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Caught in the Mirror:
Fictional Representations of "Cyborgs" and "Serials" in Postmodern American Technoculture

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Thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
M.A. degree in English Literature

University of Ottawa
Ottawa, Canada

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To my friends and family with whom I refused (in order to preserve my sanity) to discuss "cyborgs" and "serials" along the way.

Abstract

Cultural fragmentation in Postmodern America has led to a destabilization of the political sphere and created a climate of change and possibility, one in which socialist-feminist Donna J. Haraway labours to redefine feminist politics by constructing a borderless and especially, genderless, cyborg subjectivity. "Cyborgs" and "serials" are figures of social and fictional "reality," that, together, reflect the normalizing, hierarchical, and psychologically traumatic aspects of operational Harawayan cyborgology.

Chapter 1 explores the practical limits of the hybridity and fluidity characteristic of Harawayan cyborg subjectivity and politics to suggest that processes of political normalization are far less easily dismantled in practice than they are in theory. This discussion focuses on the persistent influence of sex/gender dualism on hierarchical structures in technoculture, a persistence illustrated in science fiction novels by James Tiptree, Jr. and Vonda McIntyre. Chapter 2 looks at how race influences the divergence of feminist agendas by engendering the mutually exclusive, racially influenced perspectives of both Harawayan cyborg politics and radical U.S. feminism. Two science fiction stories by Octavia E. Butler, a black American writer, illustrate the translation of gender hierarchy into racial hierarchy. A sensitivity to this rearticulation of oppression seems to be missing from cyborg politics. Finally, Chapter 3 investigates the psychoanalytic trauma of fragmentation, multiplicity, and fusion through the psychopathology of serial killers in order to question Haraway's emphasis on, what is for her, the "liberating" and "creative" quality of a psychological state that is, for these criminals, *the* source of psychosis and aggression. This chapter explores what I consider to be the "serial" side of Haraway's "cyborg," in a crime fiction novel by Gordon Lish.

Acknowledgements

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The Illusory Cyborg Revolution: Mapping the Posthuman Frontier

> . . .we learn less from maps than material landmarks.[1]
> —Robert G. Dunn, *Identity Crises*

Questions of identity are paramount in Postmodern American academic discourses. In a cultural and critical climate characterized by the "differentiation, dispersal, and decentering of cultural meaning and experience," that creates "a disjunctive and sometimes jarring experience of multiplicity and fluidity, disturbingly incongruous and disorienting yet full of exhilarating possibilities," political and psychoanalytic discussions about group and individual identities grapple with the disappearance of traditional identity boundaries and the task of theorizing political and psychological subjectivities amidst the fragmentation and flux of Postmodernity (Dunn 143). In *Identity Crises: A Social Critique of Postmodernity*, American sociologist, Robert G. Dunn observes that Postmodern America is in the grip of a complex intersection of "interrelated identity crises," linked to social and cultural changes effected by technology, and that as a philosophy, Postmodernism is primarily concerned with theorizing identity in the age of technoculture (4, 1). Thus, the crises are tied to exploring, mapping, and settling the Posthuman frontier.[2]

As part of the Postmodern critical climate that "emphasizes the instability of meanings and of intellectual categories (including that of the human subject)" and aims to "dissolve the fixed binary oppositions of structuralist thought" (Baldick 175-76), American Posthumanism

1

examines the ways in which technology, particularly "information technologies" (Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., "Interfaces" 313), constructs perceptions of the Posthuman body and identity. Advances in medicine, space travel, and media and information technologies have extended the boundaries of science, politics, psychology, and imagination throughout the twentieth century, and since the 1970s, two genres of popular American fiction have been translating these advances into ideas about the evolution of Posthumanity in American technoculture. Science fiction and crime fiction are both profoundly concerned with the boundary loss that pervades Postmodern society. Two popular Postmodern factual and fictional figures reflect this pervasive boundlessness: "cyborgs" and "serials."

Medical procedures like transplants and the use of prosthetic limbs and electronic devices create living "cyborgs"—human-machine hybrids—that blur traditional organic-mechanical and organismic distinctions between humans, animals, and machines.[3] Popularized in contemporary science fiction as figures of both utopic and dystopic boundary loss and hybridity, fictional representations of cyborgs in futuristic, (extra-)terrestrial worlds, reflect the simultaneously liberating and restrictive experience of boundary loss in technoculture, identified by Dunn. American feminists explore the empowerment and continued oppression of sexually and racially marginalized political groups through academic discussions and fictional representations of cyborgs, adopting this figure of border-crossing to inspire the denaturalization of hierarchical political groupings according to traditional race, class, and gender classifications. Consequently, feminist writing tends to embrace fragmentation and flux as powerful tools of patriarchal and hierarchical subversion,[4] although to varying degrees.

My discussion of cyborgs in the following chapters explores feminist perspectives on the range and limits of boundlessness, focusing on differences between abstractionist and corporeal feminism as well as between hegemonic and radical views of identity formation. Questioning the practical applications of Harawayan "cyborgology" (Sandoval 169), these chapters reveal some of the exclusions and practical shortcomings of abstractionist cyborg politics in one of the most influential feminist essays in Postmodern America: Donna J. Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century" (Sandoval 167).

In "A Cyborg Manifesto" ("Manifesto"),[5] Haraway presents a compelling, utopian vision of cyborg politics in which the boundlessness inspired by Postmodern fragmentation and flux is aesthetically pleasing because it is endlessly creative and also politically empowering. None of the disorientation that Dunn locates in the Postmodern sphere can be found in this text that celebrates boundlessness by participating "in the utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender" and by deconstructing the boundaries between race and class that cause what she sees as the "[p]ainful fragmentation" of women's movements in America ("Manifesto" 150, 155). Haraway envisions the cyborg as a liberated and empowered, because inclusive, subjectivity. It is ostensibly non-hierarchical since it claims to neither privilege nor marginalize any subject position. Rather, it speaks metaphorically in a common language of difference, "a powerful infidel heteroglossia," that blurs the boundaries of political identity, communication, and relations (181). Thus, Haraway identifies cyborg politics as an empowering "response through coalition" to the fractured women's movements of the twentieth century ("Manifesto" 155). As "a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction,"

her mythical cyborg serves as a model for boundary transgression and thus, as a facilitator in the gathering of womanhood's scattered narratives (149).

To Haraway, both fact and fiction participate in the making of social reality, and, therefore, "the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion" ("Manifesto" 149). Perceiving this boundary as an illusion enables Haraway to theorize cyborg subjectivity according to Baudrillard's Postmodernist "logic of simulation" (31), in which there is no boundary between reality and simulation; concrete reality ceases to exist and to inform representations of reality so that there are only simulations. Baudrillard insists that this "logic of simulation . . . is characterised by a *precession of the model*" (Baudrillard 31-32, emphasis in original). He illustrates this turn of logic with Borges's "allegory of simulation" (1). According to the "old" (pre-Postmodern) logic, a map is drawn to represent an empire's territory. In this case, the map is a simulation that only refers to, or mirrors, the actual territory, whose existence precedes the map. Here, the two are never confused. Conversely, according to the logic of simulation in the technocultural age, the map *becomes* the territory—what before it only simulated—by preceding it, instead (2). Where once the territory engendered the map, Postmodernity's "liquidation of referentials" allows the map, the simulation, to replace the real territory (2). While this is an attractive theory, it ignores what is to be done with the territory that yet exists in the material world. In terms of identity-formation, the logic of simulation marginalizes the body and embodiment, in the construction of consciousness.

Haraway rejects the psychoanalytic notion that identity formation must begin with individuation, a process that subsequently allows a subject to make identifications in the political sphere. Like many other Postmodernists, she perceives the notion of a stable ego to be inherently

Modernist, patriarchally oppressive, and thus, an unsuitable model for liberating feminist consciousness. As one psychoanalyst notes, "Much of the postmodernist critique sees the essentialist self as static, immovable, and therefore representing fixed, immutable modernist assumptions. It views the 'Freudian' self as the self of bourgeois early-twentieth century Vienna and therefore not responsive to modern concerns" (Glass 5). Haraway rejects a "natural matrix of unity," arguing that we are all infinitely fragmented and that "no construction is whole" if we refuse—as the cyborg does—to naturalize it ("Manifesto" 157).

In *How Like a Leaf*, in an interview with Thyrza Nichols Goodeve, Haraway does not, however, completely reject the idea of psychoanalytic unconscious. Instead, she links her "ambivalence" towards traditional unconscious of Modernist psychoanalysis to her "desire to discover an ['unfamiliar'[6]] unconscious proper to the dynamism of the cyborg" (124). Her acceptance of an unconscious is ironically contingent upon its determination by social and political fragmentation and flux, according to a logic of simulation, rather than by essential or "natural" psychological unity and stability. The individualistic human body is no map for cyborg subjectivity or politics. The fluid cyborg "self," a truly political subjectivity, is constructed through an inverse process of identity formation, whereby chosen external identifications with fragmentation, fluidity, and flux determine the state of the unconscious, and not the other way around. Such a "socially informed body" (Seltzer, *Bodies* 88) precludes a "natural"—biological or psychological—dependence on wholeness for the creation of identity. Indeed, Haraway's position resists the possibility that the need for a stable psychological core may be tied to an evolution of this kind of unconscious drive, and chooses instead to view subjectivity as a *tabula rasa*.[7]

While Haraway celebrates the promise of boundlessness in cyborg politics as an empowering, patriarchally subversive "creativity in the most literal sense" (*Leaf* 115), she fails to recognize this fluid consciousness as a threat or detriment to some feminist groups. As one critic points out, Haraway's cyborg is a "systems being" (Csiscery-Ronay, Jr., "The Cyborg" 513) that never focuses on individuality, and that "Once everything becomes a cyborg .... When everyone becomes an other, everyone will be the same in the hypostatic disunion" (525). Through a process of abstraction of the individual effected by deconstructing patriarchal dichotomies and thus discounting experiences of difference marked by divisions between race and sex or gender (although these have been unjustly legitimized through a process of naturalization), cyborg subjectivity is characterized by anonymity and by a gathering of feminist identities into that of a greater "network being" (Csicery 511). This network of cyborg relations resists individuation even though *embodiment* necessitates an individual experience of the body and of consciousness and is, therefore, an inevitable aspect of identity in the material world. Cyborg politics is therefore inoperable in the real world where consciousness embodies difference and individuality, a notion familiar to corporeal feminists like N. Katherine Hayles, Anne Balsamo, and Claudia Springer. These feminists, as well as white science fiction writers like Vonda McIntyre and James Tiptree, Jr.,[8] see cyborgs as less empowered identities because of the inescapable tension between consciousness and materiality, and thus between embodiment and politics. Radical feminists of colour like Audre Lorde and Cherrie Moraga, as well as black science fiction writer, Octavia E. Butler, similarly perceive the potential for abstraction and "self" loss within a general union of feminist movements like that represented by cyborg politics,[9] and reject such a position of self-effacement as undesirable for that reason.

Not only do corporeal and radical feminists observe the impractical and self-effacing potential of cyborg subjectivity, noting the dysphoric potential of system consciousness, but cultural analysts locate the same sense of loss and desire to preserve individuality in an examination of Postmodern "serials." Media technologies of production, reproduction, and consumption, namely television, radio, and literature, deconstruct material and ontological boundaries, or reference points, between fact and fiction as well as between local and global, private and public, and psychological and political spheres. The collapse of these boundaries informs the perceived threat of self-loss, or anonymity that problematizes identity formation for the serial killer (Seltzer 34). As the product of the seriality inherent to technocultural systems of production and reproduction, "serials" in crime fiction internalize and reflect fragmentation in the public sphere. In *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture*, Mark Seltzer notes that seriality is most evident in television series and daily newscasts and newspapers (64). Series are perpetuated by dissatisfaction with a lack of closure and by a perpetually frustrated expectation of finding closure in each new episode or column. Similarly, for serial killers, each murder is unsatisfactory "because it [increases], not [lessens] the tension" (65). Thus, "'the real meaning behind the term *serial killer*' is the internal competition between repetition and representation'" (64). In other words, the "serial" kills repeatedly in unsuccessful attempts to represent or construct boundaries between the psychological "self" and the social/physical body, and thus, to self-identify and find "self"-closure. However, "serial" selfhood is a representation of cultural fantasy, not individuality. Seltzer identifies the serial killer as a "species of person" (2) whose psychological fragmentation reflects that of the social sphere and manifests itself in what is for him, a hybrid socio-psychological sphere. He cannot individuate or differentiate a

"self" separate from the rest of society, which, due to the absence of boundaries, is to him an

anonymous mass. Seltzer describes the "serial"'s criminal behaviour as a compulsive and

violent lashing out against fragmentation and anonymity, a reaction to the "coming down of the

boundaries between inside and outside, between the psychological and the social" that is largely

facilitated by media technology (113).[10] Concerned by the dangers of boundary loss

(psychological fragmentation and fluidity), to serial killers, to sufferers of other mental illnesses

like Multiple Personality Disorder, as well as to society in general, some psychoanalysts maintain

that a unified and stable ego is a crucial tool for resisting the loss of boundaries and of identity

markers in Postmodern society. Crime fiction tends to support this view by illustrating

technoculture as a social and psychic dystopia, in which the serial killer's compulsive and

repetitive aggression is linked to a desire to individuate and construct a stable self in the absence

of stable identity boundaries.

Like Haraway's cyborg, the serial killer is a hybrid of fact and fiction. An inability to

individuate or cathect body/ego boundaries leads the "serial" to "construct a prosthetic . . .

character" (37) through a process Seltzer calls "*primary mediation*" (37, emphasis in original).

This "self" is comprised of images of serial killers in fact and fiction, from television, radio, and

literature, and it mirrors the characteristic seriality of these information technologies. Thus, the

"serial" is not an individual but a "species of person" (2); he, or his identity, is absorbed within,

and is representative of, an American technological systems consciousness. The "serial"'s

"identity," his anonymity, emerges through and because of an inverse process of identity

formation in which fragmented bodies and identities in the public sphere give rise to a

fragmented ego. *This* "socially informed body" (*Bodies and Machines*, 88) indicates "the

inseparability of identity in machine culture from a rapport with technologies—particularly

technologies of writing, reproduction, and information" (37) in a subject whose psychotic fusion

with the public sphere precludes individuation. As a way of differentiating the self from the

social mass, the "serial" concentrates on physically penetrating body boundaries to physically

locate the boundaries of a "self" he cannot cathect. Herein lies the criminality and social danger

of his fluid socio-psychological sphere.

Amidst the excitement of Haraway's project dedicated to revolutionizing political identity

and neutralizing the balance of power in Postmodern American technoculture, there is a large

body of evidence to suggest that the "logic of simulation" at work in Haraway cyborg politics is

inoperable in the material world where people must still exist in an embodied state and therefore,

from a stable position, deal with a multitude of embodied perspectives, with boundaries, and with

problems of difference that exist there in very tangible ways. Hence, Dunn's assertion that "we

learn less from maps than from material landmarks" when it comes to understanding the tension

between identity discourses and practices (1) is an apposite reminder that useful political theory

must evolve through concurrent considerations of perceived possibilities and observed practices.

Both the threat of "self"-dissolution posed by systems consciousness and perceived by many

feminists and serial killers, and illustrated by "cyborgs" and "serials," as well as the danger posed

to society by serial murder, underline the importance of considering the material landmarks such

as the physical body, the clear rejection of an inclusive feminist union by some feminists, and the

destructive psychopathology of the serial killer, in determining that Haraway's "Manifesto"

describes neither a utopian, nor an operable political platform. I shall explain these ideas in the

following chapters through an intersection of cultural, feminist, and psychoanalytic theory with

popular fiction, wherein the rejection and trauma of anonymity illustrated by "cyborgs" and "serials" suggests that in ignoring some important fictional and material reflections of cyborg fluidity, Haraway is unable to grasp the full range of her cyborg's "transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities" ("Manifesto" 154).[11]

Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. observes that, as a "network being," Haraway's cyborg "is not nihilisitic," but rather "An evolved cyborg [that] can become aware of its 'kinship' with an infinite number of cyborg-entities in the world" (511).[12] The cyborg, however, "is at the centre of [Haraway's] ironic faith, [her] blasphemy" (Haraway 149) in resistance to "Western myths of transcendence—Christianity, progress, patriarchal lineages conjuring up mythologies of legitimacy"(Csicsery 511) and Csicsery-Ronay notes that "Once everything becomes a cyborg—when every Amazon becomes a greenhouse, every innovation a prosthesis . . . [w]hen everyone becomes an other, everyone will be the same in the hypostatic disunion" (525). Certainly Haraway does not intend her cyborg to be nihilistic, but cyborg subjectivity's foundation in the fragmentation of sex, race, and class differences does seem to render those differences obsolete. When these categories of identity formation cease to be (allowed to be) at variance with one another, the difference between individual experience ceases to count and political heterogeneity becomes political homogeneity. In this way, cyborg politics does not empower women as women, nor does it empower different experiences of womanhood since it deconstructs race, gender and sex—the body and the basis of political difference. Moreover, this erasure of the body devalues that aspect of our identity that anchors our individuality and makes us human, so the cyborg actually valorizes the disembodied, abstracting, androgenous *technological* characteristics of the network subjectivity or systems consciousness and

devalorizes the biological human characteristics. In this way, Harawayan cyborg politics is a

normalized hierarchical system and is, therefore, not politically utopian at all, since it

marginalizes divergent perspectives that value embodied difference.

Feminists looking for platforms for real political reform and practice understand that

fragmentation and flux of a fluid subjectivity, what Haraway calls an "oppositional

consciousness," is not a utopian subject position ("Manifesto"156). Haraway bases her cyborg

on Chela Sandoval's notion of oppositional consciousness in differential feminism. Sandoval

characterizes this feminist movement as the fifth of the twentieth century, and explains that it

concentrates on including rather than excluding the perspectives of the previous four movements

(Sandoval 53).[13] Thus, as Haraway explains, "oppositional consciousness is about contradictory

locations and heterochronic calendars, not about relativisms and pluralisms" ("Manifesto 155-

56). Haraway claims her cyborg politics participate in the "utopian tradition of imagining a

world without gender," but her utopia is also characterized by the elimination of race, class,

psychology, indeed, of politics too—essentially, by the effective disembodiment and abstraction

of identity since the body is not allowed to be a visible aspect of cyborg identity or to count for

anything as a historical text, something which seems important if the body is considered to be a

text at all. Furthermore, cyborg politics is utopian from *Haraway's* perspective, but its discourse

of inclusion and equality works to obscure what Susan Bordo calls, the "personally invested

human nature of 'story making'" (144). Ironically, in its attempt to theorize inclusiveness and

equality, the "Manifesto" is guilty of some rather serious exclusions with a view to asserting

Haraway's perspective of what constitutes an acceptable and desirable, empowered feminist

identity. It does not incorporate the corporeal feminist view (denying its own abstractionism and

asserting a dedication to materialism), the radical feminist view, or the psychoanalytic view, all of which suggest the importance and desirableness of boundaries and individuality as a way of making sense of the world, and of understanding one's place in relation to one's "self", to others, and to the age one lives in. Consequently, in the following chapters I will discuss the unrevolutionary and illusory platform of empowerment in cyborg politics, identify the psychological foundation for political normalization and pluralization in America, assert the need for a realistic and fact based view of the range and limits of psychological and social boundary play, as well as suggest that cyborg politics, on an ethical level, might usefully benefit from a more truly hybridized—political and psychological—position that is sensitive to the pain and fear of "self"-dissolution articulated by feminists of colour and described by psychologists in relation to serial killers and other people suffering from psychological fragmentation and fluidity.

Accordingly, Chapter One undertakes the exploration of Haraway's idea of the permanently open and chimeric self as a utopian, genderless subjectivity. Abstracting individuality and oppressing difference within a systems consciousness by imagining the body and embodied identity as a palimpsest, a *tabula rasa*, Haraway ignores the influence of materiality on identity construction, and precludes her own ability to examine exclusionary tendencies at work in the "Manifesto" and processes of normalization in technoculture and cyberculture. Referring to the normative aspect of self-interest in "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticism," Susan Bordo notes that, "Foucault reminds us that the routes of individual interest and desire do not always lead where imagined and may often sustain unintended and unwanted configurations of power" (151).[14] For this reason, Haraway's attempt, in the "Manifesto," to confound political normalization—the rearticulation of patriarchal

dualisms and ideologies—in the technocultural sphere, involves resisting the "escalating" individualism that for her, characterizes the dark side of cyborg teleology.[15] Thus, through cyborg politics she encourages a heightened awareness of subjectivity as a multitude of relations within a network[16] rather than as a distinct individual. Cyborg imagery pollutes traditional human/animal/machine distinctions and engenders a hybrid subject-in-flux, who weaves or dances through myriad perspectives.[17] If such kinetic fluidity were possible to maintain, cyborg politics could indeed resist the tyranny of the "self," which would be dissolved within a web of relations. While cyborg fluidity-resistance is an attractive idea, Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. observes that the "endurance" of cyborg flux "is problematic" because at some point the cyborg must inhabit the material world as a "fixed body or personal identity" ("Cyborg" 511). He points out that metaphors of fluidity lose potency when forced to correspond to the fact of embodiment in the material world. In this way, we can understand that the cyborg metaphor and the body metaphor constitute two opposing forces at work on Posthuman subjectivity as well as on politics in the technocultural sphere. Consequently, the ability of cyborg imagery to "suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves," by participating "in the utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender," is inevitably limited by the tension between the transcendence and embodiment of male/female dualism. In this tension between the embodiment of dualism and cultural constructions of monistic sexuality lies the basis for political normalization, a point about which the "Manifesto" is, dissatisfactorily, reticent.

In her recently published *Methodology of the Oppressed*, Chela Sandoval summarizes Haraway's twofold aim in the "Manifesto": to deconstruct and subvert Western patriarchal

ideologies and structures of dominance and "to propose a new technopolitics and form of being,"

capable of achieving this end (167). For Haraway, equalizing the balance of power in society

begins with changing the way identifications are made and relationships, formed, perceived, and

valorized. She asserts in the "Manifesto" that, "Social reality is lived social relations, [it is] our

most important political construction, [and] a world-changing fiction," and thus, "Liberation rests

on the construction of the consciousness, the imaginative apprehension, of oppression, and so of

possibility" (149). Cyborgean hybridity, bodies forth the openness, willingness, and desire to

transgress the gender, race, and class boundaries that Haraway believes must be dissolved to

unite and empower all American women in a non-hierarchical feminist consciousness, in a

utopian, post-gender society. Hence, mythical cyborg subjectivity in the "Manifesto" represents

Haraway's construction of a revolutionary Posthuman consciousness mapped by the fluidity and

formlessness of an oppositional consciousness that both embodies and engages in politics

resistant to domination by patriarchal dualisms and naturalized identities; in *Electronic Eros:*

Bodies and Desire in the Postindustrial Age, however, Claudia Springer states that "Cyborg

imagery so far has not widely realized the ungendered [and generally boundless] ideal Donna

Haraway theorizes" (66). I shall reveal the truth of this statement by exploring, first of all, the

utopian hopes for and the actual development of Internet cyberspace and cyberpolitics (political

activity in cyberspace). Anne Balsamo's discussion of cyborg identity and of cyberspace as a

new frontier that many Postmodernists, and especially feminists, are racing to settle with a

revolutionary "technopolitics and form of being" (Sandoval 167) combined with Michael

Margolis and David Resnick's analysis of the phenomenon of the current political normalization

of cyberspace expose the normalizing processes that "[continue] to uphold gender

differences"(68) and hierarchical structures of political identity on the Net. The recognition of

the potential for cyborg normalization is clearly illustrated in Vonda McIntyre's *Superluminal*

and James Tiptree, Jr.'s *The Girl Who Was Plugged In*. These novels celebrate a certain degree

of "self"-liberation afforded by cyborg hybridity and fluidity, acknowledging that embodiment

inevitably restricts that liberation. As I shall argue in Chapter 1, therefore, cyborg politics is

essentially unrevolutionary in that it is unable to re-structure the unconscious through a logic of

simulation; cyborgean metaphors of fluidity cannot disempower the metaphor of the body.

Simply imagining one's "self" to be endlessly fluid and fragmented does not dissolve the

material solidity of the body and the effect this solidity has on one's identity formation.

Chapter Two examines fictional cyborgs as representations of the political tensions

between Haraway's socialist-feminism and that of Radical U.S. Women of Color. Although one

critic observes that "Posthumanism is ultimately less concerned with politics . . . than with the

transformation of reality when informatics is fed back into human social life at every level,"

(Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., "Interfaces" 313), these two feminist movements are politicisizing

Posthuman identity, expanding its boundaries to include more than new informational and

biomechanical interfaces between humans and technology, and making it refer to new human

connections across previously unbridgeable divisions between race and class. Both groups seek

political empowerment for women and other marginalized groups through affiliations made

possible by the Postmodern climate of boundary transgression that enables them to challenge

traditional Western hierarchical groupings of race, culture, sex, gender, and class. Drawing from

the writing of Audre Lorde and Cherrie Moraga as well as from Octavia E. Butler's fictional

representations of dystopic cyborg societies in *Dawn* and "Bloodchild,"[18] I shall reveal how

Haraway's "Manifesto" erects its own hierarchical boundaries by claiming to offer a

unanimously desirable and utopian feminist union. By discounting the radical perspective, or

simply that of some women of colour, Haraway fails to understand that her vision of an inclusive

feminist subjectivity is for these other women dystopian and oppressive. Her creation of an

ostensibly non-hierarchical political consciousness prevents her from recognizing the ironically

hierarchical and oppressive nature of cyborg subjectivity. I shall explain that although Haraway

presents the oppositional cyborg as inclusive and non-hierarchical, its drive to form only *certain*

kinds of connections—rejecting those desired by (radical) feminists of colour—constitutes a

suspect hierarchical agenda nonetheless. By examining the simultaneous inclusionary and

exclusionary impulses in radical feminism and illustrated in Butler's fiction, this chapter reveals

that the same tension—what Dunn refers to as the "dual logic" (143)—between fragmentation

and pluralization is at work in the "Manifesto."

Moving from politics to psychoanalysis in Chapter Three, the trauma of boundlessness

discussed by Mark Seltzer and James M. Glass further reveals the exclusive, inoperable, and

potentially dangerous aspect of fluidity in Haraway's cyborg politics that results largely from her

rejection of psychoanalytic perspectives on unity and fragmentation. I shall bring together

Seltzer's analysis of the Postmodern American serial killer, James M. Glass's research on

Multiple Personality Disorder, Leland Swenson's work in the increasingly recognized field of

evolutionary psychology, Margaret Mahler's and Klaus Theweleit's descriptions of

boundlessness as psychosis, with fictional representations of serial killers in Gordon Lish's *Dear*

Mr. Capote to further illustrate the destructive and traumatic nature of fragmentation in the

public sphere—a dystopian view that Haraway cannot acknowledge because of her rejection of

traditional psychoanalysis. In this chapter, I shall trace the connection between the American

identity crisis and violence, as represented by the serial killer, suggesting that the crisis itself is

the cause of increased public fascination with "serials" and violence, as well as the cause for the

"serial"'s criminal behaviour. Finally, the depiction of psychosis in the serial killer mirrors the

fluid subjectivity of the Harawayan cyborg; I suggest that the serial killer presents a troubling

picture of applied cyborg fluidity in the psychopathological sphere.

In *Identity Crisis: Modernity, Psychoanalysis and the Self*, Stephen Frosh points to the

ambiguity of the term "Postmodern" to explain why its usage varies among countries but

especially between Europe and the United States (22). One of the differences between French

and American views of Postmodernity is the way in which numerous American Postmodernists,

like Haraway, celebrate boundlessness by disregarding the psychological impact of fragmentation

of individual psychology, while many French feminists are more sympathetic to the

psychoanalytic emphasis on unity and stability. Glass notes that Julia Kristeva, for example, who

is also a psychoanalyst, "is intensely sensitive to the pain of disintegrated selves" (18). She

understands identity first and foremost as a *stable position*, from which any feminist activism

must stem (including political positions of multiplicity or boundary play). The following is how

Glass describes her psychoanalytic feminist viewpoint:

> When speaking of herself, Kristeva argues that 'I myself, at the deepest level of
>
> my wants and desires, am unsure, centerless and divided' (1987: 8), she refers to
>
> her psychoanalytic knowledge gained through discourse: I am divided, yet I know
>
> I am divided; analysis makes me aware of my essential 'multiplicity' as a human
>
> being, but I am capable of making sense out of that multiplicity. . . . Kristeva, as

an analyst, knows that to make sense out of one's centerlessness requires a firm

sense of a core self. . . . (Glass 18-19)

While the French feminist-psychoanalytic view falls outside the scope of this study of American

technoculture, it is useful to note the French feminist concentration on the importance of

boundaries to identity, with which Haraway disagrees, but which other American feminists seem

to appreciate, as a point of possible further study in the analysis of feminism in Postmodernity.

Haraway's celebration of fragmentated subjectivity in her "Manifesto" is inspired by boundary

play in Postmodern feminist science fiction; however, she fails to perceive or respond to a crucial

distinction between her utopian vision of the boundlessness and the more realistic assessment of

the more stable nature of political boundaries in these texts. Other feminists see it, and

psychologists see it, but in her desire to create a utopia, Haraway fails to see how materiality and

consciousness, politics and psychology are linked.

This thesis brings together feminist and psychoanalytic discourses in a comparative study

of the material and ontological boundaries at work in individual and group identity formation.

To my knowledge, there is currently no other study of both axes of the American identity crises,

yet the loss of boundaries central to Posthumanism and Postmodernism is vital to "cyborgs" and

"serials." Both are Posthuman figures of boundary transgression, who represent the euphoric and

dysphoric tensions at play in Postmodern American technoculture. Haraway's mythological

cyborg thrives in utopian boundlessness, while fictional representations of other "cyborgs" as

well as "serials" depict a more realistic tension between freedom from and restriction by

boundaries in the material world, a tension identified by corporeal and radical feminists, as well

as by psychoanalysts. Hence, Haraway's cyborg ideal must be tempered by reflections of the

lived, embodied experiences of fluidity and boundlessness found in the political reality of other feminist "cyborgs" as well as in the psychological reality of "serials." These alternative hybrid subjectivities reflect the unrevolutionary and often painful process of inverse reality/identity making in technoculture.

Hence, the title of this thesis, "Caught in the Mirror: Fictional Representations of "Cyborgs" and "Serials" in Postmodern American Technoculture," identifies the inability of Baudrillardian/Harawayan logic of simulation to construct a utopian Posthuman subjectivity in the "Manifesto." Haraway's cyborg utopia is illusory, since it is also a discomforting, disorienting, and inherently "self"-deconstructing sphere. Since the "Manifesto" excludes considerations of fluidity at work in lived processes of identity making, her cyborg is unable to view its material reflections, its application of mythology/theory to political action and embodiment. In order to underscore the need to temper theory with reality, the following chapters posit Haraway's theoretical cyborg as caught in a mirror while we examine its reflection in other "cyborg" and "serial" realities.

Notes to Introduction

1. Robert G. Dunn, *Identity Crises: A Social Critique of Postmodernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 1. Here, Dunn recalls and refutes Jean Baudrillard's allegory of the map by insisting on the value of praxis in formulating theory and material reality in informing virtual reality, a point on which I will elaborate further on in this introduction.

2. Anne Balsamo draws a parallel between what she calls the "electronic frontier," the territory of the Posthuman, and the settling of the American West. See Anne Balsamo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), 116.

3. The term "cyborg" is shortened from "cybernetic organism" (Clute, 290). Manfred Clynes coined the term in 1960 (Jones 203). Definitions of the term vary from text to text, but generally, most agree that a cyborg is a human/machine hybrid. In science fiction, however, cyborg hybridity also often revolves around animal or alien hybridity. For more specific definitions of the term, see Anne Hudson Jones, "The Cyborg (R)Evolution in Science Fiction." *The Mechanical God.* Dunn and Erlich, eds. (Westport CT: Greenwood, 1982), 203; and John Clute and Peter Nicholls, "Cyborg," *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (NY: St. Martin's Griffin, 1995), 290-92.

4. Haraway calls fragmentation and flux the "acid tools of postmodernist theory." See Donna J. Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (NY: Routledge, 1991), 157. 17 Feb. 2000 <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/HPS/Haraway/CyborgManifesto.html> 149-181.

5. Hereinafter I will refer to Haraway's text simply as the "Manifesto."

6. Haraway notes that she thinks of the term "familiar," very literally, as a derivative of the word "family," which itself carries connotations of the traditional nuclear family. In her adult experience, Haraway's "family" relationships have been anything but traditional, and so it is important to her to validate and valorize her experiences through the creation of an "unfamiliar" unconscious (*How Like a Leaf* 124-126).

7. It seems strange that as a biologist and also as a Professor of History of Consciousness, Haraway would place so little importance on the body and on processes of evolution in relation to behaviour and identity formation (ideas I will discuss throughout this thesis). Haraway does say, in *How Like A Leaf* (NY: Routledge, 1998), that she thinks in "biological metaphors" and has "an allergy to abstraction" (82, 107). In contrast, throughout the following chapters, I will argue that Haraway *is* an abstractionist and clearly rejects the metaphor of the body.

8. James Tiptree, Jr. is the pseudonym of Alice Hastings Bradley Sheldon (1915-1987), under which she wrote science fiction from 1967 to 1977, when her true name became public (Clute 1230).

9. I use the term "cyborg politics" here, and throughout the thesis, to refer specifically to Haraway's political myth in the "Manifesto."

10. Serial killing is neither an exclusively contemporary nor strictly American phenomenon. It has, however, largely entered the American law enforcement, consumer, and academic

consciousnesses only since the 1980s. Serial killing, as I will discuss, is linked to the increasing technologization of social consciousness and behaviour, which is why the numbers of cases as well as public fascination with the serial killer have increased dramatically over the past thirty years. While this is the case in other Western countries, my focus is only on the American serial killer and American technoculture. See Ronald M. Holmes and Stephen T. Holmes, *Contemporary Perspectives on Serial Murder* (Thousand Oaks CA: Sage, 1998), ix. Since the '80s, many serial killers have been profiled in the media, in true crime fiction, in crime fiction, and in various academic studies (Holmes and Holmes vii-viii). While serial killing is not exclusively a type of crime committed by men, the number of female serial killers in the United States constitutes approximately one fifth to one tenth of the serial murders each year (Holmes and Holmes 36). The female serial killer has largely been ignored in academic studies, and the "publicity of serial murder, whether it be through the news media, movies, or books, has sensationalized and publicized the acts of males" (Holmes and Holmes 33). Because the motivation and method of male murderers differ so greatly from that of female murderers, the serial killer known to the public sphere is male. Since the seriality and psychosis that I will be linking to the Postmodern sphere and to the psychopathology of the male serial killer (in the third chapter), is not as well studied in women, or does not apply to the behaviour of female serial killers, I shall be focussing only on males in this study. Thus, I use the terms "serial" and "serial killer" only in reference to males.

11. In the "Manifesto," Haraway states that her "cyborg myth is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of

needed political work" (154). While she concentrates on the utopian and revolutionary possibilities of cyborg politics, I believe it is imperative to also explore the dystopic side of her myth. For this reason, I play the part of "devil's advocate" in this thesis in order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of both the utopian and dystopian possibilities and consequences of fluidity in the political and psychological spheres.

12. Cyborg hybridity extends to all beings and objects including, but not restricted to humans, animals, machines, texts and information (510). See Istvan Csicery-Ronay, Jr., "The Cyborg and the Kitchen Sink; or, The Salvation Story of No Salvation Story." *Science Fiction Studies*. 25 (Nov. 1998): 510-525.

13. Sandoval explains that the oppositional consciousness of differential feminism engages with and operates in relation to the previous four, generally accepted hegemonic feminist movements of the twentieth century. These are generally classified as the "'liberal'"/"'equal rights,'" "'Marxist'"/"'revolutionary,'" "'radical/cultural'"/ "'supremacist,'" and "'socialist'"/"'separatist'" phases of American feminism. Liberal feminism emerged during the 1920s and '30s (Sandoval 48). It focused on diminishing the differences between men and women, emphasizing the sameness of the sexes rather than gender differences in the workforce (Sandoval 48). The second phase, Marxist feminism, rejected the tenets of liberal feminism and sought to re-valorize sexual difference, asserting "'specifically that women's lives WERE different from men's'" (Sandoval quoting Eisenstein 49). Marxist feminism was followed by radical feminism, a movement that rejected both of the previous two movements that tended to

try to equate "femaleness" with maleness, thus implicitly positing female as "other" (Sandoval 49). Instead, radical or supremacist feminism embraced a new polemical position figuring "maleness" as "other" (Sandoval 49). Sandoval notes that feminists of colour sensed themselves to be excluded from all three of these movements that emerged from the agendas of (generally) white feminists who were "striving to represent themselves as only other versions of the dominant white male" (195 n. 37), fuelling the emergence of a "fourth, final, and 'antiracist' phase they defined as 'socialist feminism'" (50). The socialist phase attempted to address/account for differences of race and class among women. Each of these four phases was characterized by a rejection of its predecessors and also by the notion that the positions taken in each of the phases were inherently "contradictory" (Sandoval 51). Sandoval developed her theory of oppositional consciousness as a way of transcending the exclusiveness and *temporal locatedness* of all four previous feminist phases. This kind of political consciousness rises out of what she identifies as a fifth twentieth century movement: differential feminism. Noting that in the '70s, U.S. feminists of colour did participate in the "white women's liberation movement" (socialist feminism), Sandoval also observes that "they seem[ed] to shift from one type of women's group to another, and another.' They were mobile (yet ever-present in their 'absence')" (58). This mobility, this fluid subjectivity based on the endless formation and reformation of political affiliations characterizes, for Sandoval and for Haraway, the differential feminism of many U.S. feminists of colour. Thus, an oppositional consciousness theoretically operates as an inclusive "*imaginary space*" by engaging with all feminist experiences, movements, agendas, and perspectives (Sandoval 53, emphasis added). By retaining mobility among all feminist subjectivities, oppositional consciousness avoids temporal and spatial restrictions. Sandoval

argues that differential feminism preserves difference and personal agency, asserting that, "The differential represents the variant; its presence emerges out of correlations, intensities, junctures, crises. Yet the differential depends on a form of agency that is self-consciously mobilized in order to enlist and secure influence; the differential is thus performative" (58); however, as I will argue throughout this thesis, the perception of a loss of "self" and personal agency ensues when difference ceases to *function* as difference, to have psychological or political value and, thus, to be performative. For an extensive description of differential feminism's oppositional consciousness, see Sandoval's *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 41-64.

14. In *Feminism/Postmodernism*. Linda J. Nicholson, ed. (NY: Routledge, 1990), 133-156.

15. Haraway intends her cyborg myth to serve as a blasphemous subversion of Christianity and psychoanalysis—what she calls "Western" origin stories—that valorize myths of "original unity, [and]fullness" and use them to propagate "seductions to organic wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity" (151, 149). In contrast, cyborg imagery is replete with fluidity and hybridity and valorizes "partial identities and contradictory standpoints" (154). Consequently, Haraway observes that, "the cyborg has no origin story in the Western sense—a 'final' irony since the cyborg is also the awful apocalyptic telos of the 'West's' escalating dominations of abstract individuation" (151).

16. Haraway affirms, "I prefer a network ideological image, suggesting the profusion of spaces and identities and the permeability of boundaries in the personal body and in the body politic. 'Networking is both a feminist practice and a multinational corporate strategy—weaving is for oppositional cyborgs" (170).

17. Bordo locates the "Manifesto" in the Postmodern tradition of viewing the body "as the vehicle of human making and remaking of the world, constantly shifting location, capable of revealing endlessly new 'points of view' on things" and argues that the images Haraway uses to inspire the protean Cyborg subjectivity—the Cyborg itself, the Cyborg as Trickster, and "the metaphors of dance"—tend to veil the located and perspectival influence of the material body on identity (144).

18. Butler is one of the only black American (female) science fiction writers.

Starving On Metaphors: Rearticulating Embodiment in Post-Gender America

> "'It's possible . . .' Lanea said, searching for a way to say this that
> was gentle for them both, 'it's possible . . . that there is a reason, a
> real reason, pilots and crew don't mix.'"[1]
> —Vonda McIntyre, *Superluminal*

In "Vampire and Replicant: The One-Sex Body in a Two-Sex World," Cyndy Hendershot observes that the proliferation of the vampire, "a body which negates sexual difference," in Victorian literature, signalled that society's simultaneous attraction and repulsion to changing gender roles (375). She notes that the breakdown of gender roles in America both during and immediately after the Second World War similarly gave rise to a "one-sex body metaphor" to represent the erosion of gender roles in the workforce (374-375). Cinematic one-sex alien "body snatchers" captured the American imagination during the middle of the century, shifting focus away from the body and, thus, away from a basis for the naturalization of sexual difference (375). Instead, the metaphor posited "social, not biological difference as *the* mark of sexual differentiation" (374). Now, Donna Haraway's cyborg is the late twentieth-century one-sex metaphor. In the "Manifesto," she explains her hope that feminist cyborg imagery can confound the rearticulation of body-based dominations in Postmodern society. She would like to see her cyborg, a metaphor for fluidity and hybridity, inspire a one-sex—ungendered— political sphere. The metaphor cannot, however, alter the fact of a two-sex body, and it must be noted that "Haraway does not propose literally replacing gendered bodies with cyborgs" (Springer 66).

Nevertheless, her proposal that the metaphor can fuel the construction of a genderless subjectivity is problematic.

N. Katherine Hayles, advocate of corporeal feminism,[2] argues that incongruities between cultural identity constructs and the embodiment of these constructs are "inherently destabilizing with respect to the body" ("Materiality" par. 17).[3] Thus, disparities between inscription and incorporation can constitute an identity crisis. Since the human body engenders embodiment in a two-sex world, it is difficult to see how embodiment, which is the seat of consciousness and hence of identity, can be *de-gendered*. Postmodern deconstructionist discourses, like Haraway's cyborg myth, use one-sex metaphors to shift focus away from the body's role in identity-formation in order to forward the plausibility of revolutionary, un-*natural* discursive constructions of subjectivity. By focussing only on the power of the cyborg metaphor in the "Manifesto," Haraway ignores the problem of "post-gender" cyborg *embodiment*. On a diet of metaphors of fluidity, the Posthuman is wasting away. Practically speaking, it needs something more substantial. The body, too, is a powerful metaphor—of solidity, integrity, and sexual dualism—more so than recent (relatively speaking) notions of hybridity. Hence, technocultural anxiety over a loss of "self," perceived as a loss of personal agency in the discursive dissolution of the body into information systems and metaphors of technology, is at the heart of the Postmodern American identity crisis. This techno-angst, as I call it, is responsible for rearticulating embodiment as an attempt to make sense of the body, and in turn, this rearticulation effects the normalization of politics in the technocultural and cybercultural spheres by re-naturalizing hierarchical dualisms and dominations.

Haraway recognizes Postmodernism as a time of both possibilities and restrictions in which Western societies are witnessing "the erosion of gender as an organizing principle"

(Nicholson 11). She understands it as a time "where prior means of control and repression have given way to new forms. 'Our dominations don't work by . . . normalization anymore; they work by networking, communications redesign [and] stress management'" (Nicholson 12). Even though she asserts that "[t]he cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world" (150), the persistent tension between inscription and incorporation empowers a new "informatics of domination" not much different than old hierarchical ideologies. While identifications are now emerging along different physical and imaginative lines, both the old and new political spheres exhibit the tendency to legitimize dominations by naturalizing cultural constructions of identity. This normalization of social reality and politics in cyberculture is described in some of the early Postmodern feminist science fiction that Haraway only celebrates for participating in the destabilization of boundaries. While James Tiptree, Jr.'s *The Girl Who Was Plugged In* (*Plugged* hereafter) and Vonda McIntyre's *Superluminal* participate in liberating naturalized identities from organic bodies, these stories remain aware that the cyborg is more than a theoretical being and, thus, must somehow *embody* hybridity, fluidity, and sexual dualism. These texts depict cyborg societies in which natural bodies and gender are at issue, and they call into question the reality of the pure "pleasure in the confusion of boundaries" and joyful liberty from incorporation that Haraway envisions ("Manifesto" 150). *Plugged* illustrates fears about the erosion of the body in a seductive technocultural sphere where cultural valorizations of sexualized technological perfection work to marginalize human imperfection as monstrous. Human/machine hybrids inhabit the *Superluminal* world, yet social relations remain structured by dualistic *techno*-biological difference that is the primary organizing force of labour and class divisions in the story. By portraying characters that embrace technology for personal gain in cyborg societies structured by a hierarchy of naturalized identities, Tiptree, Jr. and McIntyre

suggest that embodied experiences are self-affirming, even if these experiences subject us to domination. Both books suggest that embodiment is a form of "self"-consciousness that continues to structure new body-based dominations in cyborg relations. Consequently, oppression continues to operate through the cyborg body, in the form of naturalized, dualistic, *gender-type* dominations.

To explain the normalization of technopolitics illustrated by these texts, that should temper utopian regard for cyborg politics, I shall begin by explaining how Haraway's assertion that women must embrace technology and code subjectivity—the language of "self" communication—with images of fluidity and networking overlooks fears of "self"-dissolution reinforced by potent metaphors of the body. I shall argue that cyborg politics metaphorically dissolves the body and de-valorizes embodied experience, playing into already present technocultural anxieties related to a sense of self-loss and loss of personal agency in the face of increasing discursive dematerializations of the body in technoculture. Techno-angst is well documented in American literature, and I shall highlight some of the discussions surrounding American ambivalence toward technology to account for a growing concentration on reinforcing political ideologies, borders and body boundaries. Anne Balsamo's and Michael Margolis and David Resnick's discussion of the normalization of patriarchal ideologies on the Internet reflect the similarly unrevolutionary potential of applied cyborg politics and subsequently helps to explain how the desire to retain a sense of familiarity connected with the metaphoric stability and actual physical characteristics of the body perpetuates body-based dominations and identifications of "new forms of being"(Sandoval 167) in *Superluminal* and *Plugged*. Finally, although cyborg imagery contributes to an appreciation of new hybrid relations, cyborg politics

must be understood as neither a permanent nor utopian resistance to the normalization of these relations.

Haraway asserts that new human/machine interfaces can be re-imagined as permeable and inclusive, and thus be invested with the ability to create new, more flexible political groups and relationships. She argues that patriarchal "communications sciences and modern biologies are constructed by a common move—the translation of the world into a problem of coding, a search for a common language in which all resistance to instrumental control disappears and all heterogeneity can be submitted to disassembly, reassembly, investment, and exchange. . . . The biggest threat to such power ['effective communication'] is interruption of communication" (164). In the "Manifesto," Haraway's utopian vision of feminist liberation depends on escaping from patriarchal, historically determined notions of identity in order to map a new non-hierarchical political subjectivity. Even though Haraway labours to subvert the normalization of technopolitical consciousness, her myth obscures the reasons why old hierarchical ideologies leak into the new cybercultural sphere and impose restrictions on cyborg fluidity. Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. describes the cyborg as a "network being" who is hyper-aware of its infinite "'kinships'" with other beings and technologies ("Cyborg" 511) and as such, its subjectivity is characterized by a web of relationships rather than by individuality (513). The individuality of the fixed body, however, is a normalizing force at work on cyborg fluidity, one which opens even hybrid "selves" to self-interest.

Embodied, "self"ishness resists fluidity as much as cyborg consciousness resists stability. Hence, the embodied cyborg in technopolitical reality can be understood as a material and ontological hybrid (therein lies its fluidity) subject to the influence of metaphors of fluidity (cyborg imagery) and metaphors of solidity (body imagery). Haraway marginalizes the

influence of body imagery in the "Manifesto" because it hinders that of cyborg imagery, yet the influence of the body on subjectivity formation in material reality is at least as powerful as that of imagination and arguably more so because hybridity and fluidity have had comparatively less time to capture the human imagination but also, of course, because consciousness/information must always be embodied. Accordingly, Posthuman and technopolitical processes of change can be understood to be bound up with processes of normalization.

To grasp Haraway's use of the cyborg metaphor, one must understand her view of the body as a social text. For her, dominations threatening feminist empowerment in Postmodern technoculture depend on the translation of all things and relations into a single code that enables the systematization and interface of all objects:

> At the level of ideology, we see translations of racism and colonialism into
> languages of development and under-development, rates and constraints of
> modernization. Any objects or persons can be reasonably thought of in terms of
> disassembly and reassembly, no 'natural' architectures constrain system design.
> The financial districts in all the world's cities, as well as the export-processing
> and free-trade zones, proclaim this elementary fact of 'late capitalism.' . . . .
> 'Integrity' or 'sincerity' of the Western self gives way to decision procedures and
> expert systems. For example, control strategies applied to women's capacities to
> give birth to new human beings will be developed in the languages of population
> control and maximization of goal achievement for individual decision-makers.
> ("Manifesto" 163)

Haraway urges women to resist technocultural dominations of humans and of each other by scrambling or resisting translation into the code. Hence, her cyborg does not try to create

interfaces through a "common language" (163). Rather, it strives to make affiliations woven into "a powerful infidel heteroglossia" (181).

For feminists to re-code the "informatics of domination," says Haraway, they must "overcome technophobia" and embrace the systems, tools, and metaphors of technology that conspire to regulate social reality (Springer 155). In *Electronic Eros: Bodies and Desire in the Postindustrial Age*, Claudia Springer notes that one of Haraway's objectives in the "Manifesto" is to urge women toward this goal, "to embrace the cyborg paradigm rather than allow a new masculine style of late-twentieth-century domination to prevail" (105). Indeed, Haraway identifies the cyborg metaphor as a source of both feminist resistance and liberation:

> There are several consequences to taking seriously the imagery of cyborgs as other than our enemies. Our bodies, ourselves; bodies are maps of power and identity. Cyborgs are no exception. A cyborg body is not innocent; . . . it does not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end . . . it takes irony for granted. One is too few, and two is only one possibility. Intense pleasure in skill, machine skill, ceases to be a sin, but an aspect of embodiment. The machine is not an it to be animated, worshipped, and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; they do not dominate or threaten us. We are responsible for boundaries; we are they. (180)

It must be noted that the cyborg body of which Haraway speaks is a mythical one. While she exhorts a general embrace of technology as a part of Posthuman bodies and subjectivities, she posits the cyborg metaphor as being powerful enough to infuse the cyborg body with fluidity and multiplicity so that ironically, as in the "informatics of domination," "no 'natural' architectures

constrain system design" in the hybrid chimeric cyborg (162). In order to dissolve naturalized identifications such as gender, race and class, the cyborg metaphor dissolves the materiality of the body, such as its sex and skin colour, effectively deactivating its potential for meaning creation.

In "The Materiality of Informatics," Hayles argues that Postmodern deconstructionist discourse camouflages the body in order to erode any foundation for "natural" identity. "The body's dematerialization," she says, "depends in complex and highly specific ways upon the material and *embodied* circumstances that the ideology of dematerialization would obscure" (par. 2). Insisting on the importance of corporeal feminism, she rejects "the postmodern orthodoxy that the body is primarily, if not entirely, a linguistic and discursive construction"[4] ("Materiality" par. 1) that inspires Haraway's simulation of a new socially inscribed body-in-flux, metaphorically liberated from naturalized dominations of gender and race. Cyborg politics employs language, not to achieve clarity but to create "noise" (176). For Haraway, cyborg writing figures as the "pollution" of dualistic structures and "natural" identities that, "make very problematic the statuses of man, woman, human, artefact, member of a race, individual entity or body" (176, 178). Speaking about radical U.S. feminist of colour, Cherríe Moraga, Haraway asserts that, "Writing marks Moraga's body, affirms it as the body of a woman of colour" (176). Thus, she posits writing as the basis of cyborg identity. Although a cultural construct, gender is rooted in biological (embodied) differences that cannot be erased—except hypothetically through the *theoretical* dematerialization of the body. As Haraway dematerializes the body's contribution to political identity, her cyborg becomes a chimeric, protean consciousness that escapes domination by refusing to be located in a distinct body that somehow still embodies a multiplicity that never simmers into singularity. While Haraway locates "pleasure" and

boundless "creativity in the most literal sense" in the cyborg's ironic self-implication, I suggest that the emancipation afforded by her myth is severely and ironically restricted by its inability to preserve a sense of self that corresponds to the body.

While Harawayan cyborg consciousness strives to attain an inclusive, objective perspective, dis-located from the "individually articulated" (Hayles, "Materiality" par. 17) perspective of embodiment, we can locate tension between cultural constructions of fluidity and the embodied experience of rigidity. Hayles notes that "there is anincipient [sic] tension between [embodiment] and hegemonic cultural constructs," and that therefore, "Embodiment is inherently destabilizing with respect to the body, for at any time this tension can widen into a perceived disparity" ("Materiality" par. 17). This disparity, she continues, can be understood as a tension between inscription, which is informative, and incorporation, which is performative: "Discourse is associated with inscription, instantiated experience with incorporation" (par. 20). An incorporating practice constitutes "an action that is encoded into bodily memory by repeated performances until it becomes habitual" (par. 21). Thus, with the erosion of gender inscriptions, sexual incorporations are no longer performative, and there emerges an incongruity between consciousness and embodiment, a crisis characterized by anxiety over self-dissolution and the perceived loss of control.

In the "Manifesto," cyborg imagery usurps the natural body as the primary source for making identifications. In "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticism," Susan Bordo examines Haraway's construction of cyborg fluidity as a subjectivity that weaves, by "dancing," through an infinite variation of selves (144). The dance metaphor illustrates how cyborgs network through a heteroglossic code and also demonstrates how cyborg politics functions *theoretically* as a wholly inclusive but never assimilative political self, able to incorporate

myriad possibilities of socio-political subjectivity. Haraway claims that cyborg fluidity can preserve difference outside of a valorizing structure by positing cyborg subjectivity as a heteroglossia, a non-hierarchical sphere of infinite variety and difference, in which cyborgs dance perpetually through infinite perspectives. Bordo contests the notion that the dance can be without limits, however, by observing as does Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., that boundaries are essential to the existence and acknowledgement of difference:

> The imagination of 'justice' to heterogeneity, entertained as an epistemological (or narrative) goal, devours its own tail. For the appreciation of difference requires the acknowledgement of some *limit* to the dance, beyond which the dancer cannot go. If she were able to go there, there would *be* no difference, nothing which eludes. (144-145)

Thus we can expose cyborg heteroglossia to be illusory because it fails to recognize the boundaries necessary to creating and apprehending difference. We may take from the notion that the dance must have limits, the idea that theory—in its infinite conceptual fabrications—must at some point weigh its merits against the limits of materiality.

The Postmodern idea that the boundary between fact and fiction is an illusion, that the two spheres are essentially one and the same, may work in theory, where the protean cyborg can "refuse to assume a shape for which [it] must take responsibility" (Bordo 144), but does not, however, work in practice where cyborgs inhabit sexually and racially marked bodies of flesh, blood, and perhaps also metal and plastic. In social reality, the body *is* subject to naturalized dominations for which embodiment is responsible, since differences that exist can only be perceived through an ontological perception of their value, their meaning in relation to one another. The body needs to be acknowledged more satisfactorily in the "Manifesto," where

cyborg politics must be called to account for the real limits imposed by embodiment on fluidity and consciousness. Cyborg imagery cannot suggest a way out of the simple fact that cyborgs, as much as humans, are comprised of *both* mind and body, *both* information and infrastructure.

N. Katherine Hayles observes that the body is a "congealed metaphor" ("Posthuman" 372). It is part of our ontology. Thus, it informs our psychological and political subjectivity and, so, is resistant to dissolution:

> The body is the net result of thousands of years of sedimented evolutionary history, and it is naive to think that this history does not affect human behaviours at every level of thought and action. . . . the body itself is a congealed metaphor, a physical structure whose constraints and possibilities have been formed by an evolutionary history intelligent machines do not share. . . . there is a limit to how seamlessly [humans] can be articulated with machines, because they remain distinctively different from intelligent machines in their embodiments.
>
> ("Posthuman" 372)[5]

According to Hayles' view, any incorporation of technology into human function and behaviour—either materially or imaginatively—is inevitably affected, let us say limited, by the body and how it informs the ways in which humans have come to understand and identify themselves. Since human identity is always characterized by the tension between consciousness and embodiment, one must acknowledge that metaphors of fluidity (heteroglossia, dancing, networking), when applied to human subjectivity, are inescapably restricted, countered by the metaphoric stability and rigidity of the body. Hence, theoretical cyborg fluidity is limited in practice by a desire for correspondence between the differences inherent to individual bodies and for the translation of these differences into meaning, into social practices. Without this

correlation, a sense of meaninglessness, of self loss and loss of personal agency, ensues. The "Manifesto" does not adequately attend to the need for self-articulation and self-affirmation, where Haraway's primary aim is to theorize a subject position capable of resisting the imposition of gender as a naturalized identity. Cyborg hybridity and fluidity dissociate subjectivity from the sexed body, effectively deactivating the body in terms of contributing to self-identifications, and, thus, problematizing personal agency. Haraway envisions the "seamless articulation" (Hayles 372) of human consciousness with technology by recoding the former to resemble the electronic interfaces and systems/networks of the latter in a heteroglossic network, but this network must be recognized as one in which anonymous, indistinct, "selves" oppress the individuality of a body that cannot likewise be materially dissolved. As Bordo argues, cyborg imagery is inoperable:

> To deny the unity and stability of identity is one thing. The epistemological fantasy of *becoming* multiplicity—the dream of limitless multiple embodiments, allowing one to dance from place to place and self to self—is another. What sort of body is it that is free to change its shape and location at will, that can become anyone and travel anywhere? If the body is a metaphor for our locatedness in space and time and thus for the finitude of human perception and knowledge, then the postmodern body is no body at all. (145).

Thus, Haraway's utopian "coding" of Posthuman subjectivity must be recognized as abstractionist, since the resulting political consciousness is removed from the forces of self-interest that inevitably emerge from an awareness of the body. Herein lies a shortcoming of Haraway's attempt to create a "political myth faithful to feminism, socialism, and materialism" (149). To usefully contribute to real feminist action, her utopia needs to be "tempered" by a

compromise between imagination and reality, between abstraction and embodiment. The tenuousness of cyborg heteroglossia, or the dis-located subjectivity-in-flux, is located precisely in its oppression of the body, which translates into a perception of disempowerment. Ironically, this sense of dissolution within the cyborg network constitutes an identity crisis that fuels an increased concentration on self-affirmation. Consequent attempts at "self"-definition work at cross-purposes with cyborg politics by imposing a grid of identity boundaries or "controls," on social identity, which become legitimized through a process of naturalization. These boundaries work within an architecture of hierarchical dominations. They work to reaffirm the self, and to erode the disparity between political subjectivity and embodiment.

Increasingly characterized by fluidity, instability, and incoherence, American society is experiencing a growing sense of disorientation due to an inability to synthesize inscriptions and incorporations. As Posthuman abstractionists neglect embodiment and embrace the interface of information, "which lacks physical presence and exists entirely in relations," they make the flow of information "seem essential and physical existence epiphenomenal" (Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., "Interfaces" 315). The human body is increasingly deconstructed by the discursive erosion of embodiment. In Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr.'s "Till We Have Interfaces," a review of Hayles' *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, he observes that "For many posthumanists . . . the human body becomes de-realized the more it is revealed to be a site for a variety of social inscriptions. As gender, organic physiology . . . and other 'natural' givens are deconstructed, very little of bodily experience remains intact" (317). Implicit in the deconstruction of humanist concepts like the naturalization of identity, is the abstractionist desire to transcend "mortality and boundedness" (Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. 319). Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. notes Hayles' understanding of the Posthuman fixation on cyborgs as an

indication of this desire, since cyborg imagery illustrates "a refusal to believe in the givenness of things, in necessity" (320). Such a resistance to embodiment is characteristic of cyborg politics.

In "The Technobody and Its Discontents," Veronica Hollinger reviews three texts focussing on the "politics of myth" illustrated by cyborgs in cyberculture and science fiction by Mark Dery, Anne Balsamo, and Claudia Springer. She notes that a common issue in all three books is the cybercultural tendency to view the body's vulnerability to disease and marginalization with fear and contempt, pointing to Balsamo's observation that "VR [virtual reality] emerges in the 1980s, during a decade when the body is understood to be increasingly vulnerable . . . to infections as well as to gender, race, ethnicity, and ability critiques . . . [offering] the vision of a body-free universe" (quoting Balsamo 127).[6] Noting also that "Theories of the looming obsolescence of the body reveal a subtext of overwhelming anxiety in the face of these threats," Hollinger observes that Postmodern literature articulates a widespread cultural anxiety over the perceived loss of identity, of the body, and of agency in this vision (131). She writes that in *Escape Velocity: Cyberculture at the End of the Century*, Mark Dery's analysis of the pervasive disillusionment and aggressiveness in cyberpunk,[7] where the body is generally characterized as the mind's achilles heel, "recalls Jean Baudrillard's analyses of the 'fatally' seductive nature of the simulation. One of our ongoing anxieties, Hollinger observes, arises from our sense of the loss of the real—of authentic experience; we dread being trapped in a reality which is only ever virtual" (125).

In his recent book, *Technophobia*, Mark J. Brosnan explains that technology-related fears are increasing rather than decreasing as technology is increasingly integrated into social practices and consciousness. He concludes that "up to half of the population is 'technophobic,' possessing negative opinions about or having anxiety towards, information technology" (i).[8]

Negativity stemming from interfaces with machines, particularly personal computers, is due

partially to "a perceived loss of control" (14, 18). Brosnan observes technophobia as an

expression of survival fears pertaining to the uncertain relationship between humans and

technology.

While often irrational, technophobic survival fears stem from the perception of a self-in-

crisis. In *Robopaths*, an early study of Postmodern American technoculture, Lewis Yablonsky

foresees a dystopian future characterized by the destruction of human life and agency. Labelling

the relationship between humans and machines a "sociodrama of survival," he predicts that

technology will either destroy human life altogether in "imminent megamachine wars,"[9] or effect

"*social death*," in which humans are increasingly desensitized and systematized in the image of

machines (xiv, xiii). In a more recent examination of techno-angst, Joe Sanders, Robert Reilly,

and Andrew Gordon discuss a common ambivalence toward the relationship between humans

and technology, in *The Mechanical God: Machines in Science Fiction*. Their essays investigate

the fear of "self"-destruction as a product of the unknown potential of technology, contending

that the possibility of artificial intelligence is both pleasing and frightening as the symbiotic or

competitive and hostile *telos* of the human-machine relationship is unknown. Sanders identifies

the fear of evolutionary supplantation as being central to anxieties regarding machine

consciousness. He writes, "We wonder whether we should expect to compete against the

machine . . . [and] what will happen to the loser in the competition" (168). Implicitly, he notes

the fear that machines will prevail in such a rivalry because of their super-human strength and

endurance; mechanical parts resist wear and are easily replaceable. The body, however,

deteriorates, and normal human lifespan allows only the temporary replacement of very few

body parts (168). Even though the promise of empowerment through technological

enhancement is attractive, the idea of relinquishing personal agency in the interest of achieving empowerment, is not.

Anxieties arising out of perceptions of self loss in the face of Postmodern dematerializations of the body are very real. Discussing Balsamo's book, Hollinger notes the ironic tendency of cybernetic discourse to "enforce exactly the kinds of boundaries which it promises to erase forever. And gender, of course is one of the most strongly guarded of these border sites" (Hollinger 129). Springer draws on cinematic depictions of male cyborgs in *Terminator* and *Robocop* with "aggressive, bulging bodies," as well as on "cyberpunk fiction's lean, vacillating male bodies" to argue that both representations stem from a defensive reaction to an overwhelming sense of the body's vulnerability to illness, injury, and mortality in this age of the "invincible armored killing machine" (109). To compete with machines, her discussion reveals, the body—far from becoming invisible—is often portrayed as mechanically reinforced in order to compete with machines. Similarly, human consciousness often manifests itself as information—portrayed as the flow of electrical impulses or signals in cyberspace,[10] as software—to the (dystopian) detriment of the body, in order to compete with artificial intelligence.

According to Springer, "Cyborg imagery so far has not widely realized the ungendered ideal Donna Haraway theorizes" (66) because of a resistance to deconstructions of the body. She notes that feminist science fiction does engage in boundary play, blurring distinctions between humans, machines, and aliens, but she also concludes that this boundary play often leads to self-affirmation expressed through exaggerations of sexual identity—a sexual identity that "carries a potentially heightened significance, because it can be used as a primary marker of difference in a world otherwise beyond our norms" (67). Once we understand how and why boundaries

continue to figure in cyberculture, as in technoculture, where the promise of boundlessness

incites both exhilaration and anxiety, it becomes possible to identify an ironic link between

cyborg liberation from and attachment to the body it tries to escape. The cyborgean attachment

to a natural/technological/hybrid body that Haraway tries to dematerialize restricts the

revolutionary nature of cyborg politics in the "Manifesto," laying the foundation for the

rearticulation of dualistic ideology in technopolitics.

Ostensibly post-gender cyberculture is ironically not-so-post-gendered because of a

growing techno-angst that engenders a desire for "security and continuity in a changing world"

(Dunn 25). As bodies and spaces are blurring and changing, the desire for familiarity finds

expression in the political normalization of Posthuman bodies and spaces. This normalization

works to reaffirm the body through a correlation of meaning between embodiment and

consciousness, and thus legitimizes new kinds of "naturalized" hybrid identities subject to

dynamics of privilege and marginalization similar to the "old" hierarchical sphere. Before

turning to portrayals of normalized fictional cyborg societies in *Superluminal* and *Plugged*, I

shall discuss the current normalization of politics in American cyberculture by addressing works

by Michael Margolis and David Resnick, as well as Anne Balsamo. These writers observe that,

contrary to utopian expectations of a political revolution, cyberspace and cyberpolitics are, in

fact, demonstrating signs of political normalization. The previously discussed desire for a

subjectivity stemming from both aspects of human being, namely consciousness and

embodiment, is at the heart of the inevitable normalization of Postmodern technopolitical and

social reality. Balsamo's and Margolis and Resnick's examinations of politics on the Internet

and in cyberculture provide some particularly salient insights into the practical limits of political

boundlessness that Haraway's "Manifesto" does not adequately address. Thus, I present the

following description of cyberpolitical normalization as a picture of applied cyborg politics, and hence, as an embodied reflection of Haraway's metaphoric cyborg subjectivity.

In focusing on the deconstruction and reconstruction of identity, American discourses posit identity as both an imaginary and real frontier to be created or theorized, explored, and mapped. In *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women*, Anne Balsamo states that, in cyberculture, cyborg subjectivity is both "an *imaginary* construction that identifies a horizon of contemporary cultural thought," and "in another sense[,] . . . a real space on the fringe of mainstream culture: the 'electronic frontier' names the space of information exchange that already exists in the flow of databases, telephone and fiber-optic networks, computer memory, and other parts of electronic networking services" (116, emphasis in original). Thus, she identifies a material base for virtual reality, noting its conception and use by people in material reality. Many feminists view their contribution to the settling of the new frontier to be essential to the empowerment of politically marginalized groups. Haraway, as we know, insists that feminists must subvert Western patriarchal hierarchical "informatics of domination" by "coding" cyborg communications, identity, and ontology with fluidity and indeterminacy to prevent the imposition of rigid dominations of identity (163-64). For Haraway, the new frontier ironically figures as an *impermeable* boundary between new and old political ideologies, yet it is also a sphere in which identity is constructed as boundless. As Balsamo and Margolis and Resnick observe, new frontiers are often normalized to reflect pre-existing spaces, values, and practices rather than rejecting and subverting them, as intended or expected. I shall now present some of their ideas concerning the unrevolutionary political organization of cyberspace before turning, presently, to corresponding illustrations of normalized cyborg societies in Tiptree, Jr.'s and McIntyre's novels.

Balsamo asserts that cyberspace and Virtual Reality (VR)—the electronic frontiers—are evolving (being mapped and settled) by means of a *"Rearticulation of Old Identities to New Technologies"* (131,emphasis in original). She notes that while cyberspace is often thought of as a new kind of reality, "free from the burden of history" (131), as is Haraway's cyborg,[11] both the way people actually use it and construct its fictional representations in science fiction reveal the electronic frontier as a site already steeped in familiar gender, race, and class ideologies (131). Although cyberspace seems to offer the opportunity of coding a palimpsestic subjectivity, it has already become another venue in which to articulate and perpetuate old ideologies. Balsamo observes that, "the fact that virtual realities offer new information environments does not guarantee that people will use the information in better ways. It is just as likely that these new technologies will be used primarily to tell old stories—stories that reproduce, in high-tech guise, traditional narratives about the gendered, race-marked body" (132). She is not alone in observing that cyberspace is as commercial as the material sphere. She notes that cyberspace, as seen on the Internet, and cyberculture, as articulated in the literature of cyberpunk "subculture"—in "hacker" magazines like *Mondo 2000*—"promote the sexiness" of technology for marketing appeal (117, 122). Thus, the virtual (abstract) sphere of cyberspace is characterized by the economics and class divisions of late capitalism and consequently, by an obsession with the (sexed and sexualized) body.

The normalization of cyberspace—the new electronic/political frontier—is also discussed extensively by Michael Margolis and David Resnick in *Politics as Usual: The Cyberspace "Revolution."* Their study examines utopian hopes for a political revolution brought about by equal access to information and the facilitation of political activism through open discussion in cyberspace:

> Speculation about the impact of the Net often takes a metaphor—cyberspace—
> and reifies it, as if cyberspace actually exists in a parallel universe. Our mundane
> existence is presumably transformed when we enter this free space. Long ago,
> Marx observed the false freedom that results from positing us as free, all-
> powerful, sovereign citizens in our public capacity, while actually living out
> limited and alienated lives in civil society . . . . Is the abstract freedom of
> cyberspace really liberating, or is it deeply illusory? The more we experience life
> online, the more it looks like life offline. (14)

Margolis and Resnick explain that in the early 1990s, many people expected the "fluid and unstructured politics of newsgroups and listervs . . . once the only significant politics that existed on the Net," to revolutionize democracy in cyberspace (4). They conclude that such a revolution has not occurred, and that in fact, the conversational, two-way, egalitarian interactions on the "old Net" has given way to the structured, one-way "flashy" presentations of Web pages on the "new Net," designed to "entertain, . . . inform, influence, and persuade" an audience (4-5). The present political structure of the World Wide Web is a far cry from earlier utopian expectations, and as cyberpolitics increasingly mirrors "the ongoing struggle for wealth, power, and political influence" that occupies social reality and political relations in the real world, a definite class division emerges between Webmasters (mostly paid professionals who construct Web pages) and Web surfers ("The public that is ripe for persuasion and manipulation") (3-7).[12]

A common reaction to the ability of cyberspace to breach international boundaries and thereby threaten the integrity of nation states, is for those states to patrol their virtual boundaries by regulating cyberspace: "As the Web increasingly becomes a venue for commerce, governments become increasingly interested in extending their regulatory supervision and taxing

authority" (7). Margolis and Resnick argue convincingly that the hoped-for political revolution has failed to occur because the people using the Internet are the same people who live with all kinds of tangible boundaries off-line. In practical terms, they note that there really is no way for virtual reality to depart drastically from material reality:

> The regulation of cyberspace is part of the process of normalization—of transforming a marginal frontier into a populous settled territory of advanced industrial society. . . . settling the frontier means establishing law and order; it means building fences, rounding up outlaws [hackers and frauds], and making cyberspace a nice place to raise a family and conduct business. (14)[13]

Margolis and Resnick conclude that hopes for radical political change, as a result of the Internet, "must be tempered by the facts" (22) of what is already happening in cyberspace. Life there is looking a lot like life off-line (14). They also note that "The Utopian vision of a worldwide agora that would revitalize democracy has to confront the harsh reality of lawsuits and regulations, commerce and entertainment, political parties, organized interest groups, political activists, and, most important, masses of bored and indifferent citizens" (22). The latter constitute the majority of Internet users and are not generally concerned with political revolution as they are with being able to live on-line as they do off-line.[14]

Clearly, the technological revolution has done more to perpetuate and strengthen old gender and race ideologies in cyberspace, than is has to revolutionize them. To fully apprehend the empowering possibilities of cyborg politics, Haraway should more fully acknowledge how embodiment stimulates self-interest, which cyborgs, as much as other beings and nation states, express by regulating boundaries and normalizing political dominations and relations. The illusory equality of cyberpolitics on both the new and old Nets should figure somehow in the

"Manifesto," should curb Haraway's joyful embrace of the idea of boundlessness. Hayles states that, "without . . . [personal] agency and some provision for judgment, interdependence is indistinguishable from totalizing domination" (summarized in Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. 314). Therefore, despite Haraway's insistence that a dancing cyborg hybridity can resist assimilation through the "informatics of domination," her revolutionary cyborg "heteroglossia" is suspiciously similar to the kind of "common language" she is trying to avoid. This kind of domination is exactly what Haraway aims to subvert, but does not address how embodied feminists can resist or even want to resist acting out of self-interest, resist participating in the struggle for power, and instead, endure the dissolution of perspective and agency into a web of relations. Feminist and cyborg embodiment is complicit in "self" promotion and empowerment, an idea mirrored in *Superluminal* and *Plugged*. In reaction to the instability of a subjectivity-in-flux, people (including feminists) desire connection to a stable identity that corresponds to a real and more *restrictedly protean* body and identity.

The ironic sense of loss that accompanies the lure of transcending the self in cyberpunk and in the opening up of political borders on the Internet continues to figure in feminist science fiction texts that grapple with locating the self among seemingly infinite (possible) variations. We will see that the fiction of James Tiptree, Jr. and Vonda McIntyre present ambivalent views of cyborg identity, wherein bodies figure prominently in embodiment to restrict cyborg fluidity. Their work depicts the loss of traditional boundaries as attractive and liberating and also as oppressive and traumatic, an irony that Haraway neglects to discuss in the "Manifesto" because she seeks to subvert the informatics of domination through metaphor alone.

Any influence that metaphors of fluidity have over the reconstruction of a genderless subjectivity, is countered by the fact of the body. Crediting feminist science fiction writers with

being revolutionary political activists who pollute natural distinctions by "rejoicing in the illegitimate fusions of animal and machines" (176), Haraway affirms, "I am indebted in this story [the cyborg myth] to writers like . . . James Tiptree, Jr., Octavia Butler, . . . and Vonda McIntyre.[15] These are our story-tellers exploring what it means to be embodied in high-tech worlds. They are theorists for cyborgs" (174). Ironically, however, Haraway fails to satisfactorily address the altogether unrevolutionary aspect of cyborg hybridity clearly depicted by these authors. While I am only concerned, in this chapter, with the issue of gender in novels by Tiptree Jr. and McIntyre, Chapter 2 deals extensively with issues of race, and briefly with gender, in Butler's work.

Haraway celebrates the power of feminist science fiction to re-shape structures of dominance that have traditionally marginalized women and people of various cultures. Not only does cyborg fiction confound 'natural' identity, it employs language, not in the interest of achieving clarity, but to create "noise" by blurring the boundaries and questioning the integrity of naturalized identity :

> Cyborg politics is the struggle for language and the struggle against perfect communication, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly, the central dogma of phallogocentrism. That is why cyborg politics insist on noise and advocate pollution [of dualistic structures and 'natural' identities], rejoicing in the illegitimate fusions of animal and machine. (176)

Science fictional cyborgs are powerful noise-makers "that make very problematic the statuses of man or woman, human, artefact, member of a race, individual entity, or body" (178). Among the cyborg writers Haraway briefly discusses in the "Manifesto," Tiptree, Jr., McIntyre, and Butler certainly create noise by illustrating myriad border-crossings. What we can see in their stories,

however, is not pure "pleasure in the confusion of boundaries" (150), nor a pleasurable sense of freedom from incorporation. Characters in *Plugged* cling to familiar elements of human identity so that they can negotiate instability with stability, while *Superluminal*'s portrayal of cyborg subjectivity and embodiment are characterized by pain and isolation as much as by joy and union, in a cyborg society implicitly structured by hierarchy and privilege.

Unlike most science fiction that "does not radically restructure relations between the sexes" (Springer 66), cyborgs in *Superluminal* collapse gender roles, but other than that, do not deconstruct the basis for naturalized class distinctions and labour divisions. Springer notes that Haraway draws inspiration from the science fiction of writers like Tiptree, Jr. and McIntyre for her cyborg metaphor and construction of cyborg politics, because their stories present alternative views to "the traditional male fantasies played out in the genre" that often include exaggerated male dominance, an increased concentration on sexuality and the maintenance of gender roles—generally the preservation of the status quo (67). Other science fiction also engages in boundary play, but relations between men and women tend to be articulated in "conventionally patriarchal" ways (66); however, gender roles are generally de-stabilized in feminist science fiction. Conceptualizing hybridity through a one-sex body, however, does not re-write the body's two-sexed dualism. In fact, hierarchical dichotomy stemming from the metaphor of the body continues to inform the imagined futures even in feminist science fiction, as we shall now see in *Plugged* and *Superluminal*, as Tiptree, Jr. and McIntyre observe other ways—other than gender—of structuring natural and political dualism.

Illustrating the exaggeration of sexuality in *Plugged* that is one way of clinging to the familiarity of the body in a changing world, McIntyre constructs a society in which technological enhancement, perfection, is sexualized, and a mark of social status. Regular human bodies are

monstrous, unattractive, unsexed. Thus she articulates a hierarchy, a dualism between sexed

and sexy hi-tech bodies and unsexy, and in this way, unsexed, low-tech bodies. Set in a future

capitalist society on Earth characterized by excessive consumerism, *Plugged* is the story of the

transformation of the disfigured human nobody, P.J. Burke, into the beautiful cyborg holocam

star, Delphi. As Burke, she is described as a marginalized and monstrous "other" in a society

that worships "Gods," technologically enhanced, latest-product-wearing, glamorous socialites:

> . . . you can see she's the ugly of the world. A tall monument to pituitary
>
> dystrophy. No surgeon would touch her. When she smiles, her jaw—it's half
>
> purple—almost bites her left eye out. She's also quite young, but who would
>
> care?
>
> The crowd is pushing her along now, treating you to glimpses of her
>
> jumbled torso, her mismatched legs. . . . her face reverts to its usual expression of
>
> dim pain and she lurches onto the moving walkway. (3)

Now that cyborg metaphors inspire hybridity and denaturalize gender, a new body-based

domination emerges between hi-tech and low-tech bodies, a dualism which, in *Plugged*, is

tellingly associated with hierarchical sexual dualism—sexual perfection and imperfection. The

cyborg body is the basis for privilege and is thus sexualized. Sex regains significance and status

in this technoculture and in this way, reinforces the hierarchical dualism of sexual difference.

In this story, the general public worships Gods, buying all the products the Gods endorse

in order to emulate them. Burke, however, gets a chance to actually *become* a God, a holocam

star, by acquiring a new body. GTX (Global Transmissions Corporation) uses Gods to

aggressively market products to a society that has banned advertising. In a process called

"'eccentric projection or sensory reference'" (10-11) Burke is to act as the human "remote" that

controls the otherwise lifeless, laboratory-grown body of Delphi: "'They grow 'em,' Joe tells her. He couldn't care less about the flesh department. 'PDs. Placental decanters. Modified embryos, see? Fit the control implants in later. Without a Remote Operator it's just a vegetable'" (11). Desirous of status in the world of the Gods, Burke accepts the job. From her control box, "a huge cabinet like a one-man sauna" (11), she projects her consciousness into Delphi, who is the "darlingest girl-child you've ever seen" (9). Her job, like the other Gods, is to show herself in public and appear on holocam shows, to surreptitiously promote commercial products—her use of them a silent endorsement. The cyborgean transformation infuses life into the controllable Delphi, leaving Burke "If possible, worse than before. . . . . The disimprovement in her looks comes from the electrode jacks peeping out of her sparse hair, and . . . other meldings of flesh and metal" (8). While Delphi gains immediate popularity and admiration as a sexualized "kitten," a "darling girl-child," Burke becomes even more of an unwanted nobody, "a gaunt she-golem flab-naked and spouting wires" (9, 10, 53).

Burke's transformation illustrates the tragic state of a society so intent on widespread consumption and conformity that mere humans are generally socially powerless undesireables. Burke's cyborgean transformation points the way to her empowerment in such a society. Difference and otherness here, as in Western society, are marks of powerlessness. That Burke's body withers away to the brink of death, and actually does die in the end (53), in her attempt to actually become Delphi and leave her own body behind, illustrates a body-based hierarchy that characterizes the limited merging potential of human and technology, and reflects the technocultural fear of losing personal agency in a union with machines. *Plugged* shows that the idea of transcending the body is attractive, but is perhaps a danger in disguise. The simulation of

consciousness that is Delphi, survives the death of its remote to 'live' as the extension and at the expense of another human operator.

One of the salient points of this story is the incompatibility of humans and technology, in the sense that the human element, the body, is oppressed and de-valued in favour of the technological body. Humanity, the human body, becomes a monstrous "other." This kind of marginalization does not paint an optimistic portrait of cyborg empowerment. It illustrates the need to locate and preserve some element of traditional human identity and agency in a world much like our own, in which the boundaries are shifting to create increased opportunity for control and manipulation. Burke's total embrace of what she sees as her cyborgean freedom from pain and marginalization is undermined by her surrender to corporate control of body and mind, and thus portrays a possible version of cyborgs in society being, not free from structures of dominance, but subject to them. *Plugged* ultimately offers a dystopic perspective of cyborg consciousness functioning in society, by showing that the relinquishing of the body results in a loss of personal agency.

While *Plugged* explores the cyborg hybridity of human and machine, the novella—like most of Tiptree, Jr.'s stories that illustrate human/other combinations—ends with the death of the cyborg's human component, and a sense of loss, emptiness, in the ultimate survival only of the technological component (Clute 1230). GTX's manipulation of Delphi is offered as a product of patriarchal capitalist society and is thus a criticism of the re-instigation of sexual significance, of sex-based status employed in the interest of preserving the patriarchal status quo. What *Plugged* also tells us is that similar or worse dominations await to replace sex-gender tyranny. Gender hybridity or erosion, therefore, does not lead to a utopian equalization of power. Rather, anxiety stemming from the need for inscription to correspond to incorporation

results in the rearticulation of sex dualism as other hierarchical body-based dichotomies: cyborg/human, hi-tech/low-tech (or no-tech). As machines become bodies or part of bodies, technology becomes the basis for naturalizing political identities.

In translating metaphorical cyborg fluidity (subjectivity) into physical hybridity, Tiptree, Jr. explores Postmodern/Posthuman issues of the body's discursive dissolution into un- or dis-embodied cyborg consciousness. Burke's human body withers away, forgotten, unhealthy, and marginalized. Through the narrator—a critic of GTX corporate society—Tiptree, Jr. relates the tragedy of the body's marginalization caused by the desire for perfection, power, and status afforded by the technologically enhanced (or inspired) cyborg stamina. In this story, the body decays while consciousness thrives—at the cost of personal agency. *Plugged* is clearly cynical about the feasibility of the utopian cyborg metaphor in application, observing that we reassert the body through a process of normalization involving the legitimization of new naturalized dualisms and dominations. The utopian transcendence of the body envisioned by Haraway through the embrace of technology and network imagery is tempered in *Plugged* by the pragmatics of the cyborg. Tiptree, Jr. asserts, "To *become Delphi.* Of course it's impossible" (38), suggesting that devalorizing the body and its individual embodiments, imperfections, its dualism that grounds male/female dominations, has the potential to divide society into monsters and Gods.

What we can and should take from this story is the irony that transcendence *seems* empowering because it promises inclusion in a dominant system. Here, transcendence does not truly empower Delphi/Burke because it disempowers her: she is controlled by GTX. Boundary transgression in *Plugged* thus reinforces structures of dominance. We can draw some parallels between Tiptree, Jr. and Haraway's cyborgs that reveal the oppressive potential of Haraway's.

Both seek social empowerment through the re-location of consciousness and experience outside the human body. Burke's "Delphi" identity is based on inclusion within a dominant social structure, at the expense of her personal agency. Similarly, Haraway's cyborg derives its power from transgression of human/technological boundaries at the expense of the necessary correlation between embodiment and body, one that when threatened, threatens the "self" and gives rise to a rearticulation of the body through body-based boundaries and dominations. In both scenarios the body, difference, is marginalized, thus marring attempts to equalize power relations.

Far from depicting the pleasurable boundless creativity Haraway perceives in the blurring of boundaries, *Plugged* is an instance of the distance cyborg fiction has yet to go in erasing gender and creating a utopic society unstructured by privilege. Haraway's idea that leaving the body to become a "network being" (Istvan 511)—here a physical cyborg—will delete the biological basis for naturalizing gender manifests itself in *Plugged* as a re-enforcement of that very construct through an emphasis on sexuality. In *Electronic Eros: Bodies and Desire in the Postindustrial Age*, Claudia Springer observes that, "Cyborg imagery so far has not widely realized the ungendered ideal that Donna Haraway theorizes" (66). Springer points to feminist science fiction's noise as a project that has largely served to reinforce gender through the portrayal of exaggerated sexual identity, or one that "carries a potentially heightened significance, because it can be used as the primary marker of difference in a world otherwise beyond our norms" (67). The world of *Plugged* and Haraway's cyborg are certainly beyond our norms and yet very similar to the climate of boundary shifting the West is experiencing now. The suggestion that it is necessary for embodiment to correspond to the material body rather than to a metaphor or cultural construct is clear in Tiptree Jr.'s novella. It should certainly inform

Haraway's construction of an imaginary space in which people, having lived as located, rigidly defined social identities, risk feeling lost and destabilized, which in turn causes a desire to retain familiarity and cling to fragments of the social structure that we know. Ironically, by failing to effectively attend to the human body, the cyborg metaphor will likely perpetuate dualisms in the real world, where hybrid, technologically enhanced, more perfect people dominate. The split between hi-tech and low-tech bodies in *Plugged*, reminiscent of the class division between Webmasters and Web surfers described by Margolis and Resnick, is also found in *Superluminal*.

Turning to McIntyre's novel, we can once again observe the cyborg "pollution" of naturalized identity in hybrid characters. The world of *Superluminal* is neither structured by gender nor characterized by rigid distinctions between humans, animals, and machines. The protagonist, Lanea, undergoes a heart transplant, trading her organic heart for a mechanical one that will allow her to experience the full seven dimensions of space as a pilot. During space flights, regular organic humans, crew, must sleep through transit because they cannot survive travelling at the speeds faster than light in which other dimensions can be perceived, nor do they possess the ability required to perceive them. Orca is a "diver" who can communicate with whales and survive long periods in the ocean. She wants to become a pilot, but the necessary mechanical heart would destroy her "kinship with divers and cetateans" (Haraway 179, McIntyre 38). Haraway celebrates McIntyre's novel for its application of cyborg fluidity: "All the characters explore the limits of language; the dream of communicating experience; and the necessity of limitation, partiality, and intimacy even in this world of protean transformation and connection" (179).

While *Superluminal* does explore communication, 'noise,' and boundary permeability, it does so by presenting characters who, while afforded myriad embodied experiences by protean

transformations, are also limited to one of those identities at a time. While they have the freedom to change, they must exchange one position for another. When Lanea becomes a pilot, she finds herself isolated from regular crew-members. A new tension exists between her and those with whom she would previously spend her time. When she comes to bid her friends good-bye in the space station's crew lounge, she and they all sense the rift between them:

> Lanea climbed down to them. The circle opened, but she remained outside it. She was as overwhelmed by uncertainty as her friends.
>
> 'Sit with us,' Ruth said finally. Alannai and Minoru looked uneasy. Lanea sat down. The triangle between Ruth and Alannai and Minoru did not alter. Each of them was next to the other; Lanea was beside none of them.
>
> Ruth reached out, but her hand trembled. They all waited, and Lanea tried to think of words to reassure them, to affirm that she had not changed.
>
> 'I came . . .' But nothing she felt seemed right to tell them. She would not taunt them with her freedom. . . . . 'I came to say good-bye.' . . . . They had all been friends, but her friends accepted her no longer.
>
> The first pilots did not mingle with the crew, for the responsibility was great, the tensions greater. But Lanea had thought it would be different for her.
> (18)

The rift between pilots and crew is due to more than the increase in responsibility of a new job. Lanea is physically altered by a mechanical heart over which she must exercise voluntary control, that replaces the rhythm of her pulse: "Her pulse was gone, but in its place she felt the constant quiet hum of a perfectly balanced rotary machine" (5). This transformation causes Lanea to feel physically repelled by her lover Radu's organic heart's rhythms: "She stroked the

back of his hand but moved quietly away from him, away from the sound of his pulse, for it formed the link of a chain she had worked hard and wished long to break" (63). Being close enough to feel and hear his heart has the disturbing effect of disrupting her ability to control her own, and being in close proximity to her causes Radu to experience intense nightmares:

'It's possible . . .' Lanea said, searching for a way to say this that was gentle for them both, 'it's possible . . . that there is reason , a real reason, pilots and crew don't mix.' . . . .

'It could be temporary—we may only need acclimatization.'

'Do you really think so?'

. . . 'No,' she said, almost whispering. Her system and that of any normal human being would no longer mesh. The change in her was too disturbing on psychological and subliminal levels, while normal bio-rhythms were so compelling that they interfered with and would eventually destroy her new biological integrity. (66).

Lanea's newfound freedom—as she calls it (18)—socially, physiologically, and psychologically excludes her from the company of other than pilots like herself, excludes her from intimacy with those who are not pilots, but not only is her social circle narrowed, her freedom is restricted by the administrators and health officials whose job it is to maintain her health by submitting her to constant testing of her body's acceptance of the implanted "heart." This constant supervision frustrates Lanea's desire for freedom, for unrestricted experience, a desire which prompted her to become a pilot in the first place:

'The administrators—their red tape. Their infernal tests.' . . . .

'Aren't they necessary? For your health?'

> She told [Radu] about the hypnotics, the sedatives, the sleep, the time she
>
> had spent being obedient. 'Their redundancies have redundancies. If I weren't
>
> healthy I'd be out on the street wearing my old heart. I'd be nothing.' . . . . ' I
>
> want to be the one who shows earth to you. They want me to spend the next
>
> month shuttling from one testing machine to another. . . . . My freedom's limited.'
>
> (56-57)

While Lanea's so-called freedom allows her to experience a greater number of dimensions due to alterations in her temporal and spatial perception, and in this way to travel in space to the "edge of reality" (214), her temporal and spatial freedom cost her freedom on earth, in society, among those not privileged, not healthy enough, to become pilots.

We observe similar dynamics of exclusion and isolation in Orca's situation. She longs to be a pilot, but the transformation would prevent her from remaining who she is; she could not remain a diver. And yet, the divers too, are changing. Orca tells us she is not human. In describing divers to Radu, she says, "'I'd say we were more different than a race, but less different than a separate species. We're a transition phase.' . . . . 'I don't know what we're changing to. I'm not sure I want to know'" (138). Her family will be attending a meeting of divers to decide how they will evolve next. "'The techniques are easy enough,'" she says, "'You figure out what you want, build the DNA, construct a series of carrier viruses, sensitize yourself to them . . . . You feel like you have the flu for a few days, while the virus replicates. Then you're well, the new genes are integrated, and they slowly change you to fit'" (139). Orca points out to Radu that the decision to change is hers and that she is not inclined to go through with it but senses the deep loss she would experience by being cut off from her family, by being "'left behind'" (139). Eventually, she chooses the life of a pilot over that of a diver, or what the divers

will become. Although she does embrace the prospect of what being a pilot will add to her already diverse experiences of subjectivity, she loses her connection with her family and the sea.

For all its fluidity, this cyborgean society does not obliterate the structure of social hierarchy merely by introducing instability into the system. While Haraway appreciates McIntyre's portrayal of the limits of fluidity in this story, her observations of the restrictions are based only on the characters' inability to assume multiple simultaneous bodies and perspectives. Haraway envisions the fluidity of cyborg subjectivity, the openness to new experience and connection, as a step toward creating a genderless, non-hierarchical, utopian society. In the future depicted in *Superluminal*, gender is certainly not an organizing force or a basis for sexual hierarchy. Both men and women can be crew or pilots. The absence of gender, however, does not appear in the story as a step toward an egalitarian society in which the body is no longer a basis for social dominations. In fact, the definite class and labour divisions between crew and pilots are discussed at length. The same rearticulation of the body-based dualism between high-tech and low-tech bodies in *Plugged* emerges also in *Superluminal*. Here, this dualism figures as a physical repulsion between mechanically enhanced pilots and organic crew and divers and also as a division between those who are enlightened, who are capable of exceeding the limits of reality, of the body, and those who are not, who are bounded, limited, restricted.

The subtle exclusions at work in cyborg politics are further brought to the surface when we look at the hardly mentioned separation between the privileged pilots and the weaker, limited humans in *Superluminal*. This hierarchical split mirrors that between the Gods and the general populace—people like P.J. Burke—in *Plugged*. The social hierarchy that pervades these cyborg stories, I contend, is the ironic byproduct of the longed for freedom of an increasingly protean reality—in reality and in fiction. I maintain that the instinct to group and regroup in the interest

of self-preservation and self-privileging, is inherently marred by a susceptibility to structures of dominance, so deeply entrenched in the Western "self," the body, that these structures naturally affect the architecture of new images of liberation, such as that in Haraway's "Manifesto." Why does this structure continue to figure in attempts to escape it? Not only is it likely more deeply a part of our ontological paradigm than some might believe, but in the face of the concept of limitless freedom, like an overwhelming infinity, the embodied human experience of specific location in time and space surfaces as an instinct to return to familiar territory, to a map that resembles experience of boundaries, dynamics of power included. We reconstruct elements that can tie the unfamiliar to the familiar. Haraway's cyborg politics and subjectivity feeds on a diet of metaphors (fluidity, heteroglossia, dancing), but practically speaking, cyborg imagery lacks substance, solidity, a body.

Although gender roles do, indeed, seem to be eroding in cyberculture, the male/female dualism continues to inform other body based dominations through a certain normalization of Postmodern politics identified in science fiction as well as in the technocultural sphere. The deeply illusory and highly commercial cyborg society presented in *Plugged* illustrates a loss of personal agency that the seductive sexualization of cyborgean disembodiment would obscure. Here, the desire to identify as a sexual being—since only perfection (technology) is sexy—leads the protagonist to embrace the perceived empowerment of a cyborg body. In *Superluminal*, while gender does not affect the distribution of labour, the dualism of hi-tech and low-tech bodies figures as a difference of ability and emerges as the primary class and labour division, instead. In both novels, embodied cyborg hybridity remains dualistic in order to correspond to the dualism of the two-sexed body. In these novels, as in earlier descriptions of Internet cyberspace, politics and identity remain characterized by hierarchical dualisms. In cyberspace,

the division between Webmasters and Web surfers is not itself body-based, but the division figures as a rearticulation of the two-sex power dynamic. Similarly, in *Plugged* and *Superluminal*, dualism figures as a class and labour division but also one that is actually naturalized in new technologically enhanced bodies.

Haraway offers cyborg politics in the "Manifesto" as a revolutionary, utopian form of creative empowerment and political resistance, able to subvert "command and control" by patriarchal ideologies and dualisms. I contend, however, that her euphoric cyborg imagery, with its metaphors of fluidity and hybridity, risks obscuring the normalization of politics in cyberculture because it prevents the "Manifesto" from attending to both the necessary experience of embodiment and the strength of the body as a metaphor for investing embodiment with meanings that are behind the perpetuation of sex-based dualism and domination. The shortcomings of cyborg politics are located in its easy dismissal of rearticulations of the body in cyberculture, for therein lie the foundations of cyborgs' ironic complicity in technopolitical normalization: it is starving on metaphors of fluidity.

In the Posthuman's state of crisis that contributes to the rearticulation of congruity between the two-sex body, the embodiment of dualism, and prevailing Postmodern American cultural constructs of fragmented, dis-embodied subjectivity, normalizing tendencies give rise to the increased concentration on preserving the integrity of exclusive political group identities. This imposition of identity boundaries in an attempt to resist "self"-dissolution by giving the political body concrete features correlative to sexual and racial difference is a phenomenon Robert Dunn calls the "dual logic" of fragmentation and pluralization in Postmodernity (143), and it provides context for the differences in racial feminist perspectives outlined in the next chapter.

Notes to Chapter 1

1. Vonda McIntyre, *Superluminal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1983), 66.

2. In Chapter 2, I discuss Hayles' identification of two schools of Posthuman thought. One focuses on abstractionism and the other on embodiment. As an advocate of "corporeal feminism," Hayles ascribes to the tenets of the Posthuman theory of embodiment, meaning that she places great importance on the need for Posthuman feminist theory to remain practical and operable in terms of embodied experience. Although Haraway would resist being classified as an abstractionist, one of my goals in this thesis is to reveal her abstractionist tendencies in the "Manifesto." See Chapter 2 for more details on the differences between the two theories.

3. Hayles distinguishes between the concept of "embodiment" and the "body" in "The Materiality of Informatics." (John Hopkins University Press, 1996) *Configurations*. 1.1 (1992) 147-170 <http://muse.jhu.edu/demo/configurations/1.1hayles.html> 48 par. She explains, "In contrast to the body, embodiment is contextual, . . . enwebbed within the specifics of place, time, physiology and culture that together comprise enactment. Embodiment never coincides exactly with 'the body,' however that normalized concept is understood. Whereas the body is an idealized form that gestures toward a Platonic reality, embodiment is the specific instantiationgenerated [sic] from the noise of difference" (par 16). Throughout my discussions in this chapter and the rest of the thesis, I too, use "body" to refer to the vehicle of human consciousness. The body is the only common denominator of embodiment, which is experiential in both individual and group.

4. She characterizes this belief as one "likely to stupefy future generations." See N. Katherine

Hayles, "The Materiality of Informatics." *Configurations*, 1.1 (1992): 48 pars. 16 Mar. 2001
<http://muse.jhu.edu/demo/configurations/1.1hayles.html>, par. 1.

5. While I am only discussing, in this chapter, Hayles' emphasis on the body as an equally, if

not more powerful metaphor than cyborg imagery, it is important to note here that she ties the

strength of the body metaphor to its years of ontological sedimentation in the evolution of human

psychology and behaviour, an idea I explore in my examination of "serials" in Chapter 3.

6. Hollinger quotes from Anne Balsamo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg*

Women (Durham: Duke, 1996), 127.

7. "Cyberpunk" refers to a genre of science fiction popularized during the 1980s. It generally

focuses on the danger, seductiveness, and illusory nature of virtual reality. See John Clute and

Peter Nicholls, *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (NY: St. Martin's Griffin, 1995), 288.

Clute and Nicholls note that "The 'punk' part of the word comes from the rock'n'roll

terminology of the 1970s, 'punk' meaning in this context young, streetwise, aggressive,

alienated and offensive to the Establishment. A punk disillusion, often multiple—with

progressive layers being peeled away—is a major component of these works" (288). William

Gibson's *Neuromancer* (1984) epitomizes the genre. It's protagonist, Case, is a cyberspace

cowboy, a hacker who views the body as a prison from which escape, in virtual reality, is

illusory. Gibson writes, "For Case, who'd lived for the bodiless exultation of Cyberspace, it

[embodiment] was the Fall. . . . The body was meat. Case fell into the prison of his own flesh,"

see William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (NY: Penguin, 1984), 6.

8. Citing studies that compare technophobic behaviour in various countries, Brosnan's British study acknowledges technophobia as a cross-cultural phenomenon. Thus, it is applicable to a discussion of American technology-related anxieties. See Mark Brosnan, *Technophobia: The Psychological Impact of Information Technology* (NY: Routledge, 1998), 17.

9. American warfare in the Middle East and Eastern Europe since the 1990s, affirms that extreme visions of escalating violence, like Yablonsky's, are not unfounded. Bruce Sterling's recent article in *Wired* magazine, "Peace Is War?," describes the overwhelming American arsenal of invisible "space based" communications and surveillance equipment that make "Space War" so invisible and deadly (79, 81). See Bruce Sterling, "Peace Is War?" *Wired* (Vol. 10, April 2002), 79-89.

10. William Gibson is credited with the original fictional construction of cyberspace, "the interior space of virtual reality programs," in *Neuromancer* (Balsamo 117).

11. Haraway states that, "cyborg incarnation is outside salvation history" (150). See "A Cyborg Manifesto." *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (NY: Routledge, 1991) 17 Feb. 2000 <http://www.stanford.edu.dept/HPS/Haraway/CyborgManifesto.html> 149-181.

12. Not even the old Net was free of inequalities. Margolis and Resnick comment that although discussions in newsgroups were basically participatory and democratic, they were "often . . . bounded by the discussion group itself" (4). This is true of all discussions, but considering the fact that fewer people had access to a computer in the early 1990s, as well as the fact that the "digital gap," since then, is widening between Americans in higher and lower income brackets as

well as between those belonging to racially privileged and marginalized groups, political discussions on the old Net were never really a public forum. Margolis and Resnick observe that between 1994 and 1997, the gap in PC ownership between lower and middle-income households grew from 38.2% to 47.7%, from 16.8% to 21.5% between white and black households, and from 14.8% to 21.4% between white and Hispanic households (213). Statistics like these give us reason to pause and consider how open, utopian, and ostensibly egalitarian *any* esoteric academic discourse, like Haraway's for example, can possibly be.

13. For examples of regulations imposed on Internet use in China, Germany, France, the U.S., and ASAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) members, see Michael Margolis and David Resnick, *Politics As Usual: The Cyberspace "Revolution."* (Thousand Oaks CA: Sage, 2000), 12 & 13.

14. Margolis and Resnick remark that the facilitation of access to information and discussion on the Internet is not inherently able to transform passive users, "surfers," into political activists (6, 7). They conclude that, "as in the real world, most people who use the Internet have less interest in participating in political and civic affairs online than they have in following sports, seeking entertainment, pursuing hobbies, shopping, or gathering information about a variety of other subjects" (vii-viii).

15. Haraway mentions other science fiction writers I will not discuss in this thesis. They are Joanna Russ, Samuel R. Delany, John Varley, and Monique Wittig (174).

Chapter 2

The Radical Limits of Boundary Play: Reconfiguring Hierarchy in the "Manifesto," *Dawn*, and "Blood Child"

"The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House"[1]
—Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*

In his article, "Post-Modernism and Feminist Science Fiction," Robin Roberts

asserts that Postmodern feminist science fiction reveals the binarism of patriarchal

structuralist ontology "By adopting neither the extreme of reproducing the structures of

patriarchal society, particularly its language, nor the extreme of endeavouring to speak

through the body" (138). Thus, he rejects what he describes as the Derridean notion that

"resistance must either draw upon that which it resists or attempt to step outside and then

necessarily recreate structures of oppression" (Roberts 138). Roberts implicitly suggests

that the Postmodern feminist perspective is uniquely positioned—both within and in

resistance to patriarchal hierarchy—to criticize structures of oppression. Missing from

his article, however, is a discussion of the varying degrees of privilege and oppression

among women that influence the perspective of any feminist criticism. My purpose in

this chapter is to examine how race informs the competing feminist perspectives on the

ability of postmodern boundary transgression to deconstruct social hierarchy. I shall first

compare Donna J. Haraway's white socialist-feminist perspective in "A Cyborg

Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminist in the Late Twentieth-Century"

("Manifesto" hereafter) with that of two radical feminists of colour, Cherrie Moraga and

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Audre Lorde, in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Colour* (*Bridge* hereafter) and *Sister Outsider* respectively, to identify how these women's experience of racial privilege and oppression contributes to their work of empowerment through different kinds of feminist connections. Having shown the distinct and incompatible nature of these divergent feminist goals, I shall then turn my attention to the breakdown of affinity in the "Manifesto", upon which cyborgean non-hierarchy is based. Finally, in a look at how Butler illustrates the radical feminists of colour's fear of (racial) self-erasure in the type of cyborgean union outlined in the "Manifesto," I shall draw some salient parallels between the forced cyborg unions in Octavia E. Butler's *Dawn* and "Blood Child" and Haraway's "Manifesto," more fully to expose the hierarchical nature of Haraway's myth of feminist connection and empowerment in order to conclude that liberation and empowerment are a matter of perspective.

Now that Posthumanism is redefining what it means to be human in an age where technology allows us to experience a certain level of disembodied consciousness, the issue of perspective has acquired tremendous importance in the feminist struggle to overcome oppression in America. A useful discussion of perspective is found in Susan Bordo's essay entitled, "Feminism, Postmodernism, and Gender-Scepticism." Here, she quotes from Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*, in which he says that "There is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival knowing" (quoted in Bordo 140, emphasis in original). Expanding on this position, she argues, "This selectivity, moreover, is never innocent. We always 'see' from points of view that are invested with our social, political, and personal interests, inescapably 'centric' in one way or another, even in the desire to do justice to heterogeneity" (140). The uniqueness of perspective stems from

embodied consciousness, in which the body, as a biological and social text, informs our individual political identity and perspective.

Since embodied perspective is exclusive in the sense of being perspectival and informed by self-interest, the creation of a more inclusive and comprehensive point of view has become paramount to Postmodern feminist projects of connection. From a brief comparison of Haraway's white socialist-feminist views with those of radical feminists of colour, however, we can clearly see that racial perspectives inform valorisations of different kinds of connection. As a woman and a feminist, Haraway senses the pain of separation from other groups of women and the subsequent political disempowerment imposed on women by separation. She states that, "Painful fragmentation among feminists (not to mention among women) along every possible fault line has made the concept of woman elusive, an excuse for the matrix of women's dominations of each other" (155). Her project, therefore, is to unite women by removing the patriarchal and hierarchical divisions between them and to theorize a truly inclusive and a-hierarchical consciousness of "'women's experience,'" thereby politically empowering women through the subversion of hierarchical social identity (149). In the "Manifesto," Haraway envisions the socio-political emancipation of all American women by means of an inclusive union based on "affinity", that is, based on political alliances between women defined "not by blood but by choice" ("Manifesto" 155). By theorizing the erasure of boundaries that have divided groups of women in the United States along racial, educational, and economic lines, the "Manifesto" illustrates a Posthuman feminist construction of what is, according to Haraway, an inclusive political identity.

As a figure of Postmodern feminism, Haraway's cyborg continually creates and recreates its identity according to the simultaneous construction and deconstruction of socio-political categories; thus, it is "resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity" (151). Haraway argues that cyborgs, people who adopt such a borderless political identity, are "needy for connection" ("Manifesto" 151) and therefore "have a natural feel for united front politics, but without the vanguard party" (151). She celebrates the power of the cyborg consciousness to empower women as women by "seizing the tools to mark the world that has marked them as other" (175). The tools she refers to are, generally, "the systems of myth and meanings structuring our imaginations" (163). More specifically, they are the feminist appropriation of "Communications technologies and biotechnologies" (164) that empower informational rather than material interfaces. Through the valorisation of ontological boundlessness (or an ontology of boundlessness?) and the adoption of a cyborgean consciousness focused on ethereal, politically dis-embodied feminist connections, Haraway foresees the union of all feminist movements in a pluralistically empowered Postmodern feminist position.

The fact that we are already cyborgs is fully apparent to Haraway, and thus, cyborg feminism appears to be the inevitable, final step towards a feminist utopia:

> By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized, fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. . . . The cyborg appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal [as well as machine] is transgressed. Far from signalling a walling

off of people from other living beings, cyborgs signal a disturbingly and
pleasurably tight coupling. (150, 152)

Possible only as interfaces between disembodied—theoretically, politically, and
materially deconstructed—consciousnesses, these couplings are meant to disturb the
social hierarchy by "subvert[ing] command and control" (175). They are intended to be
pleasurably liberating and empowering for women; however, from Haraway's racially
privileged feminist perspective, she fails to recognize how disturbing and threatening
such unions can appear from a racially marginalized feminist position.

Other American women, particularly radical Third World feminists of colour,
also seek empowerment through new feminist connections. Like Haraway, this group
feels the strain and disempowerment of women's separation, but they feel it more keenly
because they are doubly oppressed—both sexually and racially. Thus, as we shall see in
the writing of Cherrie Moraga and Audre Lorde, many women of colour desire
reconnection with other racially marginalized women rather than with all women in
general. In her essay, "A Place of Breakthrough: Coming Home," Cherrie Moraga
deplores the pain of racial and sexual division. Describing her own fear of separation, she
says, "It is . . . [a] source of terror—how deeply separation between women hurts me"
(*Bridge* xvi). Like the "Manifesto," Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* (1984) and Cherrie
Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua's anthology, *Bridge* (1983), endeavour to fashion
empowering connections, primarily between women of colour in the United States.[2] In
the Forward to *Bridge*, Moraga appeals to her readers' need for connection in the fight
against oppression, urging that "the impetus to forge links with women of colour from
every region grows more and more urgent as the number of recently-immigrated people

of colour in the U.S. grows in enormous proportions, as we begin to see ourselves all as refugees of a world on fire" (ii). In such an oppressive world, connections between similarly oppressed women are more than just political—they are "redemptive" (111). Lorde observes as much in her essay, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," when she says, "For women, the need and desire to nurture each other is . . . redemptive, and it is within that knowledge that our real power is rediscovered" (111).

It is useful to pause for a moment to explain the redemption Lorde locates in making exclusive new feminist connections to the phenomenon of group pluralism in America. The strength of the body metaphor to inform the rearticulation of the "self" and of embodiment through the reconfiguration of hierarchical dualisms, outlined in the previous chapter, is further demonstrated by the fact that women of colour seek empowerment through an emphasis on their racially marked bodies and historical consciousnesses rather than on a fluid, ethereal, abstract theoretical platform. Robert G. Dunn identifies what he calls the "dual logic" of fragmentation and pluralization in post-war, and particularly Postmodern American society (143). Pluralization refers to the construction of group boundaries in identity politics. Dunn defines pluralism as "a politics of recognition" and a "response to the disruptive and disintegrative features of postmodernity," a sphere in which he asserts, "The disorientation and sense of emptiness accompanying cultural turmoil give rise to a search for compensation and redemption through identifications with and membership in various groups and communities" (144). Pluralism, as defined here, involves clearly defining political identity on the basis, but not exclusively, of race, class, and gender (144). Such pluralistic attempts to counter the

sense of self-absorption into a mass public sphere are based on retaining a correlation between the body and embodiment. Far from embracing fragmentation and fluidity, American technoculture is moving away from the "liberation" of identity, which is experienced by many as a disempowerment of "self," and moving toward "self"-preservation. According to Dunn, this process of "self"-definition, is "indigenously and inescapably American" (19).

Far from seeking the union of all women, then, as Haraway does, radical feminists of colour are concerned with constructing alliances among women of similar racial marginalization. Moraga notes that women of colour have their own internal racial divisions to mend (*Bridge* iii), divisions that do not exist among white women. Truly, the union of *all* women is hardly possible without first mending the divisions between women who share similar experiences of marginalization. The desire to empower their *racially* marginalized position, leads women of colour to focus on the importance of their cultural heritage, their roots. As a result, their writing often takes pride in their individual and collective racial, sexual, and class "otherness." They advocate the investment of authority and power in their unique racial as well as sexual identities, rather than in a collective, comprehensive experience of womanhood.

Differing experiences of oppression naturally lead Haraway and the radical feminists to desire different kinds of connection. In turn, their desires influence their views of the political possibilities of boundary play in the formation of a Posthuman feminist consciousness. Turning briefly to Hayles' discussion of the two schools of Posthuman thought, we can usefully employ Posthuman abstraction and embodiment theories to characterize Haraway's and the radical feminists' yearning for connections.

In Csicsery-Ronay, Jr.'s review of N. Katherine Hayles' *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics*, he notes Hayles' understanding of the Posthuman fixation on cyborgs as an indication of the desire to transcend mortality and boundedness because the fixation illustrates a "refusal to believe in the givenness of things, in necessity" ("Interfaces" 320). Posthumanism's boundary obsession manifests itself in abstractionist and embodiment theories, which translates into abstractionist and corporeal feminism. Abstractionists believe that consciousness can exist without or separated from a body, while theorists of embodiment believe that consciousness must always be embodied and experiential. As a corporeal feminist, Hayles considers to be human whatever body is able to contain consciousness (313). She identifies the dissolution of the body as the primary substrate of both abstractionist theory and cybernetic research (315, 317). Where Haraway seeks to transcend the embodied, limited human perspective in favour of an abstract, inclusive feminist perspective, the radical feminists embrace the political and material body in order to empower their unique racial and female identities.

In the "Manifesto", Haraway subscribes to the tenets of abstractionist Posthumanism in her longing to attain/adopt multiple perspectives, to exchange located experience for multiple contexts. This longing is evident in her conception of the disembodied cyborg—"Cyborgs are ether, quintessence" (153)—as a "fiction mapping our social and bodily reality" (150). She complains about the inherent inability of embodied consciousness to achieve such a protean perspective, since "People are nowhere near so fluid, being both material and opaque" (153). Consequently, through cyborg politics and stories, "the tools . . . that reverse and displace the hierarchical

dualisms of naturalized identities" (173), Haraway seeks to appropriate the empowering figures and concepts of abstraction in scientific and technological relations to inform the liberated feminist cyborg identity. A major element of cyborg subversiveness is the idea that the body can be theoretically miniaturized through a process of abstraction. Haraway observes that "Miniaturization has turned out to be about power; small is not so much beautiful as pre-eminently dangerous, as in cruise missiles" (153). Clearly, the cyborg's strength lies in its invisibility, in its resistance to targeting within the patriarchal hierarchy. A cyborg cannot be marginalized by hierarchical racial or sexual classifications if it refuses to define itself according to them and instead adopts and moves through all racial and sexual positions.

While Haraway tries to adopt an abstract feminist perspective, radical women of colour subscribe to the tenets of Posthuman embodiment to empower their uniquely racial feminist perspectives. Rather than reach outside the body for an objective kaleidescopic subjectivity that incorporates all women's experiences but values none independently, women of colour focus on themselves, on their material and political bodies, to infuse value into their specific cultural contexts. Explaining how the term "radical" figures into the feminism of many women of colour, Moraga writes, "We use the term in its original form—stemming from the word 'root'—for our feminist politics emerges from the roots of both of our cultural oppression and heritage. . . . Each woman considers herself a feminist, but draws her feminism from the culture in which she grew" (*Bridge* xxiv). Hence, the radical feminism of women of colour effects a return to the roots of racially inscribed feminist identity.

Moraga explains that women of colour have often felt excluded from privileged, generally white hegemonic feminist movements that do not speak to their experiences and therefore cannot empower their unique racial positions. She states, "I can't prepare myself a revolutionary packet that makes no sense when I leave the white suburbs of Watertown, Massachusetts and take the T-line to Black Roxbury" (Preface to *Bridge* xiii). For this reason, Moraga and Lorde seek to reconnect with their bodies that have marked them as outsiders, even among other women, and to concentrate on the practical aspects of learning to empower their historically, racially, and sexually oppressed "selves." They call this focus on feminist and racial embodiment, "theory in the flesh" (Moraga 23):

> A theory in the flesh means one where the physical realities of our lives—our skin color, the land or concrete we grew up on, our sexual longings—all fuse to create a politic born out of necessity. Here, we attempt to bridge the contradictions in our experience:
>
> > We are the colored in a white feminist movement.
> >
> > We are the feminists among the people of our culture.
> >
> > We are often the lesbians among the straight.
> >
> > We do this bridging by naming our selves and by telling our stories in our own words. . . . We are interested in pursuing a society that uses flesh and blood experiences to concretize a vision that can begin to heal our 'wounded knee.' (Moraga 23)

Where Haraway seeks to address perspective among women through the abstraction of all women's experiences of embodiment and oppressions into a kaleidescopic feminist

consciousness, Moraga identifies this kind of abstraction as an impediment to true feminist resistance:

> *The danger lies in failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression.* The danger lies in attempting to deal with oppression purely from a theoretical base. Without an emotional, heartfelt grappling with the source of our own oppression, without naming the enemy within ourselves and outside of us, no authentic, non-hierarchical connection among oppressed groups can take place. (Moraga 29)[3]

Much of the fear of discounting the racial dimension of their feminist identities stems from a fear of erasure, of self-denial. In a letter to a friend, Mcraga relates how for years it was so easy to let "white language" define her feminism (31), to discount her own ethnicity (31). She asserts that the temptation to forget one's own oppression results from the seduction of gaining ground within the hierarchy:

> . . . oppressed groups are forgetting all the time. There are instances of this in the rising Black middle class, and certainly an obvious trend of such 'unconsciousness' among white gay men. Because to remember may mean giving up whatever privileges we have managed to squeeze out of this society by virtue of our gender, race, class, or sexuality. (30)

Radical U.S. Third World women of colour adopt the position that feminist theory needs to be practical and real, that is, it must be rooted firmly in the real life oppression and bodies of racially marginalized women. Their movement focuses on inhabiting and valorising the bodies that are the basis of their oppression in order to re-value what

patriarchal hierarchical society in the United States has de-valued. For radical feminists, feminist theory must be performative.

Clearly, the differences in women's oppression led to the formation of competing feminist movements. Haraway's quest to empower an inclusive non-hierarchical feminist consciousness is commendable, but her project of aligning competing movements so that their common goal is simply to empower "women," is highly problematic. Because they have different needs and goals, a union of feminist movements must involve some sort of compromise or accommodation between them (an idea that I shall explore in Butler's stories), but we shall see that in the breakdown of Haraway's notion of affinity, one that is necessary to her cyborgean "non-hierarchical" feminist union, there is no compromise on her part. Her needs are served, whereas those of many women of colour are not. By turning my attention to Haraway's problematic project of uniting competing feminist movements through affinity—choice—I shall now contest the cyborg's ability to do so in a non-hierarchical and non-oppressive fashion.

By its very nature, a non-hierarchical society or system requires the willing participation of all its members. If anyone's participation is forced, the system is flawed by privileging and marginalizing the needs of various groups within it. Because Haraway attempts to create a non-hierarchical feminist movement, she focuses on convincing all women that a cyborg consciousness can empower them and speak to their specific needs. The only way to overcome resistance to her political vision is to convince objectors to choose to adopt a cyborgean position. In order to market the cyborg to as broad an audience as possible, in the "Manifesto" she draws attention to the many facets of feminism and stresses that only through an inclusive union, through a coalitional or

integrative consciousness, can they all empower themselves without reconfiguring a newly exclusive "essential identity" (155). Haraway also lists the names of many white feminists as well as feminists of colour (radical and otherwise) whom she considers to be cyborg writers because of their attention to Posthuman identity and boundary play (155-157, 173-80).[4] She includes various feminist perspectives within her cyborgean consciousness. Thus, the "Manifesto" depicts all feminists, indeed, all people, animals, and machines, as cyborgs. Oddly, however, she both mentions and discounts the views of radical feminists of colour, since their goals differ from hers. She says that, "American radical feminists like Susan Griffin, Audre Lorde, and Adrienne Rich have profoundly affected our political imaginations—and perhaps restricted too much what we allow as a friendly body and political language" (173). Yet even after her dismissal of radical feminists' views of connection, identity, and empowerment, Haraway still presumes to draw them into her cyborg union—one can only assume as unwilling participants—thus, marking them as cyborgs when they evidently prefer a different, more exclusive type of feminist identity and union:

> They insist on the organic, opposing it to the technological. But their symbolic systems and the related positions of ecofeminism and feminist paganism, replete with organicisms, can only be understood in Sandoval's terms as oppositional ideologies fitting the late twentieth century. They would simply bewilder anyone not preoccupied with the machines and consciousness of late capitalism. In that sense they are part of the cyborg world. (173)

Haraway suggests that her embrace of total boundlessness holds *more* possibilities for

liberation and empowerment through connection than does the radical feminists'

movement and implies, therefore, that cyborg politics is better able to subvert and

transcend hierarchy:

> ... there are ... great riches for feminists in explicitly embracing the
>
> possibilities inherent in the breakdown of clean distinctions between
>
> organism and machine and similar distinctions structuring the Western
>
> self. It is the simultaneity of breakdowns that cracks the matrices of
>
> domination and opens geometric possibilities. (173)

While the "Manifesto'"s cyborg politics is a more inclusive feminist movement than that

of radical feminists of colour, in that it attempts to include all movements within its

consciousness, this particular point is not at issue in this chapter. At issue, here, is

Haraway's notion that cyborg politics is non-hierarchical because it consists of a

multitude of feminist perspectives united by *affinity*. Her dismissal of the radical

perspective, which seeks not to connect with all other feminist movements, and her

subsequent forced inclusion of that movement within her own *anyway*, plainly shows the

hierarchical privileging of her own feminist view. Consequently, cyborg politics as

propagated by Haraway in the "Manifesto" is clearly hierarchical because it oppresses at

least one of "its" constituent feminist perspectives. If cyborg politics really did consist of

voluntary, affinitive unions, then perhaps it could be successfully non-hierarchical, at

least within the cyborg group.

While the lure of inclusion within a privileged position is seductive, the danger of

being seduced by privilege and thus being effectively sedated against the pain of

difference and oppression is an important focus of both *Bridge* and *Sister Outsider*.

Lorde argues that white women are too easily (able to be) placated by the privilege of

being white and are thus seduced by a certain degree of privilege to forget the pain of

their sexual oppression—their pain of difference. She says that, "white women face the

pitfall of being seduced into joining the oppressor under the pretense of sharing power," a

position not available to black women because of their visible racial otherness (*Sister*

118). Moraga makes a similar point that white gay men and rich black men are often

seduced into forgetting their sexual and racial marginalization in exchange for the

comfort of a greater degree of privilege within the hierarchy (*Bridge* 30). Lorde warns

against dismissing our differences, especially our visible differences, because it blinds us

to the nature of our oppressions, or even to the perception of any oppression at all. She

asserts that, "Refusing to recognize difference makes it impossible to see the different

problems and pitfalls facing us as women" (118). Once we forget the pain of difference

and accept the little privilege we *can* gain within the hierarchy, we lose the ability to

discern the nature of our marginalization. Consequently, we cannot resist our oppression.

Once we lose sight of the structures of oppression, Lorde argues, we are no longer able to

destroy them because they become ingrained in us, "For we have, built into all of us, old

blueprints of oppression, and these must be altered at the same time as we alter the living

conditions which are a result of those structures. . . . [Consequently,] the master's tools

will never dismantle the master's house" (123).

Now that some of the boundaries between feminist groups are dissolving, radical

feminists of colour warn us to remain aware that the dissolution is also a relocation of

boundaries that simply reconstruct hierarchy along other lines. While Haraway envisions

a progressive, non-hierarchical borderless society, radical feminists and some other women of colour maintain a different perspective. Octavia Butler's fiction illustrates the fear of self-loss stemming from Postmodern boundary play that I have traced throughout the writing of other women of colour, in terms of the fear of losing racial identity. Butler senses that the dismantling of borders does not result in the type of utopian society that Haraway envisions. Rather, her stories depict a society in which the boundaries change but do not disappear. Thus, for her, while Postmodernism engineers new biological and social relations between humans (both sexes), aliens, and technology, these new relationships are structured by new hierarchies. In the societies depicted in Butler's *Dawn* and "Blood Child," cyborgean connections are not liberating or empowering because they are forced on disempowered humans by a dominant group; in other words, the unions are not based on affinity. Haraway tries to convince us that the infinitely perspectival cyborgean union is the only way to empower all women's marginalized positions. Similarly, the Oankali in *Dawn* and the Tlic in "Blood Child" promise humans that an alien-human union is mutually beneficial and that both sides have the reasons and the power to choose it. As it turns out, humans do not have the power to refuse it. The choice is ultimately made for the humans in both stories by the dominant alien group for whom the union is necessary. I contend that Haraway's myth is similarly oppressive in that the cyborg union, from *her* privileged perspective, is necessary to the further empowerment of women, a fact that leads her to propagate her myth as mutually beneficial to all women.

As previously discussed in Lorde and Moraga, women of colour have often felt suspicious of the seductiveness of privilege. There is a strong current of this suspicion in

Dawn and "Blood Child." These stories both depict cyborg societies (in the Postmodern Harawayan sense of new hybrid connections between humans and animals/ aliens/ machines), in which humans are saved and protected by a dominant alien species and subsequently forced into human-alien unions. In both cases, the aliens try to convince humans that the union is for their own good and that without it they will not survive. The aliens also insist that the new unions will be non-hierarchical, but as we shall see, the unions are ultimately forced, often upon sedated, powerless humans who are prevented from or punished for resisting.

The Oankali are *Dawn*'s cyborg creatures. They are gene-traders, who perpetually genetically re-engineer their species through a process called "xenogenesis" that involves coupling their DNA with that of other beings; this time those beings are human. The heroine, Lilith Iyapo, is a black woman and one of a number of humans saved by the Oankali from a nuclear war that has destroyed most human life and rendered Earth almost uninhabitable. As a woman of colour, she articulates Butler's racial perspective on the limits of Postmodern boundary play. Aboard the Oankali ship, Lilith is woken from dormancy and placed in charge of choosing and "awakening" other sleeping humans and training them to accept their part in the xenogenesis. Lilith believes that humanity will be destroyed by a union with a constantly evolving alien race whose offspring will neither preserve nor celebrate any recognizable human characteristics. The Oankali embody multiplicity and hybridity, and these are the permanent traits that will define future Oankali.[5] She suspects that the Oankali "invitation" to combine human and Oankali DNA is disingenuous and will not be mutually beneficial. The coupling will not save or empower humans because they will no longer *be* humans. Convinced the gene-

trade will destroy humanity, Lilith determines to help people to escape from their saviour/captors.

According to the Oankali, the main benefit of the oneness offered by the Oankali is based on human inclusion into a non-hierarchical society. Onkali are either male, female, or ooloi—unsexed. Upon her first encounter with an ooloi, Lilith immediately observes its privileged position within the alien hierarchy: "It was smug and it tended to treat her condescendingly. . . . And in spite of the male Jdahaya's claim that the Oankali were not hierarchical, the ooloi seemed to be the head of the house. Everyone deferred to it" (46). Even though the Oankali maintain the semblance of equity in their society, in that they all participate in determining the direction of their evolution, the ooloi are the ones who provide the others with the options from which to choose. Jdahaya tells Lilith, "'They show us the tested possibilities. We all decide'" (39-40). Thus it is the ooloi who ultimately direct the evolution of the species. They are the scientists, the ones with access to knowledge, who "'have special organs'" (39), tools for gene manipulation.

Each human has an immature ooloi to look after and teach him or her about the Oankali. Before maturing, the ooloi are mild-mannered and calm, having not yet grown the tentacles they need to engage in gene-manipulation. Like the others, Lilith's ooloi, Nikanj, insists that Oankali are non-hierarchical, yet in a conversation with a man named Paul Titus, who has lived among the Oankali for many years, Lilith learns how dominant a mature ooloi becomes. Paul's decision to regard the sexless ooloi as male is suggestive of its patriarchal, hierarchical nature of which even Lilith has not been fully aware:

"Nikanj isn't male," she said. "It's ooloi."

"Yeah, I know. But doesn't yours seem male to you?"

She thought about that. "No. I guess I've taken their word for what they are." . . . .

"You wait until yours is mature," he said. "You'll see what I mean. They change when they've grown those two extra things." He lifted an eyebrow. "You know what those things are?"

"Yes," she said. . . .

"Then you know they're not arms, no matter what they tell us to call them. When those things grow in, ooloi let everyone know who's in charge. The Oankali need a little women's and men's lib up here." (87-88)

Having been among the Oankali for so many years, Paul has been able to closely observe the nature of their society. When Lilith tells him that Nikanj desires her to "'help it through its metamorphosis'" (88), its maturation, Paul notes that her participation would afford her many privileges that other humans would not have. "'It isn't hard,'" he says, "'Puts them in debt to you, though. Not a bad idea to have someone powerful in debt to you. . . . They'll be grateful and you'll be a lot freer'" (88). Oankali power dynamics are frightening because the aliens don't believe they are hierarchical. Their social and biological practices provide them with the illusion of utopian equality, and this illusion obscures the structures of dominance at work in xenogenesis—both among the Oankali themselves and between the Oankali and the humans. In this way the hierarchy can continue unexamined, disguised and accepted. Lilith's distrust of her captors' true nature reinforces her decision to teach the other humans to "*Learn and run!*" from the Oankali (248).

As Lilith perceives the dynamics of privilege and oppression at work within Oankali society, she also becomes aware of the Oankali's seductive powers. By creating the illusion of familiarity, the aliens promise the human survivors that the union will offer them comfort and security. The Oankali transform parts of the ship to resemble the now recovering planet Earth on which the humans and aliens are to begin their evolution (200). Lilith often seeks comfort in this "illusion of wilderness and isolation" (200). The humans are also permitted to have a human mate, but sexual relations take place only through an ooloi. Although these relations are somewhat comforting to them, one man named Joseph's rejection of the non-physical, mediated union because it is illusory, signals the general human discomfort with Oankali intervention that, as Jim Miller observes, "comes at the cost of the loss of human intimacy" (341). The Oankali try to seduce the humans by telling them that reality is interpretive and that humans can make the kinds of liberating and empowering connections they desire, by evolving with the aliens—at the cost of losing their own bodies as well as their human characteristics and identities. Jdahaya tells Lilith that humans can escape their inherently hierarchical nature and acquire greater mental abilities as well as increase their physical strength and endurance (40, 79).

What the Oankali do not realize is that humans are willing to accept their shortcomings in exchange for remaining human. Nikanj does not understand why Lilith values the preservation of her humanity over the acquisition of new and what it considers to be better traits:

> "Our children will be better than either of us," it continued, "We
> will moderate your hierarchical problems and you will lessen our physical

limitations. Our children won't destroy themselves in a war, and if they need to regrow a limb or to change themselves in some other way they'll be able to do it." . . . .

"But they won't be human," Lilith said. "That's what matters. You can't understand, but that *is* what matters." (247)

In the same way that Nikanj, out of his own evolutionary compulsion, tries to convince Lilith that the union will benefit humans, Haraway seeks to reassure women of colour that the cyborg will empower them, and like Nikanj, she fails to understand the fear of self-loss in such a union, that others perceive. Her position is as "'centric'" to her own "social, political, and personal interests" (Bordo 140) as the Oankali's is to theirs. The Oankali claim to offer ultimate oneness of the intellectual, biological, and emotional kind that humans seek, not understanding that the human desire for oneness is based on a union with other humans. Unable to accept the desire of many women of colour for connection with other women of similarly oppressed positions, Haraway also alleges that her cyborg offers the ultimate empowering connection among *all* women. From Lilith's fear of self-loss, however, we can understand how women of colour would be marginalized by cyborg politics since the kind of union it calls for is one that is not based on the recognition of race and racial marginalization; it does not allow race to count. Once again, this deprivileging is the cost of Haraway's imposition of her own point of view on feminist evolution. While her intention is certainly not to marginalize any racial positions, that she does so, is an unfortunate fallout of cyborg politics.

Since a society that forces prospective members to adopt a "consensual" reality is inherently oppressive, like Haraway, the Oankali must convince rather than force humans

to participate in xenogenesis in order to claim to be non-hierarchical beings. Despite the Oankali claim to the contrary, however, Lilith observes their society to be very hierarchical as the aliens resort to forcing humans to submit to the union—even while maintaining the illusion of choice (189). Jdahaya states that the Oankali are non-hierarchical, and asserts that they are only "'powerfully acquisitive'" (39). We witness this oppressive characteristic at work in *Dawn*, in the Oankali refusal to allow humans to reject the coupling. Lilith pleads with Jdahaya to let the humans go free, but her request is denied by the Oankali's "implacable" position that, "'We are committed to the trade,' . . . . 'We are as committed to the trade as your body is to breathing. We were overdue for it when we found you. Now it will be done—to the rebirth of your people and mine'" (41). Jdahaya's admission that the cross-breeding will take place because the Oankali need it, clearly signals that humans do not have a choice in the matter and that their needs are not the ones addressed by xenogenesis. While the Oankali prefer that the humans accept their evolution, since the program must be implemented, they resort to forcing them into submission. Those who reject the Oankali are sedated, and thus rendered powerless to resist. One ooloi says to the humans that the drugs are to "to dull your natural fear of strangers and of difference" (192), an ironic statement since the humans' desire is to remain different from the Oankali—what they fear is self-loss, the loss of difference. One man, Peter, discovers the power of Oankali drugs to reverse his revulsion of the aliens: "For perhaps the first time since his Awakening, he was at peace . . . . the ooloi-produced drugs could be potent. . . . Under their influence, he accepted union with pleasure. When that influence was allowed to wane and Peter began to think, he apparently decided that he had been humiliated and enslaved" (192).

In addition to the fact that the ostensibly empowering union is actually oppressive because it is forced on humans, we can see that the oneness of which the Oankali speak so enthusiastically is undermined by the effect of their sedatives in repelling humans from one another. A woman, Jean, finds herself unable to bear human presence when drugged. Butler writes, "All of the humans who had been kept heavily drugged were this way—unable to tolerate the nearness of anyone except their human mate and the ooloi who had drugged them" (193-94). Here, as in the "Manifesto," we witness a breakdown and marginalization of (human) attachments valued by some, in order to create new attachments valued by others. Both of these texts—the first, unconsciously, and the second, consciously—illustrate the insidious hierarchical nature of a forced "affinity" that would obscure the politics of choice.

Like Haraway's cyborg, the Oankali seem to offer freedom from material and ontological deficiencies, but as White observes, "Attention is frequently drawn . . . to the fact that humans have little say in the matter of the 'gene-trade'" (404). Although people are ostensibly allowed to choose or reject a part in xenogenesis, we observe the "coercive, in fact compulsory character of [the Oankali] 'invitation'" (White 405). This coerciveness is similarly part of Haraway's inclusion of radical feminists of colour in her cyborg movement. The absence of choice, what Haraway calls "affinity," in both the Oankali and "Manifesto"'s cyborg unions, surreptitiously embeds hierarchy within a seemingly "ideally 'post-human' future of unlimited possibility" (White 404).

In another of Butler's stories, "Blood Child," oppression figures strongly in cyborgean Tlic society where traditional human—here called "Terran"—biological and gender roles no longer exist. Here, Butler illustrates the failure of boundary dissolution

to create a non-hierarchical society. "Blood Child," according to Butler, is partly a story about "accommodation" (32), in which Terrans must find a way to live among the insectoid Tlic, in a galaxy far removed from a hostile Earth. The Tlic accommodate Terrans by adopting them, so to speak, protecting them, and using them as hosts (incubators) for their grub-like young. Males are the preferred hosts because females must continue to bear Terran children. Terrans are allowed to have their own human families for the sake of replenishing the stock of hosts, but their main purpose is to accommodate their adoptive Tlic families by helping to bear Tlic young, in a gruesome and painful birthing process.[6] These accommodations signal a weakening of the boundaries between human and alien and between male and female. In this story, the traditional polarity of male and female biological roles is somewhat collapsed as both males and females experience pregnancy and labour in some form. The roles are only "somewhat collapsed," however, since we must acknowledge the fact that males can participate in the birthing process of an alien race with the help of alien technology, but female Terrans are still the only ones able to bear their own children. The fact that Butler has not chosen to depict a future in which men give birth to human children indicates the integrity of the biological (sexual) boundary between men and women that Postmodern feminists dismiss in their overall rejection of any natural basis for the creation of male and female gender roles.[7] Thus, in a limited way, Butler affords humans more sexual parity in this story than we have yet achieved for ourselves; however, while traditional gender roles are erased between humans in "Blood Child," the gender polarity is reconfigured in the alien-human dynamic.

"Blood Child" is not a utopian vision of possible future social equity for humans; on the contrary, it suggests that regardless of whatever "progress" is believed to be achieved in this respect, society will continue to be characterized by a struggle for power that has traditionally been played out between the sexes, and may very well continue along other lines. Although traditional *human* biological and gender roles are significantly altered in this story, humans as a species are feminized. They are domesticated as child-bearers who survive only under the protection of their hosts. The Tlic, on the other hand, as a species, are masculinized. Both males and females dominate and participate in the public sphere and production of culture (knowledge, science, politics). Clearly, while the dynamics of oppression are no longer based on sex, gender roles characterize the differences between oppressed Terrans and privileged Tlic; alien positions are privileged and empowered (masculinized), while all human positions are disempowered (feminized).

While the Tlic never claim to be non-hierarchical, they do justify their "management" of humans because the latter are an endangered species who must be protected from other Tlic who would exploit the Terrans' reproductive capacity. In the story, Gan is a young adolescent whose Terran family has been adopted by the very influential female Tlic, T'Gatoi. Unless in her company, Gan's family never leaves their farm on the human preserve:

> T'Gatoi was hounded on the outside. Her people wanted more of us made
>
> available. Only she and her political faction stood between us and the
>
> hordes who did not understand why there was a Preserve—why any
>
> Terran could not be courted, paid, drafted, in some way made available to

them. . . . She parcelled us out to the desperate and sold us to the rich and

powerful for their political support. Thus, we were necessities, status

symbols, and an independent people. (5)

T'Gatoi justifies keeping Terrans on the preserve because they are both endangered by as

well as a danger to the Tlic. In her explanation of this to Gan, she tells him, "'your

ancestors, fleeing from their home-world, from their own kind who would have killed or

enslaved them—they survived because of us. We saw them as people and gave them the

Preserve when they still tried to kill us as worms'" (25). Thus, part of her justification

for Terran "management" is the fact that Gan's people were oppressed on their own

world anyway. Here, they will at least survive, where their protected status requires that

their freedom be restricted for their own good. While male and female Tlic and Terrans

possess a kind of sexual equality within their own species, humans as a species are

oppressed because of their reproductive abilities, and so racial oppression is made

analogous to sexual oppression. Thus, Butler indicates both the deconstruction and

reconstruction of gender polarity.

Like the Oankali, the Tlic try to seduce Terrans into believing that the human-

alien relationships are based on more than need on their own part. In the same way that

Haraway's cyborg and the Oankali must convince people that cyborgean union is

empowering, the Tlic argue that at least under their protection the Terrans can survive.

Terrans are raised to think positively of the hosting, that it is a "'good and necessary

thing'" (16) since it enables the Tlic to survive, while Terrans also survive because they

are useful to this end. T'Gatoi assures Gan, whom she is going to implant with her eggs,

that the Tlic love humans and do not think of them merely as host animals. After

witnessing a gruesome Caesearian birth of Tlic young, involving the removal of mature grubs from the Terran host's body before the grubs consumed it, Gan reconsiders his initial pleasure with being chosen as T'Gatoi's mate. He thinks to himself that such a procedure seems "wrong, alien" (17). On the night that she must lay her eggs, T'Gatoi tries to depict the Tlic-Terran relationship as one based on love. She says to Gan, "'We wait long years for you and teach you and join our families to yours'" (24). The sincerity of her emotional appeal, however, is undermined by her immediate need to impregnate a host, and by her threat to do it to Gan's sister if he himself is unwilling.

"Blood Child" illustrates the erasure of some traditional biological and social boundaries, but Butler suggests that the freedom to manipulate boundaries does not liberate us from the dynamics of oppression. Rather, it increases the possibilities for oppression. We see evidence of this fact in the new Terran-Tlic society, in both the sexual exploitation of humans and in the Tlic practice of sedating humans to render them pliable and receptive to hosting practices. At the beginning of the story, T'Gatoi gives Gan and his family two sterile Tlic eggs to eat. The eggs are powerfully sedative when ingested. Gan's mother and his siblings share one of them, but Gan is given a whole one because, as he later discovers, T'Gatoi intends to lay her eggs in his body that night, and this drug is to dull his fear and pain. The eggs relax the family and leave everyone happily "drifting and dreaming" (3). Later, T'Gatoi and Gan have an emotional and potentially violent argument about the Tlic-Terran relationship, during which Gan considers shooting T'Gatoi with a rifle, accusing her and the Tlic of using Terrans like animals. After threatening to use Gan's sister, Hoa, as a host instead, Gan agrees to accept T'Gatoi's eggs to protect his sister and also because he believes he cares about his

relationship with T'Gatoi. When she deposits her young in Gan's body, he wonders at the sedative effect of her bodily fluids: "The small amount of fluid that came into me with her egg relaxed me as completely as a sterile egg would have, so that I could remember the rifle in my hands and my feelings of fear and revulsion, anger and despair . . . without reviving them" (29). Although Gan decides to mate with T'Gatoi, his decision is made under heavy sedation and in part to protect his sister from the process, even though she would have willingly become a host. Gan has witnessed the painful and bloody extraction of grubs from a host; she has not. The story suggests that Hoa is completely ignorant of her oppression and is therefore easily seduced by the privilege, or honour of being chosen to be a host. It is significant that Gan is sedated again during his impregnation, and subsequently observes that he can only remember but not feel his former feelings of revulsion toward the Tlic. His sedation signals the Tlic's need to facilitate the Terran's acceptance of their hosting role; the Terrans do not choose to be hosts, and would not have relationships with Tlic if it were not necessary for Tlic to use hosts that do not eat their young (25).

Butler affirms that "Blood Child" is not a story of slavery, but is instead a kind of love story and a "pregnant man" story as well as one about accommodation (*Bloodchild* 30, 32). It is about all of these things as well as being a story about boundaries. Butler plays with sex, gender, biological, emotional, and spatial boundaries. She writes about making connections and accommodations in the face of hardship. "Blood Child" illustrates the Postmodern idea that boundaries are not absolute. Myriad new connections are possible between humans, animals, and technology. It also suggests that these new connections, as in Haraway, are not inherently free from hierarchical structure; they

merely reconfigure it. Thus, freedom from old structures of oppression is limited by the creation of new ones.

Haraway appears to have been seduced by what Lorde would call her "whiteskin privilege" (118), so that she has internalised hierarchical methods of oppression, and is consequently unable to remain aware of these and, so, to effectively transcend her own hierarchical tendencies. While she consciously rejects the powers and methods of oppression, her contention that the correct and most equitable and inclusive feminist position is one of infinite perspective, first of all, demonstrates the embrace of a hegemonic esoteric philosophy of abstractionist deconstructionism, a philosophy that is inherently exclusionary on the basis of education, class, and as we have seen, also race. Secondly, cyborg fluidity is ironically oppressive in that Haraway rejects the validity of the radical perspective and yet forcefully includes it within the cyborg consciousness. Thus, for all that Haraway's "Manifesto" may appear revolutionary, empowering, and inclusive, it is also normative, oppressive and exclusionary, since it clearly does not speak to all women's desires for connection and empowerment and perpetuates hierarchical modes of dominance. It empowers those women who agree with Haraway's abstractionist politics, which is a product of a patriarchal academic tradition and racial privilege, and discounts resistant perspectives. Her myth cannot be inclusive, nor can it claim to subvert hierarchy since she constructs the cyborg using "old structures of oppression" (Lorde 123) that inevitably play out in cyborg politics. As a result, the "Manifesto" is unable to speak of empowerment to the many women of colour who are threatened with racial erasure. It does not offer them liberation from racial oppression—which is, along with sex, equally a part of their marginalization—because,

as radical feminists of colour fear so often happens, Haraway tries to use the master's tools to try and bring down his house.

We may now qualify Roberts' notion that feminist science fiction, in general, can expose the hierarchical structures of patriarchal ontology, by asserting that feminist science fiction by women of colour is better able to remain aware of such oppression due to its foundation in a compound marginalization of both race and gender. Lorde and Moraga fear that white women are naturally more susceptible to being seduced by racial privilege than women of colour—something that can blind them to their participation in hierarchical structures of oppression, Haraway's "Manifesto" being the case in point. It takes an awareness of difference (racial, gender, sexual, or other) to perceive the "means [by] which power can dissemble itself as benevolence" (White 404). Clearly, her experience of the double oppression of race and gender enables Butler to apprehend the dystopic possibilities of boundary transgression that Haraway fails to see. Consequently, Haraway's cyborg feminism might more effectively combat hierarchy if it respected the different perspectives of all the women for whom it professes to speak.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," *Sister Outsider* (Freedom CA: The Crossing Press, 1984), 123.

2. The term "women of color" is used by radical and other feminists to designate the constituents of U.S. "Third World feminism." See Cherrie Moraga, "Refugees of a World On Fire: Forward to the Second Edition." *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings*

By Radical Women of Color. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua, eds. (NY: Kitchen

Table, 1983), i & ii. The grouping, women of color, includes Afro-American,

Asian/Pacific American, Chicana, Latina, and Native American women (248, 251, 253,

255, 258).

3. Commenting on a conversation Moraga held with "a gay male friend" of hers, she

notes that true intimacy between people whose experiences of marginalization are

radically different rests on coming to terms, first of all, with one's own oppressions. She

describes this realization in the following passage:

> . . . a gay male friend of mine once confided to me that he continued to feel that,
>
> on some level, I didn't trust him because he was male; that he felt, really, if it
>
> ever came down to a 'battle of the sexes,' I might kill him. I admitted that I
>
> might very well. He wanted to understand the source of my distrust. I responded,
>
> "You're not a woman. Be a woman for a day. Imagine being a woman." He
>
> confessed that the thought terrified him because, to him, being a woman meant
>
> being raped by men. He *had* felt raped by men; he wanted to forget what that
>
> meant. What grew from that discussion was the realization that in order for him
>
> to create an authentic alliance with me, he must deal with the primary source of
>
> his own sense of oppression. . . . If he—or anyone—were to truly do this, it
>
> would be impossible to discount the oppression of others, except by again
>
> forgetting how we have been hurt. (*Bridge* 30)

For Moraga, if one is always aware of the source of one's pain, as well as the experience

of the pain, it is not easy to discount the sources of pain, and pain, of others.

4. Along with the feminist science fiction writers to whom Haraway refers, that I have listed previously on page 66, n.15, she mentions Luce Irigaray, Cherrie Moraga, Audre Lorde, and Susan Griffin as writers of cyborg fluidity ("Manifesto" 174).

5. The Oankali also have a hierarchical nature that they deny but that I argue is the driving force of their evolutionary practices.

6. Butler describes the birth of the grubs in the following scene: "His body convulsed with the first cut. . . . T'Gatoi seemed to pay no attention as she lengthened and deepened the cut, now and then pausing to lick away blood. His blood vessels contracted, reacting to the chemistry of her saliva, and the bleeding slowed. . . . T'Gatoi found a grub still eating its egg case. The remains of the case were still wired into a blood vessel by their own little tube or hook or whatever. That was the way the grubs were anchored and the way they fed. They took only blood until they were ready to emerge. Then they ate their stretched, elastic egg cases. Then they ate their hosts" (15, 17). See "Bloodchild," *Bloodchild and Other Stories* (NY: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1995).

7. In "Dilemmas of Difference: Feminism, Modernity, and Postmodernism," Christine Di Stefano observes the ubiquity of gender in all cultures because it has a biological base. She does note, however, that while "gender seems to be a nearly universal feature of all human societies," dualism does not always create inequality (64). See *Feminism/Postmodernism*. Linda J. Nicholson, ed. (NY: Routledge, 1990), 39-62.

Chapter 3

Fusion Illusion: The Hell Whole of Symbiotic Psychosis

"*Amentia! Amentia* is what the word was! . . . . 'Amentia.' Then Paki in and Paki out."[1]
—Gordon Lish, *Dear Mr. Capote*

In light of the feminist treatments of gender dualism and race division expounded upon in the previous chapters, I shall now call upon the psychopathology of the"serial" to reveal the psychological foundation of the identity crises and identity politics in America. This chapter will question the implications of boundary transgression and psychological fluidity on (human) identity formation. Mark Seltzer's *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture* examines the phenomenon of the serial killer as a manifestation of the "*pathological public sphere*" in which American society focuses on violence as a result of "[t]he coupling of bodies and machines" and also the "coupling of private and public spaces" (31). Seltzer observes a traumatic loss of identity in the confusion of private/psychological and public/social boundaries that Haraway promotes. This alternate view of fluidity provides cause for concern about Haraway's embrace of the cyborg metaphor to inspire liberation and empowerment. While Haraway concentrates on the cyborg as a site of utopian boundary erosion, Seltzer's description of the serial killer offers a dystopic perspective of boundary loss. His work reveals that "serials" constitute less a physical manifestation of a symbiotic, intimate relationship between humans and machines, as is the case with the Harawayan cyborg, than the psychotic product of the melding of social and psychological, metaphorical and material spheres into which the "self" dissolves.[2] The "serial"'s trauma strongly suggests that Haraway should not discount the

psychological and social trauma involved in evolving from a patriarchal culture that has traditionally invested heavily in the gendered identity of the individual, to a genderless society that eliminates the importance of the wholly bounded individual in favour of a new kind of subjectivity that inspires openness between humans/ animals/ aliens and technology.

Haraway's genderless utopia, also uncharacterized by racial or class divisions, is an attractive but truly impossible ideal. It is also potentially a dangerous society since the dissolution of psychological boundaries is directly linked to aggressive behaviour like that of the serial killer. The psychological profile of serial killers offered by Mark Seltzer identifies serial violence as a product of unsuccessful individuation. He observes in "serials" a traumatic loss of identity related to the confusion of private (psychological) and public (social) boundaries that Haraway promotes.[3] This confusion or disorientation results in their inability, yet fervent desire and compulsive attempts, to achieve individuation. Their frustrated and repeated attempts to distinguish themselves as individuals, are manifested in horrifically violent crimes. Hence, Haraway's refusal to engage with psychoanalytical perspectives on Posthuman identity weakens her conception of a socially practical and desirable cyborg subjectivity and cyborg politics because she minimizes the clear psychological difficulties associated with what is, for the "serial," a psychosis.

Haraway removes herself from any possible psychoanalytic discussions pertaining to serial killers that are certainly relevant to Postmodern discussions of formlessness and boundaries, and thus, also to her cyborg. Indeed, she displays no awareness or recognition of the serial killer's psychology, yet the absence of boundaries is as vital to this figure as they are to her cyborg. Haraway's preoccupation with science fictional cyborgs as constructions of fluidity and hybridity and as an imaginative way to negotiate the increasing technologization of society

prevents her from locating other relevant explorations of consciousness in crime fiction. To Haraway, both fact and fiction participate in the making of social reality, rendering "the boundary between science fiction and social reality . . . an optical illusion" ("Manifesto" 191). Actual and fictional serial killers model themselves and their criminal behaviour on serial killers and killings profiled in the media and in literature; the boundary between fact and fiction, there, is also an optical illusion. Here we see how the "serial" constructs a prosthetic character through "primary mediation" (Seltzer 37).[4] Drawing on James M. Glass's observations about the pain of fragmentation in people with Multiple Personality Disorder (MPD),[5] Leland Swenson's research about organismic distress in evolutionary psychology, Margaret Mahler's and Klaus Theweleit's theories regarding symbiotic psychosis and individuation that elucidate Mark Seltzer's psychoanalysis of the serial killer, as well as Gordon Lish's novel *Dear Mr. Capote*, I shall outline the psychoanalytic and evolutionary limitations of Haraway's utopian cyborg theory by illustrating a dystopia of postmodern socio-psychological boundlessness.

A common by-product of the Postmodern celebration of boundlessness is the rejection of Modern psychological theory and psychoanalytic theory and practice founded on the (generally oedipal) search for wholeness and a focus on the importance of stable boundaries to processes of differentiation and individuation. As Stephen Frosh explains, in *Identity Crisis: Modernity, Psychoanalysis and the Self*, the "self" is an oppressive nominalism/concept under deconstruction in the Postmodern world:

> Postmodernism, in [a] post-structuralist guise, suggests that the illusion of selfhood bolsters the dominant order by allowing appeals to unchanging human nature and by locating the sources of potential resistance, and hence, responsibility within the individual. The postmodernist critique suggests, in

contrast, that individuality is so permeated by sociality that there is no way of

resisting on an individual level at all. More generally, postmodernism opposes all

tendencies to take refuge in any illusions of wholeness or of received wisdom,

even in aesthetic terms. (Frosh 22)

James M. Glass criticizes the Postmodernist reduction of consciousness to a social text. He

contends that the deconstruction of the psychologically unifying and stabilizing "self" that

affords an awareness of and ability to negotiate boundlessness and fluidity is an unfortunate

result of the general Postmodernist "'war on totality'" (xviii-xix). This war on the "self" in the

name of ontological boundlessness is ironically dogmatic in its rejection of Modern

psychoanalysis and consequent refusal to consider the real psychological implications of

fragmentation for psychologically unstable people. This bias, Glass notes, severely restricts the

ability of Postmodern philosophy to be become aware of its own oppressiveness. Referring to

people living with MPD and psychosis, Glass asserts that, "such persons do not have the

capacity to become artists or eloquent poets," and that celebrants of fluidity and formlessness as

anything more than an aesthetic or metaphor "dangerously lose sight of the self" that cannot

enjoy self-deconstruction in a creative and satisfying way from a position of control and self-

awareness (157-158). On the contrary, these people desperately seek wholeness and stability.

At the heart of Haraway's celebration of fragmentation is her rejection of psychology and

psychoanalysis. She rejects oedipal gender constructions and search for "original unity,"

claiming that these mythical constructions are designed to oppress women and resist feminist

empowerment. In the "Manifesto," she states that, "The cyborg is a creature in a post-gender

world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, . . . or other seduction to organic

wholeness through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity" (150).

Her feminist liberation rests in the subversion of psychoanalytic determinations of and restrictions on "self"-creation and also in the idea that empowerment can only be achieved through a process of conscious "self"-definition, a process that is uncomfortably similar to the primary mediation of the serial killer. This fact alone calls for the consideration, in Haraway's construction of cyborg "'unfamiliar' unconsciousness," of the psychosis of the American serial killer (Haraway *Leaf* 125).

In *Serial Killers*, Seltzer calls Postmodern American society a "*pathological public sphere*," characterized by fluidity and the dissolution of boundaries between public and private, individual and society, and psychology and society (6). He traces the serial killer's repeated aggression to seriality generated by the cultural consumption of media technologies of production and reproduction. Although Seltzer's analysis concentrates on the "serial" pathology in terms of serial killers, he asserts that Postmodern society, in general, exhibits a similar cultural psychosis and seriality:

> Serial killing has its place in a public culture in which addictive violence has become not merely a collective spectacle but one of the crucial sites where private desire and public fantasy cross. The convening of the public around scenes of violence—the rushing to the scene of the accident, the milling around the point of impact—has come to make up a *wound culture*: the public fascination with torn and open bodies and torn and open persons, a collective gathering around shock, trauma, and the wound. (1)

Wound culture, to use Seltzer's term, is the site of social *and* psychological fragmentation and fusion, in which similarity/conformity and anonymity characterize seriality. He notes that in the pathological public sphere, there is "a general failure of distinction between subject and space

. . . which means that forms of personation (self-making) are scarcely separable from a radical depersonation (self-absorption in space)" (49). In the search for differentiation, founded on a desire for individuation amidst such conformity, the serial killer is a "'nonperson'" who penetrates physical body boundaries in an attempt to perceive psychological "self" boundaries that seem to be disappearing from Postmodern technoculture.[6]

From his work with women suffering from MPD,[7] Glass notes that he has never observed "the phenomenon of multiplicity of identity . . . [as] a creative or playful or regenerative experience" (xvi) such as Postmodernists like Haraway purport it to be. Glass contends that Postmodernist philosophers and theorists are only able to embrace fragmentation and flux by ignoring the psychoanalytic "self" and thus marginalizing, ironically, the already fragmented self. He concludes from his research that people suffering the trauma of psychological fragmentation experience multiplicity as a terrifying and painful "despair over ever finding a coherent sense" of "self," not as an enriching and liberating opportunity for "self"-creation (xvii). The women Glass interviewed do not experience boundlessness as a tool for escaping from the perspective of the "self," but, on the contrary, as a perpetual torment in the form of a disorienting and disintegrative series of blackouts during the surfacing of alternate personalities (xviii). Consequently, Glass considers the application of Postmodernist deconstruction to personation as a harmful and marginalizing philosophy, asserting that, "the Postmodernist view, if it is not merely a metaphor, [is] a dangerous advocacy" (xii).

Quoting Christine Di Stefano, Glass asks, "'If we are encouraged to embrace fractured identities, we are inevitably drawn to the forbidden question: Fractured with respect of *what*?'" (7). He notes that, for identity to become fractured, it must have an original unity and that fragmentation occurs voluntarily as a self-aware means to achieving a *new* unity (7). Thus, he

suggests that fluidity and boundary play can only be a pleasurable and artistic experience/endeavour if one can engage in it from a position of self-awareness, from a point of orientation. If there exists no stable form to manipulate and deconstruct, but only a pre-existing state of fragmentation such as constitutes the experience of MPD and, as I shall discuss shortly, that of serial killers' psychosis, the already disoriented non-self/selves is/are motivated by a perception of physical pain, to seek the stability of boundaries that afford a degree of self-awareness and comfort. While MPD differs from the psychosis of the serial killer, which I will discuss further on with respect to Mahler's and Theweleit's work, fluidity, fragmentation, and fusion are the direct cause of their respective traumas. While people with MPD live in a psychological realm characterized by perpetual discontinuity, or fragmentation, the "serial" lives in a fluid sphere in which he experiences the absence of boundaries as an overwhelming psychological and physical "self-absorption in space" (Seltzer 49). The serial killer cannot differentiate between "self" and "other." He is at once in perpetual fear of both fragmentation and fusion. Understanding that fragmentation and fusion cause the serial killer's loss of perspective and self-awareness and constitutes a traumatic identity crisis manifested in the public sphere as murder underscores the possible dystopic dimension of Haraway's assertion that as cyborgs, "*we are they*" ("Manifesto" 180, emphasis added).[8]

Turning to the field of evolutionary psychology, Leland Swenson's discussion of "instinctual drift" offers some insight into the difficulties associated with psychological fragmentation and provides some understanding of the psychological basis for the existence of normalizing and pluralizing tendencies towards individuation and self-affirmation in the political sphere (even when to do so clearly sustains oppressive social ideologies and structures). More importantly for this chapter, instinctual drift explains the connection between Postmodern

fragmentation and violence. Swenson, a Professor of Comparative Psychology at Loyola

Marymount University in California, argues against the politically-correct twentieth-century

rejection of instinct and human nature.[9] His work calls into question the Postmodern idea that

the body, along with political and psychological identity, is a palimpsestic social text that can be

endlessly re-written without psychological repercussion, through inverse processes of identity

formation such as primary mediation or cyborgean metaphoric construction. Swenson and Glass

agree that social behaviour and political identity are directly and inevitably influenced by a

human "nature," a psychological ontology deeply entrenched in biological, physiological, social,

and psychological processes of human evolution. The reason that theorizing the "self" as an

endless multitude of perspectives may not be as simple or desirable an endeavour as Haraway

presents it to be, may be found in the evolution of boundary creation/preservation as a survival

technique. The creation of boundaries corresponds to a socio-psychological instinct to contain

and protect one's "self" and/or one's group.

Research on animal behaviour related to eating habits, conducted in the 1960s,

demonstrated that instinctual behaviour prevails over learned behaviour in animals during times

of distress.[10] Evolutionary psychologists are currently exploring the connection of this

"instinctual drift" to "seemingly irrational" aggressive human behaviour (Swenson 1, 11).

Instinctual drift can be defined as "the tendency for all organisms, when under pressure, to resort

to and exhibit their natural tendencies" (McGraw 49).[11] Evidence shows that these tendencies

are very difficult to change and one researcher finds that they "stubbornly resist the effects of

learning experiences in the individual" (Swenson 3).[12] More importantly, research shows that

"aggressive behavior in humans is an instinctual behavior triggered by the sign stimuli of

experiencing one's physical or psychological territory as being invaded, or of otherwise feeling

threatened" (Swenson 5, emphasis added). Hence, the desire to form psychological identity boundaries (and by extension, also political group boundaries), can be understood as an instinctual survival mechanism that is difficult to suppress, even when its expression is understood to enforce oppressive and exclusionary ideologies such as those described by Haraway.

The drive to individuate, to differentiate the "self" from "other," is inherently exclusionary. The threatening dispersal of a familiar and coherent "self" brought on by boundary deconstruction in the Postmodern sphere qualifies as a type of organismic distress (political and psychological/physical) that poses a significant perceived threat to American identity/ies. As I will clarify in my following discussion of psychosis, the serial killer is both an identity in crisis and the representation of a cultural identity in crisis, who resists the implosion of subjectivity with aggressive outward explosions of violence, who lives in perpetual fear of the fragmentation of the "self" into a subsequent fusion of "selves."

Psychologist Margaret Mahler's work with psychotic children concludes that two phases, namely symbiosis and separation-individuation, are essential to forming a full, individual identity. These phases occur in very early childhood, determining the subject's ability to function autonomously and perceive his/her unique place in society. She determines that children who do not successfully complete these two phases develop a condition she calls symbiotic psychosis. This psychosis causes them to behave violently, lashing out in attempts to locate the identity boundaries they have never been able to construct between themselves and other people and objects. While Mahler bases her work on children, Klaus Thewleit adapts her findings to his study of Fascist Germany's soldier males. He posits that parallels between the childhood and training of these soldiers results in their symbiotic psychosis as adults. Mahler

and Theweleit's theories combine to create the profile of a subject who has not formed an individual identity and who lives in a world wherein there is no separation between self and other, private and public, or psychology and society. Psychoanalytically, Mahler's psychotic child and Theweleit's psychotic soldier male mirror the psychological profile of the serial killer. Through Davie, Gordon Lish's *Dear Mr. Capote* explores the mind of a psychotic killer who plays out his psychological trauma on the social stage. As a fictional representation of psychosis, Davie mirrors the criminal and psychopathological profile of real serial murderers, offering a frightening analysis of Postmodern psychopathology.

According to Mahler, the first step in forming a healthy individual identity involves the child's developing the ability to distinguish between his or her self and the mother. "[I]ndividuation," this recognition of the self as an individual, entails the child's psychological separation from a hitherto symbiotic union with the mother during the separation-individuation phase (Theweleit 212, Mahler *Separation* 5). Mahler and colleague, Dr. Bertram J. Gosliner, jointly outline the essential condition for achieving individuation as "[a] strong and adequate symbiotic phase" (Mahler *Infantile* 111), a time generally spanning infancy to early childhood (6 months to 3 yrs), in which a child's whole existence is bound up with the mother's: "The term *symbiosis* in this context is a metaphor. It does not describe, as the biological concept of symbiosis does, what actually happens between two separate individuals . . . . It was chosen to describe that state of undifferentiation, of fusion with mother, in which the 'I' is not yet differentiated from the 'not-I'" (*Separation* 78, Mahler *Human* 9).[13] Mahler and Gosliner go on to note that "[t]he aim and successful outcome of this individuation process is a stable image of the self. . . . [that] depends upon successful identifications on the one hand, and distinction between object- and self-representations on the other" (*Infantile* 111). Mahler likens healthy

individuation to "a second birth experience" (*Separation* 5). Without it, a child is never psychologically whole and must devote his or her energies to protecting his or herself from overwhelming and confusing identifications with physically separate people and things. The construction of psychological boundaries, and recognition of physical ones, are thus necessary to healthy identity-formation.

A healthy symbiotic phase is essential to successful individuation. During this phase, the mother acts as a "'mirroring frame of reference'" (*Separation* 87, *Human* 19) for the child, who begins to develop a sense of the symbiotic self—a precursor to developing an individual identity—according to the mother's own sense of this symbiotic identity. Mahler states that, "[i]f the mother's 'primary preoccupation' with her infant—*her* mirroring function during earlier infancy—is unpredictable, unstable, anxiety-ridden, or hostile; if her confidence in herself as a mother is shaky, then the individuating child has to do without a reliable frame of reference for checking back perceptually and emotionally, to the symbiotic partner" (*Separation* 87). The safer and more confident a child feels during the symbiotic phase, the healthier the individuation will be. If a child feels unsafe and anxious because a mother's overprotective tendencies have instilled in him or her a general fear of being both with and without the mother, individuation will be very difficult. Similarly, if a mother's love is overwhelming and stifling, the child may try, but be incapable of, successfully individuating.

It must be noted that children with symbiotic psychosis do not merely have difficulties separating their identity from that of their mother's. Theweleit expounds upon Mahler's studies of the psychotic child's symbiotic identifications with what he calls "maternal bodies" (213). He contends that without individuation, a child is in lifelong need of identification with larger entities in order to feel whole. In this equation of mothers with representations of the mother,

the child perceives itself (inasmuch as it can perceive a psychological and physical self) as a component of a larger entity:

> What this child seeks (its whole life long, if need be) is unification with maternal
>
> bodies, within which to become "whole," born to completion. The child and the
>
> bodies themselves become progressively larger; the child's lack of boundaries
>
> allows it to fantasize itself as coupled with even the most massive of quantities. It
>
> calls upon bodies to nourish it and give it shelter. In this sense, rather than
>
> because of any supposed relation to the real mother, it seems legitimate to refer to
>
> those bodies as "maternal." (Theweleit 213)

The maternal bodies to which Theweleit refers play the role of the mother in the symbiotic psychotic's search for wholeness, boundedness. As totalities, they enable a subject who is not "whole" to insert himself or herself into something that resembles the mother-child symbiotic union, thus constructing a sense of wholeness. The soldier male, for example, needs to be part of the totality of his troop, meaning that as an individual, he is a fragmented subject: "The soldiers' limbs are . . . as if severed from their bodies; they are fused together to form new totalities. The leg of an individual has a closer functional connection to the leg of his neighbor than to his own torso. In the machine, then, new body-totalities are formed: bodies no longer identical with the bodies of individual human beings" (Theweleit 154).

According to Mahler, this "hallucinatory or delusional somatopsychic, omnipotent fusion with the representation of the mother," and in particular the inability to perceive boundaries between the two "actually and physically separate individuals ... is the mechanism to which the ego regresses in cases of the most severe disturbance of individuation and psychotic disorganization" in symbiotic psychosis (*Separation* 79). She discusses the

"quasi-normal negativistic phase of the toddler," as an "accompanying behavioral reaction

marking the process of disengagement from the mother-child symbiosis. The less satisfactory or

the more parasitic the symbiotic phase has been, the more prominent and exaggerated will be

this negativistic reaction" (*Infantile* 115). Hence, the exaggerated and violent behaviour of the

psychotic child, who has not achieved individuation, indicates the absence of cathected physical

and psychological boundaries and the presence only of a disorienting and painful fear of

fragmentation and fusion, of both separation from and union with the mother.

Mahler concludes that children who do not develop a firmly bounded identity, grounded

in rigid distinctions between self and other, experience "symbiotic child psychosis" (*Separation*

21), in which they display violent psychotic behaviour. Due to an unsuccessful individuation

phase, the resulting symbiotic psychotic child often experiences a sense of panic, causing him/

her to lash out violently in an attempt to overcome a sense of fragmentation and feel unified with

other bodies. In the following summary of her studies of psychotic children, Mahler offers two

hypotheses regarding the root of their violent, psychotic behaviour:

> In the symbiotic psychotic child the maturation of ego apparatuses, which is
>
> biologically predetermined, takes place alongside of a lag in development toward
>
> emotional separation-individuation and is therefore experienced as a catastrophic
>
> threat. The panic reactions which ensue when such a child is confronted with the
>
> possibility and the necessity of separate functioning trigger the psychotic defense
>
> mechanisms . . . . The second hypothesis . . . state[s] that normal separation-
>
> individuation is the first crucial prerequisite for the development and maintenance
>
> of the "sense of identity" . . . . the psychotic child never attains a feeling of
>
> wholeness, of individual entity . . . . [rather], in symbiotic psychosis, . . . there is

fusion, melting, and lack of differentiation between the self and the nonself.

(*Separation* 5)

In short, Mahler believes that the psychological impulse to individuate is biologically predetermined, and that when individuation does not occur, the subject cannot reconcile its physical ability to function autonomously with a lack of perception of itself as a separate and whole identity, capable of doing so.

Mahler's research goes on to discuss the psychotic child's "ambitendency—fear of separation yet fear of reengulfment—and the associated negativism" (*Infantile* xiv).[14] She concentrates on the fact that an infant devotes its attention to the reduction of unpleasurable tension, which it expels by "urinating, defecating, coughing, sneezing, spitting, regurgitating, [and] vomiting" (*Infantile* 111). However, until reaching the separation-individuation phase, the infant must also rely on the mother for tension reduction via her "ministrations in reducing the pangs of need-hunger" (*Infantile* 111). Thus, for the symbiotic psychotic child, the need for tension reduction continues to involve both its own efforts as well as those of the mother. When the child experiences tension which requires the mother's soothing, but finds that care is not forthcoming, he or she lapses into "a state of organismic distress . . . phenomenologically similar to the panic reactions of later life . . . . [and which] are followed by restitutive productions [that] serve to maintain or restore . . . the delusion of oneness with the mother" (*Infantile* 132, 139). Similar states of distress occur in both the soldier male and the serial killer.

In *Male Fantasies*, Klaus Theweleit uses Margaret Mahler's portrait of the symbiotic psychotic child to analyse Germany's Fascist soldier males as "not-yet-fully-born" (211-212). He extrapolates her findings concerning the violent psychotic behaviour of young children, to explain that the soldier male's appetite for violence stems from a similar inability to achieve

individuation (212). Theweleit asserts that, due to an inadequate symbiotic phase, the soldier males of early twentieth-century Fascist Germany never effected individuation. He claims that "a psychic type whose basic structure was more or less 'psychotic' may have been the norm in Germany (at the very time when Freud was writing), and that this type was far more 'normal' and more common than Oedipus" (213). I am less concerned with how Theweleit perceives the childhood of these soldiers as the basis for their psychotic personality, as I am with his description of their psychosis also as a product of primary mediation during military training. In the military, the soldier males experienced a second upbringing, or training, but as a soldier rather than a child. This training provided them with an inadequate symbiotic phase in the sense that the maternal body, here the troop, the army, the fighting machine, is a larger entity of which the soldier is meant to remain only a small component. Thus, the prevention of a "'full'" birth of the individual identity of the soldier male is the beginning of his psychosis (212). The success of the German army depended on the smooth integration of all its parts, soldiers working in unison. The soldier was trained out of individuality and subjected to fusion with the troop.

The childhood symbiotic phase to which Theweleit refers is one in which the soldiers are "inundat[ed] as children by a mother's intermittent or sometimes constant and intense emotional stimulation. Incapable of working over . . . their fear of the 'devouring' mother, they seem to have escaped 'inward,' fleeing from the mother" (212-213). The "war-machine" (185) itself is the maternal body with which the soldiers identify. By focussing his attention inward, a soldier prevents himself from "'cathecting' [his] own periphery," which would "consolidate the sense of self different from the mother and others" that is essential to the separation-individuation phase (212).

Although the soldier is prevented from developing as an individual, Mahler's research

shows that the impulse to individuate is never extinguished. The perpetual need to reconcile

physical abilities and boundaries with psychological ones characterizes us as embodied humans,

a "reality" that Postmodernism attacks. Theweleit identifies two coping mechanisms used by the

soldiers to cope with their sense of fragmentation, that co-exist with a sense of unity with a

maternal body—a prosthetic identity. He posits that when the "'first stage' of socialization,"

which is individuation, or the formation of an "'ego,'" is unsuccessful, then the "'second stage'

of socialization," or what he calls the "'drill,'" is what "impose[s] a sense of boundaries on these

men" (213). Routine drills, training and ("self")-discipline, create a sense of order for the soldier

male. Theweleit identifies the psychotic's aggressive behaviour as such a "'maintenance

mechanism,'"[15] a repeatedly frustrated and violent attempt at fusion with a maternal body that

never brings the desired feeling of wholeness.

The relevance of Mahler and Theweleit's psychoanalyses of symbiotic psychotics to

Seltzer's serial killer and also to Haraway's cyborg, is located in the violent behaviour that

results from the absence of identity-forming boundaries. The danger of such a lack is often

illustrated in crime fiction accounts of serial killers. Further discussion of Mahler and

Theweleit's theories is therefore best situated within a discussion of Gordon Lish's *Dear Mr.

Capote*, which explores the link between psychosis and aggression through the character of

Davie, an "all-American" serial killer. The construction of Davie's psychopathology illustrates

Daniel Bell's notion of "'spillover'" as "[t]he very 'opening' of the borders between the

psychical and the social" (quoted in Seltzer 113). Certain individuals—women—within the

public sphere become victims of Davie's psychological illness. Their deaths play a public role

in Davie's private psychological drama/ trauma. The painful opening up of borders between

Davie's psychic and social realms is the larger issue surrounding any study of serial killers, into which a study of his psychopathology provides vital insights. As an adult symbiotic psychotic, Davie's thought patterns and violent behaviour illustrate the ambitendency which cause his panic attacks. These attacks, brought on by delusions of engulfment by maternal bodies, in turn lead him to kill women in a constant attempt to individuate. Insights provided by Lish's novel into the psychopathology of "serials," reveal the dangerous psychosis that threatens to engulf Haraway's cyborg.

Dear Mr. Capote is the autobiography of a fictional serial killer, Davie. Its intended audience is Truman Capote. Davie wants his story told to the public, and he wants Capote to write the best-seller. Davie wants America to know how "normal" he is, how "typically" American, and also why he kills women by stabbing them in the left eye with his knife, Paki. Like Theweleit's Fascist soldier male, Davie displays behaviour patterns that coincide with Mahler's portrait of the "'psychotic'" child (Theweleit 211). He is unable to create an identity for himself, separate from that of the early child-mother symbiotic relationship, and, consquently, continues in his adult life to behave psychotically. His failure to individuate means that he is, psychologically, "not-yet-fully-born," and this locks him into "perpetual efforts at fusion [with] . . . 'maternal bodies'" in an effort to become "'whole,' born to completion" (Theweleit 211-213, 221). He therefore uses the "'drill'" as a surrogate for the "psychic agency of the 'ego'" (213), which would normally provide him with an external sense of self—a perception of the psychological and physical limits of "Davie." Finally, Theweleit's idea of the psychotic's use of "'maintenance mechanisms'" explains why a subject like Davie, who has not achieved a "'full' birth state" (here, psychologically), is given to violent behaviour in his attempt

to become "whole" (Theweleit 212). As a symbiotic psychotic, Davie is locked into a pattern of aggressive behaviour.

Like the psychotic child and the soldier male, Davie has undergone various traumatic experiences as a result of an inadequate childhood symbiotic phase. He recalls alternately vigorous and flaccid emotional stimulation from his mother, rather than a healthy, constant emotional presence. Consequently, he has never achieved a state of individuation. Davie describes his mother's love, in one instance, as all-encompassing. His recollection explains his negativistic reaction to intense and inconsistent emotional stimulation:

> Up until we moved, I was the happiest boy there was. She was always saying I was out of this world. . . . . She said I was a picture-book boy. But what did she say after she saw Buddy Brown move in next door? Did she say picture-book boy anymore?
>
> I thought everything loved me. I thought the sky and trees and clouds loved me. I thought the sky wanted to reach down its arms down and hug me. I thought everything wanted to grab me and squeeze.
>
> Okay, I lied. Meaning, even before Buddy Brown, I sometimes got a little sweaty. Here's why—if things loved me so much, maybe they were going to get me and keep me!
>
> This is the reason I did not go out unless she made me. It wasn't safe outdoors. Whereas inside, it was a little less jumpy and sweaty. (Lish 14-15)

What is evident in Davie's psychology is nothing less than the same escaping inwards from the "devouring" mother that Theweleit observes in the soldier male. According to Seltzer, "sea, sky, rivers, trees—are the traditional *crowd symbols*. The dream of a direct affiliation with Nature is

the dream of a direct *fusion* with an indistinct mass of others: the complete fusion with the mass at the expense of the individual" (19). Davie's failure to individuate prevents him from differentiating between him "self" and "other," which according to Mahler and Gosliner, is part of the outcome of a successful separation-individuation phase (*Infantile* 111).

As well as subjecting her son to intense emotional stimulation at various times, at others his mother seems to have provided him with inadequate emotional support. Davie obsesses about the fact that "nobody told [him] what a minute was," and about how his mother would leave him alone in the car while she went shopping, saying "'I'll only be a minute'" (Lish 20-21). Having clearly been unable to individuate, Davie is not able to recognize his mother as an "other" and cannot, therefore, reconcile his need for her with her leaving him alone:

> I knew it wasn't long. This is how I figured I could wait it out. But then I couldn't. I would try and try, but then it got to be too much longer than I thought it was going to be, and who could hold it anymore? So then I would lock the doors and get on the floor . . . . So I just had to do it. I tried hard not to. But it was no use. It was like having to go to the bathroom. It was like squeezing and squeezing to stop it. But then you can't. And you start knowing here it comes. So this is when I get the feeling I mean when I get sweaty. . . . Here is when I have to squeeze the hardest, and then I let go and push the door.
>
> I ran. Across the sidewalk and into the first store. (Lish 21, 23)

Mahler's analysis of the separation-individuation phase confirms that Davie remains locked in a symbiotic union with his mother. Davie's psychotic "ambitendency," his fear of being swallowed up by maternal bodies or crowd symbols, and here, his alternative fear of separation from his mother, creates within him a confused psychological state.[16] Clearly, Davie's severe

panic reactions to alternate smothering by and separation from his mother indicates his identification with maternal bodies that reveals the inadequacy of his symbiotic phase. Davie has never reached the stage "of becoming 'I,'" and lacks any secure sense of internal/external boundaries (Theweleit 212). Unable to deal with the polarity of constant feelings of engulfment and fragmentation, Davie is subject to corresponding panic attacks and aggressive behaviour throughout his life as he instinctively seeks to individuate.

As previously mentioned, the psychotic child concentrates on alleviating unpleasurable tension by "urinating, defecating, coughing, sneezing, spitting, regurgitating, [and] vomiting" (*Infantile* xiv). This child continues to require its mother's involvement in the reduction of tension. Evidently, Davie both fears his mother's presence, and yet requires it to feel secure. When she leaves him physically alone, he lapses into "a state of organismic distress . . . similar to the panic reactions of later life," which lead directly to his killings that in turn "serve to maintain or restore . . . the delusion of oneness with the mother" (*Infantile* 132, 139). Ironically, preserving this oneness, for the soldier male as for Davie, requires the destruction, the penetration, of the "other." Like the soldier male, Davie is unable to deal with what he experiences as a fragmentation of the self—the physical and (for him) psychological separation of himself and his mother.

Having established the psychotic child and adult's constant need for union with maternal bodies, we can further examine Davie's participation in the phenomenon of symbiotic psychosis. When he has unresolved tension, Davie panics. He tells Capote several times how frightened he is of bodily harm, a fear that represents his sense of "self"-dissolution as physical trauma. Unable to differentiate between himself and his victims, he panics when describing one of his killings, as though he could himself be hurt in the process:

Yours truly was the only (joke) eye-witness, ha ha.

HEY, HOLD IT, HOLD IT, HOLD IT!

That was way out of line and I know it. . . . I am getting the jitters again.

Okay. Okay. Deep breaths, deep breaths. Time out for yours truly to get calm

and collected again.

Ben Bernie. Hey, Ben Bernie.

This is Ben Bernie saying good-night and pleasant dreams. (Lish 113)

Throughout the novel, Davie insists that he has been on the radio. When he panics, he invokes

his association with the media, with television personalities he knows or claims to have played,

and with voices he claims to have enacted on the radio. The media is a maternal body for Davie.

The soothing effect of his conception of this union is that of a mother reducing tension in a child.

It makes him calm and sleepy; he affirms, "it's like *yowsah, yowsah, yowsah* . . . it makes me

want to sleep" (Lish 152).

Theweleit notes that, for the psychotic child, the maternal bodies become progressively

larger and that the symbiotic child will continue to engineer attempted unions with them. Davie

not only attaches his identity to the radio, but to "the world's largest network, the Mutual

Broadcasting System" (Lish 98). Obviously, this is a totality larger than his mother, but it is

important that his first associations with the Mutual Broadcasting System are linked to his

relationship with her: "*Young Doctor Malone,* . . . we used to listen to that one together. . . . I'm

on the hassock and she's in the chair and the light is coming in from behind her. Whereas the

other things are the needle and thread and *Young Doctor Malone* on the radio!" (Lish 73).

Establishing a union with a maternal body is important to Davie, who as an adult no longer has a

child's access to his mother. As a symbiotic psychotic, he requires help to expel tension from

his own body. For him, the radio is a link to his mother, an extension and completion of his own body and its functions, and a union from which he is not capable of distinguishing himself. Theweleit claims that, this "impulse toward fusion" is propelled by the need "for the missing half without which it cannot *be*" (Theweleit 213).

According to Mahler, the psychotic child needs to bind his externally and physically fragile psychological "self:"

> Owing to the inability of the utterly brittle, vulnerable ego structure that the symbiotic psychotic organization entails, the problems of coping with the inundation of unneutralized . . . [tension] from within, as well as with complex traumatic overstimulation from without, continually threaten the child's ego to the breaking . . . point. (Theweleit 217)

The psychotic child experiences external overstimulation, since it is incapable of "integration and synthesis of inside and outside stimuli" (Theweleit 217). Owing to the failure at individuation, this child "is not equipped with the perceptual faculties capable of allowing it to work over . . . movements external to it" in the same way that it cannot "work over [a] fear of the devouring mother" (Theweleit 217, 213). This means that external movement "penetrates directly into the child, [whereupon] its ego then fragments with extreme rapidity and releases destructive energies. 'With his entire body being suffused with primitive aggression, the fear of exploding and disintegrating into bits'" are what the psychotic child fears most (Theweleit 217).

Psychotic children and adults enact various form of the drill in order to impose some sort of external boundaries on themselves to prevent fragmentation. The soldier male constructs "a body armor" that he "wears" to keep his fragile identity intact (Theweleit 143). The hierarchical relationships within the military as well as the strict regimentation of military training form a

maternal totality (in the previously described sense), within which the soldier male inserts himself in order to structure his "self." Military barracks and academies, the troop, even the soldier's uniform serve to buttress the soldier's identity—he is not a whole, but part of a whole (Theweleit 206-225). External elements replace the psychic agency of the ego which the soldier male lacks (213).

Davie puts himself through various versions of the drill for reasons similar to those of the soldier. He regimentalizes his behaviour, imposes external order on himself to replace the absence of internal psychological apparatus. His lack displaces his own interior as the site of his psychology. That site exists outside his body, in the public sphere, located in his relationships to other objects. Davie's psychopathology is constituted by a fear of fragmentation and the subsequent searching for yet feeling stifled by fusion with maternal bodies.

It has already been mentioned that Davie's greatest fear is of bodily harm. This manifests itself in his relationship with "the boy." This boy is not Davie's son, but rather it is Davie himself as a child. Hearkening back to the notion that the psychotic child and the soldier male cannot integrate inside and outside stimuli, we see here that Davie's fear of bodily harm relates to the same inability. Furthermore, he is afraid of bodily/external harm because he cannot separate it from psychological/internal tension and pain. His perception of psychological unboundedness as physical trauma is what makes Davie so terribly afraid of people, of being engulfed by a crowd:

> Okay. Here is the thing. People make a wave! . . . .
>
> It is like a wave of ocean coming. The second thing is, it always goes in a direction which isn't the one it is supposed to go in. It's like when the ocean goes

against the natural nature of things. In other words, watch out, something is definitely coming!

I for one am always set up for this when I am on the streets of Gotham. This is because a decent citizen has to be. Otherwise, here comes bodily harm or worse. . . . . You have to look with both eyes! You have to watch for the wrong type of wave!

I say make it second nature.

I don't have to tell you the number of times the boy has been told to do this—make it second nature. (Lish 30)

Davie's way of coping with painful stimuli is to train himself to guard against it—against people. He talks to himself on a walkie-talkie that he keeps in his pocket, so that he can remain in touch with "the boy" in case anything happens: "Listen, I am in Constant Touch on the seven-watter. 'Red Dog, Red Dog, all clear? This is Blue Dog calling Red Dog, please answer please!'" (Lish 32, 79). Davie is both training officer and soldier, both adult and child:

'IN MY HOUSEHOLD, THE TRAINING is my department . . . . Bodily harm is the fastest thing which happens . . . . Which is why you have to watch the foot traffic for the wave. Which is how I am training the boy. I tell him for him to keep his eyes wide open for how the foot traffic is going . . . . This is how the wave starts, first this little speeding up here and this little speeding up there, then the next thing you know the whole thing of it is going crazy and is racing in another direction! . . . . I keep telling this to the boy, I say, 'Stay on your toes in the corners of your eyes.'" (Lish 32 & 35)

Davie assumes the role of trainer in order to guard against trauma, since his mother failed him in that department: "I do not want the boy not to know the things I didn't and vice versa" (Lish 8). He wishes to provide "the boy" with as much education as possible, to spare himself the trauma that resulted from his own unsatisfactory symbiotic phase. Via "the boy," he seeks to prevent the ignorance and state of unpreparedness that has left him so traumatized. He never knew what a minute was. Davie points to what he found, as a child, to be humiliating gaps in knowledge about simple matters like the fact that particles floating through the are dust which is what his mother vacuums up, and that voices on the radio do not come from people *inside* the radio or from inside his head. His ignorance in these matters indicates to him that his mother failed him in her role as a teacher (Lish 16-17). Consequently, he vows to "never miss an opportunity" to educate "the boy" (Lish 48).

Symbiotic psychotics use the drill to artificially structure their lives, so that they are "capable of social functioning" instead of just being "clinically symbiotic" (Theweleit 213). Although this lends their lives some semblance of normalcy, psychotics periodically need to relieve psychic tension that builds within them. Mahler and Theweleit use the term "'maintenance mechanisms' . . . to designate the aggressive behaviour of psychotic children" (Theweleit 210). While searching for unification with maternal bodies, seeking to reclaim the symbiotic mother-child union, the psychotic harbours negative emotions toward the mother. The mother is "the half from which the not-yet-fully-born was once prematurely released, incomplete and violated, to 'live' with open wounds. From this, the relationship with the missing half is marked by revenge, which . . . cannot fail to transform the artificial and violent symbiosis that is to follow into a relationship of domination" (Theweleit 213 & 216). The "artificial and violent symbiosis" is the psychotic child's attempt at union with other bodies. The soldier male

violently dominates his union with the enemy: "These men 'screamed for the enemy' as babies scream for food 'with tearing rage in their hearts.' Now at last they can take revenge 'with tears in their eyes' for all the pain they have ever suffered . . . . in this moment of discharge, streams are released to flow toward an enemy with whom penetration will be mutual" (Theweleit 182).

We can answer Theweleit's question: "What processes in the act of killing give him [the soldier] the pleasure he can apparently no longer find elsewhere?"(143) by saying that killing allows him to release tension directed toward his mother for the trauma suffered from an inadequate symbiotic phase and subsequent premature separation. Considering the external location of the soldier's psychology, "the physical construction of his body precludes any successful discharge of psychic tension, [therefore] his drives find the only available outlet; they escape in objectified form, as blood" (Theweleit 194).

As a psychotic child/adult, Davie uses the drill in an attempt to consolidate his identity when he fears fragmentation. In addition to barricading himself inside totalizing bodies (seeking wholeness through identifications with maternal bodies like the radio), he must find an outlet for his tension in order to maintain a socio-psychic equilibrium. The same impetus to spill blood characterizes both the soldier's and Davie's release of psychic tension. Davie is particularly fascinated by the death of one his victims, a fat woman, because he finds tremendous release in externalizing internal gore. Knowing what we do about the psychotic's object relations, it does not matter that it is *her* insides he draws out. Davie keeps returning to the fact that hers was the only instance in which he was able to see her insides "coming out and out. Like a lump sort of, only with these bubbles behind it pushing it out" (Lish 90).

Davie's relationship with his mother is one he is driven to control aggressively; it is this relationship that he addresses with the murder of each victim. He retaliates against the

abuse he has suffered from his mother, the most psychically devastating of which is her premature (for him) abandonment of their symbiotic union. He relates a pre-killing example of one of his attempts to release psychic tension when, left in the car one time as a child, he describes a squeezing feeling that moves him to lock the doors in an effort to contain himself, to keep his "self" together. Realizing the need for release, he says: "Here is where I have to squeeze the hardest, and then I let go and push the door" (Lish 24). As he grows older, murder becomes the maintenance mechanism that brings release for Davie, allowing him to expel his tension into the public sphere.

In his ambitendent efforts to fuse with and individuate from maternal bodies, Davie's inability to recognize physical boundaries as markers that also separate psychological boundaries, leads him to focus on the little he can perceive of the border between himself and another individual. His killings involve his sudden uttering of a word of the day, taken from his "Word-a-Day calendar,"[17] to a chosen female victim. His unexpected approach and sudden utterance of isolated words like "*Capstone*," "*Impediment*," and "*Amentia*" cause the women to turn and look at him—eyes wide open in surprise, whereupon he stabs them in the left eye with his knife (3, 6, 132). Something in this scenario bothers Davie, although it is not the murder of innocent women:

Sometimes there is this click, okay?—and other times there isn't.

My own theory is it could be this or it could be that. The click, I mean. Okay, it's maybe she's got on contacts, which is one idea. But I'm not one hundred percent convinced. For instance, it could be you maybe hear a pop and it comes out sounding like a click. So you say to me, "A pop? What pops?" And I say to you it's maybe the eyeball or the brain . . . . But just for argument's sake,

like there could be this skin or shell or something. You see what I mean? Like

with a grape maybe. I mean, there's maybe this thing which goes around like a

rind on the brain. Except you only hear it sometimes. On the other hand, this

could be because you don't always stop to think to yourself it is time for you to

listen close. (Lish 89)

The click, or pop, bothers Davie because he senses that there is some kind of a boundary he is

transgressing. He senses that maybe people have a rind, like a grape, but he does not really

know what to make of this insight. It bothers him because he doesn't feel like he has

boundaries, yet senses that others perhaps do.

Seltzer explains that the blurring of boundaries between inside and outside creates a

pathological public sphere: "this bordering of the social on the psychiatric—is the malady itself,'

the public's psychopathology, but what of the killer himself (113)? *Symbiotic Psychosis.* That is

what the word is. When psychology spills over into society, the "self" becomes a fusion of

"others," and the public sphere becomes a "private" arena. The serial killer's wholely deviant

behaviour is the result of the necessary maintenance mechanisms he employs in his endless

journey toward individuality and away from fusion and anonymity. "Such children," says

Theweleit in reference to psychotic children, "have little choice, under the conditions of a

particular upbringing, but to become . . . what clinical psychiatrists would call manifestly

insane" (211). Fused into a "hell whole," Davie's symbiotic psychosis leaves him little choice

but to penetrate bodies and to kill; for him it is a question of "self" survival. In this kind of

psychopathology lies some of the "dangerous possibilities" of the Harawayan cyborg's "potent

fusions" ("Manifesto 154)—the dark side of fluidity that is disturbingly absent from cyborg

politics.

Lish's portrayal of a serial killer coincides with Seltzer's theories in *Serial Killers*, where the behaviour of the male serial killer is seen as a violent reaction to the "coming down of the boundaries between inside and outside, between the psychological and social" that is largely facilitated by the proliferation of "cultural forms (literary, visual, and technological)" (*Serial Killers* 113, *Bodies and Machines* 4). Both Seltzer and Lish understand the disappearance or absence of such boundaries as disorienting and destructive. Haraway's contribution to Posthumanist theory, in the face of disappearing psychological and social boundaries in the fragmentation and fusion of Postmodern technoculture, is a theoretical cyborg identity that thrives on boundlessness. That she proposes to conceive of new, more open social relationships and affiliations, between people of traditionally different cultural, economic and gender backgrounds, without considering the psychological implications, is an unfortunate result of her disinclination to engage in psychoanalytic theories of the "self" (*Leaf* 125). Such a disinclination prevents her from considering the potential dangers of the boundless psychology. The mere fact of our being human, with identities that are both conceptually and physically defined, precludes us from living without boundaries. We require markers with which to recognize ourselves as individuals, and against which to recreate and redefine ourselves. The markers may disappear, but only to be relocated elsewhere. Ironically, a consideration of "serial" psychopathology would clarify for Haraway the evolutionary biological and psychological basis for normalizing and pluralizing tendencies exhibited in social reality and in science fiction, and suggest that cyborg fluidity may be a weak, if not a potentially dangerous metaphor. Admittedly, the profiles of the psychotic child and soldier male presented here are located in a more traditionally patriarchal society than Haraway's Postmodern cyborg. However, Lish's postmodern character, Davie, illustrates these figures' continuing relevance to

considerations of Posthuman identity. This Postmodern novel depicts the real disorientation that stems from socio-psychological fusion in the fragmented Postmodern sphere. Davie's character reaffirms Mahler and Theweleit's position that the psychological cathexis of physical boundaries is essential to a healthy and socially functional human identity. Indeed, it just may be that the boundless identity Haraway claims for her cyborg is, in the material world, in fact a psychotic one.[18]

Notes to Chapter 3

1. Amentia: a severe congenital mental deficiency. See Gordon Lish, *Dear Mr. Capote* (NY: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1996), 132-33.

2. The serial killer recalls Yablonsky's description of the "robopath," whose identity and behaviour are externally determined; he or she "has no intrinsic self-definition" (13). For Yablonsky, robopathology is the "social-psychological pathology" of the information age (14). He observes that robopathology is a product of Postmodern technocracy, since the desensitization of people and the systematization of their behaviour "appears to be a built-in part of a technocratic system" that divests individuals of responsibility, transforming them into programmed workers who are "super-conformists" (14). See Lewis Yablonsky, *Robopaths* (NY: Bobbs-Merrill, 1972).

3. Haraway asserts that the cyborg, and hence its subjectivity and political identifications, are "no longer structured by the polarity of public and private," but she engages with this fragmentation only with a view to eradicating gender ("Manifesto 151). For her, fluidity

"defines a technological polis based partly on a revolution of social relations . . . in the household" (151).

4. For the inverse process of identity formation, in which the subject basically consumes an identity that originates externally, see Introduction, p. 9. Primary mediation in the serial killer is observable in his compulsive "consumption" of victims and criminal profiles. There is no boundary between factual and fictional serial killers.

5. While people with MPD are not a joint focus with the serial killer in this chapter, Glass's extensive clinical work with fragmented subjectivities offers some relevant insights into the trauma of the serial killer.

6. A trauma can be either a psychological or physical wound. In the pathological public sphere where the psychological and the social leak into one another, the serial killer's psychological trauma manifests itself in the social sphere as physical trauma.

7. Glass interviewed women diagnosed with MPD at the Sheppard and Enoch Pratt Hospital in Towson, Maryland. See James M. Glass, *Shattered Selves: Multiple Personality in a Postmodern World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), xii.

8. See discussion in Chapter 1, p. 27.

9. Quoting from DeKay and Buss, "Human Nature, Individual Differences, and the Importance of Context: Perspectives From Evolutionary Psychology." *Current Directions in Psychological*

Science 1/6 (1992): 184-189, Swenson affirms, "A long standing dogma in this century's social science has been that the nature of humans is that they have no nature . . . . Evidence that such a view is empirically untenable has been accumulating over the past decade (Swenson 21 of 31). See Leland Swenson, "Biopsychology, Evolutionary Psychology and the Descent of Learning." *A Hundred Years of Learning.* 24 Jan. 2002 <http://bellarmine.lmu.edu/faculty/lswenson/learning511/L16EVPSY.html> p. 21 of 31.

10. See Keller Breland and Marian Breland, *Animal Behavior* (NY: Macmillan, 1966).

11. The Brelands explain this phenomenon as follows: "'learned behavior drifts toward instinctive behavior" (5). See Keller Breland and Marion Breland, "The Misbehavior of Organisms." *Classics in the History of Psychology* 23 Jan. 2002 <http://psyclassics.yorku.ca/Breland/misbehavior.htm> 6 pp.

12. Swenson notes that this conclusion is drawn by K. Z. Lorenz, from his research on fish and bird behaviour that he uses to illuminate behavioural patterns in other mammals (3). Lorenz observes what he considers to be innate behaviour as having "a 'peculiar spontaneity'—the emission of a fixed action pattern is considered to be self-reinforcing" (Swenson 3).

13. Mahler explains, "The term symbiosis is borrowed from biology, where it is used to refer to a close functional association of two organisms to their mutual advantage. . . . The essential feature of *symbiosis* [the inability of a child to progress beyond this stage of fusion with the mother] is hallucinatory or delusional, somatopsychic omnipotent fusion with the representation of the mother and, in particular, the delusion of a common boundary of the two actually and

physically separate individuals. This is the mechanism to which the ego regresses in cases of the most severe disturbance of individuation and psychotic disorganization, which I have described as 'symbiotic child psychosis,'" See Mahler's *On Human Symbiosis and the Vicissitudes of Individuation* (NY: International Universities Press, 1968), 7, 9.

14. Mahler uses the term "ambitendency" to describe the behaviour demonstrated by children who have failed to individuate. She observes this ambivalence in their "rapidly alternating clinging and negativistic behaviors" during which the child displays both a need and a rejection of the mother. See Margaret Mahler, Fred Pine, and Anni Bergman, *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant* (NY: Basic, 1975), 107. In the "Glossary of Concepts" for this text, Mahler, Pine, and Bergman define ambitendency as, "The simultaneous presence of two contrasting, behaviorally manifest tendencies; for example, a child may cry and smile virtually at the same time, approach the mother and at the last minute veer away, or kiss the mother and then suddenly bite her. Ambitendency is behaviorally biphasic" (289).

15. Theweleit notes that Mahler coined the term "'maintenance mechanisms'" in *Infantile Psychosis* to designate the aggressive behavior of psychotic children" (210).

16. During clinical studies of "Stanley," a child suffering from symbiotic psychosis, Mahler observes from his behaviour a state of organismic distress similar to that of Davie. Mahler notes that, "With [Stanley's] entire body being suffused with primitive aggression, the fear of exploding and disintegrating into bits seemed his basic fear" (*Human* 103).

17. Learning new words from his calendar is a form of the drill, one way Davie tries to educate

and "train" himself into stability and being.

18. Clearly not all people who experience varying degrees of unsuccessful individuation actually become serial killers or develop serious psychological illnesses. My discussion of the link between difficulties during the stage of individuation and the development of psychosis is intended only to provide a basis of comparison for the severe psychosis of serial killers and the correlative state of total un-individuation of Haraway's cyborg.

Conclusion

More Than Metaphor?: The "Cyborg"'s "Serial" Reflection

"Look at us in the mirror together."[1]
—Gordon Lish, *Dear Mr. Capote*

The body, insofar as it is a metaphor for the necessary boundedness of human identity, is undergoing a deconstruction that technologically revolutionizes "human" identity and consciousness. The type of systems consciousness supported by abstractionists like Haraway suppresses the human element in the melding of bodies, subjectivities, and technology rather than empowering and liberating it. That Haraway supports the deconstruction of the body for its artistic/political value without taking into account the fact that boundaries are necessary to preserving the difference inherent to embodiment and psychological comfort, is a direct result of her refusal to consider practical examples of people living with racial disempowerment and fragmented/fused identities. Such examples affirm that fragmentation and flux are not desirable or sustainable states for human political and psychological consciousness in the way that they are for technological information systems and also that the compulsion for "self" preservation and creation in Postmodern technoculture is to seek the empowerment of one's identity through the stability and unity of self afforded by the clear delineation of boundaries and difference.

"Cyborgs" and "serials" are products of a Postmodern American "*wound culture*" suffering from an obsession with violence that is an extreme form of a tendency toward

"self"-differentiation (Seltzer 1, emphasis in original). The Postmodern American serial killer, in fact and fiction, serially penetrates body boundaries in desperate attempts to reinstate the material boundaries that provide a psychological basis for differentiation and identity formation. The fact that his natural instinct is to seek stability and unity amidst fragmentation, fusion, and flux—in the face of the threat of "self" dispersal and anonymity—affirms the importance of boundaries to human identity. Similarly, while cyborgs in science fiction "play" with boundaries, their manipulations stem from the desire for and result in the formation of new unities and firmly bounded identities.

Only Haraway's celebratory cyborg seeks to remain suspended in a social and psychological hiatus. Why does Haraway support a permanently fractured state of deconstruction while others seek to reconstruct new boundaries? As suggested in the first two chapters, her social privilege within the traditional patriarchal hierarchy and her conviction that deconstructionism is inherently free of structuralist tendencies prevent her from perceiving any substantial threat of "self"-dissolution that other feminists and psychoanalysts focus on. As seen in these chapters, Haraway is unable to avoid creating new boundaries as she formulates cyborg politics in the "Manifesto" and is thus unable to prevent their influence on her theoretical attempts to subvert hierarchical social relations.

Politics mirrors psychology in "cyborgs" and "serials." The serial killer plays out his symbiotic psychosis in the public sphere; Davie penetrates maternal bodies in order to fuse with them even as he feels himself to be penetrated and overwhelmed by fusion with others. Feminists of colour resist fusion with the totalizing maternal body that is cyborg politics; in Butler's *Dawn* and "Bloodchild,"Lilith and Gan only obey their Oankali and Tlic captors because they are forced into unwanted human-alien unions. Finally,

although white feminists labour to deconstruct gender, the worlds of *Plugged* and *Superluminal* suggest that body dualism continues to inform political structure because the body is more than just a metaphor of solidity. Fluidity certainly exists in these "cyborg" and "serial" relations, but not in perpetuity as the "Manifesto" suggests may be possible.

Evolutionary psychology and psychoanalytic theory reveal the importance of "serials" to Haraway's cyborg. As discussed in the third chapter, empirical evidence in the field of evolutionary psychology reveals the link between aggression and a survival instinct in animals and humans. In situations of organismic distress, if a subject's psychological sense of "self"or physical body is in danger, the subject will lash out in order to protect his/her boundaries. The fragmenting Postmodern American sphere constitutes such a state of distress—an identity crisis. The illustration, in previous chapters, of the link between body-based dualism and the normalization of political structure in cyberculture and technoculture, as well as the self-redeeming quality of body-based group pluralism, now finds a base in biological and psychological evolution—in *human nature*.[2] Unity, stability, boundaries: these constitute what appears to be a psychological and political identity-formation default setting, suggesting that Margaret Mahler correctly locates the impulse to individuate in biology, or at least in the evolution of a human psychology that is inextricably linked to the individuality of the body. Thus, evolutionary psychology *and* psychoanalytic theory underscore N. Katherine Hayles' assertion that the body is a "congealed metaphor" ("Posthuman" 372).

The Harawayan cyborg is not based on practical or real lived experiences of fragmentation, merely on the artistic aesthetic of formlessness and the search for a

feminist utopia. Haraway's utopia is indeed an imaginary and unattainable "no place" because, as a study of "cyborgs" and "serials" suggests, boundlessness is a temporary chaotic crisis state. My contention that boundlessness is unsustainable contributes to my perception of Postmodernity as an in-between stage, a stage of breakdown, in which Modern truths and realities that have ceased making sense are deconstructed so that new concepts and unities that *do* work can be formed. My sense is that Postmodern fragmentation and flux will settle into new reconfigurations of boundaries and hierarchies along lines that are better able to incorporate technology and globalization, as tools for communication and the dispersal of information separate from human consciousness, than present configurations. Thus, unacknowledged by celebrants of boundlessness, Postmodern deconstruction is only a temporary part of a habituated drive to create new unities, not to maintain fragmentation or fusion.

Deconstruction is crucial to the perception of new possibilities and change. Posthuman deconstruction de-naturalizes traditional biological and social human identity so that new identities can evolve. Boundary transgression is crucial to liberating society from the permanent authority or "tyranny" of accepted generalizations, concepts, truths, and assumptions. Boundaries and hierarchies will always exist, but our power to change the face of these various "realities" is the only way open to us to subvert each individual configuration. How we create new possibilities is limited by our own limited perspectives on empowerment and selfhood. Therefore, one theory, philosophy, or movement cannot claim authority over another. Haraway's "Manifesto" claims to be able to speak to and unite all marginalized people on the basis of affinity but cannot

because not all people subscribe to her views on connection and self-creation. Herein I locate the breakdown in cyborg politics despite its promising boundary play.

Postmodern boundary loss has different implications for different people, and thus, the celebration and advocacy of boundlessness as the basis for political and psychological identity creation is itself hierarchical and indicative of the human tendency to employ boundaries in a way that is "self"-seeking, that creates identity according to one's own perspectival goals and desires for selfhood and growth. For example, as a socially privileged and psychologically healthy person, Haraway yearns for the empowerment of creative self-expression; thus she creates cyborg consciousness. Women of colour desire to empower their racial as well as feminist identities, and so they seek connection with other women of colour to the exclusion of other women. White feminists who seek to empower themselves as embodied women focus on maintaining their sense of a bounded, and therefore human, self. Finally, the psychologically fragmented serial killer seeks to create a bounded "self" out of the social chaos he experiences as a traumatic psychological state. Presumably, if Haraway were to consider the effects of psychological fragmentation, she would not consider serial killing to be a creative and liberating act of self-creation, and she would have to consider fragmentation as a state preceding and leading to unity. The boundlessness she advocates is, for her, empowering within a pre-existing hierarchical sphere, but it only offers a continuing sense of loss for those who are already marginalized or disabled within that sphere.

As theorists and fiction writers labour to understand Posthuman relationships and identity in the technocultural sphere, the importance of combining political and psychoanalytic perspectives on identity is becoming more apparent. Seltzer points to the

ever-increasing presence of technology in society, as well as society's relationship to that

technology as the cause of the destructive pathology of technoculture and its serial

killers. Conversely, Haraway attributes importance to technology as a metaphor of

formlessness that should be seen as a predominantly, if not a wholly creative force.

"Cyborgs" and "serials" can and should be brought together to highlight two

diametrically opposed interpretations of boundlessness, and to temper utopian with

dystopian views of deconstruction. "Serials" and most feminist "cyborgs" caution us that

to ignore the boundaries according to which we chart our identities is to disable ourselves

in perceiving both the political and psychological "self" oppression of each position, and

especially of Haraway's theoretical "non-position." Boundary loss would effect a

fragmentation of various political boundaries and a subsequent disorienting and

oppressive fusion of "selves," that, far from what Haraway asserts, can only assure

homogeneity—a melting pot, so to speak—not a heterogeneous gathering of differences.

The preceding examination of competing American celebration and

disapprobation of the Postmodern aesthetic of boundlessness suggests tempering

celebratory views with the revelation of the unsustainability of deconstruction and also

suggests that American and French Posthuman feminist discourse could further elicit

useful psychoanalytic notions of difference and unity in the practical rather than

theoretical empowerment of women. As a Postmodern celebrant of boundlessness,

Haraway should look, perhaps, not to subvert *hierarchy* but to empower women and

feminist consciuousness*es* through affiliations made between exclusive political positions.

In this way, her cyborg politics could remain sensitive to other perspectives.

Academically responsible feminist projects of empowerment can only emerge from the

celebration and preservation of human difference in the face of technological conformity, observable for instance in Kristeva's feminist-psychoanalytic perspective wherein only healthy and centred individuals can appreciate "essential 'multiplicity' as a human being" (quoted in Glass 19), experiencing stability and individuality in the *awareness* of one's fragmentation and fusions. Theoretical analysis and fictional representations of cyborg women of colour and serial killers confirms the existence of a political and psychological drive towards unity and boundedness that enables a subject to negotiate technocultural flux from a stable position rather than from within a disorienting fragmentation/fusion of positions. Thus, Haraway's vision of feminist empowerment in the Postmodern sphere should incorporate the boundedness focused on by other American feminists as well as French feminist-psychoanalysts as a necessary and useful tool for empowering women of different backgrounds as *women* rather than as abstract self-disconnected systems consciousness.

While it would be nice to think that liberation from political oppression and marginalization can stem from a simple re-conception of the nature of boundaries and identity, and thus, of consciousness, people must still function in the material world, where boundaries are changing but *not* disappearing. Despite American technoculture's current spiralling through virtual reality, we must realize that to an extent VR is not much different from material reality. Humans live in *both* the imaginative and actual spheres that exist in tension. This tension indicates that material and ontological boundaries will continue to interact and thus point the way to a negotiable version of reality, virtual or otherwise. The Posthuman frontier is being defined, not by boundlessness but in reaction against it. What remains to be seen is not whether identity will continue to fragment, but

in what configurations the boundaries will eventually solidify today, and in the "unbounded" future yet to come.

Notes to Conclusion

1. Gordon Lish, *Dear Mr. Capote* (NY: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1983), 183.

2. I think that people have had difficulty with the concept of human nature because it has come to imply a kind of unchangeableness and rigidity that imposes restrictions on human identity and relations. Whatever we can call human nature, however, is inextricably bound up with processes of evolution and is consequently also subject to (albeit slow) change. The fact that human nature *evolves* means that it is both restrictive and liberating at any given time. In the age of technoculture, when humans are evolving physically through the use of prosthetics, implants, and genetic manipulation at a rate (seemingly) exceeding that of our psychological and social evolution, it is not difficult to understand the desire of Postmodernists like Haraway to bridge the gap. Consciousness, however, proves more resistant to manipulation than the body and, ironically, is already working to restrict the types of choices and changes made in this era of participant evolution.

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