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Title: "I sing the body electric": Theories and modes of subjectivity and embodiment in the Information Age

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Degree: Ph.D.

Year: 2003

Pages: 00146

Institution: The University of New Mexico; 0142

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Source: DAI, 64, no. 11A (2003): p. 4098

Abstract: This dissertation reads, interprets, and constructs a network of associations amongst a group of critical, theoretical texts by six authors: Jean Baudrillard, Scott Bukatman, Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles, Mark Poster, and Sherry Turkle, all of whom share a sense that late twentieth century technological change is linked to deep cultural change. Their texts postulate that post-War developments in information and communications technology are linked not just to fundamental alterations in economic, political, and social structures, but to epistemological and ontological shifts as well. In particular, they propose that those changes produce new modes of subjectivity and embodiment.

I find that some of these texts, and their associated enactments of subjectivity and embodiment, accept and reproduce the age-old dichotomy in Western epistemology between mind and body. My first two chapters explore and articulate this tendency. In Chapter One I examine a complex of recurring themes rooted in the technologically-mediated separation of information from materiality. These themes include the separation of text from context, the dissociation of signifier from referent, the increasing distance between representation from reality, and the divorce of subjectivity from embodiment. In different ways and by different means, the texts I consider in Chapter One register the increasingly absorbing capacities of electronic signification and simulation. Chapter Two examines and critiques the tendency subject is hypothesized to inhabit the electronically constituted textual, representation, simulational realm I describe in Chapter One.

of subjectivity; they evince a closer attention to places in the texts which engage the body and which consider the status of embodiment in the encounter with information technology. Chapter Three charts the emergence and development of the analogous relationships between organisms and machine constructed by cybernetics research, and investigates the consequences of the cybernetic paradigm for a uniquely human sense of self. The body of theory examined in this chapter suggests that discourse is simultaneously semiotic and material. As such, the process of constructing human/machine analogies is rendered as a corporeal as well as a linguistic phenomenon: the models of subjectivity produced by the analogies—which profoundly undermine traditional modes of subjectivity—are almost always instantiated in the body of a human, animal, or machine. Chapter Four provides close readings of certain essays and textual excerpts which I argue produce specifically "corporeal subjectivities." These subjectivities are grounded in the body as the body intersects with technology: here, the

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contours of embodiment and the topography of subjectivity are closely linked, even enmeshed. Corporeal subjectivities are complex, situated, particular, and porous, and connected to and interpenetrated by human and non-human Others.

I conclude by suggesting that it would be interesting to read models of technologically-mediated corporeal subjectivity beside and against models of hybridity being articulated in ethnic studies, feminist theory, queer theory, comparative literature, and postcolonial theory. These fields have extensively theorized the question of alternative subjectivities and intersubjective identities, with particular attention to issues of race, gender, sexuality, and nationality. This critical work would necessarily deepen and complicate theories of subjectivity arising in cyberspace discourse. In exchange, I propose that the significance of embodiment in cyborg configurations might fruitfully interact with theories and modes of hybridity.

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