

SADIE PLANT

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**DIGITAL WOMEN +
THE NEW TECHNOCULTURE**

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to all the contributory factors

cyborg manifestos

For years, decades, centuries, it seemed as though women were lagging behind the front runners of the human race, struggling to win the rights attained by men, suffering for want of the status which full membership of the species would supposedly have given them. And as long as human was the only thing to be, women have had little option but to pursue the possibility of gaining full membership of the species "with a view to winning back their own organism, their own history, their own subjectivity." But this is a strategy which "does not function without drying up a spring or stopping a flow." And there are processes of parallel emergence, noncausal connections and simultaneous developments which suggest that sexual relations continually shift in sympathy with changes to the ways many other aspects of the world work. If Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex* found itself compelled to call for "men and women" to "univocally affirm their brotherhood" in 1949, this was also the point at which the first sex began to find itself subsumed by self-organizing tendencies beyond its ken or its control. By 1969, when Monique Wittig published *Les Guérillères*, these tendencies were emerging as networks which didn't even try to live up to the existing definitions of what it was to be a proper one of anything at all. And by the 1970s, when Luce Irigaray wrote *This Sex Which Is Not One*, fluid complexities were giving a world which had once revolved around ones and others a dynamic which obsoleted the possibility of being one of anything at all.

As personal computers, samplers, and cyberpunk narratives proliferated in the mid-1980s, Donna Haraway's cyborgs

were writing manifestos of their own. "By the late twentieth century," they declared, "our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are all cyborgs." And while the shiny screens of the late twentieth century continued to present themselves as clean-living products of the straight white lines of a peculiarly man-made world, Haraway's text excited a wave of subversive female enthusiasm for the new networks and machines. In the early 1990s, a cyberfeminist manifesto appeared on an Australian billboard and declared, "The clitoris is a direct line to the matrix," a line which refers to both the womb—*matrix* is the Latin term, just as *hystera* is the Greek—and the abstract networks of communication which were increasingly assembling themselves.

"You may not encounter ALL NEW GEN as she has many guises. But, do not fear, she is always in the matrix, an omnipresent intelligence, anarcho cyber terrorist acting as a virus of the new world disorder."

VNS Matrix

They say she wears "different veils according to the historic period." They say her "original attributes and epithets were so numerous . . . in the hieroglyphics she is called 'the many-named,' 'the thousand-named' . . . 'the myriad-named.'" They say, "the future is unmanned." They say, "let those who call for a new language first learn violence. They say, let those who want to change the world first seize all the rifles. They say that they are starting from zero. They say that a new world is beginning." They say, "if machines, even the machines of theory, can arouse themselves, why not women?"

nets

- p. 48 "a trail . . . of interest through the maze of materials available" Van-
nevar Bush, quoted in George Landow, *Hypertext*, p. 17.
- p. 49 "an irresistible revolutionary calling . . ." Gilles Deleuze and Félix
Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 387.
- p. 50 "the faculty which distinguishes parts . . ." Gilles Deleuze, *Difference
and Repetition*, p. 36.
- p. 50 "demonic rather than divine . . ." *ibid.*, p. 37.

digits

- p. 51 "essential to all who wish to be calculators . . ." Brahmagupta, quoted
in S. H. Hollingdale and G. C. Tootill, *Electronic Computers*, p. 23.
- p. 52 "It is India that gave us the ingenious method . . ." Leibniz, quoted in
ibid., p. 26.
- p. 53 "Numeration is the representation of numbers by figures" *ibid.*, p. 25.

holes

- p. 55 "Zero is *something*" Augustus De Morgan, quoted in Dorothy Stein,
Ada, A Life and a Legacy, p. 72.
- p. 56 "occult principle of change" Menabrea *Sketch of the Analytical Engine
invented by Charles Babbage Esq.* By L. F. Menabrea, *of Turin, Officer of the
Military Engineers*, in Philip and Emily Morrison, eds. *Charles Babbage
and his Calculating Engines*, p. 240.
- p. 57 "to say that intense and moving particles . . ." Gilles Deleuze and Félix
Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 32.

cyborg manifestos

- p. 58 "with a view to winning back their own organism . . ." Gilles Deleuze
and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 276.
- p. 58 "men and women . . ." Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 687.

- p. 59 "By the late twentieth century . . ." Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg
Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late
Twentieth Century," p. 150.
- p. 59 "The clitoris is a direct line to the matrix" VNS Matrix, billboard.
- p. 59 "different veils according to the historic period . . ." Luce Irigaray,
Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche, p. 118.
- p. 59 "original attributes and epithets were so numerous . . ." J. G. Frazer,
The Golden Bough, p. 503.
- p. 59 "the future is unmanned . . ." VNS Matrix, billboard.
- p. 59 "let those who call for a new language . . ." Monique Wittig, *Les
Guérillères*, p. 85.
- p. 59 "if machines . . . why not women?" Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the
Other Woman*, p. 232.

programming language

- p. 60 "in honour of an obscure . . ." Carol L. James and Duncan E. Morrill,
"The Real Ada; Countess of Lovelace." Accessible at [http://
www.cdrom.com/pub/ada/alpo/docs/flyers/naming.htm](http://www.cdrom.com/pub/ada/alpo/docs/flyers/naming.htm).

shuttle systems

- p. 60 "our material—for some incomprehensible reason" Sigmund Freud, *On
Sexuality*, p. 320.
- p. 61 "taking the world to human will and ingenuity" Elizabeth Wayland
Barber, *Women's Work*, p. 45.
- p. 63 "Neolithic women were investing large amounts . . ." *ibid.*, p. 90.
- p. 63 "machines for spinning, weaving, twisting hemp . . ." W. English, *The
Textile Industry*, p. 6.
- p. 63 "in the sense that his 'machines' . . ." Serge Bramly, *Leonardo, the Artist
and the Man*, p. 272.
- p. 63 "Like the most humble cultural assets . . ." Fernand Braudel, *Capital-
ism and Material Life*, p. 237.

**'The best and most original book
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and implications of ubiquitous
computation.'**

William Gibson, author of *The Difference Engine*

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