Feminist and Postmodern:

Donna Haraway's Cyborg

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The old dominations of white capitalist patriarchy seem nostalgically innocent now: they normalize heterogeneity, e.g., into man and woman, white and black. 'Advanced capitalism' and post-modernism release hetero-geneity without a norm, and we are flattened, without subjectivity, which requires depth, even unfriendly and drowning depths. It is time to write the *Death of the Clinic*. The clinic's methods required bodies and works; we have texts and surfaces. Our dominations don't work by medicalization and normalization anymore; they work by networking, communications redesign, stress management. Normalization gives way to automation, utter redundancy. Michel Foucault's *Birth of the Clinic, History of Sexuality* and *Discipline and Punish* name a form of power at its moment of implosion. The discourse of biopolitics gives way to technobabble, the language of the spliced substantive; no noun is left whole by the multi-nationals. These are their names, listed from one issue of *Science:* Tech-Know-ledge, Genentech, Allergen, Hybritech, ... If we are imprisoned by language, then escape from that prison house requires language poets, a kind of cultural restriction enzyme to cut the code; cyborg hetero-glossia is one form of radical culture politics.

<div align="right">Donna Haraway, 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs'[1]</div>

Many feminisms today still carry the normalizing assumptions of modernity which Foucault, among others, has exposed. In Australia in the eighties, feminists themselves engaged in a significant

revision of earlier, popular understandings of second wave femin-
ism that implicitly held women in the embrace of masculine
definitions of relations between the sexes. By resort to philosophi-
cal argumentation especially, but through this more specifically to
a deconstruction of texts and practices, the categorical under-
pinnings and rhetorical strategies of modern thought and institu-
tional life were able to be laid bare. This work bore insights which
both more adequately explained women's subordination and pro-
duced more refined — if ever more inaccessible — feminist
theories which generated significant political divisions among
feminists. Yet in the public culture this revision has carried little
weight.

If the 'ethics debate' in Australia can be taken as an example,
the kinds of feminism which are felt to say something compelling,
in that sphere, are ones which work by way of a relatively unprob-
lematized notion of woman, and certainly of the body. On one
side, liberal feminists sitting on ethics committees and bodies of
review typically endorse the new reproductive and related tech-
nologies, arguing variously for the right of individuals to choose
and the autonomy of private individuals.[2] Philosophers like Peter
Singer, who endorse their cause, hold that Shulamith Firestone
got it right in 1971, and ask increduously why feminist opponents
of the technologies today cannot recognize the radically liberatory
potential of her position. On the other side, then, are the vocal
opponents of the technologies — Robyn Rowland most notably in
Australia, Gena Corea in the United States.[3] For these women the
technologies manifest a misogynist logic. They certainly, quite

1. 'A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology and Socialist Femin-
   ism in the 1980s', in *Australian Feminist Studies*, no. 4, 1987, p. 37.
   (Also in a slightly revised version of the original in Haraway's recent
   Simians, Cyborgs and Women. The Reinvention of Nature, London,
   Free Association Books, 1991.)
2. For example, Robyn Layton, Chair of the National Bio-ethics Con-
   sultative Committee; see their *Surrogacy — Report 1*, April 1990.
   Also, Senators Olive Zackharov and Rosemary Crowley (ALP) in
   their dissenting views as members of the Select Committee on the
   Human Embryo Experimentation Bill (1986) where they argue for
   'parental rights' as paramount in deciding on the production and
   fate of embryos for experimentation or donation within IVF
   programmes.
3. Gena Corea's work includes *The Mother Machine, Reproductive
   Technologies from Artificial Insemination to Artificial Wombs*, New
   York, Harper and Row, 1986; Gena Corea, Renata Duelli Klein *et al*
   (eds), *Man-Made Women: How New Reproductive Technologies
   Affect Women*, London, Hutchison, 1985; 'How the New Reproductive
   Technologies Could be Used to Apply the Brothel Model of Social

rightly, locate a modern narrative of conquest in the self-under-standings of modern science, and medicine particularly, and identify a certain exercise of patriarchal power. But the philo-sophical assumptions of their primarily activist approaches can be shown to be embedded in the same logocentric and 'masculine' outlooks as their opponents.

This becomes clear if one looks to the form of the explanations these authors offer.[4] At this level of analysis, there is a striking similarity with the explanations they challenge. Thus, while Row-land and Corea call into question the teleological unfolding of the liberal-humanist dream embedded in medical discourse and held to by their liberal feminist opponents, we find instead a dystopic teleology of patriarchal science embedded in the all-encompassing 'truth' of men's quest to control women. It is a mirror image of the history they do not like. And while these authors offer some challenge to techno-determinism, the same gulf emerges between technique and 'humanity' as is assumed in notions of technology as mere tool, as in Singer's work, and in the 'magical' sense of technology as an alien force which many commentators have recognized as part of the powerful mystique of technological creation.[5] The latter is clear in Corea's depiction of an alien logic

Control Over Women', *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 8, no. 4. Robyn Rowland has written many articles both for the popular media and scholarly audiences, and many conference papers. For example: *Woman Herself, A Transdisciplinary Perspective on Women's Identity*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1988; 'Repro-ductive Technologies: The Final Solution to the Woman Question?', in Rita Arditti, Renate Duelli Klein and Shelley Minden (eds), *Test-Tube Women, What Future for Motherhood?*, London, Pandora Press, 1984; 'Choice or Control? Women and Our Relationship to the New Reproductive Technologies', paper delivered to the 'Liberation or Loss? Women Act on the New Reproductive Technologies Confer-ence', Canberra, May 1986.

4. It is essential to dig into the philosophical assumptions of positions like these; they have both theoretical and practical implications which cannot go unchallenged. Yet I do not believe that philosophical critiques alone adequately explain the phenomenon of people, and feminists more particularly, holding such viewpoints. In the larger essay from which this article comes, I attempt to situate contradictions in the work of Corea and Rowland in a broader cultural reading of second wave feminist approaches to the reproductive technologies. This leads me to assess the work of 'essentialist' feminists somewhat more sympathetically than *this* article might suggest.

5. See Peter Singer and Deane Wells, *The Reproduction Revolution: New Ways of Making Babies*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1984. That technology is merely a tool is clear in their arguments for enlightened 'choice' in respect of the technologies. The mysterious

of masculine science;[6] in both Corea's and Rowland's work where the notion of an essentially misogynist patriarchy itself is never scrutinized, but rather plays the same kind of mysterious role technology often does; and where the masculine is essentialized, thus offering little hope for real change between the sexes. Further, an essentially instrumental understanding of technology is evident in their notion of ideology, most notably the so-called 'ideology of motherhood'[7] — an effect in consciousness — and in their construal of power and 'needs' as secondary or additive to the persons we really are.[8] These aspects of their work are completely consistent with the liberal-humanist tradition. Neither 'ideology' nor power here contain any sense of their role as constitutive of the person; no sense of the role the new technologies play as bearers of a transformation of the body and subjectivity, the position I wish to argue. On the one hand, women are told they are the dupes of patriarchal ideology; on the other, we find that bodies, with their needs established in secondary relationship to their contexts, remain distinctly separated from the technologies which can only 'intrude' into them.[9]

Donna Haraway, an American feminist and historian of science, offers a distinctly different assessment of technology, the person and the body in late capitalism. She is one of the feminists I mention above who has taken up the new philosophical standpoints, distinguishing a particular version of postmodern feminism from those still dependent on modern frameworks of understanding. Hers has been a self-consciously epistemological feminist project, all the more pointed by her work on scientific discourses.[10] She would, I believe, concur with the brief critique of the Rowland

force of technology is often commented upon in the literature, and is understood as the perception of a power which takes the form of an assumed unfolding of a logic internal to the technological apparatus itself; the 'spiritual' aspect, if you like, of technological determinism. For example, see Stephen Hill, *The Tragedy of Technology, Human Liberation Versus Domination in the Late Twentieth Century*, London, Pluto Press, 1988, Chapter 1.

6. This is well illustrated, I believe, in Corea's essay, 'Egg Snatchers' in Arditti *et al*, p. 48.

7. Rowland, 'Choice or Control?', pp. 6-7.

8. Rowland, 'Choice or Control', p. 7, for instance, and Jalna Hanmer, 'Transforming Conscious: Women and the New Reproductive Technologies', in Corea *et al.*, *Man-Made Women*.

9. Michelle Stanworth quoting Renate Duelli Klein in her 'The Deconstruction of Motherhood', in *The Reproductive Technologies: Gender, Motherhood and Medicine*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1987, p. 35.

10. Haraway has written extensively on primatology, for instance, and social biology.

and Corea positions above. But she goes much further than this to suggest the elements of a shifting cultural ground on which contemporary disputes with respect to technology and the body emerge, and indeed the epistemological standpoint that she herself may, under the conditions of 'advanced capitalism', take up.

Haraway, then, catapults us into another world — another 'reality', and another order of feminist theoretical sophistication on questions of science and technology. In her 'Manifesto for Cyborgs', from which the above quotation comes, she throws down a challenge to feminists to see the circumstances of their discourse, especially that upon what may now properly be identified as 'techno-science'.[11] Unlike the feminist authors I have so briefly reviewed, Haraway sees in the circumstances of our lived reality a broad-reaching development which for her goes under the name of advanced capitalism and the information revolution; its concomitant aesthetic-theoretical elaboration is 'postmodernism'. In this 'period' the essences which lay submerged in the feminisms of Firestone or Corea/Rowland are simply untenable if one looks at the reality of scientific practice — and the realities it constructs. As a professed 'socialist-feminist' (a socialist feminism which will not entertain 'Marxism', but will 'play' with 'historical materialism'),[12] Haraway sees the information revolution as the material foundation of the new order and theorizes, or rather, 'plays' with its consequences for women. This material reality is one which brings both new oppressions and new, radical possibilities, suggesting also both the need for and possibility of deploying new methodologies for the feminist project.

This reality is figured for Haraway in her notion of the 'cyborg'. The cyborg is a 'cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction'.[13] Here we have Haraway's 'ironical' figure as a model both for a way of being as individuals and a way of politics, and for what we *are* regardless of our choices inasmuch as the information revolution now casts us and the oppressions of our times in distinctively postmodern terms. Cyborgs are both the potentially radical grouping of the new international working class — especi-

11. 'Techno-science' refers to the interpenetration of science and technology in the historically novel sense that advances in one are basically dependent on the other: theoretical science informs technological development directly and scientific discovery is dependent on the powers of the new science-based technologies.
12. Haraway, for example pp. 12-14.
13. Haraway, p. 1.

ally the women of the new 'homework economy' — whose identities are fractured, shifting, part of the great network of world-wide information; and those cultural radicals who actively embrace the cyborg form where it liberates us from the subject form of modernity, dispensing with all essentialisms, all myths of lineage and genesis.[14]

In its negative frame, the cyborg manifests as 'technobabble', that, fracturing of the 'substantive' according to the metaphor of information which seeks 'a common language' without 'noise'. The information revolution, from which it seems there is no return, necessarily starts from the move common across the communications sciences and biology: *the translation of the world into a problem of coding'* (Haraway's emphasis). But feminists have the choice. They may counter the current power frame of the information revolution — in which 'all resistance to instrumental control disappears and all heterogeneity can be submitted to disassembly, reassembly, investment and exchange' — by coding the cyborg self according to *their* ends. They must engage in a process of myth-making or 'cyborg writing' which 'insists on noise and advocate[s] pollution'.[15] The information revolution affords this possibility of 'writing' in ways not previously available. Where bodies as such are contested entities, and with the flattening out of an earlier form of subjectivity, we are left with 'surfaces', all the better and easier to 'inscribe'. This etched surface is ideal for achieving the kinds of radical cyborg 'connections' which Haraway advocates. *Formally* the two cyborg possibilities which Haraway identifies do not differ:

> The entire universe of objects that can be known scientifically must be formulated as problems in communications engineering (for the managers) or theories of the text (for those of us who would resist). Both are cyborg semiologies.[16]

It is, that the new form offers different choices, different outcomes within its more general embrace.

Haraway, then, offers a project for the body in the late twentieth century. In contrast to other perspectives on 'post-industrialism',[17] here political and ideological battles will rage, with the body at their centre, a continuing site of contestation, and construction.

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14. See also Haraway, 'In the Beginning was the Word: The Genesis of Biological Theory', *Signs*, Spring 1981.
15. Haraway, 'Manifesto', p. 31.
16. Haraway, 'Manifesto', p. 17.
17. For example, Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History', *Fortune*, January 1990.

Bodies are discursive or textual entities generally, the conventional products of particular historical circumstances — thus Haraway's partially positive reference to Foucault on the modern body. But it does seem that the body of postmodernity is more radically open to reinterpretation than any body before it. Once bodies come to be seen as information, as interactions between them and between their parts come to be seen as a matter of coding or as texts, the relative opacity they enjoyed under modernity is circumvented. On one hand, this has meant that the dominant techno-scientific trajectory constructs in actuality — literally, not ironically as Haraway would wish it — the 'cyborgs' which are part of what she names 'the teleology of star wars'. There is no relief here, only the deadly game of a science and technology which still believes in its humanist calling. On the other, if the information revolution can help us to see the basis in 'writing' of our relationship to the natural world and to machines, then we may choose our destiny without recourse to opposed, but formally the same, teleological frameworks for understanding science and technology. That is, feminism and other progressive movements need not seek for essentializing distinctions which would make them 'different' from the totalizing pictures of patriarchal capitalism and humanist science. Liberated from *this*, 'a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints'.[18] Haraway thus suggests both a more fluid, reflective relationship to our cultural constructions and, in seeing through the authorizing moves of the sciences and techno-determinist ideologies, a new responsibility for our technological invention. This appears to include our own bodies as integrally formed within the given possibilities of the new socio-cultural setting.

The contrast between the Corea/Rowland and Firestone positions and Haraway's is, then, quite stark in several basic respects. A way around the essentialist categories dictated by the modern is found in the cyborg which figures a radical transgression of the old boundaries, 'heterogeneity without a norm' now achieved by the information technologies but also practised radically via a postmodernist heteroglossia.[19] Haraway's own provocative transgression of the traditional boundaries of science writing and literature is a case in point. As well as the 'deconstruction' of the masculine/

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18. Haraway, 'Manifesto', p. 8.
19. On postmodernist heteroglossia, see Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, New York, Methuen, 1987.

feminine dichotomy being achieved, crucially the mind/body split inherent in the science or technology/'humanity' dichotomy is also transgressed. A constitutive role is afforded science[20] and technology, where the body, 'the natural' are conceived as real, lived, 'fictions' — things that we humans live and have 'made up'. Conversely, science and technology, indeed their epistemological foundations, are situated in the larger historical settings of socio· cultural wholes — industrial capitalism/advanced capitalism.

Haraway's work offers a number of advances on that of other feminist writers on science and technology. She can conceptualize the new, identify a range of its key characteristics, point even to the contours of what I want to see as the new 'body construct': the cyborg, a body of fictional limits, a surface upon which new fictions may be written, the manifestation of the codes we manipulate, the body over which we may effect a new kind of 'autonomous' control. These, I would suggest with Haraway, are aspects of the construction of bodies and a mode of the self that any discussion of the new reproductive technologies must take into account.

This is to endorse not only Haraway's reading of contemporary techno-scientific productions, but at least some parts of her underlying epistemological orientation also. The techno-sciences, and the new reproductive technologies within them, are not to be understood in the terms offered by essentialist and 'realist' positions.[21] With respect to Haraway's position, like the 'natural' world science deals with generally, woman's body is no essential substance beyond the meaning frames of culture but is differentially constituted exactly through practices like the scientific and technological. This is the case with maternity also. We may speak of 'cyborg maternity', maternity as an epistemological issue, just as we know it to be recast today as a cybernetic problem in biology. With respect to this, though women may make more or less intelligent and more or less informed choices about how they 'use' technologies, we are talking about a more general transfor· mation in the cultural setting within which choice is constructed,

20. See Haraway, 'Manifesto', pp. 18-19, for example.
21. The description 'realist' suits the Stanworth collection noted above. This socialist feminist response to the question of the technologies, and often directly in response to the positions of 'culturalist' and radical feminists, is typically one of arguing that the technologies are a *fait accompli*. Feminists must now construct the best politics they can to make the technologies responsive to women's position, rather than allow masculine medical and legal discourses to dominate the field.

and its meaning radically altered. To be concerned for women, for infertile women and IVF children as well, requires critical examination of how science and technology are part of an active construction of who we 'know' ourselves to be. We must take absolutely seriously, and as a primary consideration, the proposition that science and technology exert — in the terms of a larger cultural setting — some kind of 'productive' power over bodies and persons. With Haraway I agree that there is an integral tie between an 'arbitrary' historical construction of the natural — the techno-scientific mode of our practising the natural — and an emergent mode of the person: we are living a reconstruction of our 'ontology'. This is our cyborg being, that common cultural form which nevertheless promises a proliferation of differences, the multiple possibilities which grow from a conception of the world as code.

So the cyborg is many things in Haraway's essay. It is the (constructed) reality which we must comprehend. Its credibility as a call to action, or ideological figure in that sense, depends in large part on the accuracy of her claim as to its reality — that of it being the embracing form of the life of subjects in late-capitalist society. Yet clearly the cyborg, which identifies a form of knowledge with our age, contains its simultaneous negation. It is like the Derridean notion of 'erasure' by which we are to understand that all acts of naming, identifying, closure are simultaneously erased.[22] This is the let out, the escape to a diversity of meanings once we understand that access to the real is always mediated by the linguistic strategy used. And, admirably enough, Haraway's provocative notion of the cyborg and her postmodern linguistic 'playfulness' leaves the reader in no doubt that in her case a deliberate rhetorical strategy has been deployed. It is out in the open that Haraway is positioning herself and the knowledge claims she is making with postmodernism, from the point of view of feminism. No disinterested enquiry here. Indeed, if we are to have knowledge of the real, then for Haraway such knowledge can only ever be the partial knowledge which the 'situation' allows. Feminism is a form of 'situated knowledge' which may guide scientific and other kinds of access to the real.

However, I wish to argue that in Haraway's work there is a level of a covert play for power which Haraway may not recognize, or on reflection wish to propagate. The problems of which I speak

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22. See Gayatri Chackravorty Spivak's 'Translator's Preface' to Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, Baltimore and London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, pp. xiv-xviii.

here I believe have their source in both methodological confusion and theoretical inadequacy. In particular, Haraway's use of the cyborg metaphor radically confuses the intellectual with the lived, in a sense I will make clear below. Haraway touches on this distinction in her own frank discussion of the problems constructionist and deconstructionist methodologies face: in one vein it is, ultimately, how to hang on to any sense of reality at all.

Now, to counterpose the 'intellectual' to the 'lived' would be to provoke Haraway to the utmost, and this distinction might indeed appear to undo those areas of common agreement mentioned above. But I do not mean to drive a wedge between intellectual production and life: in a strong sense I am arguing that science and technology are key forces in informing the kind of people we are. In words not quite those of Haraway, embodying developments in culture more generally, science and technology are embroiled in the *deep* structures of social interaction and of the psychological make-up of the person. What I disagree with is Haraway's argument in the 'Manifesto' that the new forms of knowledge — whether the technocratic information order or the poetical heteroglossia which breaks out as a possibility under the same conditions of information — merely have a 'surface' on which to work. I want to retain exactly the opposite proposition, that the body and person are 'depth' formations, even given the recasting of the world as information, or the radical cyborg exhortations to 're-write' the body. Haraway's work reflects a conception of the body and person which, in its deep anxieties about essential being, can comprehend the world only in the image of the text. Far from there being an encounter with incommensurable 'difference' or otherness as Haraway's notion of heterogeneity might have suggested, we learn nothing of embodied life or social being which is not vulnerable to the 'textual'. Yet it is exactly social practice and embodiment, as modalities of being rather than as particular 'narratives', 'sites' or 'locations' from which particular meanings spring, that offer resistance — and arguably a structured one — to the making-over of life in the image of the text. This is the project in which Haraway, together with the systems managers and reproductive techno-scientists, is equally engaged, as both the notions of the 'cyborg' and the 'surface' attest.

These issues may be drawn out in the consideration of practical examples like the new reproductive technologies, even if it is not exactly clear what Haraway would say specifically about them. In one version of the cyborg, and at one level of reading it, there is nothing which readily would lead one to take up either an actively 'pro' or 'anti' stance on the reproductive technologies. If they were to be judged part of the 'homogenizing' or technocratic

strand of the information order, then cyborg feminists would fight them on non-essentialist grounds. But cyborg feminism equally could argue for them in terms of our being able to take control of our technological creations. In fact, the cyborg notion seems intended first and foremost to legitimize a feminist politics of science and technology: 'Both chimpanzees and artefacts have politics so why shouldn't we?'[23] The problem is establishing a field of knowledge as one equally of power. Indeed, if we are to find more specific ethical guidance, beyond the broad need to politicize claims to knowledge and the concomitant principle of us taking responsibility for our constructed worlds, then we must turn to feminism itself, or those standpoints offered through women as bearers of 'situated knowledges'.

What for Haraway loosely binds the various hyphenated 'identities' of women (black-lesbian women, white-heterosexual women, *et cetera*)[24] is an insistent embodiment, which I take primarily to mean linked experiences of oppression; all the feminisms seek redress for the denial of women's autonomy, or recognition of what Haraway calls their 'agency'.[25] Feminism occupies a privileged moral ground in Haraway's cyborg essay.[26] But it is at this point that Haraway's reliance on metaphor, and the cyborg metaphor in particular, produces a circularity in her political argument, for this potential point of ethical justification — for the cyborg outlook — rests on an identification of feminism generally as the archetypal cyborg. Here too, then, there can be no clear guidance on the practical question of the reproductive technologies, or any other particular instance of the techno-sciences. All that can be properly said is that the ethical is the political, the ethical attitude is the politicizing and relativizing of that which we might otherwise believe to be a gift or curse of nature or God. At the same time, we must be drawn to the con-clusion that if women's autonomy is figured by the cyborg — and second wave feminism is historically, actually and necessarily a cyborg phenomenon — then our feminist self-understanding and our ethical judgements are to be subordinated to the knowledge form(s) of the techno-scientific era and *their* insistent social outcomes.

A further look at how Haraway handles the question of access

23. Haraway, 'Manifesto', p. 5.
24. Haraway, 'Cyborgs', p. 8, 'Fractured Identities'.
25. Haraway, Introduction, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women, Reinventing Nature*, London, Free Association Books 1991, p. 3.
26. Haraway, 'Manifesto'.

to the real, and by implication ethical action, shows that the real message of Haraway's work, and the ethical imperative which is implied constantly in it, must be dealt with at the level of her epistemological assumptions and method. Now here Haraway seems to recognize complexities and problems, but the productive tension that she imagines to exist when she begins to talk about these dissolves, I will argue, before what is an overriding logic in her position.

In the essay 'Situated Knowledges' this supposed productive tension is presented as taking shape between the deconstructive on the one hand and the idea of embodiment and situated knowledges on the other. The former embraces the celebratory mode of the cyborg, that bold 'clearing of a space' for the imaginative construction of an alternative reality. We know that anything is possible under the sign of the text. In feminism's fight with a masculine science, it is the possibility of arguing the 'radical historical specificity, and so contestability' of scientific and technological constructions. 'Situated knowledge', on the other hand, attempts to deal with the 'multiple personality disorders' Haraway says are the result of just that kind of 'epistemological electroshock therapy',[27] which is her deconstructive method. It is as if the 'embodiment' and 'situated knowledges' that feminism draws on is counter to the irreality of deconstruction and the cybernetic hyper-real alike.[28] She seeks to bridge the perceived gap between 'theory' and 'experience' in an exhortation to develop a new way of seeing.[29]

Thus one has the sense of two divergent approaches in contest. This is certainly the sense you get of the subject/writer who tries to hold divergent possibilities together. But perhaps this subjective struggle, which seems real enough, is but a lingering problem of the still not wholly reformed modern subject. For Haraway's apparent counterpositioning is, and could be, nothing of the kind. A felt dilemma is resolved at the level of the text, from the standpoint of the text. Where 'embodiment' might have suggested some recognition of a mode of being heterogeneous and resistant to the reduction of the text, the logic of the information age holds sway. Thus bodies are *only* to be known as texts, and 'situations' as the spatially arranged points of view at which particular textual

27. Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges', in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*, p. 186.
28. Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges', p. 184.
29. Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges', in the section 'The Persistence of Vision', pp. 188-191.

phenomena emerge. The positional emphasis in 'situated know-ledge' confirms that we are dealing with the surface of the post-modern 'map' which Jameson has exhorted us to put first as the necessary intellectual work of our time.[30] If there is something more to being embodied, something that would pose as a primary issue the question of how to describe the non-textual modality out of which 'textual' formations grow, then Haraway's method won't let us get to it. If there is something more to 'the situation' — other dimensions of socio-bodily engagement in the world — the textual and positional conception obscures them.[31] Likewise with her mention of the 'unrepresentable' in a reference to the 'many faces' of nature.[32] The epistemological answer both to her problem of a certain subjective (embodied) 'dissonance' and the question of 'reality' and 'nature' more generally for historians and philoso-phers of science, lies in this rather 'thin' conception of embodi-ment and the social 'space'. What remains intractable to descrip-tion and understanding can by degrees be approached by letting 'difference' speak; or to put it in visual and spatial terms, from all perspectives. But such 'perspectivalism' is 'difference on one plane',[33] a spatial formulation. Within Haraway's framework, it cannot be conceived that there may be in embodiment and forms of social practice, and largely closed off to the text as unrepresent-

30. Fredric Jameson, 'Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism', *New Left Review*, no. 146, 1984, pp. 53-92.

31. The notion of the situation is useful here to sketch briefly an alterna-tive formulation to that of Haraway. According to Sharp, one defining feature of the contemporary period is the explosion of the situation as the primary setting of the constitution of the self and integration of persons into society. It is exactly the kinds of network formations Haraway identifies and the image-construction communications tech-nologies which transgress national and ethnic boundaries, as well as those of the family and the state-administered institutions, that have this effect. 'Situation' or 'situatedness' in that earlier period referred to a quite specific 'density' of relations between persons and things; a particular, less abstracted engagement of the body in the world. The 'density' of which I speak implies the possibility of an intuitive depth of meaning and value shared between persons, an effect of the form of social relations as constitutive of socio-bodily being. (In ways different to Sharp, Mary Douglas points to these sorts of issues, see her *Natural Symbols*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1973.) Haraway is worried about 'boundless difference', but her challenge to this with respect to relation-ships in the world is conceived in the depthless imagery/language of the information mode itself: the 'task of making partial, real connec-tion' ('Manifesto', p. 15).

32. Haraway, Introduction, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women*, p. 3.

33. This refers to Geoff Sharp's work on 'constitutive abstraction'. See below.

able, another order or register of difference — an order or orders heterogeneous to the heterogeneity of one plane, according to the one, cyborg principle.

Ironically, for I agree with Haraway's philosophical critique of positions like Gena Corea's and Robyn Rowland's, it is, with another order of difference that, I suggest, such writers remain in touch. The fear of a certain disembodiment of women at the hands of a radically abstracted techno-science is *argued* on essentialist foundations. It is dismissed consequently as anachronistic in these postmodern times. Yet there are ways of grappling with those aspects of embodiment that do not have to be explained thus. Thinkers like Julia Kristeva, for instance, encounter and begin to give us ways of conceiving of the unrepresentable of embodied being and forms of social interaction, and yet may explain the body and person as varied historical constructions.[34] Kristeva employs a double framework of analysis which is sensitive to the socio-bodily modalities of touch and smell and movement, to the emotional and its sources, the nature of which must escape the fully textual approaches; and indeed as such illuminate the mechanisms of cultural commitment to the forms of knowing and being which live through us. Another approach is offered in the work of Geoff Sharp, which generally informs this article.[35] Where Kristeva conceives of the heterogeneous 'orders' of our being in the sense of our emergence into culture — the 'pre-symbolic' and the 'symbolic' — Sharp's work raises the prospect of a more fully social explanation of the body and person as living a complex interaction of *social forms*. What the emergent order of the text/information cannot know, and which in one sense we personally value when we go so far as IVF to have a child, is a level or mode of desire and embodied being tied to a distinctive form of social life.

An ethical guide also emerges here. If we are to live the pleasures of the body, which also requires that we continue to live much of its pain, then it may be that we will have to defend structural elements of a culture that the postmodern now pronounces defunct. This is not at all to say we will find ourselves defending the maternal sacrifice, as figured in the madonna and child, or what others so barrenly call the 'pro-natalist' ideologies

34. Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, see Toril Moi, *The Kristeva Reader*, for excerpts, pp. 89-136.
35. See Sharp's 'Constitutive Abstraction and Social Practice', especially the sections: 'The Abstraction of the Cultural Frame: The Emergence of Autonomy' and 'The Ideology of Autonomy and Cultural Contradiction', *Arena*, no. 70, 1985, pp. 68-76.

of the nuclear family. This is to refer to the ideological instance rather than to the formal characteristics of the socio-cultural in any of its given historical elaborations. This points to the need for an investigation of the mechanisms of the forms of the *social tie* observable in different cultures and historical periods: the social forms of the construction of persons, and not the particular narratives of identification that now fill the pages of postmodern texts as invitations to *pure* difference.[36] The positions of Kristeva and Sharp strongly contradict the postmodern proposition that the body is a mere surface, providing tools for an examination of those realms of being that are taken for granted in everyday life, and thus especially vulnerable to the assumptions of the techno-scientific age which actively eschew, if not actively begin to engineer away, their existence.

So, I would hold that far from the 'cyborg' metaphor offering feminism a creative spur to political activity, it represents an impasse for thought and action. Haraway does not really come to grips with the meaning and mode of life of the techno-scientific era, nor could her method allow her to. Indeed, she steps in with the metaphor of the cyborg exactly at the point where our cyborg desires, those of the text, should be laid out for critical reflection. I want to use the cyborg metaphor not merely as a provocation, and not in Haraway's sense, but critically: as a figure for a general socio-cultural form which must be grasped first as a *social* issue (not primarily an epistemological one) and critically set within these terms against its predecessors. I would suggest that far from the adoption of the cyborg encouraging an unlimited reflexivity, it closes off the possibility of asking the questions we most need to today.

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In summary then, I have proposed that the development of the new reproductive technologies carries through a more general transformation in the mode of the constitution of subjects. That is, in line with much recent social theory, but hardly applied in the specific case of the reproductive technologies, I take the view that persons are constituted as such in distinctive and variable ways according to the socio-cultural context of their formation. In particular, some theorists of and commentators on postmodernity help us to begin to illuminate the distinctive self of postmodern

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36. For example the three volumes of *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, New York, Zone Books, 1989.

society, pointing to the contemporary science-technology nexus as crucially implicated in the new subject form. For the purposes of this essay I have drawn on the work of Donna Haraway in this regard. The contrasting positions of liberal feminism and Corea/Rowland are the familiar terrain of contemporary feminist reproductive politics. Each, however, fails to grapple with the emergent social reality partly carried in, certainly figured by, the new reproductive technologies; and neither have a sufficiently developed theoretical apparatus with which to account for the relationship between techno-science and the person, and especially the new reproductively 'autonomous' woman. These approaches can all be found to be deficient when a critique of their philosophical presuppositions and methodological orientations is undertaken.

So, Haraway's work — which suggests the notion of the 'cyborg' as our distinctive mode of being and experience of the body in the information age — moves beyond the modernist assumptions of the previous writers. Hers is the provocative challenge to feminism in general to come to terms with a new reality which demands radically new tools of analysis and elaboration. But ultimately Haraway's position, as I have argued, carries deep problems for the feminist response to the techno-sciences. While she correctly identifies aspects of our new mode of being and convincingly overturns some feminist accounts of the technologies, she far too readily accepts the cyborg nature of our emergent desires. Although specific ethical guides are not to be found in Haraway's work, I have indicated how, at the level of her methodological commitments, a definite logic of engagement in the world emerges. Here I suggest that though Haraway arrives at her conclusions by somewhat more acceptable means than Firestone and other pro-technology advocates, they all in the end celebrate the arrival of the information order. Finally, I pointed to some other approaches which indicate how feminism might overcome the impasse which for me Haraway's work represents.

Running through this article are assumptions which only really come to the forefront in these suggestions for alternative research directions. They are part of a preoccupation with the emergence of forms of the self and their lived embodiment. While Haraway must put forth an entirely textual account of the body, I wish to explore contrary forms of being, and suggest that these co-exist in our personal formation. Knowing better what these other orders of (socially constituted) 'difference' or modes of (social) being are, we have a better basis for asking what the new reproductive technologies mean; for better posing questions about a widespread sense that 'something' is put under threat by the new technologies.

With the benefit of this kind of point of view, we may also begin
to place second wave feminism, and the contests within it in the
form of the many feminisms, rather more adequately than is
typically the case. Not only do different intellectual traditions and
novel intellectual developments compete across groups of feminist
thinkers and differently 'situated (feminist) identities', a contest,
at least a confrontation, of different forms of knowing and being
may be said to occur within and as the body of our ambiguous
passage into postmodernity. In this light, *some* aspects of theoret-
ically 'outmoded' feminism may still offer insights into a more
'human' alternative to the cyborg. At any rate, I hope both
Haraway's work and the critique I attempt here will help to better
situate feminism's quest for women's autonomy.