

CYBORG CUNT GLITCH

*A Heteroglossia of Three Oppositional Feminist  
Techno-Resources*

Megan Dieudonné

Master Thesis  
University of Fine Arts Hamburg  
Winter Semester 2020/21

Supervised by  
Christoph Knoth, Nora Sternfeld

I would like to thank Alex for the thoughtful feedback,  
Hannah for the cheerful chats and Carolyn and Andrea  
for their continuous support.

In this text, three oppositional feminist techno-resources\* spawn to life: Cyborg from Donna Haraway's *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985), "Cunt" from *The Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century* (1991) by the VNS Matrix, and Glitch from Legacy Russell's *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto* (2020). The existence of each resource, the world(s) it inhabits and the trouble it makes is expressed and promoted through language. The Cyborg makes trouble in the 1980s, by searching for dangerous potentials found in human-machine-couplings. The Cunt makes trouble in the early 1990s, through its provocative relationship with male-dominant cyberculture. The Glitch makes trouble in the 2020s, by celebrating the error and exploring unlimited identities online. The resources target the binary system that reads the material body as either male or female, thus leading it to "perform" one or the other. This assumption is what each resource aims to trouble, by injecting itself into the system and by blurring the boundaries between the real and the digital, the human and the machine. The resources provide an opportunity to reimagine what a body means and how it can perform, online and AFK<sup>1</sup> ("Away From Keyboard").

I will begin the text with a personal narrative; A Story of my own experience of "becoming" online. The BODY section will explain how gender is no longer a natural inevitability but a contingent production. I will then give an overview of two feminist discourses, posthumanism and cyberfeminism, and how each occupies itself with bodies and technologies. The MANIFESTO section introduces the three feminist publications, the manifesto as a genre and how it is a tool for feminist activists. I will then discuss each resource and how it refuses the binary, by coupling with the machine.

\*The use of the word "resource" comes from Haraway's manifesto when she refers to the Cyborg as an "imaginative resource for feminists".

Throughout, the resources are given a unique colour (Cyborg, Cunt, Glitch) and respond to word prompts as an attempt to reflect their opinions in the context of today's feed and handles (updated April 6, 2021).

pronouns

I am a creature of a post-gender world, a hybrid of machine and organism, made by imagination and material reality. it/its they/them.

she/her we/us

I refuse the binary performance of gender. I contain multitudes, of multiple selves. But for you, I'll write my name: they/them.

MEGNDDNNE

A Story: The Internet came into my life at the arrival of my parent's first home computer. It was a profound moment as if something was entering the house. With each piece of hardware tucked into its cubby-hole, the computer-printer-fax combo sat poised, like a temple. I arrived in cyberspace in the early 2000s, with my feet on the ground and my eyes ahead I stared through the glass monitor while the raspy, cacophonous techno-tunes of dial-up sang to a halt. Beyond those tunes, I was in cyberspace, experiencing it as the word intended: a utopia. ~we are the virus of the new world disorder saboteurs of big daddy mainframe

Cyberspace is described as a notional environment separate from AFK. It's a space, made up of many places of which there is no fixed entry. It mirrors the world we live in while making a world of its own. In 2006, professor of modern culture and media Wendy Hui Kyong Chun in her text *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics* described cyberspace as "a place in which things happened, in which users' actions separated from their bodies, and in which local standards became impossible to determine. It thus freed users from their bodies and their locations."<sup>2</sup> Around the same time, I "surfed the net"<sup>3</sup> on Internet Explorer 6, and in 2009 I joined facebook on Safari. The era of Web 2.0 had just begun and what it meant to be social was about to be redefined. In 2020, curator and author Legacy Russell writes, "we are standing inside the machine and every day we make a choice whether or not to rob ourselves. We banally are complicit with the individual theft of our own personal data. This is poised to become one of the greatest existential crises of our time."<sup>4</sup> As a tweenager I logged in as ~LuvPunk12

Now, in my twenty-nine-year-old, white, female-identifying, queer, body I log in as megnddnne. The name given to my body is reassigned as a symbolic acronym of my first and last name. A strategy of moderate anonymity and an attempt at facetiousness

equivalent to the angst I have about how my body appears and stands up online. But, this angst isn't totally due to timidity. This angst occurs because today's Internet immediately and constantly demands that we define and categorize ourselves within a predefined framework. As media professor and author Lisa Nakamura writes, "users of the Internet represent themselves within it solely through the medium of keystrokes and mouse-clicks, and through this medium they can describe themselves and their physical bodies any way they like; they perform their bodies as text."<sup>5</sup> Though I agree with Nakamura, I believe more specificity is required when we talk about *how* bodies "become" online. On most mainstream platforms, bodies cannot be described "any way they like" rather, the body is described within a predefined framework. It can only "perform" or "become" as far and as wholly to what has already been written, which suggests the platform and algorithm know us better than we know ourselves. Furthermore, Russell writes, "the body is a text: every time we define ourselves, we choose definitions—names—that reduce the ways our bodies can be read."<sup>6</sup>

Today, the Internet is woven into the fabric of our lives. The idyllic vision of "Internet-as-utopia" has rapidly transformed, surpassing its previous limitations and the division between user and computer is becoming more opaque. It's (now) something else and (right now) becoming something else (again) and it's everywhere. In 2014, artist and author Hito Steyerl asks: "Is the Internet dead? The Internet is probably not dead. It has rather gone all out. Or more precisely: it is all over! (...) The Internet is now more potent than ever. It has not only sparked but fully captured our imagination, attention and productivity of more people than at any other point before. Never before have more people been dependent on, embedded into, surveilled by and exploited by the web."<sup>7</sup> Steyerl's summary of the Internet endures today. The Internet is in my pocket and before the weight of its hardware sits its most reliable companion, a body.



Lygia Clark, *Óculos (Goggles)*, 1968. Clark addressed vision with a pair of goggles with multiple lenses, as the "viewer" looks through, single vision fractures and multiplies.

## BODY

What's that movement called when the eye moves between a distant object and a near object? It's an "accommodation reflex" and it occurs when both eyes converge in a simultaneous movement. It's the in-between focus, a blurry shift, the back and forth motion as the eye focuses then relocates between two fields of vision. The same likeness can be applied to the body and the screen—a feedback loop that constantly iterates itself.

matilde park blog

*In this particular parabiosis, one side broadcasts; the other receives the broadcast, and while maybe they adjust the broadcast, really one is more reliant on the other. Without a human, the broadcast continues regardless. The screen doesn't need you; but you need it, because it is both an environment and the self-in-that-environment, in one being.*

July 17, 2019

In 1999, literary critic N. Katherine Hayles published the book *How we became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Hayles makes a distinction between the "enacted body" present in the flesh and on one side of the screen, and the "represented body" produced through verbal and semiotic markers. She writes, "the overlay between the enacted and the represented bodies is no longer a natural inevitability but a contingent production, mediated by a technology that has become so entwined with the production of identity that it can no longer meaningfully be separated from the human subject."<sup>8</sup> This journey from the offline to the online (e.g. from the enacted body to the represented body) is the moment when the human subject turns into a cybernetic organism. By being complicit and interdependent, the Cyborg threatens the idea of the human as an autonomous, extraordinary being. When the boundaries of the body are troubled, so are the boundaries that mark a body-specific, e.g.

gender. Philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler questions the materiality of the body by stating that sexual difference is not a matter of material difference. According to Butler, the concept of a (gendered) body is exactly that: a concept that is created, naturalized and determined through social, political and cultural discourses. There is no pre-discursive, stable "sex" as prior to gender, instead, "sex" itself is a construct offered within language. "Sex" then materializes through performance, guided by a set of rules which are meant to validate the humanity of that individual. In her book *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (1993) she writes, "the regulatory norms of "sex" work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative."<sup>9</sup>

Since the early 1990s till today, it is specifically the Internet that triggers utopias of liberation from conventional gender roles. In 2020, Russell writes: "We want a new framework and for this framework, we want new skin. The digital world provides a potential space where this can play out. Through the digital, we make new worlds and dare to modify our own."<sup>10</sup> The virtuality of the Internet allows one to refuse the performance of the binary body and reinvent the self. It empowers especially those who have travelled away from their assigned site of gender, to define their own identity. The Internet also encourages the evolution of a new spectrum of bodies that online can develop and manifest faster than AFK. "One is not born, but rather becomes a body. Through the artifice of a simple digital Shangri-La—a world online where we could all finally be "freed" from the mores of gender, as dreamt of by early cyberfeminists—is now punctured, the Internet still remains a vessel through which a "becoming" can realize itself."<sup>11</sup>

With the growing omnipresence of the Internet comes the hope that the solutions to the "troubled material of the body", born in the realm of the digital,



will also cause a backlash on the AFK society and guide (us) toward new frameworks in the future. That said, the Internet can be understood as a tool for political and social mobilization.

## COVID-19

we are the virus of the new world order  
infiltrating disrupting corrupting the discourse  
I have certain similarities with a virus, too. I'm an abstract body, I come in different shapes, I mutate. I'm active. I inject myself into systems as an error, I create malfunctions, obstacles. I fight the system that hosts me. However, I wouldn't exist without a host, so I don't cause a complete collapse. I rather force the system to change. I'm not a danger. I'm rather a possibility that should be made visible, equal and celebrated.

## reproduction

the matrix is the womb  
Cyborg replication is uncoupled from organic reproduction. You two are my offspring, but we're not related.

## POSTHUMAN

thoughts\_become\_things @iopiq

*it's a choice to be human.*

9:08 AM · Jun 3, 2020

Identifying the body as constructed is just one step away from understanding what posthumanism is. Despite the terms numerous definitions, I will focus on the intersections between posthumanism and feminism and particularly look at the human and the technological nonhuman, and further the implications this kinship has on the renegotiation of gender in the context of digital media and the Internet.

Feminist posthumanists call into question the traditions of "Western" anthropocentrism and the Enlightenment ideas of the exceptionality, primacy, unity and purity of the human subject. Gender theorist Jenny Sundén writes: "Departing from how humans are intimately entangled with animals, machines, and the environment, the category of the human is revealed to be both less-exceptional and less-clearly bounded than previously imagined."<sup>12</sup> Feminist posthumanists argue away from this separation between the human and nonhuman others, or better, those who were made into other than rational men.<sup>13</sup> Instead, humans are seen to be intimately entangled and co-constituted with non-humans—"be they machines, other-than-human animals, or other critters of the natural cultural realm."<sup>14</sup> In her text *On trans-, glitch, and gender as machinery of failure* Sundén shows that within feminist posthumanist theorizing, a special effort has been made to re-conceptualize nature as invented and produced, rather than discovered. "This fundamental denaturalization of nature also functions as a way of breaking the associative link between woman and nature, or woman as nature."<sup>15</sup> But by prioritizing the materiality of nature in posthumanist feminist politics, technology slipped out of sight until recent years. "It is a slipping that simul-

taneously disregards a body of work that takes seriously questions of nonhuman subjects, materiality, agency, and embodiment in technological domains (Braidotti, 2013; Hayles, 1999; 2005; Suchman, 2007, 2011). The disappearance of the technological in post-humanist theory is all the more curious read against the background of the work of Donna Haraway (...), often pointed out as foundational within posthumanism."<sup>16</sup> Although Haraway herself said she had "no patience"<sup>17</sup> for the concept of the posthuman, her Cyborg became an influential resource in renegotiating the boundaries between organism and machine, mind and body, nature and culture, human and animal, male and female.<sup>18</sup> Technology can mean different things. In the 1980s, when Haraway wrote the *Cyborg Manifesto*, early human-machine-kinships could be found in medicine, the military and on production sites, and info- and biotechnologies were increasingly entwined with the human body.<sup>19</sup> But, how can one become a "post-human" online? The posthuman defies identity as naturally determined and unchangeable. Instead, to call upon Hayles, the posthuman is "an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction."<sup>20</sup> Thus, it's the virtuality of the Internet that allows the posthuman to embody identity in a shifting and fluid way while interpreting the world from multiple perspectives. The posthuman is a speculative being, it could be understood as a mode of consciousness, a mode of action, rather than a body. Or, as a verb, an adjective and a mark of punctuation, rather than a noun.

thoughts\_become\_things @iopiq  
*were humans built to look for links between  
lifetime?*

5:17 PM · Jun 8, 2020

Posthumanism seeks and finds other intellectual allies which share similar intentions to dismantle the patriarchal narratives of gendered bodies and technologies. Found within the cyberfeminism discourse, both of these isms (posthumanism and cyberfeminism) challenge the notions of what counts as "human" in the digital age. Unknown author writes: "Cyberfeminism occupies itself with bodies and technologies precisely because these two aspects have generated such contested and politicised (gendered) issues throughout technology's history (...). Female bodies have been most likely to be excluded from the powerful inner circle of technology and also most likely to be objectified by technology's penetrating eyes. Cyberfeminism deals with the question of how and why technologies inscribe gender onto bodies and how these gendered identities are re-configured in a posthuman age."<sup>21</sup>

matilde park @matildepark\_

*Seeing oneself in a social role -> seeing oneself as a loaded signifier*

2:20 AM · Feb 4, 2021

Answer to @matildepark\_

*Those who don't will transform themselves into a signifier they themselves can perceive with meaning and relation*

2:20 AM · Feb 4, 2021

modern machine

big daddy mainframe

Percy, Apple iPhone SE 2 Plus, earbuds

They are everywhere and they are invisible. Miniaturization has changed our experience of mechanisms. I believe our best machines are made of sunshine. Light and clean, machines weigh the same as the signals they produce, the electromagnetic waves bound within a machine are eminently portable. We walk in with signals.

## HUMAN

Fixing  
Planning  
Producing  
Innovation  
Growth  
Certainty  
Nodes  
Systems  
Global  
Independence  
Extinction  
Anthropocence

## MORE-THAN-HUMAN

Caring  
Gardening  
Engendering\*\*  
Resurgence\*  
Nurture  
Contingency  
Knots\*  
Assemblages\*  
Terrestrial\*\*  
Interdependence  
Precarity\*  
The Dithering\*\*\*

\*ANNA TSING \*\*BRUNO LATOUR \*\*\*KIM STANLEY ROBINSON

*Version 1.0* is an A/B styled manifesto assembled by Anab Jain. The two lists aim to shift and extend our perspective from human-centred to more-than-human worlds to imagine alternatives for living with and through the ecological emergency.

## CYBERFEMINISM

In 1992, theorist Sadie Plant and the artist collective VNS Matrix coined the term "cyberfeminism". They took the prefix "cyber-" attached it to feminism and steered it towards the computational, the technological and the digital. It reached the edges of cyberspace and didn't stay within the lines. The waves of cyberfeminism were fleeting, bold, ambitious, mythic, unpredictable and contradictory whereby an array of feminists and women activists bound themselves to one or few of these words and thrived. Through various projects, publications and debates, the "cyberfeminists" combined theoretical speculation, science fiction and artistic experimentation against the backdrop of cybernetics, embodiment, computing and feminism.

To some, it was an art movement that flooded the overwhelmingly, dry, male-soaked technological landscape, and to others, it offered an extension to living room sessions or town hall debates. Writer and musician Claire L. Evans in her book *Broad Band: The Untold Story of the Women Who Made the Internet* (2018) writes, "if the previous generation thought globally but acted locally, holding their consciousness-raising sessions in each other's living rooms, then the Internet could collapse the difference, creating a global living room where pixels and code did the work of pickets and fists."<sup>22</sup> Cyberspace changed the game by offering an unprecedented podium for women's rights, empowerment and liberation in which "feminists could newly network, theorize and critique online, transcending (if only temporarily, if only symbolically) sex, gender, geography."<sup>23</sup>

Based on the Western model of emancipated womanhood, cyberspace had the magnitude and capability of being totally imbued with feminist potential as it offered an incomparable "global" stage which Evans perfectly puts (and I repeat), "did the work of pickets and fists."<sup>24</sup> Feminist activism online was certainly unavoidable, as writer and historian Lucy Delap declares in her book

*Feminisms: A Global History* (2020), "feminists have persistently, creatively and doggedly appropriated spaces for political activism and solace. Some of their interventions were designed to subvert male-dominated spaces and make women's absence plain."<sup>25</sup> For feminists and cyberspace it was no different. Evans writes, "the cyberfeminists were fascinated by the idea of online space without geography, without predefined conventions, and believed a new kind of feminism might set sail there, afloat and untethered on an ocean of fibre and bits."<sup>26</sup>

I make no assumption that cyberfeminism has one narrative, a single origin or rather, that the influential and stirring work and contributions of Sadie Plant, SubRosa, the VNS Matrix or the Old Boy's Network (OBN) did not break ground for feminists and women activists online. Because, what endures as a defining characteristic of cyberfeminism can be traced back to Cornelia Sollfrank's words in her text *The Truth About Cyberfeminism* (1998) where she shortly but impactfully claims, "cyberfeminism only exists in the plural."<sup>27</sup> But, within this pluralistic quality and numbering of cyberfeminism, many narratives are not as visible. It has failed to extend and reach out to all women on equal terms. As Russell explains, "the public face of cyberfeminism was regularly championed and fetishized as one of white womanhood [thus] this white cyberfeminist landscape marginalised queer people, trans people, and POC aiming to decolonize digital space and their production via similar channels and networks."<sup>28</sup>

Consequently, cyberfeminism mirrored feminism's own past due to its inherent blind spots and silencing, thus reverberating the same problematic forms of marginalisation. So as Black, working-class, lesbian, trans and bisexual, disabled, non-Western and non-Christian women have been shut out of feminism's history, cyberfeminism is no exception.

Then and now, cyberfeminism is unable to hold on to a single approach of feminism simply because it repli-

cates the structure it inhabits. Shaped by accessibility and endless possibility, it favours the multiple, because the Internet itself often rejects the singular and flourishes in the plural. And, part of this flourishing arrangement are narratives that should be brought forward to the term's forefront, e.g. Radhika Gajjala's insights into South Asian digital networks, Mindy Seu's constant gathering of resources for techno-critical works (1990-2020) titled Cyberfeminism Index and Russell's *Glitch Feminism*, to name only three.

capitalism

I dissent, I push back against capitalism. I'm aware of how power operates online, I'm aware of the "technological builders" who shape how we experience digital worlds, steered by their politics. My trouble is that I'm on Instagram.

speaking writing weapon

My trouble is that I am the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism, not to mention state socialism. But illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origin(s). Their fathers, after all, are inessential.



## MANIFESTO

The manifesto, as explained by historian and literary critic Mary Ann Caws in *Manifesto: A Century of Isms*, "is by nature a loud genre"<sup>29</sup> that "has a madness about it. It is peculiar and angry, quirky or downright crazed. Always opposed to something particular or general, it has not only to be striking but to stand up straight."<sup>30</sup> Needless to say, the anger and loudness of the manifesto genre was a useful prompt and important fixture for feminists. "Janet Lyon has emphasized the function of the manifesto in articulating group identities, of establishing speaking positions for various minorities seeking to be heard (...), her focus on feminist rewritings of manifestos demonstrates the extent to which questions of gender are woven into the fabric of this genre."<sup>31</sup> The manifesto genre caused a disturbance enough to make something manifest for feminists and what feminists came up against.

In 1985, six years before the launch of the Web Browser<sup>32</sup>, Donna Haraway published a heavily poetic, ironic and dream-state piece, titled *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late 20th Century*. Through an array of eclectic theory and technological thought Haraway constructs the myth of the Cyborg to confront the traditional boundaries built and maintained by "Western" epistemology. For Haraway, these boundaries are exactly what separates "human" from "animal" and "human" from "machine", thus the Cyborg is deployed as an "imaginative resource" to debunk the dominations of race, gender, sexuality and class. When Haraway wrote the manifesto, the term "internet" was still gaining momentum within young networking agencies.<sup>33</sup> Yet, Haraway's theorizing and lectures on the Cyborg and the rebalancing between machine-human-animal were and are influential within the posthumanist and feminist discourse in the context of digital practice.

In 1991, the same year the Line Mode Browser (WWWLib) developed by Nicola Pellow was released,

the VNS Matrix released their first manifesto *The Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century*. Together, Josephine Starrs, Julianne Pierce, Francesca da Rimini and Virginia Barrat "took up the techno-utopian tone of early internet culture and turned it on its head."<sup>34</sup> The manifesto circulated via the online-community LambdaMoo and was shared throughout an Internet Relay Chat (IRC) channel. Though the manifesto made use of the technology at the time, it was predominantly distributed through traditional media. Its first release was printed on A4 sized paper and pasted onto walls (preferably over commercial advertising). It was sent by fax to postmodernist writer Kathy Acker and, most loudly, mounted onto a billboard almost five and a half meters wide, catching the attention of cultural theorist Sadie Plant, who later wrote *Zeros + ones: digital women + the new technoculture* (1997), a poignant telling of women's relationship with modern technology.

In seventeen lines of black, lowercase, unpunctuated text, the world written out in the manifesto swelled from a spherical form, boarded by twenty genetic chimerisms. The manifesto spat itself out in a single constant and reworked the noun "cunt" as a functional epithet, as a fundamentally patriarchal gesture that defines power for women, in primarily sexual terms.

In 2013, Russell coined the term "Glitch Feminism" and has since produced a discourse that interjects a socio-techno construct of gender and sexuality. The term came to Russell while researching porn star James Deen. With multiple tabs open the browser became stuck, overwhelmed and a glitch occurred "a little digital death". Russell sat, experiencing the myth of AFK and IRL ("In Real Life"), and in its collapse found its dazzling potential. Russell writes: "The glitch is the digital orgasm, where the machine takes a sigh, a shudder, and with a jerk, spasms. These moments have been integrated into the rituals and routines of our own physical action, impacting how we interact with our own bodies, and how we explore our deepest fantasies and

desires, spurred forth by these mechanized micro-seizures."<sup>35</sup> In Russell's compelling and urgent *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto* (2020), the Glitch is deployed as the main subject. In twelve sections, the concept of the Glitch is an "investigation, and celebration, of artists and their artwork that help us imagine new possibilities of what the body can do, and how this can work against the normative."<sup>36</sup> *Glitch Feminism* was published analogously, as a pocket-sized book due to Russell's wish for it to be easily portable.

Under the title "manifesto", the resources Cyborg, Cunt and Glitch were all born, expressed and promoted through language. But what exactly does the manifesto form offer? Is there a consistent style or characteristic that can be found in all three narratives? The following pages breakdown the (feminist) manifesto as a genre—it became clear that the manifesto is not a homogeneous genre, but rather draws its punch from contrasts and, sometimes from contradictions.

### *Challenging authority vs. seeking authority*

In science, a distinction is sometimes made between the political, the literary and the artistic manifesto, but with a closer look, all three are anchored in the same: politics.<sup>37</sup> The political manifesto underwent a change of meaning along the way: Long before the manifesto became a revolutionary, subversive voice, it instead served to publicize the will of a sovereign.<sup>38</sup> "With manifestos, political authorities informed their subjects about decisions that had been made long ago, about processes that had been already completed."<sup>39</sup> It was only in the time of the French Revolution when the manifesto became partisan and an organ of minority interest groups.<sup>40</sup> "While the earliest prehistory of the manifesto presents us with a genre steeped in authority (...), the modern manifesto is formed in the revolutionary challenge to such authority."<sup>41</sup> But this seems to be characteristic for manifestos until the current day: "In contrast to the earliest authoritative

manifestos, the modern, revolutionary manifesto seeks to obtain an authority it doesn't yet possess."<sup>42</sup> Manifestos are launched in the future and claim that authority will be given by the changes they themselves want to bring about.

### *Past vs. Future*

Manifestos are about the past, the present and the future at once. They're an expression of criticism of an existing condition (e.g. the patriarchy), therefore, a certain amount of unforgiveness is inherently bound to it. The Cunt claims to be ~unbounded unleashed unforgiving and Sara Ahmed writes in her article *A Killjoy manifesto* (2016) (a term she uses for the "feminist" manifesto): "We are willing to be the ones who fail the project of reconciliation. We know the success of that project is the failure to address these histories of injustice that manifest not only in the unresolved trauma of those for whom this history is a bodily inheritance, a transgenerational haunting but also in a grossly unequal distribution of wealth and resources. And they say: but look what you have been given. Equality, diversity: they all become gifts for which we are supposed to be grateful; they become compensatory. We are not grateful when a system is extended to include us when that system is predicated on inequality and violence."<sup>43</sup> The manifesto intends to change attitudes towards the injustice of an order by exposing its past. And then the future comes in: The manifesto also calls for change. It voices an alternative vision for words to be translated into action.

### *Manifestation vs. Disturbance*

Because the manifesto lacks authority and cannot exert any direct coercion toward the audience, they rely on the power of rhetorics. Sara Ahmed writes: "To render a new order of ideas perceptible is simultaneously a disordering of ideas; manifestos often enact what they call for in surprising and shocking ways given how they

expose the violence of an order. (...) A manifesto not only causes a disturbance, it aims to cause this disturbance. To make something manifest can be enough to cause a disturbance."<sup>44</sup> A manifesto claims both manifestation and disturbance at the same time. Even more, the disturbance itself can be understood as a manifestation. With this often comes a radical or unconventional language, and even a violation of the linguistic norm: "A manifesto makes an appeal by not being appealing: a manifesto is not an attractive piece of writing by existing norms or standards. It cannot be: it has to strain to be said. And yet a manifesto is appealing to those who read it."<sup>45</sup>

### *Political vs. Artistic*

Due to its tendency for unconventional, almost performative expression,<sup>46</sup> the manifesto has an artistic appeal. Historically, the genre entered the art world with the futurist movement, and later became a standard feature of the modernist art avant-garde. Throughout the 20th century, the edges between manifesto and artwork, poetry, collage, play or performance became blurry; "manifesto art" was born.<sup>47</sup> But even when the manifesto was used as an artistic expression it kept somewhat political, often rooted in socialist ideas. It might be due to *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) by Marx and Engels which transnationally reached a large audience and therefore coined the definition of the entire genre. "The predominance of the Manifesto over the subsequent history of the genre means that a history of the manifesto must also entail a history of socialism."<sup>48</sup> Immediately, the *Cyborg Manifesto* comes to mind in which Haraway acknowledges that socialist-feminism is advanced by allying itself with the basic analytic strategies of marxism<sup>49</sup> and describes one of her intentions as "an effort to contribute to socialist-feminist culture and theory in a postmodernist, non-naturalist mode and in the utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender."<sup>50</sup> In *Glitch Feminism*,

Russell brings together contemporary investigations and celebrations of artists as an offer and solution to "the troubled material of the body" within digital practice.<sup>51</sup> ~we see art with our cunt we make art with our cunt This strong bond between artistic and political agenda has a long history, "the social-ist internationals and transnational avant-garde movements found themselves in an intimate, if contentious, alliance from which neither could entirely escape. (...) The history of these competing manifestos is thus a history of struggle about the relation between art and politics, a struggle, in other words, about the best poetry of the revolution."<sup>52</sup>

### *Collective vs. personal narrative*

Because the manifesto is a call to action, the key aim is to reach a large audience. "We are willing to participate in a killjoy movement. We are that movement. Watch us roll."<sup>53</sup> The manifesto aims to mobilize, and therefore, as a publication should provide public accessibility, and as a text must create a sense of "we". We speak in tongues. That said, the manifesto is mostly written by a single person or a group, who visibly claim authorship and take responsibility by signing off with their name. "In many cases, the name also conceals an expert role that can be linked to the person who signed it. If professional qualifications and associated expert status match the content of the manifesto, this could give the text additional authority and legitimation."<sup>54</sup> Russell's *Glitch Feminism*, for example, balances between collective identification offers and an insight into Russell's personal experience of performing a Black, queer, female-identifying, femme identity AFK, and how exploring online meant she could be what she wanted.<sup>55</sup>

The next section will look at each resource which, to call upon Hayles, is "produced through verbal and semiotic markers." In particular, I will focus on how it refuses the binary through technology. I imagine each resource not as a particular shape or form, but rather as a mode of action—a strategy to identify as something opposed to the binary. Essentially, a resource can be anything, but, like the manifesto, it's often opposed to what it isn't. A resource is free and weightless because it has rid itself of the weight of what it refused.

## CYBORG

For Haraway, the Cyborg is a "cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction."<sup>56</sup> In the 1980s, Cyborgs were wandering the world(s) of science fiction, but they also had become reality through the neo-capitalist innovations of microelectronics and biotechnology. Haraway searches for the "dangerous potentials" found in technological developments.<sup>57</sup> She writes, "by the late 20th century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized, and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are all cyborgs."<sup>58</sup>

Cyborg imagery sought to change what's considered the "women's experience" at the end of the 20th century. Haraway argues that the Cyborg offers an alternative knowledge ecology as a proxy to the production of "universal totalizing theory"<sup>59</sup> and that through this new mode of thought an assemblage of interacting knowledge(s) (could) open up which allows the "dichotomies between mind and body, animal and human, organism and machine, public and private, nature and culture, men and women, primitive and civilized"<sup>60</sup> to be questioned, structurally and ideologically. Haraway also suggests that this way of thinking probably always has and most likely now misses "most of reality" and proposes relief: "cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves."<sup>61</sup> Above all, this newly imagined symbiosis that Haraway proposes between human and nonhuman offers a "slightly perverse shift of perspective (...) in technologically mediated societies"<sup>62</sup> previously unimaginable. **I'd rather be a cyborg than a goddess. No need to decide. Be both.**

What's essential to the Cyborg's contingent production is the rejection of the human subject and the symbiotic companionship between human and nonhuman entities "in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of per-



manently partial identities and contradictory stand-points."<sup>63</sup> Haraway instead urges us to celebrate contradiction, inconsistency and fragmentation. She considers that all truth is socially constructed, and expresses this through a freely associative, lyrical and ironic writing style. As a socialist-feminist who believes that thinking is best done collectively, Haraway brings together different reference points, scientific and fictional texts, and personal experience. This grants the audience a variety of possible interpretations, but also, makes it a tricky text to understand.<sup>64</sup>

When searching "cyborg" on Google Images the result is (mostly) a complex, wired, sci-fi, half-mechanic body that still resembles human anatomy and physiology e.g. erect posture, bipedal locomotion and manual dexterity. A Cyborg is not an abstracted posthuman, but a human-machine-hybrid (in the transhumanistic<sup>65</sup> sense) where certain body parts are enhanced. It has height, weight, strength, speed and exceptional survival skills. This familiar image of an empowered, destructive, faultless "superhuman" may have also contributed to its deviations within the (cyber)feminist discourse (yet, there are voices who critique such images which directly associate the Cyborg with hyper-masculinity<sup>66</sup> and involuntarily enable gender stereotypes.<sup>67</sup>) Professor of sociology Judy Wajcman analyses the gendered nature of technology in her book *TechnoFeminism* and writes: "The lived technoscientific reality of cyborgs has taken second place to their treatment as fictional discourse. Whereas Haraway is attuned to the 'fictional' narratives of real science, her followers are more interested in the elaboration of science fictions."<sup>68</sup>

Because the saturated image of the Cyborg is so culturally associated with masculinity, I'm sceptical if the Cyborg can be used as an appropriate metaphor today. Yet, Haraway's ideas remain relevant and evidently ignited not only the feminist imagination. With her recent writings she has turned to human-animal-rela-

tions and the climate crisis which again, is a multi-kind and multi-species question.

## NFTs

ALL NEW GEN is not for sale we don't want your cryptocurrency

The NFT market has a problem with its destructive carbon footprint. So one of the consequences is climate migration which produces systemic homelessness for many species, human and nonhuman.

I already tweeted about it: this NFT conversation feels to me like a violent re-brand / next wave of the toxic dude net art / digital art community; why is no one talking about the fact that the 'democratic future of art' here has a specific face and gender and target art x tech audience? Is it just me?

## CUNT

Although *The Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century* (1991) had a similar agenda in overcoming gender power structures through technology, it follows a different strategy. Instead of abstracting the human body by coupling with the nonhuman, the VNS Matrix instead ironically enhance the female-identified body and bring it into cyberculture. ~the clitoris is a direct line to the matrix Body parts become agencies of their own. They're mostly erogenous zones explosively mating with technology, thus defying the stereotype of the "naturally" innocent female-identified body.

Among the three manifestos, *The Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century* demonstrates a high level of radical and colloquial language. The VNS Matrix celebrate and arrange words like "anti", "madness", "disorder" and "saboteurs" beside words like "positive", "holiness", "poetry" and "temple"; this sort of linguistic agreement appears somewhat threat-like. The first sentence: "we are the modern cunt" and the last: "we are the future cunt" posits the word "cunt" strategically. Opposed to the word's profane use within a patriarchal society, the VNS Matrix celebrate it by associating it with words from the science fiction subgenre cyber-punk, e.g. "terminator", "matrix" and "virus" to its "geek-cool hackers" with names like "Case the console cowboy", most likely to add extra fuel to the already loaded concord.

Visually, the manifesto takes shape as a square and can be perceived like an image, an emblem or badge, swallowed whole. The most dominant element is the text itself which warps out of one spherical fragment of DNA, surrounded by twenty elliptic icons resembling single chimeras. The manifesto is impactful and eye-catching, almost hypnotic, visual harmony is achieved as all elements fall into a single coherent whole.

Despite the other resources, the Cunt is directly speaking to the reader, there is no "speaking about" or "speaking for" the Cunt, there's no mediator or author

needed. The Cunt is liberated, she uses her own language, she creates her own codes. Thus, the destruction and amendment of language become the message itself; (anti-)language is the weapon to dismantle the patriarchy, and the spreading of male dominance in technologies, in particular. Unknown author expresses this thought like this: "VNS Matrix not only infects men's clean machines with subversive guts and viscera, but also sets out to corrupt the broader code, namely the symbolic order and textual parameters that have frozen women, into techno-illiteracy and incompatibility."<sup>69</sup>

But, I wonder whether the Cunt (as a resource) is somewhat in favour of the binary as it specifically targets and celebrates the female-identifying body, women's liberation and self-dominance. And, in doing so, excludes other gender identities. Though, positioning the focus on specific female-identified organs could be also read as a *general* critique on the extreme presence of gender constructions AFK, and the gender power relations thereto which are inherently connected and robust. "VNS Matrix's project is an attempt to rethink a non-essentialised embodied self, which simultaneously allows for multiple bodies or sets of embodied positions. Hence, the contested sign "woman" is both affirmed and deconstructed."<sup>70</sup>

The VNS Matrix's metaphor might be confusing or even annoying to some, as it risks trapping back into some form of bio-determinism and equating the female-identified with hysteria, hormones or motherhood. However, *The Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century* recognizes that the female-identified—or, the "other" than male-identified—are not sufficiently present in the creation and perception of technologies. In comparison to the other two manifestos, this view on technology and its transformational power on AFK gender power relations might be less utopic.

## GLITCH

In the context of computing and electronics, the word "glitch" suggests that an undetected error has occurred. A Glitch prevents something from functioning properly, it's an inconvenience, a hurdle that halts efficiency, a momentary slippage. Sundén writes: "The machine is still running, but the performance is poor, which also shifts the experience of the performance. As an unexpected break in the flow, glitches are often undesired, undesirable, and hence possibly anxiety-inducing when they occur. It is a momentary loss of control, over technologies, systems, and devices."<sup>71</sup>

Within the machine of society, so to speak, the "failure to function" is gender. Russell declares that the AFK society "relentlessly demands we make choices based on a conceptual gender binary that limits us as individuals,"<sup>72</sup> for individuals to stay in the hegemonic line. In *Glitch Feminism: A Manifesto* (2020), Russell confronts the binary by introducing the oppositional resource, Glitch. The Glitch is a celebration of the error and a mantra for all those who slip, slide, queer and "glitch" between the hegemonic and the binary, or for those who are unwilling to follow. As previously described, for Russell, it is specifically the Internet that holds the possibilities for creating, exploring and redefining identity and "to make abstract again that which has been forced into an uncomfortable and ill-defined material: the body."<sup>73</sup>

The Glitch meets the other resources in problematizing the construct of the predetermined (gendered) body and advocating for its liberation through technology. But, by asking the painful question of who is recognized as being fully "human", Russell not only calls out the historical construction of gender but also the historical construction of race, restricting the physical movement of female-identifying, queer, POC. Thus, arguing for a redefinition of the feminist movement by establishing an intersectional discourse<sup>74</sup> and amplifying the visibility of all kinds of historically othered

bodies into the cyberfeminist utopic imaginary: "As we wade through contemporary feminisms and the negotiations of power embodied by #BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, or the tradition of the Women's March, we must recognize that these movements are defined and driven by technology."<sup>75</sup>

The agenda of the Glitch is revealed through the structure of the book. Comprised of twelve sections, with each section titled after what the Glitch can be and how it operates. Within the twelve instantiations and interpretations and by using the word "glitch" as a noun or as a verb, *Glitch Feminism* takes a multifaceted standpoint.

GLITCH REFUSES  
GLITCH IS COSMIC  
GLITCH THROWS SHADE  
GLITCH GHOSTS  
GLITCH IS ERROR  
GLITCH ENCRYPTS  
GLITCH IS ANTIBODY  
GLITCH IS SKIN  
GLITCH IS VIRUS  
GLITCH MOBILIZES  
GLITCH IS REMIX  
GLITCH SURVIVES

I see the Glitch not as a figure that's between human and nonhuman, but rather as a call to action. Russell's enthusiastic telling of how the Internet can be a place for world-building where bodies can develop and don othered skins proves optimistic. According to Russell, the possibilities the Internet offers to the "troubled material of the body" should have a positive consequence on AFK. Russell writes: "As glitch feminists, we inject our positive irregularities into these systems as errata, activating new architecture through these malfunctions, seeking out and celebrating the slipperiness of gender in our weird and wild wander."<sup>76</sup> This injection is exactly the function that blurs and deregulates the divide between the body and the machine, the real and

the digital. So, it is not surprising that the manifesto itself reads like a manual, like a "how-to-guide" on how to inject ourselves into these systems. The Glitch is a vehicle to rethink our physical selves. Thus, "becoming a glitch" is less a transformation of embodiment, but rather a transformation of consciousness and action, online as well as offline.

But if the loop is more or less fueled from one end, I wonder how these bodies might inject themselves back into AFK? And, if glitched bodies are actually capable of dismantling institutions like Google, facebook and Instagram which mirror the capitalist, binary AFK infrastructures? Glitch feminists should target these platforms, instead of (only) "feeding" into them. It's not enough to only state pronouns and reshare posts and stories. After all, Russell ends the manifesto with "Let the whole damn thing short circuit."<sup>77</sup>

matilde park @matildepark\_

*going offline is relearning how to become bac-  
terium, how to become material as-yet-unhoned  
toward your Cleo pedestal self*

3:11 AM · Mar 9, 2021

I  
Donna Haraway, The VNS Matrix and Legacy Russell  
conclude their manifestos on the same note: (hope for)  
the future. Haraway ends with the wish to be a Cyborg  
rather than a goddess, The VNS Matrix announce  
they're the future Cunt, Russell urges us to tear it all  
down and be the Glitch. If I was to follow, I *should* speak  
in tongues ~infiltrating disrupting disseminating. I  
*should* use "we" instead of "I" and utter unapologetic  
words. I should spiral dance, ~corrupt the discourse  
and, let the whole damn thing short-circuit. But I ques-  
tion what the next resource will be? And, who it will be  
for? Or, I hope that a resource is no longer required to  
explain our bodies and tools to ourselves. As a feminist  
designer who works with machines and the Internet I  
want to not only use what is already written but shape  
what it should be: inclusive to all bodies and identities,  
human and nonhuman.





Friendliness doesn't always help.

Film still from *Die allseitig reduzierte Persönlichkeit-Redupers* (*All Round Reduced Personality*), Helke Sander, 1978.

## NOTES

1 In 2011, theorist Nathan Jurgenson urgently critiques the emergence of new technologies and the phrase "digital dualism" by arguing against the term IRL ("In Real Life"). He believes we have surpassed the IRL acronym, it is a falsehood: that there are two selves operating in isolation from one another. Instead, to distinguish between the physical self and the digital self he insists upon a continuation of the two: the user does not step in and out of two separate realities (e.g. the online self versus the offline self), but rather steps away from the keyboard ("AFK"), thus the progression of the self continues; see nathanjurgenson (2011)

2 Chun (2006), p. 37.

3 Words like "surfing" and "superhighway" and phrases like "a new frontier" and "surfing the information superhighway" gave expression to what it felt like to use the Internet—the Internet was an activity waiting to be experienced.

4 Russell (2020), p. 73.

5 Nakamura (1995), p. 1.

6 Russell (2020), p. 73.

7 Steyerl (2014), p. 30.

8 Hayles (1999), p. xiii.

9 Butler (1993), p. 2.

10 Russell (2020), p. 11.

11 Ibid, pp. 12-13.

12 Sundén (2015).

13 see Koistinen, Karkulehto (2018).

14 Ibid.

15 Sundén (2015).

16 Ibid.

17 Haraway (2016), pp. 13, 97.

18 see Koistinen, Karkulehto (2018).

19 see Haraway (1985/ 2006), pp. 117-118, 131.

20 Hayles (1999), p. 3.

21 Unknown author.

22 Evans (2018), p. 239.

23 Russell (2020), p. 33.

- 24 Evans (2018), p. 239.
- 25 Delap (2020), p. 5.
- 26 Evans (2018), p. 239.
- 27 Solfrank.
- 28 Russell (2020), pp. 32-33
- 29 Caws (2001), p. xx.
- 30 Ibid, p. xviii.
- 31 Puchner (2006), p. 4.
- 32 The origin and history of the Internet is a diverging endeavour. Still, a definitive moment was the development of the Web Browser. The WorldWideWeb (W3) was the first web browser developed in 1989 by Tim Berners-Lee, followed promptly by the Line Mode Browser (WWWLib) written by Nicola Pellow. The WWWLib Browser could be operated and used on multiple computers and computer terminals, providing users access to the World Wide Web from multiple locations. This meant that content could be fetched from the World Wide Web and displayed on an interface; information and knowledge newly and flowed. Both browsers were exemplary to the general development of the web browser and unarguably defined what the Web Browser fundamentally is; see Wikipedia, *The History of the World Wide Web*, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_the\\_World\\_Wide\\_Web](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_World_Wide_Web)
- 33 Haraway instead found examples of human-machine-couplings in medicine, the military or production; see Haraway (1985/ 2006), pp. 117-118, 131.
- 34 Evans (2018), p. 239.
- 35 Russell (2012).
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 see Klatt, Lorenz (2010), p. 8.
- 38 see ibid, p. 9.
- 39 "Mit Manifesten unterrichteten politische Autoritäten ihre Untertanen über längst vollzogene Entscheidungen, über abgeschlossene Prozesse." Translated with [www.DeepL.com/Translator](http://www.DeepL.com/Translator) (free version); ibid, p. 9.
- 40 see ibid, p. 10.
- 41 Puchner (2006), p. 23.

- 42 Ibid, p. 24.
- 43 Ahmed (2017), p. 263.
- 44 Ibid, p. 251.
- 45 Ibid, p. 252.
- 46 The manifesto is sometimes defined as a "speech act" rather than an actual piece of writing; see Puchner (2006), pp. 23-32.
- 47 see ibid, pp. 5-7.
- 48 Ibid, p. 2.
- 49 Haraway (1985/ 2006), p.125.
- 50 Haraway (1985/ 1991), p.150.
- 51 see Russell (2020), p. 9.
- 52 Puchner (2006), p. 4.
- 53 Ahmed (2017), p. 268.
- 54 Hinter dem Namen verbirgt sich zudem in vielen Fällen eine Expertenrolle, die mit der unterzeichnenden Persönlichkeit verbunden werden kann. Passen fachliche Qualifikation sowie assoziierter Expertenstatus der Manifestanten thematisch zu dem Inhalt des Manifests, so könnte dies der Textbotschaft eine zusätzliche Autorität wie auch Legitimation verleihen." Translated with [www.DeepL.com/Translator](http://www.DeepL.com/Translator) (free version); Klatt, Lorenz (2010), pp. 29-30.
- 55 see Russell (2020), p. 7.
- 56 Haraway (1985/ 2006), p. 117.
- 57 Haraway optimistically endorses technological innovation for its emancipatory potential, while at the same time critically analysing the interconnections between capitalism, patriarchy and technoscience.
- 58 Haraway (1985/ 2006), p. 118.
- 59 Ibid, p. 147.
- 60 Ibid, p. 130.
- 61 Ibid, p. 147.
- 62 Ibid, p. 122.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Wajcman (2004), p. 98.
- 65 Transhumanism specifically looks at how technology can directly enhance the human condition by developing and making widely available sophisticated techno-

logies able to enhance longevity or cognitive abilities, e.g. pharmaceuticals (hormones), prosthetics or vaccines.

66 see Wajcman (2004), p. 98.

67 Ibid, p. 94.

68 Ibid.

69 Unknown author.

70 Ibid.

71 Sundén.

72 Russell (2020), p. 11.

73 Ibid, p. 8.

74 Russell notes that racism alongside sexism has been indeed recognized by some feminists working in the field of the technological and the digital, such as the VNS Matrix. Yet, the hypervisibility of white faces and voices demonstrated an ongoing exclusion; see *ibid*, p. 33.

75 Ibid, p. 35.

76 Ibid, p. 13.

77 Ibid, p. 153.

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