REVIEW-ESSAYS

Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr.

The Cyborg and the Kitchen Sink; or, The Salvation Story of No Salvation Story

Donna J. Haraway. *Modest_Witness@Second_Millenium.FemaleMan© Meets_OncoMouse™: Feminism and Technoscience*. Routledge (800-634-7064), 1997. xi + 361 pp. $75.00 cloth; $18.99 paper.

1. Mutants in Awe at their Progress. Donna Haraway assured herself a place in the postmodern pantheon with the publication of her "Manifesto for Cyborgs" in 1985. By boldly finding her own uses for one of the hardest science-fictional and military chimeras, Haraway demolished some of the most cherished dualities of Euro-American rationalism. Haraway combined a form of radical pragmatism that refused to entertain any concept of a natural, given meaning to the world, with a feminist utopian dream of global networks working for social justice and ecological health. Her cyborg was universal—every being could be seen as a multiply determined node in a field of interactions dominated by technology. Dualisms that permitted traditional ideological polarities—as, for instance, between hypercapitalist technodevelopers and nature-advocate feminists—Haraway dismissed as optical illusions shared by the traditional right and left that refused to understand the power of technoscience. In a world of cyborgs, hierarchical distinctions between human and animal, human and machine, mind and nature, natural and artificial, or male and female, are fetishes for evading the messy truth that there is no purity in the world. Haraway gave theoretical voice to the radical social and cultural transformations brought about by the communications revolution in the developed West. Cyborg politics encouraged women to take power in science, by admitting that only through such power could feminism actually affect the world. Haraway also provided a theoretical context for an engaged, participatory study of cognitive border zones, where different cultures of knowledge met and were hybridized.

The "Manifesto" remains a remarkable document of postmodern theory, not only because of its originality and audacity, but also its widespread influence. It is not an easy text to read, and Haraway's notion of the cyborg as a posthuman creature dissolving all comfortable common-sense categories is a disturbing one. Consciously to be a cyborg is to be completely fluid in the network of social power-determinations, to be without fixed identity, and completely free, at least in terms of traditional moral choices. Haraway implies

that a cyborg has its values, but even its own endurance is problematic, since a cyborg's awareness need not be tied to a fixed body or personal identity; more important than its own endurance is the endurance and development of the network in which the cyborg makes its connections with other cyborgs. There are no fixed sources and goals of value: no God (Haraway's only true enemy is the fetishized Not-Cyborg), no natural law. Because Haraway imagines the cyborg as a network being, her cyborg world is not nihilistic. An evolved cyborg can become aware of its "kinship" with an infinite number of cyborg-entities in the world, from animals to machines to texts, and its most natural response would be play and creativity.

Sf has many stories of the evolution of human beings to a posthuman level, and Haraway expected her readers to be aware of the science-fictional dimension of her theoretical creature. These posthuman evolutes in sf, however, often demonstrate the impossibility of communicating what the posthuman is to the human, i.e., to us. The ones who pass over the apocalyptic line, like the children saved by the Overlords in *Childhood's End* (1953) or by the "slimies" in the Strugatskys' *The Ugly Swans* (1966-7), all the way to the New Flesh in Cronenberg's *Videodrome* (1982), emphatically cannot communicate to normal humanity the values on which they base their decisions; they speak "otherwise." And even though we are all potentially cyborgs in the age of global technoscience, Haraway does not propose that cyborgs are freer of ethical dilemmas than humanists. Once transcendental sources of appeal are demolished, there is no guarantee that cyborgs will do good rather than harm. Nor indeed will traditional humanists know what should be considered harm for various cyborg forms. Yet Haraway has tried to alloy her essentially descriptive insight into the posthuman condition with a political-moral encouragement: in the world dominated by technoscience, the cyborg is able to do more good than the moralist. Indeed, since humanism is explicitly associated with productionism and phallocentrism in a later essay, "The Promises of Monsters" (in *Cultural Studies,* ed. Lawrence Grossberg et al. [New York: Routledge, 1992] 295-337), the cyborg is the only way out: whether the way will lead to suffocation or solidarity is yet to be decided; it is, to use one of Haraway's obsessive formulas, "at stake."

The "Cyborg Manifesto" articulated some of the foundational ideas of postmodernism, explicitly linking technoscience, ethnography, feminism, and liberation politics in a synthesis that has now become a bona fide model of postmodern thinking. It is a full-catastrophe model, in which the terrifying annihilation of roots and teleology also promises a liberation from the hypocritical, schizophrenic morality of the violent Western culture of progress-at-any-cost. The "Manifesto" linked the cyborg state to the dissolution of the great Western myths of transcendence—Christianity, progress, patrilineal genealogies conjuring up mythologies of legitimacy—and claimed an ironic and perhaps tongue-in-cheek solidarity with all outsiders, all the Others that formed the Great Paradigmatic Pool of Aliens for sf: women, machines, animals, non-Western peoples (though, interestingly enough, she does not mention children, another of the basic models for sf aliens). With the rejection of traditions of

legitimacy, "affinity" replaces blood, and the politics of connection (networking) replaces the abstract cosmological history of the Western ideologies, including Marxist feminism. The Western concept of Nature was deconstructed to reveal its ideological purpose as a "regulatory fiction," the irreducible explanation for compulsion, exploitation, and violence. Individuation, unity, holism, synthesis, alienation, fallenness—all ideologies that reduce difference are demonstrated to be violent appropriations.

For Haraway, effective, liberatory solidarities must be built through actions by allies who never lose their distinctive differences—and presumably always threaten to create schisms in the future. Resolution and synthesis are replaced by the ideal of perpetual negotiation and contest. This view is clearly linked to the affinity-group politics of its time. Cyborg politics demanded a radical rejection of the very idea of a privilege based in natural origin. In this sense cyborg politics is a logical evolutionary development of Enlightenment critiques of ideology, of the rationalization of arbitrary force, blood, and professional ascendancy. Refusing to shy away from the dangerous implications, cyborg politics was to be the ideology of risk-taking, versus the ideologies of natural unity or purity, which were viewed as self-protective smokescreens set up by historical victors trying to consolidate their gains.

In this, cyborg politics had many affinities with anarchism. But whereas anarchism was a humanism, cyborg theory seemed to advocate the obliteration of mutually-sustaining dualities and oppositional categories through the conscious cultivation of transgression. Transgression—the enemy of transcendence, in Haraway's cosmology—involves the violation of ideological boundaries, and indeed, potentially all boundaries, since all boundaries are implied to be ideologically motivated. "Pollution," "miscegenation," "contamination," "illegitimacy," and "noise" all become ironic positive terms, affirming simultaneously the pleasures of richness and of destruction. As the graffito in Jeff Noon's *Vurt* (1993) declaims: "*Puir is poor.*" One can see this as a form of punk resistance, where the display of deviance is the declaration of independence, and openly courted scandal is the tool of revolution. The cyborg's sacred tenet is that nothing is sacred. Indeed, for Haraway, prime among the de-sacralized categories is motherhood and "natural" reproduction, and the use of natural/organic birthing as a model for transformation. (Hence, perhaps, why children and blood-families are absent from Haraway's social vision. The biological family is so inimical to cyborg sociality that Haraway does not even entertain reforms in its structure. Children, then, might be viewed as the cyborg's shadows, the aliens that are not even imagined.)

Seen from this perspective (thirteen years later), aspects of the "Manifesto" are still so fresh that no self-respecting theory of the present can ignore them. It was hard then to see that, in Haraway's oblique language directed toward a small group of leftist intellectuals, was articulated one of the boldest acids of thought in our time. This affirmation of pollution connected with a strong current of anti-traditionalism that came from many sources: a gigantic skepticism about Western ideologies that came not only from oppressed peoples and vanguard critics, but what seemed to be a whole new generation of

rejectionists dismissing the fundamentalisms that had promised everything—progress, the Apocalypse, heaven here or heaven there—and whose promises of ultimate transformation, once they were worn out, unrenewable, could be replaced only by raging negation. Disillusioned in the myth of "humanity," many folks turned naturally either to their own group-identities or to the savage, resentful rejection of the "good citizen."

Haraway did not—and arguably could not—arrive at a logical accounting for the cyborg's Good. Indeed, since all groups have been de-legitimized, no ethics based in mere logic or original principle can stand. As in most other areas of deconstruction, Haraway's "Manifesto" performed virtuoso demolitions of social categories, leaving the reconstruction to irrational affirmations. The manifesto's feminism is based on the positional agency of women vis-à-vis men. Rejecting all essentialist concepts of women, Haraway—following Monique Wittig—daringly claims for women what Lukács claimed for the proletariat: the subject-position of the revolutionary class, who are capable of seeing the emerging liberation because it is both in their interest and in their imagination to do so. To see from this position, one need not even be a biological woman, only acknowledging "feminization." As Haraway clearly states in her article, "'Gender' for a Marxist Dictionary" (in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* [New York: Routledge, 1991] 127-148), woman is a class-agent whose goal is the destruction of the conditions that created it, and thus the destruction of itself as a class. So the privileged cyborg position is clearly that of the oppressed who putatively are accorded special clarity by seeing the violence ingrained in ideologies that justify their domination.

The main cognitive point of the "Manifesto" is to alert women and the "feminized" that science is the central political arena of the age; or rather, that global technoscience—the conglomeration of institutions, projects, applications, taxonomies, and economies that further the technological transformation of the world—is the field where political questions of freedom and contingency will ultimately be determined. Technoscience viewed as a cultural practice has already, in the second half of the twentieth century, succeeded in transforming the perspective required to understand the way the world works: as a matter of communications dynamics—a model that creates a continuum between the putatively technical aspects of science and the *politique aux choux et raves*, the social-political experiences of people living their daily lives. The translation of politics and social life into communication-system terms permits Haraway to turn the classic systems-theoretical view (which essentially had no need for the hypothesis of human will) on its ear. If people understand how the world as material-semiotic communication system works, they can intervene and contest it, revealing how much it had depended on hidden, even unconscious human agency in the first place.

The radical cyborg of Haraway's "Manifesto" thus has little to do with the traditional sf topos of the lone prodigy, the servo-mechanical/organic *individual* designed to heighten problems of personal mortality and freedom. It is a systems being, free of shame and dogma, free to make any alliances necessary

for its survival in whatever situation it may find itself. Liberated from the "God trick," superstitions of apocalyptic religion, and the "secular salvation stories" of technoscience, the manifesto's cyborg is aware of its precise material limitations, but has no prejudices about what it may or may not do to assure the survival of its network.

The manifest power of Haraway's deconstructive analysis is evident not only in the great influence the concept of the cyborg had on postmodern theorizing following its publication, but also in the unmistakable evidence that postmodern youth culture delighted in cyborg identity. However, for many readers, the "Manifesto" was marred by Haraway's complicated and ambivalent rhetoric of ironic self-implication. Because technoscience has transformed the world to the point that there is nothing truly outside it, everyone was implicated in it, including those critical theorists of science who hoped to direct it to emancipatory ends. Further, almost by definition, the systems-condition of the cyborg precludes a priori moral positions. Haraway infuses her analysis with progressive purpose through the constant use of encouraging, hortatory language that is considerably vaguer than her analysis. Perhaps the most awkward problem is that Haraway attacks "saving myths of original wholeness" (Christian and secular) with missionary zeal, identifying the sources of domination and violence in the mythology of expulsion from primal innocence and ultimate restoration. But once these myths are discarded, where do the alternative justifications of liberatory practices come from?

In the "Manifesto" (in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*: *The Reinvention of Nature* [New York: Routledge, 1991] 149-181), Haraway writes that "there is a myth system waiting to become a political language to ground one way of looking at science and technology and challenging the informatics of domination—in order to act potently" (181). Yet it is difficult to imagine that the ironic cyborg myth system Haraway carefully collects is free from the very flaws she finds in her antagonists. As she continues:

> ...holistic politics depend on metaphors of rebirth and invariably call on the resources of reproductive sex. I would suggest that cyborgs have more to do with regeneration and are suspicious of the reproductive matrix and most birthing. For salamanders, regeneration after injury, such as the loss of a limb, involves regrowth of structure and restoration of function with the constant possibility of twinning or other odd topographical productions at the site of the former injury. The regrown limb can be monstrous, duplicated, potent. We have all been injured, profoundly. We require regeneration, not rebirth, and the possibilities of our reconstitution include the utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous world without gender. (181)

Who are "we?" If we had no original wholeness, how are we injured? What are our injuries, our lopped-off limbs? What is to be regenerated? Indeed, in this telling passage at the end of the "Manifesto," Haraway posits a "monstrous world" in which the blessed monster turns out to be the Whole One, a creature without gender—monstrous only because the normalizing mainstream is itself riven by the myth of gender. What is the salamander in this analogy? In the hermetic tradition the Salamander is the being that retains its structural and spiritual wholeness in the midst of the fires of transformation. Here Haraway,

in tension with her ideas, uses it for similar purposes, for the salamander is the creature with the power to regulate its wholeness.

Clearly, the difficulty of Haraway's rhetoric is different from that of more detached deconstructionists; it stems from a certain heteroglossia that she consciously adopts in her attempt to speak to several constituencies at once, while debating several kinds of opponents at the same time. Already in the "Manifesto" Haraway eschews narrow and clear enunciation, choosing simultaneously to exhort, satirize, analyze historically and deconstructively, to congratulate and encourage other feminist critics and marginalized people, and regularly to alert her readers to her own awareness of her contingent cultural subject position—i.e., to leave space in her argument for critiques from potentially excluded voices. Haraway accepts a certain obscurity precisely to avoid the discursive clarity that pretends to be accessible to all thinkers but actually reinforces the legitimacy of the academic elites. Her style recognizably involves the movement of thought from historical analysis and "material-semiotic" speculation to personal assertions of modesty and political polemic. Any sentence might lead in any of these directions. This dizzying style is certainly difficult, but it was justified by the number of readers Haraway strove to unite in her audience. Further, her implicit debating partners range from sociobiologists to feminist identity theorists and rejecters of technoscience to the ideologues of global capitalism. Thus Haraway faced competing tasks: to allow openness and plurality for her allies, and to present a unified—albeit flexible and varied—critique to the opponents of cyborg feminism.

2. From Manifesto to Modesty (and back again). It's not easy to recall the exact moment when the penny of "A Manifesto for Cyborgs" dropped. Although it first appeared in the glory years of cultural/sf theory on the edge—two years after the English translation of Baudrillard's "The Precession of Simulacra"; a year after Jameson's "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," the English version of Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition,* and Gibson's *Neuromancer*; and in the same year as Sterling's *Schismatrix*—Haraway's "ironic myth" took time to take effect. Typical of the anti-postmodern Left, Jameson made no mention of Haraway in his *Postmodernism* book, published as late as 1991. The Harawayan cyborg gathered power, especially in the late 80s/early 90s, in an ambiguous relationship with cyberpunk and digital culture. Sometimes the bad-girl rival of the lost boys of c-punk for the future of cybercommunication, sometimes the futuristic projection of the carnival of queers and freaks, sometimes the utopian vision of dynamic freedom from biological determinism, the cyborg appeared more and more as *the* theoretical breakthrough being. That people complained the cyborg was being interpreted to fit any technically savvy, supposedly liberatory, in-your-face display a writer wished to characterize wasn't sur-prising. Haraway was clear about one thing, if only one thing: her myth was ironic, she was speaking in quotes, presenting a program halfway between a technically enlightened socialist-feminism and sf. Unwilling—and perhaps unable—to decide whether the cyborg is an agent specifically of

feminist revolution or of the general communications/prosthesis revolution, Haraway gave the world a theory for which it would *have to* find its own uses.

It seems so long ago now, from the present of 1998, that the radical ideas of the mid-80s appeared as life-changing transgressions. Simulation, the cyborg, cyberspace, virtuality, the death of the imaginary, the virus, the queered, the Temporary Autonomous Zone, the bio-philosophy of addiction, the whole thesaurus of deconstruction of transcendental gestures are now the currency of our postmodernism. And like characters in a Philip Dick novel, the problem is not the porousness of our reality, but the banality this brings. Like Flitcraft in Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*, we have grown used to beams not falling on our heads, and we adjust to a culture of prosthetics and digitization and global economic injustice. During the years that these concepts became familiar, Haraway published two books. *Primate Visions* (Routledge, 1989) and *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women* (Routledge, 1991) differ considerably from each other, but each covers huge tracts of intellectual territory. The former was a magisterial study of the ideologies of primatological research in the twentieth century, in which close historical analyses of specific practices and ideologies were far more emphasized than Haraway's own explicit authorial interventions. The latter was a compilation of essays that had appeared in many different places over the course of a decade. As her audiences varied, so did her style, on a spectrum from clear academic analysis to the wild flight of the "Manifesto."

After the appearance of the "Manifesto," the two most significant techno-scientific developments were the global communication web and genetic research, institutionalized in the Internet and the Human Genome Project. Attesting to the power of Haraway's cyborg model, both developments represent the extension of the embodiment of information in communication-control systems. Both have profound decentering effects on notions of identity (personal, group, gender, ethnic, etc.), on reproduction or rather replication of different kinds of information, on social agency—indeed on all ideas of "transcendental" control over the dynamics of information. The cyborg is intimately involved with each information system. As a network being, its politics—even its very self-naming—depends on information flow and the proliferation of mutable terminals. As a being-without-origin, it is assembled through the combination of elements in the system of semiotic reproduction and mutation. Genetic engineering re-directs our dominant image of reproduction from a natural process that is usually damaged by mutation, into one in which mutations can be viewed as benevolent artificial (and "artifactual") recombinations. The Internet liberates people from their naturally given subject-positions and also gives them the power to forge tactical alliances and movements; genetic engineering liberates humanity—and many other types of creatures—from their naturally given physical qualities and their "fates." The cyborg is the product and agent of all these liberations.

Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan©_Meets_ OncoMouse™ takes Haraway's cyborg anthropology directly into these two dominant prosthetic systems of postmodernism: the Internet and the Genome Project.

Haraway's mediating language is that of textuality—and *MW* is a grandiose (i.e., definitely not modest) display of intertextual linkings. Both the Internet and HGP are part of the web of language and narratives, of "material-semiotic" objects and actors (indeed they are themselves privileged object/actors in the cyborg net). Despite Haraway's title, *MW* is, once the pieces are assembled, a stuttering prolegomenon to a critique of the entire semiotic-material legitimation system of global technoscience. Finding the appropriate trope in Net-communications, Haraway settles into a style of argument based on topical leaps that imitate, in her eyes, hypertextual linking on the Internet. Her thesis does not develop, so much as it is constellated through the hyper-metonymic juxtaposition of related "sites." Since these sites are also "nodes"—i.e., they are constituted by the intersections of lines of social force—Haraway's language constantly shifts perspective from that of a participant-observer entwined in the Net of determinations to an outside observer critically mapping the domain. Ultimately, the effect is not of a magisterial theory of techno-scientific culture, but rather of being tossed into a methodological washing machine full of unsorted laundry. Haraway does not for a moment strive for elegance or simplicity. Those would probably be considered reductive and create the illusion of false knowledge, the complacency of an intelligent subject in love with its own writing. Although in theory the topoi of her pseudo-surfing should be linked by the logic of her overall structure, they appear and then they dissolve into their determinations (and Haraway's subjective reservations) like a map that breaks into the capillaries of its roads and rivers as we zoom in. Instead of arguing from major premises to minor ones, Haraway adopts what might be considered a "fractal" approach. Her theses appear in every context, no matter how small, leading to obsessive repetitions of phrase that fatigue a reader trying to put pieces together.

Haraway's technique is, ideally, quite simple. She isolates certain conceptual objects that are extremely powerful in contemporary culture—the gene, the computer, the laboratory animal, race, objectivity. She then finds concrete material-semiotic representations and embodiments of these objects, which she treats as condensations of their multiple determinations. Blurring the boundary between the concept and its embodiments, Haraway treats both the images and the concepts as tropes which must be deconstructed to reveal the legitimation narratives they repress. These narratives are not single or simple; thus, a discussion of the ideology of the gene leads Haraway through an excursion on "gene fetishism" as "map fetishism," a comparison of Australian aboriginal concepts of territory versus those of white settlers, a parodistic caricature called "Michaelangelo's Dog" (used by Haraway to invoke the origins of genetic research in animal breeding), and a jocoserious play on the gene as a classical Freudian penis-substitute. The moral of this theoretical picaresque is: "A gene is not a thing, much less a 'master molecule' or a self-contained code. Instead, the term *gene* signifies a code of durable action where many actors, human and nonhuman, meet" (142).

Haraway's conception of "nonhuman actor" is highly problematic, however, for several reasons. First, Haraway provides no limits for what can

be conceived in such a way. Applying a principle we might call "secular paganism," Haraway wishes simply to endow "any interesting being in technoscience" with a form of agency in the redirection of narratives. If for Marx every commodity is the condensation of the labor that produced it, for Haraway every object/image/text is a condensation of its various legitimation narratives (which combine not only the history of its production, but also of what its production displaced). Everything becomes "lively" for Haraway, if not exactly alive. Much of the time this seems merely a coy way of getting past the problem that the semantic networks in which these beings take form are created by human beings in the course of scientific work. Haraway further confuses the status of these hermeneutic beings by calling them "inhabitants," and even "citizens," as if they were endowed with inalienable political rights. This is a fundamental problem, for if Haraway truly wants to imagine a world in which all objects become actors equal to human beings, politics and freedom would become undefinable. If she is merely creating the fiction of a carnivalesque sf-world, a purely ironic subversion of the Pride of Man, then the reader can never know what is to be done with the results.

The purpose of the deconstruction is twofold, as she writes in her earlier essay, "The Promises of Monsters," which is in many ways the missing introductory/explanatory chapter of *MW*. It involves "two related turns": "1) unblinding ourselves from the sun-worshiping stories about the history of science and technology as paradigms of rationalism; and 2) refiguring the actors in the construction of the ethno-specific categories of nature *and* culture" (297). In a turn worthy of her Enlightenment forebears, Haraway displays how the privileged images of technoscience—such as photographs of the fetus, the double-helix of the DNA, the lab rodent advertised as a tiny savior—act as "technoscientific sacraments."

> The visual image of the fetus is like the DNA double helix—not just a signifier of life but also offered as the thing-in-itself. The visual fetus, like the gene, is a technoscientific sacrament. The sign becomes the thing itself in ordinary magico-secular transubstantiation. (178)

The negative, critical aspect of Haraway's deconstruction consists in hunting out the instances in which the "secular salvation narrative" of phallocentric progress underlies the behavior of technoscience. The positive aspect would be the transformation of technoscience's objects for liberatory purposes, "turning" science toward survival and equality, as opposed to exploitation and profit.

The title beings of the book, the trademarked creatures OncoMouse™ and FemaleMan©, are the two most fully articulated examples of her device. OncoMouse is an existing entity, a laboratory mouse genetically engineered to carry carcinogenic genes. It truly is a patented "device," and as such enjoys mythologization within, and through, the technoscientific market. It is a prime instance of a genetically manipulated being becoming a commodity. The organism is bought and sold as an embodied readout of an altered genetic program. Haraway demonstrates the mythological transformation of the lab rodent into a "savior" of human lives (via the cure for cancer). OncoMouse, Haraway implies, is already conceived as a form of cyborg, and her extra push

consists of revealing the multiple determinations concealed by the cynical mythology. Thus, in a move that reminds one of the Rats of NIMH, Haraway makes of lab mice enunciations of their own multiple determinations: "model system, animate tool, resource material, self-acting organic-technical hybrid" (52).

If with OncoMouse Haraway describes a physical being that is deconstructed into a network of determinations, she makes the opposite move with FemaleMan©. Taking Russ's classic novel as the "founding text of anglophone feminist SF" (75), Haraway fantasizes about "enterprising up" the novel, turning its textual disruptions of generic and gender expectations into a concrete being. *The Female Man* is a textual web of disruptions, constructing its meaning through its subversions of traditional concepts of gender and personal identity. Refusing to be contained within the horizon of generic expectations (of the novel, of sf), it also refuses the containment of a generic world's space-time and the continuity of self. The proprietary reification of this symbolic disruption—in effect, like all trademarks, converting a concept into a commodified object—would make it an agent among all the other agents in the "fallen" world. (In effect, Russ's novel would be as exchangeable as a bomb, an identity bomb.)

Haraway's reading of Russ's book is one of the best readings it has received, placing it in a context that shows its great originality. Indeed, she shows off the power of sf to challenge dominant narratives. For *The Female Man* is, for Haraway's purposes, a challenge to the Human Genome Project's conception of the unitary genetic program. The gene-map is for technoscience the ultimate sacred text; it is literally, physically so, and thus acts as the secular salvation story's sacred word of Nature/God, which can be read as closely and with as much confidence in its literal truth as a fundamentalist's reading of the Bible or the Koran (with the significant but ambiguous difference that the genome-text places human beings, represented by their scientist-priests, in the position of Jehovah and Allah). Against this mythology of the One Text ("there is but one text and its name is DNA"), Haraway sets up Russ's novel as her champion golem, which refuses to be appropriated into any unitary form, and by analogy/extension, refuses to permit "woman" or "human" to be contained in any one definition. *The Female Man* is a "fallen woman"/imperfect text—a "founding" text of non-foundationalism.

These two cyborgs—a physical being converted into a node of significations, and a subversive text turned into an exchangeable object— Haraway pretends to dispatch into the world, where they can act as agents among all the other cyborg agents. They are, in more conventional terms, hermeneutic devices for seeing that our own Western scientific subjectivity is no less situated and contingent than that of the objects we pretend to control and define.

3. Let's Get Lost: Cyborg Toporrhea. Haraway's excursive method is not reader-friendly; its pyrotechnics are those of the proverbial explosion in a fireworks factory, or net-surfing on speed. Haraway's is a very complex mind

not at all comfortable with the requirements of expressing that complexity. She is in the difficult situation of wanting to explain the relations of things and actions across the whole range of human social life, but resisting totalizing, systematic, reifying language that would call her analysis/description into question on her own terms. Unlike a Hegel or a Heidegger, whose difficulty of language emerges from the complexity of the object world they are trying to identify and grasp as contemplating—abstract, encysted—subjects, Haraway will not permit herself the creation of a subject position that is privileged over potential contenders. She cannot invent terminology, since that might be viewed as the egotistical colonization of reality, so she generously, and with magnificent insecurity, adopts others' terms or appropriates terms in the public, even popular domain. Even though the relations among the different cultural and material spheres are clearly related in systematic, albeit historically dynamic ways (Haraway never abandons her historical materialism), she will not allow herself to pretend that she can give a clear, concise, and logically contained picture of it. Because she grants agency to objects, viewing objects as equal players to human wills in the construction of human reality, her own position as speaker is perpetually weak. She places herself in the unenviable position of having clear analytical insights, but no authority (since her position is totally contingent); the systematic, comprehensive, logical accounting of the way she perceives things to be (a sort of fluid dynamics of Western technological culture) becomes almost aphasic in its logorrhea. It is like listening to a brilliant intellect without self-confidence, perpetually digressing and anecdotalizing, for fear that she will leave something out, some compliment unreturned, some objection unforeseen; that she may be seen to be arrogant, egotistical, and unsociable: *proud*.

Much could be said about the difficulty of reading Haraway, her stylistic "tics," her "stuttering and swerving." Nothing comes in ones in her multiverse. One factor/element—even as a fictive tool for thinking—is never enough for a given discussion, as if any "one" were ideologically suspect. To read Haraway is to enter a mind that is either incapable of, or deeply committed against, monistic/unitary thinking. Striving constantly against those who would "contain the heteroglossia and flux of events" (10), every given thing, every concept, every sentence must include several competing or temporarily coordinated categories. Since everything is multiply determined, the honest theorist must reflect that multiplicity. Further, Haraway's almost manic proliferation of analogies and figures with only tenuous relationships to each other leads not through "wormholes," one of her favorite figures for passing through the implosion of categories, but into a labyrinth. This makes for rich, often chaotic, ultimately exhausting prose. (Haraway's partiality to the science-fictional image of the wormhole is telling. Like faster-than-light and time-travel, the wormhole is a purely mythological, and one might argue ideological, device to transport beings in resistance to concrete space and time. If Baudrillard seems perpetually trapped in the gravity well of postmodernism's black hole, Haraway ironically chooses to go through the anomaly of an anomaly.)

To make matters worse, Haraway's vaunted linguistically playful, metaphorical style, which might seem appropriate for an argument based on the implosion of conceptual boundaries, is not always under control. A writer like Baudrillard, who is similarly devoted to argument-by-metaphor, is comfortable with lyrical language because he is content with the abyss that metaphor ultimately conjures up. But Haraway is too earnest for such flights. She is, after all, trying to link things together with scrupulous attention to the facts of science. Thus when her metaphors appear to be ungrounded, she creates an unintentional dizziness, not the vertigo of language sucking reference into itself, but the nausea of language losing its grip. There are many such examples in *MW*, from little throwaway images that a reader simply cannot follow, to major rhetorical knots. I will be content with one example. Early in *MW*, Haraway offers this "explanation" of her thesis:

> My tendentious point is that the apparatuses of cultural production going by the names of science studies, antiracist feminism, and technoscience have a common circulatory system. In short, my figures share bodily fluids, no less than do the zoöns taking common nourishment on the stolon of a colonial tunicate. The fluids of my figures are mixed in the time-machine where they all meet, the computing machine of my e-mail address, named Second Millennium. (22)

Here, the trope of implosion justifies several ostensible violations of sense. There's no clear cause-and-effect demonstration, and there is considerable confusion of apparently distinct categories; metaphors are mixed, tropes undefined. Haraway begins with a complex bodily system (an interbody, as it were) in which different practices are conceived as insistently juicy animate organisms, whose interrelationship is somehow analogous to a natural process. These are transformed without analogical mediation into the product of a machine that mixes fluids (these fluids had been shared in the previous sentence, and so had no need of being mixed mechanically), a time-machine to boot. This implies that the mediation is temporal, a dynamic, artificial foreshortening of an evolutionary process, implying perhaps that the colonial tunicate of the previous sentence is itself a fluid-mixing time-machine—which might be fine from the perspective of imploding the natural and the artificial, the evolved and the constructed, except that no justification is offered, either poetic (through word-play) or science-fictional (through the literalization of metaphor or a narrative of ironic discovery). Nor indeed, are we told why what had been an atemporal description of physiology should suddenly be viewed in temporal—but not historical—terms. All this is then transformed into an online computer's e-mail function, apparently linking the inter-communication of subjects on the Net with the interflow of juices in... in what? the stolon of a colonial tunicate? the conceptual juice-mixer of a time-machine? In the end, the book, the practices it writes about, the biological process, the sf trope, and the techno-social Internet all become the same obscure phenomenon, in which neither agency, nor structure, nor effect is clear. Whatever this is, it is not a point, let alone a tendentious one.

4. The Cyborg Has No Spirit. But troubling as these rhetorical mannerisms

may be, given the centrality of language for Haraway's method, they are not the strongest reservations that one might voice. The weakest aspect of *MW*, in my view, is the enormous disparity between the precision of Haraway's demythologizing criticism and its vague affirmations. Haraway works very hard to avoid the position of other important critics of postmodernism (e.g., Jameson, Habermas, even Baudrillard) whose powerful critiques are inspired by disabled desires. Haraway truly does believe that networked social action might lead to transformations. Viewed historically, Haraway's theory is, among other things, an attempt to provide a broad conceptual foundation for all sorts of activist political alliances between disempowered groups. Locally, *MW* is addressed to the feminist science-theory community; but Haraway welcomes its appreciation by anyone concerned with the global damage done by technoscience, especially people within that "community." But nowhere does Haraway make it clear how one can move from understanding the multiple determinations of objects within the technoscientific web to a credible, non-ironic vision of a good cyborg society.

Although she returns tediously to the adjective "potent" to characterize the cyborg's strategic qualities (perhaps in contrast with "effective," which promises too much), the most powerful strategy Haraway can offer is a classical intellectual intervention: the re-theorizing of history, for which one might argue that a more lucid conception of what history means in cyborg terms is required. But it is even unclear what the rewriting should be directed toward. In what way does the rewriting of the diffused mythologies of technoscientific capitalism lead to a better world for human beings? Haraway assumes that her readers all agree with her anti-racist, ecophilic, anti-imperialist position, that science should not be used for personal profit, that decisions about science should be made democratically at every level. But assuming we all agree in hatred of injustice and ecological destruction, and love of democracy, what is it that the *cyborg* can reasonably work for? What is it that would persuade the cyborg to work for the good of all, rather than just surfing the net of existence?

Haraway severely limits her statements of hope. Her thoroughgoing demolition of the utopian mythology of progress is beholden to Enlightenment methods of critique; consequently, every statement she might make about a longed-for goal is bracketed irony: hope, for the Western intellectual, must always be contaminated by ideology. She keeps her demands, if not her "witness," modest: "Whether it existed in the past or not, [...]a techno-science—committed to projects of human equality; modest, universal material abundance; self-critical knowledge projects; and multispecies flourishing—must exist now and in the future" (94). Like Mother Courage wishing for a future without heroes, such a world does not seem too much to ask for. But if it does require heroes, what will inspire cyborg heroism?

Haraway names the urge to reconstruct the world "yearning," a term she adopts from bell hooks:

> Decentering the godlike, individualist, voluntarist human subject should not require a radical temperance project mandating abstinence from the strong drugs of

> networked desire, hope, and—in bell hooks's provocative term for an affective and political sensibility—"yearning." (128)
>
> Yearning must also be seen as a cognitive sensibility. Without doubt, such yearning is rooted in a reconfigured unconscious, in mutated desire, in the practice of love, in the ecstatic hope for the corporeal and imaginary materialization of the antiracist female subject of feminism, and all other possible subjects of feminism. Finally, freedom, justice and knowledge are not necessarily nice and definitely not easy. (192)

I do not doubt that some readers will find this appeal effective. But for my part, "yearning" seems far too undertheorized intellectually, and arbitrary emotionally, to provide an explanation for mass social action and reconstruction of vision. How does "yearning" influence reasoning? Is "yearning" something that all those who desire social justice share, without difference? (I find the same problems in hooks's use of the term.) Because Haraway will not, or cannot, presume to speak for humanity or womankind—as self-consciously situated as she is in the class-identity of bourgeois-Caucasian-Catholic-Christian-US-academic-Californian-etc.—she cannot offer anything more than a critique. And, since the critique she offers may or may not be acceptable to the many unrepresented/dominated/marginalized groups she is bound to defer to, she seems to offer nothing more polemically potent than "Let the boundary be imploded!", "The future is at stake!", and "Contest the culture of no culture!" The boardrooms quake.

This vagueness of goals is furthered by Haraway's ambivalence. Because she is extremely sensitive to her particular discursive position, she is on a tightrope between presenting herself as an authority on her subject (one whose judgments should be considered) and a power-protected speaker. She offers honest self-knowledge, but with the risk that her limitations are fatal ones:

> Behind a list of personal qualifying adjectives—white, Christian, apostate, professional, childless, middle class, middle-aged, biologist, cultural theorist, historically U.S. citizen, late 20th century, female—I write about "the human." The human is the category that makes a luminous promise to transcend the rending trauma of the particular, especially that particular nonthing and haint called race. Like all symptoms, my neurotic listing makes a false promise to protect me from category confusion, from the irrational fear that drives the tic, from corruption. (214)

Her goal is still, as it was in the "Manifesto," a world without particularities—without gender, without race. A universality without humanism. But how, after we have accepted the posthumanity of the cyborg, can we ever fit back into the snake of the human?

Haraway is also up-front about her implication in the technoscientific system, a candor that has given her authority in the past.

> Following an ethical and methodological principle for science studies that I adopted many years ago, I will critically analyze, or 'deconstruct,' only that which I love and only that in which I am deeply implicated. The commitment is part of a project to excavate something like a technoscientific unconscious, the processes of formation of the technoscientific subject, and the reproduction of this subject's structures of

> pleasure and anxiety. Those who recognize themselves in these webs of love, implication, and excavation are the "we" who surf the Net in sacred/secular quest rhetoric of this chapter. (151)

Can the irony of this passage be borne? Haraway simultaneously affirms "webs of love" and the psychoanalysis of subject-formation that makes these webs into dark thickets. Implication means both being enfolded by the fabric and bearing guilt for others' acts. Excavation is simultaneously the dispassionate archeology of the social past and the quest for the secret history of one's own repressed desire. The ambivalence of such passages indicates a powerful stalemate. And since Haraway rejects both individual will (which is an aspect of liberal ideology) and a drive for synthesis inherent in history, it is unclear what, other than good fortune, could resolve the bind?

To my mind, Haraway's otherwise prodigious theorizing fails for one overriding reason: Haraway gives no role to spirituality as a constituent of human consciousness or a vehicle for human communion. Ostensibly, she does leave a little space for a spiritual dimension. She counterposes the Native American trickster figure of coyote to the transcendental salvation narratives of Christianity. Her modest demands for a good world are not very different from those of Buddhists. Yet her coyote is more an ironic trope than a spiritual agent in a world inhabited by other such beings and archetypes, who include creators, originators, authorities, and guides. The self-created cyborg, after all, owes its existence to no ancestors; such a being has no past and can feel no gratitude, no devotion. Lacking an unconscious, it also lacks a "higher self" to which ethical appeals can be made. Buddhism will accomodate cyborgs just fine among sentient beings. But Buddhism has its salvation narrative, too, and its "Buddha trick."

Haraway's relentless antagonism to religion (specifically Christianity, of course; hostility to other people's religions might be ethnocentric) injures the power of her analyses. Like a minor league *Encyclopédiste* railing against the clergy, Haraway writes as if the "material-semiotic" exhausted the domains of peoples' meanings. Unwilling to let go of the idea that transcendence is always an aspect of the "God trick," Haraway offers no hope for either personal or collective transformation of values as a consequence of "inner" evolution. Her cyborg lacks spirit. Its "yearning" is for a confidence, a faith in a collective good of its own. Perhaps a being-which-is-not-one cannot have a "higher self." Perhaps all sf tales in which the artificial mutation/evolution leads to an awareness of "higher" and better orders than the merely human are merely sentimental romances.

Throughout her corpus, Haraway treats the notion of transcendence as the great hypnotizer of the world, which in its secular form promises utopian fulfillment through material scientific progress. Salvationist transcendentalism is what enables the "contaminated triple-historical heritage of the West" (3)—i.e., misogyny/anti-Semitism, racism/colonialism, and capitalism/techno-science). As a result, the fundamental injustices of Western history are all functions of "the addictive narcotic of transcendental foundations" (22). Let us leave aside the question of whether belief in the equality of all persons, in the

possibility of social improvement, and in the socialist critique might not also be considered aspects of the Western heritage. As far as drugs go, Haraway does not say no to "the strong drug of yearning" (128). We are given to presume that this must not pass over into the stronger drug of transcendence, or indeed a yearning for transcendence, as if an explanation of life that includes non-material beings must necessarily involve the denigration of the body.

In the end, Haraway's attempt to synthesize the science-fictional imaginary with the anti-spiritual rationalism of the Enlightenment will not fly. Once everything becomes cyborg—when every Amazon becomes a greenhouse, every innovation a prosthesis, every death a demographic adjustment, every birth a demographic experiment—the monsters will be normal. When everyone becomes an other, everyone will be the same in the hypostatic disunion. *MW* includes brilliant displays of critique and erudition, along with dizzying *toporrhea*. Haraway offers profound, if chaotic and stymieing, insights. But she does not offer what she wishes most to give: hope. At the end of "The Promises of Monsters," Haraway writes: "it's not a 'happy ending' we need, but a non-ending" (327). But even if posthumans do not die, mortal humans do, and it is our endings that the spirit mediates throughout our lives.