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2012

https://doi.org/10.25595/148

Veröffentlichungsversion / published version
Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Puleo, Alicia H.: *From Cyborgs to Organic Model and Back : Old and New Paradoxes of Gender and Hybridity*, in: Comparative Critical Studies, Jg. 9 (2012) Nr: 3, 349-364. DOI: https://doi.org/10.25595/148.

Erstmalig hier erschienen / Initial publication here: https://doi.org/10.3366/ccs.2012.0068

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FREIE UNIVERSITÄT BERLIN

HUMBOLDT-UNIVERSITÄT ZU BERLIN

Comparative Critical Studies 9.3 (2012): 349–364
Edinburgh University Press
DOI: 10.3366/ccs.2012.0068
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www.euppublishing.com/ccs

From Cyborgs to Organic Model and Back: Old and New Paradoxes of Gender and Hybridity

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Born during the late Scholastic period, nominalism is the philosophical theory which refuses to accept the ontological existence of general notions. It only considers particulars and asserts that no universals exist, only individual things and creatures. This stands in opposition to Plato's world of Ideas, ideas based on an independent reality which precedes beings. For nominalism, a general concept such as 'man' is only a useful communication tool and does not refer to a common essence existing beyond individuals from which an abstract notion is constructed. This is one of the few doctrines emerging from scholasticism to have such a contemporary feel. As Ernst Bloch demonstrated in his Leipzig lectures, this doctrine reflected the beginning of the crisis of feudalism.[1] This order, which determined each person's life from birth to death starts to lose legitimacy around the end of the thirteenth century with the development of commerce and urban centres. From Duns Scotus's nominalism emerged the modern subject as a dynamic process of self-constitution[2] and foundation of reality. Heidegger's famous critical interpretation of the concept of *subjectum* will present this nominalism as a construction of the world's image.[3]

Nominalism could therefore be another name for modern individualism. This doctrine's refusal of essences allowed so-called natural borders to be crossed. In its rejection of an essentialist standpoint, nominalism favoured the transgression of the social limits of feudal orders, of race, and of sex; or, to name it more precisely, of gender. It thereby plugs into the tradition of civil and political liberties.

Nominalism's emphasis on the singularity of each individual and its reluctance to accept groups and hierachies as universal entities opened the door to a legitimate transgression of sexual borders. The

masculine and the feminine in effect endorsed the expression of a hidden essence which can produce monsters when not duly respected. Since an immutable and sacred natural order no longer exists, blood and characteristics are able to mix. By the second half of the eighteenth century, Diderot conceives the living being as the combination of sensitive molecules ('molécules sentantes').[4] He suggests the possibility of hybrids created by science. Mixing species: what for Diderot was a daring hypothesis has today become a reality.

The etymology of the word 'hybrid' goes back to the Latin *hybrida* which means 'mixed blood'. Yet this word also refers to *hybris*, excessiveness, so detested in Ancien philosophy. In the *Dictionnaire Larousse*, three different uses of the adjective 'hybrid' are found. The first refers to selected cross-breeding within one species; the second discusses plant breeding within the same species or involving different species; finally, the third, broader use introduces the word 'hybrid' when something is made of 'disparate elements'. The noun 'hybrid' refers to any 'hybrid animal or plant' and can refer to genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and new biotechnologies. One wonders, therefore, whether the idea of excessiveness is not taking over from that of simple mixing, given the obvious risks of changes in natural ecosystems that these organisms introduce in an environment already threatened by contamination and climate change. The problem, in my view, lies in the confusion between biological limitations defined by natural history (e.g. difference between species) and limitations established by oppressive cultural practices (e.g. role models, status, norms and restrictions linked to gender). While the former limitations are the product of an inescapable process of evolution, even if they are harmful to human and non-human life on earth, the second are devices aiming at the domination by some human beings of others and of the non-human world.

In this article, I shall consider the concept of gender as a particular case of hybridity derived from nominalism. This notion has led to important social transformations and to significant epistemological changes which have been visible in the social sciences for the last thirty years or more. In order to do so, I shall first outline how women were conceptualized during the era dominated by essentialism, be it religious or supposedly scientific. I shall then examine the epistemological and social changes linked to the emergence of the notion of genre which will be opposed to that of sex as a cultural, even disciplinary component imposed by society on anatomical differences. Finally, I shall focus on the recent resignification of the concept of gender due to a radical

constructivism which aims to mask any trace of the concept of sex below that of constructed gender, of cyborg and of artificial body construct. I shall argue that, in certain cases, techno-feminism's belief that science liberates women leads to a lack of critical outlook towards the economic-technological system. In particular, I shall consider the feminist theoretician Donna Haraway's hope of a 'monstrous world'[5] free from gender constraints and where those hybrids named GMOs could be used positively.

FROM THE FALL TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE SPECIES

The principal monotheistic religions introduced man as the model of what is properly human. Woman was only an inferior, subservient being, a defective copy of the original intended by God. Whether she belonged to our species was even questioned. This flawed, sometimes malevolent creature introduced Evil into the world. This idea is shared by many mythologies, ranging from Greek mythology to Amazonian traditions. In versions excluding the tragedy of the Fall and in simply ontological interpretations, it is also found in the texts of the most recognized philosophers. In his *Politics*, Aristotle associates women with slaves and animals, all instrumental tools for the Greek citizen. Neither defeated Barbarians, nor women, nor animals possessed what defined the free man: reason. In *The Banquet*, Plato considered love towards women as an inferior desire which produced carnal children, subjugated to the cycle of birth and death, while love between men was an attraction between equals, implied spirituality and was destined to be immortalized in great works of philosophy, law or poetry.

The image of woman as fallen Nature crossed the centuries in many cultures. We find her with Eve and Pandora at the birth of Western civilization. As we know, curiosity had led Pandora to open the box which contained all the evils of the world. Eve's story is similar. In the Middle Ages, a large proportion of religious men argued that women had to endure suffering and be entirely submissive because they had had sexual relations rapports with the Devil, and thus made Adam a sinner. Christian iconography often represents Eve with a curvy figure and frizzy hair which imitate the snake's coils in order to suggest the ambiguous nature of the first woman.

With the process of secularization of modernity, science takes over from religion as the worthy advisor in people's lives. This does not imply the disappearance of religion. In fact, for a long time, women were

associated with zealously religious collectives. In nineteenth-century France and Spain, liberals criticized women's bigotry. It thus gave them an argument to refuse them the right to vote, as they stated that women would predominantly vote for political parties in favour of the clergy.

What is more, during the Enlightenment period, a current of thought affirmed the power of education in order to transform what seemed to be the manifestation of the essence of sexes. Some thinkers insisted on the social and constructed aspects of inequality between men and women. They even expressed the idea that some physical differences are the fruit of civilization. Knowledge of other cultures brought by traveller's stories played a decisive role in the development of this criticism of essences. At the dawn of anthropology, a debate took place about the innate or learned features of femininity and masculinity. For instance, comparing the feminine weakness of Europeans to the endurance of American Indian women, Madame d'Épinay blamed the customs which constrain and limit the movements of women's body in the name of decency. In contrast to Rousseau, both the Marquis de Condorcet and Mary Wollstonecraft note that faults and prejudices identified in women only reflect a lack of education. For these thinkers, the equality of all men must be the equality of all human beings, free to develop beyond the definition of their sex.

By contrast, most Enlightenment thinkers, such as Rousseau and Kant, interpret the word 'man' with exclusive reference to the masculine sex. Under their influence, women were denied the right to vote. Neither were they given any civil rights, such as the right to manage their own possessions. They were to be eternal minors submitted to the authority of their fathers first, then of their husbands. In the area of science, the discourse of medicine, accepted as philosophical due to its mix of metaphysical principles and empirical observation, endorsed women's exclusion from studying at university. Around the middle of the eighteenth century, Pierre Roussel wrote a series of treatises on the feminine sex which contributed to limit women's role to that of breeder.[6] An impenetrable barrier dividing nature from culture and public from private spaces was thus constructed. This philosophical medicine belongs to what Michel Foucault named the 'dispositif de sexualité' ('deployment of sexuality').[7] Foucault emphasizes the total hysterization of the woman's body. It was thought that the womb controlled the whole feminine body. In the eighteenth century, it was even believed to have the capacity move around the whole of the body and to produce hallucinations. The woman was thus perceived as a being

dominated by sex. The political consequence drawn from this so-called scientific knowledge was a strict division of gender roles. Men had to be in charge of all activities deemed necessary for the progress of humanity, such as education, democratic and rational organization of cultural, economic domains, and sanitary policies. By contrast, women, considered closer to nature and subjugated to biology as animals were, had to focus on improving the species. As regards sexual division of labour, as in many other areas, the old Biblical discourse gradually gave way to the authority of science. The distribution of spaces for men and women was made on the basis of the irrefutable difference between feminine and masculine essences. Freud's theory, in spite of its comparative sophistication, inherits nevertheless the fundamental principles of this hierarchization of sexes, practised by this strongly sexist medicine.

From the middle of the nineteenth century, some women refused to accept the exclusive role of devoted mother and chaste spouse tied to the home. On the one hand, suffragettes and activists of socialism and anarchism, on the other, 'women of ill repute' began to resist established norms, prompting a violent misogynistic reaction. In the area of philosophy, it reaches its peak with Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character*.[8] Just like Henry James, he states that the suffragettes' demands for the right to vote and to work as professionals are due to the fact that they are not real women, but 'hommes manqués'. According to the young Austrian thinker, women and Jews are impure beings and should be eradicated. The enormous popularity of his book shows the degree to which he expresses widespread feelings at the time.

Science relentlessly persisted in its attempts to prove the weakness of the feminine brain. Philosophers such as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Weininger go back to a misogynistic discourse.[9] In art, there is a reaction against women's resistance to adjust to the Victorian model of the 'Angel in the house'. The woman who does not accept her fate is considered a monster. The Eternal Feminine appears in numerous paintings as the sorceress Circe, goddess of metamorphoses. It is also represented by the seductress Salomé, the vampire or the mermaid. Women are frequently associated with animals. They embody the blind force of a threatening Nature which needs to be controlled. Women, Jews, blacks and working-class people are represented at the time as inferior beings, more bound by the senses than are the middle classes. At the end of the nineteenth century sexism, racism and classism are nurtured by fantasies of hybridity.[10] Woman embeds Man in animality and holds him back from his destiny' of progress and spirituality. This

discourse of animalization of the Other pre-empts the ideological bases of the Holocaust and of the Second World War.

THE CONCEPT OF GENDER AND ITS IMPACT ON THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

After the Second World War, Simone de Beauvoir used principles of Existentialist philosophy to fight biologistic discourses concerning the fate of woman. In her canonical work on feminism, *The Second Sex* (1949), the author argued that women are submitted to an unjust subordination. As an Existentialist philosopher, she considered human life as a project, as a perpetual choice. Her famous sentence 'on ne naît pas femme, on le devient' ('one is not born but rather becomes, a woman')[11] denounced the Eternal Feminine as an oppressive mystification. Noting the wide array of options offered to men and comparing it to maternity conceived as the unique fate for women of her era, she concluded that society constructs femininity at the expense of the development of the capabilities of half the human race. Today, one might add to Simone de Beauvoir's famous statement: 'One is not born man either, but rather, becomes one'. The concept of gender can help us to discover elements of social origin in our identity.

The nominalist approach regarding sex found support in the clinical research of the 1950s. The American doctor John Money defined *gender* within the framework of the social determining of sex in hermaphrodite children. He maintained that an individual, in spite of his/her genetic, gonadic and hormonal sexual belonging, will behave according to the sex that has been determined by his/her family environment. Since its inception, this theory has been criticized heavily because, although it does not deny the existence of biological data, it considers that the weight of cultural elements is decisive in the subjectivation process. His concept of 'gender role' referred to attitudes, gestures, behaviours, ways of moving, speaking and playing which are characteristic of masculine and feminine behaviour. Money asserted that gender identity becomes established around eighteen months. It might result from a process in which biological and social factors intervene.

During the following decade, the concept of gender was gradually adopted by medical and social sciences. New research horizons open up. Robert Stoller, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of California, was the first psychoanalyst to make a distinction between sex and gender. At the end of the 1970s, women theoreticians of what is known as the 'second wave' of feminism adopted the concept of gender as a key capable

of unlocking power relations in the social fabric at macro and micro levels. Kate Millett considered the research of Money and Stoller as proof of the cultural origin of the sexual structure of personality, that is to say, of gender.[12] Combining the clinical category of gender with the notion of *politics* understood as power relations, as defined by the Frankfurt School, these feminists transformed it into a critical weapon against inequality. Far from expressing emergent biology, gender would be a hybrid in the sense of 'made of disparate elements'. Here are the reasons why norms and gender stereotypes vary according to ears and cultures.

Thinkers such as Kate Millett and Shulamith Firestone compared the gender category with that of class and race. The input of this generation of young women in the New Left and in the African-American Civil Rights movement favoured theoretical bridges among these three categories. Shulamith Firestone went as far as announcing a future when pregnancies will happen in laboratories, thus freeing women from the reproductive task.[13] When the concept of gender develops in sociology and political feminist theory, sexed identity becomes one of the components of a complex feedback system. As social organization, the gender system also refers to other elements such as sexual division of labour, stereotypes, norms, sanctions and discourses legitimizing the system, based primarily on essentialism.

In a pioneering article written in 1971,[14] the sociologist Nicole-Claude Mathieu, member of the editorial board of the journal *Questions Féministes*, states that out of the three main variables used in sociology and psycho-sociology, the first to have been defined according to sociological rather than psychological or biological criteria was the socio-professional or social class category. This meant that they were not just described, but studied within their context. Later on, similar studies were conducted for the age category. Only the sex category remained. Yet a conceptualization of social sex was lacking, Mathieu observes. Ten years later, in an article entitled 'Women and Theories about Society: Notes on Theoretical Effects of the Anger of the Oppressed',[15] the sociologist Colette Guillaumin summarizes theoretical changes in the social sciences, defined as the mental face of concrete relations: relationships between the sexes, considered as belonging to nature, become social relationships, and this leads to a criticism of the sexual division of labour or of the inequality of access to wealth. Sex collectives will not be considered any longer as pre-existing elements but as the result of a power relationship. 'Women's problems' or 'the women's condition' are no longer identified as such. Instead, the social system is studied with new tools which allow the

analysis of sex domination and unmask the connection between ideology and concrete relationships even more clearly than in the case of the conflict between classes or to the conflict caused by imperialism.

Later on, Carolyn Merchant's, Evelyn Fox Keller's and Sandra Harding's epistemological research would go further, showing gender bias in the construction of the natural sciences, not only in the way these sciences conceptualize sexes, but also in their outlook on the world. The switch from the old image of Nature as a feminine organism full of vital energy, brought about by the modern doctrine of mechanism, will be the object of passionate debates.

MONSTERS AND CYBORGS: UTOPIA OR DYSTOPIA?

A postmodern nominalism emerges in the 1990s. The gender concept tends to be substituted to that of sex. Monique Wittig established herself as a pioneer of this current with her 1980 article 'La pensée straight' ('Straight Thought', 1992), published for the first time in the journal *Questions Féministes*,[16] in which she stated that the lesbian is not a woman since the word *woman* refers to a relational category which is the product of compulsory heterosexuality. She thus opened the way to a radically constructivist theorization centred on sexuality and which will later be connected to the Foucauldian concept of 'savoir-pouvoir' (knowledge-power).

This line of research, deriving from Nietzschean perspectivism, argues that there is no reality that is not already an interpretation. This is why sex should not be discussed as a biological reality independent from gender. Thomas Laqueur thus undertakes a detailed history of the transformations of body perceptions in the West, in order to demonstrate that a construction is always at stake.[17] Taking a different approach, in *Gender Trouble* (1990) the American philosopher Judith Butler applies Austin's notion of performative utterance to gender, according to which gender would only be the result of the repetition of the norm which precedes it. Gender therefore masks its normative characteristics and appears to be 'natural'. From this approach specifically linked to the queer movement, gender will not refer to man/woman binaries but to a multiplicity. Butler thus proposes the parodic proliferation of disruptive genres. Hybrid individuals in whom sex, gender and sexual orientation do not coincide are considered as new revolutionary subjects. The deliberate use of a homophobic insult (queer) as the name of the movement expresses the will to stay outside all redefinition of

normality. Butler defines 'queer performativity' as the ability to reverse enunciation positions of this decontextualized word when used for the self-denomination of abject bodies. Neither queer theory and movement, nor punk post-feminism is aiming for women's emancipation. They are not aiming for the normalized integration of gays but for the abolition of the concept of normality. This consequently places an emphasis upon sexual dissidences of those considered to be monsters. The theoretician Beatriz Preciado wishes to depart from a 'white and middle class' feminism which focuses on women's equality.[18] Her anti-sexual theory defines sexuality as a technology and states that the different elements of the sex/gender system referred to as 'man', 'woman', 'homosexual', 'transsexual', as well as their practices and sexual identities are only machines, products or implants.

The cyberpunk feminist Virginie Despentes uses the figure of King Kong as a metaphor of polymorphous and powerful sexuality preceding gender categories defined during the Industrial Revolution and other binary oppositions such as human.[19] Referring to the famous final cinema scene when the monster is born, Despentes remarks that the poor creature is betrayed by the beautiful blonde who ends up choosing the hero epitomizing traditional heterosexuality. The death of the monster allows the return to an established order and symbolizes renunciation of modern women's 'fundamental power'.[20] The monster evokes a pre-Oedipal stage, a metaphor of those excluded because of sex, race or sexual orientation.

The *queer* dissolution of frontiers contains the promise of the collapse of hierarchies. Its concept of transgression has replaced that of sexual revolution. Resistance and transformation will not lead to new models of normality, with, for instance, the integration of homosexuality. Normality is no longer wanted and is attacked by the 'rebellion of monsters', that is to say, with the practices of those which are 'inappropriate', those who do not correspond to a model, be it the one of the One or the Other, those who break away from binaries.

In this sense, queer thinking is strongly influenced by Donna Haraway, intellectual heiress of Foucault.[21] In opposition to the organic model of resistance against capitalist technological domination in thinkers such as Marcuse or Carolyn Merchant, Haraway proposes her cyborg, a hybrid of living organism and machine. This figure synthesizes the author's anthropological and political ideas, based on the conviction that progressive intellectuals must transgress their rejection of the techno-scientific system, and relinquish the belief in an organic

body capable of providing resistance. Science and technology must be embraced because their products alone are capable of effective deviation from their capitalist and patriarchal programme. A 'subversive' misappropriation could be more efficient in gaining power and pleasure. To reach this end, it is necessary to maintain a double vision of the cyborg world. On the one hand, we must remain aware that the cyborg announces a future of total domination of the planet, which is moving towards the apocalypse of a patriarchal war. On the other hand, it becomes possible to envisage the possibility of a future when people would not be frightened of their kinship with animals and machines.[22] The political fight, according to Haraway, consists of maintaining both these visions. In order to undermine an ecofeminism which relies on organic and spiritual images of Nature and woman, she says ironically that she 'would rather be a cyborg than a goddess'.[23] Haraway considers that we do not need cultural rebirths linked to reproduction metaphors but cybernetic regenerations. Her hope lies in 'a monstrous world without gender'.[24]

Her unexpected writings on the fight of ecologists and ecofeminists against genetically modified organisms are not so well known.[25] She equates this fight to a certain form of racism which could aim to defend genetic purity. All the more unexpected is the comparison that she makes between the demand for healthy food and racial discrimination. Not unreasonably, the Indian anti-globalization activist Vandana Shiva replied in no uncertain terms that she would rather be a sacred cow than a mad cow.[26] Behind this blunt response lays a deep reflexion on the effects of technocapital appropriation of old territories (deterritorialization) and of the decodification of all preceding meanings that could present obstacles to the growing privatization brought about by the process of neoliberal globalization.

Donna Haraway recognizes that she speaks 'from the belly of the monster',[27] that is, from the point of view of a society responsible for hegemonic imperialism. Similarly, she states that she was born in the family of 'transgenic, transspecific and transported creatures of all kinds'.[28] The oncomouse, this female created in a laboratory to study breast cancer, belongs, according to her, to the *queer* family. Yet, border transgression is not desirable in every case and does not always represent liberation interests. Anti-GMO groups are currently fighting a desperate battle to ensure food sovereignty for each country and biodiversity preservation. Haraway is aware of this reality and lists all arguments used by activists. In spite of this, she emphasizes that discussions on

cross-breeding between organic beings and genes which are alien to them always connote racism for her.[29]

For Shiva, this technofeminist position is only an 'academic rationalization' of the war fought against ecologists and organizations in developing countries which endeavour to resist this destructive expansion.[30] This inappropriate comparison between ecologists and racists thus seems to create an unexpected left-wing ally for the intense publicity campaign of multinationals on GMOs and herbicides. It is true that referring to 'sanctity of life'[31] can have sinister connotations, in particular for women who have to endure forced pregnancies. In any case, this type of argument is not the most apt to defend Nature and women's freedom. Nevertheless, to be fair to Shiva, we must put her thinking in its context. Her source of inspiration is Gandhi, who fought against apartheid in South Africa and for the Indian untouchables. He also defended vegetarianism on the basis of compassion for 'our friends' and declared that the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated. Gandhi, who fought discrimination throughout his life, surely cannot be suspected of supporting racism or other forms of exclusion.

There is a wide array of positions between 'sanctity of life' and indiscriminate acceptance of all limit transgressions. Haraway is aware of this. She is searching for a balance between technological progress and justice when she argues that the establishment of biotechnological corporations is not bad in itself, if it is scientifically monitored and operates in a democratic context. She gives the example of Denmark as model of national and local critical scientific politics.[32] She condemns biopiracy, which, with the means of patents, appropriates biological resources in unethical ways. Yet her seductive abolition of boundaries between Nature and Culture comes disconcertingly close to the arguments of those who, in order to disqualify environmentalism, state that the natural world is always a product of culture and that there is not natural space to save.

In its battle against oppressive essentialism, radical constructivism has been a tool for emancipation from prejudice, but it may become a sophisticated licence to domination. Let us not forget that in the twenty-first century, the most frequently crossed borders will probably not be those of gender or race in the name of freedom or equality, but of GMOs which destroy biodiversity and traditional agricultural practices. This will also affect industrially bred animals, lying sick and tortured in isolation and immobility as new viruses emerge. Even though they are

herbivores, they are given meat by-products and treated with antibiotics to keep them alive until they reach the abattoir. International capital is also another form of intense border crossing as it dictates laws to states which are no longer listening to their own citizens.

The idea is not to preserve the purity of essences but to keep the possibility of living an existence worth living. Like a Russian doll, a healthy body is a system inside ecosystems. These complex and balanced systems could be lost forever. I agree with Haraway that we must value and foster the potential progress of technoscience. Yet we shall have to choose carefully between freedom of choice and what is dictated externally, which is not always easy. We now must act with caution so as not to initiate irresponsible and destructive actions. Our lives are growing more and more hybrid. We use more and more technology. We must nevertheless remember that enthusiasms awakened by new developments in communication, medicine or cosmetic care are not synonymous with undesirable border transgressions and do not imply imposing them to others.

GMOs are hybrids which spread to neighbouring fields. They require 'Terminator technology' herbicide treatments. This name is sufficiently explicit, as they kill all plants which have not been modified in a laboratory. Moreover they are carcinogenic and lead to desertification. The effects of GMOs on human organisms are not fully known yet, but signs of dangers for health have been identified.[33] Can Vandana Shiva, the International Peasant Movement for Food Sovereignty, and indigenous people all be considered racist if they reveal that there can be no democracy when citizens are forced to accept the poisoning of their soil and the disappearance of their seeds?

In a new *Manifesto* published in 2003, Donna Haraway replaces the cyborg with the 'significant otherness'. She considers 'natureculture' hybrids with whom we have loving and responsibility relationships: dogs.[34] For Haraway, dogs are significant others. We ended up being who we are 'with' them. As domestic animals, they are our parents. We made them and they made us in turn 'in the symbiogenetic tissues of naturecultures'.[35] This technofeminist considers that her cyborg has already achieved his/her task: draw attention to the new technological reality and encourage women to enter the technoscientific universe. For her, a new figure is needed now. This change does not include a reversal of her best known epistemological positions, but it throws light on a relevant metaphorical shift which moves from the world of machines to the world of non-human consciousness capable of

feelings. Haraway also observes astutely that the key to new families does not lie in heterosexuality but in hetero-specificity. This could be the beginning of a new, non-utilitarian meeting with the Other.[36] In spite of this, her ethical position towards animals remains, in my view, strongly anthropocentric.[37] Her redefinition of Nature as fiction and total construction offers a perfect alibi for the most substantial exploitation and devastation. Her great success in the world of intellectuals is understandable, because of its novelty and its subversive gloss (see her 1992 essay 'The Promises of Monsters').[38] Yet the reality is quite different.

Often, works of science fiction present ideas which use scientific data to imagine a world where hybrids are the protagonists of a new nightmarish imaginary sphere. Fictional vampires, monsters and cyborgs evoke an abhorrent material reality which, whatever interpretations may be, is obstinately present. We act as parasites, taking blood, milk and life from captive animals, locking them up until their death in industrial farms and in laboratories. We also act as vampires in southern countries, by absorbing a constant flux of resources. Tons of toxic products used by industrial agriculture destroy much more than Godzilla would be capable of. The nuclear contamination created by Fukushima will probably kill more than would die in an attack by aliens. All this, in spite of a manga written in 1988 by Ryoko Yamagishi, which anticipated the catastrophe.[39]

Born out of a nominalist fight against false essences, the concept of gender has been used very successfully by feminist theories and movements during the twentieth century. It led to an enormous change in Western societies. We only need to remember the social organization of the sexes in a very recent past. This concept is currently a pertinent question in the sciences, at least in research centres and leading teaching institutions. The conquest of fundamental rights, formal equality and demands for real equality are part of the international political agenda. The social roles of men and women today are much more flexible and hybrid. Men and women are freer for the very reason that we could denaturalize the masculine and feminine attributive characteristics and went on to deconstruct what appeared to be an inevitable biological fate. Sexual orientation diversity has also gained visibility and support thanks to the use of a nominalist discourse. Different laws on marriages between people of the same sex are the proof that there is still a long way to go before attitudes to exclusion are defeated.

Yet we can question whether the 'monstrous world' of techno-science will bring true freedom. Behind the luminous face of the liberty and equality utopia lurks a dystopian side populated with monsters driven by the greed of economic interests and a blind faith in a technique which claims to have solutions for all problems. But alas, techno-scientific knowledge is not able to repair the disasters that it produces. Catastrophes such as those happening in the Gulf of Mexico or in the Fukushima atomic plant testify to this fact. Watching this uncertain future, I cannot hide my surprise in the face of many intellectuals' indifference towards the destruction of the earth and the efforts of the new organizations which endeavour to stop it.

We can therefore identify a double face of hybridity. At first sight we can consider hybrids as a source of symbolic, economic and social wealth. But a closer examination reveals two facets of hybridity in the current world: on the one hand some individual liberties, on the other, constraints and serious risks created by technologies which do not take into account the complexity and balance of ecosystems. Today, it is possible to transgress certain unfair and irrational limits such as those of gender – a right that should have always been ours and that society denied to us for centuries. Yet in practical terms, the capacity to cross living borders is primarily used for profit-making hybridation and transgression rather than for the dismantling of prejudices. Intellectuals argue that Nature does not exist, that it is only an interpretation. This new paradigm and our comfortable position prevent us from seeing that border transgression is not desirable when it implies the destruction of the natural diversity of the non-human world. Hyperconstructivism is the cultural corollary of neoliberal productivism. Herein resides the Janusian heritage of nominalism. How to preserve freedom without entering a nightmare of monsters and cyborgs, of suffering and death, remains to be considered. This will be a very difficult task facing ecofeminist criticism in the twenty-first century.[40]

NOTES

1 Ernest Bloch, 'Zwischenwelten in der Philosophiegeschichte', *Leipziger Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 1977).

2 On the relationship between Duns Scotus's nominalism and the emergence of feminism, see Celia Amorós, *La gran diferencia y sus pequeñas consecuencias para las luchas de las mujeres* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2005).

3 Martin Heidegger, *Holzwege* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1949), translated as *Off the Beaten Track* by Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

4 See the dialogues between Doctor Bordeu and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse in Denis Diderot, *Le Rêve de D'Alembert*, *Suite de l'Entretien*, *Œuvres*, Tome 1. Philosophie (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1994), pp. 624–676, translated as *D'Alembert's Dream* by Ian Johnston http://records.viu.ca/~johnston/diderot/dalembertsdream.htm (consulted 10/07/2012).

5 Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century', part 3 'Differential Politics for Inappropriate/d Others', chapter 8, in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991,), pp. 149–181 (p. 181).

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25 Donna Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan©_Meets_Onco Mouse®* (London and NewYork: Routledge, 1997).
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28 Haraway, *Modest_Witness*, p. 62.
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31 The notion of 'sanctity of life', used by Vandana Shiva in her writings, is at the heart of the Hindu tradition. It is also referred to as 'ahimsa', which means 'not to hurt, harm or kill through word, thought or deed'.
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This paper is published as part of the following research projet: *Gender Equality in a Sustainable Culture: Values and Good Practices for Collaborative Development* (FEM2010-15599, Subprograma de Proyectos de Investigación Fundamental no orientada).