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Haraway's Lost Cyborg and the Possibilities of Transversalism

Donna Haraway's entire body of work is permeated by her interest in finding ways of allowing heterogeneous actors to work productively together. This interest weaves its way through the cyborg, the Modest_Witness, and now the companion species. Within all these figures lies the desire to develop "vulnerable, on-the-ground work that cobbles together non-harmonious agencies and ways of living that are accountable both to their disparate inherited histories and to their barely possible but absolutely necessary joint futures" (Haraway 2003, 7). Strangely enough, while Haraway's comments on technology have been widely explored, this important work on coalition building has been largely overlooked.

Accordingly, this article attempts to map out the contours of a cyborg theory of coalition. I examine Haraway's suggestion that we must relinquish our sense of bounded identity in order to work with threatening and frightening others. However, I also suggest that, while becoming cyborgian has appealing possibilities, it is equally important to understand the pain and fear that inevitably coincide with the attempt to critically evaluate one's own subject position. Discussions of the difficulties of actually reworking our conceptions of subjectivity are limited in Haraway's own work, so as a response to this problem I seek to bring Haraway's theories into conversation with the theoretical aspects of transversal politics as they are expressed by Cynthia Cockburn and Nira Yuval-Davis. This theory of building coalitions for peace outlines some of the practical issues involved in learning how to perform the identity work necessary for interacting openly with others. Transversalism is a particularly apt conversation partner for Haraway since it is a situated practice that seeks to remain specific to the needs of the particular women involved while also offering tools and ideas that can inspire others in their coalition work. As such, it adds a valuable apparatus

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to Haraway's project of understanding "how worldly actors might somehow be accountable to and love each other less violently" (2003, 7).

An additional benefit of this conversation is that transversalism also suggests a possible context from which we might develop a greater understanding of the cyborg as an actor within a community, contradicting certain tendencies to see it as primarily an individual figure. Further, since both Haraway's work and transversal politics start from the premise that conflict is impossible to eliminate, the community implied by the conjunction between them challenges common conceptions of community as the place of harmony and communion. Instead, social structures and subjectivities are developed that allow us to view disagreement as a productive opportunity rather than as something we need to abolish. In order to gain a clearer idea of how disagreement might be viewed in a more positive light, I turn to the work of Linnell Secomb and Jean-Luc Nancy, who, while coming from quite a different theoretical background to both Haraway and transversalism, nevertheless have important insights to offer to the conversation. I conclude by emphasizing that, while adequate theories and techniques are needed for the possibility of more productive communication, what is also important is a personal desire for change that is able to withstand the difficulties of being constantly challenged without growing defensive or self-protective.

Figurations

Haraway's most famous work is, of course, her essay titled "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1991b, 149–81). At the time of its development, Haraway was concerned that feminism was simply rejecting science as masculinist and therefore forfeiting the opportunity to define the features of the new integrated circuit of twentieth-century technoscience. In addition, mainstream feminism was criticized by women of color, who argued that the all-encompassing category of "woman" elided the lived realities of many women. Haraway's notion of the cyborg was therefore conceived as a way of recognizing both of these critiques of hegemonic feminism. Consequently, Haraway's cyborg presented a way of intimately connecting feminism with technoscience and a way of envisioning political coalition that did not rest on an exclusivist notion of woman. This contribution to a new way of understanding political coalition is just one among the many others Haraway has produced, all of which conform to Haraway's technique of figuration.

This technique, inspired by the work of women of color, particularly by U.S. third-world feminists, sets out a politics that "rests on the con-

struction of the consciousness, the imaginative apprehension, of oppression, and so of possibility" (Haraway 1991b, 149). Haraway thus attempts to develop imaginative understandings of concepts such as *subjectivity*, *knowledge*, and *relationality* that challenge the traditional Western philosophical view of the self and its relation to the other in order to present the possibilities that come from seeing how we do not fit into this self/other dyad. For example, rather than understanding the subject as a self-creating individual, Haraway presents the subject as one who emerges through "co-constitutive relationships in which none of the partners preexist the relating, and the relating is never done once and for all" (2003, 12). Thus, in describing a new imaginative apprehension or figuration, Haraway does not attempt to develop self-figurations that would apply only to individual subjects but instead develops a kinship network that brings to light connections that have been rendered invisible by conventional Western dichotomies (see Haraway 2003, 9–11). Understanding one's connections to others in this way allows one to rework these dichotomies and, thus, to propose a view of collective action that discourages the use of divisive categories as a basis for homogeneous unity within groups. An important area that Haraway wished to address in her essay "A Cyborg Manifesto" was the way in which hegemonic feminism had failed to work in an open and plural manner with nonwhite women. She suggested that reworking one's sense of self was a necessary step toward more inclusive political structures. Her figuration of the cyborg was thus developed in part to provide a conception of feminist coalitions that did not require a homogenizing sisterhood in order to function.

However, the cyborg is not Haraway's only figuration, as *The Companion Species Manifesto* confirms. Instead, it exists within a collection of other political figures that conform to Haraway's political technique of developing visions of unsure, heterogeneous, desiring, noninnocent, leaky, situated actors. These visions are not abstract theories but "performative images that can be inhabited" (Haraway 1997, 11)—or, as Rosi Braidotti puts it, "a politically informed account of an alternative subjectivity" (1994, 1). These figures are useful because they provide focus, a point of reference. That is, "a figure collects up the people; a figure embodies shared meanings in stories that inhabit their audiences" (Haraway 1997, 23). With these new configurations Haraway does not seek to create permanent identity or closure but to allow conflicting concepts to interact in order to see what might be produced. Thus, figurations are imagined in order to hold together "contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes" because each idea might be "necessary and true" (Haraway 1991b, 149). Figurations do not tell us what to do; rather, they provide

a framework within which everyday decisions might be made differently. They suggest another way of orienting oneself within one's environment by offering possibilities of understanding and acting that cannot necessarily be seen within another frame of reference.

Figurations are able to perform this work by revealing the underlying assumptions of specific discourses and showing the ways in which these discourses fail or contradict themselves. Thus, developing a figuration involves looking for those aporias or impassable gaps in knowledge that "provoke a space of possibility precisely because things don't work smoothly anymore" (Haraway 2000, 115). Into these gaps Haraway inserts trickster figures. The most apt will thrive on the glitches that inevitably occur in any knowledge system and will denaturalize the commonsense feel of its ideology. Figuration entails looking for a way to cause the semiotic mechanics of a certain ideology not to stop but to reassemble and work differently.

An important aspect of this technique is the element of enjoyment. For Haraway, rethinking discursive boundaries is both serious play and playfully serious. Seeing theoretical work in this way guards against the possibility of becoming too attached to one's ideas, too arrogant, or of taking oneself too seriously. Indeed, while reading Haraway one can't help but notice how much fun she is having. It's as if she says to the reader "How about this story? See how beautifully it fits? Do you like it? Can you use it?" and then tells us to "take it and make more of them!" She shows how speculative theory, playing with meanings, is important political work. This aspect of pleasure is vital because, as Ingrid Bartsch, Carolyn DiPalma, and Laura Sells point out, Haraway's success relies on being able to "implicate the reader as a co-participant in her political practice" (2001, 129). Her figurations, therefore, need to be attractive, productive, and inviting. They need to be inhabitable and to resonate with already existing collective meanings—very difficult criteria to fill. Nevertheless, Haraway argues that our very survival depends on our ability to reassemble our dominating stories in order to allow room for more productive methods of working with others.

A new witness

The Modest_Witness, of *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan*© *_Meets_OncoMouse*™ fame, is this article's initial guide into a cyborgian theory of coalition. Through this figure, Haraway traces the development of the scientific ideal of objectivity and its link to the performance of self-effacement in the form of the "modest witness" conceived by Robert Boyle. This ideal of the subject emphasizes the need to remain distanced from, uninvolved in, and uncontaminated by the object of study. Sepa-

rating subjects from objects was therefore intimately connected to the ability of the scientist to perform a certain type of subjectivity. This performance was rendered nonmetaphorical, becoming instead the fact of objectivity. The better the performance, the more the scientist was granted "the remarkable power to establish the facts" (Haraway 1997, 24). For Haraway, this dream of objectivity is extremely dangerous since it seeks to strip agency from everyone and everything except the scientist. This dream allows knowledge to be thought of as being created by no one and, as a consequence, no one's fault and no one's responsibility. In order to challenge this conception, Haraway suggests a different figuration of subjectivity that reworks what is meant by objectivity.

For the new Modest_Witness, the desire for distance and uninvolvement is unthinkable. She is not a transcendent subject but instead integrates the scientific discourses of objectivity with its monstrous other—embodied, situated, implicated knowledge. She links Haraway's notion of cyborg subjectivity with her earlier writings about situated knowledge. Haraway's new witness thus becomes one who is "suspicious, implicated, knowing, ignorant, worried and hopeful" (1997, 3). Through this figuration, Haraway hopes to challenge the conceptual separation of science and politics that marked the advent of the scientific revolution and continues into the present. The figure of Modest_Witness was thus proposed to "bring the technical and the political back into realignment so that questions about possible liveable worlds lie visibly at the heart of our best science" (Haraway 1997, 39). Reconceiving how we think of the virtues of the scientist through the figuration of the Modest_Witness is an important step toward this realignment.

However, the Modest_Witness not only reworks scientific methodology but also suggests how processes of knowledge gathering might be understood within coalition work. Haraway describes the Modest_Witness as being "about telling the truth, giving reliable testimony, guaranteeing important things, providing good enough grounding—while eschewing the addictive narcotic of transcendental foundations" (1997, 22). The Modest_Witness does not seek to present what she knows as being either relative or objective knowledge, since both views imagine that one can remain separate and unimplicated in the worlds of others. Instead, she understands knowledge as a never-ending negotiation that requires openness to the opinions of others and a willingness to relate critically to her own ideas. She therefore renounces the illusion that knowledge presents immediate, clear images of the world. Instead, the Modest_Witness is one who makes "room for surprises and ironies at the heart of all knowledge production" (Haraway 1991c, 199). Political acts inspired by this conception of knowl-

edge can no longer guarantee innocence. The dangerous belief that there are transcendental foundations for knowledge comes to be understood by the Modest_Witness as an illusion, and she can never again hope to feel completely sure that she is doing the right thing.

This insistence on the uncertainty of knowledge—or *undecidability*, as it is termed by Jacques Derrida—is often taken to mean that political decisions are no longer possible. For Paula Moya, postmodern theories suggest "that anyone who wishes to avoid acting in an oppressive way will suspend judgment and refuse to decide among competing narratives about the world" (2001, 465). However, neither Haraway nor Derrida views the question of uncertainty in this way. Derrida argues, "If the whole political project would be the reassuring object or the logical or theoretical consequence of assured knowledge (euphoric, without paradox, without aporia, free of contradiction, without undecidabilities to decide), that would be a machine that runs without us, without responsibility, without decision, at bottom without ethics, not law, not politics" (Assheuer 1998). That is, undecidability should be understood as an intrinsic feature of political action, not as its death knell. Likewise, Haraway insists that "the point is to make a difference in the world, to cast our lot for some ways of life and not others. To do that, one must be in the action, be finite and dirty, not transcendent and clean" (Haraway 1997, 36). So while Haraway's insistence on the lack of guidelines for decision making is daunting, the absence of guarantees does not mean that one must not make decisions but rather that they must be made with caution and concern for accountability. Consequently, adopting the method of knowledge production suggested by the Modest_Witness requires one to remain in critical dialogue with both those we hope to act with and those whom we are confronting.

The cyborg of coalition

Haraway's reconfiguration of objectivity goes hand in hand with her refiguring of self-identical subjectivity. By examining her earlier figuration of the cyborg, we can gain a clearer picture of how it might be possible for the Modest_Witness to maintain the openness toward various forms of knowledge that is so critical to her work. As we are all well aware, Haraway is most often read for her comments about the ability of cyborgs to confuse the human/technology binary. While important work has come from this, claims such as William Macauley and Angel Gordo-López's that the violent, militaristic T1000 from the film *Terminator 2* is politically transgressive make one wonder whether Haraway's cyborg has been lost

altogether (see Macauley and Gordo-Lopez 1995). Indeed, the popularity of these types of cyborgs in pop culture and cyberpunk literature has led Judith Squires to suggest that "the cyborgs as 'techno-fascist celebrations of invulnerability' are winning out in the cultural battle against the semi-permeable hybrid cyborgs of Haraway's lexicon" (2000, 369). Haraway herself has noted that there has been a trend to "relegate the cyborg to an odd, attenuated kind of technophilic euphoria or glitzy love of all things cyber" (2000, 129). And she has more recently claimed that "cyborgs [can] no longer do the work of a proper herding dog to gather up the threads needed for critical inquiry" (2003, 4). Even so, I believe that the cyborg that has been disowned here represents only one layer of the multidimensional figuration that Haraway attempted to produce. By paying attention to Haraway's interest in antiracist feminist theories and her attempts to suggest possibilities for coalition across boundaries of identity, we can see another cyborg, the lost one. Thus, the figure presented here is not the technoborg that we are most familiar with but rather the coalition cyborg, who remembers her beginnings in U.S. third-world feminism just as much as those in modern technoscience.

For Haraway, the Euro-American feminist tradition relied on understandings of the self/other dichotomy that dramatically reduced the ability of feminists to work together across their differences. One instance of this was the search "for a single ground of domination to secure our revolutionary voice" (Haraway 1991b, 160). This desire for a united feminism disregarded the multiple forms of domination that affected women in many different ways. By exploring the boundary breakdowns between human and animal, organisms and machines, and the physical and the nonphysical, Haraway confirmed the inadequacy of all political claims to natural unity. She argued that feminists, having worked so hard to recognize the social and historical constitution of categories such as gender, race, and class, cannot then hope that these categories will "provide the basis for belief in 'essential' unity" (1991b, 155). Nevertheless, the response to this problem often manifested itself in "endless splitting and searches for a new essential unity" (Haraway 1991b, 151). A reconstructed feminist theory of coalition therefore needed to look for possibilities of grounding political work in something other than claims of unity.

Haraway's proposed alternative, cyborg feminism, drew upon a different understanding of the self that had been developed by women of color and charged white feminists with the task of dismantling their exclusive notions of woman. Through the work of feminists such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Chela Sandoval, and Trinh T. Minh-ha, Haraway developed the notion of cyborg subjectivity as that which does not fit into either of the

possibilities of dominant self or subordinate other. Sandoval's work in particular provided a strong theoretical framework that helped to inform Haraway's theory of cyborg coalition. This work enumerates the particular consciousness of power that is developed "by those refused stable membership in the social categories of race, sex or class" (Haraway 1991b, 155). For the one who does not fit, there is no possibility of connecting as a part to a whole. Instead, the methods developed from this consciousness provide a strong counterpoint to other analytic tools that Haraway argues "have insisted on the necessary domination of technics and recalled us to an imagined organic body to integrate our resistance" (1991b, 154). As a contrast to these methods of analysis, Sandoval's work presents theoretical tools that implement an idea of solidarity that operates "without relying on a logic of appropriation, incorporation, and taxonomic identification" (Haraway 1991b, 157). Particularly important to this is the exploration of the limits of identity and the violent methods with which identity boundaries are policed.

One of the most important steps for a new feminist figuration of identity is acknowledging that certain persistent Western dualisms have "been systemic to the logics and practices of domination of women, people of color, nature, workers, animals—in short domination of all those constituted as others, whose task is to mirror the self" (Haraway 1991b, 177). An awareness of this leads to the recognition that dreams of wholeness or unity of the self are fantasies maintained at the expense of those designated as other. Thus, for Haraway, working to undermine the idea that integration, incorporation, or identity can provide a nondominating context for coalition work has important consequences in that it undermines "*all* claims for an organic or natural unity" (Haraway 1991b, 157). The need to construct a new figuration of political subjectivity is therefore not confined to those who are excluded from Western social categories but includes all those who are committed to building political groups in order to confront forceful domination. Thus, coming to grips with "the permanent partiality of feminist points of view has consequences for our expectations of forms of political organization and participation" (Haraway 1991b, 173). Some of the most promising forms, according to Haraway, are theories of coalition work that reject firm identities and that are instead based on affinity.

Haraway's work has elicited the mistaken concern that in rejecting certain Western dualisms she is advocating an irresponsible shifting of identities at will. For Haraway, it is the specific situation of the individual that disrupts our normal categories, not the attempt to move within categories without restraint. As Bartsch, DiPalma, and Sells point out, "Haraway's theories do not render identity categories fragile; the fragility of

these categories themselves demands a theory that can accommodate their very existence" (2001, 162). Haraway's figurations are not therefore "allegories of infinite mobility and interchangeability, but of elaborate specificity and difference" (Haraway 1991c, 190). Indeed, her work is possible only by elaborating the challenging specificity of the actors with whom she interacts. Thus, for Haraway "queering specific normalized categories is not for the easy frisson of transgression, but for the hope for liveable worlds" (1994, 60). By insisting on the heterogeneity of every subject and group, Haraway argues that specificity need not tie one to preexisting understandings.

This move away from taxonomy is valuable since all too often people "use names to point to themselves and other actors and easily mistake the names for the things" (Haraway 1992, 313). For Haraway, this is dangerous and limiting because it risks obscuring the wide variety of connections, transformations, and contradictions that make up subjects. She seeks instead to present the self as being "about heterogeneous multiplicities that are simultaneously salient and incapable of being squashed into isomorphic slots or cumulative lists" (1991a, 22). Recognizing the way various categories specify those who are to be dismissed, oppressed, and brutalized, Haraway suggests an alternative mode of specificity that challenges previous strategies of categorization. Hence, to indicate one's situatedness and specificity one does not list the various categories one fits into but instead might show how one does not fit, how one cannot be stereotyped or known because of one's taxonomical specifications. For a reenvisioned feminism, this presents greater possibilities of linking with others across categories, not by changing categories at will but by recognizing that our understandings of ourselves and each other do not need to be static to be specific.

Consequently, the cyborg presents the actor as a heterogeneous subject who is never simply friend or foe, self or other, promising or frightening. People customarily separated into different categories may begin the hard task of reconnecting as necessary. Additionally, recognizing a greater degree of heterogeneity in all identity groups allows one to gain a clearer picture of the cracks and splits in the groups we are challenging. We no longer need to see the enemy as a unitary target. Thus, the cyborg's heterogeneous subjectivity makes it difficult to forthrightly name the enemy, to know whom to exclude. Deciding whom we will work with can no longer be determined by broad categories but must instead become a negotiated project.

Giving up a sense of identity with our political partners, as well as acknowledging the difficulties of pinpointing the enemy, can be seen as

a threat to a group's power to act. However, Haraway's theory of cyborg subjectivity actually presents the positive possibility of no longer having to adhere to the political imperative to be the innocent one, the most oppressed one, or the more natural one. Political groups can be released from both the pressures of unity and the frightening prospect of a homogeneous enemy, focusing instead on developing the skills to become more able to handle unstable, pragmatic coalitions that focus more on attaining specific goals than on proving the group's common identity or innocence.

By renouncing the dream of identity, the cyborg has the ability to connect in new and disparate ways that are unavailable to more circumscribed notions of the self. The death of the Enlightenment subject—the masterful, all-knowing, singular actor—is productively affirmed, and we become able to turn without grief to the prospects of being heterogeneous and cyborgian. Thus, Haraway's figuration refigures the taxonomical imperatives of Western conceptions of the self. In place of the self that must be categorized and named, Haraway presents the benefits of a self who can only ever make partial connections with others and so desires dialogue rather than identification. Haraway's work thus presents a challenge to the self/other dichotomy, questioning the ability of this conception of identity to escape its history of oppression and suggesting that a lived everyday practice of cyborg subjectivity is better able to make us conscious of the techniques we use to defend and maintain our structures of inequality.

So where has she gone?

Bartsch, DiPalma, and Sells point out that, while the cyborg was conceived primarily to act as a political metaphor, "academic work that treats a political coalition in cyborg terms . . . barely exists" (2001, 142). For Sandoval, the erasure of these aspects of Haraway's work is due to the "apartheid of theoretical domains," which has meant that the transdisciplinarity of Haraway's work has not been adequately explored (1995, 415). That is, while Haraway herself crosses between postmodern theory, U.S. third-world feminism, science studies, postcolonial theory, and cultural theory, it is rare for commentators to deal with all these aspects in their own work. This has meant that, in particular, the racial dimensions of Haraway's work have been overlooked. For Haraway, the lack of a "compelling account of race and sex *at the same time*" was part of what encouraged her to construct her cyborg figuration (Penley and Ross 1991, 11). In addition, the "embarrassed silence about race among white radical and socialist feminists" convinced her that a form of politics must be found

that did not partake in the racisms of hegemonic white feminism (Haraway 1992, 160). She therefore looked to the theories of women of color for many of the theoretical underpinnings of the cyborg. Surprisingly, the work that provided the basis for the cyborg has been completely ignored by most cyborg theorists.[1]

For Sandoval, Haraway's use of terms like *coyote*, *trickster*, and *mestiza consciousness* means that the feminist cyborg is "clearly articulated with the material and psychic positionings of U.S. third world feminism" (1995, 412). In addition, Anzaldúa's notion of the mestiza, which describes a form of tactical subjectivity that exists on the borders of common delineations of self and other and familiar and foreign, provides a clear basis for Haraway's figurations (see Anzaldúa 1987). Further links can be seen in what Sandoval calls the "methodology of the oppressed," a method based on the work of women such as Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga, and Audre Lorde and consisting of five main tactics: sign reading/semiotics, deconstruction, metaideologizing, democratics, and differential movement. This methodology advocates the importance of discerning the ideologies implicit in common sense (semiotics), being able to interrogate the foundations of these ideologies (deconstruction), and consequently reappropriating the ideologies in revolutionary ways (metaideologizing), all the while being inspired by a strong ethical sense of where one would like these interventions to end up (democratics). (See Sandoval 1995, 409–10.) The fifth tactic, differential movement, is a method of understanding the way various forms of oppositional activity can be enacted. It allows the feminisms of equal rights, revolution, supremacy, and separation to be engaged in as required, by understanding the uses of each without claiming one form to be more correct than any other. For instance, while separation is sometimes required in order to nurture and protect the differences of a newly valued group, equal rights activism is also required in order to argue for rights on the basis that all humans are equal (see Sandoval 2000, 55–57). These five tactics are all clearly discernible in Haraway's work, and an awareness of them allows her readers to have a fuller appreciation of the task she is attempting.

I would argue, therefore, that the exclusion of this body of work from our analyses of Haraway has stripped the cyborg of much of its figurative power. As a consequence, the challenge to rethink our relations with others that was presented by the cyborg has not been taken up. Although there

[1] Although cyborg theorists have largely ignored the contributions of U.S. third-world feminism, political theory more generally has explored some of the issues it raises. See Fowlkes 1997; Reuman 2000; Bickford 2001; Coles 2001; Ortega 2001; Adams 2002.

have been experiments with the performance of the technoborg, the difficulties of living as the coalition cyborg have perhaps proven to be too great. As Haraway herself notes, becoming conscious of oneself as not fitting into either "gender, race, or class consciousness is an achievement forced on us by the terrible historical experience of the contradictory social realities of patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism" (1991b, 155). Of course there are already many who have been forced to attain this type of consciousness. However, Haraway's cyborg figuration is a response to the criticisms women of color have made of hegemonic feminism. Accordingly, the cyborg lays the primary responsibility for this sort of identity work in the hands of those who may not currently be experiencing intense oppression and domination. Haraway herself does not fully explore the discomfort, anger, and fear that go along with the inability to fit, preferring to enunciate the positive aspects of being cyborgian. Consequently, it is imperative that the theories and stories that Haraway's work is based on be explored by her commentators in order to provide a clearer picture of the anguish that is an integral part of the cyborg figuration. We can then see how her strategy of cyborgian subjectivity is intimately linked to the brutal experiences of surviving forceful and aggressive domination.

For the Haraway of "A Cyborg Manifesto," the threat of global devastation presented by the unchecked recklessness of the technological military apparatus had created a collective situation of immense peril. What we must recognize then is that becoming cyborg is not simply a game but an almost unbearable requirement for survival. It is a form of subjectivity drawn from the tactics required for dealing with overwhelming power differences that threaten an individual's existence to the very core. With the current intensification in the deployment of the military apparatus in the Iraq conflict and in the "War on Terror" more generally, and in the continued threats of environmental destruction and nuclear warfare, the importance of actively dismantling privilege in order to develop less violent ways of dealing with conflict is still a pressing task. It is true that the immediacy of global threats can be somewhat hidden from our everyday lives, and perhaps this is why Haraway's call to rethink the way we work with others has been lost behind the exploration of cyber culture. But as recent events have shown, we do not have the luxury of waiting until such dangers are everywhere palpable. We must begin immediately.

A few tactics

The question still remains, then, of how we might concretely go about utilizing cyborgian subjectivity in coalition work. And, further, what might

be the link between reworking our understanding of the world and our ability to act differently within that world, within the contingent, variable situations we find ourselves in? More specifically, how might a cyborgian understanding of subjectivity be developed in a situation where there are serious power differentials between the women involved? What sorts of tactics might we employ? Fortunately, an astonishingly apt answer to these questions can be found in the practice known as transversalism, a form of coalition work articulated theoretically by Yuval-Davis and Cockburn. Through their work with a number of feminist peace groups, both have encountered a distinct form of working with the problems associated with coalition work, not just with different others but with those we see as our enemies. Thus, this form of politics is called "'transversalism'—to differentiate from 'universalism' which by assuming a homogeneous point of departure ends up being exclusive instead of inclusive" (Yuval-Davis 1994, 192–93). For both of these theorists, politics based on a homogeneous notion of identity is spectacularly unable to deal with the problem of working toward peace. Instead, they argue that by questioning how one understands one's sense of identity, by reducing defensive reactions and attempting to broaden one's point of view, less aggressive responses to conflict can become more than a naive hope.

Both theorists are interested in "how to go about this task concretely" (Yuval-Davis 1994, 189). They argue that we need to "know more about *how peace is done* . . . really *done* . . . how some ordinary people arrange to fill the space between their national differences with words in the place of bullets" (Cockburn 1998, 1). Consequently, both women's work is based on the study of existing peace groups. Yuval-Davis focuses primarily on Women in Black and Women against Fundamentalisms, while Cockburn's book, *The Spaces between Us*, connects the insights of Yuval-Davis with the Women's Support Network, a group of Catholic and Protestant women working for peace in Northern Ireland; Bat Shalom, a group of Israeli and Palestinian peace activists; and the Medica Women's Therapy Center in Bosnia-Hercegovina.[2]

For all these groups, coalitions are formed not "in terms of 'who' we are but in terms of what we want to achieve" (Yuval-Davis 1994, 188–89).

[2] See the following Web sites for more detail about the groups on which Yuval-Davis focuses: Women in Black, http://www.womeninblack.net; and Women against Fundamentalisms, http://waf.gn.apc.org. The Web sites for the groups focused on by Cockburn are Women's Support Network, http://www.womenssupportnetwork.org; Bat Shalom, http://www.batshalom.org; and the Medica Women's Therapy Center, http://www.medicamondiale.org.

However, the ability of these groups to achieve the goals they set for themselves relies not on setting identity aside and ignoring it but on actively challenging how identity is experienced. Yuval-Davis identifies two tactics that are utilized in this regard. She writes that at Women in Black meetings "each participant brings with her the rooting in her own membership and identity but at the same time tries to shift in order to put herself in a situation of exchange with women who have different membership and identity" (1994, 192–93). Thus, transversal politics requires the cyborgian abilities of being situated and yet not having one's actions determined by the categories one supposedly fits into.

It is important to note, however, that the ability to shift has to be understood in a particular way. First, one does not dismiss one's sense of self or one's moral values. Yuval-Davis argues that "it is vital in any form of coalition and solidarity politics to keep one's own perspective on things while empathizing and respecting others" (1994, 193). Transversal politics thus reiterates the importance Haraway places on remaining connected to one's particular background and experiences while recognizing the impure nature of this background. That is, the self "is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and *therefore* able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another" (Haraway 1991c, 193). Within these coalitions, then, one's situatedness does not need to be forgotten or minimized. Rather, it provides the inspiration and commitment that are required to engage in the difficult work of forming coalitions for peace. The second clarification of the process of shifting is that it "should not homogenize the 'other'" (Yuval-Davis 1994, 193); while roots are necessary, they are not natural or prescriptive of one's behavior. A coalition member should not, therefore, be forced to represent her entire race, ethnicity, or religion. Instead, her views and opinions need to be treated as her own, not as typical of her group. That is, "the boundaries of a transversal dialogue are determined by the message, rather than the messenger" (Yuval-Davis 1997, 131).

Cockburn adds two broader sets of tactics to those of rooting and shifting. The first of these consists of what she terms *identity processes*. These processes foster nonessentialist attitudes toward identity and recognize identities not as natural or innate but rather as influenced throughout by systems of coercion. Thus, transversal politics reiterates Haraway's emphasis on identity work as an integral part of dismantling the systems that maintain group antagonisms. Transversalism not only recognizes the heterogeneity of the subject but also actively seeks to develop this cyborgian subjectivity in order to better interact with others. The coalition groups "do not essentialize identities and therefore do not predict what

might flow from them. They are unusually willing to wait and see" (Cockburn 1998, 225). They leave room for surprises in the midst of their knowledge just as the Modest_Witness does. As Sara Ahmed writes, all too often the other is not actually "that which we fail to recognize, but is that which we have already recognized as 'a stranger'" (2000, 3). Whenever possible, this recognition as already other is put on hold, and the participant's assumptions are interrogated and held to account. Transversal politics thus suggests one solution to Haraway's call for "a concept of agency that opens up possibilities for figuring relationality within social worlds where actors fit oddly, at best, into previous *taxa* of the human, the natural, or the constructed" (Haraway 1991a, 21).

However, transversal politics also recognizes that relating in this way is extremely hard work and must be approached carefully, with explicit guidelines and goals. As Bernice Johnson Reagon remarks in regard to participating in coalition work, "I feel as if I'm gonna keel over any minute and die. Most of the time you feel threatened to the core and if you don't, you're not really doing no coalescing" (1983, 356). Transversalism is not only about recognizing the inadequacy of categories. As a form of politics working for peace, responsibility must be taken for the different ways each category, such as Israeli or Palestinian, experiences the conflict. Cockburn argues that "the projects operate well as alliances only when they do recognize and make explicit this ethical asymmetry" (1998, 227). Thus, "creating an alliance is therefore not just a matter of mutual opening. It involves a willingness to face ethical issues, to dig deep into layers of advantage, exploitation and oppression. It is a painful process" (Cockburn 1998, 226). Consequently, as a part of managing these disturbing difficulties, transversal work requires groups to define clear agendas and develop fair, open, and democratic group processes.

The second set of tactics Cockburn discusses is implementing these procedures. Transversal politics recognizes that our ability to act comes from being in relation with others. Consequently, in order for us to act differently, the structures of these relations need to be changed. The groups therefore place great emphasis on creatively structuring the democratic space within which they all work. Cockburn notes that "the space has to afford an optimal distance between differences, small enough for mutual knowledge, for dispelling myths, but big enough for comfort" (1998, 224). This space thus allows for a conceptual difference between political partners and friends. As Felly Nkweto Simmonds argues, "The assumption that my 'political' sisters are also my friends is a false starting point. Friendships that are based on such assumptions can, in fact, prevent us from speaking the truths about our lives, especially if this truth is at

odds with the truth about our political lives" (1997, 25).[3] Transversal politics recognizes that the need to work together should not be confused with mutual affection, or even liking. Indeed, Cockburn describes friendship "as the last resort of an alliance" (1998, 228). Although she does not deny that friendship can make the process more enjoyable, an important aspect of transversal politics is the ability to interact without assuming the similarity that friendship entails. Thus, transversal politics does not rely on common identities in order to act. As with the cyborg figuration, conflicting identities are connected together within transversalism because it is necessary to do so. However, a notion of structure or community is also developed that makes it possible for individual cyborgs to have breathing space in the midst of these important connections.

Transversal politics is an invaluable addition to our political toolbox. We are shown how the tactic of cyborgian subjectivity might take an embodied form in order to consciously work for a more peaceful and just society. The difficulties of such work are actively taken into account, and the need to rethink not only personal subjectivity but also the structures in which this subjectivity might be expressed is added to the concept of the cyborg. Transversal politics does not claim to be able to solve all our problems. As Yuval-Davis reminds us, "Transversal politics are not always possible, as conflicting interests of people who are situated in specific positionings are *not* always reconcilable" (1994, 193). However, transversal politics actively utilizes notions of identity very similar to Haraway's, while also acknowledging the pain of constantly being challenged and called to account for one's own position. This utilization thus presents an important step toward imagining the possibilities of a suspiciously hopeful cyborgian politics.

In addition, transversalism's modest hopes for knowledge repeat Haraway's vision of the Modest_Witness. An understanding of political action is produced that does not rest in a space of unproblematic knowledge of others or self-confident actions but, rather, constitutes what Diane Elam describes as a "realm of continual negotiation . . . in the absence of any accounting procedure" (1994, 81). Transversal politics shows that acknowledging that we must act without certain frameworks does not imply that one must be either paralyzed or unprincipled and opportunistic. Instead, this unsettling understanding of the limits of knowledge allows

[3] See also in this regard Derrida's *Politics of Friendship*, where he argues that "friendship does not keep silence, it is preserved by silence" (1997, 53). Derrida then goes on to critique a notion of friendship based on similarity, developing one that can instead be thought "beyond the homo-fraternal and phallogocentric scheme" (1997, 306).

room for recognizing that all participants in political work need to be listened to, negotiated with, and not silenced by the invocation of objective principles. Through the work of Haraway and transversalism, politics becomes understood as a process, as an unending work. Putting transversalism into practice will not result in a final unproblematic reconciliation between the parties involved. Nor can it save us from all difficulties in some vague future. It is rather "the difficult reality of unavoidable, unending, careful and respectful struggle" (Cockburn 1998, 216).

Cyborgian communities

Transversalism suggests that it is indeed possible to react in new ways to old situations, not by following prescriptive rules that tell one how to act but by reorienting oneself within one's world so that the actions of others can be understood in a less threatening way, reducing the need to react in a self-protective manner. Given the inevitability of conflict, it is imperative that these understandings of openness and negotiation be woven into our notions of community in a broader fashion than that already illustrated. As I argue above, it is not enough for us to understand ourselves differently; the structures within which we interact also need to be developed and challenged. Thus, the cyborg requires a figuration of community that will productively structure her dealings with others. If we are to avoid the tendency toward totalitarian and unfree structures, to which many communities are subject, the question we need to ask is, How might we find a figuration of community that avoids static visions of peace and harmony? Haraway's work provides a hint of such a figuration when she claims "where we need to move is not 'back' to nature, but *elsewhere*" (1992, 313). That is, we need something other than unity and innocence to strive for; we need an elsewhere or, rather, elsewheres. However, this is the closest Haraway comes to a figure for cyborgian communities. Instead, as she argues in *The Companion Species Manifesto*, "the imagined community . . . can only be known through the negative way of naming, like all the ultimate hopes" (2003, 64). Understanding the community through what it cannot be brings about a massive shift in how we envision communities, a shift I would like to explore through the vision of a fractured community developed by Linnell Secomb in response to Jean-Luc Nancy.

For both Nancy and Secomb, the initial step toward rethinking community entails realizing that the ideal of harmonious sociality is not possible but is rather an illusory story. As Nancy argues in *The Inoperative Community*, "Until this day history has been thought on the basis of a

lost community—one to be regained or reconstituted . . . always it is a matter of a lost age in which community was woven of tight, harmonious, and infrangible bonds" (1991, 9). However, he goes on to insist that "community has not taken place . . . community has never taken place along the lines of our projections of it" (1991, 11). Thus, in order to conceive of a new figuration of community, we need to recognize what community is not. Namely, it is not something that can somehow be regained. Instead, we can recognize that community has never happened and so is never lost. This means, as Haraway often argues, that there is no need to seek to return to a lost paradise since there never was an original unity to which we might one day return. Instead, we need to remain in critical relation to this dream of wholeness and look at what other possibilities we do have.

As we saw in regard to transversal politics, there are indeed possibilities for cyborg subjectivities to work together effectively and productively, although these require that the various actors participate in self-critical dialogue and negotiation. Secomb's notion of fractured community extends these elements of political coalition into a more general figure of an (im)possible community. For Secomb, community is best understood "as productive disagreement" (2000, 134). She argues that disagreement "holds a space open for diversity and for freedom. It is not disagreement, resistance, and agitation that destroy community. It is rather the repression or suppression of difference and disagreement in the name of unity and consensus which destroys the engagement and interrelation of community" (2000, 134). Secomb therefore resists the notion that the proper task of politics is to create a unified community. Instead, she insists that understanding a society as fractured is beneficial not only in that it would recognize structurally the importance of difference but also in that it would "also overcome stagnation and complacency, and generate transition and transformation" (2000, 137). Recognizing that we will never attain the fabled notion of community does not therefore need to be disastrous. Instead, the inevitable conflict that occurs in any community can be reenvisioned as "the passion, rapture, and ecstasy which enriches and sustains being-with-others" (Secomb 2000, 147). Thus, just as the death of the subject enables the political possibilities developed by Haraway, the death of community suggested by Nancy can also be seen as a positive opportunity for rethinking our earlier concepts. For instance, we might see that "disagreement, difference, and passion mark the living community," not the failed one (Secomb 2000, 148).

This idea of community is a particularly apt one for the cyborg because it recognizes the unavoidable nature of process and change that is integral

to Haraway's work. As Nancy says, this type of community "is not a work to be done or produced. But it is a task, which is different—an infinite task at the heart of finitude" (1991, 35). Here Nancy is referring to Maurice Blanchot's notion of unworking. For Blanchot, part of the possibility of creating a work is the impossibility of completing the transferral of inspiration to a finished form. He writes that this incompletion prevents one from being able to view one's work and say "at last it is finished, at last there is nothing" (1981, 30). In view of this, Nancy argues that "community necessarily takes place in . . . that which, before or beyond the work, withdraws from the work, and which no longer having to do either with production or with completion, encounters interruption, fragmentation, suspension" (1991, 31). Thus, the condition of possibility for community is that its tendencies toward unity are always apart from it, never materialized but constantly retreating in front of our efforts to live peacefully together. If it were to become fixed in place, we would no longer have community but rather the end, the finish. For "when the system of connection closes in on itself, when symbolic action becomes perfect, the world is frozen in a dance of death. The cosmos is finished, and it is One. Paranoia is the only possible posture; generous suspicion is foreclosed" (Haraway 1992, 327).

This does not mean that connection itself is denied in the fractured community, only a certain type of connection. Instead of connection being seen as an end point, connection must be rethought as process. Ahmed suggests precisely this when she argues that "collectivities are formed through the *very work that has to be done* in order to get closer to other others" (2000, 17). Nancy's argument, which Secomb also refers to, suggests a similar notion: "It is not a matter of making, producing, or instituting a community. . . . It is a matter of incompleting its sharing. . . . For a complete sharing implies the disappearance of what is shared" (Nancy 1991, 35). However, Secomb argues that Nancy fails to present a picture of how this incompletion might be enacted or sustained. In addition, she argues, this vision of sharing must be balanced with an emphasis on "the defiance and non-conformity of being-together" (Secomb 2000, 143). The figuration of the fractured community is therefore produced in order to provide a form that emphasizes both.

For cyborgs who "are wary of holism, but needy for connection," this figure of community might just be one of the possible elsewheres they are looking for (Haraway 1991b, 151). That is, while it is not necessarily true that all aspects of the theory of community suggested by Secomb and Nancy will directly and neatly fit with Haraway's philosophy, these visions of community do suggest productive possibilities for a cyborg

figuration of community. For example, a fractured community recognizes the cyborg's desires for partiality and intimacy and her unfaithfulness to her origins. The cyborg's struggle against perfect communication is also incorporated by recognizing the inevitability and the productivity of disagreement. In place of the natural Garden of Eden, then, which is always already lost, a cyborgian community based on these theories would consist of an imagined elsewhere, always preceding us, resisting closure and completion. That is, a cyborgian community would be one described in a negative and yet hopeful fashion as that which it is not, at least not yet.

The importance of yearning

As we saw with transversal politics, interacting with others can be very painful. In order to commit to actively and self-critically developing the tools that allow one to be less threatened by others, the longing for change must permeate one's lived everyday habits. Only then might we become the honest, compassionate subjects that this suspiciously generous politics calls for. As bell hooks writes, "To have a non-dominating context, one has to have a lived practice of interaction. And this practice has to be *conscious*. . . . In reality this non-exploitative way to be with one another has to be *practiced*; resistance to the possibility of domination has to be *learned*" (1994, 241). Thus, as was argued earlier, the cyborg figuration can inspire new forms of politics only inasmuch as it is inhabited. Cyborg theory needs to become a cyborg practice.

Practicing to be a cyborg means taking action for collective social change, based on both our own goals and the goals of others. In particular, one's sphere of responsibility or accountability must be extended to see not only how we are oppressed but also the way in which our actions maintain other people's subjection. Becoming cyborgian therefore entails taking on the terrifying task of working toward justice, not a calculable justice that would hope one day to be complete but a Levinasian justice that is never ending, such as Diane Elam describes: "Justice does not involve paying one's debts. Believing that one's debts can be paid is a fundamentally irresponsible belief; the desire to wash one's hands of responsibility to others. Rather, justice involves recognition of the debts that cannot be paid, the debts that set a limit to one's autonomy. To recognize such debts as unpayable is not to write them off, either—it is rather to commit oneself to an endless work of reparation without the final solace of redemption" (1994, 111).

Previously in this article I questioned the ability of the cyborg to inspire such a lived practice because of the difficulties of embracing heterogeneous

subjectivity as a consciously enacted strategy. However, in recognizing the ominous responsibility Elam presents, the pleasurable aspects of the cyborg become very important. Yuval-Davis reminds us that "as we can never accomplish, by definition, what we set out to do, one of the important tasks we have to think about is how to sustain and sometimes even celebrate our lives while struggling, including how to have fun" (1997, 132). Thus, the playfulness of Haraway's work can now be rewoven into the theoretical pattern created by this article as the brightly colored thread that draws and entices other players to the game: a game of cat's cradle that, as Haraway writes, "invites a sense of collective work, of one person not being able to make all the patterns alone" (1994, 70).

Haraway's work is an attempt to find a way out of the well-founded fear that humans will inevitably destroy themselves with the military technology available to them. She suggests that by finding new metaphors to describe both our sense of self and the way we engage in coalition work, we might develop ways of living that "subvert the apocalypse of returning to nuclear dust in the manic compulsion to name the Enemy" (Haraway 1991b, 151). Thus, through the cyborg, Haraway proposes a subject who does not participate in creating opposing others—named enemies—or in fixing others in stereotyped categories. This form of subjectivity points to a vastly different way of conceiving coalition work, one that requires "the recognition that one cannot *know* the other or the self, but must ask in respect for all of time who and what are emerging in relationship" (Haraway 2003, 50).

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