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# The Ethics of Hybrid Subjects: Feminist Constructivism According to Donna Haraway

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*This article discusses the viability of a feminist constructivist approach of knowledge through the careful reading of the work of the feminist scholar and historian of science and technology, Donna Haraway. Haraway proposes an interpretation of objectivity in terms of "situated knowledges." Both the subject and the object of knowledge are endowed with the status of material-semiotic actors. By blurring the epistemological boundary between subject and object, Haraway's narratives about scientific discourse become populated with hybrid subjects/objects. The author argues that the ethics of these hybrid subjects consists of an uneasy mixture of a Nietzschean and a socialist-Christian ethic. The article concludes by setting out why Haraway's project constitutes an interesting effort to fuse postmodern insights and feminist commitments.*

The work of Donna Haraway, feminist scholar and historian of science and technology, covers many issues and disciplines: from literary science fiction to immune system discourse, from primatology to feminist theories of gender, and from postcolonialism to the workings of information technologies. Haraway's fusion of feminism and constructivism is particularly compelling in its (re)interpretations of the notions of the subject and object of knowledge and in the way these are connected to discussions of the non-innocence of knowledge claims.

Haraway's interpretation of objectivity in terms of "situated knowledges" draws on the metaphor of *vision* and stresses the technological and collective

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character of building theories and knowledges. Accordingly, the former “subject” and “object” of knowledge reappear as apparatuses of visual and bodily production. By giving them both the status of material-semiotic actors, Haraway blurs the epistemological boundary between subject and object. Her worlds therefore are full of hybrids. The ethics of these odd subject/object mixes, I argue, consists of an uneasy mixture of a Nietzschean ethic of self-affirmation and non-innocence, with a socialist-Christian ethic of feeling for a suffering humanity. It is the ethic of posthumanist yet all too human subjects. In the final section, I set out how Haraway manages to fuse postmodern insight with feminist commitments—a risky undertaking that can succeed only if both partners hold on to their own radical insights.

### Objectivity Revisited

In Haraway’s view, feminist theorists are trapped between two alternative positions. On the one hand, they feel attracted to constructivist views of knowledge, according to which claims regarding truth and objectivity are part of the language and power games of science. On the other hand, they would like to hold on to an empiricist position, from which scientific knowledge claims can be criticized for their male bias. Feminists want to have it both ways: they *simultaneously* would like to subscribe to “an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects . . . and a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a ‘real’ world” (Haraway 1991, 187). But Haraway does not fancy either option. The constructivist approach tends toward relativism, which “is a way of being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere” (p. 191). Empiricism, on the other hand, presumes the feasibility of a universalist point of view, which could then be described as a way of being everywhere while denying the need to be anywhere. Both, Haraway argues, fail to see that the subject of knowledge is always located somewhere and that its perspective is necessarily partial. Because they are not localizable, neither universalists nor relativists can be called to account. Their claims are irresponsible. Haraway proposes the term *situated knowledges* to refer to the feminist alternative for relativist and universalist (or “totalizing”) accounts of knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Because “it is hard to climb when you are holding on to both ends of a pole, simultaneously or alternately,” she thinks it is time to switch metaphors (p. 188).<sup>2</sup>

As a vehicle for reconceptualizing objectivity, Haraway reclaims the metaphor of *vision*. Haraway opposes the currently commonplace feminist statement that sight is the privileged sense of patriarchal culture, to be associated with alienation, objectification, and voyeurism. Instead, she em-

phasizes the situatedness and embodiment of all vision.<sup>3</sup> An enormous proliferation of increasingly advanced visualizing technologies in postmodern culture seems to enable us to be everywhere and get to know even the most hidden and dark places. But this is an illusion, a “god-trick.” To Haraway, *all* vision is particular and specific. Familiar notions of objectivity only support false promises of transcendence. “The moral is simple,” Haraway (1991, 190) argues. “Only partial perspective promises objective vision.”

The moral may be simple, but the message is both intricate and intriguing. First, it challenges our usual understanding of objectivity as *opposed* to partiality and situatedness, that is, to the supposedly subjective features that detract from the general validity of knowledge claims. Instead, Haraway redefines notions of partiality and situatedness in such a way that they come to refer to knowledges that are self-reflexive concerning the (material, historical, social) conditions under which they came into being.<sup>4</sup> Second, Haraway’s message transforms the notion of vision. Theoretical instruments are perceived as “optical devices.” They, however, do not *reflect* but rather *diffract* what is before them. In line with her ensuing distrust of practices of representation, Haraway believes that situated knowledges do not *reproduce* what is already given but rather *regenerate* contested and contestable “novel forms.” Their production of new “interference patterns” or “geometries” dispenses with existing subject-object boundaries, making room for the emergence of “wonderful” and “promising monsters” (Haraway 1992b).

Haraway’s interpretation of vision thus implies a radical rethinking of the notions of the *subject* as well as the *object* of knowledge. When focusing on the issue of objectivity, Haraway merges the notions of subject and object. But she simultaneously holds on to this distinction insofar as it enables her to stress the relevance of epistemological responsibility and empowerment.

### Objects as Actors

As a biologist, a historian of primatology, and a feminist, Haraway is particularly concerned about *bodies* as objects of scientific discourse. Even biological bodies are not natural or given entities, merely there to be discovered and unveiled. As objects of knowledge, they are brought into being by knowing and partial subjects, who have stakes in constructing them as such. As soon as these bodies are wrought, they can become very powerful and effective in constructing other, sometimes unexpected and unintended, objects. An object of scientific discourse therefore should not merely be perceived as passive and inert matter but also as “an active, meaning-generating axis of

the apparatus of bodily production” (Haraway 1991, 200). Thus the object of knowledge is elevated to the status of a material-semiotic actor.

This approach intends to make room for a relationship with the (social and natural) world that does not aim at mastery and domination. Instead, we should see the world “as a coding trickster with whom we must learn to converse” (Haraway 1991, 201). For this reason also, Haraway rejects all “semiotic politics of representation” (Haraway 1992b, 311). For the actual effect of the well-intended strategy of “speaking for” an object is the exclusion of those who are closest, like the pregnant woman to the fetus or like the local people to the rain forest. These actors come to be perceived as threatening to the objects that are to be preserved and protected. They are reduced from knowing and caring subjects to antagonistic environments. The scientist posing as the ventriloquist for nature, according to Haraway, thus takes a politically and ethically dubious stand. Moreover, she is convinced that “nature” and “reality” are, in the end, unrepresentable. Quoting Gayatri Spivak, she remarks somewhat enigmatically that although nature is one of the things we cannot not desire, we must at the same time acknowledge that we cannot possess it and thus also cannot represent it. Contrary to the pretension to *speak for*, we had better try to *articulate with* the natural, social, and technical worlds we study.

The use of the concept of articulation is an attempt to use a new metaphor to indicate the possibility of a more equal way of relating to one’s objects of investigation.<sup>5</sup> The choice for this term is rather unfortunate, however, as it tends to endorse, rather than to undermine, the idea of nature having a voice of its own. Haraway seems to be aware of this risk in her reminder that an articulation of the world is still performed from the point of view of people through situated knowledges. In the end, articulation does not bring us “back to nature” any more than representation did.

## Embodied Subjects

Whereas in Haraway’s view the object of knowledge is endowed with more activity and autonomy than we usually expect from an object, the knowing subject loses its autonomous and transcendental position. Haraway does reject the notion of a transcendental, unitary, transparent, and self-knowing subject. This, however, should not lead us to drop the notion of the subject completely. Another notion of the subject might offer the opportunity to invent new images of “non-isomorphic subjects, agents and territories of stories unimaginable from the vantage point of the cyclopic, self-satiated eye of the master subject” (Haraway 1991, 192). Elaborating on the metaphor

of vision, and in analogy to the conceptual change in the understanding of the object of knowledge, Haraway proposes to see what was previously called the subject of knowledge as an “apparatus of visual production.” Thus the epistemological subject is constituted by constructed bodies that perceive, interpret, measure, and value the world from their particular and partial perspectives. Just like the body objects, the subject of knowledge is a discursive construct. It is split and contradictory; its “being” is problematic and contingent, always moving and taking various positions. Within such a view, vision is no longer solely a matter of how the world impinges on us. It is also about the power to see and thus about the power to construct realities.

### **Non-innocence**

Consequently, the conceptual distinction between subject and object loses much of its traditional validity. The process of knowledge acquisition is revealed as a constantly changing and complex network. Apparatuses of visual and bodily production are producing ever-shifting boundaries, constituting subjects and objects whose beings can be long-lived and persistent but remain essentially problematic and contingent nevertheless. Moreover, the possibility of a constant (re)drawing of boundaries has very real, material, and often unexpected effects. Precisely because practices of knowledge constantly generate objects, issues, and experiences that are very real, they cannot be perceived as innocent. They have both ethical and political implications. Haraway sticks to a notion of the subject because it enables her to discuss issues of accountability and empowerment in close connection with the problem of objectivity.

On the one hand, Haraway distinguishes the subject position from the object position because the situatedness of knowledge refers to the ability of the fragmented, never-whole subject to make partial connections, to resist fixation, and to be accountable. “We,” as knowing subjects, are asked to enter into “conversations” and to show a constant awareness of our responsibility in the fabrication of objects. The object, although also a material-semiotic actor, is not asked about its responsibility. The object world is presented as a “coding trickster.” As independent actors, objects can refuse to be our delegates. As subjects of knowledge, we must respect this, for “we are not in charge of the world” (Haraway 1991, 199).

On the other hand, Haraway frames a new notion of the subject to empower those who have been put into the position of objects, those who have been marginalized and usually denied the status of knowing and moral

subjects. To characterize, but also to indicate the critical potential of these subjects-to-be, she names them “inappropriate/d others,” a term coined by Trinh (1989). It describes the positions of “otherness” to the rational and transcendental subject. At the same time, it indicates the relative freedom of movement of the subjects-to-be regarding a position of otherness that they neither fully occupy nor completely adjust to. Haraway has especially set her hopes on knowledge practices from perspectives “from below” because they might be able to constitute other, less unitary forms of subjectivity. In this respect, she joins in with other feminist concepts of critical subjectivity, such as de Lauretis’s (1990) “eccentric subjects” or Sandoval’s (1991) “oppositional consciousness.” These terms, according to Haraway, emerged within feminist theory to decode “what counts as ‘woman’ within as well as outside ‘feminism’ ” (Haraway 1991, 144). They do not so much finish with gender as the central category of feminist critique but rather form the ultimate expression of “what ‘gender’ is grammatically about”: the contestation of any “alterity” or difference as taken for granted (p. 147). Therefore, “to be an ‘inappropriate/d other’ means to be in critical, deconstructive relationality, in a diffracting rather than reflecting (ratio)ality” (Haraway 1992b, 299).

### Beyond Identity

In her conception of situated knowledges, Haraway attempts to put the political requirement of a feminist standpoint on a par with the epistemological issue of objectivity. In her revision of the idea of rational knowledge, objectivity does not abstract from partiality but rather is *grounded* in it. Haraway’s idea of partial positioning, however, must not be confused with identity politics, such as that advocated by feminist standpoint thinking, which demands the knowing subject to identify herself with the marginalized and oppressed or to situate herself as a woman, as Black, as an African American lesbian writer, and so on.<sup>6</sup> The concept of situated knowledges should rather be understood as an attempt to think through the consequences of the ongoing proliferation of increasingly specified and hyphenated identities. In our time, the assumption of a subject in possession of a coherent identity has become meaningless. In this respect, Haraway notes that the Western tradition typically assumes that “not to have property in the self is not to be a subject, and so not to have agency” (Haraway 1991, 135). She thinks feminists mistakenly go along with this assumption when they believe that loss of gender identity would be equal to the loss of female agency. She believes that, on the contrary, it is possible to “disperse the coherence of gender without losing the power of agency” (p. 136).

This must not be taken to imply that the identity of the knower, as constituted by sex, race, class, and many other categories, is completely irrelevant. But “‘Being’ does not ground knowledge, at least not until ‘being’ has been made into a strategic, *built* site generating interrogation, not identification” (Haraway 1989b, 309). In other words, Haraway agrees on following a politics of identity in the field of knowledge *on the condition* that this strategy is aimed at destabilizing and recoding the identities taken as its starting point. Accordingly, she warns against romanticizing alleged female or Black perspectives. Although subscribing to the originally Marxist idea that visions from below are (epistemologically) superior, she continues to emphasize the need for critical scrutiny and reinterpretation: “*how* to see from below is a problem requiring at least as much skill with bodies and language, with the mediations of vision, as the ‘highest’ techno-scientific visualizations” (Haraway 1991, 191).

In my opinion, Haraway displays such skill in her own historical and critical work, particularly in her radical deconstructive readings of discourses of science, technology, and popular culture or in writing experiments such as the famous “Cyborg Manifesto.”<sup>7</sup> In her intellectual practice, she constructs highly idiosyncratic and politically charged but “true” stories, featuring eccentric and contestable actors.

## Hybridity

To Haraway, Western scientific views and treatment of monkeys and apes provide telling stories about the driving forces and motivations behind Western practices of knowledge acquisition. Haraway’s (1989b) elaborate study of the history of primatology, *Primate Visions*, covers many fields outside the strict domains of the sociobiology and ethology of apes—for example, the social networks of scientists, (post)colonial history, gender relationships, the rhetoric of advertisements, or the aesthetics and politics of exhibitions of nature.

The desire inscribed into science consists, on the one hand, of the wish to reclose the “broken cosmos” of the ecosystem—a longing to return to our *origins*. On the other hand, the man of science dreams of conquering *space*. Non-human primates have functioned as a means to fulfill both desires. Apes are often seen as the mediators between human beings and nature, as a possible source of information about man’s origin. Primatologists lead us back to nature; their stories are of salvation, of “paradise regained.” Apes are close to humans yet are definitely not human. They are our closest “others,” like mirrors reflecting our image of ourselves. Haraway (1989b, 11) charac-

terizes primatology as “simian orientalism.” But monkeys have also been given the doubtful honor to be the first of the primate species to travel into space—to be man’s guide to the future. Haraway relates the story of the famous “chimponaut” HAM, who became something of a mixture of animal and machine, a cyborg (Haraway 1989b, 136–39).

The figure of the cyborg, a particular cybernetic organism, came to play a crucial role in science fiction literature since the 1950s. To Haraway (1989b, 139), it also stands for “a powerful social and scientific reality.” Cyborgs come into being when boundaries—particularly those between animals and humans or between self-controlled, self-governing machines and organisms—become blurred. Haraway does not see this development as threatening the singularity of humankind. On the contrary, as she confesses at the end of *Primate Visions*: “I have always preferred the prospect of pregnancy with the embryo of another species; and I read this ‘gender’-transgressing desire in primatology’s text” (Haraway 1989b, 377).

Haraway uses the label of science fiction to characterize both the primate and her own discourse; they do not simply represent “scientific facts” but are also instances of “speculative fiction” (Haraway 1989b, 15). Scientific storytellers are not neutral in their inquiries; their social and political commitments are inscribed in their representations of nature. Haraway does not find fault with this by itself. It is what keeps science going, as the place “where possible worlds are constantly reinvented in the contest for very real, present worlds” (Haraway 1989b, 5). But her motivations are clearly different from what she sees as the driving forces behind “science as usual.” She wants a world without oppression and domination; where sexual, racial, and other so-called natural distinctions have lost their meaning; and where even species boundaries, particularly between humans and non-humans, are no longer sacred. She realizes the grandiosity of her aims yet obstinately wants “a possible but all too absent elsewhere.”<sup>8</sup>

In her practice of reading and interpreting the texts of science, technology, and popular culture, Haraway constantly attempts to evoke this “elsewhere.” To accomplish this, she makes up what I would call “hybrid stories,” featuring her favorite “monsters”: chimponaut HAM, the cyborg, black woman Sojourner Truth, and human son of god Jesus—hybrid posthumanist subjects, “bien étonnés de se trouver ensemble.”

### Cyborgs and Other Tricksters

In the “Cyborg Manifesto,” Haraway puts the figure of the cyborg center stage. Reacting against the feminist tendency to distrust new technologies as

endangering the social situation and bodily integrity of women, she advances the cyborg as a figure that feminists and other progressive people may try as their image of embodied subjectivity. The cyborg represents a (possible) subject formation that destabilizes established boundaries: between organism and machine, between animal and human, between the physical and the nonphysical. But the central opposition that the cyborg undermines is the opposition between *nature* and *culture*. Haraway's assumption is that a variety of social categories, such as race and gender, have been used to "reinvent nature" in a way that suits dominant hierarchical theories of race and gender differences. Not only chimpanzee HAM or science-fictional human robots may be considered as exemplary cyborgs, but so too may all beings who, in the history of Western culture, have been assigned a position in between nature and culture. Monkeys, aliens, and women (Haraway 1989a) have served as the exemplary deviations of the norm of the Western subject of scientific knowledge. The "Cyborg Manifesto" urges those who have been ascribed this position of the "other" to mobilize its destabilizing aspects, their deviant sides. As boundary creatures, they actually are monsters—"a word that shares more than its root with the word, to *demonstrate*. Monsters signify" (Haraway 1991, 2).<sup>9</sup> Deliberately posing as a monster, a hybrid creature shows the arbitrariness and constructed nature of what is considered the norm(al).

To Haraway, the cyborg fits in the already mentioned chain of feminist concepts, such as eccentric subjects, oppositional consciousness, and inappropriate/d other, that try to grasp various forms of oppression. The cyborg is Haraway's figuration of a possible feminist and posthumanist subjectivity.

In one of her more recent articles, Haraway unexpectedly turns to the tradition of Judeo-Christian humanism (Haraway 1992a). Her concern remains that of finding feminist figurations of subjectivity. However, she also professes her belief in the necessity of feminist figures of *humanity*. In the search for new figures of "critical subjectivity, consciousness, and humanity," she now retells the stories of two key figures in the traditions of Judeo-Christian humanism and twentieth-century feminism: the biblical figure of Jesus and the black woman and ex-slave Sojourner Truth. What makes these figures so evocative and compelling is precisely their resistance to being represented as fully human. In Haraway's reading, they are both "trickster figures." They appear in several guises without ever revealing their true nature. Haraway further sets up the remarkable similarity between Pilate's exclamation to the angry Jewish crowd, "Ecce Homo!," to Sojourner Truth's question to the White, male anti-suffrage provocateurs in her audience: "And ain't I a woman? Look at me!" Both characters, according to Haraway, are staged as the suffering servant who claims his or her humanity in a hostile world, which

denies him or her fully human status. Sojourner Truth and Jesus are figures “of a broken and suffering humanity” (Haraway 1992a, 87). Pilate’s “Ecce Homo!,” showing a humiliated and pitiful man who still claims to be king and witness to the truth, is a mockery, but it is one “that cannot evade the terrible story of the broken body” (Haraway 1992a, 90). The experience of suffering lends Haraway’s posthumanist humans a different outlook from that of the monster figure of the cyborg. The figures of Sojourner Truth and Jesus embody hopes for a new “non-generic humanity.” The difference has to do mainly with the *ethics* embraced by these different subjects.

All of Haraway’s subjects share a tendency toward unruliness; they enjoy playing with boundaries and with established certainties. But the cyborg appears to stop here; in its bonding with others, it seems to be driven merely by an inclination to provoke. When relating to others, it is “perverse.” In its preference of unnatural relationships, the cyborg is antithetical to the human being as Western humanism has conceived it. It challenges assumptions of purity and identity that so often subtend racist, sexist, and ethnocentric practices. It is equally skeptical toward politically progressive projects, such as those of radical feminism, insofar as they appeal to innocent victimhood or unambiguously celebrate assumed identities. The cyborg does not feel attracted toward a politics based on shared identities. Instead, it concludes only temporary, monstrous alliances, founded on affinity and “related not by blood but by choice, the appeal of one chemical nuclear group for another, avidity” (Haraway 1991, 155).

The figures of Sojourner Truth and Jesus contradict ideas of univocality, identity, and purity. But they add an important dimension to this loosening up of boundaries: they are marked by histories of serving and suffering. As such, they appear to articulate the position of “inappropriate/d others” more adequately than does the cyborg.

Surprisingly, Haraway’s work thus accommodates two different ethical stances. On the one hand, there is the anti-humanist Nietzschean ethic of resistance and self-affirmation as it is celebrated by cyborgs. On the other hand, Haraway appears to subscribe to a socialist-feminist ethic of solidarity, a Christian feeling for a suffering humanity.

This may be further clarified by reading the title “Ecce Homo” not as a biblical reference to Jesus but as deriving from Nietzsche’s (1977) intellectual autobiography. The subtitle of “Ecce Homo” neatly fits Haraway’s call for self-affirmation: “Wie man wird—was man ist.” For Nietzsche, this was the exact opposite of becoming human. His “Ecce Homo” was rather meant as blasphemous mockery; he hoped to shock his audience. His prime target, however, was the Judeo-Christian tradition, and here Haraway’s perspective differs from the Nietzschean project. Whereas the latter’s philosophical

hammer crushed Christian values as constituting a slave morality, she evokes the figure of a slave and the image of a suffering humanity to talk about empowerment. The Hegelian and Marxist master-slave plots are thus retold in postmodernist and feminist fashion.

"*Ecce Homo*" consequently envisages a different future from that of the "*Cyborg Manifesto*." The latter ends in a militant mode. It delights in a feminist "speaking in tongues to strike fear into the circuits of the supersavers of the new right" (Haraway 1991, 181). The author of "*Ecce Homo*" offers more comforting possibilities. She has hopes for "a collective humanity without constructing the cosmic closure of the unmarked category" (Haraway 1992a, 92). To her, the development of a common language is not at all at odds with requirements of specificity. This subject is definitely more than a Nietzschean self-affirmative provocateur. He or she is a posthumanist human who emphasizes his or her radical specificity and simultaneously recognizes those of others.

### **Risks and Balances**

Although Haraway's work may inspire some and may be indigestible to others, there can be little doubt that she has managed to concoct a very special mix of radical constructivism and feminist politics. In her invention of the cyborg-subject, for instance, Haraway takes up the feminist notion of "double vision." She radicalizes the assumption that feminist knowledges originate from the perspective of "woman" as the critical "outsider-within" of dominant society. For the cyborg's vision is not simply double; its artifactual eyes diffract the world in a mosaic pattern. At the same time, Haraway is a full-fledged constructivist in her persistent awareness of the inevitability of the intrinsic relationship between knowledge and power. This is particularly evident when she stresses the non-innocence of all knowledge including her own, when she refers to the feminist aim of empowerment of "inappropriate/d others," and when she emphasizes the responsibility that goes with any knowledge claim.

Does this conclusion imply that feminist researchers and theorists of knowledge now should all become "Harawayans"? "Goddess forbid!" I guess she would exclaim. Apart from her own disinclination, I think it would also be quite impossible to "follow" Haraway. Her work consists of an idiosyncratic, hybrid style of speech and writing, and it cannot be easily reduced to a package of methodological guidelines. But, of course, we cannot get away by stating that the answer is merely a matter of taste and style. Haraway's

call for partial, situated knowledges is meant to have a universal appeal; it is a call to all of us. So, how must we react?

I would argue that we can draw several important lessons about the relationship between feminism and constructivism from Haraway's work. Feminism and constructivism can learn from each other without either one having to discard its own radical insights. But there are risks involved in this coalition because the balance tends to become more precarious as the two partners grow stronger.

First, feminist theorists could learn from a constructivist approach to grow a bit more skeptical about grand categories such as sex, patriarchy, and phallogocentrism. Instead, they could focus more on details that tell their own particular stories instead of staging them as mere instances, or even proofs, of the existing encompassing structure. Haraway herself sometimes takes recourse to broad categories such as capitalism, progressive people, and the Western self. The "Cyborg Manifesto," for instance, suggests that we presently live in a world ruled by the networks of "the informatics of domination" (Haraway 1991, 161). This generalization might be too hasty; the extent that one's life is actually determined by these new configurations of power does depend on one's specific location in the world. Haraway's construction of the cyborg, however, can be seen as one possible attempt to escape pre-given categories, to edge closer to the invisible in-betweens.

Another lesson feminists could pick up from constructivism is the strategy to go where the power is, to see how power works. This is what Haraway (1991, 175) means when she talks about the need for women to become literate in the fields of science and technology and claims that "cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other."

But Haraway's insights are most striking where she shows what constructivism could take to heart from feminism. First, constructivism could become political in the sense of becoming more critical. In addition to following the actors, the executives, and the delegates *within* an established network, it might sometimes also choose to start from the perspective of the outsiders who do not neatly fit the standards of these smoothly working networks. As Star (1991, 29) notes, "By experience and by affinity, some of us begin not with Pasteur, but with the monster, the outcast." Responding to a remark made by Bruno Latour about a groom that does its work well "provided you put aside maintenance and the few sectors of population that are discriminated against" (cited in Star 1991, 42), she replies—and I could not agree more—that there is every reason *not* to put these issues aside: "I think it is both more analytically interesting and more politically just to begin with the question, *cui bono?*" (Star 1991, 43).

Second, I think constructivism could well use something of the utopian or visionary aspect that motivates feminism. Although constructivist writings often refer to the porous boundaries between fictional and true accounts of the world, it is Haraway's practice of science fiction that has the nerve to draw the consequences from this semiotic turn. The stories she tells constitute a genre of writing of her own making, a genre that mixes the factual with the fictional. Refusing to act merely as the traditional scientist, loyal to what already has been crafted (the facts), she also wishes to be faithful to the openings and opportunities this world contains for a possible and better future. Accordingly, she seeks something new, a "perspective from those points of view, which can never be known in advance, which promise something quite extraordinary" (Haraway 1991, 192). The science-fictional aspect of Haraway's work makes it more than politically useful; it is a political practice in itself.

Politics, however, is risky business, particularly if you are "resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity" and if you also wish to be "oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence" (Haraway 1991, 151). It means you will have some tightropes to walk. This is evident in Haraway's mix of a Nietzschean and a socialist-feminist voice. These voices may succeed in reinforcing rather than silencing each other only if they are finely attuned. In spite of their common evangelical appellation, the one who is "speaking in tongues" will only rarely also become an "ecstatic speaker," undermining established streams of information and, at the same time, affirming its monstrous, hybrid self. In this respect, Haraway reminds us that the choice of an audience constitutes a decisive moment in the process of writing. Her reference is clear: her conversation is mainly among "inappropriate/d others." But we can make different choices and aim at other targets as well, as long as we keep in mind one severe restriction: the performative effects of texts largely depend on the reception of the interlocutors. As a writer, one never has them fully in hand. This applies also to the cyborg-subject itself. Its writings may produce a variety of effects, but its polyvocal, hybrid style of speaking might not affect the establishment at all. It can easily be disposed of as the *Spielerei* (mere word play) of some postmodernist, literary avant garde. It may also elicit irritation and lack of understanding on the part of its intended audience. Its ecstatic way of speaking may even gather a fanatical, orthodox group of followers who would gladly identify with the position of "inappropriate/d others" as the epistemologically privileged, the chosen ones. None of these effects is intended, of course.

Finally, then, we may also learn from Haraway that awareness of the uncontrollability of the world constructed in and through science-fictional

stories makes it necessary constantly to explore many precarious boundaries. For example, the boundary between the affirmation of multiple, monstrous selves and their subsumption under new categories; or between a utopian inclination that remains open to the future and a fanatical utopian belief; or between a fragmented multiple image of the subject/object world and a subject that, in its striving for multiplicity, blocks any view of the world by self-reflexively dwelling on its own situatedness in that world.

Haraway manages to walk these and many other tightropes between feminism and constructivism admirably well. But copying the art will not do. The only way to learn is to start practicing ourselves.

## Notes

1. "Situated Knowledges" (1991) was originally written in 1988 as a review of Harding's (1986) *The Science Question in Feminism*. Harding's book can be seen as exemplary for feminist attempts to combine empiricist and constructivist accounts of knowledge. Haraway has serious problems with this way out of the dilemmas.

2. This move is reminiscent of Thomas Kuhn's view of how scientific revolutions occur. This is not a coincidence. In an earlier work, Haraway studied revolutionary switches of metaphors in biology, relying on the insights of Kuhn and Mary Hesse about the crucial role of metaphors and models in science. Haraway (1976, 3) states that "a view of scientific theory that does not give a large place to metaphor, with its predictive value and potential for development, has trouble accounting for the very progressive aspect of science such views are most interested in."

3. See, for instance, Irigaray (1980) and Keller and Grontkowski (1983). Especially in the context of feminist critiques of pornography, vision often has been unmasked as the "male gaze" that reduces women to the status of mere objects (see, e.g., Kaplan 1983; Kappeler 1986).

4. In this respect, Haraway's interpretation of feminist objectivity corresponds with Sandra Harding's definition of "strong objectivity," as Haraway herself points out in an interview with Kum-Kum Bhavnani (Bhavnani and Haraway 1994, 36). In Harding's (1993, 69) view, strong objectivity includes the requirement to put the subject of knowledge on the same critical plane as the objects of knowledge and, moreover, to integrate "scientists and their communities . . . into democracy-advancing projects for scientific and epistemological reasons as well as moral and political ones." For more extensive theoretical elaborations, see also Harding (1991) and Barwell (1994). In another article, the social psychologist Bhavnani (1993) infers three guidelines for rendering feminist research more objective in Haraway's sense and then goes on to illustrate this on the basis of her own research among young, working-class people in the United Kingdom.

5. Haraway (1992b, 324) explains her choice of the term articulation by way of a short etymological excursion: "In obsolete English, to articulate means to make terms of agreement," supplemented by her own, more idiosyncratic associations: "It is to put things together, scary things, risky things, contingent things."

6. I refer especially to the work of Harding. In *Whose science? Whose knowledge?*, Harding (1991) sees herself confronted with the epistemologically problematic position of, for instance, the white anti-racist or the male feminist. Within the logic of standpoint thinking, these positions are problematic because the subjects in question have no experiences with living in the margins

of racist or sexist society themselves and should therefore be disqualified as legitimate subjects of knowledge concerning these issues. The way out of this uncomfortable position, according to Harding, is to "become marginal," to "reinvent" oneself as "other" and learn to look at one's own dominant situation through the lenses of a marginal standpoint. Other prominent examples of feminist standpoint theory, on whose insights Harding builds, include Smith (1974), Hartssock (1983), and Collins (1990).

7. The "Manifesto for Cyborgs" was first published in 1985 (*Socialist Review*, Vol. 15, pp. 65-107).

8. "How might an appreciation of the constructed, artifactual, historically contingent nature of simians, cyborgs, and women lead from an impossible but all too present reality to a possible but all too absent elsewhere?" (Haraway 1991, 4). The "Introduction" to *Primate Visions* ends on a similar note: "I want the readers to find an 'elsewhere' from which to envision a different and less hostile order of relationship among people, animals, technologies, and land" (Haraway 1989b, 15). And, at the beginning of "The Promises of Monsters," Haraway (1992b, 295) announces that she wants her theorizing to produce "effects of connection, of embodiment, and of responsibility for an imagined elsewhere that we may yet learn to see and build here."

9. In English, Haraway's reminder of the ambiguity of the word monster by associating the Latin noun *monstrum* with the verb *demonstrare* may be a bit far-fetched. In Dutch, however, the noun monster really carries these two meanings. It may refer to an anomalous, frightening creature, but it can also mean a sample or a specimen.

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