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Review of Manifestly Haraway

Journal:	<i>Theory Culture & Society</i>
Manuscript ID	Draft
Manuscript Type:	BR - Book Review
Key Words:	Haraway, nature cultures, affective relationality, human-animal relations, cyborgs, companion species
Abstract:	In this article I review Donna Haraway's book, 'Manifestly Haraway', that brings together the Cyborg Manifesto, The Companion Species Manifesto and a Companion Conversation with Cary Wolfe. What I want to do is show how Haraway's work taken together is inspiring and revolutionary, offering us a basis for thinking differently about how we can intervene in dominant power relations in ways that are not simply critical but constructive of new ways of doing and being a social scientist. So like Foucault before her she offers not just exceptional tropes to think with - the cyborg, the companion species - but practices, ways of thinking and writing and relating, through which to make worlds differently. Making kin, becoming-with - not post-humanism but compost - these are the messages of her manifestos for doing our theorising and our researching differently.

View

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3 Donna Haraway. *Manifestly Haraway. The Cyborg Manifesto. The Companion Species*
4 *Manifesto. Companions in Conversation (with Cary Wolfe)*. Posthumanities 37.
5 Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2016.
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8 While familiar with Haraway's writing, I've been very slow in eating my way through
9 this new collection over the last six months. I've ingested the essays in tiny bites –
10 not only because the prose is so often rich and moving – but mainly because her
11 work is so good to think. Looking at my annotated copy every other line is
12 underlined or starred and so I realise what a difficult task it is going to be to capture
13 the complexity of her thought alongside conveying the passion and revolution of her
14 work.
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17 Rereading the manifestoes excites me in a way that only Michel Foucault and
18 Marilyn Strathern have done in the past. This is not because I didn't read the earlier
19 versions carefully enough. Rather it's because I am now able to read them from a
20 different place. Specifically, it has taken many years to shed something that has got
21 in my way before – something to do with having been brought up in a particular
22 tradition of argument and empiricism in sociology that circulates the object-subject
23 divide as well as separating (good) epistemology from ethos, ethicality, and matters
24 of care (see also Puig de la Bellacasa, 2012, and Thompson, 2013). Additionally I am
25 now reading Haraway through my having been moved and rewritten by a life that
26 includes having babies and keeping a family of animals as well as taking up
27 opportunities for research that has followed medicine back to biology. So too I am
28 immersed in the politics of a cultural revolution: the enmeshing of life and flesh with
29 digital technology, cyber technoscience and genomic imaginaries, and the acute
30 need to preserve and cherish the stuff of our planet of which we are only one
31 expression.
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36 In all this I have been travelling backwards to retrieve a sense of those matters –
37 affect, care, relationality, and immersion in the mess – which are so crucial to
38 knowledge-making and to reassembling the social. While each of these is so easily
39 excluded by sociology's three gods of empiricism, functionalism and analytic
40 argument, what is helping me to reverse direction is a growing tradition that brings
41 together what is normally held a part. This is a tradition (for all the irony that such a
42 term implies) that presses natureculture re-members humans as temporary
43 expressions of, and as made-up of, the same stuff of the worlds they study (see for
44 example Chiew's, 2014, insightful discussion of Cary Wolfe's and Karen Barad's
45 work), and that technology and animals are as co-constitutive of the social as
46 humans (see for example Michael, 2000). Putting themselves into a relation of
47 extraction with the world is not only dangerous for humans as well as for the world
48 (Heidegger 1996), as Stengers (2010) and Latour (2004) point out, scientists cannot
49 and should not do that anyway because it is simply not good science.
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53 In *Manifestly Haraway* the manifestos – created around two tropes - the 'cyborg'
54 and 'companion species' – are laid alongside an extended conversation between
55 herself and the critical theorist Cary Wolfe. In this conversation as well as the
56 introduction Wolfe helps explicate how Haraway's work expresses a feminine vision
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3 which is both erudite and razor sharp, but also kind and funny. He talks of the
4 swagger of Haraway's rhetorical performance – her irony and how her writing is in
5 itself so liberatory. While still insisting on the need for community, Haraway says in
6 the Cyborg Manifesto that irony and the politics of blasphemy are protectors from
7 being swayed by the moral majority. Blasphemy is what Haraway calls a 'category
8 deviance'. Indeed, both cyborgs, the conjoining of flesh and machine that
9 increasingly underpins human life, and companion species, the becomings that
10 humans in affective relations with nonhuman others make, are blasphemous
11 because they undo the categories that hold up the world as we know it.
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15 In rereading these two manifestoes together I think what is so extraordinary is how
16 Haraway's writing helps us experience what she is trying to help liberate: a new way
17 of working and thinking as social scientists. By this I mean she helps us to pay
18 attention to how *all* the boundaries in place that hide our connectivity, our
19 interdependency and our relationality are themselves connected. The boundaries
20 her work challenges are between the human and the animal, organism and machine,
21 the virtual and the fleshy, the literary and the scientific, the poetic and the
22 functional, affect and effect. Haraway's writing makes possible a vision in which
23 every move we make, every step we take, everything we create is underpinned by
24 the historicity of how these divisions are enacted.
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28 Specifically, she helps illuminate how these divisions help support relations of
29 asymmetry, domination and oppression between humans and others, including
30 other humans, because how the way in which these divisions are worked body-forth
31 and manifest asymmetries in power between different classes of being: 'reasonable',
32 privileged, powerful, often heterosexual, white and masculine as against
33 unreasonable, disadvantaged, weak, often black and female, sometimes also gay or
34 lesbian. What she asserts is how in the nexus of entanglements between how
35 division is done are possibilities for reproduction of asymmetrical power relations,
36 including capitalism's worst excesses of war and oppression. This is what her work –
37 when we read these manifestos and the conversations together – has accomplished
38 – and it is a truly remarkable feat. Yet she is, as she puts it, neither a technobunny
39 nor an all out critic of technology and of science. Rather she offers us – as part-
40 creators and inextricable users of technology and science – a different way of doing
41 technology and science. For example, she does not want us to abandon genomic
42 thought but urges us to see genomics differently – that we are made up of,
43 dependent upon and share the same stuff of the world as other creatures.
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48 Donna Haraway gets us out of empiricist and analytical forms of argument – this is
49 what Strathern (1998) also calls us to in the second Chapter of *Gender of the Gift*.
50 Haraway does this very differently from Strathern but she does it all the same.
51 Haraway does not work the old divisions in ways that simply try to invert power
52 relations, but finds different ways of thinking, writing and doing as at the same time
53 connecting things up that are usually held apart. Strathern manages through her
54 comparative method working between Melanesian and Euro-American cultures to
55 create conditions of possibility for seeing the destructive modes of thought that
56 underpin modernity as at the same time as generating possibilities for thinking
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3 differently. Haraway on the other hand works explicitly on the divisions that support
4 analytical and empirical thought, bodied forth by the specific ways in which
5 technoscience has infiltrated every aspect of life and thought as well as aligned with
6 power structures to dominate and oppress, including making war not love.
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9 Haraway's work then is aimed at not just breaking down the old divisions but to shift
10 attention and ways of thinking them that re-invents their connectivity. She calls this
11 an 'affirmatory biopolitics' after Esposito (2008), one that stresses kin, not otherness
12 or division, and that produces a vision of compost rather than of the post-human. It
13 is not just that she shows us that we have never been modern. She does something
14 more than this and it is this 'more' that I want to press. This is because Haraway was
15 doing something in cyborg manifesto that when I first read it I did not quite get. To
16 borrow from Anneliese Ryles, in the Cyborg Manifesto Haraway gives us the means
17 to see the figure of techno-science twice. She is writing the figure of techno-science
18 at the dawn of a new cyber age-the age of digital culture that is about to envelop us.
19 Her prescience here is extraordinary. By prescience I am pointing to her exhortation
20 in the manifesto to realise how all our techno-scientific invention and creativity can
21 be rolled out to underpin relations of domination, or as ways to undo the categorical
22 work that makes the figure of human exceptionality possible, and instead press
23 relations of kin and connectivity. She recreates the figure of persons as not ever fully
24 human in the sense of the sovereign subject, but as always in extension with
25 otherness, in this case technological otherness. In so doing she turns the idea of
26 purity (racial, gendered, human) on its head, but she does much more than this. She
27 says in the interview with Wolfe in the second half of the book, that cyborg
28 manifesto was written out of and with rage. Her rage is at how technoscience is
29 entangled with a politics of division and destruction. A rage born out of her own
30 socio-historical positioning: post two world wars, the aftermath of Hiroshima and
31 Nagasaki, Vietnam and resistance to US imperialist politics, with the US as *the*
32 personification of the sovereign subject. A collective rage and protest:
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38 O Superman,
39 O Judge,
40 O Mom and Dad.
41 Mom and Dad...

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44 And I said, OK. Who is this really?
45 And the voice said, this is the hand, the hand that takes.
46 This is the hand, the hand that takes.
47 This is the hand, the hand that takes.
48 Here come the planes.
49 They're American planes.
50 Made in America,
51 (Laurie Anderson, 'O Superman', from the album *Big Science*, 1982:
52 Warner Bros)
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56 This rage helps her to show how our being, our very fabric, always in extension with
57 technology, are constituted by the relations between capitalism and division. But
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3 here Haraway illuminates the figure seen twice - how all our creativity and
4 inventiveness - our entanglement with technology – could be done otherwise: and
5 she unpacks the alternative figure of the cyborg as a metaphor of connection and
6 hybridity, and as against the divisions that underpin human exceptionalism and all
7 that it supports. In so doing Haraway offers us a new politics of inclusion and
8 different possibilities for how technoscience is done.
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11 So this is the figure she turns us towards - cyborg as affirmation of our mixings, of
12 relatedness, of connection and of interdependency. This turning the figure of the
13 human as always cyborg as a metaphor for how humans live in the world as always
14 and forever political is a tour de force in itself. But cyborg manifesto doesn't just
15 offer that, it also offers possibilities for reimagining and doing relations differently.
16 This difference, this possibility always has to have a focus on the ethics and affects of
17 how our techno-human relations are done. That is she insists on focussing how
18 techno-human relations create affects and worlds of very particular kinds-kinds that
19 support war and division and destruction or worlds of relatedness that hold open
20 care for and connection with otherness.
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24 Haraway tells Wolf in their conversation that the Companion Species manifesto was
25 in contrast written out of and with love. She exhorts us to make kin not babies. So
26 what I think she means here is that our products of conception do not just make the
27 'individuals' that are so central to modern humans' thought and forms of socio
28 political organisation. But that our conceptions can be understood as both the
29 products of relations and connections, mixings and conjoinings. So Haraway's huge
30 move here is to show us in companion species how kinship and inheritance is not
31 linear-up and down a chronological tree of life – with each species having a different
32 tree. But also lateral. The who and what we live with, and the world's we make
33 together with these who's and these what's, make us up as both fleshy and virtual
34 beings. So how does she do this? The stress for Haraway is to make affective
35 relationality visible and integral. Here she pushes the leading edge of philosophy to
36 the limits. For example she doesn't just hang with Heidegger's notion of being in the
37 world, or of Deleuze's idea of human beings as becomings. Rather she asserts the
38 perspective through which we can 'see' how we are always 'becoming-with' others,
39 human and non-human, virtual and fleshy, organic and machinic. And in so doing she
40 doesn't just with Whitehead press *process*, but 'worldings', as affective relatings of
41 connection, mixing and interdependency.
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47 Even more than this perhaps Haraway's work suggests that if we don't make the
48 affective dimension of relations and interdependency visible in our work then our
49 work is always partial in both senses of the word and in ways that reproduce a
50 particular kind of politics: the politics that supports the asymmetry of divisions
51 described earlier, and most particularly the division between the human and the rest
52 of the world – of the human as over and above the world. So that rather than
53 perpetuating the division between nature and culture, the world and the human,
54 with science and technology as her handmaidens, we can think instead in terms of
55 naturecultures: how humans are made up of the same fabric as the world they want
56 to dominate. This way of doing social science is very different to how we've been
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3 brought up in the empirical traditions of research and theory that we have inherited,
4 the analytics of sociological argument which always presses somehow, somewhere
5 for objectivity and which performs humans as in command of – as above or
6 detached from - the plane of action from which they think and speak.
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9 Haraway writes about how her thinking is only possible because of her rootedness in
10 places and times – the USA in the sixties, when war and shame were a part of her
11 diet, and then California, in the golden triangle between Berkeley, San Francisco and
12 Santa Cruz – with their radical anthropology and feisty politics of alterity and
13 resistance to mainstream capitalism - that made possible a liberatory form of
14 politics, and of doing academic work. She makes it quite clear that these things as
15 well as her reading, her research and making kin with her dogs, are the parts and
16 persons and things with which she thinks and writes. For example, her work is truly
17 interdisciplinary, bringing together her early immersion in ethnology and the study
18 of animal sociality, including her knowledge of biological and zoological theory and
19 the scientific method, with social philosophy, feminism and feminist epistemology,
20 anthropology and cultural studies. The way she works these different domains –
21 academic, public and personal – helps her keep making openings, that are critical
22 and forever political, but also constitutive.
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27 Haraway's work as it *performs* connection and interdependency thus shows us ways
28 to reimagine how our thinking, our methodology and our writing are interventions,
29 that are in themselves 'worldings'. In this she exhorts us not just to mark out our
30 territory or to colonise or to persuade, nor just to kill off what's gone before. To truly
31 speak truth to power we need do our intervening differently. She does not just make
32 the personal, the social and political explicit, she makes them crucial to being able to
33 think beyond how we are positioned and entangled: opening up our own existential
34 historicity as well as that of the things we study is crucial to a methodology that
35 helps us to turn dominant world-making over, and open up an alternative vision of
36 how things can be done and can be understood, with profound material and
37 experiential affects and effects. So we can reimagine how every thought is thought,
38 how every research proposal is constructed and every research project is done, and
39 how every paper, blog or book is written, are the products of the conditions of
40 possibility, the politics, which have made or unmade worlds, the worlds that
41 entangle us and maybe oppress us. But, in making kin, in making connectivity and
42 compost, we can with Haraway also make ways together of doing these things that
43 can turn earlier, more destructive forms of world-making over.
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51 Department of Sociology, University of York.
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