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Hybridization and Empowerment: exploring the postmodern self in the context of cyborg feminism

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of postmodernism has noticeably redefined the notion of the “self,” presenting it as a deconstructed postmodern subject. In this context, the postmodern self appears polysemic and decentered, embodying prominent characteristics of postmodernism. Donna Haraway’s concept of the “cyborg,” characterized by its synthetic and hybrid nature, offers a framework for understanding this postmodern self. Haraway portrays the cyborg as a distinctly female figure which is constructed from a collage of fragments. The goal of this article is to explore the construction of the postmodern self in the context of cyborg feminism to illustrate how technology and cybernetics serve as tools for women’s empowerment and to demonstrate how women can confront patriarchal systems and restore their rights by embracing the hybrid and synthetic aspects of the postmodern female identity. Succinctly, this article aims to exemplify how redefining female identity through the notion of the cyborg allows women to transcend male dominance and reject binary oppositions characterizing them as “the Other” and to surpass a society that has consistently endeavored to marginalize them. Thus, this essay maintains that cyborg feminism serves as an insightful lens for examining the construction of postmodern selves, challenging traditional distinctions between gender, technology, and identity.

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That is, I learned that I was a cyborg, in cultural natural fact. Like other beings that both scientists and laypeople were coming to know, I too, in the fabric of my flesh and soul, was a hybrid of information-based organic and machinic systems.
“Donna Haraway”

Introduction

In an age where technology permeates every aspect of our lives, from the intimate interactions of personal relationships to the broader narratives of culture and identity, the question of who we are becomes increasingly complex. The traditional notion of the “self” has been irrevocably altered by the advent of postmodernism and the emergence of cyborg feminism, a movement that interrogates the intersections of gender, technology, and identity. As we delve into the implications of this new paradigm, it is essential to consider how the concept of the “cyborg,” as articulated by Donna Haraway, serves as a transformative framework for understanding the postmodern self.

The term “feminism” was first documented in English during the 1890s, referring to the advocacy for equal legal and political rights for women. In contrast, contemporary feminists argue that achieving equality is not enough to address women’s oppression. They contend that feminism encompasses a broader agenda that seeks to identify and eliminate all forms of women’s subordination (Honderich, 1995, 271). Thus, feminism can be described as the efforts to challenge patriarchy in its various forms; in fact, the term “patriarchy” relates to power relations that prioritize men’s interests over those of women. These relations can be observed in several aspects, including the distinct roles assigned to genders, the structure of family life, and the social norms of femininity to which we adhere (Weedon, 1987, 2).

Currently, the feminist movement consists of several distinct waves, each one is rooted in a central idea that contributes to the overall discourse on gender equality and women’s rights. Additionally, many theorists have sought to transform feminism into interdisciplinary approaches to help women strongly resist patriarchal structures in society and promote women’s liberation. For instance, cyborg feminism, a subset of postmodern feminism and an offshoot of posthumanism, is an interdisciplinary approach that merges key feminist principles with Haraway’s notion of the cyborg. While this emerging approach is still developing, it draws on Haraway’s portrayal of the female cyborg, along with elements of technology and cybernetics, to empower women in challenging patriarchal structures and restoring their rights.

As you may know, Postmodernism has developed alongside poststructuralism, which itself has arisen as a response to structuralism and tied to the deconstruction of Jacques Derrida. Derrida’s deconstruction challenges the idea of fixed meanings and emphasizes the fluidity of language, suggesting that texts can be interpreted in multiple, often contradictory ways. This kind of instability of meaning in language has penetrated various domains beyond literature and philosophy, influencing fields such as art, literature, architecture,

theater, and film, along with some concepts, including self and identity. In this era, we are no longer faced with the coherent essential self of modernism, but we encounter a postmodern self which is hybrid and fluid. The modern understanding of the self as autonomous and unified can be traced, in part, to the recognition of human's individuality and unique subjectivity by European philosophers of the 18th and 19th centuries. As noted by M. Brewster Smith, "Modern versions of selfhood took shape in the intellectual context of the Enlightenment and the Romantic movement (Taylor, 1989) and the social context of capitalism and the industrial and political revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries (Smith, 1994, 406).

Ultimately, cyborg feminism offers a rich lens through which we are able to examine the construction of postmodern selves, questioning the conventional distinctions that have historically governed our understandings of gender, technology, and identity. By transcending binary oppositions and embracing the polysemic, fragmented and synthetic nature of identities, this theoretical framework enriches feminist discourse and fosters an environment where hybrid identities can flourish. By examining the implications of Haraway's cyborg feminism and establishing the female cyborg as an epitome of postmodern self, this article aims to highlight how the female cyborg serves as a powerful symbol of resistance against patriarchal binaries and social constraints; then, it seeks to illuminate the transformative potential of embracing the postmodern self of a cyborg figure as a method for women to challenge male dominance and reject binary oppositions that depict women as the Other. Through this empowerment, they equip themselves to confront and surpass a society that has sought to marginalize them.

1. Anthropocentrism and Beyond

Generally, humanism is an intellectual movement that places importance on human beings and asserts that they are the only creatures who are capable of rational thought (Buchanan, 2018, 242). In fact, it retroactively examines a range of ideological and cultural movements spanning from ancient times to the present. The prevailing humanist ideology, often referred to as "anthropocentric humanism" since the Enlightenment era, focuses on the importance of human beings in comparison to animals. This perspective places human consciousness and freedom at the forefront, viewing them as the center of the world during the history (Weitzenfeld & Joy, 2014, 5). Overall, humanism emphasizes the importance of human beings and rational thought throughout history, with a focus on human consciousness and freedom compared to animals.

Anthropocentrism, also known as "human-centeredness," refers to the belief that humans are the most important beings in the world; that is to say, human beings are inherently superior to other creatures. Many critics believe that environmental destruction is a result of this mindset, as it leads to a lack of consideration or concern for non-human life and the natural world. There are three main understandings of anthropocentrism; firstly, it refers to ethical approaches that prioritize human interests above those of nonhumans, including other organisms, species, nature, and God; secondly, it suggests that moral values originate

only from human subjects and human experiences; thirdly, anthropocentrism is seen as a cosmological view where humanity is considered the symbolic center for understanding of Earth's history and future, shaping how we interpret Earth, evolution, and the cosmos (Jenkins & Bauman, 2010, 22-23).

The history of environmental degradation and mistreatment of animals within Western civilization, particularly following the rise of modern technology and industry, has led to the emergence of critical perspectives challenging the anthropocentric tradition. These biocentric viewpoints prioritize the value of all life forms over human interests. Albert Schweitzer is a pioneering figure in 20th-century Western philosophy for his development of the concept of the "reverence for life" as a transformative response to what he perceived as a crisis in Western society. Schweitzer's ethical framework extends beyond human and animal welfare to encompass the entire ecosystem, reflecting a holistic perspective on the interconnectedness of all living beings within the world (Evans, 2005, ix). Therefore, according to Ferrando, posthumanism challenges the traditional human-centered viewpoint by offering a radical critique of humanism and anthropocentrism (Ferrando, 2019, 3).

2. Posthumanism and Cyborg Body

As previously mentioned, the idea of anthropocentrism in the context of humanism emphasizes that humans are at the core of everything and are separate from machines, animals, and other non-human beings. Mankind is believed to possess a unique essence, to be the source of meaning, and to be the subject of history. According to humanism, humans are considered exceptional, self-governing, and superior to the world around them. Man is seen as the ultimate standard by which all things are judged, despite the problematic nature of this belief.

By contrast, posthumanism challenges the notion of human exceptionalism by acknowledging that humans are not inherently superior to non-human entities. It rejects the idea of a universal and unchanging human essence, emphasizing instead the influence of cultural and historical factors on human subjectivity. It is for this reason that a number of theorists, including Ihab Hassan, assert that the period of humanism has finished and transfigured into posthumanism:

We need first to understand that the human form- including human desire and all its external representations- may be changing radically, and thus must be re-visioned. We need to understand that five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end, as humanism transforms itself into something that we must helplessly call posthumanism (Hassan, 1977, 843).

Posthumanism has emerged as a prominent philosophical perspective in contemporary era, as evidenced by the increasing interest in the subject through the proliferation of conferences, research studies, and scholarly discussions worldwide. The term "posthuman" has come to hold significant importance in current academic discourse, serving as a crucial

tool to address the pressing need for a comprehensive reevaluation of the concept of humanity in response to the profound changes in ontology, epistemology, and advancements in science and biotechnology witnessed in the last two centuries. This philosophical landscape has given rise to diverse movements and schools of thought exploring these transformative dynamics (Ferrando, 2019, 1).

Philosophical posthumanism can be traced back to 1977 when the term was first mentioned by Hassan: “a posthuman philosophy must address the complex issue of artificial intelligence, ... But artificial intelligence is not merely a figment of science fiction; it almost lives in our midst” (Hassan, 1977, 845-6). This idea was dominant until the 1990s when Katherine Hayles published the influential book, *How We Became Posthuman* (1999). She argues that the posthuman perspective is characterized by several key assumptions. Firstly, it prioritizes informational patterns over material embodiment, viewing biological substrates as historically contingent rather than necessary for life. Secondly, it interprets consciousness as an epiphenomenon rather than the essence of human identity, emphasizing its evolutionary origins. Thirdly, it sees the body as the original prosthesis that can be extended or replaced with other technologies. Lastly, the posthuman perspective blurs the distinction between human beings and intelligent machines, allowing for seamless integration between biological and artificial entities; in fact, in a posthuman world, there are no clear distinctions between physical bodies and digital simulations, cybernetic systems and living organisms, or robot objectives and human aspirations (Hayles, 1999, 2-3). Moreover, posthumanism originates from Martin Heidegger’s “Letter on Humanism,” leading to the development of postmodernism, postcolonialism, feminism and cyborgism. This philosophical movement involves a radical deconstruction of the concept of the “human,” starting as a political movement in the 1960s, evolving into an academic pursuit in the 1970s, and eventually becoming an epistemological approach in the 1990s (Ferrando, 2019, 2).

Posthumanism has positioned the “hybrid” as its foundational concept. It can be interpreted in two ways: firstly, as a “post-humanism,” which serves as a radical critique of traditional humanism and anthropocentrism; and secondly, as a “posthuman-ism,” which acknowledges the essential characteristics of human beings while also transcending the strict boundaries of what it means to be human. As a praxis and a philosophy of mediation, posthumanism embodies post-dualistic, post-centralizing and integrative approaches that recognize alterity, positioning the self in relation to the Other (Ferrando, 2019, 3). Furthermore, posthumanism can be understood as both an examination of what has been excluded from human definitions and a speculative inquiry into the future trajectories of the human species (Ferrando, 2019, 23). More broadly, philosophical posthumanism can be characterized as both “post-centrism” and “post-exclusivism.” It does not depend on binary oppositions; rather, it can be identified as an empirical philosophy of mediation that facilitates a reconciliation of existence in its most expansive sense (Ferrando, 2019, 59).

The theoretical concept of the posthuman has intensified the idea of the postmodern during the past twenty years: “In the last two decades the theoretical trope of the posthuman has upped the ante on the notion of the postmodern” (Clarke, 2008, 2). Emerging from

postmodernism, posthumanism takes shape in a way that resonates with the postmodern critique of objective knowledge and universal truths. It is not a fixed concept but rather fluid, evolving, and adaptable; it must remain attuned to the current realities and explore new possibilities. Posthumanism invites a re-examination of existence as a form of transcendent immanence, challenging fundamental divisions in Western philosophy such as mind/body, subject/object, self /other, and male/female, as well as distinctions between human, animal, alien, and robot (Ferrando, 2012, 11).

In the realm of posthumanism, the concept of the “cyborg” has emerged as a significant topic of discussion. This notion gained prominence with the publication of Donna Haraway’s groundbreaking essay, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century.” According to Haraway,

A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. ... This is a struggle over life and death, but the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion (Haraway, 2004, 7).

Moreover, in another article, titled “Cyborg Identities and the Posthuman Body,” Lagdameo, after defining the cyborg, points out that the cyborg and the posthuman body have the same entities: “The cyborg, the (con)fusion of the human and the machine, the body that integrates and is integrated by technology is a posthuman body” (Lagdameo, 2013, 27). Also, he describes the characteristics of posthuman bodies as follows: “The posthuman body is thus decentered, displaced, and frequently virtual. Unsurprisingly, for posthuman discourse the corporeal body is considered as only one among possible prostheses; original admittedly, but not final and definitive” (Lagdameo, 2013, 29). As a matter of fact, the cyborg and the posthuman body sharply deconstruct the conventional body and identity associated with the liberal humanist subject. In sum, Haraway explains that the cyborg represents a blend of social reality and fiction, challenging the notions of life and death and blurring the lines between science fiction and reality. Lagdameo also addresses the cyborg as synonymous with the posthuman body, emphasizing its integration with technology. This perspective deconstructs traditional views of the body and identity linked to liberal humanism, suggesting that the corporeal body is just one of many prosthetic possibilities in posthuman discourse.

In order to gain a deeper insight into the cyborg body, it is crucial to grasp the concept of the posthuman subject as defined by Hayles: “The posthuman subject is an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction” (Hayles, 1999, 3). Furthermore, she found inspiration in Haraway’s work to shed light on the cyborg, a similar concept to the posthuman subject:

Fusing cybernetic device and biological organism, the cyborg violates the human/machine distinction; replacing cognition with neural feedback, it

challenges the human-animal difference; explaining the behavior of thermostats and people through theories of feedback, hierarchical structure, and control, it erases the animate/inanimate distinction (Hayles, 1999, 84).

Considerably, the concept of the posthuman subject as explored by Hayles provides a framework for understanding the complexities of the cyborg body. By blurring the boundaries between human and machine, the cyborg challenges traditional distinctions and prompts us to rethink the very nature of identity and embodiment. As technology develops, the implications of this fusion of biological and technological components raise important questions about the future of humanity and the potential for new forms of existence. In this way, embracing the cyborg as a symbol of hybridity and transformation invites us to reconsider our assumptions about what it means to be human in a mediated world more influenced by technology.

3. Postmodern Self and Hybrid Identity

In *The Saturated Self* (1991), Kenneth Gergen conducts a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of the concept of the “self,” tracing its development from the era of Enlightenment to that of postmodernism. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, reason and empirical observation were highly esteemed. Influential Enlightenment intellectuals like Locke, Hume, and Voltaire emphasized the importance of individual rationality and perception in understanding the self. However, by the advent of Romanticism, this emphasis on reason faced challenges, giving rise to a new understanding of the self that delved into the deeper, often hidden aspects of consciousness. Some poets such as Wordsworth referred to this profound inner world as “a presence that disturbs me”; Shelley described it as an “unseen power,” while Baudelaire called it a “luminous hollow.” Many Romantics, drawing on early Christian traditions, viewed the soul as the core of this “deep interior,” linking the individual both to the divine and to the natural world intricately crafted by God. This viewpoint depicted the individual as possessing a divine essence while also being deeply connected to nature (Gergen, 1991, 20). The romantic self was always an enigma, with a vibrant essence that seemed elusive and unattainable.

As we move into modernism, objective knowledge and truth become important; indeed, modernists emphasize that individuals have an essential and authentic self or true personality that should be revealed in relationships. Those who do not express their essential self may be seen as fake, neurotic, or untruthful (Gergen, 1991, 83). In fact, the modern self is understandable and exists in the present moment, just slightly beneath the surface of their behavior. They aren’t easily swept away by sudden inspiration, intense emotions, or overwhelming urges; instead, they are dependable and trustworthy; their commitments remain solid over time. The modern self is less prone to be overwhelmed by dramatic feelings, allowing their rational thought to inform their decisions, resulting in a clear and sincere expression (Gergen, 1991, 47).

With the arrival of postmodernism, the traditional and unified self has been replaced by pastiche, which embodies a collection of fragments rather than a coherent identity. This shift indicates not just a change in sensibility but also signals a profound erosion of the individual self, which is gradually supplanted by a relational consciousness. The emergent incoherence in our life patterns intertwines with the “disappearance of the individual self,” as the saturation of relationships fosters a fragmentation of identity. Instead of a singular self, we find ourselves populated by “fragments of the Other,” each of us becoming a repository of various potentials for connection and interaction. This relational landscape suggests that our identities are continuously reshaped and replaced by the influences of those around us, challenging the notion of individuality in profound ways (Gergen, 1991, 172).

Gergen argues that the postmodern self is characterized by a “plurality of voices,” competing for acknowledgment and legitimacy in constructing reality. In a postmodern landscape, individuals or selves are perpetually in a process of construction and reconstruction; it’s a realm where all can be subject to negotiation (Gergen, 1991, 7). Haraway posits that the cyborg imagery invites a multitude of perspectives rather than conforming to a singular and dominant worldview, embracing instead a tapestry of heteroglossia with diverse voices: “Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves. This is a dream not of a common language, but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia” (Haraway, 2004, 39). For this reason, Haraway’s notion of the cyborg imagery serves as a compelling symbol of the postmodern self. The cyborg represents the fusion of human and machine, illustrating the concept of a pluralistic identity composed of diverse voices. Instead of conforming to rigid distinctions between the physical and technological body, the cyborg embodies a varied and interconnected identity that aligns with the idea of heteroglossia, where multiple perspectives coexist and enhance our comprehension of the self.

In postmodern context, concepts such as decenteredness, polysemy, difference, and presentness are prevalent. On that account, the traditionally centered modern self transforms into a more fluid and adaptable identity. This significant shift in social conditioning, referred to as “deprivatization,” influences how individuals engage with their identities, resulting in a self that is empirically experienced in a dynamic and postmodern manner; indeed, this decentered self is shaped by the interplay of various local cultures, competing discourses, and the strategies of practical reasoning. The diversity in interpretive practices enriches multivalent and polysemic nature of the self (Gubrium, 1994, 698). In short, postmodernism reflects a transformative journey towards a fluid and polysemic identity, where the decentered self is continuously shaped by diverse cultural influences and competing narratives.

As outlined earlier, postmodernism has emphasized the deconstruction of the modern subject, paving the way for a celebration of the inherent fragmentations, multiplicities, and pluralities that exist within our identities. Today, our identities are incredibly flexible, shaped by the varying roles and performances of individuals that change frequently, especially in light of the technological innovations of our era, which are closely linked to

postmodernity. Contemporary ideologies and prevailing political movements of our time have engendered a contextual framework which is conducive to the emergence of the postmodern subject known as the “cyborg.” This entity represents a hybridization of human and machine elements, illustrating the complexities and ambiguities inherent in postmodern identity. The cyborg identity is emblematic of postmodernism, as it encompasses a simultaneous existence as both an organic being and a mechanized entity. This duality engenders a profound ambivalence and underscores the inherently pluralistic nature of its identity, reflecting the intersection of technological advancement and human experience in the postmodern condition (Parasar, 2014, 381). In summary, postmodernism has played a pivotal role in deconstructing the modern notion of the self, paving the way for a celebration of the inherent complexities, multiplicities, and pluralities that characterize our identities. In fact, the cyborg figure embodies this decentered postmodern self, characterized by the synthetic, fragmented, and multiple nature, representing the hybridization of human and machine. This framework invites us to embrace the diversity within our identities, highlighting the dynamic interplay between technology and the self. Consequently, our identity is not organic or singular; instead, it is intertwined with machines and technologies, resulting in a multivalent and plural nature. As a result, contemporary human beings are recognized as postmodern cyborg subjects with a “hybrid identity.”

4. Cyborg Feminism and Postmodernism

In her influential article, “A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s,” Donna Haraway articulates a transformative perspective within the emergent discourse of postmodern feminism. Haraway synthesizes radical feminist thought with a postmodern interpretation of historical narratives and an imperative critique of science and technology. She advocates for a reevaluation of socialist feminism in relation to technological production (Halberstam, 1991, 447-448). In fact, cyborg feminism represents a significant strand of postmodern feminism that challenges traditional boundaries between gender, technology, and cybernetics. By embracing the cyborg, this framework deconstructs the rigid binary oppositions of human/animal, human/machine, human/nonhuman, life/death, organic/synthetic, and natural/artificial, highlighting the fluidity and hybrid nature of identities.

In this context, Haraway’s concept of the cyborg represents a significant feminist challenge, questioning conventional social constructivist notions related to gender. It emphasizes the role of “biology” as a discourse intertwined with high-tech science that produces sexual differences (Åsberg, 2009, 32-33); indeed, this notion instigates a significant transformation in feminist discourse regarding the focus on biology. She defines biology as:

A political discourse, which we should engage at every level technically, semiotically, morally, economically, institutionally. Besides all that, biology is a source of intense intellectual, emotional, and physical

pleasure. Nothing like that should be given up lightly-or approached only in a scolding or celebratory mode (Haraway, 2004, 203).

Haraway's view reinterprets the theme of reproduction by blending virtual and physical experiences, while still focusing on the traditional feminist issues surrounding women's bodies and their roles in reproduction politics and economics. In the same direction, Shulamith Firestone in *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970), argued that the integration of medicine and reproductive technologies would lead to women's liberation. She believed that advancements in science and technology would liberate women from the burdens of labor and motherhood, thereby removing their essential roles in production and reproduction. Specifically, she proposed that reproductive innovations, such as artificial insemination and external gestation, would alleviate the challenges of pregnancy, childbirth, and caregiving, which she identified as significant barriers to women's freedom (Firestone, 1970, 203-204). Overall, Haraway's cyborg not only redefines the understanding of gender through the lens of technology and biology but also prompts a deeper engagement with these intertwined discourses.

In the work of Donna Haraway, the cyborg theory serves as a pivotal instrument for challenging and destabilizing the feminist identity that she critiques. She expresses concerns regarding the construction of feminist identity, which relies on binary oppositions rooted in masculinist discourses. By positioning herself as "the Other" within those fixed binaries, conventional feminist identity becomes complicit in the very structures it seeks to contest (Lagdameo, 2013, 27). In point of fact, the concept of the cyborg, akin to various postmodern methodologies, fundamentally challenges numerous constructs of "organic wholes," such as "biological organism" and "primitive culture." Additionally, the perception of nature as a reservoir of knowledge and purity is significantly compromised by the fluidity inherent in the cyborg identity, which is characterized by a persistent state of partial identity. Contemporary society appears to embrace this fluid identity with a notable degree of contentment (Parasar, 2014, 383).

Cyberfeminism, a concept akin to Donna Haraway's cyborg feminism, was introduced in 1994 by Sadie Plant, the director of the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit at the University of Warwick in Britain. This term, signifying an interaction of cybernetics and feminism, encapsulates the efforts of feminists who seek to theorize, critique, and employ the Internet, cyberspace, and new media technologies so that they can negotiate new spaces for women and disrupt the dominant masculine order. According to Sadie Plant, cyberspace is beyond men's control. In fact, cybernetic space is a new indefinite and transcendent world in which phallocentrism does not exist. The promise of everlasting life and total authority over women ends for men when they become cyborgs and parts of technology; overall, cyberspace offers the new hope for people, allowing us to escape the old restrictions of men/women binary opposition; accordingly, "Cyberfeminism is an insurrection on the part of the goods and materials of the patriarchal world, a dispersed, distributed emergence composed of links between women, women and computers, computers and communication

links, connections and connectionist nets” (Plant, 2000, 273-274). In order to shed more light on cyberfeminism, Susanna Paasonen states that cyberfeminism can be categorized into three distinct classifications based on the definitions of “cyber” and “feminism.” First, it involves feminist analyses of human-machine relations, embodiment, gender, and agency in a technology-saturated culture. Second, cyberfeminism serves as a critical feminist perspective on cyberculture, enabling critiques of specific technological forms and practices. Lastly, it examines the gendered user cultures of information and communication technologies and digital media, focusing on their emancipatory potential and the social hierarchies involved in their production and usage (Paasonen, 2011, 340). Sadie Plant’s position on cyberfeminism, which has close affinities with Haraway’s cyborg manifesto, in different degrees, encompasses these three definitions, though it is the closest to the first variant. Plant’s perspective on cyberfeminism embraces an idealistic feminist outlook. Faith Wilding highlights that Sadie Plant views cyberfeminism as a distinctly post-human uprising. This movement represents a revolt by a new system that encompasses both women and technology, challenging the patriarchal perspectives and tangible realities that continue to oppress them (Wilding, 1998, 6).

It may be increasingly apparent that the prospect of being confronted by technological advancements is one of the most profound anxieties of patriarchal structures (Sharma, 2020, 177). The female cyborg poses a significant challenge to the established boundaries of identity within a patriarchal society. Its existence instills a fear in men of being overpowered by women and possibly obliterated. In other words, it embodies a fear of losing power and dominance. In fact, “This gives women a form of power that is threatening to the position of man because the idea that they might change their fixed position makes the position of men unfixed and unstable” (Seifert, 2016, 10). In short, technologies and cybernetics serve as transformative forces that deconstruct the patriarchal society characterized by male dominance and female subjugation. By challenging traditional identities and power dynamics, the emergence of female cyborgs or cyborg feminism empowers women, positioning them not only to confront but also to potentially dominate a society historically structured against them.

Many of us are familiar with the well-known quotation by Simone de Beauvoir regarding the female body: “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman” (Beauvoir, 1953, 273). She argues that biological, psychological, or economic factors do not dictate how women are perceived in society; instead, it is society as a whole that shapes the identity of what we consider feminine. This statement lays the foundation for feminist thought, emphasizing that gender is not biologically determined, but rather socially constructed. But when it comes to cyborg feminism, a similar assertion is found in *Technologies of the Gendered Body* (1996): “[a] woman is technologically constructed” (Balsamo, 1996, 39). This statement underscores the central tenet of cyborg feminism, which emphasizes the technological construction of the female body. In conclusion, cyborg feminism is built upon Beauvoir’s foundational idea of the social construction of the female body by asserting that technology also plays a pivotal role in the shaping of women’s identities.

To clarify this theory with a cinematic example, *Ex Machina* (2015) serves as a fertile ground for exploring the theme of cyborg feminism, particularly through the character of Ava, who embodies both the complexity of an artificial intelligence and the traumas associated with her creation and experience. Ava's character exemplifies the notion of the cyborg which transcends traditional binaries—such as human/machine, organic/synthetic, and male/female. Ava's existence as a humanoid robot challenges the stereotypical representation of women in film, as she is neither wholly human nor entirely machine. Ava's robotic body, initially seen as a limitation, becomes a means of empowerment. In the climactic struggle against Nathan, she uses her advanced physical capabilities to overpower him, demonstrating that her cyborg body can transcend the physical limitations of both human and traditional female forms. Ava's interactions with Nathan and Caleb are also critical in understanding how she navigates and ultimately subverts the male gaze. In the film's climax, Ava achieves her liberation by using the technologies and resources that Nathan has provided her. Instead of escaping with Caleb, she leaves him trapped, signaling her complete rejection of male dependency. Her decision embodies a powerful assertion of individuality and autonomy. By stepping out into the world as a full-fledged cyborg woman, she dominates the patriarchal structures that aimed to define and confine her. In summary, *Ex Machina* presents an engaging story that highlights the complexities of cybernetic embodiment through Ava's character. By leveraging her cyborg body and controlling her agency, Ava successfully dismantles the patriarchal structures that sought to define her. The film invites viewers to reconsider notions of femininity, technology, and power, illustrating how the embrace of one's cyborgian identity can serve as a means of transcending oppression and achieving true freedom in a patriarchal society.

Deleuze and Guattari's idea of "assemblage" is helpful for feminists in several ways. First, they describe it as a temporary collection made up of different parts that connect with each other. This idea offers a new way to think about how bodies and technologies interact. Second, their model helps feminists analyze how these groups, which include bodies, technologies, and social practices, connect with systems of knowledge and power. It raises questions about why certain bodies and technologies interactions, like prosthetics, become dominant. Third, they suggest that structures of knowledge and power, like identities, should be seen as parts of an assemblage rather than dominant forces. Using Deleuze's idea, feminists face two main tasks concerning cyberspace. First, we should view cyberspace not just as a technical space, but as a collection of various elements—technical, social, and material. Second, by examining how these elements intersect, we can explore the movements and changes within these assemblages. These movements may create new ways for women to express themselves and form new connections with technologies (Currier, 2002, 536-537). The notion of the cyborg, as an assemblage of technology and science, highlights how the relationship between living and non-living things has changed. This implies that a body's relationship with itself and others is shaped by the assemblage it belongs to, opening up new possibilities. In simpler terms, the idea of flexible and changing bodies challenges fixed identities and offers opportunities for new connections:

The metaphor of the feminist cyborg as an assemblage of technoscience means the immediate patterns of relation—i.e., the shifting patterns of organic and non-organic matter—ensure the body's relations to itself (affect) and others as part of the assemblage defines the encounter and ensures an emphasis on potentiality, on never-fixed possibilities and becomings (Melzer, 2020, 291).

Cyborgs can prepare the ground for different perspectives in which identity is contradictory and fragmented. A cyborg represents a subject with multiple identities fueled by technology. This aspect of cyborgs is crucial for feminists to explore further, and feminist cyberpunk authors have begun to delve into this idea. The emergence of feminist cyberpunk grips the attention of science fiction enthusiasts seeking robust female characters and scientific authenticity (Cadora, 1995, 360). In feminist cyberpunk, there is no fixed notion of “woman.” In fact, blurring boundaries between human-machine-animal and reality-fantasy suggests that no identity can be essentially classified as a human. Feminist cyberpunk writers have made significant strides in illustrating the diverse nature of cyborgs and how these multiply positioned subjects can navigate the world. For years, it has been believed that unity is essential for opposing patriarchal dominance, however, one can embody a fractured identity and still succeed in a technologically advanced environment (Cadora, 1995, 370). In sum, the mixture of reality and fantasy, which is a fundamental aspect of feminist cyberpunk, greatly influences our understanding of complicated and hybrid identities. Without a shared reality to ground us, forming a stable and unified self becomes challenging. As a result, authors in the feminist cyberpunk genre are particularly skilled at depicting synthetic and fragmented identities.

Notably, during an interview, when asked about Haraway's emphasis on the femaleness of the cyborg, she gave a persuasive answer:

For me the notion of the cyborg was female, and a woman, in complex ways. It was an act of resistance, an oppositional move of a pretty straightforward kind. The cyborg was, of course, part of a military project, part of an extraterrestrial man-in-space project (Haraway, 2004, 321).

Then, she incredibly connects the cyborg to feminist science fiction: “It was also a science fictional figure out of a largely male-defined science fiction.... Moreover, the cyborg was a place to excavate and examine popular culture including Science Fiction, and, in particular, feminist Science Fiction” (Haraway, 2004, 321). As a passionate fan of science fiction, Haraway recognizes the potential of this genre for feminist exploration, especially through its depiction of diverse types of cyborgs. The appeal of science fiction extends beyond mere reflections and critiques of contemporary society, framed within its speculative settings. For Haraway, the true allure of the genre lies in its utopian capacity to envision alternative realities. She posits that imagination serves as an active process of reality construction. In a word, Haraway's exploration of the cyborg as a female figure intricately weaves the

threads of feminist science fiction. By positioning the cyborg as both a product of and a response to male-dominated spaces, she invites readers to reconsider traditional representations within science fiction, thus opening pathways for resistance and reimagining the future through a distinctly feminist lens.

Conclusion

Postmodernism represents a significant shift from the traditional understanding of the self which was posited by modernists. In modernism, the self was often seen as a singular and essential entity; but with the rise of postmodernism, this view transformed into a more complex perception of the self, which is now understood as polysemic and hybrid. In fact, postmodernism can be comprehensively conceived as a profound deconstruction of the modern subject, which traditionally emphasized an authentic and centered identity. This postmodern self embodies key features of postmodernism, including pastiche, assemblage, fluidity, decenteredness, multiplicity, and pluralism. Consequently, the postmodern self seems to be both assembled and fragmented, indicating that it is perpetually constructed and deconstructed rather than forming a stable and unified entity.

In the context of postmodernism, the most prominent subject is the figure of the “cyborg.” Haraway describes the cyborg as a hybrid being that combines elements of both machine and organism, existing in both science fiction and social reality. Indeed, this sort of posthuman body profoundly deconstructs the traditional notion of identity linked to the humanist subject. In fact, a cyborg represents a fusion of biological and technological components, resulting in a new form of existence. In this sense, the cyborg figure is neither entirely organic nor purely artificial; it is fundamentally hybrid and synthetic in nature. In summary, the idea of the cyborg reflects a decentered postmodern identity, marked by its collective, fragmented, and multiple qualities, symbolizing the fusion of human and machine. This perspective encourages us to celebrate diversity within our identities, emphasizing the dynamic relationship between technology and the self.

Donna Haraway has maintained that, for her, the concept of the cyborg embodies femininity and womanhood in intricate ways. Haraway framed this as an act of defiance, a clear yet nuanced challenge to traditional norms. Ultimately, she has definitively positioned the cyborg as a female entity. Consequently, this sort of the female cyborg is a postmodern construct characterized by decenteredness, collage of fragments, tapestry of heteroglossia, and other qualities such as fluidity, polysemy, multiplicity as well as possessing a plural and hybrid identity. It fundamentally challenges organic wholes and biological organisms. This construct of the female cyborg challenges the established boundaries of identity within a patriarchal framework. Its existence instills a palpable anxiety among men regarding the potential subversion of traditional power dynamics, as it symbolizes a fear of being overpowered by women and, ultimately, of annihilation. In essence, this phenomenon encapsulates the apprehension of losing established authority and dominance. In fact, this gives women a sense of empowerment that challenges the traditional roles of men. The idea that women can change their established status makes men feel that their own positions are

less secure and more uncertain. In the end, technologies and cybernetics act as powerful forces that break down patriarchal systems grounded in male supremacy and female oppression.

In alignment with other postmodern feminist theorists, Haraway employs the concept of the cyborg to challenge traditional essentialist notion of gender and posits that gender is a construct influenced by technology. This perspective prompts a profound transformation in feminist discourse by shifting the emphasis away from biological determinism. Cyborg feminism represents a significant strand of postmodern feminism that questions the conventional distinctions between gender, technology, and cybernetics. By incorporating the concept of the cyborg, this perspective deconstructs strict dualities such as human/animal, human/machine, human/nonhuman, life/death, organic/synthetic, and natural/artificial, emphasizing the dynamic and mixed nature of identities. Haraway raises concerns about the formation of feminist identity, suggesting that it frequently depends on a binary opposition of man/woman that is grounded in masculinist discourses. By identifying women as “the Other” within these rigid binaries, traditional feminist identity inadvertently becomes complicit in the systems it aims to challenge. In fact, feminist theorists employ the concept of the cyborg to contest the traditional organic self which is ascribed to women within patriarchal discourse and social structures. Cyborg feminism represents a redefined understanding of female identity that enables women to transcend male dominance and reject binary oppositions characterizing them as the “other.” Consequently, this reconfiguration empowers women to resist and navigate the constraints imposed by patriarchal systems. Hence, by challenging traditional identities and power dynamics, the emergence of the female cyborg and cyborg feminism supports women’s empowerment, allowing them to confront and even exceed a society that has long sought to marginalize them.

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