# Feminist Writings Professor Avishek Parui Department of Humanities and Social Studies Indian Institute of Technology Madras The Cyborg Manifesto - Part 5

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Very important and famous essay with this particular lecture. Now, I just want to move on to the final bit of the essay.

And just unpack little bit what Haraway is saying or suggesting over here as prophetic political statements because I may have mentioned already but there is prophetic quality about this essay in the way that makes it more relevant to us today than what perhaps was when it was first written in 1984.

And it talks about the entanglement between organism and artificiality, man-machine, man and animal and it is so blurring away of boundaries between all these categories, these ontological categories which were redefined by humanism, which were sustained by humanism in the sense of making it hierarchical.

So you know, in the discourse humanism for instance, classical eurocentric dominant modes of humanism, man the male was always the center of the entire discursive activity, you know and obviously the binary of the male center versus the female.

And of course the male center was a white male center. So it was heavily racialized as well, so racialization was part of the reification process. So with that as a center all the other stuff in the margins became the others in different degrees of otherness.

So woman was one (())(01:36) and other the non-white man and the non-white woman, the beast, the animal, the machines all these by conveniently other different points of historical time but with the rise in the Cyborg which is a sort of an evolution if you will, in late twentieth century technocratic capitalism, these binaries or these mapping out have become quite sort of entangled with each other.

No longer can we talk about the female and the male as separate entities with rise of biotechnology, with rise of sex change operations and surgeries, these essentials are getting increasingly blurred away, man-animal, man-machine, organism-inorganism, organism and machine, so all these categories which were conveniently mapped out, conveniently demarketed as the discourses of humanism, have been, is now, are now being done away with, with the rise of the cyborg.

So this is what Haraway is contending throughout this essay and she is arguing interestingly, and what is also interesting is to understand the attitude the Haraway takes towards these kind, of you know (())(2:40) with reificiation, these kind of deconstructions. She is not moaning the loss of the original centers. She was not moaning the loss of original ontological orders.

She is rather acknowledging, accepting and perhaps celebrating that kind of a decimation of boundaries. And this is a very post modernism (())(02:56). So this is one reason why this particular text is taught heavily, is anthologized heavily in the syllabi of post modernisms, as well the syllabi of feminism across the world in different departments.

So this is very much a post modernist feminism, a post modernist feminist perspective into the entire idea of the body, identity, embodiment, consumption, etc. So at the final bit of the essay which we will cover today, Haraway talks about the consequences, the fallout if you will, of taking the cyborg imagery seriously. So what are the political possibilities that might emerge from taking the cyborg imaginary seriously, what are the certain systemic possibilities, the political possibilities, the cultural possibilities which can emerge out of acknowledging the cyborg as the potent presence, as a palpable potent presence as a reality in the world we internalize and have it today. So this is what she says and this should be on your screen.

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ral and supernatural, medical and legal, portents and diseases all crucial to establishing modern identity.<sup>30</sup> In the evolutionary and behavioral sciences, monkeys and apes have marked the multiple boundaries of late-twentieth-century industrial identities. Cyborg monsters in feminist science fiction define quite different political possibilities and limits from those proposed by the mundane fiction of Man and Woman.

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 was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end (or until the world ends); 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



There are several consequences to take them seriously the imagery of cyborgs as other than our enemies. So she is saying that, you know if we just stop for a moment, othering the cyborg as the enemy; as the alternative, as the, you know the other, the alterity, the fearful other.

If we do away with the idea of the fearful other, if we acknowledge the cyborg as part of our existence, as very much who we are, not as something outside of us but as something which we have become, you know in the current cultural consumption, in the current cultural technocratic capitalism etc.

If we can do that, there is a very serious consequences which can emerge out of that acceptance and these consequences are not necessarily negative. They can be profoundly positive; they can have very positive political ramifications. In what way? That is what Haraway goes on to say.

Our bodies, ourselves, bodies are maps of power and identity. So it is a very (())(4:53) understanding of the body which is extended and so extremely extended by Haraway over here, where she talks about bodies as maps of power and identity.

Because you know bodies are articulations of power. Bodies are performances of power, and identity. So if you look at the phrase that she is using, the vocabulary that she is using, it is very much a vocabulary of machines, machinery vocabulary.

So she is talking of bodies, the entire organic quality of the body as some kind of a mapped machine which produces and promotes and disseminates, dispenses power and identity.

So it is built for power making machine, identity producing machine like, you know vending machine for power and identity, the way we perform, the way we, you know carry ourselves, way our embodiment maps on to certain discursive spaces.

Cyborgs are no exception. A cyborg body is not innocent. It was not born in a garden. It does not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end or until the world ends. It takes irony for granted.

Now this is getting more and more post-modern as you can understand. It is non-innocence of cyborg which is something that is highlighted, acknowledged and celebrated by Haraway. So cyborg is not innocent. It was not born in a garden.

So it is not biblical story of origin that one can associate with cyborg as you may remember in the very beginning of the essay, Haraway very provocatively says that, you know if we still continue to consume, and teach, and indoctrinate children, the entire biblical story of creation, Adam and Ever story, that particular narrative, that should be considered as child abuse, teaching a child that kind of fiction, very, very regressive fiction according to Haraway.

So a very provocative sentence that you know teaching the creation narrative to children should be considered, should be counted as child abuse in today's world. It is something that she is reiterating over here when she is saying that cyborg body is not innocent. It is a very,

very polymorphous, non-innocent body. It was not born in the Garden of Eden. And more importantly it does not seek in an unitary identity.

So it does not really aspire for any kind of unification at the end. So there is no union out of which it is born. There is no union into which it seeks to end. So there is no linear, temporal narrative in which cyborg wants to map itself onto.

So it takes irony for granted. Now irony of course is a very, very important instrument. It is one of the key instruments of post-modernism. Irony is that particular strategy, that particular performance by which you say something and mean something else, so that semantic slipperiness if you will, that is what you know constitutes irony, you know and that is one of the key things in post-humanism.

That semantic slipperiness, that play between superficiality in-depth, that play between the center and the centerlessness, so irony constitutes of all that. Now the cyborg takes irony for granted. It becomes embedded

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the multiple boundaries of late-twentieth-century industrial identities. Cyborg monsters in feminist science fiction define quite different political possibilities and limits from those proposed by the mundane fiction of Man and Woman. There are several consequences to taking seriously the imagery of cyborgs as other than our enemies. Our bodies, ourselves: bodies are mans of power and identity. Cyborgs are no

selves; bodies are maps of power and identity. Cyborgs are no exception. A cyborg body is not innocent; it was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end (or until the world ends); 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 ma-



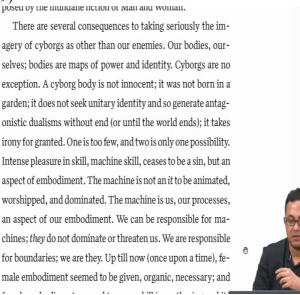
with irony.

It is an instrument of irony. It is a performance of irony. It is something which is, you know embedded inside the cyborg's embodiment. One is too few and two is only one possibility, intense pleasure is skill; machine skill, ceases to be a sin, but an aspect of embodiment. So pleasure becomes an aspect of embodiment. Now contrast that to the idea of embodiment as a productive function which was the pre post-modern mode of embodiment, embodiment needs to be productive, embodiment needs to produce something, subscribe to something, conform to something.

Now contrast to that we have the cyborg involvement as a playful activity, as a ludic activity, something which may or may not conform to a larger structural thing, a larger narrative of things, a larger architectural meaning.

So it does not conform, it does not necessarily conform to a larger architectural meanings. So in that sense embodiment, you know play becomes the ludic possibility of embodiment becomes highlighted. Or foregrounded when it comes to the cyborg. The machine is not an it to be animated, worshipped and dominated. The machine is us, our processes an aspect

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of our embodiment.

So this is again one of the important things which this essay does. It blurs away the borderline between the inside, and the outside. So it says the machine is not something out there to be consumed, to be dictated, to be worshipped, to be fed of the data, with information, with the orders.

It is us. It is what we have become, it is what we imagine ourselves to be. It is part of our embodiment, it is ingrained in our organic body. So this is us, our machines, real machines of the world today. So we have essentially become almost cyborgian in quality.

And that brings us obviously to some of the very important aspects of embodiment today whereby we are looking at a more distributive order of embodiment, a more fluid order of embodiment in contrast to static models in embodiment which preceded post-modernism.

So the machine is us our processes, as aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines. They do not dominate or threaten us. We are responsible for boundaries. We are there. So again we are looking at the complete blurring of borderlines between us and them, the machines and man.

And that is something that Haraway had talked about already at the beginning of the essay where she said that there are three distinctions which are done away with, with the rise of the cyborg. And one of those distinctions, one of the key distinctions was the man-machine; you know binary, that is completely done away with.

We are looking at, instead of a binary, instead of dualism we are looking at an entanglement, an inter-spatial relationship between man and machine and in that sense we are responsible for boundaries. We are there, we are the machines.

Upon till now, once upon a time female embodiment seemed to be given organic necessary

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exception. A cyborg body is not innocent; it was not born in a garden; it does not seek unitary identity and so generate antagonistic dualisms without end (or until the world ends); 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. Up till now (once upon a time), female embodiment seemed to be given, organic, necessary; and female embodiment seemed to mean skill in mothering and its metaphoric extensions. Only by being out of place could we

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And female embodiment seemed to mean skill in mothering and its metaphoric extension.

Now, if you look at the tongue-in-cheek style of the rhetoric over here, when she says once upon a time, so that is almost a time of fantasy, a time of, something of timeless fantastic past where Haraway says, that you know at that time of fantastic past, or past fantasy. Female embodiment meant mothering, meant nurturing, meant you know giving birth, meant the domestic and internal activities that was the be all and end all of any kind of embodiment related to the feminine self.

And it included skill in mothering. So only skill sets which were aspired out of female embodiment was skillset mothering, nurturing. That was once upon a time, it was one time of the fantastic past. Now only by being out of place could we take take intense pleasure in machines, and then with excuses that this was organic activity after all, appropriate to females. Cyborgs might consider more seriously the partial, fluid, sometimes aspect of sex and sexual embodiment. Gender might not be global identity after all, even if it has profound historical breadth and depth.

The ideologically charged question of what counts as daily activity, as experience, can be approached by exploiting the cyborg image. Feminists have recently claimed that twomen are given to dailiness, that women more than men somehow sustain daily life and so have a privileged epistemological position po-



intense pleasure in the machines, and then excuses that this was an organic activity after all appropriate to females.

Cyborgs might consider more seriously the partial fluid, sometimes aspect of sex and sexual involvement. Gender might not be global identity after all even if it has profound historical breadth and depth.

Now partiality, fluidity and polymorphous activity these become very important categories, very important functional categories of cyborg. And if you look at the sentence over here, sometimes aspect of sex and sexual embodiment.

So sometimes aspect, the incomplete aspect, the temporary incomplete, sometimes that aspect of embodiment, that aspect of sexual involvement, so those become important in rise of cyborg, in model of embodiment.

So if we contrast that to the humanist order of embodiment, most specifically female embodiment which was entirely so premised on mothering, nurturing, you know life-giving, these set of these activities. Move away from that and now we take intense pleasure in machines, so you know embodiment becomes a playful activity, a pleasurable activity.

Now, of course one can, perhaps should connect this some of the important works which are done in French feminism for instance that the three big names of French feminism, Irigaray, Cixous, Kristeva all of them talk about the entire play, entire pleasure, pleasure as a function which does not need to be functional, a pleasure the function which does not need to be productive in its possibilities, pleasure as inward, inward looking narcissistic activity which may or may not produce anything after all, so pleasure as a non-productive activity, as a ludic activity, as ironic activity so that kind of activity was celebrated by the French feminism and obviously Haraway seems to have aligned herself attitudinally to that kind of a embodiment principle.

And of course, this is quite post-structuralist as well. If you look at the post-structure idea of writing for instance which were theorized by people I told about where he had about the entire idea of the writerly text, the text of (())(13:43) which is, you know writing is a pleasurable activity, writing as a pleasure producing activity, which may or may not mean anything, which may or may not end up being productive, you know non-pleasure sense.

So the only responsibility, the only aspiration that such writing has, is to be pleasurable in quality. It should give pleasure; attain pleasure, being absorbed in pleasure. So pleasure comes a subversive function as you can imagine by now. And that kind of subversive category is something which is highlighted by Haraway as well especially when she is talking about the idea of cyborg embodiment, Ok.

So the ideologically charged question or what counts as daily activity, as experience can be approached by exploiting

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borgs might consider more seriously the partial, fluid, sometimes aspect of sex and sexual embodiment. Gender might not be global identity after all, even if it has profound historical breadth and depth.

The ideologically charged question of what counts as daily activity, as experience, can be approached by exploiting the cyborg image. Feminists have recently claimed that women are given to dailiness, that women more than men somehow sustain daily life and so have a privileged epistemological position potentially. There is a compelling aspect to this claim, one that makes visible unvalued female activity and names it as the ground of life.

But *the* ground of life? What about all the ignorance of women, all the exclusions and failures of knowledge and skill? What about men's access to daily competence, to knowing how



the cyborg image. So you know, exploiting does not become a bad activity after all. So exploiting as appropriating, so we appropriate the cyborg image then of course we can, so problematize and re-ontologize things such as daily activity, experience etc, right.

So cyborg image can be exploited, cyborg image can be appropriated, and that after appropriation, that after, you know exploitation can reproblematize, you know reanthologized what we take for granted, what we consume as a daily activity. So dailiness can be problematized and re- anthologized with the appropriation of cyborg image.

Feminists have recently claimed that women are given to dailiness, the woman know the man somehow sustained daily life and so have a privilege, epistemological position potentially.

So if you are looking at re- anthologizing dailiness which is a very political tentative as you imagine that you know the entire idea of dailiness as a consumer, sometimes unconsciously as we internalize unconsciously, that dailiness is defamiliarized, you know de- anthologized then obviously women can have privilege, epistemological position because they are more, historically they have been suffering dailiness.

They have been absorbed in dailiness much more than men but, so that, that position can now be used as position of privilege, that position of suffering, that position of, you know liquidation if you will, that can be now considered or reclassified position of privilege because then they have insider's insight into what dailyness is. And that insight can then be used, can then be formed this entire activity of reanthologization, of problematizing dailiness, making dailiness some kind of subversive activity, right.

So there is a comparing aspect to this claim one that makes visible, unvalued female activity and names it as the ground of life.

So what is the unvalued female activity? The unvalued female activity is the activity at home, the activity in the intimate space where you know people just take it for granted, the activity of nurturing, mothering, care-giving etc.

So those activities which are expected of female, which are unwaged labor by the way, if you look at the Marxist perspective, no one pays them. They are not paid for that activity. It is something expected out of them as a virtual narrative.

So that kind of activity can be re- anthologized, can be problematised with the rise of cyborg embodiment. So, and then she talks about

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One last image: organisms and organismic, holistic politics depend on metaphors of rebirth and invariably call on the resources of reproductive sex. I would suggest that cyborgs have more to do with regeneration and are suspicious of the reproductive matrix and of most birthing. For salamanders, regeneration after injury, such as the loss of a limb, involves regrowth of structure and restoration of function with the constant possibility of twinning or other odd topographical productions at the site of former injury. The regrown limb can be monstrous, duplicated, potent. We have all been injured, profoundly. We require regeneration, not rebirth, and the possibilities for our reconstitution include the utopian dream of the hope for a mon-



the entire idea, the last image, you know the organisms and the organic holistic politics depending on metaphors of rebirth.

So we come to the end of the, of the essay where she talks about the metaphorical possibilities of the cyborg and she says, this should be on your screen.

I would suggest the cyborgs have more to do with regeneration and are suspicious of the reproductive matrix and of most birthing. So reproduction is replaced by regeneration. Now if you see the difference between the two words, if you remember the two, you know the two maps which were offered by Haraway, which was something discussed in our last lecture.

So reproduction is more from an organic quality, it is more organic, it is almost divine. There is a degree of divinity, there is a degree of, you know, I mean of course it is a physical activity but there is a metaphysical essence to reproduction in the sense that you know there is degree of holiness to it.

And if we compare that with regeneration which is sometimes, more often than not more artificial in quality. That is something that is foregrounded, you know by the cyborgs. So they have more to do with the regeneration rather than reproduction. They are suspicious of reproduction.

For salamanders, this is a kind of reptile, for salamanders' regeneration after injury such as the loss of a limb, involves regrowth of structure and restoration of function with the constant possibility of twinning or other odd topographical production at the site of former injury, the regrown limb can be monstrous, duplicated, potent.

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Now again notice the way in which monstrosity becomes not just an accepted category but a coveted category rather over here. Because, and the reference of salamander is interesting. Because what that reference does is that, it tells us you know how location is a primate, is not really of a privileged location. You need to move away from the position of this privileged location, this privileged perspective.

We need to look like ourselves as co-inhibitors, so we are sharers of this ecosystem. Salamanders, men, other primates, other animals they all become sharers of, subscribers of, co-consumers if you will, of the same ecosystem. So we move away from the anthropocentric perspective, this is important. And so reference of salamanders invokes that move away from anthropocentricism.

And she says quite interestingly that you know, in the case of salamander the loss of a limb involves regrowth or regeneration but the new limb, or the new tissue which comes, upon the old limb can be monstrous in quality.

And why monstrous, it is monstrous because it may appear as aberration. It may appear as a break of the norm. It may appear as some king of a physiognomicaberration. Something of an

excessive quality, something of a, you know, non-normative quality. And now she connects that to the cyborg imagery which she says in the end, this point we require regeneration or rebirth.

So regeneration is more coveted than rebirth according to Haraway, according to the cyborg perspective narrative that she is taking, offering. Then she says the possibilities of reconstitution include the utopian dream of the hope of the monstrous world without gender.

So the monstrous world is the world of hope that we can aspire for a monstrous world. And that monstrous world would be one without gender, without the binary of gender, without the binaristic, without the dualism of gender, with the dual discourses of gender. And that of course is the utopian dream that of course becomes coveted category according to Haraway's narrative, right.

So what kind of

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depend on metaphors of rebirth and invariably call on the resources of reproductive sex. I would suggest that cyborgs have more to do with regeneration and are suspicious of the reproductive matrix and of most birthing. For salamanders, regeneration after injury, such as the loss of a limb, involves regrowth of structure and restoration of function with the constant possibility of twinning or other odd topographical productions at the site of former injury. The regrown limb can be monstrous, duplicated, potent. We have all been injured, profoundly. We require regeneration, not rebirth, and the possibilities for our reconstitution include the utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous world without gender.

Cyborg imagery can help express two crucial arguments in this essay: first, the production of universal, totalizing theory is a major mistake that misses most of reality, probably always,



cyborg imagery, lastly this is a summing up a bit, what kind of cyborg imagery teach us? What can, you know didactic function can it perform in the world we live in today? Cyborg imagery can help express two crucial arguments in this essay.

First the production of universal totalizing theory is a major mistake and that misses most of reality, probably always but certainly now.

#### And second taking responsibility

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Cyborg imagery can help express two crucial arguments in this essay: first, the production of universal, totalizing theory is a major mistake that misses most of reality, probably always, but certainly now; and second, taking responsibility for the social relations of science and technology means refusing an antiscience metaphysics, a demonology of technology, and so means embracing the skillful task of reconstructing the boundaries of daily life, in partial connection with others, in commu-



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Cyborg imagery can help express two crucial arguments in this essay: first, the production of universal, totalizing theory is a major mistake that misses most of reality, probably always, but certainly now; and second, taking responsibility for the social relations of science and technology means refusing an antiscience metaphysics, a demonology of technology, and so means embracing the skillful task of reconstructing the boundaries of daily life, in partial connection with others, in communication with all of our parts. It is not just that science and technology are possible means of great human satisfaction, as well as a matrix of complex dominations. Cyborg imagery can sug-



with all of our parts.

So these are two important aspects that cyborg imagery can help articulate and help underline. So first is any idea, any attempt for totalizing universal theory is a mistake because that can become a grand narrative very quickly and that grand narrative can take (())(21:46) quality which then will assume a center and, center margin thing will be replicated and you know that would become a very convenient tool which will legitimize discrimination, which will legitimize exploitation, which will legitimize domination in the world that has always happened.

The way that it is always happened in history of humanity you know if you talk about imperialism, if you talk about racism, they all have this kind of a dualistic, you know discourse and other universal totalizing theory. So any attempt to, so create, or make, you know an architecture totalizing universal theory is a mistake because that misses reality, that misses the live reality of everydayness.

And secondly you know the idea of move away from some kind of a eurocentric scientific technology, move away from a dominant capitalist scientific technology and use of that against itself can help this understanding, you know, help us experiencing partial connection with others.

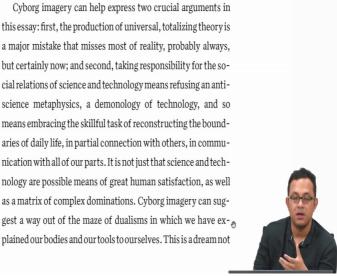
So you need to have a reconstituted idea of kinship. We need to have a reconstituted idea of embodiment. You know we need to have a reconstructed idea of boundaries in life. So, the boundaries in life should be done away with, should be reformulated, should be restructured and that restructuring will be, will come, will emerge as a partial connection with others and again look at the word partial. It is never a complete connection.

That is not even coveted, so the partial connection becomes the authentic connection, the true connection. So any true connection can only be partial in quality, can only be incomplete in quality, you know it will be inter-spatiality in quality and that inter-spatiality, the partiality of things which are not hidden, which are not concealed in the cyborg narrative, or which were foregrounded and celebrated in the cyborg narrative.

So in communication with all other parts is not just the science and technology a possible means of great human satisfaction as well as the matrix

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strous world without gender.



of complex dominations. Cyber imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualism.

So that maze of dualism can be escaped with the cyborg imagery, can be done away with the cyborg imagery. And you know that dualism in which we have explained our bodies, our tools to ourselves. So that self-explanatory dualism which is sorry to inform that scientific knowledge can be done away with, can be escaped, can be subverted with the cyborg imagery.

This is a dream not of

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of a common language, but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia. It is an imagination of a feminist speaking in tongues to strike fear into the circuits of the supersavers of the new right. It means both building and destroying machines, identities, categories, relationships, space stories. Though both are bound in the spiral dance, I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess.

NOTES

1. See Zoe Sofoulis (n.d.). 2. See Hilary Klein 1989.



common language but of a powerful, infidel heteroglossia. And this is very, very important word infidel. It is not, you know fidel, it is not faithful language. It is a language which is essentially a bastard language, illegitimate language, but that the bastard quality, that illegitimate quality, something which is celebrated and that kind of discourse. Heteroglossia is a Bakhtinian term, Mikhail Bakhtin.

Many languages, many, many voices, polyphony of languages come together, put together. So we do not really aspire for a common language. We aspire for heteroglossic language, a language which is mixed, mutable, messy. And that becomes the infidel language, a powerful infidel language.

So infidelity obviously becomes category for celebration or something which is coveted, a coveted category. It is imagination of feminist speaking and tongues to strike fear into the circuits of the supersavers of the new right. It means both building and destroying machines, identities, categories, relationships, space stories.

Though both are bound in spiral dance I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess. So that preferences articulated in the end. She would rather be a cyborg than a goddess moving out of the humanist principle and into the post-modern principle of artificiality which is celebrated and acknowledged.

So move away from goddess, is obviously move away from humanism which is, you know articulated clearly

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at the end of the essay. So we end the lecture with this point that concludes The Cyborg Manifesto. We move on to new text in our next lecture. Thank you for your attention.