Faith Wilding and Critical Art Ensemble

Notes on the Political Condition of Cyberfeminism

Friday, Sept. 19, 1997
For immediate release

The Old Boys Network (OBN) presents the FIRST CYBERFEMINIST INTERNATIONAL, Kassel, Sept. 20–27, 1997.

For eight days women from Europe, America and Australia will meet at the Hybrid Workspace at documenta X to discuss, debate, workshop and make presentations about the fastest growing movement in the world: "cyberfeminism."

The group who will meet in Kassel is united by a desire to explore how women are working with technology, influencing its development, and getting their hands dirty in the codes and hardware of information technology.

This diverse group of over forty women have very different backgrounds—from programmers to web mistresses, from artists to theorists. Within the context of the world's largest art exhibition, documenta, they will develop strategies that ensure digital savvy women have a presence not only in the art world but in all spheres of technological life.

Hybrid Workspace is being held at the Orangerie in Kassel and is a project of the Berlin Biennale and documenta X. It has run for the duration of documenta X and has presented eleven residencies of groups working with media, the Internet, culture and politics. The cyberfeminist residency is the final block and will be a dynamic, intellectually rigorous and exciting project to conclude documenta X.[1]

Part One

Cyberfeminism is a promising new wave of (post)feminist thinking and practice. Through the work of numerous Netactive women, there is now a distinct cyberfeminist Netpresence that is fresh, brash, smart, and iconoclastic of many of the tenets of classical feminism. At the same time, cyberfeminism has only taken its first steps in contesting technologically complex territories that have been overcoded to a mythic degree as a male domain. Consequently, cyberfeminist incursion into various technoworlds (CD-ROM production, Web works, listservs and news groups, artificial intelligence, etc.) has been largely nomadic, spontaneous, and anarchic. On the one hand, these qualities have allowed maximum freedom for diverse manifestations, experiments, and the beginnings of various written and artistic genres. On the other, networks and organizations seem somewhat lacking, and the theoretical issues of gender regarding the technosocial are immature relative to their development in spaces of greater gender equity won through struggle. Given such conditions, some feminist strategies and tactics will repeat themselves as women attempt to establish a foothold in a

1. The first part of this article is drawn from material originally posted on the Nettime and FACES listservs in the summer of 1997. The second part consists of excerpted e-mail dispatches (in italics) from the First Cyberfeminist International (CI) in Kassel, interspersed with short commentaries. It is intended as an example of evolving cyberfeminist practice. Since the CI was a collective action, and since not all of the presentations on the program could be discussed, no individuals' names have been attached to the presentations and workshops described here. Women on the women-only listserv FACES are called Faces. A full list of Faces who participated in the CI can be found at the end of this article.

-Innen Mouspad. Distributed by the -Innen collective during their action *New Media—Old Roles* at the 1996 computer fair in Hannover. -Innen is a group of five media artists/critics whose work comments on women and technology.

How affectionate are you with your computer?
do you: stroke □ kiss □ fondle it □ run your fingers through its keys □ lovingly wipe its screen □ hold the mouse in a grip of passion □

Did your father kiss you when you were a child?
yes □ no □

One of your friends has sexual problems with his girlfriend/wife. What do you advise him?
look for another woman □ seek out a brothel □ talk to friends about it □ Go To Newsgroups: alt.sex.* □ talk to his wife or girlfriend about it □ sexual problems don't exist □ masturbate □ go to a psychologist □ send his wife or girlfriend to a psychologist □

Has your computer ever had contact with liquid?
spaghettisauce □ tears □ sperm □ cola □ coffee □ blood □ beer □ vaginal fluid □ champagne □

Are you happy being a man?
I would rather be a woman □ sexless □ androgynous □

What was your reaction when you heard about men's liberation for the first time?
this is something I could learn from □ completely unnecessary □ applies to other men, not me □

-Innen[plus]

territory traditionally denied to them. This repetition should not be considered with the usual yawn of boredom whenever the familiar appears, as cyberspace is a crucial point of gender struggle desperately in need of gender diversification (and diversity in general).

One aspect immediately evident is that the Net provides cyberfeminists with a vehicle crucially different from anything available to prior feminist waves. Historically, feminist activism has depended on women getting together bodily—in kitchens, churches, assembly halls, and the streets. The organizing cell for the first phase of feminism was the sewing circle, the quilting group, or the ladies' charity organization. Women met together in private to plan their public campaigns for political and legal enfranchisement. In these campaigns the visible presence of groups of women plucked from the silenced isolation of their homes became a public sign of female rebellion and activism. Women acting together, speaking in public, marching through the streets, and disrupting public life opened up political territories that traditionally had been closed to them.

During the second wave of feminism, which emerged in the early 1960s, women again started meeting together to plan actions. They met in consciousness-raising groups that became the organizing cells for a revived feminist movement. This time, feminists began to master a new tactic: creating counter-spectacle in the media. Women staged actions targeted at highly visible public icons. Patriarchal monuments under feminist assault by the U.S. movement included the Miss America pageant, *Playboy* offices and clubs, Wall Street, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Pentagon, and the White House. These assaults attracted news media eager to document outrageous female misbehavior and thus spread the news of growing feminism nationally and internationally. Visible female disruption and subversion also provided images of female empowerment that inspired many women (and men) to begin taking direct autonomous action on behalf of the rights of women.

If the first wave was marked by women's incursion into new political territories, this second wave was marked by a march into new economic territories and by a reconfiguration of familiar ones. Most significant was women's demand for access to the means of financial independence—a struggle that continues in the third phase of feminist practice.

The third wave of feminisms (cultural, eco-, theoretical, sex-positive, lesbian, antiporn, multicultural, etc.)—often collectively dubbed postfeminism—continues to use these models of public action and rebellion. A recent case in point was the short-lived but highly visible Women's Action Coalition (WAC) that began in New York in late 1991, following the dramatic, nationally televised Hill/Thomas hearings; the William Kennedy Smith and Mike Tyson rape trials; and the judicial battles over abortion rights—all of which prompted women to launch a "visible and remarkable resistance." WAC quickly became a media attractor producing a spectacle

that was hip, sexy, cool, fun, outrageous, and visible. Attracting eight thousand women from around the United States and Canada in its first year, WAC organized a highly effective communication and networking system combining a phone tree with fax machines, e-mail, and media contacts. In a sense, WAC was an early protoelectronic feminist organization. Having motivated and organized so many women, WAC reinvigorated feminist activism. Like most radical organizations, it was a temporary tactical organization unable to survive its rapid growth and to organize its way out of the contradictions of difference. Nor was it able to resist some of the dogmatic tendencies of "mainstream" and "security state" feminism, which proscribe certain behaviors, beliefs, and lifestyles. While the option of purge and bureaucratize was first attempted, the fabric of radicality was strong enough that dissolution ultimately occurred.

The third wave (with a few exceptions) has missed moving into one crucial area, however—the revolution in communications and information technology. Cyberfeminism represents a new set of explorers ready to move the struggle into this new territory. As yet, the movement is still too young to face struggles inherent in the economy of difference. As on most frontiers, there still *seems* to be room for everyone. At the same time, there are lessons to be learned from history. Radical movements in their infancy tend to return to past patterns. Cyberfeminism is no different, facing key issues such as territorial identification, feminine subjectivity, and separatism and boundary maintenance.

Territorial Identification

What is the territory that cyberfeminism is questioning, theorizing, and actively confronting? Cyberspace, the surface answer, is but one small part. Of key importance are the institutions that train those who design the products of cyberlife. Overwhelmingly, hardware and software are designed and manufactured for business or military operations, still primarily male domains (i.e., men are the policy makers) in which men have the buying power. The products are designed to meet their needs or to play on their desires. From the beginning, entrance into this high-end technoworld (the virtual class) has been skewed in favor of males.[2] Beginning with early socialization/education, technology and technological process are gendered as male domains. When females manipulate complex technology in a productive or creative manner, it is often viewed and treated as a deviant act that deserves punishment.

This is not to say that women do not use complex technology. Women are an important consumer market and help maintain the status quo when the technology is used in a passive manner. For example, most institutions of commerce or government are all too quick to give women computers, e-mail accounts, and so on if it will make them better bureaucrats. This is why the increased presence of women on the Net is not all for the good. It

2. It is not the authors' position to support a reductive equality feminism that reinforces the existing pancapitalist system. Our argument here is that women need access to empowering knowledge and tools that are now dominated by a despicable "virtual class" (Kroker) that benefits from exploiting gender hierarchy. We do not mean to suggest that women should become part of this class.

is a situation similar to that in the United States from the late 1950s to the early 1960s, when middle-class husbands were more than happy to buy a second car for their wives—as long as it made them more efficient domestic workers. Technology in this case was used to deepen the confinement of women within their situation rather than to liberate them from it. (As a general rule, anything you get without struggle should be viewed with intense skepticism.) The technology and technological processes to which women currently have access are the consequence of structural economic necessity. However, all we need is a shift in consciousness to begin the subversion of the current gender structure (this is the positive side of so many women being on-line).

Pink Grrl.
<www.grrl.com>.

Thus, the territory of cyberfeminism is large. It includes the objective arenas of cyberspace, institutions of industrial design, and institutions of education. Cyberfeminism calls attention to the impact of new technologies on the lives of women and the insidious gendering of technoculture in everyday life. Cyberspace does not exist in a vacuum; it is intimately connected to numerous real-world institutions and systems that thrive on gender separation and hierarchy. Cyberfeminism must radically expand the critique concerning the media hype about a utopian technoworld. While abuse of the bureaucratic class, low-end technocratic class, and workers involved in product manufacturing has been adequately documented, what about age, race, or gender? The ability to assign oneself social characteristics on-line is seductive for those whose real-world social environment has been eliminated by pancapitalism's destruction of social spaces of autonomy. What awaits people in a minoritarian position once they are on-line? Will they find familiar and significant rhetorics, discussions, and images? Is there a continuity of discourse between the real and the virtual? While there are some virtual pockets in which continuity exists, real-world social stratifications are, in general, reflected and replicated in cyberspace.

Separatism and Boundary Maintenance

Whenever feminism begins pushing its way into new territories, the avant-garde members of the movement face incredible problems and nearly insurmountable odds. Cyberfeminism is no different. Relatively few women have the skills to see through the cyberhype, to understand the complexity of the system, and, most important, to teach other women how to survive and actively use the system. For most women in the technosphere, it takes all their energy simply to survive transgressing the norm and learning massive amounts of dense technical information. Just doing the latter is a difficult task that few people accomplish, but throw in the condition of gender isolation (learning and working in a male domain) and the generally negative social representation of being a geek girl (i.e., going against the grain of female construction), and it becomes immediately apparent that alienation levels are extremely high. Under such conditions, as in the past, separatist activity has been a useful tactic, as well as one that can foster efficient pedagogical situations.

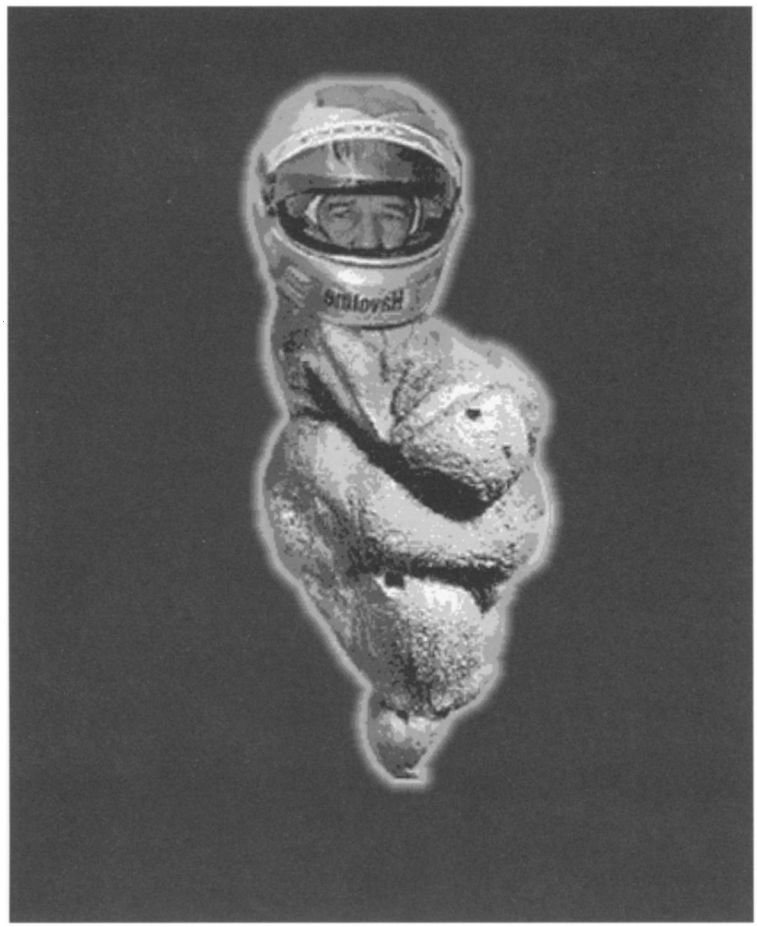

Image from Alla Mitrofanova, *Virtual Anatomy*. <www.dux.ru/virtual>

Kathy Rae Huffman often jokes that "in cyberspace men can't interrupt you [women]," but, in fact, women are interrupted in cyberspace. They are often overwhelmed with counterdiscourse, ignored, or totalized under the sign of being "politically correct." A remark by a woman may not be interrupted, but continuity of discourse, with particular regard to women's issues, is often interrupted. Women need to experiment in developing their own working and learning spaces in this postfeminist decolonization of cyberspace. This kind of separatist activity has occurred in all phases of feminist territorial decolonization and has shown itself to be very productive. Rather than exclusivity as part of a strategy to make a specific perception or way of being in the world a universal, here exclusivity is a means of escaping a false universal (one goal of cyberfeminist separatism). Separatism should be welcome among cyberfeminists and among those who support a cyberspace of difference. This is not exclusion used as a means to maintain structures of domination, but rather as a means to undermine them (another goal of cyberfeminist separatism).

Feminine Subjectivity

Cyberfeminism is currently at that unfortunate point where it has to decide who gets to be a separatist cyberfeminist and who does not. The haunting question, "What is a woman?" once again returns. In theory, this problem is graspable, but first, what is the problem? Looking back on any feminist movement, there have always been tremendous problems among women's groups and organizations brought on by attempts to define feminine subjectivity (and, thereby, "us" and "them"). In the second wave, the feminine was defined in a manner that seemed largely to reflect the subjectivity of white, middle-class, straight women. The third wave had to debate whether or not transvestites, transsexuals, and other "males" who claimed to be female-identified should be accepted into activist organizations (and at the same time, women of color, working-class women, and lesbians all still had grounds for complaints). In addition, it was never decided how to separate the feminine from other primary social variables that construct a woman's identity. For example, part of the problem in many feminist organizations, and in WAC in particular, was that the middle-class professional women had the greatest economic and cultural resources. They therefore had greater opportunity for leadership and policy making. The women outside this class felt that the professionals had unfair advantages and that their agenda was the primary one, which in turn brought about a destructive form of separation.

These are but some of the practical problems that have emerged from the issue of exclusivity and imperfections inherent in definitions. Defining feminine subjectivity can never be done to the satisfaction of all, and yet, practically speaking, it has to be done. The current theoretical solution to this problem is to have small alliances and coalitions that do not rely on bureaucratic process. Such coalitions should be expected to dissolve at various velocities over time. Also, naively humanistic or metaphysical principles (depending on one's perspective) like "sisterhood" should be left in the past, and we must all learn to live with the conflicts and contradictions of a house of difference. Of course, this is easier said than done. Truth changes with the situation (sorry, Plato). In a territory like a U.S. or British cultural studies department, we can talk about living in a house of difference. In other more inequitable territories it is more difficult, and clear boundaries (often essentialized) of differences for identity purposes are often required. For example, telling a person of color who has just been beaten by the police that "the officers were only reacting to a racist textual construction that links people of color with the sign of criminality" is probably not going to have much resonance (even though in legitimized academic territories the argument is quite convincing), whereas the simpler explanation, "Your ass just got beat because you are a person of color," will be quite convincing, because in this case, who is on what side of the racial divide is unambiguous in the mind of the unwilling participant. In this context, the

hard boundaries of essentialism make sense and have greater explanatory power until the ambiguity that emerges from successful consciousness-raising and contestation becomes a part of everyday life. Consequently, one can expect that essentialized notions of the feminine will continue to appear.

Part Two

Kassel, Sunday, Sept. 21, 1997
First Report from the First Cyberfeminist International (CI)

Greetings to all the women who are tuning in from all over the world to join the cyberfeminist days at the Hybrid Workspace.

On Saturday night about 18 women gathered for a wonderful welcoming Face Settings dinner [the Web project Face Settings by Kathy Rae Huffman and Eva Wohlgemuth uses the dinner party as a medium for organizing women]. Picture us sitting around the festive table decked with candles, bottles of wine, colorful round food, place mats, and lots of electronic equipment!! . . . The countries represented here so far are Germany, Austria, Holland, Russia, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, USA, Australia. The walls are decorated with projections of women's art from many centuries and places. The OBN (Old Boys Network, organizers of the CI) welcomed us all to the cyberfeminist workdays in Kassel. We then went around the table and introduced ourselves and spoke about our hopes and expectations of what this week will bring.

There is an amazing variety of interests and competencies represented here—theorists, artists, bad girls, cooks, writers, motorcyclists, videographers, and many multicombinations of skills and intensities. There was a strong feeling voiced that this was an historic moment, that this week is a momentous launching of a visible, global presence of cyberfeminism as a networked movement in cyberspace.

Cyberfeminism is currently drawing on social and cultural strategies from past waves of feminism. The dinner party, which was meant as a festive and celebratory introduction to the week of work ahead, took on a symbolic meaning heightened by the images from the history of women's art projected on the walls behind us as we ate and talked. The dinner party linked us to a history of feminist creativity and politics. It demonstrated the importance of cyberfeminists making opportunities to meet together bodily and form affinity groups to facilitate building a transnational, transcultural movement. It dissolved some of the estrangement so often produced by even the friendliest on-line communications, and it made our differences more evident, richer, more complex, and more productive. Indeed, the virtual medium must not replace the affective and affinity-building functions of presence.

Tuesday, Sept. 23, 1997
Second Report from the First Cyberfeminist International

Yesterday morning five of us went to a supermarket to buy a bottle of Cybersp@ce perfume (it's "real, uni-sex" and, of course, it's a "fragrance") and do an action about "cyberspace." We asked the shoppers and the staff how they like the smell of cyberspace, what they associate with the word and what they think about the Internet. The whole action was not only videotaped, but the taping was documented as well! Guess what, nobody knew what cyberspace is!!! Outside, in the parking lot one woman shouted: "There is a revolution going on, and nobody has noticed it!"

Faith Wilding.
***Recombinant Meryl*, 1997.**
12 x 9 (30.5 x 22.7).
Collage, drawing, and watercolor on paper.
Courtesy the artist.

This little exercise in trying to communicate with the general public about cyberfeminism and cyberspace effectively showed the vast differences between public hype and perception of the new communications technologies and an informed critical and practical use of them. We were to encounter these differences again in our conversations with the public throughout the week. "Cyberfeminism" presented the audience with a double conundrum, since few people seemed to have concrete knowledge of or associations with either parts of this term. The lack of information about women's histories was also highlighted in the "Who's That Girl?" quiz show:

We set this up like a TV quiz show with three volunteer contestants from the audience, a cyberfeminist plant (who knew all the answers), and host and hostess. This was great fun, with many of the cyberfems sprinkled through the audience hooting and hollering and cheering people on. The questions proved to be extremely hard for the audience (no big surprise here, we all know that women's history is still not a topic of general knowledge)—amazingly no one could even answer the question: Who was the first woman curator of documenta? . . . We felt that it was a successful interaction with the audience, and fruitful for our own education as it enlarged our general transnational knowledge bank about women.

Coming up with the questions for the quiz show was an exercise in transnational feminist history education and a vivid demonstration of the great differences in knowledge of women's history between different genera-

tions, and among women from different countries. Women's history, it seems, keeps being forgotten again, and we must think of ways to keep it alive in education and daily practice.

Another presentation on Monday afternoon addressed two of the "utopic myths" of the Internet: that the Net transcends hierarchies because there is a free interchange of information across boundaries and that the Net is nongendered so you can create any way you want without regard to body and sex. The new communications media exist within an established genderized social frame and are not automatically liberating. The Net is a contested zone, and this fact must be part of our awareness as we work on it. How can feminist artists and activists create new possibilities and interventions beyond the genderized Net representations of supersexy femme cyborgs or zine cut and paste "Tupperware women" (both favorites on the Net)? Hybridity could be a useful model (being a bastard and being proud of it) and could be explored much more thoroughly—in the sense of the "gender performativity" discussed by Judith Butler in Gender Trouble, *for example.*

Faith Wilding. *Recombinant Cindy*, 1997. 12 x 9 (30.5 x 22.7). Collage, drawing, and watercolor on paper. Courtesy the artist.

The issues of feminist self-representation in cyberspace raised in this presentation were also the subject of a workshop about avatars (personas or alter egos with which one represents oneself in cyberspace). Designing and marketing avatars has become big business, and all the usual sexist representations of women are now being offered as logos and datastamps. Cyberfeminist intervention here could create possibilities of replacing coded, stereotyped, and standardized gendered representations of women with much more fluid, multivocal, recombinant, and hybrid images. Another presentation related to this issue sketched the outlines of a theory of cyberfeminist embodiment:

"Cyber/net/schizo-feminist embodiment" was a complex and fascinating attempt to present the outlines of a theory of cyberfeminist embodiment as a database of intensity rather than an object or singular "body." A rapidly moving sequence of morphed and recombinant images demonstrated the possibility that a multiplicity of bodies can inhabit the same "space" at the same time, and a provocative graph presented as an experimental "operative model" summarized the history of ways of constructing the body as an object. To this was counterposed a

cyberfeminist model of "feminism as a browser to see life" since this is not a time in which a concrete fixed world picture can be produced. This browser sees the body as an intensity which connects energetically and desiringly with other intensities; which produces organs as a response to specific events and creative necessities of the moment; which is presence and process rather than organized structure; which is hypertextual and has no gender program. So, the (cyber) body as an intense database, an operative model of creation, of becoming, of happiness.

Cyberfeminist body-centered art is coming alive on the Net. As is to be expected, the vagina and the clitoris have pride of place in much cyberfeminist work. Cyberfeminism can create reconfigured networked bodies in cyberspace, bodies that are passionately incorporated in textual, visual, and interactive works. Simultaneously, deconstructive projects that address the proliferation of dominant cultural, gender, and sexual codes on the Net will be more effective if they come from a strong, libidinal center and are understood through the filter of women's history and feminist theory.

Part of theoretical feminism's project has been to explore the possibility of difference in female sexuality and desire. Much French and U.S. feminist, literary, and psychoanalytic theory in the 1980s was dedicated to this research. The Net offers possibilities for exploring these questions in a new technological and information setting, and among a new population of authors/producers who are grounded in both practice and theory. Although this line of research seems to have left the binary of woman/nature far behind, it is by no means certain that it will not fall into some of the traps of essentialist feminism, or succumb to the lure of simply countering masculinist Netculture with a feminine Netpornography. There is much to be gained from consciously interpolating women's histories and bodies into cyberspace; much can be learned from naming the absences, and beginning to create a multifaceted, fluid, and conscious feminist presence.

We began to discuss some of the different positions participants have on the question "What is cyberfeminism?" and whether we should try to define it. Following are the main points of the discussion. Clearly, there are strong differences between women in the group as regards their positions toward feminism and its relation to cyberfeminism. Some feel that the e-media are completely new technologies which give women a chance to start afresh and create a new language and new strategies. Many young women getting on the Net do not want to associate themselves with "old-style" feminism or even to call themselves feminists, but they are more likely to relate to cyberfeminism, and it could be a very useful tool for including and organizing these younger women. Others feel that the e-media are really not that new and that they exist in a strongly gendered social environment and perpetuate sexist codes.

Thus the history of feminist struggles for women's cultural and political self-representations, visibility, and justice is relevant to the new communications technologies. While we want to avoid some of the terrible mistakes and blindnesses which are part of past feminist thinking, the knowledge, experience, and feminist analysis and strategies gathered thus far can be a strong help in carrying us forward now. If our goal is to empower ourselves and other women,

then we must keep creating and reinterpreting our histories to encompass new conditions, new technologies, new strategies. The point is not to try to reach consensus or create definitions or limits, but to open up possibilities, create coalitions, continue the research, and figure out specific goals and strategies to reach these goals.

Some of the goals mentioned at the end of the discussion were:

- *Creating new feminist platforms (both political and technological) on the Internet*
- *Theoretical and technical education for cyberfeminism*
- *A polemical and practical cyberfeminist handbook*
- *Databases of skills, resources, venues, people*
- *A letter to festivals, museums, etc. listing specific artists and speakers available for presentations*
- *A condensed history of feminisms for cyberfeminists*
- *Continued work on an activist and visible presence of cyberfeminism on the Net*

During the CI meetings it was often argued that refusing definition did not mean refusing the formulation of a feminist politics of the Net, a set of shared purposes and actions, or affinity with other feminist groups and histories. Some disagreed with this position, maintaining that while refusing definition seems like an attractive, nonhierarchical, anti-identity politics tactic, it in fact plays into the hands of mainstream attitudes about feminism and Net utopianism (give those women computers to play with, and they'll shut up and go away). If our goal is to create a feminist politics on the Net that is adequate to the present condition of "women in the integrated circuit" (Donna Haraway), which empowers women and creates new possibilities for becoming and action in the world, then we must state our goals and philosophies clearly. Definition can be an emergent property that arises out of practice and changes with the movements of desire and action. Definition need not mean limits; rather, it can be a declaration of desires, strategies, actions, and goals. It can create crucial solidarity in the house of difference—solidarity, rather than unity or consensus—solidarity that is needed for effective political action.

Thursday, Sept. 25, 1997

"Hacking is a way of Life," says our fabulous hacker-speaker who was first on the public program today. We heard a short history of hacking, which included great anecdotes about the meetings of the Caos Computer Club (THE hacker event to be at). Do women programmers work differently from male programmers? Research has turned up some interesting facts; for example, women programmers care more about the look of their product, and they want to know about the context in which their programs are being used so they can design for actual users. Software determines how the machines are used so its design is very important.

A central goal of cyberfeminist education would be to prioritize hands-on technological education for women. But this education needs to be contextualized within a critical feminist analysis and discourse about women's place in Netculture and politics and in the pancapitalist labor economy.

Participants in the First Cyberfeminist International

Susanne Ackers, Berlin; Babeth, Amsterdam; Ulrike Bergermann, Hamburg; Josephine Bosma, Amsterdam; Shu Lea Cheang, New York; Vali Djordjevic, Berlin; Marina Grzinic, Japan; Sabine Helmers, Berlin; Kathy Rae Huffman, Vienna; Vesna Jancovic, Zagreb; Verena Kuni, Frankfurt; Vesna Manojlovic, Belgrade; Diana McCarty, Budapest; Alla Mitrofanova, St. Petersburg; Ingrid Molnar, Hamburg/Vienna; Mathilde Mupe, Amsterdam; Ellen Nonnenmacher, Berlin; Helene von Oldenburg, Rastede; Daniela Alina Plewe, Berlin; Corrine Petrus, Rotterdam; Julianne Pierce, Sydney; Claudia Reiche, Hamburg; Tamara Rouw, Amsterdam; Rasa Smite, Riga; Cornelia Sollfrank, Berlin/Hamburg; Debra Solomon, Amsterdam; Josephine Starrs, Sydney; Barbara Strebel, Basel; Rena Tangens, Bielefeld; Gudrun Teich, Dusseldorf; Kerstin Weiberg, Berlin; Faith Wilding, Pittsburgh/New York; Eva Wohlgemuth, Vienna; Ina Wudke, Berlin; Olga Egerova, St. Petersburgh; Natalja Pershina, St. Petersburg.

Cyberfeminists need to make their voices heard much more strongly in the discussion of Net development. What might a feminist educational program in computer science and media technology accomplish? Imagine!!

Cyberspace lends itself nicely to the creation of separate learning and practice spaces for different groups, and it seems fruitful to expand and maintain these spaces for now in the spirit of feminist self-help. One of the most important educational tools cyberfeminists can offer is an ongoing directory of electronic strategies and resources for women, including feminist theory discussion groups, electronic publishing and exhibition venues, zines, addresses, bibliographies, mediagraphies, how-to sites, and general information exchange. Although compilations of some of these resources already exist, there is a growing need for a more radical and critical feminist discourse about technology in cyberspace. In cyberfeminism, this discourse arises directly from actual current practices and problems, as well as from theory.

An interview with a participant from Zagreb on media activism and women's politics clearly showed another important area for cyberfeminist activism. An activist in the peace movement Zamir, in Croatia, she is currently director of the influential magazine Arkzin, *which began as a fanzine of the antiwar campaign. We heard about the importance of the Zamir BBS's (Electronic Bulletin Boards) to activist politics and culture in Croatia. There are several special projects for women going on both in teaching them Net technology and in women's studies in theory, feminist history, organizing, peace studies, medical and technical issues. Cyberfeminism could be instrumental in helping to resist the claustrophobic nationalism of Eastern European countries and offers the revolutionary potential of connections between grassroots efforts and international initiatives. For example, an international cyberfeminist action and intervention could make a crucial difference for Algerian women (and men), who are currently being tortured and killed.*

This interview brings to the forefront the important question of the differences in class positions and race, economic and cultural advantages, technological access, and education among women who have achieved entry into cyberspace and those who do not have access to connection, yet whose lives are intricately implicated in the circuits of technoscience and information technology. If we are to have a truly international political cyberfeminist movement, we have to begin to address these differences and to seek out coalitions and common projects between very different constituencies of women worldwide.

Conclusion

It seems safe to say that cyberfeminism is still in its avant-garde phase of development. The first wave of explorers, amazons, and "misfits" have wandered into what is generally a hostile territory and found a new land in need of decolonization. History is repeating itself in a positive cycle, where

feminist avant-garde philosophies, strategies, and tactics from the past can be dusted off and reclaim their former vitality. An epistemological and ontological anarchy that is celebratory and open to any possibility is threading its way through cyberfeminism. The dogma has yet to solidify. At the same time, the territory is a hostile one, since the gold of the information age will not be handed over to women without a struggle. To make matters worse, a big tollbooth guards access to this new territory. Its function is to collect tribute from every entity—individual, class, or nation—that tries to enter. Entrance for individuals comes at the price of obtaining education, hardware, and software; entrance for nations comes at the price of having acceptable infrastructure and, to a lesser extent, an acceptable ideology. Consequently, a more negative cycle is also repeating itself, for the women who have found their way into cyberterritories are generally those who have economic and cultural advantages in other territories; these advantages are awarded through class position, with its intimate ties to cultural position and race. As this group helps open the borders to other disenfranchised groups, it must be asked what kind of ideology and structure will await the newcomers? Will it be a repetition of the first and second waves of feminism in political and economic arenas? Will cyberspace and its associated institutions be able to cope with a house of difference? Knowing and understanding the history of women's struggle (along with other struggles in race relations and class relations) is essential—not just as a resource for strategies and tactics, not just so tactical responses to cybergender issues can be improved, but to see that the new gender constructions that come to mark the entirety of this new territory (not just virtual domains) do not fall into the same cycle as in the past.

Consider this example. In the United States, third-wave *activity* peaked in 1991. Barely three years later, this visible resistance had again died down, leaving continuing debates about feminism largely to the academy. In 1997, federal "welfare" laws were repealed in an all-out assault on the public safety net for the poor. At the same time, forced labor through "workfare" and prison programs has begun to intensify, and the expansion of the feminized global electronic homework economy has produced a new wave of sweatshop labor. Since these initiatives have a dramatic effect on poor and working-class women, one would think that the conditions would be right for a new popular front of feminist activism and resistance. However, the social body and public life seem so splintered, alienated, stratified, and distracted by market economy that as yet no signs of such activism have appeared. Is this problem partly that the avant-garde has been paid off to the extent that the issues of the poor that do not affect its members are no cause for action? Is this problem repeating itself in cyberspace and in its manufacture? There are so many more problems to face than just access for all.

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