Außer der Reihe

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The Reading of an Œuvre. Donna Haraway: The Poetics and Politics of Life

My first experience of reading Donna Haraway was a rapturous one. She cast a spell like that woven by Marguerite Duras in *Le Ravissement de Lol V. Stein*. Haraway's prose spoke to me in a wholly singular way and I found myself its vessel. I assimilated its substance in a strange process of rumination, replication and translation, immediately endeavoring to speak and write it in French in a kind of robotic transliteration. There is no question that in my case Donna Haraway would conjure the figure of the vampire and the image of transfusion so as to describe this hold she has on a reader.

Doubtless one of the primary and specular aspects of the Harawayan gesture is that the experience of the subject is not abolished in that uncertain exchange which consists in an act of knowledge taking the historically contingent form of a text which subverts the academic canon through its poetics.[1] This gesture places the relationality (in this case between the writer and the reader) at the center and posits it as an open one.

The act of translating Donna Haraway, writing while confronting her words, her worlds and her figures, is to first of all share an experience and to desire that others have it too. To multiply rather than replicate; to favor an active and regenerative infectiousness; to coalesce based on a poetic, political and innovative theoretical proposition. Today I am less concerned with trying to persuade the skeptics (one must learn to bear this) than with showing (and conceiving) the effectiveness and pertinence of a body of work that confronts major questions of our time.

Because Donna Haraway matters. She matters as a feminist theoretician, as a representative of science and cultural studies, as a thinker who is one of the most creative of her generation. It is not that she has followed the most direct and simple path in achieving this but precisely because of the many detours and forks in the road – because of her research and narrative strategies.

So what is her project all about? Her project might be considered a radical attempt to destabilize categories of Western thinking. Forming the basis of Haraway's approach is a basic skepticism regarding what is generally considered

[1] I think one might here borrow from Jacques Rancière (1992) and his reading of history as a »poetics of knowledge« and to question, as does Haraway, the links between narration, the sciences, and politics.

the nature of nature and in so doing the nature of knowledge (notably regarding nature). Just as nature should not be considered an original sanctuary somehow set apart from the scientific gesture or human instrumentation, scientific activity (and the life sciences in particular) should not be considered as activities detached from their immersion in the natural and social world. In a word, Donna Haraway tells us, there is no such thing as the innocence of nature; there is no Eden or state of nature that is not always and everywhere a »naturculture«;[2] conversely, there is no such thing as the innocence of biological research or any other scientific practice.

The major idea reworked on the basis of multiple traditions is that »reality is not independent of our explorations of it« (Haraway 1997, 116, cit. Karen Barad) – it does not exist as exteriority. »Reality« is only knowable in terms of the commerce that we have with it, and that commerce then and now signals an impurity in both the situation of the subject of the knowledge – bound or defined by a multitude of physical, social and natural links – and in the object of the knowledge, which reveals a similar heterogeneity.

As with Bruno Latour, the result is an extension of the definition of the social that is not solely restricted to the »society of human« (Latour 1999; 2006). This means that analysis of the asymmetry existing in relations among men and in their relations with those that they have defined as being other (women, men of color, colonials) is insufficient. The social is Haraway's *natureculture* at a more complex level. It is the contemporary dimension of our presence on this earth in a techno-scientific environment where the boundaries between the living and the artifact have always been uncertain; it is, therefore, then and now, the radically historical dimension of our way of being and evolving in this world following certain modalities that transcend social or historical time. Coming into play here is a sort of »bio-social« conception of existence, which once more places relationality at the center (in this case, between species).

In Haraway's view, emancipation comes to pass through a descriptive analysis of historical and contemporary data pertaining to this biosocial condition. Haraway's language, through its complexity and inventiveness, conjures the real and fictive (and often monstrous) figures of our techno-scientific contemporaneousness, which permits of starting work on that irremediably intricate dimension of the natural and the artifact (but also of the object and the subject of knowledge). These figures of flesh, but also of style, these real and fictive figures are tools; a means, for example, of applying that unthinkable aspect of our entanglement with the animal and the artifact; that non-exteriority to our own bio-social milieu; the eminently composite and relational character of our *natureculture*. The proposition is by no means a new naturalism or a new way of subsuming the social under the

[2] After initially putting certain of Donna Haraway's concepts in quotation marks, I then propose to introduce them freely into the text without quotation marks but in italics so that they may take on a life of their own while at the same time not being confused with a typo.

biological or as being enveloped by it. To the contrary, it is about conceiving the »biological condition« as being *pre*conditioned by history and therefore all about opening up the strictly political dimension of possible choices in terms of both society and science. To »seriously« consider »natural acts« thus means to analyze and define »the kind of civil and familial order of humans and non-humans« that we wish to privilege politically as well as from the standpoint of epistemes (Haraway 1997, 118). This latter point can be otherwise translated by the conviction (and by highlighting the fact) that »this« artifactual and social nature is a collective.

Having now rougly outlined these elements and in particular the centrality of her reflections on the life sciences, the words which are to follow – *imprints*, *founding narratives*, *connections* – will serve as a guide for approaching the thought and works of Donna Haraway. Having already had occasion to present and analyze certain aspects of her oeuvre (Gardey 2007; 2009; 2011b), I propose now to complete this reading through other readings and to refer to various propositions that have become available in the Francophone world so as to »think« along with Donna Haraway.[3]

Imprints

Donna Haraway was born into a Catholic family in the American state of Colorado in 1944. Her upbringing is not a point of indifference for Haraway, who has on more than one occasion made allusion to the importance of Catholicism in her personal journey, her intellectual development, and the modalities by which she has seized the world. »Raised a Roman Catholic, I grew up knowing that the Real Presence was present under both ›species‹, the visible form of the bread and the wine. Sign and flesh, sight and food, never came apart for me again after seeing and eating that hearty meal« (Haraway 2008, 18). Here was the origin of her certain conviction regarding the world but also a reading of the world as »the corporeal join of the material and the semiotic« (Haraway 2002, 16). The message of the eucharist matters as a primary sensual and intellectual experience – an experience of the double dimension of presence and representation, of the transitivity and reflexivity.[4] This experience makes a tool or technology of reading, the signified and signifying dyad being otherwise shifted and developed as »flesh and signifiers«, »bodies and words«, »stories and worlds« (Haraway 2002, 20).

Irreverent as it is, Haraway's position in every way remains one that emanates »from the interior« as well as earning her the classification of blasphemous, as rightly noted by Isabelle Stengers (2010). With blasphemy it is a question of taking a critical position that is addressed to a community, of taking a position

[3] See the bibliography at the end of this article.

[4] I thank my fellow historian and co-fellow at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin, José Burucua, for our conversation on these points.

that questions the possibility of »us« without breaking the link – or rather while questioning the *nature* of that link. Whether in using the figurative resources of Catholicism, of inventing a political myth (the cyborg) faithful to »feminism, to socialism, to materialism« (Haraway 1985, 2004), and of questioning the possibility of a »we« which incarnates and conveys them; whether assailing the life sciences while proclaiming a veritable »faith« in scientific activity and the »joy« that it gives – Haraway's work never evades the situation (the attachments) of the subject of the statement and the modalities by which one can attempt to describe, to understand, or to act on the world. The approach is discursive and also material in the sense that it takes seriously the semiotic and material dimensions of the subject, the forms of its *embodiment*, which links it up and situates it (as sign and flesh) in the world. Haraway ironically develops that position, which she calls one of »intra / action« (1997, 116) by attempting to describe it: »I find myself to be in the world – that is, an organism shaped by a post-World War II biology that is saturated with information sciences and technologies, a biologist schooled in those discourses, and a practitioner of the humanities and ethnographic social sciences« (Haraway 2008, 13).

Let us remain for a moment with Christianity. In Donna Haraway's work of deconstruction she does not forget that it is first a story and generator of later stories such as Humanism, Marxism, or, more manifestly, the theory of liberation. The figure of Christ as a figure of dislocation and suffering thus serves as a point of entry into *Ecce homo*. But the critique as blasphemy does not renounce a form of hope. In posing the question: »How can humanity represent itself apart from the great Humanist story?« she also asks: »What figuration need be invented to represent a ›feminist humanity‹?« (Haraway 1992, XX) In elaborating the »eccentric and mobile« figures of a new »imagined humanity« (De Lauretis 2007), Haraway rejects the idea of a coherent subject as origin but searches, as she puts it, for a »common language« to make new »connections«. It is in this sense that Haraway is post-post-modern – even if it displeases her detractors. She herself has discussed and partly rejected the label »post-modern« in tentatively endorsing Bruno Latour's phrase »We have never been modern« (1991), and in reconsidering the ravages and impasses that the »great divide« has wrought.[5]

It is therefore right to take seriously Haraway's narrative and figurative technologies. They are a means of preserving history (the story, the action, the transformation, human and collective intervention) as possibility. In her critical work she is attempting to revive the double demand for restitution of possibility in the past so as to define possibilities in the future. Just as *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) is entirely pointed toward a double belief in (and a double inquisition of) the political form of the manifesto (that is to say, of the writing) and of the (mythi-

[5] A question long discussed with respect to the positions taken by Bruno Latour on »a-modernity« in *The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate (d) Others*, Haraway 1992, 164, note 12.

cal) subject of the cyborg as figure of the coalition and the transformation; and its narrative machinery as science-fiction factories aims at the production of an alternative space. The critique of norms is accompanied by a renewed effort to produce a public culture, a common space for »here and now«, this allochronotope which Haraway opposes to but also places alongside and in the humanist tradition, as stressed by Laurence Allard (2007).

Donna Haraway says of herself that her childhood was encompassed by two major institutions, Catholicism and journalism, and that the both of them are concerned with the art of storytelling. Her father, with whom she enters into a moving posthumous dialogue in her last book *When Species Meet*, played an important role in her initiation into that inseparable dimension of »what makes up life« and the possible narrations that one can generate from it. Knowing the place of the farraginous (of living beings and machines) in her work, one might well reflect on the possible importance of the fact of having been principally raised by a father whose paradoxical situation was to be impassioned about sports and to have been a prestigious sports journalist while having been forced for most of his life to live in a wheelchair as a result of having contracted tuberculosis as a child. I lived, says Haraway, with someone whose »whole body was organic flesh as well as wood and metal« (Haraway 2008, 167). Her reflections on the reality of our corporeal presence in the world have in fact never ceased to envisage that which makes up our »capacities«, our »abilities«, our »capabilities« – for her part she speaks of »able bodies« – as a person and as a species. The word »handicap« was never uttered in her family, she says, and she insists on the »naturalness« of the situation – which was no more nor less natural than what she calls another's »paternal equipment« (Haraway 2008, 172).

There are doubtless other biographical and founding imprints to account for the work of Donna Haraway. This is one of those early and repeated experiences of loss and bereavement to which she sometimes makes explicit allusion (Haraway & Nichols 1999). Hence, no doubt certain other strands could doubtless be teased out which would give account of that affective exploration, practical and theoretical, of other forms of kinship; of that infinite exploration of bonds or of that to which we find ourselves bound and to which we are responsible and indebted.

From now on I propose to look at Donna Haraway's adulthood, at that moment when she decided to become a biologist, and to show the bedrock on which her approach is based and the character of her early work.

Founding Narratives

Trained as a biologist but also having pursued courses of study in philosophy and literature, Donna Haraway wrote her 1976 thesis using a reflexive approach toward biological knowledge by way of her interest in the paradigm changes

that had taken place in developmental biology from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1930s. In the years that followed she styled herself an historian of biology. Her first position was teaching basic biology to students at the University of Hawaii, and she recalls that in the very politicized context of the 1970s the natural sciences appeared to everyone as the sole discipline not »contaminated« by »ideology« and thus the bearer of a certain »secular hope«. During these formative years, Donna Haraway planned to categorically refute this illusion while at the same time preserving and conveying her taste for scientific work. In her own words it was about giving account of the »epistemological, semiotic, technical and material« links between science and »cultural-historical specificity« (Haraway & Nichols 1999, 17 f.). The postulate was simple – biology has a history and we must elucidate the role that biology as knowledge and practice plays in the history of contemporary Western society. In *How Like a Leaf* she clarifies how she had always read the natural sciences in two ways – »as about the way the world works biologically, but also about the way the world works metaphorically« (ibid., 24). If her work aims at elaborating the historicity of biological concepts – their contingency and thus their locality – it also attempts to explicate their metaphorical capacity to once more lead us to that link between the figurative and the factual – a link of a very complex nature, for, as Haraway concisely words it: »We live intimately *as* and *in* a biological world« (ibid., 25).

For Haraway the sciences, and in particular the life sciences, are matters too serious to be left solely to the specialists; by not »leaving biology to the biologists« (Stengers 2010) one can envisage »a livable biology«. There would be a veritable danger in permitting a sole language to dominate those possible ones. »Science has been about a search for translation, convertibility, mobility of meanings and universality – which I call reductionism, when one language (guess whose) must be enforced as the standard for all the translations and conversions« (Haraway 1988 / 1991, 187). The critique's purpose is to address, for instance, »the omnipresence of genetics« in biology during the 1990s. She speaks of »genetic fetishism«; and in recalling that »a gene is not a thing«, she denounces »the hypergeneticism« as intrinsic to »bad biology« (Haraway & Nichols 1999, 89–95). In this sphere as in others she is concerned with defending the sciences, in which we want to be the promoters and actresses. We must take hold of the sciences, work with them, as practices of knowledge, as »cultural practices« and »practical cultures«. Yet again the injunction here is not only of an epistemological or political nature – or just a theoretical one – but is rendered necessary by our bio-social condition in the techno-scientific context.

This program of »conscience« was deployed by Donna Haraway in Santa Cruz, California, where she spent the bulk of her career until her retirement as a professor in the Department of the History of Consciousness. Her work, notably *Race: Universal Donors in a Vampire Culture* (in Haraway 1997, 213–266), sought to give an account of scientific knowledge as »great machines of representations«

and of the historical role of biology in producing a kind of story of human specificity. This approach is based on the conviction that »the sciences had always had a utopian character« (Haraway 1986, 80). In their efforts to describe certain worlds and explain how they function, scientists »search out the limits of possible worlds«. This is the reason why the struggle to construct »a good story« counts as major knowledge (ibid.). In her great book *Primate Visions* (1989), Donna Haraway masterfully lays out the potential of just such an intuition:

> *In the historical, philosophical and social studies of science, it has become commonplace to note that ›facts‹ depend on the interpretive framework of theory, and that theories are loaded with the explicit and implicit values of the theorizers and their cultures. But values seems an anemic word to convey the multiple strands of meaning woven into the bodies of monkeys and apes. So, I prefer to say that the life and social sciences are composed through complex, historically specific storytelling practices. Facts are theory-laden; theories are value-laden; values are story-laden. Therefore, facts are meaningful within stories* (Haraway 1986, 79).

A bit later she says that »stories are not equivalently good«. Proven methods matter, and she concludes: »I am arguing that the struggle to construct good stories is a major part of the craft« (Haraway 1986, 80).

In inquiring into knowledge relating to the great apes and primates since the start of the nineteenth century as well as those spheres that they have helped to edify (anthropology, medicine, psychiatry, linguistics, psycho-biology, the physiology of reproduction, paleontology, neurology), Donna Haraway not only shows that »the production of knowledge is skewed by gender biases and more generally by power relations« but that it actively contributes to these relations (Jami 2008). To do work on primates is to continue producing legitimate discourse about society by reason of the authority of science. It is to thus actively contribute to the differentiation between things cultural and natural that it is a matter of addressing the differences between humans and animals, between men and women, between Western people and those of color. *Primate Visions* investigates the way in which scientific knowledge and practices rest on social and colonial orders and established gender relations which buttress this knowledge and these practices. »Primatology is about the simultaneous and repetitive constitution and breakdown of the boundary between human and animal«, writes Haraway, and also »a time machine in which the other is placed at the time of origins, even if the empirical field is modern Rwanda or Kenya« (Haraway 1986, 92). This mythology of a natural order is with respect to both Western women and men and women of color, and it is in this sense that Donna Haraway interprets primatology as an Orientalism.

Feminisms

> *In the fabled country called the West, nature, no matter how protean and contradictory its manifestations, has been the key operator in foundational, grounding discourses for a very long time. The foil for the culture, nature is the zone of constraints, of the given, and of matter as resource; nature is the necessary raw material for human action, the field of imposition of choice and the corollary of mind. Nature has had to serve as the model for human action; nature has been a potent ground for moral discourse. To be unnatural, or act unnaturally, has not been considered healthy, moral, legal or, in general, a good idea* (Haraway 1997, 102).

The questioning about what is given as a given, the historicization and politicization of the gesture which entails the domination and constraint of nature – an instrumental or scientific enterprise and the accompanying forms of exploitation (capitalist, informational, cognitive) or colonization – are certainly the litmus test of the Western philosophico-political corpus.

This perspective has been developed in the name of feminism as well as to its own greater benefit. In helping to open the black box of »biology«,[6] Donna Haraway invites feminists to conjoin their critical social analysis of gender as a construct with an incisive examination of sex as a natural biological given. Accordingly, she also invites us to desist from naturalizing technologies and to always attempt to question them so as to deploy their importance and vast potential. Haraway speaks of the »nature of non-nature« so as to draw our attention to the fact that the techno-sciences, which present a vast array of representations and interventions, escape our critical analysis.[7] In her collection *Simians, Cyborgs and Women* (1991), which followed *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985), her essential concern is biotechnology and digital and information technology. A pioneering work in the feminist analysis of technology, here Donna Haraway gives account of the multiplicity of economic, cultural and social challenges confronting us in the digital era and she acutely seizes upon contemporary forms of capitalist development linked to biotechnological innovations.[8] As I have noted elsewhere (Gardey 2009), her position vis-à-vis technology is essentially opportunist from a political standpoint and once more aims to incite women to »join in« in a way that collectively defines a »becoming« with biotechnology and digital technology since they are »our« condition.

If feminism runs throughout the entirety of Haraway's critical work and is that upon which she bases her epistemological and political approach, it is never her sole purpose. As I have been attempting to show, Haraway's perspective

6 For a history of these approaches, see Gardey (2005a).

7 For a major contribution to the feminist analysis of technology, see Wajcman (1991).

8 For a French introduction to the field of the feminist analysis of technology, see Chabaud-Rychter and Gardey (2002). The best synthesis is Wajcman (2004) and notably comprises a critical chapter on Donna Haraway's approach.

takes in much more than the traditional way in which feminism has defined and understood its field of intervention in that she has expanded its critique of nature (and naturalism) to encompass all entities that she finds there – humans / objects and subjects / beings. As a feminist theoretician, as in everything, Haraway has gone beyond the initial perspective and shrugged off the all too obvious labels. One could even go so far as to say that Haraway's feminism, in parodying it, is a »science« and »politics«.

But Haraway does not employ the word »science« so as to qualify or credit her activity. She would doubtless approve of making feminism a technology – a modality (a tool, a standpoint) for transforming all forms of viewing and of apprehending phenomena while at the same time questioning what in fact is »objectivity« or a »scientific fact«. Her epistemic plea is in favor of the partial perspective, of diffraction, of tropes, of modalities by which the knowing subject's facility and omnipotence is undermined for the benefit of a dense, multiple, situated and embodied subject.

In discussing and contributing to the theory of situated knowledge (Haraway 1988),[9] she does not reject the metaphor of vision in searching for an alternative to heliocentrism (Allard 2007) and to the masturbatory and predatory forms of knowledge production, of objectivity, of the nature of the other(s). In this regard, writing is a strategy – in contrast to transparency, it attempts to give a more »realistic« account of reality by employing the material and figurative density of language. One of the challenges of situated knowledge is to resist »phallocentric writing practices« (Haraway 1995). Writing or speaking are acts of knowledge and political acts for »colonized groups«. They know that they can make a difference and that they are »penning the pages of a new culture« (Haraway 1995). But it is primarily about finding a more effective strategy than that which consists of »speaking about it in the lowest terms« or »writing as a woman«.[10]

For Haraway, in effect, feminism is the sole element of a larger connectivity. It is part of a redefinition of what the production of knowledge and political work can be. Taking from Whitehead the vocabulary of »prehension«, Haraway devotes the bulk of her work to showing that there are no preexisting subjects or primordial foundations. Finding here certain elective affinities with the notion of Judith Butler's »contingent foundations« (1992), Haraway declines once more in *Companion Species Manifesto* (2002) what might be the practical experience of feminism:

> *This feminist theory in its refusal of typology thinking, binary dualisms, and both relativisms and universalisms of many flavors, contributes a rich array of approaches to emergence process, historicity, difference, specificity, co-habitation, co-constitution, and*

[9] It is here that Haraway speaks directly to Harding (1986; 1993) or Hartsock (1998). For a presentation in French of the theory of situated knowledge and that of »feminist epistemologies« see Löwy (2000) and Gardey (2005b).

[10] It is here that Haraway distances herself from certain aspects of Harding's approach.

> *contingency […] free of the ravages and productivities of power […] feminist enquiry is about understanding how things work, who is in the action, what might be possible, and how wordly actors might somehow be accountable* (Haraway 2002, 6–7).

Donna Haraway's quest is a multiple one and very complex – it entails the reconquest of a possible subject (fictive or mythic) for feminism that will be conscious or forewarned of the limits that precede and condition its existence – the limits of a masculine universalism that should be overcome; the limits of an illusory representation of the unity of the collective subject of »women«; the limits of a naturalization that is ever possible; the limits of the reconstruction of the founding myths. The posited figures (the cyborg but also the black slave Sojourner Truth) work these initial tensions, these inherent contradictions. The clear rejection of a globalizing theory and the recognition that »the notion of the coherent subject is a fable« cannot issue, as already mentioned, in a renunciation. To the contrary, the theoretical and critical effort, the political and poetical effort consists in exploring through writing and narrating the world's facts and realities the various representations of a »collective humanity« (ibid.). Haraway's quest is for a »feminist humanity« that is not cramped but »always in movement« (ibid.). It is in this sense that she speaks of »promises«, »monstrous promises«, as announced by the title of one of her more explicity political articles *The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate (d) Others* (1992).

Connections

From primates to laboratory mice, from genes to race, from cyborgs to dogs – the emblematic figures of Haraway's thought testify to a shift over time of her motifs and foci. In *A Cyborg Manifesto* the question of socialism tends to give way to other reflections and propositions regarding the forms of possible connections and articulation. Likewise the term and subject »capitalism« – even if still very present and regularly suummoned in texts devoted to genetic and racial biotechnologies – seems to have disappeared from Haraway's radar screen in her more recent writings. If one (rightly) interprets Haraway's oeuvre as an attempt to preserve the »struggle apropos technologies of knowledge« and the closely correlated »political struggles« (Stengers 2010), it is doubtless advisable to return to the way in which she describes her / our »worlds«. When Donna Haraway writes that »for feminist theory, who and what are in the world is precisely what is at stake« (Haraway 2002, 8), she signals a deepening and shifting of her perspective.

To pose the question »Who or what composes our world?« is to propose certain ways of defining a common world, a topos, while at the same time defining the politics of relations that we deploy toward it when we define it as ours (Gardey 2011a). In focusing on the relations between species, Donna Haraway's last two books (*Companion Species Manifesto* and *When Species Meet)* address the

affective, cognitive and political dimensions of our relations as species with »our« »companion species« and thereby aim at conceiving the social and political qualities of a »common world«. Employing such notions as »responsibility« and »accountability«, Haraway questions the dynamic and thickness of the bonds that we construct in and with *natureculture* (Gardey 2009), proposing to define what we have in »common« as more of a »becoming« and in particular »a becoming with the animal«[11] than an »elsewhere«. This approach signals the environmental impact of Haraway's world of thought, a richly interesting dimension, a way of renewing the question of the collective, of the forms of mobilization and of struggle that we must or can engage apropos of the world and its definition.

The originality of all this is once again the systematic sabotage of traditional philosophical (and political) terms with respect to the »animal question«. Let us abandon finally that which is »proper to man« and those endless debates as to what distinguishes humans from animals, justifiably criticized by Derrida (2006). Drawing on her work in the area of primatology and contemporary biotechnological hybrids (such as the Oncomouse), Haraway questions the relevance of the definition of the human as a paddock of infections and multiple exchanges that he nourishes with living micro-organisms and the DNA of those who share his domesticity. In shifting the focus of her thoughts from the species (and to an immediate bio-social plan) she has introduced reflection on the cohabitation, coevolution, and the modalities of interspecies sociability here and now. To state it again, her reading is an analytical and political one to the degree that the label »realist« in terms of these bio-social links includes the promise of an enlarged emancipation – enlarged to encompass the relationality of another nature and intertwined in another way. If one can pretend astonishment at the fact that Haraway has not invented a word so as to abolish this polarity (irrespective of the feminist cause, how does »animan« grab you?), implicit in any such creation would be the risk of continuing to convey a difference or a way of questioning the difference which obviates its displacement. It is with phrases such as »companion species« and »companions in the species« that Haraway takes us to a more collective and complex place – a place where there are scales of time accumulated which are incommensurate with one another (the time of the evolutionary theory, the time of human history, or that of *this* relation situated with *this* animal) just as are the territorial scales (habitat, milieu, environment) for which the name remains to be defined for thinking about that co-existence between social and biological milieus and that of the commune.

Despite these propositions and their radicalness, Haraway's political ecology has not been widely recognized hitherto (Gardey 2008). This can doubtless be attributed to not only the complexity of her interventions but their unorthodox character – e. g. the fact that she cultivates no nostalgia for the Garden of Eden

[11] I am referring to that concept of »becoming with«, which Donna Haraway takes from Vinciane Despret (Haraway 2008, p. 17 f.).

and that she has become celebrated worldwide through her technophile enthusiasms. The times change and the political (and possibly ecological) concerns of Donna Haraway's artifactitious reflections run their course in making available new readings and translations (into French) (Hache 2012). Additionally, specialists in the relations between humankind and animals (Despret & Porcher 2007), and in particular Vinciane Despret (2012), have engaged in discourse with Haraway regarding these questions.[12] Might we speak of an »animal turn« – of which Haraway would be one of the most articulate expressions? The formulation of this question allows me to return to the evolution of the reception of her oeuvre and to make some critical remarks before concluding with the political and critical topicality of her work.

The versions of Haraway as an »ecologist« and an »animalist« constitute the latter stages of her reception, coherent with the evolution of her oeuvre, and which are the last of a series of »other« Haraways – a »techno and boy« Haraway; a »cyborg« and »witch« Haraway; a »feminist«, »post-feminist«, »post-modern«, and even »transhumanist« Haraway; a »cultural & queer« Haraway, a »(post-) Marxist« or »Messianic« Haraway.[13] I will not be discussing here the pertinence or impertinence of these labels. My own bias is informed by these diverse readings and receptions of Haraway, but in the end I should like to propose a reading of her which places the question of living beings and the knowledge appertaining to that question at the heart of Donna Haraway's thought.

What are the important questions »from the point of view of living beings« – that is to say, again in Haraway's words, »from the point of view of worlds that we have in common (where we ›together become‹)« – and upon which we should focus our epistemic, critical, and political efforts? Formulating the question thus is in itself a response and creates a space for thinking. I do not therefore concern myself with the topicality or urgency of work on animals or relations between the species. The enterprise seems to me very legitimate from an epistemic and political standpoint. But I should like to air a certain skepticism with respect to Haraway's most recent work, namely the lack of distance and irony as well as of politics in the sense of the »capacity to articulate«. Is the dog truly the future of feminist theory? Is this a deliberate provocation or a proposition to be literally effected? I am also concerned about the field being abandoned to new hegemonic languages. In particular, I am thinking of the infinite variations on the prefix »neo« – from neo-liberalism to neo-management – and the more central point for a specialist in the life sciences being the hegemony of neuroscience and its imperialist designs. And what to make of the ability of a language like that

[12] See, notably, the Colloque de Cerisy la Salle organized by Vinciane Despret in July 2010 and addressing the question »What do we know about animals?«

[13] My readers will pardon the superficiality of this list, whose ironic character is owing to the fact of having to be brief yet all-encompassing. To this purpose, please see the bibliography at the end of this article.

of Donna Haraway's to be absorbed by conservative groups or integrated and recycled into »the circuit«?[14]

Finally there is the question as to how the Haraway program would be put to work at an epistemic or political level – in the metaphorical sense of software, language, codes, or machinery. How to work with Haraway beyond replication / translation / resignification? How can the second phase of implementation be carried out in a creative way? Beyond the epistemic impact of the proposed ideas, what is the present reality of those scientific, cultural and political forms that echo Donna Haraway's connectionist and articulationist propositions? Where is this new laboratory and how to facilitate its expansion?

If, as Sara Angeli Aguiton puts it, »Donna Haraway's artefactualism extends to the field of concrete political experience and permits the articulation of certain kinds of resistance that for too long have been viewed as exclusive – feminism, anti-capitalism, anti-racism, ecology«, or »the struggle for identity« (Aguiton), then these are all »the content of *naturculture*« (of *nurtureculture broth*, if I may) which is to be promoted, experienced, and lived.

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[14] As is her expressed concern in *A Cyborg Manifesto.*

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