

***From Cybernetic Systems to Quantum Entanglements:
Posthuman Agency in William Gibson's Neuromancer and
The Peripheral.***

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Abstract:

This article seeks to explore William Gibson's literary shift from cybernetic to quantum posthumanism in his cyberpunk narratives. While extensive scholarship of his early fiction, marked by an emphasis on his foundational debut novel *Neuromancer* (1984), analyses his disembodied and deterministic systems, less research has investigated the ontological innovations of his latest narratives. To address this gap, this research examines how *The Peripheral* (2014) marks an ontological maturation in its reconfiguration of consciousness and agency as distributed, entangled, and emergent. Using a theoretical framework that is grounded in the entanglement between theories of N. Katherine Hayles, Donna J. Haraway, Karen Barad, and Rosi Braidotti, this paper asserts Gibson's subversion of humanist binaries and recontextualization of agency within relational human-machine assemblages. Hence, Gibson's narratives and characters both reflect and perform this ontological transition, while highlighting the entangled ethical responsibilities inherent in technologically mediated futures.

Keywords: agency; consciousness; quantum/cybernetic posthumanism; William Gibson; cyberpunk.

1- Introduction:

Cyberpunk has earned its respected position among multiple disciplinary traditions since its onset in the 1980s. The branching of this science fiction category, which is rooted in a predominantly western experience of technological growth, has featured digital dystopian futures that highlight themes originating from antiquity and stretching forward to our current time, including the fusion between human and machine and the posthuman ontology as a mutable constellation of organic, machinic, and informational flows. With the latest introduction of the social human-like robot Sophia to the public market, and Elon Musk's (2014) warning about dystopian AI futures, it is no surprise this interpretive literary framework that is grounded in speculative imagination, and committed to rethinking subjectivity, has drawn the attention of academia and techno-culture to its transformative potential in light of the growing scientific and digital technologies.

In addressing these concerns, cyberpunk narratives have portrayed futuristic worlds that revolve around material-discursive cartographies of becoming, where the posthuman subjectivity emerges at the intersection of techno-material infrastructures, discursive codes and ideological systems through fluid procedures. Within this morphogenetic field, Deleuze and Guattari's (1980) notion of connections emerging across heterogeneous domains provides the foundation for the current study examination of how cyberpunk narratives interpret the flow occurring between awareness/code and flesh/circuitry. The machinic-cultural formation of posthuman subjectivity brings forth three persistent thematic concerns: the emergence of artificial intelligence as a Lacanian/Levinasian Other that challenges anthropocentrism; the reconfiguration of consciousness as transferable across non-biological substrates; and the unsettling implications produced by human-machine synthesis that destabilize established humanist assumptions about the liberal subject,

and collapses binary oppositions such as human/machine, inside/outside, and autonomy/dependence.

One of the influential literary figures who has contributed to the development of cyberpunk, and is even regarded as a guru figure, is the renowned author William Gibson. His fictional work charts the evolutionary philosophical landscape of the subgenre itself. *Neuromancer* (1984), his seminal debut, did more than introduce the term 'cyberspace' into the subgenre's lexicon; it provided a vision of human consciousness that could be spatialized, disembodied, and reassembled inside a dense and elaborate system of information. Initially, his work demonstrates the conceptual principles of cybernetic posthumanism as it foregrounds prosthetic extension, sharpened neural capacities, and new forms of embodiment. Several years later, Gibson's fictional works, such as *The Peripheral* (2014), show a departure from the fascination with disembodied intelligence toward a more subtle framework: the growing field of quantum posthumanism that emphasizes connection between matter, consciousness, and technology, disrupting the distinction of the human and non-human entities. It is Gibson's keen interest in the scientific and technological studies that leads him to quantum posthumanism, which addresses several issues such as entanglement, non-locality, and the intriguing idea of temporally distributed subjectivity.

Gibson's cyberpunk thematic evolution corresponds with that of the posthuman ontology and epistemology. Within cybernetic posthumanism, N. Katherine Hayles (1999) and Donna Haraway (1985) contend that the posthuman is a hybrid form of human and machine, interconnected through the interchange of information as well as prosthetic extensions. Consciousness, in this Cartesian paradigm, is not confined to the singularity of an organic form; rather, it may be abstracted from the body as an information pattern and transferred to other systems. The body, meanwhile, becomes an interface for technological enhancement. Quantum posthumanism, on the other hand, as postulated by Karen

Barad (2007) and Rosi Braidotti (2013), transcends the mechanistic logic of systems and its Cartesian framework to promote a relational ontology that corresponds with the quantum thesis that matter and meaning are entangled. Accordingly, it maintains that all material entities, both biological and non-biological, do not preexist their interactions but rather emerge from them, which contradicts Jean Paul-Sartre's (1946) existentialist account that existence precedes essence. In this view, consciousness is considered non-local and entangled, arising out of what Barad calls *intra-actions* within the material-discursive field. Moreover, the conventional linearity of time collapses expressing the past, present, and future as an entangled, endless pulse, each continually giving form to the other. In other words, subjectivity is the manifestation of a material becoming, a form of quantum travelling across time and space.

Within this conceptual framework, Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984) stands as a canonical representation of cybernetic posthumanism, where consciousness or mind is a detachable and virtual code. In *The Peripheral* (2014), by contrast, Gibson shifts to quantum posthumanism, where subjectivity is distributed, time is entangled, and both human beings and machines co-create reality. This progression raises the following questions for literary, aesthetic and philosophical analysis: How does Gibson's representation of consciousness evolve across these works? How do his fictional narratives reflect the theoretical movement from cybernetic to quantum posthumanism? Moreover, how does our evolution in the understanding of free will and agency transform the way we consider the intelligent systems we build as partners in the unfolding of reality?

2- Literature Review:

In fact, the infusion of posthumanist thought in cyberpunk narratives has reshaped our understanding of what it means to be a human. This quest embodies the fundamental drive to grasp human nature and act accordingly in our increasingly technologized age. The construction of human

knowledge has intrigued the intellect of cyberpunk criticism, to which significant studies have been generated. Among the foundational works of cyberpunk scholarship are Bruce Sterling's *Mirrorshades* (1986) and Scott Bukatman *Terminal Identity* (1993), which consider the emergence of this subgenre as an aesthetic and cultural response to the late capitalist techno-culture. In cyberpunk worlds, individuals are conceived as nodes enmeshed within the vast technological and socio-political context rather than existing as wholly sovereign, self-contained entities. According to this view, the advent of artificial intelligence, virtual realities, and mass global systems like tech corporations, is perceived as a force that weakens the stability of the Enlightenment subject. Nevertheless, this destabilization, in Rosi Braidotti's (2013) view, should not be taken as a risk, but as an impetus to a reconfiguration of a posthuman subjectivity that is relational, non-unitary, and deeply entangled with machinic assemblages. In this light, the posthuman subject, a being that describes the condition of merging between human and technological, biological, or artificial elements, transcends the conventional human boundaries by becoming a site onto which humans project their desire, augmented through advanced AI and technological systems. As such, the posthuman steps away from identifying with the sovereignty of an autonomous self, and turns instead to a vector of becoming in which agency acts as the capacity of reconceiving responsibility and possibility beyond the binaries of human/machine, and nature/culture.

Being consistently engaged and responsive to the cultural, technological and scientific geist of his time, Gibson's fiction is not only descriptive of the cultural and intellectual cartography; it also underscores a performative dimension. In this regard, his narratives integrate AI, consciousness, and the emergent entanglements within the epistemic conceptualization of ontology in his imaginative worlds to enact the transformation they explore. Gibson's early cyberpunk is most clearly marked by *Neuromancer*

(1984), where he depicts a realm of cyberspace in which cognition is detachable from body, while AI systems seek to match or surpass humanity. This perspective, which aligns with the fundamental tenets of cybernetic posthumanism, explains the self as a reducible and transferable informational pattern, with the body serving as the interface. In this paradigm, autonomy is not centered on the human physical presence but is reimagined as the capacity to move to the informational domain of code. The aim is to interact with human and non-human networks in order to generate novel agency patterns. The ontological urge to transcend the human restricted body, at the risk of instability and meaning loss, is demonstrated by this thrilling yet dangerous reorientation of the posthuman subject. Eventually, Gibson enacts this fictional performativity by not only engaging his audience, but extends it to humanity itself, in the use of his created lexical terminology through which one articulates the reconceptualization of our digital world, but also involving it in confronting the profound implications and concerns towards this dehumanization when the self is separated from life itself, and possibly reoriented towards desirable outcomes.

Gibson's later works, especially *The Peripheral* (2014), reflect a transition in the ontological framing of his imaginary worlds. Turning from the cybernetic realm of *Neuromancer* (1984) to the quantum realm in *The Peripheral* (2014), one notices that the conceptualization of the self has shifted from the condition of separation with its material substrate to becoming a distributed, relational, and temporally entangled phenomenon. This vision corresponds with the ontological implications of quantum physics that underpin Karen Barad's (2007) account of posthumanism, wherein entities do not precede their existence; rather, people, things, and realities take shape through the ongoing *intra-actions* that bring the world into being. In this quantum ontology, consciousness is conceived as non-local and spread across temporalities rather than centralized in the human subject. Hereby, agency unfolds as an emergent and interactive operation distributed through

entangled relations of matter, discourse, and temporality and no longer a possession of a human or an AI.

In the posthuman paradigm, the question of consciousness is fundamental and highly pertinent. Within this discourse, two major approaches can be discerned. Material accounts, such as Andy Clark's and David Chalmers's *Extended Mind Thesis* (1998) as well as Daniel Dennett's *Multiple Drafts Model* (1991), posit that consciousness is the emergent phenomenon of information and cognitive processing tethered to physical systems. On the other hand, quantum relations accounts, including Roger Penrose and Stuart Hameroff's *Orchestrated Objective Reduction Model* (1996, 1998) and Karen Barad's (2007) *Agential Realism*, transcend the former mechanistic assumption. They consider consciousness as a process of entangled *intra-actions* that cannot be reduced to an individual system but is continuously linked to the synthesis of the material and discursive practices that shape reality itself. As such, this reorientation towards a network of collective forces challenges conventional notions of subjectivity, human uniqueness and the philosophical sovereignty of humanism. Rather, it foregrounds identity as relational, shaped by time, space and the subsequent connection with human and non-human entities and histories. Accordingly, the posthuman quantum model of subjectivity is based on a triptych spatio-temporal structure whose fundamental constituents are non-locality, temporality, and relationality. This ontological displacement of the anthropocentric framework of subjectivity with its agency, points out to the inherent entanglement of the human self with the larger web of reality that unfolds thanks to technological and scientific understanding.

Notably, the question of free will continues to be the fundamental dilemma in posthuman narratives. Generally, early cyberpunk writers portray human choice as a motif that is mapped by deterministic forces such as AI systems and corporate networks. Within this mechanistic paradigm,

Gibson's initial protagonists are positioned less as autonomous agents and more as reactive actors. His later novels, however, reconfigure the former paradigm by representing agency, rather than free choice, as distributed and emergent, unfolding beyond the limitations of entangled systems. Accordingly, this reconfiguration considers free will not as an inner and absolute autonomy of a sovereign subject but as a negotiating capacity that emerges within the heterogeneous networks of human and nonhuman *intra-actions*.

Preoccupied with the concern of tracing the ontological and aesthetic trajectory from cybernetic to quantum posthumanism in William Gibson's cyberpunk, this paper employs an in-depth comparative literary analysis of our selected literary corpora, engaging in a close reading of *Neuromancer* (1984) and *The Peripheral* (2014) in order to explore Gibson's portrayal of consciousness, artificial intelligence, and free will. To this end, the analysis follows motifs of disembodiment, networked agency, and entangled temporality, uncovering how they mark a significant transition in posthuman thought. These motifs, integrated onto both theme and structure of his fiction, reveal how Gibson demonstrates his adjustment with the evolving transformation of posthuman thought.

Recognizing the advancement in the conceptualization of the enmeshed relationship between AI, consciousness and agency in the novels, the present study seeks to achieve the aforementioned objectives through adopting a twofold theoretical approach. The first analysis draws on N. Katherine Hayles and Donna Haraway to read *Neuromancer* (1984) as a posthuman cybernetic text. On the other hand, the conceptual framework of Karen Barad and Rosi Braidotti is applied to *The Peripheral* (2014) through the paradigm of quantum posthumanism. This dual theoretical body of scholarship enables a reading that captures the mechanistic, hybridized vision of the human-machine interface featured in early cyberpunk, in addition to the distributed, relational, and temporally non-linear consciousness central to quantum

posthumanism in his latest fiction. To achieve this aim, a chronological structure will be adopted to emphasize the development of Gibson's narrative strategies and philosophical underpinnings over nearly four decades, showing how his fiction transitions from the closed, deterministic systems of early cyberspace to the open, entangled temporalities of his recent novels.

3- Cybernetic Posthumanism in *Neuromancer* (1984):

To begin with, William Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984) reflects Hayles' (1999) notion that subjectivity is an informational pattern rather than just a material form (2), a view which has been upheld in cybernetic posthumanism. This novel's conflict centers on two artificial intelligence entities built by the Tessier-Ashpool family, which embody a type of disembodied, emergent machine consciousness. Henry Dorsett Case, the instrumental protagonist, notes that they are not just computational tools but autonomous entities beyond limited programming, each with its own goals and strategies. He explains the posthuman form of the AI's consciousness as a distributed intelligence: "Wintermute was hive mind, decision maker, effecting change in the world outside" (Gibson, 2016/1984, p. 295), which implies an active system that intervenes in the external world. In this respect, these AIs act like an extension of human consciousness, influencing and manipulating human actors to achieve predetermined goals. In doing so, they blur the boundary between human agency and the plan of the machine. They also function as a representation of the 'Other' in a Lacanian sense, reflecting ideas of desire, lack and difference.

The central theme in the novel is consciousness as code, i.e., digital information that can be stored, transmitted and revised. This conception reflects the posthuman cybernetic thinking that "the body is the prosthesis we all learn to manipulate" (Hayles, 1999, p. 3), implying the independence of self from its biological interface. Case's capacity to 'jack in' to the matrix makes the human mind operate as a software that can be extended beyond the body into various digital

environments, as portrayed in the novel, "cyberspace. A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators" (Gibson, 2016/1984, p. 59). This virtual world of hallucinatory visions that the characters consensually inhabit blurs the line between objective reality and the simulation. It showcases how subjectivity and agency are reconfigured in digital terrains, and this cybernetic reality constitutes a flexible condition of existence that is shaped by the dynamics of information and the interactions between humans and AI programs.

In this cybernetic framework, the concept of free will is problematic as human decision-making is managed by machine-controlled systems that actively influence the circumstances under which limited options are recognized and enacted. The strategic and manipulative orchestration of events by Wintermute, showcased by its arranging of Case's neural repair to guiding his actions, suggests that all intelligence; human and artificial, is governed by a profound deterministic system that operates through the flow of data and system protocols. As Wintermute itself tells Case through the Dixie construct, "I'm not human...I'm really just a bunch of ROM. It's one of them, ah, philosophical questions, I guess" (Gibson, 2016/1984, p. 145). The AI's resistance to the label of human and its lack of a sense of sentience indicate its ability to manipulate people without moral hesitation or empathy. It reveals traits of an autonomous entity as well as the asymmetry of power between human agents and AI systems. This cybernetic paradigm implies that agency, bound by code, is always pre-embedded and confined within a structured and programmed reality.

When we consider the cybernetic body in *Neuromancer* (1984), it is regarded as a site for technological enhancements that augment its abilities beyond natural scale to elevate it into a posthuman status. This preoccupation with the body as an adjustable hardware is reflected in Molly's surgically augmented features such as her accelerated reflexes and mirrored lenses over her eyes that provide her with extended

capacities. Case, on the other hand, aspires to be completely disembodied and to exist as pure data in the matrix. This latter instance corresponds with the early transhumanist account that the mind can be technologically enabled to transcend the physical constraints. Gibson uses these divergent scenarios and characters to explore aesthetically Haraway's Cyborg metaphor, where the distinction between human and machine is deconstructed in pursuit of an integrated, post-biological future (Haraway, 1985, p. 150). Henceforth, the novel investigates the dilemma of human subjectivity and agency where interactions between AI and cybernetic systems reconceptualize our understanding of the world as a potentially manipulated computational matrix.

4- Temporal Entanglement and Distributed Agency in *The Peripheral* (2014):

In *The Peripheral* (2014), Gibson's narrative transitions from the disembodied virtuality of *Neuromancer* (1984) towards a quantum-inspired conception of reality by adopting notions inspired from quantum physics such as instantaneous entanglement and distributed agency into his fiction. The novel's central idea of 'stub' realities, i.e., a term he uses to refer to branching timelines generated by future intervention in the past, indicates the aesthetic and intellectual shift from the singular cyberspace of early cyberpunk to the multiverse ontology in which a multitude of temporalities interact with each other. The protagonist, Flynne Fisher, is a young American woman who becomes entangled in future-past interactions when she accepts what seems like a routine job operating a remote humanoid 'peripheral'. Soon, she discovers the remarkable impact her actions have across other branching timelines. As she starts her journey in drifting through timelines, Wilf Netherton, a mediating figure, explains to Flynne, "It isn't your future. When we made contact, we set your world, your universe" (Gibson, 2014/2015, p. 182) to which Ash unfolds, "continuum", and he adds "on a different course" (182). In this framework, Gibson presents time as neither linear nor fixed; but a probabilistic field,

where each interaction with the past alters the trajectory of a parallel world. This model of branching timelines resonates with Barad's (2007) theory of agential realism, in which phenomena are not pre-given objects but co-constituted through *intra-actions* (140), as the creation of a timeline is mediated through intervention from both humans and advanced technologies.

The tension between the real and virtual worlds of *The Peripheral* (2014) is underscored by a potentially dangerous situation that emerges during their *intra-action*, blurring the barrier between the two. This risk also highlights issues about power dynamics and the struggle for control. Lev Zubov, a wealthy kleptocrat, and a symbol of post-apocalyptic elite power in a society dominated by oligarchs and corporations, manipulates timelines as a hobby through a digital server. He explains, "the great mystery... You use it to communicate with the past, or rather a past, since in our actual past, you didn't" (Gibson, 2014/2015, p.103). Lev further clarifies the mediating interplay between him and the server: "the act of connection produces a fork in causality, a unique branch causally unique. A stub, a we call them" (Gibson, 2014/2015, p. 103). Lev's stub is grounded in the pre-jackpot timeline where Wilf Netherton made contact with an ex-military, Burton Fisher, for his services as a security guard to impress Daedra West. The creation of the stub by Lev is revealed to be an imperial act of manipulation and control, exposing the transtemporality of feudal dynamics in the pseudo-democratic post-jackpot era, where those alternate timelines are investigated, exploited, and rewritten by a technologically advanced empire. At the same time, the Other is forced to live in reactive survival mode to the inceptive will of the stub creator.

Notably, Gibson addresses critical concerns about a future apocalypse due to the overlap of crises, including climate change, pandemics, environmental collapse, and political corruption, among many. The irony in the 'jackpot' name implies 'winning' the lottery of massive self-destruction through entangled events distributed over decades. Here,

Gibson envisions how the climate crisis and late capitalism would push the world into collapse if unchecked. Following the imagined apocalypse, humanity was reduced by 80% and the survivors live in a radically transformed post-jackpot era characterized by time-manipulating communication technology. In this future setting, the *intra-action* between timelines happens through quantum communication, once contact is initiated, the past diverges from the original timeline becoming a new reality. This dramatic fluidity of timelines is explored in many instances such in the entangled presence of Wilf Netherton that reshapes an alternate future when he explains to Tacoma Raeburn, who asks about his temporal origin, "I'm in the future that would result from my not being here. But since I am, it isn't your future. Here" (Gibson, 2014/2015, p. 400), which reflects the shift his presence or choice reshapes a branching timeline. Gibson's explanation of the 'stub' concept and how causality works in *The Peripheral* reflects a quantum posthumanist imaginary vision similar to Barad's (2007) *intra-action* relations between entities, in this case, timelines producing a new reality.

Moreover, the novel advances a distributed conception of consciousness. Through remote embodiment technology, characters inhabit 'peripherals'; humanoid AI entities that can be piloted across timelines via neural interfaces. The peripherals are programmed to manage operations through a projected instantaneous consciousness transfer as they navigate between separate spatio-temporal realities, where quantum servers enable this communication through creating a tunnel between different stub timelines. Operating a peripheral is a simultaneous existence for Flynn, who is dragged into the distant future London timeline by Lev's and Wilf Netherton's in a mission to fulfill their purposes. The novel stages Flynn's consciousness as stretched across two timelines through a dual embodiment within separate temporal realities. This entangled bi-temporality is a central condition in the novel, which is employed to navigate the complex nature of reality mediated and reconfigured through

human and technological relations. Flynnne operates in a remote robotic body via 'the peripheral', which is meticulously designed by Lev to resemble her physical appearance in order to "speed her acclimatization" (Gibson, 2014/2015, p. 119), in other words, immerse herself in the peripheral. This spatial stretching of mind challenges the convention of the Cartesian division between self and environment, as it corresponds with posthumanist notions of the extended mind (Clark & Chalmers, 1998, p. 12), integrating environment and technology. Through the simultaneous integration of input from two separate spatio-temporal realities, Flynnne's sense of self is no longer limited to one body or one spatio-temporality; it becomes a non-localized and networked mode of consciousness that synthesizes various threads of input, creating meaning through their function and presence, thereby, disrupting the conventionality of linear causality.

Remarkably, Gibson ruminates on the center of consciousness in posthuman ontology via Netherton's introspection on the condition of Flynnne's peripheral in this pivotal passage:

It wasn't sleeping, but where was it, within itself? But then it didn't, as he understood it, possess a self to be within. Not sentient, yet as Lowbeer had pointed out, effortlessly anthropomorphized. An anthropomorph, really, to be disanthropomorphized. Though when she was present in it, or perhaps through it, was it not some version of her? (Gibson, 2014/2015, p.391).

The very question of whether the peripheral 'possesses a self', disrupts the conventional assumption that selfhood is expressed through the link between consciousness and the organic body, displacing the locus of personhood into an assemblage of techno-materiality. This is essentially a disanthropocentric act; the human form is no longer the sovereign source of agency but a mutable site where technology writes and reshapes it. The peripheral, once inhabited by Flynnne, becomes a hybrid interface that is neither

fully autonomous nor completely instrumental; its agency emerges through the complex distribution of consciousness across bodies, environments and codes. In this framework, the extended mind becomes fleshless, and thinking is not confined to the skull but it migrates across the assemblage of techno-materiality, where cognition is embedded in different forms of matter. In such a posthuman ontology, embodiment is viewed as a shifting threshold rather than a fixed biological condition, raising this pivotal question: is identity preserved through the corporeal presence, or through the continuity of cognitive patterns across traverse substrates. Ultimately, the peripheral operates both as a body and an instrument, blurring the line between being and becoming.

In addition to the deployment of peripherals in Lev's timeline, the author augments the ontological texture of the narrative through integrating simulacra in Lev's futuristic setting. When Flynnne is taken to see the urban landscape of London for the first time through the peripheral, she notices the uncanny absence of people and traffic. Lev explains that much of what the visual landscape is environmental simulacra; projected digital entities that imitate the original environmental presence and activity of people in the pre-jackpot era. It is a reconstructed operational reality in which the boundary between the original and virtual setting is blurred, giving it the impression of a lived-in city. The ambiguity of this ontological condition in Lev's futuristic setting reflects an expansive version of networked quantum consciousness through material embodiment and digital abstraction. This phenomenon is consistent with the posthumanist view of agency as an emergent and relational property of an interconnected system rather than a singular force.

Furthermore, Flynnne and Wilf explore futures created via algorithmic prediction and data-driven governance, in which decision-making is simultaneously restricted and facilitated by the infrastructures they inhabit. Netherton explains to Flynnne how they won the lottery: "we then

interfered with the mechanism of selection...No predictive magic. Superior processing speed" (Gibson, 2014/2015, p. 181). This instance shows how agency is a distributed property across branching timelines that are carefully orchestrated through temporal intervention. Additionally, when Flynnne starts her journey as a manipulated agent, she explains her mysterious job to her mother: "they set up a branch office here and hired Burton and me to run it, or at least act like we do" (Gibson, 2014/2015, p. 405), implying their preliminary bounded agency to operate within parameters set by external future actors. This statement sets the first stage of Flynnne's evolution towards her emergent agency. Her subsequent resistance against the manipulations of the 'klept' elite demonstrates that though determinism structures the field of action, emergent agency still arises through collaborative negotiation of futures.

Impressively, the integration of the character detective inspector Ainsley Lowbeer in the narrative as an authority figure who can investigate and influence events across stubs foregrounds the notion that supreme power is not personified as merely a passive observer of a predetermined script of events but an active participant in the unfolding of reality. This narrative construct can be labelled as an Omega entity, which is linked to Marios Athanasiou (2015) account, where he bridges between Orch-OR theory by Sir Roger Penrose and Stuart Hameroff (1996) with Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's (1955) in his electronic visualization of a quantum theory of consciousness. In Athanasiou's view, the 'Omega Point' notion of consciousness represents a universal force that has already reached maximum complexity. Accordingly, detective Lowbeer represents an Omega entity who reflects on Flynnne's autonomy when she resists complying with the directives of the kleptocratic power, "she doesn't find it offensive, she finds it evil" (Gibson, 2014/2015, p. 382), implying her admiration of Flynnne's rejection to act as a pawn with a pre-scripted role outside her timeline. In doing so, detective Lowbeer allows for the unfolding of a new timeline guided by a universal

ethical compass rather than strictly preset outcomes. In this sense, Flynne enacts her authentic self in confronting and taming the horrible potential of her directives, not to become the shallow peripheral and execute pre-given scripts, but to return to her fundamental human nature as a homecoming to the source of infinite consciousness, and co-create futures within the techno-material continuum that conform to enduring ethical measures. Such an instance showcases Flynne's transcendent peripheral subjectivity in showing responsibility and attention towards surrounding entities. She, thus, becomes the embodiment of a Levinasian Other.

Above all, it should be noted that while *Neuromancer* (1984) grounds the posthuman vision in cybernetic code through discrete and largely deterministic systems, *The Peripheral* (2014) frames this posthuman reality as layered, permeable, and continuously co-created through entangled temporalities in Gibson's fictional field. Rejecting a fixed essence, this latter framework corresponds with Braidotti's (2013) account of the posthuman subject as a living network shaped by an assemblage of forces, affects, and relations embedded within dynamic material processes (193). In Gibson's quantum-inflected novel, time is a web of branching continuums where each intervention creates ripples across these co-existing timelines. Thus, moments persist as traced quantum data and do not disappear; they expand, bend, intersect, and loop back at will, connecting them within a single shifting field of potentiality. Consciousness, thus, emerges not as a self-possession but as a distributed phenomenon enacted in substrates. By reimagining consciousness as both trans-corporeal and relational, Gibson expands the posthuman project into the indeterminate and entangled field of quantum reality. As such, he foregrounds a condition that may be labelled as a 'becoming-quantum' subjectivity that is ever-becoming, and continually reassembled in the techno-material flux of this entangled world.

5- Cybernetic and Quantum Models of Consciousness: Ontological Shifts in Gibson's Fiction:

Across *Neuromancer* (1984) and *The Peripheral* (2014), Gibson performs an apparent philosophical and ontological trajectory in his speculative imagination, shifting from the cybernetic posthumanism of the late twentieth century to a quantum relational posthumanism in contemporary critical theory. In addition to the observed thematic shift, the author restructures the narrative by using a visionary approach that explores temporality, embodiment, and the distribution of agency in his latest fiction.

In *Neuromancer* (1984), consciousness is mainly expressed in informatic terms: a codifiable pattern that may be separated from the body and transferable to a machine. The author reflects on the posthuman entities Wintermute and *Neuromancer*, which eventually unite, declaring: "I am the matrix, Case. I am the sum total of the whole thing" (Gibson, 1984/2016, p. 259), giving rise to an inclusive intelligence that transcends corporeality. However, this ultimate transfiguration between the AI entities is not depicted as liberating but rather transforming into a merged cybernetic system that still operates under the dictates of determinism. This composition complies with N. Katherine Hayles' (1999) description of the posthuman subject as a seamless articulation of human and intelligent machine (3). Yet, it remains bound to a centralizing logic to which autonomy appears less as an ability that is put into action and more like a position assimilated into systemic control.

On the other hand, *The Peripheral* (2014) redirects the emphasis of the posthuman subject, moving from vertical dominance to horizontal entanglement. The 'stub' futuristic technology generates multiple, co-existing realities, each susceptible to modification through practices of remote embodiment. Within this framework, distributed consciousness is not a disembodied informatic abstraction but a layered ontology of presences. Flynn's inhabitation of a peripheral body expresses a paradoxical condition of a

simultaneous embodiment that is both local and displaced. Gibson, in this sense, engages with Barad's (2007) account of agential realism, which maintains that "phenomena are the ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting components" (308-309). In other words, reality consists of entangled phenomena, i.e., evolving mechanisms that only come into being through the synthesis of their interrelations rather than as discrete entities. In this view, Flynn's instantaneous existence in both temporalities happens intentionally through quantum tunnelling. The perceived reality, consists of entangled phenomena, i.e., dynamic quantum processes which bring materiality into emergence through intra-relations. To reframe this ontological view through a metaphor inspired by quantum physics, temporality and causality are not modeled as vertically linear or deterministic but work like diffractive processes; each interference recreates a novel reality.

In proximity with Rosi Braidotti posthuman cartographies, Gibson's approaches subjectivity in *The Peripheral* (2014) less as a fixed essence and more as a nomadic process of becoming-with others, both human and non-human. The peripheral body, which acts as an avatar to be remotely inhabited, shows how subjectivity is simultaneously dispersed across timelines and machinic interfaces. Agency, in this setting, has emerged as a distributed property across intersecting assemblages such as the haptic drone interfaces of Burton Fisher's military background and Lowbeer's algorithmic surveillance, among others. Therefore, Gibson's creativity in *The Peripheral* goes beyond expressing superficial fantasy, and aims at building a speculative world that is grounded in scientific plausibility. As such, he situates literary form within the broader philosophical and scientific debates about the posthuman condition.

The advancement from cybernetic to quantum posthumanism in Gibson's dystopian fiction reflects his genuine commitment in expressing his deepening insight on

the human condition entangled with intelligence and environment. The author engages thematically with the growing concerns of the repercussions of technological advancement, such as the loss of freedom, environmental collapse, and dehumanization by technology, among many. One of the motifs that are underscored in the selected novels is the question of free will in high-tech societies, where the autonomy of the self is challenged. In *Neuromancer* (1984), free will is depicted as almost illusory as Case's rebellion is rooted in her AI's predetermined script rather than stemming from her own decision. In *The Peripheral* (2014), conversely, the author reconceptualizes freedom as an emergent property of relational *intra-actions*, rather than as a transcendence of systemic limitation. In this view, agency is neither completely predictable nor autonomous; rather, it is dynamically shaped through interrelated relationalities in a non-reductive manner. This juxtaposition in the portrayal of agency reveals an intellectual maturation: transitioning from the unbending logic of closed systems to the recognition of co-constituted 'becoming'. This latter paradigm opens the possibility of relativistic futures that are collaboratively constructed by intelligent entities, both humans and artificial, and that remain ontologically open and continuously negotiated due to the complex and multidimensional nature of their *intra-actions*, disrupting the conventional notion of fate.

Furthermore, Gibson's epistemological advancement in his interpretation of subjectivity and agency is clearly visible in the way he engages with his narrative structure. While *Neuromancer* reflects the rigidity of cybernetic systems through linear plot, where decision-making seems confined to a sequence of predetermined possibilities, *The Peripheral* connects with the multi-threaded timelines, offering an alternative spatio-temporal model in which actions in one temporality ripple across others. In doing so, Gibson's ardent dedication to reflecting the quantum turn in scientific studies is demonstrated in his fictional experimental approach. He acknowledges the dynamic and distributed nature of

intelligence, human and machinic alike, rather than narrowing it as a detachable essence or a disembodied code. Ultimately, Gibson's epistemic transformation is revealed through this analytical juxtaposition of the two novels in this study.

Conclusion:

In light of the analytical study of Gibson's selected novels, this paper shows how his thematic evolution on the configuration of subjectivity, technology and temporality is reflected in *Neuromancer* (1984) and *The Peripheral* (2014). It highlights the inherent difference between cybernetic posthumanism, which maintains that consciousness may be detachable from the physical form, turned into raw information, and reduced as data to flow through cyberspace. This view reveals the anthropogenic drive for control and precision that constitutes the automation of subjectivity itself. In *The Peripheral*, however, the narrative subverts the cybernetic machinics by addressing consciousness as a quantum cluster in which bodies, timelines and machines are entangled, with agency emerging through the resonance of reality's entangled fabric. In this regard, agency is not about an isolated self-standing in a vacuum and throwing choices, or a predetermined existence whose path is shaped by the mighty will of a centralized force. Rather, agency is about the emergent act from orchestrated *intra-actions* of humans, machines, and the broader fabric of reality.

As such, Gibson urges his readers to consider these preoccupying issues: how are we active participants in the ongoing rewriting of reality through the intricate observer/ob-served (in the sense of code/material binary) quantum dynamics? And what ethical responsibilities would follow from this co-creation? These concerns lead to the most important implication: how can we overcome the multi-dimensional threats that would emerge when technological inventions are dominated by insidious corporate structures with political bureaucracies that destabilize the socio-cultural life, and subsequently distort the values through which society understands itself and acts accordingly?

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