

Cyberfeminism

Index

downloaded:

8 entries

2023-09-26

15:00:12

1985 A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century Donna Haraway

Cyborg imagery can help express two crucial arguments in this essay: first, the production of universal, totalizing theory is a major mistake that misses most of reality, probably always, but certainly now; and second, taking responsibility for the social relations of science and technology means [...] embracing the skilful task of reconstructing the boundaries of daily life, in partial connection with others, in communication with all of our parts. [...] Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms (x) (<http://localhost/the-cyborg-its-manifesto-and-their-relevance-today-some-reflections/>) in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves. This is a dream not of a common language, but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia. It is an imagination of a feminist speaking in tongues to strike fear into the circuits of the supersavers of the new right. It means both building and destroying machines, identities, categories, relationships, space stories. Though both are bound in the spiral dance, I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess.

1991, Donna Haraway, in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (x) (<http://localhost/simians-cyborgs-and-women-the-reinvention-of-nature/>) (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 149–181; excerpt p. 181

Editor's Note: This essay was originally published as "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s," Socialist Review 80 (1985): pp 65–108. Critiques of "A Cyborg Manifesto" are wide-ranging: critics argue that the text assumes the reader is familiar with North American cultural capital; that it does not include critical engagement with disability; and that it creates a false binary between the cyborg and goddess, among other issues. As Haraway notes, the essay took on a life of its own, reaching a virality in its own time that continues today, and still remains a fruitful entry into a form of cyberfeminism. —MS

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120214194015/http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Haraway/CyborgManifesto.html>
<https://web.archive.org/web/20120214194015/http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Haraway/CyborgManifesto.html>
https://monoskop.org/images/4/4c/Haraway_Donna_1985_A_Manifesto_for_Cyborgs_Science_Technology_and_Socialist_Feminism_in_t
https://monoskop.org/images/4/4c/Haraway_Donna_1985_A_Manifesto_for_Cyborgs_Science_Technology_and_Socialist_Feminism_in_t

1991 Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature Donna Haraway

This book should be read as a cautionary tale about the evolution of bodies, politics, and stories. Above all, it is a book about the invention and reinvention of nature—perhaps the most central arena of hope, oppression, and contestation for inhabitants of the planet earth in our times. Once upon a time, in the 1970s, [...] she belonged to those odd categories [US socialist-feminist, white, female, hominid biologist], invisible to themselves, which are called "unmarked" and which are dependent upon unequal power for their maintenance. But by the last essays, she has turned into a multiply marked cyborg feminist, (x) (<http://localhost/new-sciences-cyborg-feminism-and-the-methodology-of-the-oppressed/>) who tried to keep her politic, as well as her other critical functions, alive in the unpromising times of the last quarter of the twentieth century. [...] Then, adopting an illegitimate and frightening sign, the book's tale turns to the possibilities of a "cyborg" feminism that is perhaps more able to remain attuned to specific historical and political positionings and permanent partialities without abandoning the search for potent connections.

1991, Donna J. Haraway (New York: Routledge, 1991); excerpt p. 1

Editor's Note: This anthology contains ten essays written between 1978 and 1989, including "A Cyborg Manifesto." (x) (<http://localhost/a-cyborg-manifesto-science-technology-and-socialist-feminism-in-the-late-20th-century/>) —MS

<https://www.routledge.com/Simians-Cyborgs-and-Women-The-Reinvention-of-Nature/Haraway/p/book/9780415903875>
<https://www.routledge.com/Simians-Cyborgs-and-Women-The-Reinvention-of-Nature/Haraway/p/book/9780415903875>
<https://archive.org/details/simianscyborgswo0000hara> (<https://archive.org/details/simianscyborgswo0000hara>)



Cover image of *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*

1996 Electronic Civil Disobedience and Other Unpopular Ideas Critical Art Ensemble

One essential characteristic that sets late capitalism apart from other political and economic forms is its mode of representing power: What was once a sedentary concrete mass has now become a nomadic electronic flow. Before computerized information management, the heart of institutional command and control was easy to locate. In fact, the conspicuous appearance of the halls of power was used by regimes to maintain their hegemony. Castles, palaces, government bureaucracies, corporate home offices, and other architectural structures stood looming in city centers, daring malcontents and underground forces to challenge their fortifications. These structures, bespeaking an impregnable and everlasting solidity, could stop or demoralize contestational movements before they started. [...] If the fortifications were breached, the regime would most likely collapse. Within this broad historical context emerged the general strategy for civil disobedience. (x) (<http://localhost/from-cyborgs-to-hacktivists-postfeminist-disobedience-and-virtual-communities/>)

1996, Critical Art Ensemble, <https://web.archive.org/web/19991128162305/http://www.critical-art.net/>
<https://web.archive.org/web/19991128162305/http://www.critical-art.net/>

Editor's Note: When I announced the first version of the Cyberfeminism Index in March 2019, I received a message from someone, who I will leave unnamed, regarding the sexual assault perpetrated by Steve Kurtz of Critical Art Ensemble against two graduate students. Kurtz quietly resigned from the university in 2015. Rather than erasing CAE from this history, we believe it is best to offer this unfortunate context here to honor the victims and to surface the complicated history of CAE and its members. —MS



Electronic Civil Disobedience presented in the window of Printed Matter, NYC, 1994; <http://critical-art.net/electronic-civil-disobedience-eed-printed-matter-nyc-1994/> (<http://critical-art.net/electronic-civil-disobedience-eed-printed-matter-nyc-1994/>)

1997–
1998

Flesh Machine

Critical Art Ensemble

This live performative project attempted to simulate bio-class divisions in the flesh economy. By live testing the suitability of participants to pass on their genes through a “donor program,” CAE revealed the latent residue of eugenics in the fertility market. This performance also brought the scientific processes of reproductive technology into the public domain. [...] While the public could accept intervention in the process of dying, intervention in the process of birth was suspect. To inscribe the body as a machinic system that could be repaired or maintained through medical and scientific tinkering was (and is) perfectly fine, as long as medical science does not attempt to appropriate the role of creator. For example, to biologically support the immune system through vaccinations that strengthen the organic system can only be perceived as desirable and well worth voluntarily acquiring in a secular society, while creating a new and improved immune system through genetic intervention is not so desirable (at least not yet).

1997, Critical Art Ensemble, <http://critical-art.net/flesh-machine-1997-98/> (<http://critical-art.net/flesh-machine-1997-98/>)



Image from <http://critical-art.net/flesh-machine-1997-98/> (<http://critical-art.net/flesh-machine-1997-98/>)



Image from <http://critical-art.net/flesh-machine-1997-98/> (<http://critical-art.net/flesh-machine-1997-98/>)

1995

New Sciences: Cyborg Feminism and the Methodology of the Oppressed

Chela Sandoval

I propose another vision, [...] namely that cyborg consciousness can be understood as the technological embodiment or a particular and specific form of oppositional consciousness that I have elsewhere describes as “US third world feminism.” (x) (<http://localhost/sangre-boliviana/>) And indeed, if cyborg consciousness is to be considered as anything other than that which replicates the now dominant global world order, then cyborg consciousness must be developed out of a set of technologies that together comprise the methodology of the oppressed, a methodology that can provide the guides for survival and resistance under first world transnational cultural conditions. This oppositional “cyborg” consciousness has also been identified by terms such as “mestiza” consciousness, “situated subjectivities,” “womanism,” and “differential consciousness.” (x) (<http://localhost/poes%C3%ADa-tecnolog%C3%ADa-mujer-c%C3%ADberreflexiones/>) In the interests of [...] translation, [...] from “cyborgology” to “feminism,” from “US third world feminism” to “cultural” and to “subaltern” theory, I trace the routes traveled by the methodology of the oppressed as encoded by [Donna] Haraway in “Cyborg Feminism.”

1995, Chela Sandoval, in *The Cyborg Handbook*, ed. Chris Hables Gray (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 407–421; excerpt pp. 408–409; submitted by Lidia Zuin

1995

The Future Looms: Weaving Women and Cybernetics

Sadie Plant

The computer emerges out of the history of weaving, the process so often said to be the quintessence of women’s work. The loom is the vanguard site of software development. Indeed, it is from the loom, or rather the process of weaving, that this paper takes another cue. Perhaps it is an instance of this process as well, for tales and texts are woven as surely as threads and fabrics. This paper is a yarn in both senses. It is about weaving women and cybernetics, (x) (<http://localhost/how-we-became-posthuman-virtual-bodies-in-cybernetics-literature-and-informatics/>) and is also weaving women and cybernetics together. It concerns the looms of the past, and also the future which looms over the patriarchal

present and threatens the end of human history. [...] Today, both woman and the computer screen the matrix, which also makes its appearance as the veils and screens on which its operations are displayed. This is the virtual reality which is also the absence of the penis and its power, but already more than the void.

1995, Sadie Plant, *Body & Society* 1, no. 3–4 (1995): pp. 45–64; excerpt p. 46

Editor's Note: Many of the themes addressed in "The Future Looms" were expanded upon in Plant's second book, Zeros and Ones: Digital Women and the New Technoculture. —MS

https://monoskop.org/images/1/13/Plant_Sadie_1995_The_Future_Looms_Weaving_Women_and_Cybernetics.pdf
(https://monoskop.org/images/1/13/Plant_Sadie_1995_The_Future_Looms_Weaving_Women_and_Cybernetics.pdf)

2004 A Rant About "Technology"

Ursula K. Le Guin

"Hard" sf [science fiction] is all about technology, and "soft" sf doesn't have any technology, right? And my books don't have technology in them, because I am only interested in psychology and emotions and squashy stuff like that, right?

Not right. How can genuine science fiction of any kind lack technological content? Even if its principal interest isn't in engineering or how machines work—if like most of mine, it's more interested in how minds, societies, and cultures work—still, how can anybody make a story about a future or an alien culture without describing, implicitly or explicitly, its technology?

Nobody can. I can't imagine why they'd want to.

Its technology is how a society copes with physical reality: how people get and keep and cook food, how they clothe themselves, what their power sources are (animal? human? water? wind? electricity? other?) what they build with and what they build, their medicine—and so on and on. Perhaps very ethereal people aren't interested in these mundane, bodily matters, but I'm fascinated by them, and I think most of my readers are too.

Technology is the active human interface with the material world.

2004, Ursula K. Le Guin, Ursula K. Le Guin Archive, <http://ursulakleguinarchive.com/Note-Technology.htm> (<http://>)

Editor's Note: I often refer to Ursula K. Le Guin's concept of gathering in my practice. In my essay "On Gathering," I wrote, "In Ursula K. Le Guin's Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction (1986), Le Guin posits the first human tool as the basket, not the spear, thereby recasting the first protagonist as a gatherer, not a hunter. Not only did this address the deeply gendered roles of these two parts, it also changed the singular hero to the plural collective, from he to we. 'Before the tool that forces energy outward,' she writes, 'we made the tool that brings energy home.' Gathering, for Le Guin, is not a masculine, techno-utopian process of disruption or of moving fast and breaking things, but the methodical, deep labor that comes from 'looking around, rather than looking ahead,' from gathering rather than hunting." <https://issue1.shiftspace.pub/on-gathering-mindy-seu> (<http://>) —MS



artifact from <http://ursulakleguinarchive.com/Note-Technology.htm> (<http://>)

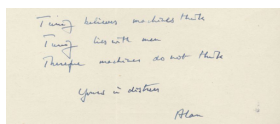
2013 Queer History of Computing

Jacob Gaboury

For most historians of technology, questions of sexuality are irrelevant to the technical achievements of an individual, and while queer historical work exists for significant literary and cultural figures, very little work has been done on queer figures in the history of technology. This may be due to the guarded lives these men led, and an almost total lack of personal biographical information available in existing historical accounts. Even the archives of these figures are in many cases lacking, as material relevant to the personal lives of these men is often excluded or withheld.

This division between the personal and technical is significant, and with few exceptions these men seem to have internalized this distinction, living lives that moved between worlds both public and private. These men lived in times radically different than our own, times in which the contexts and dispositions surrounding homosexuality were undergoing dramatic transformation. Just as computers evolve over the course of the twentieth century from simple tabulating machines to complex, interactive, expressive systems, homosexuality is also transformed and recoded, burdened with visibility and identity.

2013, Jacob Gaboury, Rhizome, February 19, 2013, <https://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/feb/19/queer-computing-1/>



"Alan Turing, Letter to Dr. N. A. Routledge, AMT/D/14A Turing Archive", image from Rhizome essay

Cyberfeminism Index is gathered by Mindy Seu. The website was developed by Angeline Meitzler with frontend support from Janine Rosen. This font is Arial by Robin Nicholas and Patricia Saunders. The encircled cross-reference numbers are an adaptation of this font called Arial Symbol by Laura Coombs. All entry descriptions are excerpts; please refer to the credit at the bottom of each page.