued that rearticulating the portrayal of hybridity through cyberspace delimits ways of situating knowledge and "foregrounds that which is hidden or foreclosed" (130). The figure of the cyborg proclaims the emergence of a new materialism that

focuses on the positive image of women's bodies. However, Kevin Robins rejects such notions and considers that cyberspace remains a fictional stage unconnected to reality as "the technological domain readily becomes a world of its own, dissociated from the complexity and gravity of the real world" (143). Robins adds that the cyborg image offers only a psychic protection against the unchangeable reality of patriarchal societies, and that the techno-environments of virtual space lure the unconscious with a fantasy which can never be effective in real life. Regardless of various viewpoints about the influence of female cyborg illustrations, women's representations in cyberpunk showed more transformation towards hybridity.

E. Feminist Representations and Steampunk

In the wake of the cyberfeminist representation, women's portrayals continued shifting towards hybridity through the science-fiction sub-genre known as steampunk. Hybrid female portrayals embedded in a Victorian environment took over cyber narratives since steampunk "focuses very closely on the social aspect of reenacting the past" using technology as a means "to create and re-present" (Brummett 101). Feminist writers considered steampunk as another literary outlet to recreate and re-imagine female characters from the past and present (Seed 112), and the mixing of Victorian setting, artefacts, and culture with mechanical innovations redirected the cyborg entity created earlier in cyberpunk towards a different style of hybridity and added a needed dimension from which to further investigate possibilities in the representation of the female. Portrayals resumed in tracing the "independent women" in hybrid heroic roles such as the explorer, inventor, assassin, dirigible pilot, and the detective in "The Last Ride of the Glory Girls" (2011)

by Libba Bray and “Hand in Glove” (2011) by Ysabeau S. Wilce, as they all pictured women’s new abilities in predefined and stereotypical masculine conditions.

Women’s representations of hybridity in steampunk have catalyzed the erosion of different perspectives. Catherine Siemann believes that females in steampunk illustrate “the plight of women,” which mirrors definite historical references to censorship and working-class inequalities (6). Similarly, David Beard adds that steampunk “reifies gender norms that inadvertently perpetuate the domination of women” (xxiv). Also, Margaret Stetz traces the influential role of steampunk, asserting that it is about re-visioning historical foundations which devalue women’s sociopolitical status. In addition, the emergence of labels such as “New Woman Fiction” within steampunk portrayals has impacted stereotypical gender perceptions (341). However, Leigh Summers notes that the image of woman in steampunk still heralded patriarchal cultural codes, as the corset, a common image, remains potentially “heavily pregnant with feminine metaphors and associations, unavoidably steeped in and expressive of Victorian female sexuality and its subordination” (43). Yet, Valerie Steele rejects this idea, noting that the corset’s material, made of leather and metal, connotes the “postmodern manipulation of sexual stereotypes” (48). Despite different viewpoints on the role of steampunk representations in promoting feminism, women’s representations continued on shifting towards hybridity throughout plots of the science-fiction genre from the 1970s till after the 1990s.

This thesis aims to show how science-fiction representations continued to shift feminine portrayals into the concepts of hybridity and then into transformative hybrid entities and is based on feminist representations in science-fiction and its sub-genres cyberpunk and steampunk. I will

attempt to highlight the process of transition towards hybridity in both sub-genres, which set feminist representations in a middle state or a stage of liminality—a liminal setting in which the traditional feminist portrayal is left behind and is evolving towards a new representation of feminist hybridity. As Bjørn Thomassen defined it, “liminality refers to any ‘betwixt and between’ situation or object, any in-between place or moment, a state of suspense” (7). The liminal is a crossing, an intersectionality, and a transitional state that steered, as I will show in this thesis, feminist representations towards hybridity. I will classify this process of the transformation of the image of the female in science-fiction into pre-liminality, liminality, and post-liminality reintegration, as I see these three stages leading the female science-fiction representation towards hybridity and transition. Each classification is characterized by different directions and relations, coalescing to produce a specific ethos that was to mark feminist cyberpunk and steampunk representations since the 1980s.

The evolution of women’s representations from the beginning of postmodernism to cyberpunk has been well documented, but the female image in steampunk has not been as abundant as cyberpunk portrayals and, therefore, little has been done to examine the stages of liminality inherent to representations of the female in cyberpunk and steampunk genres, thus presenting an opportunity to further investigate the process of transformation towards hybrid identity, as well as delineating, in detail, the different characteristics of each liminal stage. This in turn provides a better understanding of the relationship between liminality and hybridity, as well as shows how these two concepts changed the representation of the female in science-fiction and allowed feminist theories to adapt to the new digital scene. To demonstrate this claim, each aspect of

liminality (pre- and post-) will be examined through the lens of feminist theories as they are portrayed in Neal Stephenson's *Snow Crash* (1992), William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984), Libba Bray's "The Last Ride of the Glory Girls" (2011), and Ysabeau S. Wilce's "Hand in Glove" (2011). Throughout this thesis, I will show how Y.T.'s, Molly's, Addie's, and Aurelia's stages of liminality and hybridity have emerged in different degrees as the "New Woman," an image of a woman free of patriarchal control and is socially, sexually, and economically empowered and independent.

In chapter one of this thesis, I will show how Y.T. and Hiro, the hybrid female and male representation in *Snow Crash* illustrate the pre-liminal stage, in which cyberspace will be discussed as an interference stage that only intermittently occurs and does not lead to a complete transformation towards hybridity. I will discuss how the female cyborg representation lived in double ontological positions, concentrating on the relation between embodiment and identity. In chapter two, I will position the cyborg figure of Molly in *Neuromancer* as representing the liminal stage; I will study the representation of female hybridity as it goes through a liminal realm almost detached from physical existence in its previous social and cultural conditions. In this case, cyberspace will be a vehicle to a mid-transition towards complete hybridity, a threshold between two areas—an anteroom which positions the female representation *in a flux between multiple identities* of life inside and outside the virtual space. In chapter three, I will cover the representation of women's hybridity as they occur in steampunk narratives, discuss the Victorian hybrid female portrayals in the post-liminal reintegration phase, and show how stepping into the post-liminal reintegration setting means that the female representation reached complete hybridity and closed

off ways of living with multiple identities. The reintegration stage in post-liminality will be read in relation to the characters of “The Last Ride of the Glory Girls” and “Hand in Glove.”

Chapter I. Pre-liminality and Innovation

A. Introduction

Science-fiction representations continued to shift feminine portrayals into hybrid entities. When attempting to trace the progression of the representation of women's hybridity in science-fiction, one automatically thinks of the interrelation between hybridity and liminality. As an overview, liminality was conceptualized first by Arnold van Gennep (1909) at the beginning of the twentieth century to describe the ritual stages of transitions invoked by societies (11). Gennep describes the liminal state as a moment of transition, the middle stage in a rite of passage, where a familiar stability is left behind and a new one is embraced. It is also preceded by a pre-liminal stage and followed by a post-liminal one. As liminality provides moments of freedom for individuals to remove social impositions and welcome difference, it also relates directly to the concept of hybridity. The concept of hybridity was rooted in science as the outcome of a cross between two separate species and later became aligned with cultural studies as a description for mixing and combining new spaces or beliefs (Bode and Jacobson 4). The connection between liminality and hybridity opens ways for attaining emancipation in social and cultural performances; when individuals welcome difference in the liminal stage and accept the ongoing of cultural mixing through hybridity, a new space, or a "third space," is created for cultural performances and different authority setups (Bhabha 211). Thus, the creation of a different space facilitates the elimination of race, class, gender, and other differences.

Feminist writers combined women's representation in science-fiction with notions of liminality and hybridity towards the fusion of flesh and machine, a process known as trans-

hybridity. Both terms, “liminal” and “trans-,” imply transformation and shifting from one phase to another or from one place to another (Carlson and Sweet 1071). In reference to van Gennep, liminality does not occur on its own but must be preceded by a pre-liminal phase; therefore, the main concern of this chapter will be to relate the female hybrid representation of Y.T. in *Snow Crash* (1992) to the pre-liminal stage. I will show how Y.T.’s pre-liminal hybridity, in comparison to other male figures, promotes feminism and represents the concept of the “New Woman.” As mentioned previously in the introduction, concepts of the “New Woman” started in fictional narratives, plotting feminist cultural and sexual issues through female characters. Such concepts concentrated on pushing women’s representation into more openness and expressiveness, away of traditional portrayals of silence and romance. Bringing up the concepts of “New Woman” with Y.T.’s pre-liminality into a digital setting opens way of highlighting more on feminists’ theoretical frameworks, joining feminist sexual and cultural issues of empowerment in one space, given that she is represented differently from other classical female science-fiction figures, as she demonstrates her simultaneous living in two spaces, reality and virtuality with removable technological bodily augmentations.

B. Characteristics of the Pre-liminal Stage

It is essential to present first an overview of the characteristics of the pre-liminal stage. Passing through the pre-liminal stage is the first step towards separation from the previous world or reality. In this case, separation is considered a short-lived situation since the pre-liminal persona prepares and aims for fully transiting to their hybrid identity in the virtual space but doesn’t effectively reach complete transition. According to Victor Turner (1969), the pre-liminal stage

comprises of a “symbolic detachment . . . from an earlier fixed point in the social structure” or “from a set of cultural conditions” (94), meaning that the pre-liminal persona undergoes neither full detachment from their past life nor a full attachment to their new identity, appearing in a temporary situation of detachment from and attachment to; in this case, temporality pushes the pre-liminal persona to be simultaneously active in both spaces, reality and virtuality. In the same way, Y.T.’s hybridity throughout the plot takes the characteristics of a pre-liminal stage.

C. Y.T.’s Pre-liminality

Y.T. reflects the characteristics of a pre-liminal stage through continuous physical shifts between the Metaverse and reality. Despite the fact that “[s]he has a visa to everywhere” (40), and is technologically inclined with powerful capabilities, Y.T. still shows a physical attachment to her life with her mother. Relatedness to reality keeps on ticking in and pushing her to disconnect from her hybrid body. In one situation, Y.T. freezes when her phone rings, “It is her mother” (88), so she stops all her engagement in the Metaverse to answer her mother. In another, she suddenly remembers that her mom is probably lying worried in bed, so she hurries back home (114). Sometimes, Y.T. escapes by calling her mom and “waiting for her ride” (255). Other times, Y.T. simply heads directly with her skateboard and makes sure that her mom is fine (308). Y.T.’s state of hybridity, then, appears in the pre-liminal stage, where she lives simultaneously in a spatial and temporal connection to two different spaces: Y.T.’s life as a teenage girl with her mom and Y.T.’s life as the powerful female hybrid representation in the Metaverse.

In addition to Y.T.’s physical shifts to life with her mother, she continuously builds mental connections to real concepts outside the Metaverse. Such mental relations to real concepts are

salient in the scene with the “RAT thing”: “[T]he edges of the wings look like something I’ve seen before . . . like the radiator on a car” (109). Relating a virtual concept— “The RAT Thing”—to a realistic one— “the radiator on a car”—shows that her thoughts still relate to real notions, seen in her life, outside the Metaverse. Also, thinking of such relation helps her to successfully deal with a dangerous situation, as Y.T. concludes that the “RAT Thing . . . has to keep moving, keep forcing air over its radiators, or else it overheats and melts down” (109); she directly reaches these radiators and stops the “RAT Thing” from functioning.

Moreover, Y.T. experiences mental relatedness to her life outside the Metaverse through flashbacks about her grandfather and, most of the time, about her mother. When she encounters Ng, the Vietnamese man connected to the Metaverse, and sees him “leaning forward in his chair, getting his shoulders rubbed by a geisha” (257), Y.T. remembers her grandfather once telling her that “[t]he Vietnamese, like most other Asians, hate the Japanese. And apparently this Ng character gets a kick out of the idea of having a Japanese geisha around to rub his back” (257). Y.T. keeps experiencing triggering flashbacks, specifically memories and events about her mother. In one instance, Y.T. “cuffs the loose manacle onto her wrist . . . forming a double bracelet . . . The kinds of thing her mother used to do back when she was a punk” (91). She even relates “The deep, computer-designed imprints of suburban boys” in the Metaverse to “the mystery figures in Peru” that her “mom learned about at the NeoAquarian Temple” (273) and told her about. Relating mentally to concepts, images, and flashbacks to her life outside the Metaverse sets Y.T.’s hybridity in a pre-liminal stage.

Therefore, Y.T.'s physical and mental shifts to her real life lead to her short-lived existence in the Metaverse; her hybridity stands in a "symbolic detachment . . . from an earlier fixed point" (Turner 94), which is her teenage life with her mother. Despite undergoing technological augmentations, Y.T.'s state of hybridity remains physically and mentally attached to her real life, thus not fully attached to her hybrid body in the Metaverse. She appears in mental and physical temporary situations of detachment from her real life as a teenager, and as attachment to her hybrid body in the Metaverse, simultaneously active in both spaces. Consequently, Y.T.'s hybrid portrayal stands in the pre-liminal stage, before the "threshold or the liminal" (Genep 19). She is passing through the first step of separation from reality, yet showing an incomplete attachment to her hybrid body in the Metaverse. Y.T.'s pre-liminal hybrid state makes her shift physically outside the Metaverse, until she leaves it at the end of the plot to be at home with her mother. This frames Y.T.'s hybrid portrayal differently from other cyberpunk fiction female representations, like Molly in *Neuromancer*, the main concern of the next chapter. Knowing that some of her bodily augmented parts can be removed, like the *dentata*, the merge of her pre-liminality and hybridity represents Y.T. as the digital "New Woman."

D. Hiro's Pre-liminality and Comparison with Y.T.

It is essential to relate Y.T.'s characteristics during the pre-liminal stage to the main male protagonist, Hiro, to highlight her hybrid appearance as a feminist icon and relevance to the "New Woman" concept. To Hiro, the virtual "is liberating" (315), and it allows him to "[maneuver] his way onto the freeway" (315) where no cultural difference can eliminate his virtually powerful status. In the real world, "Hiro didn't even have part of the country to call it home" (69) and didn't

have the power to overcome societal obstacles. The freedom and power provided in virtuality made him a renowned hacker, the creator of powerful software and “the only person in the whole bar who can use them” (234). Y.T.’s pre-liminal state appears different from that of Hiro, as she feels relatedness to both spaces. In the Metaverse, she enjoys and overcomes dangers; in reality, she also feels an affiliation and relaxation with her mother, grandfather, and boyfriend.

Despite success in the Metaverse, moments of physical switching to reality take over Hiro’s actions in virtuality and prevent him from staying continuously attached to his hybrid identity. He physically shifts outside the Metaverse due to instances of weakness, and experiences flashbacks which push him back to reality, like when he recognizes Juanita in virtuality for the first time: “Despite her lack of color and shitty resolution” (64), Hiro’s avatar freezes, adopts “the same facial expression with which he used to stare at this woman years ago” (64), and moves directly back to reality. Hiro’s past weakness is reawakened by recalling Juanita’s memory and the issue of class difference which, in the real world, obstructed all his chances of being with her and left only Da5id, “who had always been the first in everything” (69), to pursue Juanita. Once again, Hiro is flung back to reality when he reads “statistics about his own death” and “turns off all techno-shit in his goggles” (351). The fear of death flashes in his mind, awakening an earlier fright that interrupts all his actions in the virtual space, stimulates a feeling of weakness, and pushes him back to reality. Y.T., in contrast, does not physically shift outside the Metaverse due to flashbacks of tough memories or moments of weakness. She gets back to her home and life as a teenager, thus proving her superior pre-liminal representation in both spaces more than Hiro.

However, Hiro's momentary and motionless physical shifts to reality show that his pre-liminal state is reaching an end, for he shifts to reality for a short duration and stays invisible, living in a state of isolation and loneliness without belonging to a family or even having a job; the Metaverse always seems a better place where he feels a sense of belonging and self-fulfillment. In comparison to Hiro's isolation and loneliness in the real world, Y.T.'s life as a teenage girl is full of social belonging and family relatedness.

Since real life reminds Hiro of weakness and failure, he prefers, in some situations, to obstruct his return to the misery of reality. Some of these situations include his depending on the librarian to get information on real-world topics (religion, history, philosophy, etc.) when searching for the source of the virus Snow Crash, and deciding that "he doesn't have an independent memory" (237). This predicament shows that Hiro's state of hybridity appears to be heading towards liminality and aiming to reach completeness or full attachment to the Metaverse, although flashbacks sometimes interrupt his actions. Life in virtual space provides Hiro with more success and relatedness.

Conversely, Y.T. appears to be far from reaching Hiro's, final stages of pre-liminality: her willfulness to stay attached to her hybrid identity in the Metaverse appears to be momentary, as mentioned, since she does not want to be completely attached to one place only. In virtuality, Y.T. has the ability to decide, achieve, and even escape whenever she wants. Similarly, in the real world, even if her lifestyle appears to be different from that in virtuality, , she has, as a teenage girl, a stable life with her family, friends and boyfriend – a life that is full of action and engagements. Her double identity appears to be powerful and capable in both states, more than that of Hiro's.

Thus, the merger of her hybridity and pre-liminality sets her as the digital “New Woman,” specifically in comparison to the male’s hybrid portrayal. As such, the concept of the “New Woman” relocates cultural differences between gender roles through fictional characters; similarly, Y.T. continues the same path through her pre-liminal hybridity; she portrays her superior abilities in comparison to Hiro, as she is capable of showing an eminent position in both spaces. In reality, Y.T. frames such characterization through her social relatedness and connections.

E. Y.T.’s Capabilities

Paving the way to the “New Woman” through her pre-liminal hybridity, Y.T. portrays distinctive mental and physical capabilities, defying traditional and cultural notions of women’s inferiority. Technological gadgets offer Y.T. a fully powerful equipped uniform with “a hundred pockets” and “pens, markers, penknives, lock picks” (88) in addition to “blades on her shoulder” (201). The uniform with all its equipment fosters Y.T.’s charm and showcases her feminine bodily features; people “swivel their heads to look at her butt as she rolls past them” (189), and males admit that she is “a hell of a chick . . . a knockout” (210). Also, Y.T. shows her powerful physicality by directing the motion of her skateboard in the real world and easily occupying space in the Metaverse, as she says that in addition to her initials meaning “Yours Truly,” they also stand for “Young, fast, and female” (189). Despite hurdles, she is always able to directly “catch her balance” (189), as “she stomps on the edge of the plank with one foot” (189), preventing herself from falling. Other than her energetic, powerful, and charming hybrid body, Y.T. “sees into the night with her Knight Visions” (41), securing her way in darkness. Moreover, Y.T.’s hybrid representation provides her with a feature that helps her resist rape and sexual intimations, as “she’s wearing a

dentata” (62) and its “effects can be unpredictable” (91). The dentata’s effect will be discussed later. Such overview of Y.T.’s physical capabilities shows that the merger of her hybridity and pre-liminality represents the concept of the “New Woman”: charming her surrounding with her powerful hybrid physicality transforms predefined notions of women’s bodies as physically incapable and inferior to males. In addition, her pre-liminal hybrid representation shifts women’s portrayal into more openness by showing that female bodies can be charming in settings away from romance and intimacy, releasing the female body from patriarchal constructions of objectivity towards more admiration for her bodies’ functionality.

Additionally, throughout the plot, Y.T. also shines with her mental capabilities. Not only does she have the skills to proficiently steer her skateboard, she also had the potential to become intellectually more developed, as mentioned in one of the scenes where “[s]he reads the instructions in English . . . She whiles away the time by reading the instructions in all other languages” (92). In addition to her intellectual acumen, Y.T. proves to be mentally gifted with a great awareness to sense danger and prepare for it before it happens. Even if sometimes “she’s a little freaked-out” once she feels in danger, she is still “taking it easy” (207) and analyzes her steps with mindfulness in order to overcome difficulties and never overreact. This is shown in one delivery mission in which she suspects that the franchise who ordered the pizza is dangerous; she intelligently thinks and “stays with him, looking for a way out” (188) without showing her fear. This blend of mental and physical capabilities in Y.T.’s pre-liminal hybrid body challenges stultifying gendered roles that culturally depicted women as ignorant and foolish. Y.T. continues

the progression of the “New Woman’s” concept by portraying the way women can be mentally and physically capable, reforming traditional and cultural representations of inferiority.

Y.T.’s mental and physical capabilities mark her distinctive character as well. With her technologically-inclined physical and mental capabilities, Y.T. is able to demonstrate the trait of confidence. In one scene, when she is put under arrest after entering the “MetaCops” to send the delivery, she remains fearless and confident and says that they “can’t even rez what Y.T. says” (55). Her confidence encourages her to show toughness as well, which is reflected in many situations. Knowing that her physical and mental capabilities protect her from danger, Y.T. never gives up in the face of obstacles: when she is injured by the “RAT” and Hiro begs her not to approach it, she actually does: “One footstep at a time, she approaches the Rat Thing” (108). Even she knows how to prove her presence, especially in front of powerful, higher-ranked males. When meeting Uncle Enzo, the mafia boss, Y.T. amazes him with her confidence and courage, as he seems “like he’s having a good time, not putting her down” (195). Indeed, Y.T. attracts the attention of people around her and knows that “all are staring at her” (40). She aims to always attain superiority: “People Don’t fuck with her. She has established her space on the pavement” (201). This shows character traits of confidence and toughness, and frames Y.T. as the independent digital “New Woman” of the pre-liminal era.

Once again, it is essential to show how her physical and mental capabilities distinguish her virtual persona and render her, in many situations, more mentally and physically flexible and superior to Hiro, foregrounding the way Y.T.’s pre-liminal hybridity touches upon a wide spectrum of feminist issues. Despite the fact that Hiro is characterized as being a powerful sword fighter, a

successful hacker, and an intelligent software developer, he is still unable, in many situations, to reach Y.T.'s superior physical and mental capabilities. In their first encounter, Hiro appears in a frail state, as he is late and unable to make the delivery without the help of Y.T. As events progress, Y.T. shines with her mental capabilities in learning about the drug Snow Crash, whereas Hiro relies on the librarian to conduct his research. Moreover, as the mafia becomes astonished with Y.T.'s powerful capabilities in her delivery missions, Hiro doesn't show any new achievements or improvements, his skills are only seen in sword fighting and software development. His abilities are limited, pushing Y.T. to insult him sometimes, such as when she asks him if he knows "how to use chopsticks" while he "shrugs off this insult" (183). At other times, Y.T. prefers to leave him alone, such as when they attend Vitaly Chernobyl's concert, thinking that "[s]he would be embarrassed anyway to be seen with an oldster like Hiro" (138). Y.T.'s capabilities exceed those of Hiro's and reach a stage where she is able to foresee Hiro's tricks, like when "she is astonished that he would actually be thinking this. Then she gets the sap factor under control and realizes: He's waffling. Which means he's probably lying" (106).

By showcasing her powerful physicality, mental capabilities, and confident character, Y.T.'s pre-liminal hybrid image relocates cultural differences between gender roles, challenging representations of inferiority attached to women. Moreover, since Y.T. continues the path of the "New Woman" in representing the traits of independent women, she highlights feminist issues of sexuality. As mentioned previously in the introduction, the true beginnings of feminist resistance against sexual repression started with the emergence of the "New Woman" in fiction, and Y.T.

continues the same path in projecting such sexual concepts through her distinctive hybrid feature, the *dentata*.

F. The Dentata

Y.T. is the only powerful hybrid female able to destroy males' sexual gratification with her distinctive feature, the *dentata*. When Y.T. is arrested by the MetaCops and they take off her clothes, Y.T. doesn't shrug, "She's not afraid; She's wearing a dentata" (62). Elsewhere in the novel, as her relationship with Hiro develops, Y.T. muses about having sex with him, but then dismisses the thought because she'll have "to take out the dentata, and this isn't the place" (105). Finally, Y.T.'s dentata is put into full action with Raven on the Raft. As Y.T. and Raven are in the middle of their sexual relationship, "a very small hypodermic needle slipped imperceptibly into the engorged frontal vein of his penis, automatically shooting a cocktail of powerful narcotics and depressants into his bloodstream . . . it was her dentata" (438). In these three instances, the dentata appears to be a protective shield against males' sexual desires.

The dentata presents a dangerous weapon and provides Y.T. with the power of sexual resistance, a key concept of the "New Woman." In the episode with Metacop mentioned above, the dentata's effect made the manager jump back and raise both hands to protect his eyes while they were trying to rape Y.T. In the second episode, Y.T. doesn't remove the dentata, thinking that despite her physical and mental capabilities, the "Clints," or males, still try to abuse her, but the dentata can obstruct ways of putting her in an inferior position and protect her from rape. In the last episode on the Raft, Y.T.'s dentata, her "last line of personal self-defense" (438), is able to crash Raven's superiority: "Raven's been harpooned in the place where he least expected it. Now

he's going to sleep for at least four hours" (438). Instead of forcefully penetrating her, as a male, he is invisibly and softly penetrated by her dentata. Y.T.'s dentata changes the entire situation and is able to crash the system of its user, Raven, and helps her escape.

As Y.T.'s hybrid portrayal continues the path of "New Woman" in touching upon feminist issues of sexuality through her dentata, Julia Kristeva's theory of the "abject" and of "abjection" (1982) comes to mind. In Kristeva's terms, the "abject" refers to human reactions, like horror, and to bodily reactions and liquids, like open wounds, vomit, and sewage, or any concept that repels away from the body (3). Y.T.'s dentata illustrates a similar feature, as YT is capable to put on and repel the dentata from her body, depending on her "bodily reactions" and circumstances. Specifically, such a concept can be seen when Y.T. is facing Clints and has sexual thoughts about Hiro, but then she assumes that "she'd have to take out the dentata, and this isn't the place" (105). Kristeva explains that the location of the abject "lies outside" and is "radically excluded" from the place of the living body. Similarly, the dentata is located in Y.T.'s hybrid body only. Kristeva adds that the "abject" means that which "disturbs identity, system, order" and will not "respect borders, positions, rules" (4). Y.T.'s dentata has the ability to disrupt order, specifically the order established in the Raft, by tarnishing Raven's superiority and putting him in deep "sleep for at least four hours" (438). Indirectly, Y.T.'s dentata gives her the potential to reverse positions and elevates her to a superior status.

Y.T.'s dentata appears as the "abject," able to disturb orders and able, as well, to protect her body. As Kristeva explains, the abject "disturbs identity, system, order" (4) by acting as "repellent and repelled" (6) able to preserve a "clean self" or body and able to separate the self

from any source that threatens the self. For example, the body demonstrates a disruption in its system when ejecting waste, urine, or blood as a way to continue living and be protected. In the same way, Y.T.'s dentata is capable of disrupting males' superior identity by repelling sexual penetration and eliminates her fear of being sexually abused. It also helps Y.T. preserve her "clean self" a reference to the protection of her independent identity from rape and from being attached to any constraining male relatedness.

Moreover, Y.T.'s dentata paves the way for her to freely reject and, sometimes unwillingly, betray males. Her ability, through the dentata, to deceive Raven relates to Kristeva's idea of abjection in a religious aspect, as the abjection of the sin of feminine temptation in the story of the Garden of Eden, as man "is torn by covetous desire: desire for woman" while the woman had already consumed the forbidden fruit or apple, so "He must protect himself from that sinful food that consumes him and that he craves" (127). In the case of Raven, his sinful condition is falling under Y.T.'s dentata, which makes him sleep, helping her escape the Raft. In the context of Kristeva's notion of "the abject," Y.T.'s dentata can be seen as the abject of the male's phallus. Y.T. is able, with a small hypodermic needle in her dentata to trap the male's phallus and expel the trait of masculinity from his body. This shows how Y.T.'s dentata rectifies the representation of women as inferior sexual beings who are routinely raped and repressed. Her hybridity posits Y.T. as the digital "New Woman," able to recreate superior representations of women even in sexual settings. In addition, linking Y.T.'s dentata to Kristeva's concept of the "abject" shows that the blend of liminality and hybridity also integrates feminist theories to the digital scene.

Furthermore, as Y.T.'s dentata reforms women's inferior sexual portrayal and *re-presents* the abjection of the male's phallus, her hybridity is also related to Freud's concept of the *vagina dentata*. To Freud, women are seen as castrated and in a state of envy of the male's penis, and representations of woman as "a being who frightens and repels because she is castrated" (274) evolved through different images. One of the most prominent examples is the picture of the "Medusa's head," a representation of the hair on the female genitalia in the form of snakes. Another example is the representation of the virgin goddess Athena, who "displays the terrifying genitals of the Mother" and is known for repelling all sexual desires (274). In different representations, the female genitalia became illustrated as *vagina dentata* or "toothed vagina," a trap or a black hole which swallows the penis or cuts it into pieces, again because of envy. Even in medical fields, a Hungarian doctor advocated that a doctor must wash his hands at the touch of the feminine genitalia, as a prevention from a "puerperal fever" which causes death and decay (Kristeva 159). The female genitalia became a representation of panic hallucination.

Y.T.'s dentata reflects the Freudian representation of the Medusa's head, as her toothed dentata symbolically becomes the snake which poisons Raven's phallus by trapping it, paralyzing it, and finally expelling it. This is also linked to the Freudian notion of the terror of castration that a boy feels at the sight of the female genitalia. Raven can be figuratively seen as a terrified boy, since Y.T.'s dentata unexpectedly awakens in him the fear of castration once he feels the repulsion of his phallus. Y.T., like the virgin goddess Athena, terrifies her surroundings and repels unwanted male sexuality.

However, Y.T.'s dentata negates Freud's claim that women are castrated or experience envy. Through her hybrid body, Y.T. takes on the position of the castrator. Even though she is attracted to Raven, Y.T. does not remove her dentata to engage in sexual intercourse because she's well aware of her intentions behind this engagement with Raven. In the middle of the Raft, away from her normal life, Y.T. could have opened the way for sexual enjoyment, but she didn't. This shows that through her dentata, she repositions and reforms the inferior cultural images ascribed to women as castrated or yearning for the male sexual organ. Specifically with Raven, Y.T. admits her attraction, thus altering the Freudian image of women as envious and lacking. Y.T.'s pre-liminal hybrid image sets her as the digital "New Woman," resisting sexual repression and redressing inferior theoretical representations of women.

As Y.T.'s pre-liminal hybridity paves the way for resisting sexual repression and reforming inferior related portrayals, her representation, figuratively, rewrites an emancipatory discourse about the image of women. Hélène Cixous' (1975) *Laugh of the Medusa* is here relevant, since she believes that "[w]oman must write herself . . . as there are no grounds for establishing a discourse, but rather an arid millennial ground to break . . . to project" (875). Similarly, in the case of Y.T., her pre-liminal hybridity projects an emancipatory discourse, one that blurs cultural and social binaries. The attributes projected by Y.T.'s hybrid body reflect Cixous' conviction that "it is time to liberate the "New Woman" from the Old by coming to know her—by loving her for getting by, for getting beyond the Old without delay" (878). Y.T.'s powerful physicality, mental capabilities, and the effect of her hidden dentata highlight a feminine image which was still kept on the dark side and under the enormity of repression; she reinstates the concept of the "New

Woman” in the current digital setting, and shifts women’s representation towards more openness, defying stultified gendered roles.

Indeed, the representation of Y.T.’s *dentata* rewrites the discourse around sexuality. As Cixous explains in the context of her concept of *écriture féminine*, “there has not yet been any writing that inscribes femininity; exceptions, so rare” (878) and “writing has been run by a libidinal and cultural—hence political, typically masculine—economy” (879). Y.T.’s *dentata* draws a different image and stands as an “invention of a new insurgent writing” (880). Through her abjection of the male’s sexual drives, Y.T. inscribes a new mode of thinking, completely different from that of libidinal writing. She is represented as a force and sets an end to the phallic period which was used to mute women’s bodies before. Y.T.’s figurative creation of an emancipatory discourse around women’s sexual image presents her pre-liminal hybridity as the digital “New Woman” able to transform women’s representation and target patriarchal premises.

Additionally, as Y.T.’s pre-liminal hybridity creates a contemporary feminist sexual discourse, it also indirectly highlights the linguistic order of symbols. As Cixous argues, linguistics still conceptualizes symbols based on images of “the inevitable man-with-rock, standing erect in his old Freudian realm” or on Lacan’s “sanctuary phallos sheltered from castration lack” (884). Cixous explains that such conceptualizations frame the woman as a symbol, a signifier, and a reference only “within the discourse of man” (887). By writing new discourses about sexuality, women are able to extricate themselves from their misplacement in the symbolic order of linguistics and invent a language which would never diminish or stifle the female presence.

linguistic terms maneuver signs of sexual difference. Representations of male subjects are labeled without any direct reference to their sex, for example “‘A pupil has been punished with compulsory detention for a month; A girl has been reprimanded’ or ‘A company director, a lathe-operator, a croupier and a woman’” (Cavallaro 74). Such examples show that linguistic terms refer to women based on their femaleness, withdrawing gender-neutral terms. Moreover, patriarchal forms of signification in language continue with binary oppositions; the hierarchy is mirrored in setting the word “female” with synonyms such as “dark, bad” (76), and so on. Terms in binary oppositions appear judgmental and evaluative, showing that words related to women and females are classified with synonyms with bad connotations. This confirms how language demonizes femininity, privileges terms related to males, and deploys patriarchy.

Therefore, in relation to Cixous, as Y.T.’s pre-liminal hybrid figure creates a different discourse of sexuality away from phallogocentric traditions, she is symbolically writing a new language. Through displaying her independent personality, powerful physicality, and potent dentata, Y.T. eliminates the classification of women’s image under specific bad connotations in the linguistic order. The blend of Y.T.’s hybridity and liminality creates a new vocabulary of positive lexical terms. This is seen when Y.T. states that her initials stand for “Young, fast, and female” (189); she intends to produce specific lexical words for women’s representation without inferior and hierarchical significations.

Moreover, as Cixous encourages females to write in order to change the phallic mystification and divorce women’s representation from patriarchy, she also believes in the power of “woman for women” or woman writing for another woman; saying that such writing creates “a

force that will not be cut off but will knock the wind out of the codes” (882). Cixous’ idea of writing “woman for women” can be directly seen in Y.T.’s pre-liminal hybrid representation and her relationship with her mother. As mentioned above, Y.T.’s presents the image of a powerful and independent woman, demonstrating a stable lifestyle in reality and a powerful image in the Metaverse. After her dad’s departure, Y.T.’s mother “just folded up into herself like an origami bird thrown into a fire” (372). For that reason, Y.T. “thinks maybe the whole thing” (372), of being the independent and powerful women, will be good for her mother and will make her proud. This relates to Cixous’ idea of writing “woman for women,” as Y.T. becomes, in Cixous’ terms, the image of a woman “who makes everything all right, who nourishes, and who stands up against separation” (Cixous 882). Her pre-liminal hybrid portrayal turns into a feminist discourse for women capable of standing for themselves, despite challenges and misery. Since she never hints about missing her dad, feeling frail or incomplete, Y.T. symbolically writes, through her hybrid body, to her mother in order to make her happy and proud. Thus, Y.T. continues, as mentioned previously by Cixous, “to liberate the New Woman from the Old” (878).

In conclusion, throughout this chapter, linking Y.T.’s hybridity to the characteristics of pre-liminality frames her as the digital “New Woman.” Through portraying her superior physical and mental capabilities, in comparison to male figures, Y.T. eliminates predefined cultural and traditional notions of women as physically and mentally incapable. Y.T. also symbolically reforms women’s inferior sexual demonstrations, creates a liberated contemporary sexual discourse, rearranges women’s representation in the linguistic order, and directly writes for women to stand for themselves. Y.T. proves that she is able to fulfill difficult and dangerous missions, deceive

males, prove her superiority, and symbolically write, through her body, a series of achievements for her mother, she decides to “call Mom for a ride home” (516) and goes back to real life, claiming “Yeah, home seems about right” (533). Going back home shows that her stage of pre-liminality is far from the liminal, but equally far from the stereotypical representations of females in classical science-fiction documented in the introduction to this thesis. Her hybridity does not lead her to complete transformation, since the Metaverse appears as an interference stage in her teenage life. Yet, she is able, through the merge of pre-liminality and hybridity portrayed in the novel, to present the digital “New Woman.” Despite the fact that Y.T.’s hybrid portrayal represents the physicality of a teenager, implying her undeveloped body as a woman, she uses her dentata for projecting concepts of the “New Woman”, pushing the representation of women’s body into more openness and neutralization, extracted from labels of differentiations and inferiority. Conjuring up a superior sexual image of her body, through her intercourse with Raven specifically, configures the way Y.T. makes use of her hybridity and removable inclined dentata to, symbolically, liberate women’s images from cultural preconceptions of sexual passivity, fear, and envy. Moreover, as Y.T. illustrates a teenage relationship with her boyfriend, outside the Metaverse, and never hints for getting or being pregnant, shows her sexual control, even when the dentata is removed from her body, proving her use of hybridity for feminist targets of empowerment, relating to Haraway’s belief in the cyborg’s influential role in reinventing a different nature for women’s cultural and sexual portrayals.

It is also interesting to highlight the fact that Y.T. appears as the only hybrid figure resembling the eponymous virus *Snow Crash*. This connection further highlights the blend of

hybridity and pre-liminality in Y.T.'s image, and firmly frames her as a powerful, digital "New Woman." The drug, *Snow Crash*, conveys the characteristics of pre-liminality specifically, throughout its mode of activation. The instructions written on the drug, "Tear this card in half to release your free sample" (82) imply that its effect leads somewhere out of the virtual space where it is distributed and consumed. In other words, once Da5id takes the drug, he is "thrown out," and his system crashes, implying that *Snow Crash* isn't only part of the virtual space. The drug can move, live, and switch between two different worlds, and its impact can effectively transform the location of the user. The unstable motion of the drug proves that *Snow Crash* is considered a pre-liminal icon, unable to be set and attached to virtuality only. Y.T.'s pre-liminal hybrid portrayal in a way resembles that of the drug *Snow Crash*, since the hybridity of both appears unattached completely to the Metaverse. Moreover, *Snow Crash* is the only figure capable of destroying the users' system in virtuality and obstructing their way of enjoying freedom in the Metaverse. Similarly, Y.T. is the only female hybrid figure able to crash the users' system through her dentata, as mentioned previously.

It is true that there are other female characters in *Snow Crash* that merit investigation in the context of the liminal, such as Juanita, whose hybridity appears to be different from that of Y.T. the former remains physically attached to the Metaverse, rarely shifting to the real world because she does not have family ties. After Juanita's progression as a "a neurolinguistics hacker" (492), she becomes fully attached to the Metaverse. Yet, Juanita experiences mental shifts to reality, and recalls the memory of getting pregnant at the age of fifteen, and being saved from that situation by her grandmother; she also shifts back to her real-world religious beliefs. In one event,

Juanita interrupts Hiro by saying “You’re a religious person yourself” (231), to which he asks her: “Do you believe in God or not?” She answers: “Definitely” (232). Juanita, more than Y.T., lives in the *in-betweenness* of two worlds but for very brief moments, when the deepest parts of her psyche intrude to bring back, in a flash, past memories of pain and betrayal, or moments of spiritual hope. If Y.T. knows about the Metaverse but prefers to stay, as a robust and confident “New Woman,” in the real world, Stephenson’s portrayal of Juanita as stepping further into the liminal realm of a constructed Metaverse ushers possibilities of full bodily hybridity and augmentations which I will explore in the following chapter.

Chapter II. Liminality and Vision

A. Molly, Y.T., and Juanita

The promotion of feminism continued in science-fiction through the increased hybridity of women's representations as illustrated in Molly's hybrid image in *Neuromancer* by William Gibson. Molly, the main female protagonist, shows great capabilities through her hybrid body, one can draw a relation between Molly's representation and that of Y.T. and Juanita in *Snow Crash*. As mentioned previously, Y.T.'s hybrid body appears to be in the first phase of hybridity, or in a pre-liminal stage, since she shifts physically between two spaces, the real world and the Metaverse, but her body is unchanged and she ultimately prefers the real world. Juanita, however, is closer to reaching hybridity since she shifts back to reality mainly through her memories. Thus, Juanita's state of hybridity, minus the bodily enhancements, appears to be closer to that of Molly in *Neuromancer*, whose hybrid image is the main concern of this chapter.

Women's hybrid representations in *Snow Crash* and *Neuromancer* demonstrate the progression into more hybridity and more bodily augmentations by shifting from the pre-liminality stage with Y.T. to the liminality stage with Molly, the characteristics of which will be explored in this chapter. Additionally, by tracing this progression of women's hybrid representation from pre-liminal to liminal, one can trace how the physical attachment to reality with Y.T. progresses towards mainly a mental relatedness to the real world with Molly. In this chapter, I will concentrate on the way Molly's hybrid representation appears in a liminal state where physical attachment to the real world decreases. I will also elucidate the ways in which her hybrid image in a liminal state touches upon the spectrum of feminist theory. Similarly to Y.T., but in a more advanced and, one

can say, more radical manner, Molly presents, through the merge of her hybridity and liminality, concepts and features of the “New Woman.”

B. Molly’s Hybrid Body

Before illustrating Molly’s full state of hybridity, it is essential first to show the characteristics of her powerful hybrid body, which consists of a costume of a “black jacket,” “sleeveless gray pullover with plain steel zips” (38), and “leather jeans” (41); her facial and bodily features are “dark hair cut in a rough shag” (36), “white fingers . . . with a four-centimeter scalpel blades . . . beneath the burgundy nails” (37), “implanted lenses” (45), and “a thin black child with wooden beads and antique resistors woven tightly into her hair” (90). After undergoing technological changes, Molly’s bodily augmentations are built into her body, unlike Y.T. and Juanita. This shows a more complete attachment to the virtual space, as the augmentations cannot be removed, and her body cannot go back to its previous, “normal” configuration in real life.

Additionally, Molly demonstrates a powerful physicality. Using the blades on her fingers, “Molly’s flechettes, at twenty rounds per second” (52) can defend her against any attacker, like when she injured Terzibashjian and “most of his middle finger was missing” (115). Molly’s stance allows her to always be ready to attack: “She rocked back on her heels and rubbed her palm together, cracked her knuckles” (209) prepared to injure and sometimes kill her assailants. Moreover, Molly’s physicality allows her to endure and handle pain by injecting herself with “six thousand micrograms of endorphin” that “came down on the pain like a hammer, shattering it” (83). In other places, “[h]er leg seemed to be bothering her, and she seldom spoke” (90) and “she gritted her teeth at the stabbing pain in her leg as she began to climb” (227).

Molly demonstrates, throughout the novel, her mental capabilities by intelligently planning to overcome obstacles. She always states “I wanna know why” (11) and finds solutions to every situation. When stuck in the Straylight Villa, Molly demonstrates her intelligence by dealing with the situation cautiously, witness Case’s description of her actions while she is entering passages and finding a way to escape, saying “she had to kneel to examine . . . [she] must have read it correctly” (251); when in danger, she “carefully regulated her breathing” (247) and “she wasn’t lost” (249). Molly’s physical and mental capabilities relate directly to Y.T.’s pre-liminal hybridity, for the latter paves the path to the “New Woman” in defying traditional and cultural notions of women’s inferiority; Molly continues Y.T.’s path, further framing a more radical digital “New Woman.”

Throughout the plot, Molly reveals confidence and toughness; she is always ready to attack, plan, and even give orders. Her self-confidence can be seen as she rules and commands her surroundings to act, such as when she employs a medical team (90) or when she gives instructions to Case, or when she undervalues others, specifically men. Several instances reveal this type of confidence: when “Case turned on the foam and Molly cursed him softly for disturbing her” (105); when she told the Armenian “You’re an asshole” (115); when she slaps Riviera and tells him “I’ll hurt you real bad” (125). Molly the “razorgirl” does not tolerate being underestimated, for when she appears, “people melted out of her way, stepped sideways, made room” (72). Her hybrid body helps her control her surroundings, pushing all, especially males, as they become “the passenger behind her eyes” (72). Portraying Molly as the independent and powerful digital “New Woman” also highlights her superiority, specifically in comparison to other male figures in the plot.

C. Molly and Other Males

Indeed, despite the fact that the plot mainly focuses on Case as he is considered the main target by AIs Wintermute and Neuromancer in the matrix, Molly's hybrid representation appears to be more superior than his in most events. In the first scenes, she appears as Case's savior as he is in a state of loss and confusion with the memory of Linda Lee. She explains his current situation to him, saying that "[we invented you in Siberia, Case . . . I was there when they invented your kind" (39). From that moment, if Molly disconnects the "simstim rig" (295) from him, Case feels that "fear began to knot between his shoulders" and even "Hot tears blurred his vision" (51), as he is hovering anxiously in the virtual space and searching for her. He follows her everywhere, "keying back into her sensorium, into the sinuous flow of muscles, senses sharp and bright" (72). Case's portrayal, as he continuously follows Molly, parallels that of Hiro in *Snow Crash*. Both male characters appear to be reliant on and supported by women's hybrid capabilities. As Hiro depends on Y.T., specifically in delivering the pizza and overcoming dangers, Case similarly needs Molly to guide his way and actions in cyberspace. In the same way that Y.T. appears more capable than Hiro, specifically in her powerful appearance and relatedness to both spaces, the Metaverse and reality, Molly also displays superiority to Case in major situations. In difficult situation, Molly proves to be a stronger fighter than Case, to the point that even Finn admits to Case that they should "[o]bserve the protocol. Ask the boss," the "boss" being Molly (108). When Wintermute calls and teases Case by playing psychedelic tricks on him, specifically when Molly is not besides him, Case just hangs up (121), for he feels unable to face danger without her. When Case is attacked by Michelle and Roland, Molly shows up suddenly and saves him, killing them all (196). Molly is

thus portrayed as a powerful independent woman, superior to Case. She is frequently helping him and saving him, and he even admits to her “you’re the only good change come down since I signed on with Armitage” (226). It is not until the final scene, when Molly retrieves the key and Case reunites Wintermute with Neuromancer, that he feels able to disconnect from her as he throws the shuriken, a souvenir from her, and moves to a different journey with another girl named Michael.

Molly’s hybrid body also paints her as a powerful independent woman especially in comparison with other male figures like Armitage, as she is able to influence him despite the fact that he is supposedly holding a leadership position as the mission chief. With confidence and toughness, she mocks Armitage, in some situations, like when she says “What does the bastard want?” (105). With her powerful personality, Molly is even able to influence Armitage’s decisions, specifically when she persuades him to hire Finn, and displays independence when she tells Case that she can easily disconnect from Armitage even if he has hired her. Molly also shows her powerful and independent features with Riviera projects, her naked body coupled with his in front of everyone, after which she remembers how she used to be a sexual puppet in the real world. Despite Riviera’s constant attempts at demonizing Molly, he finally admits that “[s]he’s extremely dangerous. Too dangerous” (264). This confirms Riviera’s fear and attentiveness when she is around him; the examples above show Molly’s power and fascination over male figures.

Such comparison shows that Molly’s hybridity repositions cultural and gender differences and challenges stultified gender roles. Molly continues the path upon which Y.T. started in presenting the digital “New Woman,” as she pushes women’s representation into more openness. Both hybrid images move women’s representation from the stereotypical setup of romance and

intimacy, to portray women's new bodies strengthened by powerful physical and mental capabilities along with confident personalities and independent mindsets.

Moreover, through her hybrid body, Molly also portrays independence in sexual scenarios. After Case restores his nervous system during surgery and wakes up, he surprisingly finds Molly next to him and asks her why she stayed, to which “[s]he answered him by reaching back, between his thighs . . . she rocked there for a minute in the dark, erect above him, her other hand on his neck” (45). Molly's position, “above him,” highlights how her representation, even during sexual intercourse, defies stereotypical portrayals of women in a submissive position “below.” As the two share affectionate moments together, Molly acts as the dominant figure and the instigator of sexual intimacy. In such situations, Molly demonstrates through her hybrid body the figure of the independent woman liberated from cultural expectations which restrict women's sexual freedom. Her hybrid body, with the liberty provided in virtual space, reveal that she is able to engage sexually at her will, and can appear “naked [but] just out of reach” (57) if she wishes to. Molly's hybridity frames her as a radical digital “New Woman,” completely liberated from cultural norms which set women as sexually, intellectually, and physically inferior to the opposite sex. By challenging traditional binaries, she builds a new social space for female embodiment released from devaluation and differentiation.

D. Independent Women and Feminist Issues in the Liminal State

Furthermore, Molly promotes feminist issues and features of the “New Woman” even through her state of liminality. Her hybrid portrayal shows the characteristics of liminality, exceeding those of Y.T.'s pre-liminal hybrid portrayal. Molly kicks-off her journey with Case and

shows complete physical attachment to her hybrid identity. Unlike Y.T., she never physically shifts to reality or physically live between two spaces. Even more, she does not mention her reasons for escaping reality and becoming technologically augmented. This relates directly to the concept of liminality by van Gennep (1909) who describes that in such a stage, the individual undergoes complete transition from one state to another (3). However, as events progress, Molly reveals moments of mental shifting to her past life, showing sporadic mental disconnection from her hybrid identity and life in cyberspace. Gibson, in *Neuromancer*, describes cyberspace as “[a] consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation . . . A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity” (67). Such a description is linked to Molly’s life in cyberspace, where she lives in the fantasy of being the digital “New Woman” able to physically conquer spaces. Unexpectedly, mental shifts to her past life outside cyberspace take Molly away from her lived fantasy and back to tough memories.

Here are some of Molly’s mental shifts to her past life outside the virtual space: When Riviera projects holographs of Molly in sexual scenes with him: Molly’s memory flashes back to the past. and “[h]er face was blank” (168) as she is not able to handle the projection of the scenes which triggered memories from her life in reality. She later admits to Case that “she was starting to remember” (178) the “puppet time” (177), the “routine with a customer,” and the “bad dreams” of being obliged to be a prostitute because of poverty. In this situation, Molly proves her momentary detachment from her hybrid body as she mentally shifts back to reality and past events. In this situation, her state relates to Victor Turner’s description of liminality as a process of

transformation in which the liminal persona stands in a “betwixt and between” state (95). She lives a momentary state of mental confusion, a “betwixt” between her current life now, as Molly the hybrid female, and her life before as a “meat puppet.”

Molly’s liminality-as-memory also appears when she tells Case about her past relationship with Johnny, her true love: “My Johnny . . . I was real happy . . . He was my boy. We worked together. Partners” (210), remembering their relationship and his tragic death. This moment shows the way Molly hides memories which can never vanish from her mind, relating her to Turner’s description of the liminal persona’s structural invisibility which embeds a “twofold character” (95). This embedding shows how the person holds on to previous thoughts or beliefs from his/her past life and is unable to get detached from them, even while undergoing the process of transition. Similarly, Molly through her hybrid representation demonstrates twofold character, Molly in the real world and Molly in cyberspace. In these two situations, Molly experiences a mental flux between past events and current actions. Her state of hybridity stands in a liminal phase, as she momentarily detaches herself from her hybrid body by shifting back to memories in reality and remembering life before her technological augmentations. To further borrow from Victor Turner’s concepts about liminality, “the liminal persona,” the “threshold people” (95) stand at the margin or threshold of transition, so they appear in a middle location, and they are not classified as belonging to the past life anymore but not yet considered part of the currently lived situation. Similarly, Molly’s hybridity makes her stand in the middle, between past life in reality and current life in cyberspace.

Focusing on memory and mental fluctuation to show Molly's liminal state of hybridity addresses feminist issues. Remembering the past agonizes and weakens Molly. In comparison to Y.T.'s pre-liminal portrayal and female steampunk representations which will be discussed in the next chapter, Molly is the only female whose memory brings her suffering. Flashing back to specific tragic events of loss and powerlessness, Molly's hybridity shows that women need, in specific situations, social policies for personal safety. Her memory takes her back to moments of yearning for social protection in the face of injustice and poverty.

When she first recalls her memories, Molly admits that she worked as a "meat puppet" and was unsatisfied with her condition since she needed the money to pay for her body augmentations. Also, Molly confesses that she only experienced happiness with Johnny and expresses her misery over losing him. Both situations reveal the reasons she escaped from reality as she was subjected to tough societal conditions and unwanted sexual encounters. Undergoing technological augmentations and owning a new hybrid identity allows Molly to physically escape cultural and social boundaries. Despite the fact that she still shifts back to memories in reality, she never shows any hints of yearning to reattach herself physically to her past life.

Figuratively, Molly's physical escape from cultural and social boundaries restates the agenda of nineteenth-century Cultural Feminists. Back then, feminists raised social awareness around the idea that "feminine qualities may be a source of personal strength and pride and a fount of public regeneration" (Donovan 47). Once such cultural view is embraced, social and cultural benefits will be freely opened to woman as to man, allowing women more self-reliance and protection. The particular consciousness, epistemology, and ethics which positioned women in an

inferior social position were highlighted by the Cultural Feminists and plotted through literary representation, like the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft mentioned above.

Molly's liminality and mental relatedness to past tragedy relocates such feminist issues of cultural differences through fiction. She echoes feminists' writings and the voices of rebellion, like Sarah Grimké who argued for women's social and cultural protection. Thus, tracing Molly's liminality and how it promotes feminist views highlight the ways she foregrounds features of the "New Woman." Indeed, Molly hints at her past to show how her hybridity helps her become a powerful and independent digital "New Woman," as she is now able to change her destiny and resist boundaries which might limit her existence or action. In the middle of the lived fantasy in cyberspace, Molly's representation reveals the Cultural Feminists' dream of envisioning women away from patriarchy in workplaces, political institutions, and social communities. Woman is no longer the labeled prostitute or the restless lover, unable to change her destiny; reality is no longer shaping her existence and productivity.

From this point of view, Molly's representation also relates to Turner's ideas of liminality and *communitas*, or a community "in which . . . groups or categories of persons who habitually occupy low status positions in the social structure are positively enjoined to exercise ritual authority" (167) throughout the transition process. Similarly, cyberspace becomes for Molly a site where she enjoys authority and independence. Alongside exhibiting the features of the "New Woman," Molly shows that combining hybridity and liminality helps rewrite the feminist agenda.

Molly's hybridity and liminality are also linked to Homi Bhabha's notion of a "third space," "a space of enunciation" where ways of "becoming" rather than only "being" are made

possible, as “new structures of authority” are set up (211). Throughout Molly’s mirroring of the Cultural Feminists’ perception and features of the “New Woman,” she builds a space of feminist enunciation. By recalling the memory of working as a “meat puppet” in order to save money, get her augmentations, and escape the cruelty of society which always undermined her and stole her happiness with Johnny, Molly’s plight is that of females throughout history. Through her liminal hybrid portrayal, Molly eliminates social and cultural boundaries which expect women to be living under the straddles of patriarchy and never be independent. She is bringing her hybridity and liminality together as a tool to carve a new “third” space in cyberspace for transforming and “becoming” able to defend herself against social differentiation.

Furthermore, in comparison to other male figures, especially Case, she reveals more personal events about her past life that are poignantly reminiscent of the history of female oppression in patriarchal societies. Despite the fact that Case reveals his yearning for Linda Lee, who appears later as part of the matrix in cyberspace, he still does not share any specific past event about his life in reality. It is only Molly who is shown fighting her inner demons and attempting to come to terms with them as a portrayal of an empowered female and a feminist icon, continuing the path of Y.T. in representing the digital “New Woman.”

E. Molly and Baudrillard’s Simulacra and Simulation

Molly’s hybridity in a liminal state, which aids her transition into a better life in cyberspace and demonstrates a definite feminist goal, relates to Jean Baudrillard’s theories of “hyperreality” in *Simulacra and Simulation*. Baudrillard believes that our current reality and society have become replaced with images or “simulacra,” defined as “the generation by models of a real without origin

or reality: a hyperreal” (1). Consequently, society becomes mainly concerned with the precession, production, and consumption of simulacra, which in turn leads to an era of hyperreality and spaces, both private and public, loaded with “models of simulation” and an “imaginary of representations” (2). As Baudrillard tracks the fundamental role of signs and images in controlling our reality, he also believes that this hyperreality created through simulacra no longer relates to previous notions of origins or truth. There “is no longer a question of either maps or territories” and “no more mirror of being and appearances, of the real and its concepts” (2). When the distinction between the real and the virtual collapses, reality is considered a hyperreality, one that is actually produced from “miniaturized cells, matrices, and memory banks” (2) and can be recreated infinitely. Using Baudrillard’s concept that virtual images are creating our reality, Molly’s hybrid image can be seen as an influential representation of a new feminist space informed by the new era of advanced technologies of virtuality and simulations.

Using Baudrillard’s terms, Molly’s hybrid image in this age of hyperreality carves a new space for feminism. Since reality has become a representation of images and no longer relates to traditional approaches linked to mimesis (imitation) and realism, Molly’s hybridity creates, in turn, a new feminist reality. Relating her image to Baudrillard’s description of the present reality, Molly’s hybrid image is considered a collection of “simulacra” carving one or more “simulations”; her image represents a generation of models unrelated to traditional approaches of identity politics and notions of subjectivity; an image or simulacrum that collapses limits between cyberspace and reality, generating a new feminist space where women can be equal and even superior to men in the social and cultural spheres. Demonstrating superior physical and sexual traits in comparison to

male figures makes her hybrid image, or simulacrum, the digital counterpart or, better, the continuation of the “New Woman,” eliminating the traditional straddles of patriarchy.

Baudrillard also adds that reproducing a different reality through “simulacra” or images opens up aspects of sexual practices. Baudrillard explains that when the simulation of images replaces the relationship between reality and representation, and when limits plus references are completely eluded, the representation of the body also changes. Images of the body become visualized as a “shining sign of sexuality without a referential and without limits” (111). Since, in Baudrillard’s terms, Molly’s hybrid image is considered a simulacrum and a “model of simulation” eluding limits between cyberspace and reality, the representation of her body breaks out of cultural and social references or boundaries. Likewise, and as mentioned previously, specifically through her sexual encounters with Case, Molly reveals the image of an independent woman able to reverse stereotypical sexual images that portray women as passive vessels.

Molly’s representation through Baudrillard’s lens is also related to Y.T.’s vaginal dentata. Both hybrid representations continue each other’s path in representing features of the digital “New Woman,” as they are both specifically against sexual repression, and reform erotic images of females. As mentioned in chapter one, Y.T. negates the Freudian image of the toothed dentata and fear of castration through her vaginal dentata. Here again, Molly’s hybrid image, in relation to Baudrillard’s theory, presents her body in a sexual frame: “No affect behind all that, no psychology, no flux or desire, no libido or death drive” (112). Molly’s hybridity moves women’s embodiment away from sexual devaluation and more into a neutral space liberated from cultural differentiation and classification.

F. Molly's Liminality and the Male Gaze

Indeed, as Molly's hybrid liminal image generates a space for change and possibilities, she creates a contemporary gaze, a new vision where females are seen as powerful and are no longer placed in opposition to, or viewed as a negation or a continuation of, the male. Molly's participation in the creation of the contemporary gaze can be traced through the novel: she not only helps create this contemporary gaze, she also controls it. In addition to her powerful physicality, Molly's vision-enhancing, eye-augmentation lenses provide her with the unique ability to control how she is perceived and gazed at. As Case describes Molly, "He realized that the glasses were surgically inset . . . [t]he silver lenses seemed to grow from smooth pale skin above her cheekbones" (36), allowing her to see well in the dark. Also, Molly's enhanced lenses help her to hide her reactions; she never shows or expresses feelings of fear, happiness, or sadness through her eyes. Case constantly describes her blank eyes: "There were dark circles under her eyes, but even with the cast on, it was like watching a dance. No wasted motion" (105), and her lenses "were empty quicksilver, regarding him with an insect calm" (41). Only when danger approaches and she readies herself to attack, do her eyes show focus on the attacker and her surroundings: "her eyes locked on the circling knives" (51), "[r]eflected colors flowed across Molly's eyes as the men circled" (50), and her eyes were "dull with rage" (151). Additionally, her mirrored-lens eyes do not even show if she is awake or sleeping. When Case tells her "'Wake up, baby,'" she answers, "I've been waking an hour already" (109). In another instance, "He left without waking Molly, he thought. He was never sure, with the glasses" (160). Case curiously asks Molly, "How do you cry, Molly? I see your eyes walled away," and Molly answers "I don't cry,

much . . . I spit” (219). Thus Molly’s mirroring lenses act as a mask which shields her face from expressing inner feelings or exposing her frail states or personal intentions.

The representation of Molly’s mirroring eyes reverses hackneyed images of portraying women’s eyes as the main indicator of their inner feelings, like in Jane Austen’s *Emma* (1815) and Margaret Atwood’s *Cat’s Eye* (1988). Molly shows, through her technologically augmented eyes, that women’s eyes do not always express their passiveness, sadness, or even happiness. As previously mentioned, Molly does not cry, she “spits.” She does not want her eyes to be a site of expression or to be relocating cultural or social differences through her gaze.

Also, Molly’s technologically enhanced eyes provide her with the freedom to choose when to express feelings. As Molly’s lenses never mirror her inner sadness or even weakness, her eyes always appear incurious or blank, further highlighting her powerful physicality and toughness. Even Case admits, after being so close to Molly, that nothing “had even indicated that she had a past” (213). In addition to the fact that throughout the plot she never talks to him about past memories, he was also unsuccessful in detecting, through her eyes, anything personal about her past life; Her eyes never provide him with hints that can help him relate to or assume that she may have had a tough past, protecting herself from any undermining gaze. By controlling her eye-expressions, she is able, as well, to make Case engage with her emotions and logic, setting him in a state of continuous wonder about her mental states, rather than with her body.

Analyzing the mirroring lenses from a feminist perspective, one should not assume that Molly’s blank eyes and technological augmentations repress her feelings or intend to present her as passive. On the contrary, Molly’s mirroring lenses are a weapon she uses to protect herself from

others' subverting gaze which hangs up, like a bad dream, over her as she recalls how she was, before crossing into the liminal realm, undermined by the way others gazed at her as a "meat puppet." When Molly tells about Johnny's killer, she says: "he caught my eye . . . we just looked at each other . . . He looked at me" (212). The man's gaze indicates his rage and his readiness to hurt Molly, cause her agony, and kill her lover Johnny. In cyberspace, she is able to obstruct others' gaze upon her eyes, as the mirroring lenses protect her from exposing any look which might undermine and subjugate her.

Molly's augmented lenses, from a feminist aspect, relate her hybridity to Simone de Beauvoir's notions of the "Other." As mentioned in the introduction above, de Beauvoir, inspired by the traditions of existentialism, concentrates on the way the social "gaze" on the woman labels and positions her as inferior. The male patriarchal gaze assigns an identity to females, framing them with negative qualities and marking them as the "Other." Women are thus "defined and differentiated with reference to man; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential" (11). As Molly's augmented lenses help her control the male gaze upon her; she is indirectly eliminating the gaze of "otherness." The blend of her hybrid capabilities and liminal state shows that Molly is not "defined and differentiated with reference to" Case or other male figures in the plot. She eliminates the possibility of women being compared to or gazed at through men. Mirroring blank lenses that protect her from the male gaze, even during sexual intercourse, is also an instance of de Beauvoir's notion of the "otherness": because females are cast and gazed at in reference to males, they are considered by as a means of sexual enjoyment and fulfillment. Molly refusing that Case touch her eyes during sexual intercourse counters such stereotypical

sexual portrayals of passiveness and mortality: Case tries to touch her eyes as a way to gauge her sexual engagement or his expectation of her passiveness. However, Molly demonstrates her awareness and control, even if she is sexually enjoying intercourse with Case.

Additionally, Molly's mask-like eyes with an unflinching and expressionless look mark her control and show her double gaze, by which I mean that Molly has the ability to hide her feelings and never share looks with others; at the same time, she can permit males (only Case), to look through her eyes and, more importantly for the plot, to use her eyes as a screen connection when he "jacks in" to cyberspace; as she moves towards her mission waypoints, she provides Case with visual input without which he would be blind. Case's looking at new virtual spaces through Molly's eyes reverse stereotypical images of males gazing only onto female's physicality: her double gaze—she controls who sees her inner self and she controls who can use her sight to navigate cyberspace—creates a new way of conceiving women's representation by showing a male gazing through her and not at her. Thus, women's representation evolves from them being displayed for the gaze and enjoyment of men to becoming an active controller of the surrounding gazes.

However, despite the fact that Case is the only male figure who has the ability to jack in through Molly's eyes, she still does not allow him to touch them. Specifically, in the first sexual scene, "he touched her face. Unexpected hardness of the implanted lenses. 'Don't,' she said, 'fingerprints'" (45), forbidding him from touching her eyes during intimate moments so he cannot feel or see her sexual desire under the implanted lenses. Case can only feel Molly's sexual desire through "her breasts . . . small hard nipples" and through her "impaling herself, slipping down on

him again and again” (45), but he cannot detect in Molly’s eyes any signs of her sexual engagement. As Molly recounts her past memories of working as a “meat puppet” to Case, she mentions that her ability to recall memories is taken away from her during sexual intercourse. Accordingly, the passiveness and obligation she has been put through relates to Molly’s current refusal, post-body-augmentation, to share looks with any male figure during sexual intercourse and her unwillingness to accept the gaze of others during her presence in cyberspace. Similarly, Molly limits Case’s touch and sexual enjoyment, taking into consideration that some men may get sexual fulfillment from detecting the passiveness of a woman through her eyes. Drawing her blank eyes, throughout the plot, makes Molly create a contemporary gaze for women’s image, weaving, once again, with Y.T.’s figurative writing of a contemporary emancipatory discourse around women’s portrayal of sexuality and language. Thus, both female representations, as they shift from pre-liminality to liminality, continue each other’s path in promoting the digital “New Woman,” transforming the digital space into a breeding ground for demonstrating a contemporary image of women’s empowerment away from patriarchy. The amalgamation of these pre-liminal and liminal states of hybridity encourages inclusion and combines new feminist theoretical frameworks, relating more to Haraway’s description of the cyborg becoming “a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction”(148), erasing gender boundaries.

G. Molly’s Liminality and Other Female Issues

There are other female hybrid characters in *Neuromancer* that touch upon feminist issues through their hybrid representation, such as Marie-France Tessier-Ashpool and her cloned daughter Lady 3Jane. As Molly explores the Straylight Villa, she exposes the patriarchal intricacies

found in the story of Lady 3Jane's parents Marie-France Tessier and John Ashpool. After Marie-France had helped her husband financially, he strangled her to death in front of her daughter Lady 3Jane. The presence of Marie-France persisted, even after her death, since she invented the twin AI, Wintermute and Neuromancer. Lady 3Jane explains to Molly that her mother constructed for them "a symbiotic relationship with the AIs, our corporate decisions made for us" where "Tessier-Ashpool would be immortal, a hive, each of us units of a larger entity" (271). John Ashpool, "a dedicated abuser," "couldn't accept the direction" (271) Marie-France intended for her family by inventing the AIs, so he killed her in front of Lady 3Jane, their daughter. He kills her because of his inability to accept that Marie-France, with her AI invention, is more powerful than him. However, killing Marie-France was not an effective move as the AIs stayed on even after her death; his imposition of the patriarchal power, as he had envisioned it, had failed. Wintermute and Neuromancer remain as the virtual legacy of Marie-France's universal dream of uniting opposites that "both represent the fruition of certain capacities" (272). The fact that Wintermute and Neuromancer survive both Marie-France and John is a witness to the power of female courage, resilience, and inventiveness even after death.

Molly, in the Straylight Villa, is ready to continue the path of Marie-France and eliminate the strictures of her husband's patriarchy. As the place of their residence is described, "Each space in Straylight is in some way secret, this endless series of chamber . . . where the eye is trapped in narrow curves, carried past ornate screens, empty alcoves" (206), and Molly appears as the eye who is gazing at the "carried past" of Marie-France's tough life with Ashpool. In other words, Molly stands alone in the villa facing Ashpool, and is able to intimidate him: "He spat on the carpet

near his one bare foot . . . He seemed to shiver. ‘Marie-France’s eyes,’ he said, faintly” (221). Molly, by killing Ashpool, is avenging Marie-France and also taking revenge for herself and for all the women oppressed by patriarchy and misogyny.

At the end, the joining of Molly, Lady 3Jane, and Marie-France’s representations fosters a powerful feminist bond. However, their states of hybridity are different from each other. As mentioned previously, Molly’s mental shifts to her tragic life outside cyberspace positions her hybridity in a liminal state, whereas Lady 3Jane’s and Marie-France’s states of hybridity appear to be more advanced than Molly’s, revealing a quasi-complete attachment to their virtual identity and never hinting to a life outside cyberspace. Yet Lady 3Jane and Marie-France, by basculating entirely into the virtual, miss the opportunity to make use of the lessons learned as they remain trapped in cyberspace. In the following chapter I will explore post-liminality, that state which follows the trajectory I am drawing in this thesis, namely, from pre-liminality to liminality to post-liminality, the last of which finds its best representation in steampunk fiction, and the accompanying expansion of the fourth feminist digital wave.

Chapter III. Post-liminality and Reintegration

A. The Line of Progression Between Female Hybrid Representations

The examination of Y.T. in *Snow Crash* and Molly in *Neuromancer* in the previous chapters highlighted the increasing progression of hybridity and liminality in female representations. In the first stage, Y.T. appears in a pre-liminal stage; she exhibits feminist tendencies of resisting males, specifically with her vaginal dentata, highlighting feminist physical, mental, and sexual forms of empowerment and engraving features of the “New Woman” in digital settings. However, Y.T.’s state of hybridity remains in a pre-liminal stage, as she physically shifts back and forth between reality and virtuality throughout the plot before settling on exclusively existing in reality with her mother. In the second stage, Molly, as a cyberpunk female, appears in a liminal stage, as she mentally shifts to her past memories and never yearns, throughout the entire plot, to be physically back to life in reality, portraying, like Y.T., the concept of the “New Woman” through her liminal hybrid image. In the third stage, the steampunk female exhibits an ever-increasing shift to hybridity by reaching the post-liminal reintegration stage, which is the main concern of this chapter. *Reintegration*, according to van Gennep (1960), stands for the state of getting back into *ordinary life* and reaching an advanced social position, completely different from the previous rank or status; it occurs only after undergoing the first stage of *separation* or the pre-liminal stage, and the second stage of *transition* or the liminal stage (44). Alongside discussing the post-liminal reintegration stage of female steampunk representations, I will relate them to the stages of Y.T.’s pre-liminality and Molly’s liminality, highlighting the fact that cyberpunk and steampunk female images follow a similar path in presenting the digital “New Woman.” Moreover,

I will show that the blend of hybridity and liminality helps cyberpunk and steampunk female representations strengthen the feminist ground, joining feminist views and theoretical frameworks under one umbrella. These hybrid images show the viability of post-humanity and the broadcasting of the Fourth Feminist Wave by presenting a progression from pre-liminality with Y.T., to liminality with Molly, reaching post-liminality with steampunk Victorian portrayals, first with Addie in “The Last Ride of the Glory Girls” and then with Aurelia in “Hand in Glove.”

B. Addie’s Post-Liminal Stage in “The Last Ride of the Glory Girls”

Before discussing female steampunk hybridity, it is important to present an overview of the characteristics of post-liminality. To van Gennep, the rites of transition include, as I mentioned earlier, three subcategories: the pre-liminal, or separation stage; the liminal, or transition stage; and the post-liminal, or reintegration stage. In the final stage, the post-liminal persona reaches an arrival stage towards completeness, since the preparatory or pre-liminal stage and the transition or liminal stage have already been gone through (11), with the post-liminal persona showing complete attachment to and incorporation into the new stage attained.

Throughout the plot of “The Last Ride of the Glory Girls,” Addie’s state of hybridity appears in the post-liminal stage, as she opens the novel with a personal tone: “How I ended up riding with the Glory Girls, the most notorious gang of all-girl outlaws, is a story on its own . . . I can’t tell the one without the other” (18), showing her intention of exposing the transitional stages of her life. In narrating her experiences, Addie shows how she passes through Van Gennep’s rites of transition until she reaches post-liminality.

Addie first appears in the stage of pre-liminality, or separation, when she is detached from her religious community. Spending her childhood in a restricted religious environment makes Addie develop anxiety over becoming sinful, living in the promise “to seal [her] covenant with the One God” (37). She doesn’t get a chance to experience a social life outside her religious community until she joins the Pinkertons. In this stage, Addie detaches herself from her everyday religious rituals and regulations and dives into a different community that looks like “a free world” (21) but never “let a girl do a man’s job” (23). Despite facing many hurdles, Addie proves her physical and mental capabilities by repairing watches and experiencing a different lifestyle away from religious restrictions.

Addie’s pre-liminal stage and ability to prove her capabilities in the middle of a male-centered workplace, the Pinkertons, relates to Y.T.’s pre-liminal hybrid image. As mentioned in chapter one, Y.T. illustrates powerful capabilities once she disconnects from her teenage life with her mother, defying traditional notions of women’s inferiority through her potent pre-liminal hybrid body, specifically in front of male figures. Similarly, once Addie separates herself from the religious community, reaches the Pinkertons, and steps into her pre-liminal stage, she kicks off her journey by challenging stultifying gendered roles that culturally frame women as ignorant and incapable.

Further, portraying Addie’s pre-liminal stage in a male-centered workplace also connects to the historical Kate Warne, pursuing her job as “America’s first female detective” in 1856 at the Pinkerton Detective Agency, knowing that “[p]rior to her being hired at the agency, women were relegated to secretarial duties at the company” (Enss Chapter 1). With her investigation and

observation skills, Warne impresses the Pinkertons, proving herself to be one of the finest agents. Similarly, Addie succeeds, like an engineer, in fixing weapons and even “the chief’s old pocket watch, which had been running three minutes slow for a year” (24). After that, Chief Coolidge gives her, disregarding other male workers, more difficult plans for a new code breaker (24), believing in her capability to achieve things and raise the Pinkertons’ accomplishments.

After settling in the Pinkerton’s company and exploring her new job with its different lifestyle, Addie reaches the liminal or transition stage. This dislocation from her past religious life is a completely new stage in which she is assigned the responsibility of fixing clocks in a male-dominated workplace; along feeling a gradual removal of religious barriers, Addie recounts living in a continuous mental fluctuation. She constantly shifts back to her past childhood life in the religious community, to the way her “life had been planned” (18), and to the memory of John Barks and his drowning in the river after he commits the “sin” of kissing her. Even when she begins working with the Pinkertons and gains the admiration of Chief Coolidge, her mind remains haunted by childhood memories of religious fear and persecution, as Addie continuously describes feeling “a sense of pride though [she] knew that were a sin” (32). In this stage, she mentally fluctuates between right and wrong, sin and saintliness, ability and inability.

Addie’s state of mental fluctuation relates to Molly’s liminal portrayal in chapter two, who was similarly oscillating between tough memories of reality and her actions in virtuality. Similar to Molly, Addie makes use of her liminal stage and mental fluctuation to expose women’s tough social conditions. Through the illustration of Addie’s mental flux between life in the Pinkertons and her religious beliefs, she notes: “Mam would’ve said I should let them win, that a woman

shining her light too bright was unnatural in the eyes of the One God” (22). Such religious belief makes Addie feel as if she’s committing a “sin,” leaving her guilty for experiencing superiority in a male-centered workplace., Addie, in this stage of liminality, highlights patriarchal ideologies of religion, echoing Feminists like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who believes “religion as one of the main forces that keep women subjugated” (Donovan 28).

After passing through continuous mental fluctuations, Addie takes the decision to leave the Pinkertons and starts her journey with the Glory Girls, reaching her post-liminal reintegration stage, “robbing trains and airships” (30), allowing her to experience liberation, eliminating cultural and religious restrictions. In reference to van Gennep, Addie has reached a post-liminal stage of “arrival” (27); for her, stepping in the post-liminal means attaining incorporation in the social system, making her own decisions without religious impositions and the Pinkertons’ regulations. In terms of Turner’s description, what is significant about the post-liminal stage is its relation to the social conventions (11): Addie, with the Glory Girls has, similarly, positioned herself in a social stance of eminence, completely attached to her present life, and has closed off ways of living in multiple identities. She has overcome her past fears and stopped the mental fluctuations between a past Addie who lived under religious imposition and one who was trying to prove her mental and physical capabilities with the Pinkertons. She shows a complete attachment to her hybrid identity, narrating her self-liberation as a move away from physical and mental connections to her past, remembering that “[she] had one life as a Believer and another as a Pinkerton” (41). Addie pinpoints the moment she was able to cut off the fluctuation between these two identities: “Forward or back . . . John Barks told me once I had a choice” (53), and she realized it was time to leave the

Pinkertons and get into a new life with the Glory Girls. Reaching the post-liminal reintegration stage provides Addie with the chance to feel integration, relatedness, and liberty in her social system.

Addie's state of hybridity in the post-liminal reintegration stage relates to the hybrid portrayals of Y.T. and Molly. One can draw the line of progression from Y.T.'s pre-liminal state of hybridity and physical separation, to Molly's liminal and mental fluctuation, all the way to Addie's post-liminality and serene attachment to her hybrid body. As Y.T. and Molly illustrate through their states of hybridity features of the "New Woman," similarly, Addie continues their path in presenting the post-liminal digital "New Woman." In other words, when appearing in the pre-liminal state, Addie continues the path of Y.T. in defying traditional and cultural notions of women's inferior physical and mental abilities. Similar to Molly, she rejects the religious misrepresentation of women's role in society. Proceeding towards her post-liminal stage, with her distinct feature of complete physical and mental attachment to her hybrid body, Addie portrays her feminist reintegration of cyberpunk and steampunk portrayals in the social spectrum, foregrounding more features of the "New Woman."

C. Hybridity: The Augmented Body and its Relation to Feminism

Addie portrays feminist reintegration in the social spectrum through her different hybrid physical features that combine, and build upon, those of Y.T. and Molly. In the first, pre-liminal stage, Y.T.'s physical appearance is a mix of realistic features with some technologically additions, specifically the dentata. Y.T.'s removable dentata, as explored in chapter one, relocates feminists' sexual issues and male's traditional thought of sexual abjection. In the second, liminal stage, Molly

reveals her fully-augmented body, standing in limbo, unable to get back to her past body; the latter is designed to remain in a liminal stage and in virtual space. Molly's implanted lenses and bodily augmentations, as explained in chapter two, develop a nontraditional gaze for women's image, Consequently, the technological augmentations, superficial with Y.T. but deep with Molly are used in the first two hybrid stages to expose feminist issues.

In the third stage, the post-liminal reintegration stage, the steampunk Victorian female reveals a progression towards hybridity through a new hybrid bodily construction. She is represented in refashioned Victorian costumes without technological bodily augmentations but in the middle of technological settings. Thus, tracing the progression of liminality and hybridity shows that, in Addie's stage, bodily augmentations, intentionally, disappear in order to present her in a close state to reality. Such blend of realism and hybridity shows Addie's intentions of integrating her feminist targets in the social and cultural norms. Her un-augmented steampunk post-liminal persona symbolizes her bonding with female cyberpunk and her aim of reintegrating feminist goals and spreading out feminism directly from a digital setting into the social spectrum of reality.

D. Addie's Post-Liminal Stage and Feminism

In addition to her un-augmented steampunk persona, Addie portrays her feminist reintegration in the social spectrum through her direct and subjective tone, making her post-liminal hybrid representation closer to reality. She opens up her narration with a direct and subjective tone, as the plot begins with "I were riding with the Glory Girls" (17), an opening with a direct speech that immediately brings the reader as close as possible to the female speaker, Addie. With direct

speech, by describing her life experience and emotions from a first-person perspective, she appears as a tangibly living part of reality, and not only as a virtual figure.

Addie continues the endeavor of Y.T. and Molly, for Y.T.'s pre-liminal state is portrayed with a touch of realism by describing her, in some events, as living the life of a typical teenager with her mother away from virtuality; Molly is also portrayed in realistic events, especially when she mentally shifts to her life with Johnny and her job as a sex worker. Female cyberpunk images employ realism as a way to deconstruct borders between the fictitious plot and reality, revealing "New Woman's" concept of empowerment. Addie, narrates the whole plot in a realistic subjective tone, a mode of narration that shows Addie's way in continuing the progression towards realism, traced before by Y.T. and Molly

Moreover, Addie demonstrates the integration of feminist imagery, in the social spectrum, by embodying the traits of the independent "New Woman," similarly to Y.T. and Molly, but in a more advanced state. Addie shows her physical and mental capabilities in a male-dominated setting, like Y.T. does with Hiro and Uncle Enzo, and like Molly with Armitage and Case. However, Addie shows further progression after leaving the Pinkertons' workplace, for she proves her capabilities and independent character, proudly saying: "I kept myself to myself and worked hard" (24), she leaves her job at the Pinkertons, especially after learning that Chief Coolidge had been smearing her social character, "getting the word out that I were a thief" (28).

By leaving the Pinkertons', Addie continues where Y.T. and Molly stopped by teaming up with the Glory Girls and progressing independence. On the one hand, Y.T.'s independent traits relocate feminist issues with her "jacking in" with Hiro and working with Uncle Enzo, but at the

end, she escapes from both of them. Molly's hybridity also touches upon feminist issues of women's empowerment through her mission with Case and Armitage; however, she ends up in the same space at the end of the novel. Both Y.T. and Molly portray the digital "New Woman," as mentioned in chapters one and two, through their hybrid portrayals as they relocate cultural and sexual differences. However, they cut off any possibility of being in a different setting or teaming up with other females.

As Addie narrates, the Glory Girls help her experience full independence, detached from the previous male-dominated environment. By joining "the most notorious gang of all-girl outlaws" (18) and finding new ways to help them slow time and rob trains and airships, Addie becomes able to better relate, in a social context, to people around her, allowing her to overcome her miserable past in the religious community and to leave the Pinkertons without fears or regrets. Drawing, through her post-liminal hybridity, the liberated setting provided by the Glory Girls figuratively turns into an evolution of a female bond. Her teaming with the Glory Girls symbolizes the increase in the number of females seeking radical change, pushing the limits, and changing social roles and expectations, thereby unknowingly and perhaps somewhat knowingly paving the way for the empowerment of women.

Consequently, the change that happens in Addie's life as a result of her teaming up with the Glory Girls demonstrates the benefits of female collaborations and cooperation. Women back each other up and reintegrate their independent presence in the surrounding social and cultural systems. With the Glory Girls, Addie's capabilities and social presence isn't restricted anymore by male's superiority, like in her religious community or with the Pinkertons. The Glory Girls'

bonding help in supporting and protecting each other, proving their eminent social presence and performances. This new collaboration shows that equal spaces for women are possible in any social setting, as Addie describes the Pinkertons as powerful watch fixers, matched with the Glory Girls' abilities to regulate time. Her narration displays an equal status between two opposite figures, since both are presented as equally integrated in the social system with great capabilities. The illustration of the Glory Girls' empowerment, by becoming the prime focus of their surroundings and gaining powerful social status for themselves, highlights the benefits of female collaboration in making a change, paving ways of social and cultural liberation for women. Addie's post-liminal hybridity becomes an encouragement for women to bond towards equality and against social restrictions, as bonding with the Glory Girls paves her way to become empowered, mapping the features of the "New Woman" and following the feminist goals of female cyberpunk portrayals. As Y.T. and Molly continue the path in featuring concepts of the "New Woman" in fiction and promoting feminist cultural and sexual issues, Addie follows in their footsteps by creating a feminist digital wave with the Glory Girls, highlighting various issues under the same feminist umbrella.

In her journey with the Glory Girls, Addie gets a closer look at each girl's tough past, thereby showing the socio-cultural restrictions and hardships that the girls had to go overcome to become who they are: Josephine witnessing her sister's death by the overseer's bullet; Amanda escaping from her uncle and spending long hours in the shipyards during night; Fadwa's life with her family in the refugee camps; and Colleen losing her life as a governess after her dad is arrested for treason. Each girl's harsh past is described to highlight her powerful ability to escape the misery of social and cultural restriction before joining the Glory Girls. Throughout the plot, the girls show

Addie their independent and tough characters, especially when they tell her: “We’re reminders that people shouldn’t feel too smug. That what you think you own, you don’t. That life can change just like that” (30). For that reason, they took it upon themselves to transform their surroundings by teaming up as the Glory Girls, with the belief that, as Josephine tells Addie, “[w]e didn’t make this world, Addie. It don’t play fair. But that don’t mean we have to lie down” (30). Thus, the image that the Glory Girls portray is that of independence and a powerful intent for changing the order of life and the social system around them. Each girl distanced her existence from the patriarchy’s ostensible “protection” that was imposed on her and teamed up with other girls to live beyond the boundaries of society, and more specifically society’s patriarchal dictates. Being part of a group helps the girls withstand hardship through support and togetherness; as a group, they become stronger and more empowered.

Y.T.’s pre-liminality and Molly’s liminality did not include this image of women teaming up, as a group, with the intention of changing the surrounding system, as both Y.T. and Molly worked either independently of others or with the help of one male (Hiro and Case, respectively). Indeed, both bind with males only with the intention of generating different norms and escaping restrictions, yet Addie’s call for teaming up with the Glory Girls represents a type of feminism directed towards change. This shows the feminist bond created through Y.T.’s pre-liminality, to Molly’s liminality, reaching to Addie’s post-liminality and her direct reintegration of feminist targets in social and cultural norms through figuratively creating a feminist wave as she teams up with the Glory Girls.

Addie shows her post-liminal reintegration of feminist goals in the social spectrum through the realism of her physicality and her subjective tone along with her independent traits when with the Glory Girls. As Addie maps her progression towards post-liminality, she walks the readers through her stages of pre-liminality and liminality, relating to Y.T.'s and Molly's features of the "New Woman," as well as creating a new feminist digital space. The post-liminal stage is represented through her bonding with the Glory Girls in which her hybridity relates to female cyberpunk feminist goals and figuratively creates a digital feminist campaign that addresses women's issues from all aspects. The blend of her hybridity and liminality becomes a key component for the spread of a feminist movement, bolstering Feminists' Fourth Digital Wave. By exposing diverse feminist issues and portraying a feminist bond with the Glory Girls in the middle of a technological fictitious setting, Addie's post-liminal representation indirectly encourages women to let go of anonymity on digital platforms, showing that the digital space is a right space for the beginning of a new digital feminist movement without fears and obstructions. Addie's move from her religious community into the Pinkertons workplace, all the way into the Glory Girls makes her post-liminal hybrid image a feminist portrayal for empowerment issues, foregrounding "New Woman's" concept of deforming predefined cultural gendered roles.

E. Aurelia's Post-Liminal Stage in "Hand in Glove"

Other steampunk portrayals relate to the previous female hybrid images and show the progression of hybridity into a post-liminal stage, and I am here interested in Aurelia Etreyo in "Hand in Glove." Aurelia's hybridity appears without bodily augmentations, similarly to Addie, but stands in a more advanced post-liminal position. She is one step ahead towards complete

hybridity since there are no hints about her past life throughout the plot. Victor Turner explains that in the post-liminal stage, “the ritual subject, individual, or corporate is in a relatively stable state” (95), and Addie’s hybridity, as shown above, reveals her stability and relatedness to the Glory Girls; Aurelia also shows the same characteristics in her position as a police officer, but her hybridity appears in a more advanced post-liminal state since her memories, mental fluctuations, and stages of transformation are not mentioned. Aurelia’s post-liminal hybridity pushes the readers to frame her in a powerfully stable status, negating any hints about a previous life in a state of multiple identities. She is portrayed as “Constable Aurelia Etreyo,” characterized by her intelligence and independence, energetically performing her job, and cutting off ways of living in states of fluctuation.

Moreover, Aurelia’s advanced post-liminal state is more incorporated into the social system. Referring to Turner, as Aurelia stands in a more progressed post-liminal reintegration stage, she “is expected to behave in accordance with certain . . . ethical standards binding on incumbents of social positions in a system of such positions” (95). Similarly, Aurelia’s hybridity paves her way to demonstrate complete social incorporation through her job as a police officer, in which she behaves in accordance to positional requirements, in conformity with Turner’s theory. Addie, on the other hand, does not abide by any standards in a specific social job in her position with the Glory Girls, who aim to break the rules and enjoy liberty in their free world. Portraying the Glory Girls as hoodlums sets Addie in a capable social position, but without a specific job title. Even though she proves her masterful abilities in repairing watches, Addie ends her journey

working independently unrelated to specific positional conditions, setting her post-liminality a step ahead of Aurelia's.

The post-liminal progression from Addie's to Aurelia's states of hybridity stands as evidence to female hybridity's exposition of feminist targets and issues. The post-liminal prolongation, which starts with Addie and progresses to Aurelia, can be understood through van Genep's "gradual reintegration process" (55), in which these representations, step by step and figuratively, incorporate their empowerment goals in the social system; Addie's post-liminal state appears, in the beginning stages, to be entering the social system: she faces numerous restrictions from her religious community and from the Pinkertons until she reaches social independence and relatedness to her surroundings by joining the Glory Girls. Aurelia's advanced post-liminality takes a step further, as she "came to the PD the youngest graduate from the police academy ever" (110). She enjoys a powerful social status without the burden of her past, and reveals more realism through the showcasing of her abilities in a mundane setting, the police office. As Addie progressively draws her reintegration of cyberpunk feminist targets into the social spectrum, engraving features of the "New Woman," Aurelia follows the same path, appearing in an advanced post-liminal state due to her socially higher-ranked job position.

F. Aurelia's Post-Liminal Stage and Feminism

Aurelia's post-liminal hybridity, as a police officer, is soundly based on a realistic view of society, hinting at her understanding and incorporation into the social system; her representation is different from Y.T.'s, Molly's, and even Addie's, as she works in a down-to-earth job where dealing with people, and many times courting danger, without bodily augmented gadgets. This

added element of realism encourages the readers to believe in the existence of Aurelia's hybridity and encourages them to see her story as a social issue, and not only a whimsical science-fiction story. Her representation as a police officer connects to Y.T.'s touch of realism with her mother, to Molly's when recounting her memories in reality, and to Addie's subjective tone, showing how the more the female hybrid images progress into stages of liminality and reach hybridity, the more realism is added as a direct way of reintegrating their feminist goals of portraying empowerment.

Through her advanced post-liminal state, Aurelia showcases the feminist goals presented by cyberpunk fiction and follows their path in embedding features of the "New Woman" in digital settings. However, Aurelia adds to the image of the digital "New Woman" the concerns for direct social issues. As mentioned in the introduction, the concept of the "New Woman" featured the female image in fictional narratives, relocating cultural and sexual issues through fictional characters; Y.T.'s pre-liminality and Molly's liminality touch upon feminist issues figuratively, symbolically, and indirectly through their hybrid portrayals. With steampunk, the surplus of realistic features paves Addie's way to directly state her feminist intentions, shifting features of the "New Woman" back into reality. The embedding of realistic features demonstrates Aurelia's post-liminal hybrid representation as a police officer in a realistic job situation, thus injecting more realism and encouraging the re-awakening of the "New Woman" in the social spectrum.

What follows shows how Aurelia appears as the post-liminal digital "New Woman," relating to the feminist goals of cyberpunk representations and making her representation a feminist social issue. Aurelia's hybridity is similar to that of Y.T., Molly, and Addie, for she is able to prove her independent traits in the middle of a male-dominated setting, aggregating their

feminist concerns. Aurelia is the youngest graduate from the police academy, full of energy to work “She’s bitter . . . snappish and mean” (111). She courageously faces Detective Wilkins, who is the most famous cop and is always congratulated for closing cases, when she proves, by detecting fingerprints, that he had failed in convicting the right man in his final case. While doing so, Aurelia demonstrates her intelligence, as she analyzes clues and always finds solutions for the cases she is working on, such as when she reasoned that “she’s not supposed to enter a building without permission from the owners . . . but a police officer can always find an emergency” (123). Additionally, she shows how tough she is when she fearlessly entered an abandoned place while investigating cases. When Ylva Landaðon, the chief of police, mocks her as she faces Wilkins and hints at his failure in closing the case, she does not stop her investigation and insists on proving them wrong. Indeed, Aurelia’s job as a police officer posits her hybridity on an equal social status as other male figures in the same workplace. Drawing this feminist equality and capabilities goes back, in the context of cyberpunk and steampunk fiction, to Y.T.’s call for sexual equality through her dentata and Molly’s call for the elimination of differentiation through the gaze. Aurelia is also directly linked to Addie’s call about the importance of feminist bonding and grouping towards equality.

However, Aurelia moves a step further from Y.T., Molly, and Addie by directly exposing the patriarchal system that thrives on the overt and covert oppression of females. After proving that Detective Wilkins has failed, the police department “published a glowing account of his investigation” where Aurelia is not mentioned at all (140), and Wilkins remains the golden star of the department. When, afterwards, Detective Wilkins tries to hide his undermining of Aurelia’s

success by asking her to join his team, she asks: “And anyway, doesn’t Detective Wilkins always get what he wants? Who is she to stand in the way of the hero of the hour?” (141), revealing the social repression she is going through, thus making her post-liminal hybridity a clear and direct social issue.

Aurelia’s representation as the female self-reliant police officer aggregates Y.T.’s pre-liminal, Molly’s liminal, and Addie’s post-liminal feminist representations of independence. Aurelia’s refusal can be related to Y.T.’s sexual refusal with Raven, to Molly’s rejection of gazing at others and being gazed at, and to Addie’s refusal to stay under Chief’s Coolidge power. She highlights previously illustrated feminist goals in her realistic job condition, straightforwardly highlighting women’s social repression and configuring her direct feminist reintegration in the social spectrum. Thus, drawing cyberpunk and steampunk feminist goals along the progression of liminality and hybridity highlights the evolution of a digital “New Woman,” marking a social ethos, transforming the gender dynamics of tolerance, and supporting the Fourth Feminist Digital Wave.

G. Post-Liminality and the Emergence of the Postmodern Digital “New Woman”

By drawing the line of progression presented by female hybridity and relating it to the stages of liminality, I have argued, starting with Y.T. in chapter one, Molly in chapter two, and Addie and Aurelia in this chapter, that these female characters embody, each in her own way, the concept of the “New Woman” which emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As mentioned in my introduction, female representations of the “New Woman” began in fictional narratives and produced a pioneering voice for the true beginnings of feminist resistance. Soon

after, however, stereotypes about the “New Woman” were generated and contradicted feminist views. With the evolution of the Second Feminist Wave, feminist publications moved to a theoretical framework, shifting women’s representations away from fiction, creating diverse standpoints about feminism, and, with the emergence of Lesbian Feminism and Black Feminist Campaigns, believing that the previously illustrated concept of the “New Woman” did not describe all feminists and that “[t]here is and must be a diversity of feminisms, responsive to the different needs and concerns of different women, and defined by them for themselves” (Walters 97). Subsequently, promoting the fictional woman meant generating a central public role in scientific fields for real women, specifically to defy the latent patriarchal premises in orienting knowledge which presented women as inferiors in scientific fields. For that reason, an innovative illustration of women developed along science-fiction known as the female hybrid character, illustrated earlier in the introduction. Thus, tracing the female cyberpunk and steampunk hybrid representations—Y.T., Molly, Addie, and Aurelia—presents, through the merging of their liminality and hybridity, a re-assessment of the original “New Woman” and her reconstruction in the postmodern digital century. Additionally, as I have argued in this chapter, the aggregation of Y.T.’s, Molly’s, Addie’s, and Aurelia’s feminist goals and the embedding of the “New Woman” concept through their hybridity shows the progressive path of redirecting the representation of the “New Woman” back into the social spectrum. Drawing the connection between female cyberpunk and steampunk hybrid and liminal features presents their representation of empowerment in digital space under one umbrella.

By highlighting the ideologies above and tracing the line of liminal progression evinced by female hybridity, I hope to have successfully argued that Y.T., Molly, Addie, and Aurelia create a digital image of the “New Woman”—an image which relates to the concept of intersectional feminism, showing that feminists, despite their overlapping and different identities, they stand for the rights and empowerment of each other, opposing the root causes of inequalities. This makes the merge of Y.T.’s, Molly’s, Addie’s, and Aurelia’s hybridity and liminality symbolizes the intersectional feminists’ target of joining voices, illuminating the connections between all feminists’ fights in order to present the long history of women’s discrimination and to reach liberation. Y.T., Molly, Addie, and Aurelia’s hybridities, reveal, as well, their support of the Fourth Digital Feminist Wave and the creation of the digital “New Woman.”

Indeed, contemporary developments in technology have played a major role in creating and activating the Fourth Wave of Feminism, as the launching of feminist campaigns on the Internet have exceeded expectations, encouraging the intense activism of women users. As social media platforms paved women’s way to take a step away from patriarchal culture, feminists found themselves examining past failures and re-adjusting their positions in the context of the emerging digital space (Chamberlain 3). Their main approach concentrated on what has become known as *feminist temporality*, a contemplation of how the past and the future affect feminist involvement in technological platforms in the present moment.

In this Fourth Wave, the global connectivity available for users on technological platforms welcomes multiplicity and difference, and diversity becomes a tool for a better representation of the proliferating alternative identities and multicultural connectivities. Such approach allows

feminist narratives to reach women globally and offers a digital spectrum for the sharing of arguments and discussions. This provides a new iteration for feminist discourses and contexts since it “allows for a revision of the almost dialectical nature to the Western history of feminism” (Chamberlain 21). Thus, tracing the different liminal transition processes and diverse hybrid features of female cyberpunk and steampunk as I have done in this thesis provides a literary parallel to the Fourth Wave concept of welcoming difference and multiplicity. As Y.T., Molly, Addie, and Aurelia progress, each in her own way, and each within the limitations of her own time and context, along the path of differentiation from their stifling patriarchal restrictions, they are unified in their goal of empowering females in the new spaces offered by the digital revolution.

Drawing the Fourth Feminist Wave’s embrace of intersectional and inter-generational feminist activism and its relation to cyberpunk and steampunk also highlights issues in postfeminism. Different standpoints evolved around the meaning of postfeminism and its positive or negative impacts on promoting feminism. Some considered the term “a shift within feminism defined as an ‘epistemological break’ linked to postmodernism, postcolonialism, and poststructuralism” (Rivers 4), and the line of progression traced by the hybridity of Y.T.’s pre-liminality, Molly’s liminality, all the way to Addie’s and Aurelia’s post-liminality presents an added meaning to postfeminism. As I have shown in this thesis, the promotion of female empowerment as supported by postmodern hybrid bodies, technologies of simulation, and augmented perception shows that postfeminism “stands as a cultural phenomenon, allowing for ‘the contradictory nature of postfeminist discourses and the entanglement of both feminist and

anti-feminist themes within them” (Rivers 4), and that postfeminism and digital technologies can energize and give more meaning to feminist politics in the shape of cyberfeminism.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have chosen to examine the female cyberpunk and steampunk heroine, with hybrid features portrayed in female cyberbodies and steampunk representations promoting different aspects of feminist issues. Y.T. in *Snow Crash*, Molly in *Neuromancer*, Addie in “The Last Ride of the Glory Girls,” and Aurelia in “Hand in Glove” progressively present the evolution of a digital “New Woman,” a cyber-woman exhibiting the features of an emerging cyberfeminism. The female heroine of cyberpunk and steampunk fiction exposed not only their distinctive hybrid features but also their transition stages of liminality, manifested along the gradual evolution of the digital “New Woman” and highlighting the potency of combining notions of liminality with hybridity in touching upon the feminist literary canon spectrum.

In presenting a comprehensive discussion of the concept of liminality and its pre- and post-liminal stages as I used them in female cyberpunk and steampunk, I have mainly used Arnold van Gennep’s (1909) observation of the individual’s transition from one social position to another, Victor Turner’s (1969) detailed description of liminality in all its stages, and Bjørn Thomassen’s (2014) further elaborations of Turner’s theories; these were put alongside the theoretical frameworks presented by Feminist First Wavers as they historically developed, with the influence of postmodernism into Third Wavers and eventually into the current Fourth Wavers.

As I explored in chapter one, Y.T., the female cyberpunk heroine in *Snow Crash*, inaugurates empowerment concepts of the “New Woman” in a digital setting, the Metaverse. With her pre-liminal hybrid body made of removable parts, like the dentata, she transforms predefined notions of women’s bodies as physically incapable and inferior to males into weapons of self-

defense. In comparison to the main male protagonist, Hiro, Y.T. showcases her superior mental and physical capabilities, reforming traditional and cultural inferior representations of women. Rejecting the invading male's phallus with the help of her dentata, Y.T. exemplifies Julia Kristeva's concept of the "abject," and alters the Freudian image of women's sexuality as lacking and envious of the male organ. Additionally, by writing new discourses about sexuality in a way similar to what Hélène Cixous' *écriture féminine*, Y.T.'s dentata extricates women from the phallic mystification and their misplacement in the symbolic order of linguistics, inventing a language which would not accept signs of sexual difference.

The liminal stage with Molly, in *Neuromancer*, follows Y.T.'s feminist autonomous role, demonstrating physical attachment to her life in cyberspace and continuous mental fluctuations to and from her memories in real life. As I showed in chapter two, Molly continues the same path as Y.T. in framing the digital "New Woman" and moving women's representation from the stereotypical setup of romance and intimacy into settings of powerful physical and mental capabilities along with confident personalities. Molly's liminality makes her the only female hybrid representation whose memories bring her suffering; however, she reveals the Cultural Feminists' dream of envisaging women away from patriarchy in workplaces, political institutions, social communities, and brings her hybridity and liminality together as a tool to carve a cyberfeminist space of *enunciation*, described in Homi Bhabha's terms as a "third space" for transforming and becoming able to defend herself against social differentiation. As an emblem of cyberfeminism, Molly's liminality and augmentations make of her a *simulacrum* capable of generating and projecting models unrelated to traditional approaches of identity politics and

notions of subjectivity. As Molly moves women's embodiment away from sexual devaluation and more into a neutral image liberated from cultural differentiation and classification, she creates a contemporary cyberfeminist gaze no longer placed in opposition or in negation to the male.

With the advent of steampunk fiction and the arrival of new cyberfemale heroines with little or no augmentations, a shift occurred in the representation of gender in the postfeminist, *post-postmodern* era. As I showed in chapter three, Addie in "The Last Ride of the Glory Girls" and Aurelia in "Hand in Glove" appear in their first stage of post-liminality, tracing their transition stages and going beyond past tragedies, and sometimes going as far as negating any hints about a previous life before the big leap that changed not only their lives but also their representation as postfeminist cyberfemales. Through their post-liminal representations, both exhibit features of the "New Woman," but in a setting where Victorian artifacts coexist with advanced technology, manifesting a direct feminist reintegration into the social spectrum of real-life relationships and locales. Addie's post-liminality illustrates her reintegration through teaming up with the Glory Girls, drawing, through her hybridity, the evolution of a feminist bond aimed at radical change; standing in an advanced post-liminal stage, Aurelia embodies straightforward feminist social issues, revealing ways of emphasizing her presence in the middle of a male-centered workplace and encouraging a re-awakening of social values that will mark a new ethos centered on the Fourth Feminist Digital Wave.

I believe that this thesis has added to previous studies on women's representation in fiction through the description of the progression of liminality and hybridity, showing the viability of posthumanism in the context of the Fourth Feminist Wave. I hope this contribution paves the way

to further investigations centered on the development of female representation in posthumanism and transhumanism in order to see the ways in which these emerging movements can further change the trajectory of women's social and cultural emancipation.

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