The Self in Cyberspace

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> "Tessier and Ashpool climbed the well of gravity to discover that they loathed space. They built Freeside to tap the wealth of the new islands, grew rich and eccentric, and began the construction of an extended body in Straylight. We have sealed ourselves away behind our money, growing inward, generating a seamless universe of self." [*Neuromancer*, 173]

William Gibson's *Neuromancer* is replete with concepts of seemingly endless matrices of information and intelligence. This might cause one to believe that those who are jacked into the matrix are as interconnected as the matrix is, forming intricate layers of cyber-community and contributing to a global and unified consciousness. We have discussed the loss of true "identity" in cyberspace -- we have purported that the ability to take on various personas and thus to appear in diverse forms results in a decentered and de-emphasized self, a single consciousness sacrificed for the sake of a more multivocal one. The above quote challenges this notion by positing the exact opposite : not only is the self not lost in cyberspace, but it is indulged and magnified, creating and closing off personal cyber-worlds.

A look into the nature of interfaces, specifically as intermediaries between humans and other intelligences, contributes to the notion of a self alone in cyberspace.

> "This way's better for you, man". He took, his Partagas from a coat pocket and lit one. The smell of Cuban tobacco filled the shop. "You want I should come to you in the matrix like a burning bush ? You aren't missing anything. back there. An hour here'll only take you a couple of seconds". [169]

Here, an artificial intelligence appears to Case in the form of Deane and the Finn, two recognizable figures from Case's world. In order to connect with Case, therefore, an interface is created that serves as a unique intermediary between him and the AI. The intermediary is unique because it carries information only applicable to and living within Case's personal cyberspace. Not only does the AI appear in human form as an accomodation to human nature and human limitations but it appears as an accomodation to the nature of the individual and the self.

The concept of interfaces has in essence been around since Biblical times -- since God appeared to Moses in the form of the Burning Bush. This miraculous display was intended to make Moses believe in the power of God and His divine powers. A bush that was on fire yet never disintegrated was the interface which God used in communication with Moses. However, God "appeared" to figures from Biblical times in more subtle ways. According to the Old Testament and the books of Prophets, God appeared to prophets -- middlemen between Him and His people -- in the form of dreams, dreams especially constructed for those who were to relay information to the people. God appealed to individual consciousnesses -- those of the prophets (and in the case of the Burning Bush, Moses) -- because of the unique measures by which individuals need to be approached. Our very separate senses of self, formed by disparate personal constructs and collections of faces and memory, renders interfaces necessary and important. These interfaces also strengthen the "seamless universe(s) of self" in

which we reside, in and out of cyberspace boundaries.