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## Critical Studies – Week 2

### **How long I spend to read the full manifesto?**

It's around three or four days. I divided it into several readings, so I didn't have precise timing.

### **Did you read the text in one go or do you need several attempts?**

I need several attempts. Some concepts are quite hard to understand, so I did some research about some concepts. It took me some time.

### **Where did you read it?**

On my iPad.

### **Just before going to sleep or in the middle of the day?**

Both. Mainly during the daytime, because this time period I am the most awake, which helps me understand.

### **Which passages are the most important ones according to you?**

I think it must be the three crucial boundary breakdowns.

scientific) analysis possible. By the late twentieth century in United States scientific culture, the boundary between human and animal is thoroughly breached. The last beachheads of unique-

The second leaky distinction is between animal-human (organism) and machine.

The third distinction is a subset of the second: the boundary between physical and non-physical is very imprecise for us. Pop physics books on the consequences of quantum theory and

## **What are these paragraphs saying in your own words?**

Advances in life sciences have broken the boundaries between humans and animals. Laboratory mice are used to test the effects of human vaccines, and humans can use fish skin to repair disfigurement.

The emergence of artificial organs broke the boundaries between organisms and machines. It seems that all organisms can be transformed into machine codes.

The emergence of virtual worlds and short videos makes it impossible for humans to distinguish the boundary between virtual and reality. The boundary between physical and non-physical seems to be broken. Will the future described by the Matrix come? Will consciousness upload really exist?

## **How do you like her writing style?**

I must say that I don't like her writing style very much, but I can feel that the Cyborg manifesto is an excellent essay. It also gives me some inspirations. I think I will read it again if I have enough time to enjoy every words in manifesto.

The main reason I don't like it is the huge number of metaphors. I need to take long time to figure out some metaphors' meaning, which makes me hard to think about the point that Haraway wants to express in context.

## **What is her main overall argument? (Is there an argument?!)**

I'm not sure about what Haraway wants to express. She seems try to use cyborg to rebuild something without gender. And this way may change the situation of women. I don't think there is an argument. She tries to create a "cyborg method" to solve the problems of feminism. The manifesto is like a building processing of new identity.

## **Which sections/narratives are unclear?**

One unclear sections impressed me is the chart in Chapter The Informatics of Domination.

Organics of Domination	Informatics of Domination
Representation	Simulation
Bourgeois novel, realism	Science fiction, postmodernism
Organism	Biotic Component
Depth, integrity	Surface, boundary
Heat	Noise
Biology as clinical practice	Biology as inscription
Physiology	Communications engineering
Small group	Subsystem
Perfection	Optimization
Eugenics	Population Control
Decadence, <i>Magic Mountain</i>	Obsolescence, <i>Future Shock</i>
Hygiene	Stress Management
Microbiology, tuberculosis	Immunology, AIDS
Organic division of labour	Ergonomics/cybernetics of labour
Functional specialization	Modular construction
Reproduction	Replication
Organic sex role specialization	Optimal genetic strategies
Biological determinism	Evolutionary inertia, constraints
Community ecology	Ecosystem
Racial chain of being	Neo-imperialism, United Nations humanism
Scientific management in home/factory	Global factory/Electronic cottage
Family/Market/Factory	Women in the Integrated Circuit
Family wage	Comparable worth
Public/Private	Cyborg citizenship
Nature/Culture	fields of difference
Co-operation	Communications enhancement
Freud	Lacan
Sex	Genetic engineering
labour	Robotics
Mind	Artificial Intelligence
Second World War	Star Wars
White Capitalist Patriarchy	Informatics of Domination

I don't understand the sentence that Haraway wrote in the manifesto "*First, 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*"<sup>1</sup>. What the meaning of "natural"? What is the "naturalistic coding for the left-hand side"? I haven't understood these meanings yet.

## Which sections/narratives are clear?

One section is the three crucial boundary breakdowns. Another section is Fractured Identities. Haraway pointed out that women are constructed by society. Then Haraway quoted Sandoval's point of view to further argument.

## Why do you think she writes this way?

I think this is the way she feels best expresses her thoughts. The issue of feminism involves many areas, especially when Haraway tries to rebuild a new identity through cyborg. Although she uses many metaphors, I can feel her emotions in the text. Maybe she doesn't care how others interpret, she just wants to express what she wants to express. It's really cool.

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<sup>1</sup> Donna Haraway: The Cyborg Manifesto from *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York; Routledge, 1991), pp.149–181.

## **Do you think her work is overrated?**

No, I don't think so. Although her words are difficult to understand, you must admit that Haraway offers many unique perspectives on feminism. For example, to re-establish identity through cyborg. I think this has brought great inspiration to many researchers.

## **Do you think her writing is still relevant today?**

Yes. Because today's world is more digital. Short video, meta-universe, AR, VR and other technologies all pull people from reality to virtual world. We are gradually becoming more "cyborg". Haraway's use of cyborg to reconstruct identity seems to be very useful for the current digital world.

# Write Exercise

## The Inspirations about Reading

It's a really challenging essay for reading. I spend around three or four days to complete all content. The biggest inspiration from the reading of Cyborg manifesto is I need to do more reading exercise and get more knowledge. There are many concepts from different culture, which is interesting and hard for me to get empathy. For example, I feel it difficult to understand this sentence: "***Nor does it mark time on an oedipal calendar, attempting to heal the terrible cleavages of gender in an oral symbiotic utopia or post-oedipal apocalypse***"<sup>2</sup>. I can't figure out what "an oedipal calendar" means even after I search it on Google. It seems relate to Freudian Psychoanalysis. On the other hand, this experience also teaches me the importance of interdisciplinary knowledge.

The second inspiration from the reading is building the structure is very helpful for understanding the opinion the author wants to express. This seems to be a process of deconstruction. According to the catalogs provided by the author, I try to note some important keywords and sentence. Then I will collect these words to build the sub-structure of each catalog when I finish each chapter. For example, a part of the substructure of the first chapter mentions the three crucial boundary breakdowns: Human and Animals, animal-human (organism) and machine, the boundary between physical and non-physical. These concepts help me understand what is the cyborg emphasized by Haraway.

## The Inspirations about Writing

The inspirations about writing are the structure of the essay and a lot of citations. Haraway demonstrates her own opinions by combining the opinions of others with her own. This makes me feel very applicable. But I don't like her use of many metaphors. Metaphor is a good way to explain author's thinking, but it reduces the efficient of communication. The obvious example is me. As a non-native speaker, and a person without a western cultural background, it's hard for me to understand some concepts. I'm not saying the metaphor is bad. I mean we need try to control the number of metaphors used.

## An Inspiration about My Project

I did a project about Digital Human. It is about the human identity after the consciousness is uploaded. The boundary breakdowns about organism and machine, physical and non-physical, give me new perspective on digital human. It also makes me have a lot of questions about digital human.

Will digital humans really exist? What will be rebuilt according to the immortality brought by digital human? How should humans re-examine themselves? I think I need to read more relevant books to figure out these questions.

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<sup>2 2</sup> Donna Haraway: The Cyborg Manifesto from *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York; Routledge, 1991), pp.149—181.