

Terri Senft's Reading Notes on Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto"

About these notes

Below, I attempt to articulate the major ideas of Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" for my own pedagogical purposes. While you read, please keep in mind that this is my interpretation of Haraway's text, and that I often re-arrange the order of her examples in my re-presentation of her words. Other scholars read her work differently than I do, and I encourage you to examine a variety of secondary interpretations before coming to your own conclusions about Haraway and her work.

The correct citation for the version of Haraway text I am referencing is:

- Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York; Routledge, 1991), pp.149-181.

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Finally, a few things to know before reading my notes:

- After some quick background info, my reading notes follow the section headings in Haraway's original essay.
- Every few paragraphs, I summarize things with a title heading (in blue font.)
- Each section also ends "Summary Notes" (in a green font.)

Some Background on Haraway & The Manifesto

Donna Haraway's academic training is as a biologist and philosopher, and her political affiliations are those of a socialist feminist. She wrote her "Cyborg Manifesto" in 1986, revising and expanding it again for publication in 1991. Among the many things occurring at the time was Ronald Reagan's so-called "Star Wars" defense system. The C3I, command-control-communication-intelligence, was an \$84 billion item in 1984's US defense budget.

To a large degree, Haraway's Manifesto was an address to the radical feminist movement which gained popularity in the 1970's and 1980's in the United States and Europe. Radical feminism, which was a theoretical component of "second wave" activism, attempted to analyze the roots of gender oppression (its name comes from the Latin "radicalis", having roots). Those who are interested in learning about feminism various "waves" are welcome to [read my notes, here](#),

As a materialist critic, Haraway was sympathetic with the impulses that propelled radical feminism. As philosopher of science, however, she took issue with the radical feminist idea that the "roots" of a socially constructed problem like patriarchy could be located with enough research. In particular, Haraway worried the radical feminism espoused by writers like Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde seemed to promise for women an Edenic "starting point" of gender and identity, prior to other mitigating cultural factors. In poststructuralist terminology, this is called the error of "essentialism." (Those interested in learning more about poststructuralist critique, which fuels a good bit of Haraway's essay, are welcome to [read my notes here](#).)

Haraway's worries were born out in the "Goddess feminism" movement, an American attempt to reject things technological and return women to nature. Haraway saw this movement in particular as reactionary rather than progressive feminist politics. Still, certain feminist thinkers of the 1980's held great appeal for Haraway. She was particularly influenced by the French writers Monique Wittig and Luce Irigaray, who exhorted women to reject masculinist histories and instead "write the truth of their bodies" through methods like autobiography and performance. This practice, which they

called "feminine writing", influenced a generation of feminists. To a large degree Haraway's Manifesto operates in the spirit of "*l'écriture féminine*", using non-linear, performative and autobiographical language to describe the truth of a new kind of body: that of the cyborg.

Part 1: "An Ironic Dream of a Common Language for Women in the Integrated Circuit."

The Manifesto as Ironic Political Mythology

Haraway begins her essay by telling her reader she wants to write a "political myth" for today's times, one that is faithful both to feminism and materialism. In the spirit of other Manifesto writers like Marx and Marinetti, Haraway explains her new political myth ought to strike readers both as "blasphemous" and "ironic". In particular, Haraway salutes irony as a rhetorical strategy and a political method, one that she would like to see "more honored in socialist feminism."

Definition of a Cyborg

The anchoring metaphor for her essay, Haraway writes, is the image of cyborg. She defines this image in four different ways. The first is as a "cybernetic organism." The second is as "a hybrid of machine and organism." The third is as "a creature of lived social reality", and the fourth is as a "creature of fiction."

Terri's Expanded definition of the cyborg categories

[Haraway does not expand on her definitions of the cyborg, but I am doing so here in case people have questions. "Cybernetics" is the study of communication and control processes in biological, mechanical, and electronic systems. Accordingly, a "cybernetic organism" is one that functions according to a communication and control network. In addition, a "hybrid" in genetics refers to the offspring of genetically dissimilar parents or stock. Something that is a "hybrid of machine and organism" would of necessity contain both organic and inorganic materials. Put another way, a cyborg

would have elements that would qualify it as classically "alive" and then again, not. There are many great sites on the Web with information about cyborgs. I recommend especially George Landow's site for the Cyberspace and Critical theory Group, [which is here.](#)]

Cyborg changes what counts as experience.

It is important to understand that for Haraway, these four descriptions of the cyborg (cybernetic, hybrid, of the present, of the future) are not discrete, but rather co-determinate. For instance, Haraway argues that in philosophical terms, there is no real space between "lived social reality" and "fiction", because one category is constantly defining and refining the other. Haraway points out how feminists have deployed the notion of "women's experience" using it both as "fiction and a fact of the most crucial, political kind." In a similar way, Haraway argues, the cyborg will "change what counts as experience" for women in the late twentieth century.

The border of the cyborg is an optical illusion.

The struggle to define and control the cyborg amounts to a border war, Haraway argues. Ironically enough, she adds, this war is fought a terrain that is largely an "optical illusion": the space between science fiction and today's fact. Anyone who believes cyborgs are things of the future is mistaken. Modern medicine is full of cyborgs already, Haraway points out, as is modern reproduction, manufacturing and modern warfare. In short, writes Haraway, "we are cyborgs", whether we know it or not, if only because it is the cyborg which "is our ontology, it gives us our politics."

Cyborgs already give us our politics.

Thus far, argues Haraway, cyborg politics have been linked to oppressive mythologies: scientific progress; racist, male-dominated capitalism; the exploitation of nature to serve the needs of culture. This doesn't have to remain the case, however. Indeed, Haraway writes that her Manifesto is an argument for "pleasure in the confusion of boundaries and for responsibility in their construction. "

The cyborg doesn't have a Freudian origin

Haraway shares that part of the reason she is attracted to the metaphor of the cyborg lies with its ability to help her reconceptualize socialist feminism in a "postmodernist, non-naturalist" mode. Because it doesn't depend on human reproduction for its existence, the cyborg is "outside gender", reasons Haraway. Indeed, she suggests, the cyborg might the potential to reach beyond Freudian mythologies that have haunted feminism for centuries. The cyborg is no Frankenstein, Haraway argues, waiting to be saved by its master/father. Neither does it seek completeness by searching for a heterosexual soul mate, or desire community by way of a nuclear family, as psychoanalytic mythologies would have things.

The cyborg DOES have a history, tied to the military.

However, just because the cyborg has "no origin story in the Western sense", it certainly has a history-- invariably linked somehow to the military industrial complex. Indeed, to some degree, the cyborg serves as the end-point in the West's story of escalating domination of its environment: the notion of a solitary man launched into space. Like the military-funded space man sent to explore new worlds, Haraway argues that the cyborg is "oppositional, utopian and completely without innocence." Cyborgs are not reverent, Haraway writes, "for they do not remember the cosmos."

Cyborgs are not trustworthy. This might not be a bad thing.

Because they are the "illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism," writes Haraway, cyborgs are never entirely trustworthy creatures. In the end, however, Haraway notes that this may not be such a bad thing. After all, reasons Haraway, illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins.

Haraway's embrace of the cyborg differs from other socialist feminists.

In a section that probably would have made more sense at the beginning of

the essay, Haraway explains how her cyborg politics of necessity differ from those other socialist feminists. One of my premises," she maintains, "is that most American socialists and feminists see deepened dualisms of mind and body, animal and machine, idealism and materialism" in contemporary culture." As her talk of networks and hybrids indicates, Haraway regards this perception of dualism as wrong-headed in the extreme.

Border crossings: humans and animals, humans and machines.

Haraway cites three crucial "border crossings" which she argues make the call to "return to nature" an impossibility for feminists. The first is the boundary breakdown between humans and animals, which has occurred as a result of things like pollution, tourism and medical experimentation. Baboon hearts transplants, she points out "evoke national ethical perplexity-- for animal rights activists at least as much as for the guardians of human purity. " The second boundary transgression Haraway describes is between humans and machines. In the past, machines were not self-moving, self-designing, and autonomous. Today, however, machines are making "ambiguous the difference between the natural and the artificial," writes Haraway. Without ever citing the Internet or virtual reality technologies, she alludes to as much when she writes, "Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert."

Border crossing: the physical and non physical.

The third boundary crossing Haraway calls a subset of the second: the eroding space between "the physical and the non-physical." Illustrating the ubiquity of microprocessors in contemporary life, Haraway writes that "small is not so much beautiful as pre-eminently dangerous." Haraway cites the cruise missile (which can be transported undetected on the back of a pickup truck) as well as the microchip (which is the size of a thumbnail) as sources of two different sorts of dis-ease that plague the modern world. The first is related to the actual health hazard of producing microprocessors. The second is pervasive stress (the "invisible illness") of consuming them everyday through computer and media culture.

The promises of monsters.

Haraway details these three border crossings (there are others) in order to get American socialist feminists used to the idea of politically negotiating through a technological world. She understands why feminists might advocate turning away from technology. After all, the world's poorest women are the ones who suffer the most from technological "progress", as exploited sweatshop laborers, as underpaid "home-workers" and as test cases in reproductive medical trials. She also concedes that to some degree, the cyborg is to the "final abstraction embodied in a Star Wars apocalypse waged in the name of defense, about the final appropriation of women's bodies in a masculinist orgy of war (Sofia, 1984)."

Still, argues Haraway, it is irresponsible for feminists to cling to the notion that one can "return to nature", if only because such a fantasy is economically impossible for poor women, and thus rooted in cultural privilege. As she puts it later on in this essay, "It's not just that 'god' is dead; so is the 'goddess'". Rather, Haraway wants socialist feminists to engage technological economies "from the belly of the beast," and speaks of a time to come in which "people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints."

The political struggle, Haraway emphasizes once again, is neither the wholesale adoption nor rejection of technoculture, but rather the capacity to understand both perspectives at once. As she puts it, "each reveals both dominations and possibilities unimaginable from the other vantage point." Haraway ends this section by alluding to the cyborg as a "monstrous and illegitimate" myth for feminism, one which might permit "resisting and recoupling" for women in technology-heavy societies.

Summary: In this section, Haraway details her writing strategy for producing her Manifesto, which is a combination of "blasphemy" and ironic playfulness. She introduces and defines her main metaphor, the cyborg. She addresses the fact that cyborgs are a fact of the present, rather than the future, by discussing three current

"border crossings": the blurring of animal and human; human and machine; and the physical and non-physical (which is now termed the virtual.) Because of its roots in the military industrial complex, Haraway alludes to the cyborg as a "monster." Still, she hints, the cyborg is a figure that show "promise" for feminism, in part because it appears to her to be unfaithful to its militaristic origins.

Part 2: Fractured Identities

Cyborgs need affinity politics, not identity politics

In this section, Haraway deals specifically with the issue of feminist political organizing in light of cyborg politics. "I do not know of any other time in history," Haraway writes, "when there was greater need for political unity to confront effectively the dominations of 'race', 'gender', 'sexuality', and 'class'."

Although she speaks of a "need for unity," Haraway takes issue with the standard modus operandi of feminist groups: political organizing based around what are called "identity politics." She quips, "It has become difficult to name one's feminism by a single adjective," and argues that the search for the "essential woman" is not only elusive, it is dangerous. Historically, essentialism has served as an excuse for (first world) women's domination over others, "for their own good."

Women of color as a cyborg strategy of affinity

Cyborgs are hybrid and provisional, Haraway points out, and for this reason, they can have no truck with political categories requiring a stable, essentialist identity. Rather than using identity as a political category, Haraway advocates feminists consider building coalitions based on the more cyborg-friendly notion of "affinity."

To ground her argument, Haraway analyzes the phrase "women of color," suggesting it as one possible category of affinity politics. Whereas a category like "Chicana" designates a sort of racial essence, the theorist Chela

Sandoval has argued that there is nothing that a woman of color essentially is. Sandoval coins the term "oppositional consciousness" to describe the effect that the phrase "women of color" has had on the feminist community. Haraway takes oppositional consciousness to be consistent with a cyborg politics, because rather than identity it stresses how affinity comes as a result of "otherness, difference, and specificity."

Haraway's critique of Marx and MacKinnon

Haraway has mixed feelings on socialism's contribution to affinity politics. On one hand, she lauds Marxism's emphasis "on the daily responsibility of real women to build unities rather than to naturalize them." On the other hand, she admits that, "The inheritance of Marxian humanism, with its pre-eminently Western self, is the difficulty for me." In particular, she criticizes the work of Catherine MacKinnon, who has argued that feminism must diverge from Marxism by looking at sexual relations first, and class second. While Haraway agrees with this assessment, she finds MacKinnon's version of "radical feminism" to be "a caricature of the appropriating, incorporating, totalizing tendencies of Western theories of identity grounding action."

Women as a socially constructed category, rather than an essential truth.

In particular, Haraway is troubled by the erasure of race, and of agency from MacKinnon's theorizing of the "essential woman." MacKinnon "does not so much marginalize as obliterate the authority of any other women's political speech and action," says Haraway. "Rather than turning to MacKinnon, Haraway argues that feminists are better served by Julia Kristeva's suggestion that "women", like "homosexual" and "youth", was invented as a social category without much regard given to the lives of actual women.

SUMMARY: In this section, Haraway deals specifically with the issue of feminist political organizing in light of cyborg politics. She counsels against identity politics, noting "there is nothing about being 'female' that naturally binds women." Instead she advocates the practice of affinity politics which operate by way of "oppositional consciousness." She strongly criticizes the radical feminism of Catherine MacKinnon, arguing that the search for the "essential woman" is not only elusive, it is dangerous. Indeed, feminist might be

better served, Haraway notes, by considering "woman" to be a socially constructed category, deployed in a communications network, along the lines of "homosexual" and "youth."

Part 3: The Informatics of Domination

Domination versus Informatics of Domination

In this section, Haraway changes gears somewhat, moving from a discussion of women's politics to an analysis of the cybernetic structure of the cyborg. She begins by explaining what she sees as the "major rearrangements" in the "world-wide social relations tied to science and technology," since the advent of World War II.

Haraway's instruction takes the form of a two column chart. On the left hand, she describes what she calls the "comfortable old hierarchical dominations" we've all come to know. On the right hand, she details the "scary new networks", which she calls the "informatics of domination." Haraway lists thirty-three categories in all. Here is a sample:

Representation ,Simulation
Eugenics Population Control
Microbiology, tuberculosis Immunology, AIDS
Reproduction, Replication
Family/Market/Factory Women in the Integrated Circuit
Public/Private Cyborg citizenship
Sex Genetic engineering
Second World War Star Wars

Essential components are replaced by network descriptions.

Haraway argues that certain things need to be realized about her taxonomy. "First," she points out, "the objects on the right-hand side cannot be coded as 'natural', a realization that subverts naturalistic coding for the left-hand side as well." Because nature and culture exist side by side, Haraway explains that

scientists have ceased speaking about essential components of phenomena (or "roots" to use the radical feminist analogy) and instead discuss things in terms of interconnected networks.

This is a long way of saying communications and biotechnologies are now of a piece, suggests Haraway. For example, philosophizing in an era of managed pregnancies and cloning now has to do with essentialist notions of human life than it does with the "design, boundary constraints, rates of flows, systems logics, and costs of lowering constraints" of population control.

The breakdown in natural sciences is mirrored in the social sciences

The changes Haraway mentions aren't only occurring at the level of biological science. In the social sciences, Haraway argues, it has become increasingly "irrational" to invoke concepts like primitive and civilized to describe populations. Instead, discussions of development and under-development, as well as rates and constraints of modernization, dominate. And in economics, the rise of export-processing and free trade zones have seriously undercut the notion of architectural centers of capital formation.

Biology becomes cryptography.

Haraway argues that where once biology was seen as a discipline in which "organisms were the object of knowledge", today biotechnology has rendered "the translation of the world into a problem of coding." To support her assertion for "biology as cryptography", Haraway cites contemporary theorizations molecular genetics, ecology, sociobiological evolutionary theory, and immunobiology. Haraway notes that ironies abound in biotechnology, not necessary at the level of old-fashioned morality, but rather at the level of code. As she puts it, "Human babies with baboon hearts evoke national ethical perplexity-- for animal rights activists at least as much as for the guardians of human purity." Finally, Haraway points out that new biotechnologies concern more than human reproduction, mentioning agriculture and energy as just two of these other categories.

Electronics renders the social world cryptographic

In addition to biotechnology, communications technology has rendered the everyday world a problem of code, as well. "Communications technologies depend on electronics," Haraway points out, and these in turn rely on computer programming. Haraway's list of elements in the modern communications simulacrum include: "modern states, multinational corporations, military power, welfare state apparatuses, satellite systems, political processes, fabrication of our imaginations, labour-control systems, medical constructions of our bodies, commercial pornography, the international division of labour, and religious evangelism."

Summary of this Section:

In this section, Haraway outlines what she sees as the major "rearrangements in world-wide social relations tied to science and technology." She details the "Informatics of Domination," a movement in which biotechnologies become indistinguishable from communications technologies, in part because both are structured like networks, and both rely on "the transmission of code" for their functioning. This refashioning of the biological world takes in the social science world as well; so much so that it is now impossible to speak of things like economics without resorting to the language of the network and the code.

Part 4: The Home-Work Economy outside the Home

The feminization of labor in the new economy.

In this section, Haraway begins to widen the focus of her essay to economic matters. She argues that in addition to producing new sexualities and ethnicities, the 'New Industrial Revolution' is producing a new world-wide working class, one that is neither gender nor race neutral. While white men in advanced industrial societies are becoming more prone to "downsizing", it is women, Haraway argues, who are the preferred "home-workers" of the new

economy.

Haraway borrows the term "homeworker" from Richard Gordon, who uses it to describe not only the act of electronics assembly (done mainly by women overseas) but also the "feminizing" of labor in general. "To be feminized means," Haraway explains, "to be made extremely vulnerable." Haraway elaborates on workplace feminization, noting that it can also be interpreted as an of the following: to be exploited as a reserve labour force; seen less as workers than as servers; subjected to arrangements on and off the paid job that make a mockery of a limited work day; leading an existence that always borders on being obscene, out of place, and reducible to sex.

Haraway argues that the feminization of labor is not new to certain segments of the population. Black women in the United States, for example, have long known had to deal with the structural underemployment ('feminization') of black men, as well as their own highly vulnerable position in the wage economy. The difference is that now "many more women and men will contend with similar situations," Haraway maintains, "which will make cross-gender and race alliances on issues of basic life support (with or without jobs) necessary, not just nice."

The feminization of poverty in the new economy.

Even though women are not disappearing from the job rolls at the same rates as men, argues Haraway "the feminization of poverty" has also become an urgent focus for women in the new economy. This is due in part to the homework economy (which renders stable jobs the exception rather than the rule), as well as expectation that women's wages will not be met with equal male child support. The dismantling of the welfare state, too, will have major developments on gender and race in the new economy. One of these developments, Haraway points out, is that teenage women in industrializing areas of the Third World will simultaneously increasingly find themselves the sole or major source of a cash wage for their families, while being denied access to land ownership.

In addition to labor reallocation, "the new technologies also have a profound

effect on hunger and on food production for subsistence world-wide," argues Haraway. She notes that while women produce about 50 per cent of the world's subsistence food, they are generally excluded generally from benefiting from the increased high-tech commodification of food and energy crops.

The eradication of public life and the new economy.

Haraway argues that as corporate privatization grows more pervasive in everyday life, communications technologies will simultaneously work to shrink public space. In perhaps the most specious argument of her text, she suggests that high tech military culture will continue to pervade individual imagination in the form of "video games oriented to individual competition and extraterrestrial warfare." Far more convincing is her argument about surveillance and pregnancy. "The speculum served as an icon of women's claiming their bodies in the 1970s," Haraway argues, but today, the "technologies of visualization" require that we acknowledge "the deeply predatory nature of the photographic consciousness."

The possibility of feminist affinities within the new economy.

In spite of her warnings about the new economy, Haraway does not see the picture as entirely bleak. Indeed, because she identifies as a scientist and technician of sorts, Haraway is particularly interested in challenging the scientific establishment from within. "Many scientific and technical workers in Silicon Valley, the high-tech cowboys included, do not want to work on military science," she wonders aloud. "Can these personal preferences and cultural tendencies be welded into progressive politics among this professional middle class in which women, including women of color, are coming to be fairly numerous?"

Summary of this Section : *In this section, Haraway argues that in addition to producing new sexualities and ethnicities, the 'New Industrial Revolution' is producing a new world-wide working class. This working class is notable in two significant ways. First, women produce the majority of its labor. Second, this labor (whether produced by women or men) is feminized the context of*

the new economy. Haraway continues that in the new economy, poverty is feminized as well as labor. In addition, she argues that as privatization grows larger, public space grows smaller for workers in the new economy. Finally, in spite of her warnings, Haraway points out that she doesn't see the picture as entirely bleak. More and more individuals in the sciences, she points out, are resisting the military urge, something Haraway sees as pointing to a possibly more progressive politics in the future.

Part 5: Women in the Integrated Circuit

The integrated circuit marks the breakdown of public/private

In this section, Haraway further considers the ways in which the new economy has served to break down earlier distinctions between public and private domains. In the industrial era, Haraway argues, it was popular to speak about women's lives by making distinctions between (for example) the factory, the market, and the home. Today, homework economies and surveillance technologies make such distinctions impossible to maintain. To describe the fact that women today live in a world "intimately restructured through the social relations of science and technology," Haraway borrows the metaphor of the "integrated circuit" from theorist Rachel Grossman.

[Terri's comments: An integrated circuit is a fancy way of saying a chip or a microchip. Essentially, an integrated circuit consists of a semiconductor wafer on which thousands or millions of tiny resistors, capacitors, and transistors are fabricated. Today, integrated circuits are used for many different types of functions: as amplifiers, oscillators, timers, counters, computer memory, or microprocessors. Haraway wants to make an argument here that in a similar way, women in the integrated circuit can have multiple functionality.]

As a metaphor for sociality, the integrated circuit works as a network, argues Haraway, one that suggests "the profusion of spaces and identities and the permeability of boundaries in the personal body and in the body politic."

Haraway uses the integrated circuit metaphor to consider seven traditional private/public distinctions in industrial society: Home, Market, Paid Work Place, State, School, Clinic-Hospital, and Church.

To cite just one example, when Haraway considers "home" as part of an integrated circuit she sees the following connections: Home as women-headed household; home as site of serial monogamy; home as flight of men; home as old women alone; home as technology of domestic work; home as paid homework; home as re-emergence of home sweat-shops, home-based businesses and telecommuting; home as electronic cottage; home as index of urban homelessness; home as site of migration; home as module architecture; home as reinforced (simulated) nuclear family; home as site of intense domestic violence.

No reason for depression.

Haraway understands that it may be possible to be "ultimately depressed" by the implications she lays out in her essay. However, she points out, this needn't be the case. Lurking in the integrated circuit, she prophesies, are also "emerging pleasures, experiences and powers with serious potential for changing the rules of the game." Here Haraway parts company with orthodox Marxists, who according to her "see domination best", but who have trouble understanding "what only looks like false consciousness and people's complicity." Though she concedes that "what people are experiencing is not transparently clear" today, she doesn't agree that this will be the case forever.

Adding autobiography to the mix.

As she puts it, "Present efforts - Marxist, psychoanalytic, feminist, anthropological-- to clarify even 'our' experience are rudimentary." Here, Haraway complicates these 'present efforts' with her own autobiography, calling herself an Irish Catholic girl with a Ph.D. in biology made possible by Sputnik's impact on US national science-education policy. "I have a body and mind as much constructed by the post-Second World War arms race and cold war as by the women's movements," Haraway points out. "There are more grounds for hope in focusing on the contradictory effects of politics designed

to produce loyal American technocrats, which also produced large numbers of dissidents, than in focusing on the present defeats."

Haraway ends this section by pointing out that it is precisely the partiality of her case--and feminism's--that is its saving grace. "The feminist dream of a common language," she argues, "like all dreams for a perfectly true language, of perfectly faithful naming of experience, is a totalizing and imperialist one." Like cyborgs, feminism does not need a totality to work well.

Summary: In this section, Haraway further considers the ways in which the new economy has served to break down earlier distinctions between public and private domains. Haraway uses the metaphor of the "integrated circuit" to point out that categories like "home", "state" and "church" now function more like networked communications forms, rather than the separated, discrete entities they once were under older forms of capitalism. While this may seem depressing to some, Haraway argues that this need not be the case, because feminist politics, like cyborg ontology, works as a series of "partialities" than as a totalizing whole.

Part 6: Cyborgs: A Myth of Political Reality

Haraway's Academy Awards speech: thanks feminists and sci-fi writers

Haraway begins this final portion of her Manifesto with a bit of an Academy Awards-style "thank you" section, paying homage to those thinkers whose work has informed her own. She cites writer Mary Douglas for showing "how fundamental body imagery is to world view, and so to political language," and the French feminists Monique Wittig and Luce Irigaray for showing "how to weave eroticism, cosmology, and politics from imagery of embodiment." And in spite of her differences with them, Haraway acknowledges a debt to American radical feminists like Susan Griffin, Audre Lorde, and Adrienne Rich for providing what she calls the "oppositional ideologies" of ecofeminism and feminist paganism, in particular.

Most significantly, however, Haraway mentions contemporary science fiction writers as "theorists for cyborgs." In particular, she notes Joanna Russ, Samuel R. Delany, John Varley, James Tiptree, Jr, Octavia Butler, Monique

Wittig, and Vonda McIntyre for providing examples of "what it means to be embodied in high-tech worlds." She explains that she will spend the remainder of her essay detailing two strategies feminists are currently using to create cyborg mythologies: constructions of 'women of colour' in poetry and fiction, and the portrayal of 'monstrous selves' in feminist science fiction.

Women of color as "Sister Outsider"

"Earlier," Haraway reminds us, "I suggested that 'women of color' might be understood as a cyborg identity." Here, Haraway acknowledges her debt for her cyborg conception of 'woman of color' to author Audre Lorde's earlier notion of "Sister Outsider." In Haraway's "new myth", Sister Outsider exists symbolically in both an "offshore" and an "onshore" variety. Offshore, she represents a woman "whom US workers, female and feminized, are supposed to regard as the enemy preventing their solidarity, threatening their security." Onshore, Haraway argues, Sister Outsider represents the fact that women can be manipulated on the basis of their ethnic identity for division, competition, and exploitation in the same industries.

Once again, Haraway points out that just like the woman of color, who the Sister Outsider **is** will be largely determined by where she finds herself in the integrated circuit of multinational economies. As an example, she offers up the situation of young Korean women recruited from high schools, educated to function alternately in the sex industry or the electronics assembly industries. In both the scenario of the Korean sex worker and the electronics assembler, it is literacy, especially in English, Haraway argues that "distinguishes the 'cheap' female labour so attractive to the multinationals."

Literacy in the integrated circuit

Haraway speaks at length about how literacy has functioned for women of color as a path both for **assimilation and resistance** to colonialist rule "Contrary to orientalist stereotypes of the 'oral primitive'," Haraway notes, "literacy is a special mark of women of color." Women of color have been able to exploit the language of their colonizers, as well as be exploited by it. Haraway argues that women writers of color write stories that detail "the

power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other."

Writing as the pre-eminent technology of cyborgs.

Haraway calls writing by women of color to be the "pre-eminent technology of cyborgs." She recommends the work of Chicana poet Cherrie Moraga, calling Moraga's language "not 'whole'; it is self-consciously spliced, a chimera of English and Spanish, both conqueror's languages." Moraga has created a "chimeric monster", Haraway argues, and her poetry is "without claim to an original language before violation, that crafts the erode, competent, potent identities of women of colour." Cyborg writing like Moraga's isn't "just literary deconstruction," argues Haraway but rather a "liminal transformation." She writes that "These cyborgs are the people who refuse to disappear on cue, no matter how many times a 'western' commentator remarks on the sad passing of another primitive, another organic group done in by 'Western' technology, by writing."

A pause for recapitulation.

Haraway pauses at this juncture "to recapitulate" her position. "Certain dualisms have been persistent in Western traditions", she reminds her reader. These dualisms have been linked to a system of logic that must isolate "others" (women, people of colour, nature, workers, animals) whose task it is to mirror the self. As Haraway puts it, "The self is the One" (who is not dominated, who knows.) Yet, she argues, " to be One is to be an illusion, and so to be involved in a dialectic of apocalypse with the other." Haraway argues that high-tech culture challenges these dualisms, in part because, "it is not clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine." argues Haraway.

Haraway sums up her major argument in this essay thusly: "In so far as we know ourselves in both formal discourse (for example, biology) and in daily practice (for example, the homework economy in the integrated circuit)," she writes, "we find ourselves to be cyborgs, hybrids, mosaics, chimeras." She names the replicant Rachel in the Ridley Scott film Blade Runner as "the

image of a cyborg culture's fear, love, and confusion."

A brief discussion of prostheses

Here, she makes what is her only real reference to prosthetics and disability in her entire essay, in a discussion of Anne McCaffrey's 1969 novel, *The Ship Who Sang*. The novel depicts a severely handicapped girl whose brain was connected to complex machinery, in which machines serve as "prosthetic devices, intimate components, friendly selves." Haraway wonders aloud, "Why should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?"

The power of cyborg feminist science fiction

Haraway points out that because the cyborgs populating feminist science fiction blur boundaries between the status of men and women, human and machine, and individual and community, it is often difficult for student readers to identify with them in any traditional sense. Haraway details some "classic" cyborg tales, like Joanna Russ' *The Female Man*, which "is the story of four versions of one genotype, all of whom meet, but even taken together do not make a whole." She mentions Samuel R. Delany's *Tales of Neveyn*, which mocks stories of origin by redoing the neolithic revolution, and James Tiptree, Jr, who "tells tales of reproduction based on non-mammalian technologies like alternation of generations of male brood pouches and male nurturing." Author John Varley is cited for constructing a "supreme cyborg in his arch-feminist exploration of Gaea," and Octavia Butler is celebrated for writing a series of novels which "interrogate reproductive, linguistic, and nuclear politics in a mythic field structured by late twentieth-century race and gender." Finally, Vonda McIntyre's *Superluminal* is mentioned as a fiction "where no character is 'simply' human, and human status is highly problematic", and where feminist theory collides with colonial discourse in the sphere of science fiction.

On the promises of monsters.

Haraway devotes the next section of her essay to what she has called in later interviews "the promise of monsters." First she points out that monsters have

always "defined the limits of community in Western imaginations," mentioning the Centaurs and Amazons in Greece, un-separated twins and hermaphrodites in early modern France as examples of what she means. But Haraway notes that in feminist science fiction, cyborg monsters "define quite different political possibilities and limits from those proposed by the mundane fiction of Man and Woman."

Regeneration rather than rebirth

One of the ways the feminist cyborg science fiction has worked as a mode of progressive politics, Haraway argues, is that it has emphasized regeneration over rebirth (a common theme of traditional stories involving monstrous entities.) She points to the salamander, (a creature in nature that routinely regenerates) as a way of understanding what she means, here. "For salamanders," Haraway notes, "regeneration after injury, such as the loss of a limb, involves regrowth of structure." She concedes that although the regrown limb can be monstrous it can also be profoundly potent. In a similar way, Haraway argues, "We have all been injured, profoundly. We require regeneration, not rebirth, and the possibilities for our reconstitution include the utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous world without gender."

The machine is us

If nothing else, Haraway argues, feminist science fiction's reconceptualization of the cyborg shows readers that "The machine is not an 'it' to be animated, worshipped, and dominated." Rather, she maintains, "The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; they do not dominate or threaten us."

A restatement of three crucial arguments

Haraway finishes her Manifesto by restating two crucial arguments in this essay:

- 1. "The production of universal, totalizing theory is a major mistake that misses most of reality, probably always, but certainly now."**

2. "Taking responsibility for the social relations of science and technology means refusing an anti-science metaphysics, a demonology of technology." Haraway adds that taking responsibility also means "embracing the skilful task of reconstructing the boundaries of daily life, in partial connection with others, in communication with all of our parts."

She then adds a third argument:

3. Cyborg imagery suggests "a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves."

She'd rather be a cyborg than a goddess.

Finally, she admits that though both creation and destruction are bound to be part of this "spiral dance" of a cyborg future, she would still "rather be a cyborg than a goddess." Once again, Haraway emphasizes that hers is not a dream of a universal feminist language for all, but rather of a "powerful infidel heteroglossia." For Haraway, a cyborg politics will be both pleasant and dangerous, and will require both a building and a destroying of "machines, identities, categories, relationships, space stories."