Forty Years Later: Reconsidering the Cyborg as a Feminist Metaphor

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Abstract: Revisiting Donna Haraway's cyborg from "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s" is an opportunity to trace metaphors used for interdisciplinary work that question structural binaries to assess their strengths and limitations. Analyzing the cyborg's transference, especially in Technical and Professional Communication, disability studies, and religious studies, draws attention to how metaphoric values change. Such decisions can be read as revisions of feminist criticism itself. Tracing the cyborg deepens not only our understanding of it as a metaphor but also the intersectional nature of feminist rhetorical scholarship as seen in the values attributed to the cyborg with each application.

Cyborgs abound in modern science fiction, often as tools of militaristic and patriarchal regimes. Yet, cyborgs extend beyond the entertainment world. The metaphor is used in numerous fields including feminist, disability, religious, organizational, political, and rhetorical theory. Widespread use of the term indicates a desire for and potential in the cyborg to be more than media has allowed. While reflecting on cyborgs today, I look to past notions of the cyborg to reconfigure it as a model for connection, not destruction. While the piece has been cited and reprinted many times over, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s" by Donna Haraway first appeared in Socialist Review in 1985. The cyborg's use over the past four decades in feminist criticism draws on Haraway's archetype. In an interview with Gary Olson, Haraway defines the cyborg as "a polluted category" (4). She also calls the cyborg a fraught and limited trope for the "pain as well as possibility involved in contemporary technoscience and the inextricable weave of bodies and machines and meaning" (Olson 26). The cyborg is always in the middle; constantly renegotiating itself in the face of new encounters, conditions, and connections. While the cyborg can represent technology's interaction with writing, it is also a corollary for considering the political stakes we engage with daily. However, the cyborg is not merely a metaphor. It is the enactment of socially and politically laden values. Reconsidering the cyborg 40 years later, is an opportunity to take stock of feminist rhetorical scholarship's values. The goal of such reflection is to reclaim the blurred boundaries between clarity and abstraction, theory and praxis, and science and religion through an intersectional metaphor that values confusion, connection, and dissensus. In revisiting the cyborg, we might find new ways of engaging with current notions of

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being that problematize existing divisions in a productive manner for advancing rhetorically aware engagement with others by rearticulating metaphors as shorthand for values. Adopting the cyborg as a metaphor for coalition building exposes "truths" valued in feminist theory that often overshadow productive exchanges. These include but are not limited to the desire for a perfect language, the want for a "perfect" example of feminist intersectionality, and the resistance to fields such as science and religion because they "undo" the work of social feminism. Reconsidering the cyborg reconsiders the values within feminist works, enabling critique that acknowledges tensions as productive, instead of striving for perfect unison.

Haraway's Cyborg

Collectivity carries a strength, but it can be founded on dissensus and continual engagement. Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto" provides feminist and rhetorical scholars alike with the opportunity to trace the usage of the cyborg as a metaphor for interdisciplinary work via coalition building that ultimately questions assumed values. The rhetorical strength of Haraway's cyborg lies in its use of irony as both "humor" and "serious play" (149). Irony is "about contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes…about the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and true" (Haraway149). The cyborg, as an ironic metaphor, defines values that then can and should be held in tension with one another. The cyborg is neither human nor natural nor technological. It is "a fiction mapping our social and bodily reality and as an imaginative resource" for "fruitful couplings" (Haraway 150). The cyborg seeks new connections because it is built through interaction. Later in the same passage, the cyborg is also named "the awful apocalyptic *telos* of the 'West's' escalating domination of abstract individuation" (150–51). Calling out the West speaks specifically to the political and social dimensions of the cyborg. Abstract individuation based on Western principles privileges the one over the collective. Yet, the cyborg acts as a socialist critique steeped in irony. Juxtaposing the cyborg as both a "fiction mapping" and an "apocalyptic *telos*" encapsulates the dichotomy between social opportunities for collaborative couplings and biological boundaries imposed by society. It also highlights the hold individuation has within Western society. We desperately need the cyborg's contradiction to model intersectional coalitions by inhabiting the values of hope and potential destruction to invoke critical care into the ways we engage within feminist rhetoric. The cyborg embodies tensions that arise in interdisciplinary work, but do not annihilate it.

In both oppositions, the cyborg is an *oikos* for oppositional terms to reside. Nature-civilization, human-technology, beginning-end, are additional "natural" binaries Haraway challenges through the cyborg. By housing the terms in a single category, readers understand the binaries as constituting a larger whole represented by the cyborg. Haraway creates a "cyborg world" that enables "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" by deconstructing assumed binaries and locating them in the cyborg (154). The cyborg world is metaphorical but no more so than our world. We fabricate stability that is undone by our own inability to engage without metaphor without creating and approximating. The cyborg reminds us that "totalizing theory is a major mistake that misses most of reality" due to its partial nature

(Haraway 181). Interacting with the cyborg amounts to constant exchange of values as seen in its initial and more recent use.

Some Initial Replies

In the decade following Haraway's seminal text, feminist scholars in technical and professional writing, rhetoric more broadly, and religious studies interrogated the cyborg, its strengths, and its weakness. Specifically, the cyborg prompted research into the interactions between humans and technology while writing. Johndan Johnson-Eilola's own investigation of hypertext in "Control and the Cyborg" is an example of how the cyborg "usefully problematize[d] our relationships to technology and society" (383). Like Johnson-Eilola, Pamela Gilbert used the cyborg further feminist inquiry into hypertexts and questions of representation in "Meditations upon Hypertext." She approached the cyborg as an ideal hypertext that is often excluded from literature despite its usefulness for narrating identity. In both examples and Haraway's essay, the cyborg is never solely concerned with technology. It was and is a social feminist critique. The cyborg merely speaks to writing and technology as part of larger social concerns. Carol Winkelmann in particular used cyborg theory as a paradigm for electronically mediated collaboration within first-year English classrooms. Winkelmann's version of cyborg theory in "Electronic Literacy, Critical Pedagogy, and Collaboration" offers a multipolar view of human nature and highlights human interdependency without discounting or centering technology. Instead, the cyborg "internalizes" technology to subvert cultural domination (Johnson-Eilola 384). The connection between technologies, society, and representation is not accidental. In the same interview, Olson describes Haraway as "particularly concerned with encouraging political action, not just in areas of techno-science but in all areas of political life" (3). Representation, via technology and the cyborg, is inherently political. Drawing on posthumanist concerns over dichotomous hierarchies, Michelle Ballif offered the cyborg as the embodiment of what she called "Third Sophistic posthumanist transrhetoric(s)" (TSPT) to combat "a crisis of representation" in the late 90s (52). Throughout "Writing the Third-Sophistic Cyborg," Ballif advocated for a cyborg that resists "we-formation" just like TSPTR resists resolution. Resolution puts an end to continual engagement which ultimately silences or excludes difference.

One glaring exclusion is Haraway's own dismissal of religious imagery in her many definitions. William Covino points to this oversight in his reading of the golem alongside Haraway's cyborg noting how they were "products of an institutional grammar" (357). He concludes "Grammars of Transgression" by asserting that the cyborg is not an improved golem, but a reinvention of it that is based on the grammar of technology. It is "a materialized technological metaphor, whose capability for heresy is compromised" because of its technological precision (Covino 370). That compromise is equally critiqued by Elaine Graham whose "Cyborgs or Goddesses?" explored how goddess feminism risked inverting gender binaries while likewise othering the goddess. Graham argued that Haraway reinforced the divide between religion and the secular like Covino because the cyborg was represented along definitional terms instead of interactionally.

In 1998 Ballif commented that "now 13 years old," the cyborg "is both old news and a premature call"

(61). At forty years old, the same argument can be made. Far beyond the scope of this article are generations of additional scholars who engaged with Haraway and furthered her creation. The cyborg is in many ways still old news. However, the cyborg is equally a premature call for contemporary feminist rhetorical scholarship. While others have used the golem, goddesses, and later ecologies to encourage relationality, the cyborg most directly resists strict definition while acknowledging connectivity in ways that we are still not comfortable with. Disciplines embrace we-formation to gain authority leading to exclusion and silence.Black feminists have leveled this far too correct critique against mainstream academic feminism for generations now.[1] The cyborg resists finite definition and we-formation; necessitating users remain open to others and find pleasure in uncertainty. Feminist rhetorics needs to continually build coalitions, develop relationships with science and religion, as well as think intersectionally and our metaphors are one way to do that. Prior to looking at more recent usage of the cyborg, the next section focuses on metaphors as way to better understand the values they represent. The cyborg still embodies modern feminist assumptions. It also highlights the variable nature of metaphors and their ability to become shorthand tools, applied to things, spaces, and people.

Metaphor as Shorthand

Prior to Haraway's use of the metaphor, cyborgs abounded in science fiction but less so in feminist theory. Her goal was "to build an ironic political myth" with the cyborg that emphasized "transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities" for socialist-feminist theory (149, 154). Such a myth mirrors the nature of metaphors as both move through discourse, encouraging interaction to better understand a concept. Metaphors function due to ongoing processes of idealization and reappropriation. Writers identify key characteristics they want to emphasize in their subject. They then identify terms with similar characteristics and highlight their chosen feature(s) by comparing the two using metaphors. In short, the identification and abstraction of the characteristic is an idealization while the application in a different setting is reappropriation. The result is a movable 'shorthand' comprised of the values most beneficial to a rhetor in the moment of application. Each use of a metaphor changes its meaning as the process of idealization and reappropriation repeats.

But this is not how metaphors are conventionally described. Metaphor is typically defined as the use of one term in place of another to emphasize characteristics transferred from one semantic domain to another. Aristotle's *Poetics* defines metaphor as "the application of a word that belongs to another thing" (1457b7). Cicero similarly described metaphor as "when a word applying to one thing is transferred to another," due to similarities (4.34.45). However, metaphors also supply a "vivid mental picture" (Cicero 4.34.45). Transfer, via metaphor, therefore necessitates an audience's ability to imagine a concept based on a speaker's use of metaphor to highlight shared characteristics as a rhetorical strategy. Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* expands Cicero's definition, identifying four ways "transference" occurs: substituting one animate thing for another; substituting one inanimate thing for another; substituting something inanimate

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1   The Combahee River Collective Statement, Kimberle Crenshaw's "Mapping the Margins," and Patricia Hill Collins's "The Politics of Black Feminist Thought" are three of the many examples from around the time Haraway published her piece.

for animate; or substituting something animate for inanimate (8.6.4). Each variety of trope outlined identifies specific characteristics of the subjects of discussion and highlights those characteristics by making them central to the "vivid mental picture." Today, scholarly (and public) use of "metaphor" largely follows in this line of thinking where metaphors transfer properties to aid comprehension. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's book *Metaphors We Live By* is one example. They contend that the "essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" (Lakoff and Johnson 5). This recalls Aristotle's argument that "to use metaphor well is to discern similarities" so it is not merely the application but the ability to assess the proper sense of a term and then find an equally similar term to use in place of the original (1459a9). Rhetors' engagement with the term indicates the creative and created qualities of a metaphor. Metaphors are not merely transferences of qualities but are built and modified with each usage.

While metaphor is largely understood as a static rhetorical concept, there are more complicated understandings of the term. Transfer, according to Patricia Parker, "includes the possibility of competition for the same place and the threat of expulsion…The 'transfer' of metaphor seems inseparable from a kind of violence or violation" (38). Because metaphors inherently cross "predetermined boundaries" they are akin to a "foreigner or 'alien' usurping the place properly occupied by the original term" (Parker 36, 37). Each use of a metaphor has the potential to undo both the "original" and metaphorical term. Claiming a metaphor can exist eliminates the original term's sole ownership of its characteristic. Substitution means replicability and language, through iteration, is nothing but replacement. The result is that a metaphor's origin becomes less stable. Derrida's "White Mythology" questions the existence of any proper home of literal or historical meaning for metaphors. It is not that the characteristics of one discrete entity are applied to another. Every conception of an entity is already metaphorical as language approximates features and characteristics. But characteristics are based on how a rhetor engages with and selects qualities for transfer. Transporting characteristics is a migration of thought and value. For Parker, this process makes metaphor a "structuring principle," not just a figure of speech (52). Any time a metaphorical comparison is made, values of the entities are established.

Potential connections between ideas depend on the needs of discourse not an original meaning. Derrida, expanding on this point, argues:

> "the issue is not to take the function of the concept back to the etymology of the noun along a straight line…This implication of the defined in the definition, this abyss of metaphor will never cease to stratify itself, simultaneously widening and consolidating itself" (253).

The point of using metaphors is not to adhere to a strict sense of the term since no strict sense ever existed. Metaphors offer ways of viewing the world, excluding views, and inscribing values upon the stances we take. Each iteration of a metaphor inscribes a value system to gain something deemed valuable. Specifically, the process of metaphorization is "*idealization* and *reappropriation*" (Derrida 253). Idealization creates the "vivid mental image" Cicero mentions which allows metaphors to become their own entity as they migrate. Resulting metaphors are not merely applications of characteristics from one entity onto another. Metaphor

is both "a space of disorientation and discovery" that allow us to complicate and develop concepts through our idealization of them, even if we do not know where idealizations will lead (Parker 50). Through repetition, metaphors are reappropriated and become shorthand for values and characteristics with each move changing the metaphor and its value. The cyborg is a metaphor in every sense of the term, espousing values that are beyond the rhetor's intent but aware of its ironic and hypocritic nature. Configurations of the cyborg spawn and morph, "wandering" further from home, as the metaphor is taken up by contemporary scholars, inviting opportunities for reflection.

The Cyborg's Modern Reception

Cyborg Writing

Despite Johnson-Eilola's claim that "the cyborg is a process" and "an activity" it is still used as a linguistic tool (394). The cyborg appears in writing and writing is fundamental to it. Haraway considers writing "the technology of cyborgs…cyborg politics is the struggle for language and the struggle against perfect communication, against one code that translates all meaning perfectly…cyborg politics insist on noise and advocate pollution" (176). Clear language is a myth that metaphors expose while also representing our search for a "universal scientific language" (Parker 43). The cyborg's contradictory nature acknowledges the need for language but pushes back at the totalizing nature of "perfect communication" as a goal for scholarship. Ajnesh Prasad and Hans Asenbaum independently use the cyborg as shorthand for the entanglement of values and competing systems within political spheres that make "perfect communication" impossible. Prasad advances "cyborg writing" as a form of feminist embodiment (437). Highlighting the rhizomic nature of the cyborg, Prasad employs an ecological perspective to leverage Haraway's emphasis on multiplicity because the cyborg is not easily defined, so its language should reflect that.

Not unlike initial interest in hypertext, cyborg writing functions as a "radical site of infinite possibilities" that disrupt dualities bringing attention to how writing is involved in "feminist revolution" (Prasad 431, 432). The main feature of cyborg writing, per Prasad, is that it is "epistemologically informed by experience" and uses the situated and embodied experiences of the writing to deconstruct Western binaries (434). Prasad's premises for cyborg writing make the practice a tool for individuals who have experienced oppression because of Western binaries. In the process, it contends with the desire for "abstract individuation" that Haraway acknowledges in both the cyborg and society (151). Cyborg writers are engaged in a "struggle for language" to articulate their experiences while resisting a totalizing narrative due to an imperfect language. Cyborg writing "inserts uncertainty into any notion of universality," upsetting notions of privilege surrounding certain narratives (Prasad 441). However, a paradox arises given that "[c]onceptions of the cyborg define the individual" (Asenbaum 1545). Features highlighted in cyborg writing come to define the writer as with characteristics in a metaphor. The audience uses the defining features of the writing as shorthand for the writer and their experience, caricaturizing them.

To counter the totalizing potential, Asenbaum employs "cyborg activism" in their analysis of Anonymous as an extension of cyborg writing. Cyborg activism is "the continuous process of reconfiguration of the modern binaries of equality/hierarchy, reason/emotion and nihilism/idealism" (1547). Constant reconfiguration acknowledges the nature of metaphors as potentially violent while also built. Cyborg activism provides new ways of playfully mediating experiences in material and electronic mediums that further disrupts assumed binaries not imaginable at the time of hypertext. More directly, cyborg activism, using cyborg writing, is not a secondary step or a translation of bodily experiences onto a screen. It is a form of "serious play" that "must not be about the Fall, the imagination of a once-upon-a-time wholeness before language, before writing, before Man" (Haraway 175). Cyborg activism blurs the idea of the fall from a "perfect language." Removal of the "either/or" categorization allows for intersectional "ands" instead. By creating a space for seriousness and play, imagination and politics, the pushback to a perfect language metaphorically articulates the ongoing relations that come from the cyborg and ought to exist in feminist scholarship.

The Cyborg and the Crip

Clearly, the cyborg is not merely theoretical. Its nature and usage are tied to one another or the "myth and tool mutually constitute each other" (Haraway 164). But how they constitute each other matters. The totalizing tendencies of language (and metaphors) reify binaries that negatively influence usage of the cyborg through questions of representation. Alison Kafer's "The Cyborg and the Crip" identifies uncritical usage of the cyborg and challenges its necessity within disability (also called crip) studies, while acknowledging how it allows the discipline to conduct "necessary work" (125). Haraway contends that the "boundary between physical and non-physical is very imprecise for us" in the cyborg (153). Kafer's discussion of "cyborg technology" in relation to disability representation and reliance on medical technologies within a world designed for abled bodies is one imprecise boundary (105). Like Covino and Graham, Kafer is fairly critical of Haraway. The human-technology divide Haraway seeks to complicate is ultimately affirmed and crip studies must contend with the fallout of persons with disabilities being associated with cyborgs. Reading the cyborg as theoretical and physical shows the material impact rhetoric has and how theory and praxis are intertwined. "Mapping" via the cyborg has a physical nature to it, requiring movement around and between structures often created to impede progress.

The cyborg is an often-used metaphor for investigating intersectional identity. However, because there are other options—golems, goddesses, rhizomes, ecologies—it is important to remember that "cyborg theory is not necessary…but, at the same time, it can help us do necessary work" if we also acknowledge its potential harm (Kafer 125). Kafer sees the human-technology binary Haraway opposes being affirmed by the cyborg metaphor, forcing crips to become physical metaphors for cyborgs because of their reliance on technologies. Such unintended consequences intensify as cyborgs becomes "shorthand for adaptive technology" (Kafer 107). Adaptive technology, according to Kafer, is an example of "cyborg technology" that white feminists use for "idealizing, and thus otherizing" disability representations while ignoring abled persons' equal reliance on technology (105, 114). Idealization is fundamental to the creation of a metaphor and sets the

foundation for value laden equation of crips with cyborgs. Like Prasad, Kafer is concerned that metaphors, because they are "shorthand," flatten the otherwise intersectional identity and deeply personal experiences of a disabled person. Using the metaphor in disability studies affirms a relationship between the crip and cyborg that becomes "seamless and self-evident" which ultimately reduces the crip to a caricature and adaptive technologies serve as metonymies for personhood (Kafer 107).

Feminist work lauds crips for their resilience without engaging with the experiences of disabled persons in a way that will aid feminist critical theory through dissensus. Dehumanizing the crip via their "cyborg technologies" is part of the medicalized history of the cyborg which predates Haraway's text. Kafer details the term's scholarly history stressing that "the breakdown between self and other, body and machine, takes on a different hue in the context of coercive medical experimentation and confinement" (128). Adaptive technologies, and the cyborg, are attempts to "normalize the body," eradicating the experiences of a disabled person, and make normative ableism the "goal" or "cure" as a modern instance of we-formation (Kafer 107–08). Technologies overshadow the person and become their identifiers as was the case with cyborg writing. Identities take on different meanings when viewed through a "prism of institutionalization" because autonomy is stripped away as part of the medical process (Kafer 128). "Cure" implies a deviation that others and infantilizes the crip because they need another to intervene and save them from their maladies. Kafer's emphasis on the physical and social realities of the medical diagnoses of disabilities embodies Haraway's use of the cyborg for connecting theorical implications of its usage with the real-world impact metaphors have while still acknowledging their potential harm. Kafer hints at this connection when reminding readers that "[o]ur metaphors, our tropes, our analogies: all have histories, all have consequences" (128).

Kafer reclaims the metaphor for crip studies, as has been done with the term crip, and in the process re-politicizes the disabled body by way of the cyborg's inherent political nature. Cyborg, while important for modeling feminist coalitions, and therefore their interdisciplinary means, is not a singular application. Kafer's analysis shows the impact a history of abuse can have on a metaphor and reaffirm it as a totalizing characteristic. She wants a version of the cyborg that morphs with each use based on the larger system's ecology. Cyborg should be used as "social context" not metaphorically, to blur the boundaries keeping disabled persons others, without being reductive (Kafer 118). Understanding the misuse of the cyborg and identifying how its history has shaped the metaphor enables crip studies to consider how to continue using the cyborg inclusively. While critical, Kafer's analysis can be articulated as a reaffirmation of the tension Haraway desires within the cyborg, and another iteration of the cyborg that accounts for new binaries that arose after its creation. "Idealizations" based on such iterations add to the overall tension housed in a singular metaphor.

Cyborg Religion

If creation is the "idealization" portion of metaphors Derrida discusses, then "reappropriation" plays with that creation. In "I'd Rather be a Sinner than a Cyborg," Lucy Tatman plays with the contradictory

religious language in "A Cyborg Manifesto." Analysis of the religious language indicates epistemologies built into the cyborg and the values it carries with it to other fields for use. Including religion revises Haraway's definitions and arguably better meets the goals she lays out for the cyborg. It embraces the omnipresent nature of the potential for connection between materials, and/or ideologies. More broadly, there is history of association between metaphors and religion to convey complex ideologies that runs parallel to scientific inquiry. Parker captures the paradox: it is "nostalgia" for Eden, as Tatman argues, while also "the search for a universal scientific language," as seen in Prasad, Asenbaum, and ancient theorization of metaphors (44, 43). We want language that tells us the proper sense of an experience though cyborg writing will never allow this. Because metaphors are "grounded in our physical experience" they can be imperfect and still "provide an essential means of comprehending religious and cultural concepts" as the two are interrelated (Lakoff and Johnson 40). Metaphors are physically manifested in the experiences we have and the systematic structures those experiences are shaped by. Metaphors therefore must include religion because of its integral role within the social formation of thought, let alone writing. Tatman recognizes the cyborg as a cultural and religious metaphor given its apocalyptic and salvation-like message. While Haraway's cyborg is "irreverent" and "does not expect its father to save it through a restoration of the garden," Tatman acknowledges the "serious play" of the language used (Haraway 151, 149). Religious references are both "playful and ironic," like the cyborg itself, meaning they have serious implications (Tatman 53). Dismissing religiosity using religious language is an intentional engagement with religion regardless of the desired effect. Metaphorically claiming the cyborg as "our ontology" implies a religious-like function used to comprehend experiences both through its metaphorical and ontological designation (Tatman 52).

Given that metaphors are created, the cyborg has an origin (though Haraway says otherwise). Tatman dates the cyborg's birth to the middle of the 19th Century as the child of salvation theory, Marxist theory, and the Industrial Revolution (58). She gives the cyborg a "genesis" but one that is outside the "garden." The cyborg's lack of a homeland is integral to its usage and runs counter to the traditional dominance of "place" within metaphor theorization as pointed out by Parker (36). Like the cyborg's parents, metaphors used in feminist critique rise from social contexts meaning they are not tied to a physical location, though they deeply engage with them. The cyborg and its use springs from omnipresent ideologies. Addressing the use of religious language when describing the cyborg metaphor, instead of dismissing it as Haraway does, better engages with the socio-political realities we experience and their constant presence in our scholarship. In this sense, we can see how the "apocalyptic" nature of the cyborg is a recognition of its religious nature as Edens and the end times are equally involved in religious and secular notions of being. Critique becomes a (re)creation of values signified by our metaphors, leaving behind previous assumptions and giving rise to new ones.

Like the cyborg, we are "making and remaking temporary homes…to cultivate, any 'where' as a garden" (Tatman 62). The ideologies we use to understand our experiences, be they religion, culture, or the cyborg, are the "gardens" where our origins are remade based on new interactions with others and other perspectives. The gardens are the origins of theories, subfields, and activism as well as an *oikos*. Lacking a singular "garden" gives rise to an indefinite number of gardens reflecting the infinite possibilities for connection

embodied by the cyborg metaphor. It mirrors the "wandering" described by Parker or "detour" according to Derrida by moving between places and ideas. In becoming an "ontology," the cyborg is a religion, ascribing value to the "incarnation" of "flesh and machine" in more than descriptive terms (Tatman 60). The cyborg is incarnated in the gardens where material and social mechanisms interact. It is present in the "flesh and machine" of Kafer's cyborg technology; the intersectional experiences of Black feminists who are idolized while continually excluded; the patriarchal systems of oppression that overshadow othered persons' experiences; the ableist language of environmental research; and the theory-praxis divide rampant in academia. Just as Haraway argues feminists cannot avoid scientific arguments, neither can it silence disability studies, or merely limit the cyborg to past technological inquiries.

Conclusion

The tension that arises by engaging with the cyborg in modern times expands the possibilities of analysis by not requiring a strict definition, bringing values under reconsideration. Analyzing Haraway's cyborg, and its proliferation since, exposes the technological, political, and material concerns within feminist work. There are of course countless other metaphors for feminist intersectional work. So why reconsider the cyborg? Put plainly, the cyborg's strength is in its downfalls. It is messy. There is a pleasure and power in the confusion of boundaries, language, and mixing of the physical and nonphysical that prevents stagnation. The cyborg's irony and hypocrisy are reminders of our own. Reevaluation of the cyborg must contend with its limitations which are built in reminders of our own biases. Reconsidering the cyborg is a call to also critically attend to each metaphor we use and the values they are shorthand for. As metaphors wander, we have the opportunity to create and change the values ascribed to them, acknowledging a productive tension. The cyborg forces us to confront values because they are no longer hidden behind stability. Turning toward dissensus does not annihilate feminist work or its significance. Tension is a form of attention. It calls attention to the places and people currently silenced and oppressed. Learning to live with tension and the imperfect ability to communicate by way of the cyborg is a form of intersectional critique that reorients feminist inquiry toward coalition building by reconsidering our values and metaphors.

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