

‘You Can Resurrect Me, but Only Piecemeal’

Embodied Texts and the Heterotopian Regeneration of the Cyborg

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ABSTRACT

This article explores Donna Haraway’s concept of the cyborg through its prosthetic and heterotopian extension in embodied text. With this fractured and ironic ‘cyborg’ figure, Haraway attempted to move feminist theory and politics into a new direction that broke with second-wave feminism’s perpetual reconceptualization of ‘the woman’ as a natural category. However, the text also became the subject of scholarly critique for dissolving the singularities and material contexts of the bodies marginalized by the categories of gender that Haraway’s abstract and utopian metaphor of the cyborg excludes. Unlike these critics’ disposal of the cyborg, this article stays with this monstrous creature and attempts to give her back some embodied singularities, whilst further elaborating Haraway’s concept of ‘cyborg writing’ and close-reading Shelley Jackson’s digital hypertext novel *Patchwork Girl* (1995). In this hypertext novel, Jackson creates a new myth from the torn-apart body parts of the monstrous female companion of Frankenstein’s monster in Mary Shelley’s original novel. Readers are invited to cooperate in the infinite tearing apart and stitching together of this female monster and, in doing so, form the text as heterotopian; the embodied practices of readers in actual space are, namely, co-constitutive of the text’s multiple and always changing form. The author argues that focusing on the way *Patchwork Girl*’s aesthetics and literal uses of prostheses endlessly move this—and within this—heterotopian regeneration, makes present how Jackson’s hypertext departs from Haraway’s theoretical text and gives way to the acting out of a queerness that cannot imagine its place in utopia. Like Haraway, Jackson emphasizes the fragmentary nature of bodies and subjectivities. But *Patchwork Girl*’s never-resting hypertext makes these bodies, and their prosthetic extensions betray the theoretical territory of metaphor and abstraction.

KEYWORDS

Post-gender, posthumanism, cyborg, hypertext, heterotopia, prosthetics, embodiment

INTRODUCTION

In the past thirty years, Donna Haraway’s *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1991)¹ and Shelley Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl* (1995) have become canonical texts within feminist and queer theory and literature. Haraway’s theoretical cyborg and Jackson’s fictional and hypertextual patchworked ‘monster’ propose two different versions of a similar fractured and boundless being that collapses

the boundaries between human bodies and their social and technological environments—and that, in doing so, subverts humanist fantasies of fixed genders and the identity politics that dominated feminist discourses in the 80s (Pohl 2018, 12). Therefore, it is not surprising that the body of scholarly work that has read Haraway's and Jackson's texts together for their promising contributions to feminist and queer politics is extensive (see for examples: Carazo and Jiménez 2006; Fortin-Tournès 2021; Hayles 2000 and 2005; Latimer 2011; Sarkar 2020; Shakelford 2006). Yet, while Haraway's cyborg and Jackson's monster are comparable, they are not the same. *Patchwork Girl's* hypertext aesthetics, as this paper argues, even brings out some important frictions between the two texts that former analyses of these two works have largely glossed over.

This essay, therefore, explores how the monstrous body of *Patchwork Girl* can be read as a cyborg. Haraway's theory of *difference*, at times, paradoxically resolves gender differences; her 'utopian' fantasy of a world without gender, throws us into a sea of metaphors and abstractions that diminish the singular differences between bodies (1991, 181). In contrast, Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* (1995) provides a more embodied and *heterotopian* interpretation of Haraway's cyborg. Her digital novel builds forth on Mary Shelley's 1818 novel *Frankenstein* and creates a new myth of the female monster that Victor Frankenstein, the protagonist of the original novel, created to accompany the creature he fabricated as a scientific experiment. Like Haraway, but unlike Victor who out of disgust immediately tore this female monster to pieces again to leave her for dead, *Patchwork Girl* does not shy away from her fragmentary bodies and subjectivities. Going even further though, the specific interactive form of Jackson's hypertext makes these monstrous beings escape from Haraway's abstract metaphors and actualizes them in a present, *heterotopian* space that embodies multiple texts, authors, and readers at once.

When studying both texts within their singular, heterotopian contexts, the way Haraway's cyborg and Jackson's monster differ in form and practice becomes visible. The first part of this essay, therefore, takes off by relating Haraway's manifest with the feminist traditions it responds to in more depth. The second part, then, interrogates Haraway's abstractions when talking about (un)gendered bodies. For doing so, the 'prosthesis' concept, as problematized by Sarah S. Jain (1999) and Vivian Sobchack (2006) provides a useful analytical benchmark. Both Haraway and Jackson see prostheses as useful tools for queer transformations (Haraway 1991, 178; Jackson 1995, 'hazy whole'). This illustrates how, according to Jain and Sobchack, scholars often use the term 'prosthesis' metaphorically for *any* human-machine entanglement and its various enhancive promises within various theoretical debates. More successfully than the ubiquitous cyborg, these critiques of the prosthesis show the risks of separating technological objects from their complex and violent contexts to turn them into general, optimistic metaphors. This might be of relevance

especially today as fears about the marginalizing effects of new digital technologies continue to affect large audiences. Still, at moments the cyborg manifesto becomes very intimate with the technological specificities of (its) text, and uncovers parts of its queer and wounding, heterotopian context. From these moments, I claim, we can start rethinking the cyborg's embodiment. A close reading of Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* in the third part of this article develops this argument further. The concept of the prosthesis is of use here again: it reveals the conceptual and aesthetical differences between Haraway's and Jackson's otherwise, in content, quite similar texts. Rather than being merely metaphors, prostheses reappear as the junctions—and ruptures—within the fictional and actual relations formed through the text's narrated *and* practiced heterotopian contexts. My aim is, ultimately, to integrate this literary hypertext, and its technological extensions, into Haraway's cyborg concept—though without crushing them under the latter's abstract and utopian weight.

FEMINIST IDENTITIES AND FRACTURED BODIES: A CYBORG MANIFESTO

Haraway wrote *A Cyborg Manifesto* in 1985 as a response to the contemporary identity politics of (what would retrospectively be called) second-wave feminism. The feminist field, at the time, had become fragmented: the so-called 'sex wars', that took off in the '70s, foregrounded many disagreements over the best way to break down traditional gender roles, and consequently, many new feminisms arose—such as most importantly radical feminism and Marxist feminism—that each proposed a new, female identity with which to subvert contemporary patriarchal expectations (Pohl 2018, 25; Haraway 1991, 158, 160, 162). Yet, what these feminisms left unaddressed was the structure of identity itself, whose inherent logics, according to Haraway, are the root of the formation of all social inequalities. New feminist identities, therefore, unknowingly attached to the same Western, humanist epistemologies that also laid the ground for capitalism, patriarchy, and colonialism. These epistemologies hinged on a dualist and logocentric ideology of progress that divided knowledge into categorical unities of 'others'; of things and processes outside of the mind of the human self. By learning and creating new words for these things and processes, rational selves could come closer to the world's original truth and shape themselves accordingly as unique and civilized individuals (151, 153, 155-158, 175-177). In modernity, only those legible as conventional white men could qualify to meet this human standard. But new feminisms, according to Haraway, extended this dualist way of thinking beyond patriarchal intentions. Like humanists gatekept the category of the human, second-wave feminisms also 'policed deviation from official women's experience' (156). They thus excluded illicit bodies from their politics by once again naturalizing versions of the universal female experience—now determined by shared

experiences of domestic work or sex that for the most part only white and heteronormative women could potentially relate to (149).

But by the late 20th century, Haraway says, this dualist fantasy of separated selves and others and minds and matters, became increasingly difficult to uphold, and a new myth—a cyborg myth—was on its way to replace it (149, 150). ‘[C]yborgs—creatures simultaneously animal and machine ...’ (149)—were no longer only the bionic figures in works of science-fiction. Rather, they had become part of everyday social and material reality (149, 150). The cyborg myth refers to the co-constitution of contemporary socio-cultural imaginations of this human-machine entanglement, and the actual extensions of human bodies in technology and the different forms of life these extensions generate. The obsession of the West with truth, rationalism, and progress had translated into major advances in communication technology, biotechnology, information technology, and military technology, which enlarged the agency of machines over contemporary life (150, 151, 161-173). Consequently, the lines between human selves and the material, technological environments with which they interacted, ironically, blurred in increasingly perceptible ways—it became harder to tell where one body ended and the next body, whether machinic, human, animal or of any other form, began (150-152, 178). Haraway’s manifest, as a textual technology and imagination, is an example and part of such myths too (150, 173)—and thus, more than merely a concept, idea or historical description, her cyborg is itself a *materialization* of the boundary collapsing between material others and thinking selves.

This collapse had significant implications for feminist thinking and politics that have left their marks on many gender and queer theories written in the past decade (Pohl 2018, 64). Unlike the second-wave feminist concept of the ‘woman,’ Haraway’s ‘cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity’ (Haraway 1991, 151). The cyborg does not coagulate a separated body and identity into a harmonious ‘one’ that begins with the birth of a human individual and ends with the latter’s death. Instead, the cyborg regenerates continuously in symbioses with the many different, and often conflicting, social and technological environments she inhabits, and is, therefore, an infinite and multiple being without clear boundaries that holds different ‘incompatible things’ together at once (149, 177, 180). The cyborg, embracing exactly the places where these incompatible parts contest and cannot be resolved into the larger wholes of bodies and selves, will thus be different from herself and others in her infinite transformation, whilst simultaneously continuing in all of these others (150, 180). Therefore, the cyborg lacks a traceable origin story and cannot obey any ideological truth—not the one underlying modern epistemologies, nor the one informing feminist identity politics that rely on such origin stories as well (150, 151).

Haraway is optimistic about the breakdown of humanist origin stories and its potential consequences for the future of feminism. Her use of the term ‘prosthesis’ illustrates this enthusiasm, but simultaneously reveals how her manifest, at times, paradoxically imposes a general paradigm on the world again that excludes the specific lived embodiment of gendered structures the cyborg promises to include, due to her heterotopian nature. ‘For us, in imagination and in other practice,’ Haraway encouragingly says, ‘machines can be prosthetic devices, intimate components, friendly selves [...]’ (178). In this claim, the cyborg goes beyond the description of a global material reality and opens up the utopian dimension of the manifest. The cyborg can namely use her extension in prostheses to create feminist myths that do not fear but enjoy the body’s fractured and singular (re)production through machines to, finally, form and imagine ‘a monstrous world without gender’ (150, 181). This idea was already explored in the science-fiction works of feminist writers such as Anne McCaffrey and James Tiptree, Jr. in which exterior, machinic brains or non-mammalian technologies break through the boundaries of the female body (178). But ‘real-life cyborgs’ (177) can also use prostheses to disrupt the idea of organic necessity that forms women as motherly wholes—for example, by using the tools of writing itself to endlessly *produce*, rather than merely reproduce, their bodies and (con)texts as always new (153, 175). Prosthetic devices, thus, function as a metaphor for all sorts of tools the technologies with which we are imbricated afford; and with which new sorts of meanings and forms of life—that all go into Haraway’s definition of myths—are and can be generated. Yet, what Haraway leaves unexplored is what these tools specifically are, do, or cannot do—and how and in relation to what uses, materials, and ideas they produce these new forms of life.

PROSTHESES, METAPHORS, AND EMBODIED TEXTS

Sarah S. Jain (1999) and Vivian Carol Sobchack (2006) note a similar problem in other posthumanist theories that, they stress, turn the prosthesis into a ‘sexy, new metaphor’ (Sobchack 2006, 19) to talk about the general interactions between human bodies and technologies (Jain 1999, 48). They both warn that this generalization leaves out the ways specific prosthetic technologies are lived, created, and constitutive of the bodies that use them and how, in doing so, prostheses can form and uphold the same norms of gender, ability and the underlying idea of the body’s original wholeness that call these prostheses into being (Jain 1999, 33, 39; Sobchack 2006, 19, 24). In these posthumanist discussions, says Jain for example, prostheses are usually seen as enhancive devices only, obliquing their mutilating effects. When and how bodies supposedly need prosthetic tools (which, for Jain, can include any sort of object) or get injured by their use, is not separated from structures of gender, class, ability, and race, nor from the capitalist

commodification of these objects that target one specific group of customers (such as distinctively men or women) which, simultaneously, reinforces these specific needs, mutilating effects and social structures. Presumably *enhancive* prostheses—Jain uses airbags in cars as an example—can, for example, be wounding to bodies that do not fit into their proper category of intended customers (Jain 1999, 33-43, 43-46). Besides, the lack in the body, that prostheses promise to substitute for, creates addicted and never-satisfied customers who are ongoingly lured into buying the tools by the normatively gendered images these tools advertise, hoping to realize themselves as the *perfect* man or woman they desire to be—but that they will never be quite yet. Commodified prostheses thus create and supply their own demand by the desire to constantly invent and materialize new things that would make the perfect man or woman, and that all of our not-yet-having bodies certainly still lack. In doing so, this image of perfection—itsself material—also continuously displaces, so that there is no end to this addicted customer and the gendered needs and injuries its prostheses reproduce (44-46, 49).

While Haraway acknowledges that in ‘a cyborg world’ technologies can be used in the service of ‘the final appropriation of women’s bodies’ (154), she does not elaborate much on the implications of her theory for bodies embedded within a material world where gendered fantasies, such as the commercial ones that Jain discusses, continue to interact with technologies. Haraway’s resistance to provide a clear definition of prosthetic devices or an example of what her future cyborg might become with them, aside from ‘genderless,’ may have been an attempt to avoid reinscribing the norms of gender and ability stressed by Jain and Sobchack. But, as noted by Scott (1989), Sandoval (1991), and Schueller (2009) (see on this discussion also Pohl 2018, 62), with its use of abstract metaphors like ‘prosthesis’ and ‘cyborg’—and thus by erasing the lived experiences of specific bodies that get marginalized by Western technologies—the manifest, ironically, risks falling into the same universalizing trap as the feminisms it critiques. The way the manifest suffered under its own popularity in the decades following its publication illustrates this well; to Haraway’s regret, feminists all too often fetishized the cyborg figure for propagandistic purposes and turned her into an uncritical, solely optimistic and frictionless ‘techno-hype’ (Olson 1996, 25, 26; Pohl 2018, 54)—an exclusive, genderless *identity* thus.

Yet, when drawing on Jain’s concept of the prosthesis, the cyborg’s critical specificity can be restored when reading the text of the manifesto itself as an immediately actualized prosthetic extension of authors and readers. Staying very close to its material roots in text, the cyborg, in the case of my reading, is thus not a mimetic example of the figure *described* in the manifesto—ready for propagandistic purposes; rather, the manifesto itself becomes part of a collective and infinite cyborg that continues beyond its mere representation. Katherine Hayles’ concept of the

‘embodiment’ of literary language provides a useful starting point. Like Jain and Sobchack, Hayles (1999) calls for caution in reproducing discursive abstractions in cultural theory and highlights the productive potential of using literary texts in understanding our social and material environments (12). Their narratives, namely, resist ‘disembodiment’ and can give theories and artifacts ‘a local habitation and a name through discursive formulations whose effects are specific to that textual body [...]’ unlike ‘that abstract pattern [that] can never fully capture the embodied actuality, unless it is as prolix and noisy as the body itself’ (22). Literary texts, Hayles seems to imply, are thus more proximate to the specific materiality from which their language emerges, hence more attuned to the ambiguities of the body, and therefore resistant to marginalizing abstractions.

Introducing the concept of ‘cyborg writing’ in the last part of the manifesto, Haraway similarly discusses the usefulness of language and literature in overcoming abstraction:

Cyborg writing is about [...] seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other. Writing is pre-eminently the technology of cyborgs. [...] Cyborg politics is the struggle for language and the struggle against perfect communication, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly, the central dogma of phallogocentrism. (1991, 175-176)

Ironically, Haraway’s theoretical exploration of written text and, by extension, the written text of the manifest itself, give the most embodied account of the Cyborg. Haraway, namely, understands language and literature as technological tools for cyborg writing. Whilst cyborg writing encompasses not only conceptual language but *all* sorts of patterns and movements that shape different worlds (175), it does not exclude language from cyborg writing by including the material and formal structures and practices of conceptualization itself. Therefore, rather than separating language from the body and privileging one over the other, cyborg writing (of which the manifest is an example) provides an embodied account of literary texts. By using language thus prosthetically, cyborg writing collapses language and literature within the cyborg’s entire fluid mesh of difference.

In this sense, theoretical texts are no more or less embodied than any other form of text or language, as Hayles suggests. Instead, what matters to cyborg writing is *how* different sorts of texts are embodied. Different bodies, differently embodied within specific material presents, namely use different languages and write different sorts of texts (or myths, or lives). The values and fantasies these texts uphold, in turn, return to these contexts and *write* different (human, or non-human) bodies and realities. Phallogocentric origin myths are examples of such texts: they

conflate the definitions of bodies and realities with fetishizing categories of individuals created according to one's perceived lack of male sexuality, and naturalized through the endless reproduction, in content *and* form—in science, novels *and* life—of variations of the same myth (176). Aware of that, Haraway's cyborg writing highlights that the whole package of content, form, style, and narrative is underwritten by gendered norms: an understanding that lacks from her concept of 'prosthetic devices.' Like scientific theories, most literary works are produced as 'phallogocentric origin stories' with linear narratives following the track of a 'hero' that struggles with reality until his inevitable death—end of the story, end of the novel (175). Through the aesthetical promise of reality as a logical language, not only ideological beliefs, but also the forms of these beliefs aimed to produce human lives as perfect wholes that could be communicated in a nearly identical manner (174-176). In 'The Laugh of the Medusa' (1976), Hélène Cixous writes that this rationalist language presents itself as a bodiless representation of truth that marks anything 'more body' than ratio (887), hence anybody not adequately male, as the vulgar 'other.' This serves to justify man's privileged access to intellectual practices and forced non-male and non-white authors to erase any body marks from their writing whilst adapting to this 'masculine' style (875-893). When Haraway enthusiastically proclaims that cyborgs could 'seiz[e] the tools to mark the world that has marked them as other,' (1991, 175-176) she understands that writing should not replicate these conventional, disembodied aesthetic norms, but take ever new forms of material languages that never stagnate. It is by using *texts as prosthetics* that Haraway provides the theoretical tools to not only integrate texts into posthumanist discussions (that often completely turn against language) but to also restore the cyborg's queer body as a heterotopian, rather than utopian, creature. When her theory, succumbing under the generalizing and form of its own writing, fails to act out this queerness, a hypertext like *Patchwork Girl*, can.

MONSTROUS BODIES OF TEXT: *PATCHWORK GIRL*

So, how can we read *Patchwork Girl* as a cyborg—and, more importantly, through *Patchwork Girl*, the cyborg as a heterotopian creature? Many 'cyborgian readings' of *Patchwork Girl* have already focused on the first part of this question (Carazo and Jiménez 2006; Fortin-Tournès 2021; Hayles 2000 and 2005; Latimer 2011; Sarkar 2020; Shakelford 2006). Like Haraway, Jackson was generally optimistic about the potential of new digital technologies for shaping new subjects outside of the gender binary. Sharing their optimism, these critics often conflate Haraway's cyborg with Jackson's hypertext to make similar political arguments, though, without putting the two in dialogue. This leads to essentializing statements, such as Hayles' oft-quoted subtitle 'Electronic Hypertexts Initiate and Demand Cyborg Reading Practices' (2000, point eight,

emphasis added), that reduce the cyborg to the hypertext's identity. Yet, a different reading of *Patchwork Girl* that brings the cyborg to life from a dynamic, heterotopian ground, puts the cyborg to work in less idealistic terms. Heterotopia is a concept coined by Michel Foucault (1986) to describe 'other spaces': lived spaces that hold different contradictory layers of meaning at once. Lauren Berlant (2022) recently developed heterotopia further and emphasized the troubled coexistence of various and singular forms of life that are co-constitutive of the material and social presents they embody (14). Unlike utopia's ideal future, heterotopian forms thus unfold from the ground immediately there. *Patchwork Girl* uses the creative possibilities and limits of the hypertext form to embrace the formation of such monstrous kin through the meanings and matters of its different intersubjective and heterotopian presents. The text, namely, combines the immediate and embodied practices of different readers that, whilst clicking on the different hyperlinks connected to the monster's body parts, participate in the stitching together of her metaphorical and textual body, and thus always make her anew. Therefore, she is never stable; *never the utopian one*. Each new reader notes how they shape the monster whilst performing her—becoming her—from within their own contexts; when joining her parts, they simultaneously stick the discourses, limbs, and technological matters they embody themselves to her body.

As already mentioned, *Patchwork Girl* explores a cyborgian creature through the figure of the female monster that Frankenstein immediately destroyed after creating her, fearing she might procreate monstrous kin and destroy humanity (Shelley 2010, 149). We do not know this yet when opening *Patchwork Girl* in Storyspace, the software Jackson used to write the fragments that will generate this figure. Already opened on the screen is a negative black and white image of a drawn female body titled 'her' divided in two by a diagonal, dotted line that suggests a tear, a fold, or a stitching together of the different parts. Next to it is shown the 'Storyspace map,' a twelve-column tree diagram with contrasting red and black banners that title each box. Arrows link the top column, 'her,' to subsequent columns titled 'title page,' 'phrenology,' four times 'hercut,' 'body of text,' 'journal,' 'grazy quilt,' 'story' and 'graveyard' (Jackson 1995, 'Storyspace map'). We can choose to start clicking on the image of the body or on one of the columns in the map. I decided to begin with 'title page,' which opens at a random place on the screen and looks like the title page of a classic novel. It reveals that *Patchwork Girl; or, A Modern Monster*, has 'been written' by 'Mary/Shelley, & Herself:' an intertextual wordplay that suggests Shelley Jackson, Mary Shelley and the monster are simultaneously authors of the text. The titles in the Storyspace map are also listed under the authors' names, providing alternative ways to navigate the links, while the navigation bars of the opened links give access to still different 'outlines' (Jackson 1995, 'title page').

Clicking on any link opens new random images or fragments of text. I decided to continue with ‘graveyard’ on the title page, which opened ‘Hercut 4:’ another negative black and white image showing the now disjointed and disorganized body parts of the same drawn female body, separated by the same sort of dotted lines. Already having encountered the ‘title page’, I guess these body parts refer to Frankenstein’s female monster. The left corner is left out and filled with a piece of text that suggests being torn out of the Storyspace manual. The link connected to the image refers me to an untitled fragment of text saying: ‘I am buried here. You can resurrect me, but only piecemeal. If you want to see the whole, you will have to sew me together yourself’ (Jackson 1995, ‘graveyard’). The reader is invited by the scattered body parts to stitch them back together. When following the path that I have chosen, the story starts where the Western patriarchal myths Haraway has mentioned would end: with death indicating a closed human life. The life of the monster does not start as a ‘newborn’ organic unity; she is already fractured. While this passage suggests that we could, finally, turn her into a ‘whole,’ the image of the fractured body still visible on my screen already indicates that completeness is impossible. The dotted lines separate the body parts in black squares that together seem to form a Klotzki puzzle: even if we would slide the pieces in such an order that it depicts ‘organic wholeness,’ there will always be a part left out, that is not ‘body.’ There’s thus a ‘gap’ that makes the monster whole; a gap that is not an absence, but rather an integral and material part of the puzzle needed to make it function. This creates a heterotopian definition of wholeness that includes as the monster different contradicting layers of meaning and matter at once—a whole ‘body,’ thus, that cannot be reduced to one idealized unity or its lack thereof. After navigating via the ‘outline’ to a passage titled ‘hazy whole,’ the monster speaks to us again and says:

I am a whole, that is the funny thing, but I am a whole with a kind of haze around the edges. The workmen (F, or my Mary) left off here but might as well have continued, and may still. I am recognizable now, but who knows what prostheses will be grafted onto my already powerful form, making up for all the deficiencies we have yet to invent?

The scattered pieces Frankenstein and Mary Shelley have left behind are here, again, not a ‘whole’ in the humanist sense of a gendered organic unity with fixed boundaries, but they take another notion of wholeness that, in line with Haraway’s cyborg, continuously changes its constitution through different ‘prosthesis’ that are, in this case, literal body parts. These body parts, unlike the more conventional definitions of the prosthesis foregrounded by Jain and Sobchack, because of the fractured and always new movements of the text, structurally resist filling up a perceived lack; the scattered body gives no possible origin to start from, as the hypertext’s narrative through

which we reassemble this body has no fixed starting point. According to Carazo and Jiménez (2006), the infinite potential to create new forms that these origin-defying prostheses open up in *Patchwork Girl*, even gives these often-stigmatized tools ‘[...] an incongruous positive connotation’ (126). Yet, even if both may be true, the statement of the monster also reminds us of Jain’s never-satisfied customers who turn towards new prostheses, again and again, to make up for all the deficiencies (44) they didn’t even know they had, to become a more complete man or woman. Prostheses, hence, even when materially destabilizing organic wholeness, and perhaps especially when becoming positively connoted objects of desire, are not necessarily unaffected by gendered idealizations of unitary forms of wholeness.

‘Graveyard’ continues to explore this problem. Clicking on its title now via the Stroyspace map refers me to the ‘headstone,’ which includes links with the monster’s different body parts. They all have their own textual passages that tell the stories of the bodies they have belonged to. Some stories are from a historical past, others could be contemporary. All have different embodied subjectivities which often conflict. Her right arm consists for example of Tristessa and Eleanor, the first hot-tempered, not scared to fight, the second sociable and ‘feminine,’ using ‘kindness’ as a weapon (Jackson 1995, ‘right arm’). Her parts also have different genders and sexualities, as is shown for example by her liver that belonged to Roderick (Jackson 1995, ‘liver’), and her nose, which was Geneva’s, an artist whose ‘mountain’ of a nose kept away the ‘friendly and short-sighted’ but which was loved by her partner Margaret (Jackson 1995, ‘nose’). These parts constitute the body and subjectivity of the monster in a cyborgian way: they do not have one origin or sexuality, nor do they coincide with one concept of ‘woman.’ Especially interesting is, how these embodied parts are simultaneously struggling with the (historical) patriarchal society that marks them importantly. Some parts, or prosthesis, are not normatively used, such as the tongue of Susanna, which ‘ate more than the baker and butcher combined,’ (Jackson 1995, ‘tongue’) and the lips of Margaret, who ‘laughed so freely ... that the townspeople frowned on her’ (Jackson 1995, ‘lips’). The monster is thus a cyborg that can regenerate through different parts, or prostheses, which all have conflicting meanings related to their embodiment in a gendered, heterotopian world. As stated before by Shackelford (2006), the monster’s resulting lack of identity, hence, is a product of binary gender, only ‘contradictory in light of these mutually exclusive options’ (2006, 86). Meanwhile, not only is this new monstrous, identity-disrupting entity regenerated in this heterotopian *and* gendered context: but also our own judgements and expectations are continuously broken and transformed through the queer, outstanding features of the body parts that live on in the spaces of our presents. Indeed, “‘the banished body’” haunts not only the eighteenth-century rational intellect but also the posthuman transcendence,’ says Sarkar (2020, 4), quoting Keep (2006, 41). Shackelford, Sarkar, and Keep thus acknowledge the

important interplay of historical and contemporary fantasies and images of gender (and, as suggested by the latter two critics, of the posthuman) with one another, and with the bodies they are projected on in *Patchwork Girl*—fantasies that are, besides, themselves never finalized because of their own mutual and inherent contradictions. Yet, what all three critics surprisingly fail to mention—despite their interests in these symbolic forces and instabilities—is that even if the gendered prostheses in the fragments of ‘the graveyard’ are indeed, like the parts of Haraway’s cyborg, no substitutions for original, lacking body parts, they simultaneously complicate Haraway’s abstract use of the term in embodying the prostheses in material *and* semiotic contexts. The complex interactions between both of these contexts marginalize and wound bodies differently along discursive lines, regardless of the ontological resistance the embodiment of these discourses poses to the humanist fantasies on which the latter are founded.

According to Hayles’ (2005, 151, 154-155, 161) reading of *Patchwork Girl* the hypertext problematizes unitary categories of gender and sexuality, in this way, by pointing out the distribution of agency and cognition over different links of matters *and* meanings in a complex network. This network is not a utopian imagination, but an actualized heterotopia constituted by the metaleptic and embodied relations of texts, authors and readers that together practice a form of what Haraway calls cyborg writing. Clicking on different fragments, the reader becomes one of the ‘workmen’ who use the technology of the hypertext prosthetically to create the monster together with Mary/Shelley (thus Shelley *and* Jackson), Frankenstein, and herself. And vice versa, the monster states: ‘If you touch me, your flesh is mixed with mine, and if you pull away, you may take some of me with you’ (Jackson 1995, ‘hazy whole’). None of these subjects, both real and fictional(ized), thus have full agency over the creation of the other—they create each other symbiotically. I can choose passages, but Shelley Jackson has given me a selection to choose from, among which passages written by Mary Shelley in 1818 that have inspired her, that may now inspire and transform me, and so on. Not only does each reading/writing of the hypertext thus create a different text diachronically, but different texts (and subjects) are also already latent through this intertextual, metaleptic and intersubjective co-constitution. So, different from the phallogocentric and fetishizing language of the humanist man this form of (cyborg) writing forms queer bodies and subjects, amongst whom ourselves, as texts that make no hard distinctions between interiority and exteriority, or selves and others; instead, they contain multiple beings in the same heterotopian space-time.

As a heterotopian work, *Patchwork Girl* explicitly extends this queer, intersubjective, cyborg writing further by including the material technology and aesthetics of the text and software: Storyspace. The hypertext disrupts the lines between readers and authors, revealing itself as an

active force in the creation of the text and its different material and immaterial authors/bodies. The software, namely, makes the relations between these different im/material bodies-becoming-text bilateral. Firstly, the visual representation of a textual piece of the ‘real’ Storyspace manual that I have mentioned at the beginning of this section, shows the co-constitution of the hypertext’s many underlying material bodies. This creates a metaleptic loop, where the ‘real’ manual of Storyspace is given a space in fiction, referring back to the ‘real’ fragment as an equal body part amongst the other fractured body parts represented in the puzzle, regardless of their il/legibility as ‘human.’ ‘Text’ and ‘body,’ thus become interchangeable not only by way of metaphor but, more importantly, through the text’s instantiated aesthetical, metaleptic performance. Secondly, in the next link (so-called ‘lives’) that I open, the monster embraces herself as a ‘bad writing’ whilst implicitly indexing the disjointed fragments dispersed on my screen. While representing the monster’s discourse, the hypertext simultaneously talks about itself, and on a further level of metalepsis, Storyspace immediately practices this ‘bad writing’ through my body (now a prosthetic extension of the hypertext) that clicks on different links, and through the computer that reads the digital code of my instructions. The ‘bad writing’ of the immaterial fictional monster is now literalized in my material world: through me, the software, and my laptop, together forming a body-machine, or a body-text. Like Haraway’s cyborg manifesto, *Patchwork Girl* thus collapses the boundaries between different subjects *and* between itself, its representations, and the material world that is co-constitutive of the text. Or, put differently, uncovering its generative aesthetical structures, *Patchwork Girl* reveals the specific form of its hypertext to be equally a reader, body, and an author, like ‘Shelley/Jackson, & Herself,’ I, or anyone else clicking on the links. Through this collapse, the body/text has an infinite number of possibilities according to the various ways different writers/readers use each other prosthetically to put these fragments together.

Still, *not everything* is possible: the form of this hypertext has boundaries that, though porous, launch specific im/possibilities that cannot just be disposed of in the same way the monster’s fictive body parts cannot ignore the discourses imposed on them. There are indeed myriad combinations in which the fragments of the hypertext can be arranged, but at the same time, readers do not have a different option than creating always new texts ongoingly as Storyspace cannot save any reading itinerary. Put differently, the near-infinite number of possible texts potentialized by any reading/writing of *Patchwork Girl* is in itself a form that puts constitutive limits on what can be shaped and thought. Reproduction of the text’s narrative is, for example, impossible, and because of that, the hypertext could never rebound to the traditional forms of the novels (such as *Frankenstein*) it quotes. Even if I, or someone else, would in the future, follow the exact itinerary of my close-reading, Storyspace always makes other reading options visually latent by juxtaposing its links on the screen. Therefore, the connections between passages cannot

be turned into an inevitable causality and confused for an individual ‘human’ life. Following Haraway’s notion of the cyborg as part of our social-material reality, no text is the stable product of one author. Texts, like bodies, are always embodied within ever-changing contexts that affect their meanings and forms, and to that extent, they are always monstrous in the same sense that we are all ‘cyborgs.’ Whereas *Patchwork Girl*’s audiences in 1995 might have felt this intersubjective and intermedial destabilization to be part of a whole new digital reality with promising and liberating potentials for both women and literature, in today’s platform society such hyperlinks and co-authoring have become common sense, or even the subject of more dystopic point of views warning for the marginalizing effect of, for example, the algorithms and new AI chats that infiltrate our daily lives and create new means of domination, surveillance and exclusion only enhance for a very small elite. This loss of experience of the digital sublime, perhaps, explains why today the text is extremely hard to access; never having been updated to newer operating systems, hardly any computer today can still read the file. Instead, *Patchwork Girl* is now often considered an exemplary piece of electronic literature belonging to a past post-modern paradigm that was hypnotized by the possibilities of the digital’s new forms of subjects and author-audience interactions (i.e. Kayser 2019, Pignagnoli 2023, 1; Brooker 2023, 33). Still, as the prosthesis metaphor reveals as well, not every human-machine entanglement is the same, and even if we may no longer feel so enchanted by this hypertext, *Patchwork Girl* refuses the reproductive logics that structure most of today’s digital technologies. Incorporating its formal limits as constitutive of its texts and bodies, *Patchwork Girl* does not aspire to resolve the instabilities generated by our cyborgian material contexts. In other words, in this hypertext, technologies are not only the enhance and passive ‘tools’ used to give shape to any sort of utopian (or commercial) fantasy. Just like *Patchwork Girl* refuses to simply pass over the discourses imprinted on its fictive body parts, the formally unstable boundaries of the text actively generate the monstrous body/text: the heterotopia of which we are part, and from within which we limit, wound, and extend each other mutually.

CONCLUSION

When navigating *Patchwork Girl*, readers who are familiar with Haraway’s *Cyborg Manifesto* cannot ignore the similarities between the two texts. Both resist the dualist assumption that human beings are organic wholes domesticated by stable identities. Instead, they illustrate that the boundaries between mind and body, the physical and the non-physical, and human and technology are fluid. In symbioses with a social and material environment, bodies and subjectivities are inherently fragmented and conflicted, and continuously in state of becoming. This problematizes second-wave feminist identity politics, which based its actions and theories on exclusive and

natural categories of the ‘woman,’ and only displaced the binaries of the phallogocentric myths of Western, humanist epistemologies. Instead, cyborgs and *Patchwork Girl*’s monster know no origin and end; they are endlessly resurrected. They are thus never ‘one’ but always ‘multiple,’ and so are their genders and sexualities.

Where *A Cyborg Manifesto* leaves out what these different, mythical bodies look like, Jackson’s more immediately embodied narrative and hypertext do illustrate this. A comparison between Haraway and Jackson’s use of the concept of the prosthesis makes these differences between the two authors visible. Haraway uses the term as an abstract metaphor for any non-defined tool with which cyborgs extend their bodies and potentially create a genderless future. Jackson, in contrast, gives a more specific account of the prosthesis more in line with Jain’s and Sobchack’s discussions of the specific material contexts in which prostheses often reinforce norms of gender, race, and ability. In *Patchwork Girl*, we first encounter the fictional and fractured monster who adds prosthetic parts to her body descendant from various women buried in the graveyard—parts that, through the way their former owners used them, conflict with the historical values of femininity inscribed on them. At the same time, these values continue marking the fractured monster in the present. Put differently: even if the monster structurally disrupts all expectations of organic and female wholeness, she cannot entirely dispose of the gendered discourses that exist as parts within the (con)text she embodies. She will always include some of the traces of these discourses—just like the marks of anything else material, or non-material that forms within this context—in each new transformation.

However, Haraway’s concept of cyborg writing gives a powerful method I used to read both Haraway and Jackson’s texts as ‘prosthetic’ themselves. The prosthetic is not used here as a promising utopian metaphor, but rather as a way to embody text within a specific spatial, heterotopian context. Reading texts as prostheses, we can see how their different forms symbiotically take shape with the discursive and material spaces that imbricate and arrange the pieces of, for example, modern logocentric science and novels, the second-wave feminist climate Haraway’s abstract and political cyborg manifesto contests, or the queer authoring mesh made present by Jackson’s digital, interactive and metaleptic hypertext. Each creates different ‘cyborgs,’ but only Jackson’s—not attempting to resolve her instabilities and including the limits of her forms and meanings as an infinite creative force—does not repair her inherent queerness. The fictional *and* immediately performed monstrous body of text exists in a network that joins the content and form of different texts, discourses, languages, Storyspace, readers, real and fictional(ized) authors, and many other potential bodies and texts, to create multiple and endlessly new non-phallogocentric myths. The hypertext is thus not solely an enhancive prosthesis willingly

used by ‘human’ authors/readers; through its software, the text also modifies these author/readers’ bodies and subjectivities by using *their* parts prosthetically in return. All of these authors/readers—material and virtual, human and non-human—mutually transgress the boundaries of each other’s authorship and wound and de-author one another in this generative process. Actualizing the queer, dynamic and fracturing spaces a theory like Haraway’s mostly writes about, the medium of Jackson’s hypertext makes tangible how these specific, simultaneously extensive and wounding heterotopian embodiments create different and conflicting texts, bodies, and cyborgs whose interrelated forms cannot help but regenerate.

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¹ The manifest was originally published in 1985 as *A Manifesto for Cyborgs*. All references to the manifesto in the article are taken from the revised 1991 version, published as *A Cyborg Manifesto*.