

Starling Carter

Political Identities in Spacetimes of Alterity

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Politics, Ethics and Aesthetics

Throughout this thesis project I will be engaging primarily with Donna Haraway, especially her “Manifesto for Cyborgs,” a work that has been of the utmost importance to my own evolving ideas about politics and identity and to feminist thought over the past 25 years. Haraway’s work pinpoints the cyborg as a new form of ceasefire in what she calls the “border war” between machine and organism that has been an important contestation in recent and especially Western history. The cyborg presents new possibilities in terms of conceptualizing ourselves as beings and actors within larger systems and suggests a new direction for political thought/being. Without getting into her ideas too heavily here, her ideas about the “fruitful couplings” possible through the cyborg is summed up well in her description of irony and its function as a political tool: “Irony is about contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes, even dialectically, about the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and

true.”

Haraway started writing about cyborgs when personal computers were just starting to become a part of people’s lives, and I believe that her ideas bear revisitation in the light of the enormous parts that computers and the internet play in our everyday lives and relationships to self, other, and to politics in the current moment. The internet, in a sense, is the ultimate material-semiotic reality, the realm of the cyborg and its politics, for better or worse.

As I imagine it now, my project will look to political and aesthetic communities on the internet and the ways in which identities form, dissolve, coincide, and connect to or bounce off of one another in these spaces. To resist the urge to make “law-like generalizations” or to become too entrenched in the empirical or observable data that exists, I will have to rely heavily and openly on my own experiences of and encounters with self, participation, empowerment, rejection, solidarity, or revulsion.

