

*The cyborg is a kind of
disassembled and reassembled,
postmodern collective and
personal self. This is the self
feminists must recode.*

Donna Haraway



Early Cyborg



Introduction

Computer programmers and technology executives are some of the most sought after and well paid white collar workers in this country. Desired skills include the ability to keep up with a quickly changing work environment, creating bodies of knowledge, managing flows of information and machines, constant innovation, and creativity. It goes without saying that the world of technology is mostly populated by men. The job description of Mother also includes the ability to keep up with a quickly changing work environment, creating bodies of knowledge, managing flows of information and machines, constant innovation, and creativity, yet, this position is unpaid, and for many, undesirable. Obviously, most Mothers are women.

As machines and bodies increasingly become fused, Cyborg Theory celebrates, criticizes, and condemns the process. The machine/body relationship is at once liberating and oppressing. While movies and fiction depict the Cyborg as a futuristic superhuman or technological monster, I propose that it is *actually* your average Mother and Housewife that are among the first so-called Cyborgs. The machine has extended the body of the mother for centuries as she tended the stove, cranked the washer, peddled the sewing machine, and vacuumed the house, but she hardly exists in discussions of technological culture, except as a consuming unit for manufacturing and advertising or in the case of reproductive technologies – the body that carries the baby. There has been little or no discussion about the postpartum technologizing of the mother and child. With microchips embedded in everything from toys and greeting cards to thermometers and baby monitors, increasingly, the mother/child relationship is mediated, complicated and enhanced by machines. We are encouraged to feed our infants information as if we were storing data on a hard drive with a push to begin “programming” their brains in utero. What is a cyborg mother to do?

Here’s to the recognition of the Cyborg Mommy – the Cyborg as oppressed and the Cyborg as liberated.

Mother taught me everything I know.

...that curious feeling – that we are currently in a real environment – leads to the conclusion that virtual reality is located in the near future, in science fiction, or in an as-yet undeveloped technology. Perhaps the fact that we are already enveloped by the virtual is what makes it so unrecognizable.

Critical Art Ensemble



Suction Device



Enhanced visualization technologies make it difficult to continue to think about the material body as a bounded entity, or to continue to distinguish its inside from its outside, its surface from its depth, its aura from its projection. As the virtual body is deployed as a medium of information and of encryption, the structural integrity of the material body as a bounded physical object is technologically deconstructed.

Anne Balsamo



Installation of Maternal Instinct Monitor



Are you a cyborg?

1. **yes** **no** Are you dependent on technology to the extent that you could not survive without it?*

 - * Would you be prepared to hunt, gather or grow your own food? Make your own clothes by hand? Read by candle light? Is it even possible, at this point in time, to live technology-free?

2. **yes** **no** Do you consider your bank deposits, stock portfolio, or credit history more important than your fat deposits, muscular fitness or physical history?*

 - * Is your electronic body in better shape than your physical body? Are you better known by others for your data than your flesh? Do you have twinges of incompleteness when you are away from your computer?

3. **yes** **no** Do you receive most of your knowledge about the world through artificial symbolic language, rather than natural sensory experience?*

 - * Does most of your world knowledge come from pictures, words, books, and electronic communications? How do you receive news? Newspaper? Radio? Television? Web? Gossip?

4. **yes** **no** Do you identify yourself and judge other people more by their ability to manipulate tools and positions in technological and social systems rather than the ability to sustain the life and health of themselves and others?*

 - * How many people do you know and respect primarily for their vegetable garden? Primarily for their parenting skills? Primarily for their housekeeping abilities? Primarily for their relationships?

5. **yes** **no** Do you spend more time operating, troubleshooting or upgrading machinery than in self-reflection, introspection or conscious presence?*

 - * How much time do you spend with the telephone? Washer and dryer? Microwave oven? Car? Computer? Vacuum cleaner? Answering machine? Blender? Stove? Sewing machine? Blow dryer? Electric razor? Television? VCR? Stereo? Camera?

6. **yes** **no** Would you reject a lifestyle free of any technology even if you could endure and survive?*

 - * How many of us would really want to “drop out” all the way? Do you know anyone personally who has?

If you have answered yes to one or more of these questions, you are already a cyborg. Congratulations and condolences.



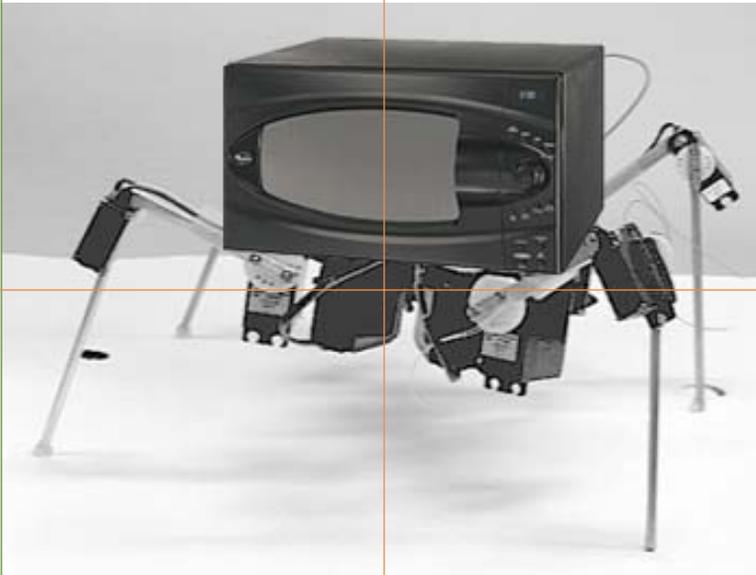
Childbearing is one experience of complex and nonsocially constructed metamorphosis. It involves an interrelation of fluctuating identities which must be navigated as the same system and differentiated at the same time; it is a process of uncontrollable events among two willful systems – and we all first negotiate this condition in our experiences as a child.

Catherine Richards



...cyborgs are generally anxiety ridden creatures, searching for a stable identity.

Jennifer L. Croissant



Roving Microwave – Model Number GNP107



Consumer Surveillance Device

