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Cyberfeminist Art as a Medium of Political Expression: Producing and Communicating a Post-cyberfeminist Artwork for Social Change

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Abstract

This dissertation was written as part of the MSc in Arts Law and Arts Management at the International Hellenic University.

Oriented towards a *reinvention* of the *collective self*, the thesis explores the appropriate interconnections between digital art and politics that promote the *redefinition* process of the collective demands and desires. To that direction, an effort has been made so as the contemporary collective *experience of oppression* to be critically examined. An *interdisciplinary approach* that creates ruptures in the dominant "*situated knowledges*" of sciences is adopted, as it appears to be quite consistent with the complex and multi-fragmented character of postmodernity. *Intersectional feminism, cyberfeminism and xenofeminism* have offered the tools for a critical examination of digital culture and its intersection with the contemporary sociopolitical milieu.

Inspired by the political and cultural cyberfeminist content of Francesca da Ramini's (aka dollyoko's) artwork 'dollspace', as well as by the critiques of Xenofeminists in relation to the current universal digital infrastructure, an initiative was taken to produce and communicate a *post-cyberfeminist* internet artwork. The use of the prefix 'post' is connoting the adoption of cyberfeminism's theoretical and artistic context in a *revised* edition, which is aligned to the current sociopolitical and technomaterial conditions. The techniques and digital tools that have the potentials to promote the post-cyberfeminist content of the artwork are explored, as well as the proper communication form so as to be in accordance with its critical character.

Keywords: digital culture, embodiment, interactivity, xenofeminism, collective self

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Preface

This thesis was written with the passion of someone who follows the trajectory of herstory so as to examine the oppressive experiences which constructed her as a subject and which also link her with the other parts of her collective self. The ultimate purpose of my journey was to explore the emancipatory discourses and the cultural and political practices that were applied in former struggles of the collective self so as to adjust them to the current sociopolitical and technomaterial conditions. My research was conducted through an experiential process, as I positioned at the threshold of the process my experience of living in a patriarchal world as a female subjectivity, applying it as a filter while searching for the appropriate bibliography. What also made the writing process experiential was the fact that in parallel with the writing process I was running the 'Fragmented Subjectivities' project. In this way, I had the opportunity to bring into practice my theoretical presuppositions.

Contents

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the interconnections between new media art and politics, with a view to creating paths for social change. By focusing on cyberfeminist art, in particular, we explore its critical and emancipatory potentialities, as well as its participatory practice, and we come up with a conclusion that this form of expression can be seen as a means for creating fragments in the dominant system of power and forge spaces for rebellion against the contemporary networks of domination, oppression and exploitation. New forms of (political) communication have emerged in modern times. Cultural critics call it *'postmodernism'*, sociologists and political theorists perceive it as the *'post-industrial'* era*,* whereas anthropologists focusing on the effects of anthropocentrism over the environment human inhabits refer to it as *'posthumanism'*. No matter the term, it is indisputable that we are living in the era of *information*, which, thanks to *digital technology,* is operating in a very high speed and has re-organized former spatiotemporal fixes, making the whole world a *global community*.

If, with a help of a time machine, had the chance to bring into the present a subjectivity living in a past society, it is possible that s/he would consider new media technologies as magic. Nevertheless, as it is elaborated in the first chapter of the first part of the thesis, in the postmodernist era, the symbolic, the imaginary and the real are situated and co-exist in the same *hyper-real* level. Thus, sometimes it is difficult for postmodern subjectivities to believe in magic as "a supernatural energy". What mythology teaches us is that myths were invented so as to explain phenomena that humanity could not explain, bounding at the same time the notions of good and evil. These notions are *simultaneously embedded* in human constructions, either material or cognitive. Like the spells, inventions may enhance human abilities but they may also have side effects. Technological media, consequently, can be parallelized with the magic wand that gives powers to the witch, whereas the manner in which she utilizes the wand depends on the values and ethics of her community that provide meaning, give content and regulate the social organization.

The second chapter of the first part of the thesis focuses on the effects of digital technology in the post-industrial era and its intersection with the contemporary sociopolitical context. Due attention is given to the networks of oppression, which *intersectional feminism* has defined as most compact, namely *the class, the race and the gender*. In addition, because of the ecological disasters and the severe problems that the climate change has brought forward throughout the planet, an attempt was made to include in the discussion the environmental situation in the epoch of 'Chthulucene'.[1]

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[1] The geological epoch (the start date of which is controversial, extending to a range between the Agricultural Revolution 12.000-15.000 years ago and the 1960's) that is signified as the era in which earth undergoes crucial anthropogenic impact is, in a yet informal context, scientifically acknowledged as the epoch of the *'Anthropocene'.* However, the feminist scientist and theorist Donna Haraway perceives that the term implicates anthropocentric connotations, *naturalizing human dominance over earth*. Adopting instead the term *'Capitalocene'*, coined by Andreas Malm and Jason Moore, she points

The thesis aims to showcase ways in which art can serve as a liberating medium in the interests of the subordinate social groups. That is why the other chapters of the first part of the thesis are devoted in *cyberfeminism* as a postmodern cultural movement. Cyberfeminism was selected because it is one of the most important and radical movements that used digital technology so as to produce art in a period when new media technologies had just started to grow. Its contribution to the critical examination of new media is very important. Cyberfeminists combined feminisms with digital technology, engaging new media theory in criticizing many of the current systems of oppression. Since cyberfeminist views are still relevant, a thorough analysis of their strengths and weaknesses can bring about new paths for updated critical theories.

The artwork that I chose to analyze, so as to examine in practice the contribution of cyberfeminists in new media and feminist theory, is Francesca da Rimini's (aka dollyoko's) web based narrative architecture '*dollspace*'. It is an exemplary case of cyberfeminist artwork, with strong political overtones. It expresses the rage of the oppressed subjectivity, its being blasphemous and it reflects dollyoko's position against the networks of oppression. I met dollyoko through Skype and after the conversations we had (attached in the Appendix) and the e-mails we exchanged, I concluded that dollyoko as an internet persona shares the same feministic energy with Francesca in person. What I appreciated most in our communication, was the fact that it was based on a common *feministic experience*, which helped us make a warm discussion, overcoming the formalities that social conventions demand.

The common feministic experience was also what triggered my attention when I discovered cyberfeminism. This thesis was written with the passion of someone who is following step by step the trajectory of *her history* (*herstory*). As part of the collective female subjectivity that is still oppressed along with other groups of people, in the last chapter on of the first part of the thesis, I try to detect in what terms cyberfeminism could be revised, in order to be consistent with the current sociopolitical and technomaterial conditions. Thus, I chose to elaborate on *Xenofeminists*' manifestations, as they combine the *anti-theses* of cyberfeminism, the intersectional feminism's identity politics and the post-structural feminisms, which I also perceive as

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out that all species participate in the transformation of the planet and affect the other species. Nevertheless, the networks of sociopolitical domination, such as capitalism, and the "situated" upon them dominant scientific discourses that *promote the dualistic model of the dominant self who is bounded by the oppressed alien,* are liable for the earth's ecological devastation. She, in accordance, proposes *the acceptance* of the fact that we try to survive in what she calls the '*Chthulucene*', namely the epoch in which all the species, while they are "*inextricably linked in tentacular practices*", are living in a damaged planet. Thus, the building of a sustainable future does not require self-oriented practices ("auto-poiesis"). In contrast, actions shall be taken with a view to the equal and collective living (symbiosis) of all the species, the genders, the races et al. ("*sym-poieses*"). See Haraway, Donna J, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2016. In conjunction with Haraway, Donna J, 'Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin, *Environmental Humanities,* website, vol. 6, 2015, p. 159- 165, https://environmentalhumanities.org/arch/vol6/6.7.pdf (accessed 27 November 2019). In conjunction with 'Anthropocene', *Wikipedia*, website, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropocene (accessed 27 November 2019).

fundamental to the postmodern radical political thought. Xenofeminism revised cyberfeminist's theses in terms of how *collective demands* could be synthesized and oriented to *gender, race and class abolition*.

Inspired by the political and cultural cyberfeminist content of dollspace, as well as by the critiques of Xenofeminists in relation to the current universal digital infrastructure, I took the initiative to produce and communicate a *post-cyberfeminist* internet artwork. The use of the prefix 'post' is connoting the adoption of cyberfeminism's theoretical and artistic context in a *revised* edition, which is aligned to the current sociopolitical and technomaterial conditions. Thus, in the first chapter of the second part of the thesis I try to explore the techniques and the digital tools that have the potentials to promote the post-cyberfeminist content of the artwork, as well as the proper communication form so as to be in accordance with its critical character.

In the last chapter I try to place the theoretical context of the thesis into a *business plan* that will help the team I assembled around the aforementioned project, in the process of producing and communicating it *in accordance with the said values and political content*. I named the project '*Fragmented Subjectivities*' as my intention was to focus on the different and multiple oppressive experiences each of us embody. The same oppressive experiences are what also interconnect us to the struggle for emancipation, forming us as a collective postmodern subjectivity. Recognizing the value of an efficiently organized strategic plan in economizing time and assets during the processes of production and communication, I searched for a business plan model that would promote the critical character of our artwork. Thus, I chose to implement the '*Arts Council England*'[2] '*Business Planning Guidance for the Arts and Cultural Sector*'.[3] In 2016, Arts Council England commissioned the 'Alchemy's'[4] consultants Dawn Langley and Susan Royce, so as to develop, based on their experiences, a business planning guidance that would be appropriate for *non-profit* arts and cultural organizations. As the Arts Council England points out in the Guidance Preface, while during 2015-2018 "there was a lot of guidance available online, very little of this was felt appropriate for non-profit arts and cultural organizations".[5] Accordingly, the 2016 Business Planning Guidance for the Arts and Cultural Sector seemed to be the most convenient in promoting the non-tradable character of our artwork.

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[2] *Arts Council England,* website, https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/about-us/our-organisation-0 (accessed 27 November 2019).

[3] Langley, D, Royse, S, Commissioned by Arts Council England, *Business Planning Guidance for the Arts and Cultural Sector*, 2016. Available from https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/document/business-planning-guidance-arts-and-cultural-organisations (accessed 27 November 2019).

[4] *Alchemy Research & Consultancy,* website, https://alchemyresearch-consultancy.com/about-us/ (accessed 27 November 2019).

[5] *Business Planning Guidance for the Arts and Cultural Sector*, 2016, p. 3.

PART A

In the first part, the theoretical context of the thesis is discussed, namely the elements which attribute cultural and sociopolitical value to a cyberfeminist artwork.

I. The New Media of Postmodernity

What has changed in art production since digital technology started to mediate our contemporary world, influencing the scale and form of social relationships,[6] is that artists have now the option to use computational tools so as to convey information instead of painting with brushes and playing music with guitar strings.[7] Information nevertheless has always been expressed with symbols in human societies, whilst the role of technology is to give shape to symbols, to create representations, to materialize the information and bring it to the "real world". Technology, consequently, brings an idea to life, making it simultaneously communicable[8] and thus inspirational for other symbols to be constructed. Paintings, photographs and music are media objects, namely symbols; signs that represent an idea, a particular perception and perspective. All media thereof, share a single common characteristic; they are *information carriers*.[9]

Media and technology, accordingly, constitute two different disciplines with separate trajectories, which are yet constantly intersected and influence one another.[10] The invention of the printing press in the fourteenth century, for example, brought radical changes in the *dissemination* of information, resulting in the redefinition of the values and ethics in the back then societies.[11] Daguerreotype, the first photographic process,

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[6] According to Marshall McLuhan's formal analysis of the role of technological breakthroughs in human societies, it is in the nature of the *medium* (the railway, the telephone, the Internet) to shape and control human associations. The content that is conveyed through the medium therefore, is defined by the latter. However, this analysis has been accused for *technological determinism* by some cultural theorists, who support that "technologies are embedded in and take their significance from a cultural and economic matrix". My thesis adopts a position between these two theories, in the sense that culture and technology are interrelated, defining one another. This position is adopted by new media theorists such as Lev Manovich. See McLuhan, Marshall, *Understanding Media. The extensions of man*, MIT Press, 1994. In conjunction with Botler, Jay David, 'Formal Analysis and Cultural Critique in Digital Media Theory', *Convergence: the International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, vol. 8, no. 4, 2002, p. 77. Available from SAGE journals (accessed 2 July 2019).

[7] Manovich, Lev, *The language of new media*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2001, p. 256.

[8] Kuni, Verena, 'Mythical Bodies I; Cyborg configurations as formations of (self-) creation in the fantasy space of technological creation (I): Old and new mythologies of ‹artificial humans›', *Media Art Net*, website, p. 1/para. 2, http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/cyborg_bodies/mythical_bodies_I/1/ (accessed 2 July 2019).

[9] Manovich, Lev, *The language of new media*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2001, p. 48.

[10] Ibid, p.43.

[11] The most prominent analysis on the effects of the mechanical reproduction of the artwork in the fields of Art History, Cultural Studies and Media Theory, is Benjamin's 'Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'. As Benjamin observes, due to the invention of the mechanical reproduction, the authenticity, the –"here and now"- of the work of art has been devalued. The work of art can be perceived out of its original context since its reproduction becomes autonomous, enabling more recipients to have access to it and therefore *democratizing* art and culture. In contrast, Benjamin's associate in Frankfurt School Theodor Adorno, is more pessimistic about the artwork's mass production. Coining the term 'Culture Industry', he advocates that mass media are being employed inside the

altered respectively, in the nineteenth century, the way that images are *produced,* affecting the world's perception of reality.[12] In a similar way, the computer media revolution of the twentieth century compose the contemporary culture's milestone, introducing the adjustment to *digital forms of production, distribution and communication*[13] of the information as well as the shift from old to *new types of media*[14]. What is also distinctive about the twenty first century mass media societies is the fact that computer machines, formerly functioning as calculators, control mechanisms or communication devices, became *media processors*.[15]

The universal computer machine and the new media consequently, perform as the mirror of a global culture. Computer's *procedural,*[16] *participatory* (interactivity), *encyclopedic* and *spatial*[17] properties reflect the complexity of our thinking, often parallelized with a network comprised by countless anti-hierarchical structured connections.[18] We are i*mmersed*[19] in the symbolic places we have constructed, but yet released from the spatial restrictions of the material world.[20] Simulation[21] and

capitalistic context, so as to manipulate the masses towards *consumerism.* See Benjamin, Walter *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media,* edited by Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin; translated by Edmund Jephcott ... [et al.], The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, London, 2008. In conjunction with: Adorno, Theodor W, *Gesammelte Schriften,* edited by Rolf Tiedmann, vol. 8 & 10, Surhkamp Verlag, 1972, 1976; vol.3, Surhkamp Verlag, 1981, Eng. trans, *Culture Industry,* Routlege, 1991. Available from Monoskop (accessed 7 November 2019).

[12] The 1821 Gericault's painting ʹ*Derby at Epsom*', or '*Horse Race'*, constitutes a testament of the medium's ability to define our perceptions and perspectives. In particular, the painting, created before the invention of the photograph, is depicting some horses racing whilst their legs are represented as if they fly. After the invention of photography, it was realized that real horses move their legs differently.

[13] Including acquisition, storage and manipulation. See Manovich, Lev, *The language of new media*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2001, p. 43.

[14] "All existing media are translated into numerical data accessible from the computer; Text, still images, moving images, sound and spatial constructions". See Ibid, p.43, 48.

[15] Ibid, p. 48.

[16] "It allows us to specify procedures which will be not merely recorded but executed". See Montfort N, Wardrip-Fruin N, *The New Media Reader*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2003, p.6.

[17] Computer's "capability of embodying dimensionality". "The creation of the illusion o space, which can be achieved with only a text-based display, is the result of its capacity for accepting navigational commands from us and then responding according to its programming in a consistent manner that reinforces our notion of space. See Ibid.

[18] The word 'network' (resau) was used by Diderot so as to connote *matter and bodies*, avoiding the Cartesian split between matter and spirit. In the 1980s, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari suggested the form of a 'rhizome', a potato root system, as a new form of textual organization which "has no beginning no end and grows outward and inward at the same time". The latter labyrinth structure represented an intellectual discourse liberated from the hierarchies of the old print-based world. See Latour, Bruno, 'On Actor-Network Theory. A Few Clarifications', *Soziale Welt*, 1996, p. 370. Available from JSTOR (accessed 7 November 2019). In conjunction with Montfort N, Wardrip-Fruin N, *The New Media Reader*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2003, p.8-9.

[19] The term 'immersion' is used to describe the contemporary technoculture, connoting inter alia the navigation in cyberspace and the transition to a simulated world. What is characteristic about immersion is the passage through technology from "the immediate physical reality of tangible objects and direct sensory data to somewhere else". See Huhtamo, Erkki, 'Encapsulated Bodies in Motion: Simulators and the Quest for Total Immersion**'**, *Critical Issues in Electronic Media*, edited by Simon Penny, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995, p. 159.

[20] Latour, Bruno, 'On Actor-Network Theory. A Few Clarifications', *Soziale Welt*, 1996, p. 371. Available from JSTOR (accessed 7 November 2019).

interactivity have re-conceptualized the geographical notion of space as a three-dimensional physical entity to an artificially constructed net of symbols, which has "as many dimensions as it has connections".[22] New media in other words, are immaterial objects which are capable of representing materiality in such a realistic manner that is difficult to distinguish between the actual and the symbolic. The tangibility of old analogue media in contrast, was confirming until recently, the Cartesian split between the two separate worlds of the observing spirit (subject) and the observed matter (object), of the preceded reality which is followed by the imaginary.[23]

The latter dualism has been eroded by many postmodern critics, inspired by semiotics and Michel Foucault's post-structural theory of the "discursive practice".[24] Pursuant to Judith Butler's concept of "performativity" for example, it is impossible to distinguish between the action and the will, as they are simultaneously effectuated when an individual perform her role in society. [25] These theories, by demonstrating that knowledge is always produced inside a specific sociopolitical context, which defines what we appreciate as preexisting natural and objective facts, validate the necessity for an *interdisciplinary approach[26]* of science. As Donna Haraway points out, coining the term "situated knowledges", the recognition of science as a rhetorical practice and by extension as "a contestable text and a power field", could lead to a more objective approach of epistemology.[27]

One of the first scientists who combined in his work sciences and social studies was the mathematician and philosopher Norbert Wiener. During World War II, Wiener formulated his theory on 'cybernetics', an interdisciplinary approach associating the behavior of biological, mechanical and social systems.[28] The first time that the English

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[21] The term refers to technologies which aim to completely "immerse" the viewer within the virtual universe. See Manovich, Lev, *The language of new media*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2001, p. 41.

[22] In Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT), those connections are perceived as the assemblage of heterogeneous entities, such as the natural entities of science and the material entities of technology that produce *meaning*. Latour, Bruno, 'On Actor-Network Theory. A Few Clarifications', *Soziale Welt*, 1996, p. 371, 374. Available from JSTOR (accessed 7 November 2019).

[23] Latour, Bruno, 'On Actor-Network Theory. A Few Clarifications', *Soziale Welt*, 1996, p. 370. Available from JSTOR (accessed 7 November 2019).

[24] "Discourse" is comprised by an entity of signs which are structured in compliance with specific rules and limitations, demonstrating specific connotations that define *inevitably* the thoughts and the actions of the subjectivity, in accordance with the spatiotemporal context. Those rules and limitations are the values and the institutions of each society. See: Foucault, Michel, *L' Archeologie du Savoir*, Editions Gallimard, 1969, Greek trans, *Η Αρχαιολογία της Γνώσης*, Εκδόσεις Εξάντας, 1987.

[25] Butler, Judith, *Bodies that Matter: On the discursive limits of sex*, Routledge USA, 1993.

[26] "Rowland (2002) identifies two stories of interdisciplinarity. One is the bringing together of different kinds of knowledge and skill, to expand knowledge or to solve a practical problem. Rowland refers to this as *trans*disciplinarity. A second story is that, far from collapsing the boundaries between disciplines, these boundary areas represent sites of contestation between different "regimes of truth". He calls this more radical approach "critical interdisciplinarity." See Triscott, Nicola, 'Art and Intervention in the Stewardship of the Planetary Commons: Towards a Curatorial Model of Co-inquiry', PhD, University of Westminster, 2017, p. 18. Available from Academia (accessed 7 November 2019).

[27] Haraway, Donna J, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature*, Routledge USA/ Free Association Books UK, 1991, Greek trans, *Ανθρωποειδή Κυβόργια και Γυναίκες: Η Επανεπινόηση της Φύσης*, Εκδόσεις Αλεξάνδρεια, 2014, σ. 274.

[28] In 1943 Norbert Wiener co-authored with Julian Bigelow and Arturo Rosenblueth the 'cybernetic manifesto'. See Montfort N, Wardrip-Fruin N, *The New Media Reader*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2003, p.65.

prefix *cyber*[29] was used connoting human associations except from mechanical problems, was in his book 'Cybernetics: or Communication and Control in the Animal and the Machine'.[30] Resembling with the post-structural theories about the social construction of subjectivity, the idea that people, like the other animals and the machines, are just part of a system, contradicted the liberal perceptions of the western Enlightenment about the nature of self as an autonomous and sufficient entity.[31]

As it is elaborated above, the fundamental difference between modernity and postmodernity is evident both in the fields of science and social theories. What we are experiencing in our postmodern world with the appearance of digital technology and by extension "the emergence of the new medium- the metamedium",[32] is the deconstruction of the relation between the real, the symbolic (sign) and the imaginary (signified). New media elements[33] are numerical representations,[34] namely signifiers with fractal structure,[35] which enables them to be embodied to other signifiers without losing their independence.[36] It is impossible consequently, to distinguish the original of the copy, since each signifier can be multiplied and placed in different positions without losing its integrity.[37] Our world of "simulacra", as Baudrillard poses, is saturated by the aforementioned signifiers, such as representations of events, subjects and objects, which mediate our experience, resulting in the end of reality and the rise of the hyper-real.[38]

The aforementioned philosophical, scientific and technological tendencies are also evident in the popular narratives of each era. Mythologies of western anthropocentric societies narrate about creatures which are human-alike whilst at the same time they incorporate alien, magical, either evil or divine characteristics. In an attempt to overcome mortality humans were always making representations of their selves.[39] Witches, gods, aliens and cyborgs[40] are human's "simulacra". According to Baudrillard,

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[29] The prefix 'cyber', deriving from the Greek word 'κυβερνητικός', is also used in words describing the internet culture, such as 'cyberspace', 'cyber bulling', 'cyber terrorism', 'cybersex'.

[30] Montfort N, Wardrip-Fruin N, *The New Media Reader*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2003, p.65.

[31] Perceptions that are based on the aforementioned Cartesian split between matter and spirit.

[32] Manovich, Lev, *The language of new media*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2001, p. 33.

[33] Such as digital images, mp3 files, electronic books and databases.

[34] '*Digitalization*' is the process of converting data into numerical representations. See: ibid, p. 49.

[35] They are comprised of independent units (pixels, polygons, voxels, characters, scripts), which are assembled without losing their separate identities. See: Manovich, Lev, *The language of new media*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2001, p. 51.

[36] For example, World Wide Web is comprised of numerous Web pages, each in its turn consisting from separate media elements that can be used separately. See: Ibid, p. 52.

[37] After we have copied for example an archive, we can't tell which the original is.

[38] Baudrillard, Jean, *Simulacres and simulation*, Paris, Editions Galillee, 1981, Greek trans, *Ομοιώματα και Προσομοίωση,* εκδόσεις Πλέθρον , 2019, p. 27-28.

[39] Kuni, Verena, 'Mythical Bodies I; Cyborg configurations as formations of (self-) creation in the fantasy space of technological creation (I): Old and new mythologies of ‹artificial humans›', *Media Art Net*, website, p. 3, http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/cyborg_bodies/mythical_bodies_I/1/, (accessed 2 July 2019).

[40] Cyborg: Cyb-ernetic org-anism. The English term was firstly introduced in 1960 by Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kines (both activated in the domains of music, neurophysiology, pharmacology and cybernetics) in order to connote a new type of constructed organism, which is comprised by both organic and mechanic parts and is automatically functioning, as integrated homeostatic system. The

there are three types of simulacra: those that are based on the image and aim to an ideal or in god's image natural reconstruction (gods and witches), those that are related to science fiction in a literal meaning (aliens) and those that are "*simulation's simulacra*" (cyborgs) and are based on the *information*; the model, the cyber game, the creatures of hyper-reality.[41] The latter category of simulacra does not come from the imaginary as opposed to reality, but from a world where reality has been replaced by information and thus there is nothing left for mythology to copy, to reflect anymore. [42]

Computerization, nevertheless, like the steam-power engines in the industrial revolution, brought radical societal and cultural changes. Whereas industrial society was based on material goods, *information society* is based on knowledge.[43] Since "knowledge is power", many computer enthusiasts believed that the launch and distribution of new media to the masses would make the world more democratic and egalitarian.[44] A position, however, that situates the invention of a medium as the only parameter that leads to social change is characterized by technological determinism. What is more, in the age of hyper-reality information has lost its value, since "we understood how human beings constructed meaning better than we have ever done before but we no longer can believe in anything that we asserted".[45] For a critical analysis of the contemporary mass media society therefore, it is essential to examine the interconnections between new media and the contemporary sociopolitical milieu.

II. The Intersection of New Media with the Contemporary Sociopolitical Milieu and Current Environmental Issues

The information revolution of post-industrial society, namely the revolution in *organizing and processing the knowledge* by computer machines, was rapidly paralleled, with social revolutions. Prominent techno-utopian theories of the 20th century proclaimed that the emergence of the new medium, the personal computer, would emancipate the world from income and wealth inequalities of Fordist or Postfordist capitalism. Computer enthusiasts believed that relationships of social power and control would erode as more and more people would gain access to information. However, although new media technologies have been characterized as "disruptive", [46] the above argument obviously suffers from technological reductionism.

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world originates from the science fiction literature and especially from the cyber punk culture. See: Haraway, Donna J, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature*, Routledge USA/ Free Association Books UK, 1991, Greek trans, *Ανθρωποειδή Κυβόργια και Γυναίκες: Η Επανεπινόηση της Φύσης,* Εκδόσεις Αλεξάνδρεια, 2014, p. 15 (note of the translator).

[41] Baudrillard, supports that "mythology does not exist anymore". See: Baudrillard Jean, *Simulacres and simulation*, Paris, Editions Galillee, 1981, Greek trans, *Ομοιώματα και Προσομοίωση,* εκδόσεις Πλέθρον , 2019, p. 187.

[42] Ibid, p. 189.

[43] Montfort N, Wardrip-Fruin N, *The New Media Reader*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2003, p. 590.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid, p. 8.

[46] As 'disruptive technologies' are characterized the robots, internet of things, augmented reality, virtual reality, block chain, artificial intelligence, drones etc. See Data, Anusuya, 'Top eight disruptive technologies and how they are relevant to geospatial', *Geospatial World,* website, https://www.geospatialworld.net/blogs/top-disruptive-technologies-relevant-geospatial/ (accessed 27

The new media have indeed radically altered all sectors of our everyday lives, but they could not by themselves change the relations of power. Thus, instead of promoting a more equal distribution of wealth, participatory democracy and horizontally structured institutions as some would imagine, we now have more power concentrated in transnational business corporations, new media barons, the military, public bureaucracies and intelligence agencies. In other worlds, those who already had power they are now more powerful. [47]

Since the last quarter of the 20th century, the capitalist mode of production has entered a "post Fordist" phase, in juxtaposition to Fordism (a system based on Henry Ford's production lines and Frederic Taylor's scientific management).[48] The '*digital discourse*',[49] namely the intersection of new advanced capitalism with network technologies, enabled the emergence of a new *globalised* society, based on the *value of information*.[50] Corporations like Google and Facebook constitute the contemporary epitomized business models that offer knowledge, free of economic charge, but receiving in return valuable information on everyone's personal data. Digital technology, alongside the material transformations that brought, introduced some fundamental ideological differences in comparison with the industrial era. Whereas during Fordism technology legitimized "the oppressive nature of the administered state and the bureaucratic corporation, the loss of personal authenticity and the alienation of the working class",[51] the post-fordist society is characterized by the deconstruction of the relation between capital, labor and the state, privileging individualism and private transnational enterprises.[52]

Concerning the "means of production", the emergence of '*immaterial labor'*, which is characterized as "the labor that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity",[53] led to the dominance of a professional technocratic elite over the former manual labor working class.[54] The post-industrial working class is required to not only have specialized skills in information technologies and even cybernetics, but also the appropriate managerial, communicative and creative abilities so as to "activate and manage the productive cooperation".[55] The *"intellectual proletarian"* therefore, is demanded to give her very personality and subjectivity for the sake of

November 2019). In conjunction with Montfort N, Wardrip-Fruin N, *The New Media Reader*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2003, p.588.

[47] Montfort N, Wardrip-Fruin N, *The New Media Reader*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2003, p.592.

[48] The bibliography on (post) fordism is immense. See, among others, Amin, Ash, *Post- Fordism: A reader*, London, Blackwell Publishing, 1994.

[49] Fisher, Eran, *Media and New Capitalism in the Digital Era,* New York, NY, Palgrave Macmilllan, 2010, p.2

[50] Ibid, p.1.

[51] Ibid, p.3.

[52] Ibid, p.4.

[53] Lazzarato, Maurizio, 'Immaterial Labor' in Virno Paolo and Hardy Michael (ed.), *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics,* Minneapolis, Minn, University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 1. Available from e-flux (accessed 27 November 2019).

[54] Montfort N, Wardrip-Fruin N, *The New Media Reader*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2003, p.588.

[55] Lazzarato, Maurizio, 'Immaterial Labor' in Virno Paolo and Hardy Michael (ed.), *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics,* Minneapolis, Minn, University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 3. Available from e-flux (accessed 27 November 2019).

production. Hence, it has become difficult to distinguish work from leisure, whereas *antagonism and individualism* are re-positioned at a higher level. "Precariousness, hyperexploitation, mobility, and hierarchy are the most obvious characteristics of metropolitan immaterial labor".[56]

Workers in the major industrial centers of *China, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia and India*, offer material labor to electronic corporations, like 'Apple' and 'Foxconn', in such a low cost that is cheaper than automated production in New York.[57] Historically, the working force in the aforementioned global factories was comprised of young migrant women.[58] A research that was conducted in 'Foxconn', however, showed that due to the deficiency of young women in recent years, the average employee is a migrant male between 16 and 29 years old. The modern proletarians are working under extremely oppressive management regimes so as to produce hardware components such as iPhone casings,[59] whilst they are even penalized by the security guards with *physical violence*.[60] It should be noted, nevertheless, that the working class in transnational northern central and south-western Chinese industries is *protesting collectively* every time one of their colleagues is treated unfairly.[61]

Except from the rise of class inequalities, the tendency of neoliberal capitalism to produce commodities that exceed real societal needs, has also have a grave impact on the stare of environment. The first eight months of 2019 were register in Brazil's Amazon rainforest *87.000 fires*.[62] Most of the forest fires are deemed to be intentionally set up by the *owners of the large ranches* in the area, whose purpose is to transform it into fertile land so as to feed the animals that are keeping in their properties.[63] Brazil's far-right president Jair Bolsonaro, although he promised to

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[56] Ibid, p.5

[57] Chan, J, Pun, N, Selden, M, 'The Politics of Global Production: Apple, Foxconn and China's New Working Class', *New Technology Work and Employment,* vol. 28, no. 2, 2018, p. 103. Available from Research Gate (accessed 27 November 2019).

[58] Ibid.

[59] "In 2012, the subtle shift in production requirements from iPhone 4S to iPhone 5 and the speedup to meet Apple's delivery time placed workers under intense pressure", ibid, p. 108.

[60] "At about 11 p.m. on 23 September 2012, a 20-year-old worker reported, 'a number of security officers severely beat two workers for failing to show their staff IDs. They kicked them until they fell' (*Interview*, 26 September 2012). At the male dormitory, workers passing by were alerted by screams in the darkness. An eyewitness said, 'We cursed the security officers and demanded that they stop. There were more than thirty of us so they ran away" See Ibid.

[61] "At midnight tens of thousands of workers smashed security offices, production facilities, shuttle buses, motorbikes, cars, shops and canteens in the factory complex. Others broke windows, demolished company fences and pillaged factory supermarkets and convenience stores. Workers also overturned police cars and set them ablaze. The company security chief used a patrol car public address system to order the workers to end their 'illegal activities'. The situation was getting out of control as more workers joined the roaring crowd." See Ibid.

[62] The Visual and Data Team of BBC News, 'The Amazon in Brazil is on Fire- How Bad Is It?', *BBC News*, 30 August 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-49433767 (accessed 6 January 2020).

[63] Clifford, Krauss, 'In the Amazon Fires Steal Breath, but Smoke Smells of Money', *The New York Times,* 2 November 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/02/world/americas/brazil-amazon-fires-cowboys.html (accessed 6 January 2020).

protect the forests and the indigenous communities,[64] expelled the outside of nation forces that wanted to help in the suppression of the fires, invoking Brazil's sovereignty in the Amazon forest.[65] He also blamed without evidence, the environmental NGOs of setting up the fires so as to undermine him.[66] The collaboration of private capital and the state resulted, only in 2019, in the *deforestation of 7, 747 sq km* of the Brazilian Amazon rainforest.[67]

At the end of the same year, Australia also witnessed extreme ecological disaster due to wildfires.[68] Thousands of people were compelled to abandon their homes, whilst it was estimated that until the 4th of January 2020, *480.000 animals* were affected.[69] Once again, the powers of the state and capital are intersected, resulting in the domination over non-human nature. On the second of January, I had an interview with the author of the cyberfeminist artwork 'dollspace', Francesca da Rimini.[70] Da Rimini lives in Adelaide and so I asked her about the emergency situation in Australia. She believes that the Australian government is at a great scale responsible for the bushfires, due to the *strong fossil fuel interests* in the area.[71] As da Rimini points out, whilst *Aboriginal people have built an indigenous culture in Australia for over 60.000 years, that embraces unity with nature*, Australian colonialists are strategically promoting the human privilege over species. Aboriginals, however, have played an important role in the environmental struggles and especially in the struggles against the extinction of species that is at a high rate in Australia. Pursuant to da Rimini, aboriginal indigenous culture should be combined with the scientific and environmental knowledge against the discourse of human superiority.

The domination of new media has had important consequences on the way non-capitalist relations of power, per se, are constituted. The human privilege, along with the white privilege and the man privilege constitute fundamental discourses upon which *western colonialists* have based their dominance. As Ariel Salleh points out, "domination over nonhuman nature, black devils and white witches has been crucial to Western colonization, each group facing inclusion yet exclusion from the rational social

[64] Hughes, Roland, 'Amazon Fires: What's the Latest in Brazil?', *BBC News,* 12 October 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-49971563 (accessed 6 January 2020).

[65] Grant, Will, 'Amazon Rainforest Belongs to Brazil, says Jair Bolsonaro', *BBC News,* 24 September 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-49815731 (accessed 6 January 2020). In conjunction with Simoes, Mariana, 'Brazil's Bolsonaro on the Environment, in His Own Words', *The New York Times,* 27 August 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/27/world/americas/bolsonaro-brazil-environment.html (accessed 6 January 2020).

[66] Ibid.

[67] Hughes, Roland, 'Amazon Fires: What's the Latest in Brazil?', *BBC News,* 12 October 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-49971563 (accessed 6 January 2020).

[68] Kwai, Isabella, 'Apocalyptic Scenes in Australia as Fires Turn Skies Blood Red', *The New York Times*, 31 December 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/31/world/australia/fires-red-skies-Mallacoota.html?searchResultPosition=3 (accessed 6 January 2020).

[69] The Reality Check Team, 'Australia fires: How Do We Know How Many Animals Have Died?', *BBC News,* 4 January 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/50986293 (accessed 6 January 2020).

[70] See the appendix.

[71]"Australia is third largest exporter of fossil fuels behind Russia and Saudi Arabia" See Morton, Adams, 'Australia Is Third Largest Exporter of Fossil Fuels Behind Russia and Saudi Arabia', *The Guardian,*18 August 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/aug/19/australia-is-third-largest-exporter-of-fossil-fuels-behind-russia-and-saudi-arabia (accessed 6 January 2020).

contract".[72] Even though new media technologies have the potential of creating ruptures in the patriarchal norms,[73] gender inequalities (as well as racism and speceisism) still exist and are even *embedded in the bodies of humanoid robots*.[74] Robots do not have genitalia that serve reproduction but are still assigned as women or men. The process of gendering robots proves that there is no such distinction as between sex and gender, but on the contrary, what we perceive as feminine or masculine is by and large matter of social convention.[75] In Japan, robots are already employed so as to execute the household and other jobs, [76] whilst the household robots are conceived as housewives' substitutes.[77] What is also worth noticing is that household robots are preferable than migrant caretakers, due to their capacity of adjusting in the cultural environment.[78] Robots, in any case, do not have a history of wars that might conflict with the history of their employees. In parallel, it has been predicted that over one half of future robots will be females and they will be positioned in posts that traditionally are conceived as feminine: nurses, employees at coffee shops or in museums so as to greed customers, secretaries and so forth.[79] It is, therefore, unfortunate the fact that although roboticists have the opportunity to re-invent social conventions, they abide by traditionalism, legitimizing a post-human sexism and ethnocentrism.[80]

In a nutshell, any evolution in technology and unleashing of the "productive forces" is not translated in an improvement in the state of social equality and justice. The role of humanities and social sciences is exactly to analyze and criticize the 'situated knowledges' that are embedded in new media. Different stands of feminism have contributed to this task and have also provided some political tools so as to change the powers that be. In a world where *capitalism, sexism, racism and speceisism* dominate human and non-human interaction, art as a tool of constructing different and imaginative worlds, may well have a political content, by offering ways for emancipation. In an attempt of defining contemporary radical political art, the following chapters discuss about how cyberfeminist artists, utilize digital technologies so as to provoke their positions, which criticize the "technopatriarchal order" as well as the other networks of oppression that are embedded in new media.

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[72] Salleh, Ariel, *Ecofeminism As Politics: Nature Marx and the Postmodern,* London, Zed Books Ltd, 1997, 2017, p. 67.

[73] See p.

[74] Robertson, Jennifer, 'Gendering Humanoid Robots: Robo-Sexism in Japan, *Body & society*, vol. 16, issue 2, 2010, p. 1. Available from Sage Journals (accessed 27 November 2019).

[75] Ibid, p. 24

[76] "Already in Japan there is a market for intelligent, autonomous humanoid robots that can push or carry heavy loads (Hitachi's Emiew); patrol premises and extinguish fires (Alsok's Reeborg Q); replace human service sector employees (Kokoro's Actroid, ATR's Robovie, Honda's Asimo); babysit and tutor children (NEC's PaPeRo, Mitsubishi Heavy Industry's Wakamaru); house-sit (ZMP's Nuvo); nurse the infirm and elderly (Riken's Ri-man); provide companionship and entertainment (Business Design and Futaba Industries' ifbot, Flower Robotics' Posy and Pino); and perform as a fashion model. Although some of these, like Riman, are still prototypes, of the 60 or more household robots now commercially available" See Ibid, p. 8.

[77] Ibid, p. 10.

[78] Ibid, p. 9.

[79] Ibid, p. 24.

[80] Ibid, p. 28.

III. Cyberfeminism

Cyberfeminism as a term was firstly introduced in 1991 by the Australian new media art collective VNS Matrix.[81] It was a collective composed of *Josephine Starrs, Julianne Pierce, Franscesca da Rimini and Virginia Barratt*,[82] aiming to explore the social relationships of technology and in particular, the way that women, gender and sexuality are represented in technoculture.[83] Inspired by Donna Haraway's 1991 essay '*A Cyborg Manifesto*', VNS Matrix, as a first project, drafted and distributed "*A Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century*"[84] in hard copies and on websites.[85] The

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[81] "VNS Matrix (articulated as V.N.S. a fauxcronym) was a cyberfeminist media art collective formed in Adelaide (South Australia) in 1991. From 1991to 1997 they presented installations and public art works in Australia and overseas, working with new media, photography, sound and video. Their works include installations, events, imagery and propaganda distributed through the Internet, zines, and billboards. Taking their point of departure in a sexualised and socially provocative relationship between women and technology the works subversively questioned discourses of domination and control in the expanding cyber space." 'VNS Matrix', *Monoskop*, website, https://monoskop.org/VNS_Matrix (accessed 2 July 2019).

[82]Burrows, D, O'Sullivan, S, 'Section III. Mythotechnesis to Machine Fictioning: 22. Technofeminisms: The Future Cunt', *Fictioning: The Myth-Functions of Contemporary Art and Philosophy*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK, 2019, p. 426-429. Available from https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/technofeminisms-the-future-cunt (accessed 27 November 2019).

[83] "VNS Matrix was on a mission to hijack the toys from technocowboys and remap cyberculture with a feminist bent." See: VNS matrix, 'VNS Matrix: A Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century, 1991', *The Art Happens Here: Net Art Anthology*, Rhizome, New York, NY, USA, 2019, p. 30-33. Available from https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/vns-matrix (accessed 27 November 2019).

[84] **VNS Matrix:**

CYBERFEMINIST MANIFESTO FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

We are the modern cunt
positive anti reason
unbounded unleashed unforgiving
we see art with our cunt we make art with our cunt
we believe in jouissance madness holiness and poetry
we are the virus of the new world disorder
rupturing the symbolic from within
saboteurs of big daddy mainframe
the clitoris is a direct line to the matrix
VNS MATRIX
terminators of the moral codes
mercenaries of slime
go down on the altar of abjection
probing the visceral temple we speak in tongues
infiltrating disrupting disseminating
corrupting the discourse
we are the future cunt

Manifesto first declared by VNS Matrix
1991, Adelaide & Sydney, Australia

'VNS Matrix: Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st century', *Sterneck*, website, http://www.sterneck.net/cyber/vns-matrix/index.php, (accessed 2 July 2019).

language they used was poetic, playful and blasphemous, reflecting the artists' ideas on "How Future Woman should be represented".[86]

During the same period in UK, the theorist Sadie Plant also coined the term 'cyberfeminism'.[87] As Plant notices, the 'Cyborg Manifesto' motivated, during the 1990's, many feminists so as to manifest their own declarations on gender, sexuality and their relation with the emerging back then cyberculture.[88] In accordance with the fibrous character of the digital networks of communication, which are comprised of anti-hierarchical structured connections,[89] 'cyberfeminism' as an umbrella term also embraces different and often contradictory feminisms.[90] As the art critic Yvonne Volkart puts it, "Cyberfeminism only exists in the plural".[91] This is the reason why 'Old

[85] Burrows, D, O'Sullivan, S, 'Section III. Mythotechnesis to Machine Fictioning: 22. Technofeminisms: The Future Cunt', *Fictioning: The Myth-Functions of Contemporary Art and Philosophy*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK, 2019, p. 426-429. https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/technofeminisms-the-future-cunt, (accessed 27 November 2019).

[86] Da Rimini, Francesca, 'VNS Matrix: Cyberfeminists: Francesca da Rimini on cyberfeminism and technology', *artwork*, The Community Arts Network of SA, Adelaide, SA Australia, issue 3, 1996, p. 8-9. Available from: https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/vns-matrix-cyberfeminists, (accessed 27 November 2019).

[87] "Science fiction people call this Steam Engine Time: that moment in history when a technology, or an idea, is so bound to happen that it's invented by several people at once." "CyberFeminist itself is partially a critique of the misogynistic overtones of cyberpunk literature in the 80s" See: Evans, Claire L, 'Feminist Worldbuilding in the Australian Cyberswamp', *Rhizome,* New York, NY, USA, 2016. https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/feminist-worldbuilding-in-the-australian-cyberswamp, (accessed 27 November 2019). In conjunction with: Evans, Claire L, 'We Are the Future Cunt: CyberFeminism in the 90s', *Vice*, website, 2014, para. 3, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/4x37gb/we-are-the-future-cunt-cyberfeminism-in-the-90s, (accessed 27 November 2019).

[88] Also check out the work of Elizabeth Grosz, Susan Hawthorne, Zoe Sofoulis, Dale Spender, Linda Dement, Jill Scott, mez breeze and Melinda Rackham. See: Burrows, D, O'Sullivan, S, 'Section III. Mythotechnesis to Machine Fictioning: 22. Technofeminisms: The Future Cunt', *Fictioning: The Myth-Functions of Contemporary Art and Philosophy*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK, 2019, p. 426-429. https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/technofeminisms-the-future-cunt, (accessed 27 November 2019). In conjunction with: Barnett, Tully, 'Monstrous Agents: Cyberfeminist Media and Activism', *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology*, no. 5, 2014, p. 1. Available from https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/monstrous-agents (accessed 27 November 2019).

[89] See footnote

[90] As dollyoko points out, cyberfeminism was a *global* movement: "the Italians were great for example…FikaFutura in Milan. And the Finns. And the Germans. I guess it was very Euro, but then there were some powerful women in Canada and The States. Like Jamaican-Canadian digital artist Camille Turner. And CarminKarasic from the Electronic Disturbance Theatre (http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ecd/EDTECD.html). EDT did one of the first Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) actions--Floodnet--circa 1998 (way before Anonymous) in solidarity with the Mexican Zapatistas. Their action provoked the US military into retaliating against the DDoS participants by launching hostile Java applets back to their computers, crashing them. I know, I was online in New York participating in the DDoS at the time. The military's involvement only came to light later. See Evans, Claire, 'An Oral History of the First Cyberfeminists', *Vice,* 2014, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/z4mqa8/an-oral-history-of-the-first-cyberfeminists-vns-matrix (accessed 27 November 2019). In conjunction with 'A Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century', *net art anthology*, website, https://anthology.rhizome.org/a-cyber-feminist-manifesto-for-the-21st-century (accessed 27 November 2019).

[91] VNS matrix, 'VNS Matrix: A Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century, 1991', *The Art Happens Here: Net Art Anthology*, Rhizome, New York, NY, USA, 2019, p. 30-33. Available from https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/vns-matrix (accessed 27 November 2019).

Boys Network', the first Cyberfeminist International, elusively defined 'cyberfeminism' by citing everything it is *not* and denominated the list '*The 100 Anti-Theses of Cyberfeminism*'.[92] By articulating decentralized concepts, they attempted to evade the restrictive and exclusionary acts of labeling and definition.[93]

The *techno-utopian* character constitutes, nevertheless, a common ground for cyberfeminisms since new media were 'tabula rasa' back then, enabling new worlds to be constructed.[94] Cyberfeminists imagined a world where the boundaries derived from the dichotomies of modern thought would not exist anymore.[95] Whereas other technoculture theories, throughout the 1990s, abide by the mind/ body separation, envisioning a "civilization of the mind", for cyberfeminists the flesh still constitutes an important parameter in cyberspace.[96] VNS Matrix for example, conceive the cyberspace as a '*world of slime*', where "the clitoris is a direct line to matrix".[97] The politics of the body comprise a feminist theory contribution[98] and echo the 'Cyborg Manifesto' declarations.

In her essay, Donna Haraway explicates that cyborgs,[99] apart from "creatures of fiction", "of mythology", are also creatures of "social reality" and "lived experience".[100]

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[92] The '100 Anti-Theses' include, inter alia: "01. cyberfeminism is not a fragrance", "04. cyberfeminism is not an ideology", "14. cyberfeminism is not complete", "70. cyberfeminism is not post-modern". See Old Boys Network, '100 anti-theses', *OBN,* website, https://www.obn.org/reading_room/manifestos/html/anti.html (accessed 27 November 2019).

[93] "Cornelia Sollfrank, meanwhile, notes that attendees at the International's workshops 'couldn't agree on one definition of Cyberfeminism, but agreed NOT to define the term. The strategy of keeping the term as open as possible was consensual. (1998: 1). See Hester, Helen, 'After the Future: *n* Hypothesis of Post-Cyber Feminism', *Res,* website, http://beingres.org/2017/06/30/afterthefuture-helenhester/ (accessed 27 November 2019).

[94] As Francesca da Rimini puts it: "the future is up for grabs: it is 'unmanned'. In this whole brave new world of technology there's a lot of space for people who aren't empowered, who don't have money, to get in and to mess with the machines to infiltrate the systems". See: Da Rimini, Francesca, 'VNS Matrix: Cyberfeminists: Francesca da Rimini on cyberfeminism and technology', *artwork*, The Community Arts Network of SA, Adelaide, SA Australia, issue 3, 1996, p. 8-9. Available from https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/vns-matrix-cyberfeminists (accessed 27 November 2019).

[95] Barnett, Tully, 'Monstrous Agents: Cyberfeminist Media and Activism', *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology*, no. 5, 2014, p. 1. Avaiable from https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/monstrous-agents (accessed 27 November 2019).

[96] Paasonen, Susanna, 'Revisiting Cyberfeminism', *Communications: The European Journal of Communication Research*, vol. 36, issue 3, 2011, p. 335–352. Available from: https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/revisiting-cyberfeminism, (accessed 27 November 2019).

[97] VNS matrix, '**VNS Matrix: A Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century, 1991'**, *The Art Happens Here: Net Art Anthology*, Rhizome, New York, NY, USA, 2019, p. 30-33. https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/vns-matrix, (accessed 27 November 2019).

[98] Angel, M, Gibbs, A, 'At the Speed of Light: from cyberfeminism to xenofeminism, cyberfeminism, xenofeminism and the digital ecology of bodies', *Digital Poetics in a Handbag: Women pioneers in digital writing*, 2017, p. 2. Available from Academia.edu.

[99] As it is mentioned above, cyborg as a term originates from the science fiction literature, basic source of inspiration for Haraway. Haraway chose to use this term because it is gender neutral and thus it reflects more accurately the world where this configuration is placed: the "world beyond the gender". In addition, it serves more expressively Haraway's figurative language and political myth. See: Haraway, Donna J, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature*, Routledge USA/ Free Association

Cyborgs, in other words, are creatures of hyper-reality in the sense that whilst they are human's simulacra,[101] they do not exist only in the imagery; they are also living organisms. Cyborg configurations,[102] transcending the boundaries between natural and artificial, reality and fiction, question the dominant in western societies white cis[103] straight male human[104] subjectivity. Pursuant to Haraway, "cyborgs break with the tradition of a creation controlled and dominated by humans, a creation that refers to a genealogy of creators and creatures and in which neither the boundaries between humans and animals or between humans and machines, nor those between subjects and objects are clearly defined".[105]

Women[106] in western societies, like cyborgs, were invented very recently as a subject. Female body also incorporates both human and mythical characteristics. Despite the fact that biologically and morphologically looks like man's body, it is not totally the same. Thus, "woman" exists in the dominant discourse as something that looks like a man, but is "not-a man" and by extension, "not-a human". Due to their alleged "non-human"-"monstrous" [107]- bodies, women have been hunted and oppressed as

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Books UK, 1991, Greek trans, *Ανθρωποειδή Κυβόργια και Γυναίκες: Η Επανεπινόηση της Φύσης,* Εκδόσεις Αλεξάνδρεια, 2014, p. 15 (note of the translator).

[100] Ibid, p. 223

[101] See p.8.

[102] "For an analysis of the cyborg phenomenon that is directed at the interfaces of art and media culture, the term configuration is helpful in two ways: Firstly, it suggests analyzing not only cyborg representations and metaphors, but also their functions—including the interfaces that support the different systems and discourses. Secondly, it brings into focus the outlined crossing of different, even ideologically molded systems of terms and meaning, which decisively influences cyborg fantasies and figurations." Kuni, Verena, 'Mythical Bodies I; Cyborg configurations as formations of (self-) creation in the fantasy space of technological creation (I): Old and new mythologies of ‹artificial humans›', *Media Art Net*, website, p. 1, http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/cyborg_bodies/mythical_bodies_I/1/, (accessed 2 July 2019).

[103] The term connotes a subjectivity that is not transgender.

[104] Human (adj.)mid-15c., *humain*, *humaigne*, "human," from Old French *humain*, *umain* (adj.) **"of or belonging to man"** (12c.), from Latin *humanus* "of man, human," also "humane, philanthropic, kind, gentle, polite; learned, refined, civilized." This is in part from PIE *(dh)ghomon-*, literally "earthling, earthly being," as opposed to the gods (from root *dhghem- "earth"), but there is no settled explanation of the sound changes involved. Compare Hebrew *adam* "man", from *adamah* "ground". Cognate with Old Lithuanian *žmuo* (accusative *žmuni*) **"man, male person"**. See: *Online etymology dictionary,* website, https://www.etymonline.com/word/human, (accessed 2 July 2019).

[105] Haraway, Donna J, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature*, Routledge USA/ Free Association Books UK, 1991, Greek trans, *Ανθρωποειδή Κυβόργια και Γυναίκες: Η Επανεπινόηση της Φύσης,* Εκδόσεις Αλεξάνδρεια, 2014, σ. 265.

[106] Woman (n.) "adult female human", late Old English *wimman*, *wiman* (plural *wimmen*), literally "woman-man," alteration of *wifman* (plural *wifmen*) "woman, female servant" (8c.), a compound of *wif*"woman" (see wife) + man "human being" (in Old English used in reference to both sexes; see man (n.)). Compare Dutch *vrouwmens* "wife," literally "woman-man." See: *Online etymology dictionary,* website, https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=woman (accessed 2 July 2019).

[107] Monsters, for Haraway, are sharing with the verb "demonstrate" more than their common root. "Monstrous bodies" demonstrate "the monstrous relations confronting subjects in the age of information and biotechnology". Monstrous bodies have become *deviant* or *demonized* in order for the dominant white cis straight male subjectivity to be empowered. The phrase *"inappropriate/d others"* is used by Haraway in a similar way. In particular, she borrowed the phrase by the Vietnamese director and feminist Trin T Minh-ha in order to connote all those who are not compromising with the dominant identitarian and political stereotypes of the "self" and the "other". Monsters consequently, are in

"witches", "sluts" or "Eva's daughters". Haraway acknowledges that woman's oppression is a political fact which creates the collectively lived experience of being considered by the dominant discourse as an object.[108] The hybrid nature of cyborg configuration, however, has changed what is perceived as "woman experience" in the late 20th century,[109] enabling women to unite as a collective subject to the struggle for reinvention of self, embracing in parallel their other different identities. For cyberfeminists, therefore, 'cyborg' represents a political identity that allows as to redefine subjectivity, transcending speciesism, race, class and gender. The latter rationale is reflected in Haraway's essay-concluding famous statement: "*I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess*".[110]

The aforementioned fragmented structure of the collective female subjectivity, whose identities are multiple and diverse, is conveyed in Haraway's ironic language. Irony became a common tool among cyberfeminists, since it is a method of joining contradictory discourses, like cyborg configurations do.[111] Influenced by the black '*intersectional feminism'* of Combahee River Collective,[112] cyberfemisists, like the VNS Matrix collective, support feminisms that are "inclusive of all women: trans women, womxn,[113] feminine-identified non-binary identified people and cis women".[114] The latter stands in opposition to older forms of western feminism, such as the white

parallel the creatures that destabilize the dominant evolutionary, technological and biological discourse. See: Haraway, Donna J, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature*, Routledge USA/ Free Association Books UK, 1991, Greek trans, *Ανθρωποειδή Κυβόργια και Γυναίκες: Η Επανεπινόηση της Φύσης,* Εκδόσεις Αλεξάνδρεια, 2014, p. 17, 18. In conjunction with: Volkart Yvonne, 'Monstrous Bodies: The Disarranged Gender Body as an Arena for Monstrous Subject Relationns', *Media Art Net*, website, p. 1, http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/themes/cyborg_bodies/monstrous_bodies/1/ (accessed 2 July 2019).

[108]Haraway, Donna J, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature*, Routledge USA/ Free Association Books UK, 1991, Greek trans, *Ανθρωποειδή Κυβόργια και Γυναίκες: Η Επανεπινόηση της Φύσης,* Εκδόσεις Αλεξάνδρεια, 2014, σ. 224.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid, p.

[111]Paasonen, Susanna, 'Revisiting Cyberfeminism', *Communications: The European Journal of Communication Research*, vol. 36, issue 3, 2011, p. 335–352. Available from https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/revisiting-cyberfeminism, (accessed 27 November 2019).

[112] The term "*interscectionality",* also referred to as "*intersectional feminism*" was firstly introduced by the Cobahee River Collective, a black feminist organization founded in 1973 in Boston, Massachusetts. Oppressed not only because of their gender but also because of their race and class, black women were struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression. Intersectionality studies the "intersections between forms or systems of oppression, domination or discrimination". See: *Combahee River Collective*, website, https://combaheerivercollective.weebly.com/, (accessed 27 November 2019).

[113] "The term '*Womxn*' is an alternative term for the English language word 'women', which has been regularly in use since 2015 to explicitly include transgender women and women of color. It has been used in a similar manner as *'womyn'* and '*wimmin*', as a rejection of the folk etymology of 'woman' allegedly being 'of man'. Due to transgender women and women of colour's perceived exclusion from the usage of these respellings, an "x" is used to "broaden the scope of womanhood," to include them." See 'Womxn', *Wikipedia*, website, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Womxn#cite_note-2, (accessed 27 Nivember 2019).

[114] 'VNS Matrix', *VNS Matrix,* (website), https://vnsmatrix.net/the-artists, (accessed 27 November 2019).

'1970's or 'second wave' feminism, that privilege cis white women and are technophobic and even anti-sex.[115]

The ironic tendency of cyberfeminists has, however, been accused of restraining rather than promoting critical dialogue, due to the ambiguity it creates about their positions.[116] In her 2011 essay, the critic Susanna Paasonen using the example of OBN's '100 anti-theses', concludes that since this ambiguity is open for interpretation to everyone, sometimes the networks of oppression and the inequalities are not given the proper attention.[117] When, although, the systems of oppression are not precisely identified, 'collective demands' cannot be located either, since the experience of oppression is what links the oppressed subjects to the collective struggle for emancipation.[118] Sadie Plant, likewise, by connecting Lady Lovelance, switchboard operators and South-East Asian women working in silicon chip factories, and placing them all under the umbrella of 'feminization', viewed as an uncoordinated multiplicity, disregards the inequalities among them.[119]

The contribution of cyberfeminisms, notwithstanding, in feminist theory and digital media culture cannot be underestimated. Invented at a 'Steam Engine Time',[120] they presented the artistic, analytical and political tools for a critical examination of cyberculture and its engagement with gender politics. Discoursing about gender-emancipatory uses of technology, sex-positive female sexuality, game culture and commodification of the bodies, they remain relevant.[121] The following internet artwork, 'dollspace', constitutes an example of how the content of the aforementioned discourses can be expressed through new media art.

III.1. The Web-based Narrative Architecture 'Dollspace' as a Cyberfeminist Artwork

'Dollspace'[122] constitutes a prominent example of cyberfeminist internet art. It is written in HTML code, but it reminds the oldschool analogue fanzines. It was launched

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[115] Paasonen, Susanna, 'Revisiting Cyberfeminism', *Communications: The European Journal of Communication Research*, vol. 36, issue 3, 2011, p. 335–352. Available from https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/revisiting-cyberfeminism, (accessed 27 November 2019).

[116] Ibid.

[117] Ibid.

[118] Burrows, D, O'Sullivan, S, 'Section III. Mythotechnesis to Machine Fictioning: 22. Technofeminisms: The Future Cunt', *Fictioning: The Myth-Functions of Contemporary Art and Philosophy*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK, 2019, p. 426-429. Available from: https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/technofeminisms-the-future-cunt, (accessed 27 November 2019).

[119] Paasonen, Susanna, 'Revisiting Cyberfeminism', *Communications: The European Journal of Communication Research*, vol. 36, issue 3, 2011, p. 335–352. Available from https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/revisiting-cyberfeminism (accessed 27 November 2019).

[120] See footnote 87.

[121] Paasonen, Susanna, 'Revisiting Cyberfeminism', *Communications: The European Journal of Communication Research*, vol. 36, issue 3, 2011, p. 335–352. Available from: https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/revisiting-cyberfeminism, (accessed 27 November 2019).

[122] Da Rimini Francesca, Dominguez Ricardo, Grimm Michael , *D O L L S P A C E*, website, https://dollyoko.thing.net/title.htm, (accessed 2 July 2019).

on the web in 1997, by one of the members of the 'VNS Matrix' collective, Francesca da Rimini (aka dollyoko).[123] Due to its *hypertextual structure* it contains a great amount of data (*graphics, text, sound, hypertexts*[124] *and hypermedia*[125]) that can be infinitely rearranged.[126] The width of the artwork, before the revised edition in 2001, could be translated in *700-800 tangible pages*.[127] All this amount of information was produced in a sixth-month period, while dollyoko was in Kyoto, exchanging personal "*huntings*" with her friends. The non-visual *text-based e-mails* they used as communication form, triggered dollyoko's imagination in creating an alien world, "*a pond of dead girls*".[128] Dollyoko's friend, Claudia Raddatz, helped by making the translation into Spanish and some animations, Ricardo Dominguez offered some of his writings and Michael Grimm created the soundtrack.[129] Interesting to note that dollspace has been threatened with censorship both in Belgium and in Italy, but still remains on the web corrupting it with slime.[130]

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[123] Francesca da Rimini (GashGirl, doll yoko, liquid_nation) is an Australian cyberfeminist artist based at times in Adelaide and at other times in London, New York or Rome. Since 1995 she has created many online projects including the web-based narrative architectures *"GashGirl"*, *"Los Dias de los Muertos"* and the award-winning *"dollspace".* In order to provoke her feminist anti-theses in the cyberspace, she is experimenting with the artistic exploitation of the aforementioned communication forms as well as the email dialogues and the virtual communities. In accordance with most of the multimedia artists, she has an interdisciplinary background. She has worked in the information technology industry and she was awarded the Australian Council's New Media Fund Fellowship for her research in the fields of quantum physics and indigenous knowledge systems. In parallel, she periodically works with the Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT), which she co-founded in 1988. She is also tutor, writer, video maker, curator, documentary producer and arts manager. Da Rimini's political agenda does not only include gender inequalities. She has also fight for Aboriginal rights and has participated in eco-activist movements against nuclear, military and mining industries. In 1991 in Adelaida she co-founded with Josephine Starrs, Julianne Pierce and Virginia Barratt the influential cyberfeminist media art collective *"VNS Matrix".* See: 'Francesca da Rimini, «dollspace»', *Media Art Net,* website, http://www.medienkunstnetz.de/artist/rimini/biography/, (accessed 2 July 2019). In conjunction with: 'Francesca da Rimini', *Monoskop,* website, https://monoskop.org/Francesca_da_Rimini, (accessed 2 July 2019).

[124] The most popular form of hypertext is the World Wide Web.

[125] When media, such as images, are interconnected by hyperlinks they are also described as 'hypermedia' instead of 'hypertexts'. In this thesis the two terms are used interchangeably. See: Burk, Dan L, 'Copyright and Feminism in Digital Media', *American University Journal of Gender*, *Social Policy & the Law*, vol. 14, no.3, 2006, p. 522. Available from Academia.edu (accessed 2 July 2019).

[126] The visitor-user of the website can navigate him/herself by clicking on the hypertexts that are available on each page. Hypertexts, either words or (moving) images, are interconnected hyperlinks that give the user access to other pages of the work containing hypermedia. In some pages of the program the user is able to choose among more than one hypertext and thus decide the trajectory of the narration. In other pages on the contrary, there is only one hypermedia to click. The user is sometimes also linked to pages that don't have any hypertexts, but the images are changing without the user's control. Some other times, video, sound or images are automatically downloaded in the user's computer when s/he clicks on a hypertext, enabling him/her to keep them as a souvenir. The hypermedia that are hidden in images are sometimes difficult to be detected and the user might believe that the narration has come to an end. However, if s/he searches more carefully s/he will definitely find a hypertext to link her/ him to the next page. Dollspace operates like a *database*, containing a great amount of data which can be *infinitely rearranged*. As a result, the navigation never ends unless the user decides so.

[127] See the Appendix

[128] Ibid.

[129] Ibid.

[130] Ibid.

Due to the artwork's wide spatiality, it is difficult, within the scope of this paper to highlight all the aspects that it brings under controversy. Thus, I focus on what I would consider most important if I was curating the artwork for political purposes, promoting it as cultural good that can contribute to social change. My twofold analysis centers on the artwork's *hypertextual structure*, which by attacking hierarchies enables *interactivity* (and vice versa) and its *feminist content,* as is expressed in the medium in which it is embedded. The *embodiment* of the feminist discourse into new media technology is, according to my view, what provides distinctive political value to the artwork. It enables a certain unity of *theory and praxis,* as it more or less occurs in the political practice of social movements. What also lends political value to the artwork is the fact that anyone can have access to it without payment.

III.1.a. Hypertext's Fragmented Structure as Form of Narration

Dollspace has never had a script. As dollyoko points out in the discussion we had on dollspace during the interview: "the whole project just grew, and that's what I love about hypertext. The rationale was to make a pond of dead girls.[131] That was the motivation and some kind of release-the-spirit".[132]

It could be argued that hypertexts constitute a characteristic form of new media that contributed to a certain modification of the trajectory of human thought, by demostrating that it is not essential to structure cognitive constructions upon hierarchies. The 'meaning' is not produced through an aristotelistic process of 'cause and effect', but it may as well be understood as a network of separate individual gestures. Accordingly, hypertextual structure, in a way confirms the postmodern theories about 'authenticity'. Considering that, pursuant to Barthes, Derrida, Foucault and other postmodern critical thinkers, there is no single objective truth, as the meaning changes according to the historical, political and societal context, and so there is no original interpretation of an artwork. In this manner, the Author-God is suspended from his/her previous position of authority, [133] bequeathing the interpretation of the artwork to the audience. Artistic process becomes more experiential and conceptual, encouraging critical thinking against what Burroughs calls "prerecordings;[134] dominant views upheld by existing institutions of power"[135]. In

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[131] As dollyoko recalls, when she was in Kyoto in 1997, she went to a famous pond where, in the past, mothers pressured by social circumstances, drowned their babygirls. This strong image of women practicing infanticide motivated dollyolo so as to create dollspace. The latter image is reminiscent of the Greek Kaiadas abyss legend (ο μύθος του Καιάδα). According to the legend, ancient Spartans, living in the most *militarized* society of ancient Greece, were throwing to Kaiadas their feeble children. In this way, society is structured upon the discourse of *ableism* –a network of oppression still dominant- just because *war* demands strong bodies. See the Appendix.

[132] Ibid.

[133] On the basis that there is no original interpretation of an artwork, Rolland Barthes attacked traditional literary criticism, which gave emphasis on the authority of author. See: Barthes, Rolland, 'The Death of the Author', *Aspen*, no. 5-6, 1967.

[134] Burroughs' "prerecordings" remind of Foucault's "discourse". "Discourse" is comprised by an entity of signs, which are structured in compliance with specific rules and limitations, demonstrating specific connotations that define inevitably the thoughts and the actions of subjectivity, in accordance with the Foucault, Michel, *L' Archeologie du Savoir*, Editions Gallimard, 1969, Greek trans, *Η Αρχαιολογία της Γνώσης,* Εκδόσεις Εξάντας, 1987.

practice, hypertexts facilitate the "re-coding"[136] of texts by blurring the lines between writing and reading. In his 1970 essay 'S/Z',[137] Barthes is opposing the "writerly" texts, which are texts that can be written and re-written, to the "readerly" texts, which can be red but not written. Hypertext constitutes a "writerly" text, since it enables the reader/user of the computer program to *interact* with it and influence the trajectory of the plot. The writing process consequently, becomes more dialectic devaluating the centrality of the author. Thus, every day people are obtaining a more interactive role in the reproduction of the artwork.

It is evident, therefore, that dollspace belongs to the category of the "writerly" texts. Not only because it is an interactive artwork that is re-written every time that it is red, but also because it was produced in a very similar manner with how hypertexts function. As it is mentioned above, during the process of the artwork's production, dollyoko was exchanging texts with her friends, who contributed in it with their personal experiences and perspectives. The hypertextual structure of the work enabled the interconnection of all those stories, which would be probably considered inapplicable in a traditional text that demands an etiologically *predefined purpose*. The notions of 'cause' and 'effect' incorporate those of 'beginning' and 'ending'. The fragmented non linear structure of the hypertext, on the other hand, links different connotations under a concept, transcending their contradictions at such a level that its definition always remains *unfinished*. Thus, the *eeriness of the infinite* is created.[138] This is the reason why dollyoko's "pond of dead girls" triggers the '*uncanny feeling*'[139] of the visitor.[140] It provokes whoever enters it, a disturbing feeling of being imprisoned into the eeriness of infinite.

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[135] Takehana, Elise, 'Burroughs / Rauschenberg: Text-Image / Image-Text', p. 278. Available from Academia.edu (accessed 2 July 2019).

[136] Theorized by Barthes, Derrida and others. See: Burk, Dan L, 'Copyright and Feminism in Digital Media', *American University Journal of Gender*, *Social Policy & the Law*, vol. 14, no.3, 2006, p. 528. Available from: Academia, (accessed 2 July 2019).

[137] Barthes, Roland, *S/Z,* Editions du Seuil, 1970, Eng. trans, Blackwell Publishing, 1990, p.ix.

[138] Anne Carson, in her essay 'Eros the bittersweet', analyzing the notion of 'eros' (love), postulates what makes a paradox: a thought which attempts to reach a *conclusion that it is never reached*. The ancient Greek poetess *Sappho* was the first to characterize eros as "*bittersweet*". Sappho's back then neologism, which provoked her ridicule by her contemporaries, constitutes another example of joining contradictory connotations in the same world. See Carson, Ann, *Eros the Bittersweet: An Essay*, Princeton University Press, 1986, Greek trans, *Έρως ο Γλυκόπικρος,* Εκδόσεις Δώμα, 2019, σελ. 15, 110.

[139] The psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud in his 1919 essay 'The uncanny', supports that humans' tendency to create copies of themselves (like dolls) arise due to their *fear of death*. He supports that the replicas which they create is an attempt of *overcoming mortality.* However, when they look at a replica, they feel uncanny (disturbing) because it reminds them that *death is inevitable*. In 1997, the roboticist Masahiro Mori, endeavoring to explain the uncanny response that humans have towards robots, published an essay in the journal 'Energy', in which he concludes: "When we die, we fall into the trough of the *uncanny valley*. Our body becomes cold, our color changes, and movement ceases". Those are also characteristics of the human replicas and as such they remind of the inevitable death. Accordingly, the "pond of dead girls" shares a lot of similarities with the "uncanny valley", since it is valley of *dead*. See Freud, S, McLintock, Haughton, H, *The uncanny*, New York, Penguin Books, 2003. In conjunction with Kloc, Joe, 'Into the Uncanny Valley', *Seed* [website], https://www.seedmagazine.com/content/article/uncanny_valley/P2/ (accessed 2 July 2019).

[140] I made the parallelism of the uncanny response that humans have towards replicas, with their response towards the paradox of the infinite. According to my view, the infinite also reminds the

A concept that incorporates different and possibly contradictory connotations echoes the Old Boys Network '100anti-theses' that positioned under the umbrella of 'cyberfeminsm' multiple and diverse non-identities. Respectively, hypertext's fragmented structure resembles the fragmented collective female subjectivity.[141] This is the reason why hypertext from its beginning was perceived as a medium that enables feminist perspectives to be expressed.[142] Its non linear, interactive character that was analyzed above, questions the traditional, hierarchical and patriarchal writing forms, enabling the re-invention of subjectivity. One of the first prominent "Literary Hypertexts"[143] was Shelley Jackson's 'Patchwork Girl; or, a Modern Monster', released in 1995, two years before dollspace.[144] What is distinctive about this artwork is that Shelley is making a "correspondence between the medium and the message".[145] In particular, the reader/user of the computer program is invited to "sew"[146] the parts of Patchwork Girl's body. Each part belongs to a different girl with different sociopolitical background and story. Thus, the "monstrous" body that the user creates constitutes a metaphor illustrating hypertext's multiplicity of connotations and, in parallel, Patchwork Girl's (and by extension collective female subjectivity's) multiplicity of identities.[147]

The embodiment of the message into the medium, as it is mentioned above, enables the interaction of the symbolic with the factual and thus, in a sense, theory becomes praxis, while the latter simultaneously reproduces theory. The aforementioned interactivity of the symbolic with the real is what attributes to dollspace its political

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inevitable death because it will stop being a paradox only if humans manage to reach immortality (albeit other paradoxes will then emerge; See Don Dellilos novel Zero K). I also made the aforementioned connection because it is common in the collective conscious to connect the situation of death with infinite situations, like the paradise and the hell.

[141] According to Haraway, gender, race and class constitute fragmented political identities of the postmodern subject. See Haraway, Donna J, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature*, Routledge USA/ Free Association Books UK, 1991, Greek trans, *Ανθρωποειδή Κυβόργια και Γυναίκες: Η Επανεπινόηση της Φύσης,* Εκδόσεις Αλεξάνδρεια, 2014, σελ. 233.

[142] Another example of cyberfeminist artwork is Linda Dement's 1995 CD-Rom 'Cyberflesh Girlmonster'. "Linda described her projects as driven by a desire to put some guts into machine, illustrating the point with the CD's ample landscape of mouths, eyes, ears, clitorises and nipples morphing into each other and giving rise to monstrous kinds of carnalities." See [142] Paasonen, Susanna, 'Revisiting Cyberfeminism', *Communications: The European Journal of Communication Research*, vol. 36, issue 3, 2011, p. 335–352. Available from https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/revisiting-cyberfeminism (accessed 27 November 2019). In conjunction with Burk, Dan L, 'Copyright and Feminism in Digital Media', *American University Journal of Gender*, *Social Policy & the Law*, vol. 14, no.3, 2006, p. 523-528. Available from: Academia.edu (accessed 2 July 2019).

[143] Hackman, Paul, '"I Am a Double Agent": Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl" and the Persistence of Print in the Age of Hypertext, *Contemporary Literature*, vol. 52, no.1, 2011, p. 85. Available from JSTOR (accessed 2 July 2019).

[144] The narrative is based on two books: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and L. Frank Baum's *The Patchwork Girl of Oz,* reflecting feminist and post-structural theories. Jackson is making a parallelism of the act of creating a hypertext with the way that female bodies are being constructed in the discourse. See: Ibid.

[145] Ibid, p. 86.

[146] Jackson parallelizes the writing process of *linking* hypertexts with *sewing*, an activity that is closely related to woman subjectivity. See: Ibid, p. 94

[147] Ibid, p. 93.

value. Its feminist content is effectuated during an interactive, dialectic process which discredits the networks of oppression produced by hierarchy. Pursuant to the post-structural theory of Judith Butler,[148] subjectivity is not something biologically predefined, but it is rather constructed inside the discourse.[149] The destabilization of the dominant discourse of hierarchy therefore, may create a fertile ground for the multiplication of the subject's identities and vice versa. In other words, dialectic processes may boost the deconstruction of the dominant dualistic theories, such as those which perceive female identity as a single and homogenous identity opposite to male.

The artwork's, non-linear[150], non-hierarchical narration also represents a practical example of postmodern literary theory.[151] Words and images constitute independent sources of gesture whilst they simultaneously have the role of a signifier and a signified, as is the case with Baudrillard's "world of simulacra" or the cyberspace. Hypermedia narration is reminiscent of Burroughs' '*cut-ups*'. Being one of the most influential postmodern artists and premature exponent of cyberpunk culture, Burroughs combined in his work the visual[152] and the verbal. His technique of cutting words from their original context and placing them in different positions resembles Dadaist collages and photomontages. His writings have the form of a database, in which words are interacting with other words as if they were paintings, creating a dispatched -from time and space- narration. By altering the words' connotations Burroughs strikes against the discourse of the "one and only" reality, illustrating the sign-mediated environment of the 20th century.[153]

Hypertext as a medium, accordingly, reflects the modularity[154] of postmodernity, whilst in parallel enables the experimentation with new, less hierarchical narrative techniques, allowing less dominant perspectives to be heard. Dollspace's feminist content, therefore, is expressed in accordance with the medium that is used. Stories and images of different women can be rearranged and presented randomly, without being restricted by hierarchy, constructing a representation of a collective rebelling female subjectivity with multiple identities.

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[148] Butler, Judith, *Gender trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,* Routledge USA*,* 1990.

[149] As it is theorized by Foucault. See footnote no. 39.

[150] 'Hyper-' refers to structure and not size The English prefix "hyper-" comes from the Greek prefix "ὑπερ-" and means "over" or "beyond"; it has a common origin with the prefix "super-" which comes from Latin. It signifies the overcoming of the previous linear constraints of written text written in paper. See 'Hypertext', *Wikipedia. The free encyclopedia*, website, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypertext (accessed 2 July 2019).

[151] Burk, Dan L, 'Copyright and Feminism in Digital Media', *American University Journal of Gender*, *Social Policy & the Law*, vol. 14, no.3, 2006, p. 528. Available from Academia.edu (accessed 2 July 2019).

[152] Despite the fact that Burroughs is mostly known for his writings, he was also experimenting with visual arts and music. "The cut-up seems revolutionary to Burroughs because it brings writing closer to painting by making the medium of the writer more tangible and haptic." See Takehana, Elise, 'Burroughs / Rauschenberg: Text-Image / Image-Text', p. 275. Available from Academia.edu (accessed 2 July 2019).

[153] Ibid. p.278.

[154] Manovich, Lev, *The language of new media*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2001, p. 51.

III.1.b. Cyberfeminist Content

The cyberfeminist content is evident not only in dollspace's hypertextual structure, but also in its aggressive 'slime' and 'vapourware' aesthetics and its provocative messages. Dollspace is composed of images, e-mails, music and poetic texts that could have been possibly collected or written by a girl and placed disorderly in her diary.

Because of the fact that dollspace is made up from countless data it is difficult to comment on each and every image or text. What they are all sharing, nevertheless, is that their content is conveyed in a very immediate and *experiential manner*, expressing the different aspects of female subjectivity from a female perspective. Its personal character, however, do not render it less political since -as the second-wave feminists declared-[155] "*personal is political*". Representations of eastern and western every day women of different ages demonstrate that women have multiple other identities whilst they all experience oppression because of their gender, no matter what their race or class is.

Narration, however, is not focused on the issue of woman oppression so as to victimize female subjectivity. On the contrary, through the artwork, navigation is raising an aggressive female perspective against her oppression. In accordance, words like "dolls", "ghosts", "bitch", "cunt" and "virgin" *demonstrate* the demonization of female subjectivity and in parallel the fact that this demonization has given her the power to destabilize the dominant evolutionary, technological and biological discourse.[156]Technology, besides, can link women from every corner of earth, enabling them to share their experiences and be united as a collective subject. The latter is illustrated by the slang internet language that is used in the narration. Slang internet language gives an informal, personal character to the artwork, whilst in parallel reminds to women that they now have the chance to share their experiences with their sisters from other countries in a language that they can all understand.

Dollspace is, in addition, characterized by cyberpunk aesthetics. Cyberpunk constitutes a subgenre of science fiction literature, which explores the possible implications of science and technology in human societies. [157] It should be noted that the dystopian scenarios of the future are rather common in cyberpunk works of art. Feminist science fiction, nevertheless, shed light to the positive perspectives of technological breakthroughs, presenting utopian society as something not only desirable but also achievable. [158] The artwork's title for example, invites us to imagine how it would be if

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[155] Second-wave feminism occurred in USA during the decades 1960-1980. Whilst first-wave feminists were focusing on the legal inequalities (vote, property), second-wave feminists inspired by the 1949 Simon de Beauvoir's 'Second Sex' drew attention to the oppression that women are subsisting inside the family environment. 'Second Sex', theorizing that gender is not biologically predefined (sex) but it is socially constructed, is considered a milestone for the feminist theory. See Athanasiou, Athina, *Φεμινιστική Θεωρία και Πολιτισμική Κριτική (Feminist Theory and Cultural Critique),* Athens, Nissos Publications, 2006.

[156] See footnote about the "monstrous bodies".

[157] See the works of Philip K. Dick, William Gibson, Roger Zelazny, John Brunner, J. G. Ballard, Philip José Farmer and Harlan Ellison.

[158] See the works of Ursula K. Le Guin, Eileen Gunn, Marge Piercy, Joanna Russ, Elizabeth Burgoyne Corbett and Frances Harper.

cyberspace were a place assigned to women. Similarly, feminist digital artists, commonly influenced by Haraway[159] and other postmodern feminists, are exploring the potential of technological developments to blur the lines between natural and artificial, reality and fiction, and therefore to redefine human body and multiply human identities.[160] In this context, dollspace is not only radical, but also a very characteristic work of its period, as it reflects the emerging cyberpunk culture of the 1990's and postmodern feminist perceptions.

As a closing point of the chapter, an extract from the artwork itself could be cited, which expresses in a more poetic way the artist's perceptions on cyberfeminism: "There is no precedent whatsoever for such an event. In the whole of history of humanity, in the whole history of the world and of the earth, in all that to which one can give the name of history in general, such an event (let us repeat, the event of a discourse in the philosophico- scientific form claiming to break with myth, religion, and the nationalist 'mystique') has been bound, for the first time and inseparably, to worldwide forms of social organization (a party with a universal vocation, a labor movement, a confederation of stated, and so forth). All of this while proposing a new concept of the human, of society, economy, nation, several concepts of the State and of its disappearance".[161] Cyberfeminism can be a guide to the aforementioned direction, offering the tools so as to map out our mythical bodies and find ways to reconstruct them. Technology has nevertheless overturned mythology, requiring the construction of a *new vocabulary* that it will not be based on dualistic contradictions. Artistic expression can assist us by offering a critical rethinking of our relations with the others, the nature, the objects, the cyborgs. We may find more similarities than differences.

However, as it is analyzed in chapter II, feminist utopias still exist mostly in fantasy. Due to *information capitalism*, the web is more regulated and commodified,[162] whilst white cis straight male culture signified crucially new media technology. Nevertheless, because of the fact that new media are cultural objects that reflect our "monstrous"[163] relationships, it is important to observe them. What they are telling us, in this particular spatiotemporal conjucture, is that our relations are empty of meaning. This is why the struggle for the reinvention of self has become a necessity. Since the technomaterial conditions in the millennial era have radically changed, it is time for the cyberfeminist theses to be reconfigured and engaged with new critical perceptions on the gender-digitality intersection. Now that we are *after the cyberfeminist future*, as

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[159] Haraway is also influenced by cyberpunk culture.

[160] See Digital photographer Cindy Sherman, graphic artist Barbara Kruger and visual artist Ursula Biemann.

[161] Da Rimini Francesca, Domninguez Ricardo, Grimm Michael , *D O L L S P A C E*, website, https://dollyoko.thing.net/title.htm (accessed 2 July 2019).

[162] Evans, Claire, 'An Oral History of the First Cyberfeminists', *Vice,* 2014, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/z4mqa8/an-oral-history-of-the-first-cyberfeminists-vns-matrix (accessed 27 November 2019).

[163] See footnote 107.

'Laboria Cubronics' points out, "we need to articulate a feminism fit for a world that swarms with technological mediation, […] abstraction, virtuality, and complexity".[164]

IV. Cyberfeminism after the Future[165]

The necessity for a critical update of cyberfeminism's elusive positions has become apparent, especially in the era of "*biotech, genetics, data mining, surveillance, immaterial labor, online pornographies, software and hardware production, digital divides and accessibility of information*".[166] The prefix 'cyber', accordingly, connoting the pre-millennial techno-utopianism, which was never achieved, has been outdated.[167] Dollyoko herself admits that since 1991, her analysis has changed.[168] As she explains, due to information capitalism the web is more regulated, whilst much effort has been made by the dominant powers so as to control free access to information. However, as repression is being accelerated, more disordering regimes are invented by the oppressed.[169] Cyberfeminism has offered and is still offering the appropriate tools with a view to social change.[170] As dollyoko points out: "*Cyberfeminism is one of many feminisms and feminism has not gone away*".[171]

Nevertheless, there currently exist so many feminisms that can no longer be based on the 'woman' identity. In her 2017 essay, Helen Hester, one of the academics composing the 'Laboria Cubronics' xenofeminist collective,[172] proposes the '*n*

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[164] Hester, Helen, 'After the Future: *n* Hypothesis of Post-Cyber Feminism', *Res,* website, http://beingres.org/2017/06/30/afterthefuture-helenhester/ (accessed 27 November 2019).

[165] The title is referred to Helen Hester's essay 'After the Future: *n* Hypothesis of Post-Cyber Feminism', that critically examines the contribution of cyberfeminism in gender and digital culture, attributing in parallel the analytical and political tools so as to be adjusted in the current technomaterial conditions. See: Hester, Helen, 'After the Future: *n* Hypothesis of Post-Cyber Feminism', *Res,* website, http://beingres.org/2017/06/30/afterthefuture-helenhester/ (accessed 27 November 2019).

[166] Ibid.

[167] Ibid.

[168] See the Appendix.

[169] "Anti-piracy measures such as the British government blacklisting notorious tracker sites like The Pirate Bay immediate spawned a host of proxy sites, and retaliatory takedowns of compliant ISPs by Anonymous)". See Evans, Claire, 'An Oral History of the First Cyberfeminists', *Vice,* 2014, https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/z4mqa8/an-oral-history-of-the-first-cyberfeminists-vns-matrix (accessed 27 November 2019).

[170] See for example "the Bloodbath collaboration with a roller derby team (www.bumpp.net*).* That could be read as a cyberfeminist intervention. Chicks, machines, extreme sports. Or the growth of female hacker clubs, workshops and events like G.hack (http://ghack.eecs.qmul.ac.uk/?p=979) and Genderchangers (http://www.genderchangers.org/links.html). You might like to chat with Nancy Mauro-Flaude about this (http://sister0.org), she's been doing this for eons. And in the global South there are many projects fostering a critical socially-engaged technological literacy, and women are driving and participating in many of these. Such projects don't need to be labelled 'cyberfeminist', but they embody some of the cyberfeminist ethos and attitude. See Ibid.

[171] Ibid.

[172] "*Laboria Cubroniks* (b. 2014) is a xenofeminist collective, spread across five countries and three continents. She seeks to dismantle gender, destroy 'the family,' and do away with nature as a guarantor for inegalitarian political positions. Her name is an anagram of 'Nicolas Bourbaki', a pseudonym under which a group of largely French mathematicians worked towards an affirmation of abstraction, generality and rigour in mathematics in the early twentieth century. Members include Diann Bauer, Katrina Burch, Lucca Fraser, Helen Hester, Amy Ireland, and Patricia Reed." See 'Laboria

hypothesis' mutable architecture.[173] In particular, she suggests that the 'OBN's' negative definitions need to be synthesized with positive statements of self-identification.[174] Acknowledging the risks that the definition process might carry, the '*n* hypothesis' architecture, like the open source software, remains accessible for perpetual updates and seeks to articulate a political identity that is not exclusionary, but in parallel, it goes *beyond individualism*. Self definition is a political tool that promotes collective demands, creativity and critical exploration.

Laboria Cubronics in other words, is proposing an updated intersectional feminism[175] that instead of limiting the number of collective identities to those of gender, race and class, it multiplies them to a fluid number.[176] When identities are divided in accordance with the networks of oppression, the latter remain static, since they are reproduced, and thus they are naturalized. Gender, race and class abolition presupposes the refusal of everything that is fixed. After all, as cyberfeminists declared, nothing is natural –not even the body. That is why digital technology may be a useful tool in the path for emancipation. In accordance with the collective's manifestations, it is time for the non cis, white, straight, male subjectivities to accept the fact that are alienated within the universal digital environment and properly use new media infrastructure so as to become more alienated.[177]

What Laboria Cubronics is proposing, consequently, is a combination of cyberfenism's non-identities with intersectional feminism's identity politics. Their assertions also resemble the post-structural Foucauldian feminist theories. The collective's requests for multiplication of identities through the use of new media, for example, are reminiscent of what Judith Butler has called "*subversive bodily acts*".[178] In particular, due to her concept of 'performativity',[179] Butler has been accused for theorizing "*the death of the subject*" since it seems that the subjects do not have a free choice while performing their gender. To these critiques, Butler opposes the *intentional action* of subversive bodily acts. She points out that precisely because gender is a repetition it is possible to be *repeated differently*.[180] Offering the example of the drag artists, she concludes that a gender repetition in disruptive and unexpected ways (revealing thus its unnatural nature) could create the appropriate fragments for the destabilization of the dominant gender identities. Butler, in other words, asserts that all subjects since their birth are *inevitably* performing their gender. The latter, however, does not induce

Cubronics', *Monoskop,* website, https://monoskop.org/Laboria_Cuboniks (accessed 27 November 2019).

[173] Hester, Helen, 'After the Future: *n* Hypothesis of Post-Cyber Feminism', *Res,* website, http://beingres.org/2017/06/30/afterthefuture-helenhester/ (accessed 27 November 2019).

[174] Ibid.

[175] See footnote 112.

[176] Laboria Cubronics, *Xenofeminism: A politics for Alienation*, website, https://www.laboriacuboniks.net/ (accessed 27 November 2019).

[177] "It is through, and not despite, our alienated condition that we can free ourselves from the muck of immediacy. The construction of freedom involves not less but more alienation; alienation is the labour of freedom's construction. Nothing should be accepted as fixed, permanent, or 'given' — neither material conditions nor social forms. XF mutates, navigates and probes every horizon." See ibid.

[178] Butler, Judith, *Gender trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,* Routledge USA*,* 1990.

[179] See footnote 25.

[180] Butler, Judith, *Gender trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,* Routledge USA*,* 1990.

the death of the subject, but on the contrary, it reveals the possibilities for the deconstruction of the former dominant gender identities.

The approval of inevitability is a common element within the xenofeminists' manifestations. The acceptance of the fact that "*we are alienated, fragmented and yet embodied still*" constitutes the only threshold for constructing new different worlds.[181] Sufficient time has now passed since the emergence of new media but we still refuse endorsing that they influence us as well as the factual infrastructure. Thus, the critique on the impact of the digital intermediation upon our lives remains elusive. However, as the members of Laboria Cubronics write: "*The relationship between technology, social relations, and the political imagination is complex, mutually shaping, dynamic, and dependent upon continuous conversation*".[182] Consequently, if we confront the past and present with a blind eye, without examining it through radical political tools, it is impossible to critically and creatively imagine and collectively construct a future free of the current networks of oppression.

PART B

In the second part are examined the ways in which the theoretical context of the thesis can be put into praxis. In the second chapter there is a *business plan* that will help the process of producing and communicating a post-cyberfeminist artwork in accordance with the said values and political content.

I. Producing and Communicating a Post-cyberfeminist Artwork

As discussed above, cyberfeminism, as a cultural movement, interconnected art, politics and technology. However, the connections between these discourses are multi variant and multipurpose, and may crystallize into various forms in different historical conjunctions. Art at times is engaged with political discourse so as to interpret it, to describe it and to critically examine it, or may serve as a medium through which a political message is propagated.[183] Nevertheless, when art is employed as a tool for maintaining the dominant power, it constitutes pure political propaganda.[184] Prominent examples of art serving as pure political propaganda are those of the totalitarian Communist and Nazi regimes. On the other hand, cultural movements such

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[181]Dean, Aria, 'Select All: Toward a Xenofeminist Future', *Topical Cream,* 2015, http://topicalcream.info/editorial/select-all-toward-a-xenofeminist-future/ (accessed 27 November 2019).

[182] Ibid.

[183] Moller, Frank, 'Politics and Art', *Oxford Handbooks Online,* website, 2016, https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935307.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199935307-e-13 (accessed 27 November 2019).

[184] Ibid.

as those of 1920s Dadaism and the late 1950s and 1960s Situationist International and other avant-garde movements, have demonstrated art's critical and emancipatory potentialities, by inventing forms and communication techniques that questioned traditional norms, offering new perspectives of seeing the world.[185] Chantal Mouffe characterizes as 'critical' the artistic practices that "can contribute to unsettling the dominant hegemony" by "bringing to the fore the existence of alternatives to the current post-political order".[186] As it is evident from the above, art can be political without being critical but it is impossible to be critical without being political.[187] Consequently, since the fusion of art and politics is complex and diverse, it is important to identify the important and dominant interconnections, which produce the desirable content that is transmitted through the communication of the artwork.

As it is examined in the first part of the thesis, cyberfeminst art could be characterized as critical, since it offers alternative perspectives of using new media technology and representing subordinate groups of people, by engaging art with feminisms. Feminisms contributed in the critical examination of the dominant powers, by focusing, inter alia, on the *experience* of the historically silenced and excluded subjectivities. Starting from the feminist declaration that 'personal is political', we are led to the assumption that politics should not be a privilege of a political elite, which governs via impressive and yet secluded institutions. In a similar way, art as a medium of political expression should not be a privilege of an intellectual elite. When art is produced or disseminated so as to satisfy the patrons and compliment the aristocrats, for the vindication of state authority or in order for the galleries and the auction houses to earn a profit, free expression is restricted. Thus, while producing and communicating a post-cyberfeminism artwork, due attention should be given so as the voices and the experiences of the oppressed are not restricted. New media technology has offered the tools to that direction.

When VNS Matrix collective started to make projects, none of the members knew how to use digital technology, or how to draw.[188] The members of the collective all shared a common passion of expressing themselves against the emerging "technopatriarchal order". New media technology offered the tools to make art, without the prerequisite of being a good technician. After all, what really matters in postmodernity is the *idea*. The VNS Matrix collective admitted its amateurism and clearly acted in accordance with the "gift economy" of the internet.[189] The whole concept was based on the

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[185] Montfort N, Wardrip-Fruin N, *The New Media Reader*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2003, p. 22

[186] Mouffe, C, Wagner, E, *Agonistics: Thinking the World Politically*, London; New York, Verso, 2013, p. 92, 93.

[187] Ibid.

[188] Da Rimini, Francesca, 'VNS Matrix: Cyberfeminists: Francesca da Rimini on cyberfeminism and technology', *artwork*, The Community Arts Network of SA, Adelaide, SA Australia, issue 33, 1996, p. 8-9. Available from: https://vnsmatrix.net/publications/vns-matrix-cyberfeminists (accessed 27 November 2019).

[189] "None of us can draw, so we are shameless plagiarisers and copyright abusers. We've released all of our work back into the world through posters and postcards. The manifesto has been translated into six or seven languages. We put our work on the Net and we don't care if people take our stuff and mess with it, because we haven't figured out a way to make money from this - so we think we just might as well put it out there. We also believe that there is a gift economy happening in this world of

perspective that everyone can produce cultural objects and transmit cultural ideas.[190] Thus, when the collective was organizing exhibitions, or released their work online, it did not matter if someone intervened into it. On the contrary, their purpose was to collect stories of the everyday people and reproduce them in their artworks.[191] Thus, art is not perceived as a commodity, but as a form of expression of collective demands and desires.

I.1. Production

What is most interesting in all the new media user-generative platforms[192] such as *photoshop* is that they equip their users with technological features which enable them to interact with their interfaces by creating, adapting and disseminating contents. These technological features have actually broaden up the concept of "technological reproducibility" in the digital age. As Walter Benjamin observes, due to the invention of the mechanical reproduction, the authenticity, the –"here and now"- of the work of art has been devalued. The work of art can be perceived out of its original context since its reproduction becomes autonomous, enabling more recipients to have access to it and therefore democratizing art and culture.[193] In addition, digital reproduction attributes new forms of autonomy to the work, through its dematerialization and liquefaction.[194] As a result, "the work is not owned but lived, is collectively widespread but not linearly distributed and finally is infinitely reproducible".[195]

Open source software[196] is a type of information technology infrastructure that has the potentials to facilitate the collective process of creating a post-cyberfeminism artwork. Since it is "software with source code that anyone can inspect, modify, and enhance"[197] it enables the anti-hierarchal interconnection of the different experiences and perspectives of the collective subjectivity, promoting in this way collective demands and perspectives, without excluding the special needs and desires of the individual subjectivities. Consequently, open source software reflects the Xenofeminist

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technology: there are a lot of people out there who are forming new tribes and new communities, and they're being assisted through the Internet." See Ibid.

[190] Ibid.

[191] Ibid.

[192] The term 'generativity' has been defined by Zittrain to denote *a technology's capacity on the whole to produce spontaneous changes driven by mass and uncoordinated audiences.* J. Zittrain, 'The Generative Internet', *Harvard Law Review,* vol.119, no.1974, 2006, p.1980–1982, as cited in Corinne H.Y. Tan, 'Technological "Nudges" and Copyright on Social Media Sites', *Thomson Reuters (Professional) UK Limited and Contributors* , 2015, p. 67. Available from Academia (accessed 12 April 2019).

[193] Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media,* edited by Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin; translated by Edmund Jephcott ... [et al.], The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, London, 2008.

[194] Ziovanni Prattichizzo, 'Living Young in the Digital Age', *GSTF International Journal on Media & Communications,* vol.1, no.1, 2013, p.44. Available from Academia (accessed 12 April 2019).

[195] Ibid, p.44-45

[196] See for example *Etherpad*, website, https://etherpad.org/ (accessed 27 November 2019).

[197] *Opensource*, website, https://opensource.com/resources/what-open-source (accessed 27 November 2019)

manifestations, whilst it is already used by many contemporary feminist artists,[198] including dollyoko.

As dollyoko points out: "My immaterial body was born in a place of the dead in 1994. Late one night two of us sharing a keyboard and inhabiting one "Guest" body, engaged with a dyslexic vampire, the_Unborne, in a morgue at *LambdaMOO*—the Mother of all MOOs". [199] MOOs constitute text-based online social environments, which enable users to communicate in real time through a central database server, by using the MOO programming language.[200] Thus, users have the opportunity to create artworks, sharing their imaginaries and exchanging ideas, in spite of any physical distance that may keep them discarded in the real world. MOOs consequently, may be a useful tool for organizing the production of a post-cyberfeminist artwork since they create a network with multiple interconnections, augmenting in this manner the number of the participants to the infinite.

This is the reason why dollyoko perceive MOOs as fundamental to the process of structuring her immaterial persona. As she explains in the interview we had, she focuses on the *political economy of things and the chains of production*.[201] How the artwork is produced plays an important role in critical art. Dollspace for example, as it was analyzed in the first part of the thesis, was produced by the use of digital tools and techniques that are in accordance with its anti-hierarchal and anti-patriarchal political content. Open source software enables the effectuation of techniques that permit the creation of "hexes"[202] against the hierarchal structure of the networks of domination such as capitalism and patriarchy. What is more, it equips the artwork with philosophical concerns that are often met in postmodern culture, like the paradox of existence and the human uncanny reaction confronting it.

I.2. Communication

How the critical artwork will be communicated also addresses many political concerns. Since it is produced so as to mobilize the oppressed to follow their utopias, it should be accessible to them. Thus, a proper propagation with a mass appeal and a free (or free donation) distribution are essential. 'Dollspace' constitutes an attempt for new media technology to be used disruptively to the traditional modes of the artwork's communication, for the sake of free expression and free access to art. Dollyoko had the interdisciplinary background to recognize the power of the emerging, back then,

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[198] See for example the work of the new media artist and theorist Nancy Mauro-Flude. *Nancy Mauro-Flude,* website, http://sister0.org/ (accessed 27 November 2019).

[199] Dollyoko has co-created with Graham Harwood *Netmonster,* another platform for artistic collaboration that resembles Lambda. See *Appendix* and Da Rimini, Francesca, 'We Spun a Dream Last Night', *Furtherfield,* website, 2017, p. 156, https://www.furtherfield.org/spun-dream-last-night-francesca-da-rimini/ (accessed 27 November 2019). In Conjunction with Da Rimini, Francesca, 'Delighted from the Spectacle', *dollyoko.thing.net,* website, https://dollyoko.thing.net/g8/daRimini-spectacle.pdf (accessed 27 November 2019).

[200] Da Rimini, Francesca, 'We Spun a Dream Last Night', *Furtherfield,* website, 2017, p. 156, https://www.furtherfield.org/spun-dream-last-night-francesca-da-rimini/ (accessed 27 November 2019).

[201] See the Appendix.

[202] Ibid.

World Wide Web and use it in order to communicate political messages independently, without the intermediation of any other stakeholder.

When dollspace was released in 1997, cyberspace was still an unexplored territory and thus, dominant powers had not anticipated to occupy it completely. However, these voices are today lost under the huge amount of information that is produced daily. The web is saturated by signs empty of content, whilst information is being manipulated by huge corporations such as 'Google' and 'Facebook'. Some prominent effects are the "fake news" in everyday politics,[203] or the prohibition of photos depicting female nipples on social media. A critical internet artwork therefore, should be communicated through *independent web spaces* so as not to be censored by such corporations or other dominant powers. This is the reason why dollyoko still pays a fee to the server were dollspace is located. The artwork's independent location prevented its ceasing when it was threatened with censorship in Belgium and in Italy.

The new *Directive on the Digital Single Market* which was voted by the EU Parliament on 26 March and approved by the Council on 15 April 2019[204] changed the status of the information society services' liabilities, such as Google and Facebook. Many human rights advocates criticize it on the grounds that *it will promote censorship*. The Directive contains two main controversial articles: Article 15 and Article 17. Article 15, which is known as the "link tax", gives the rightholders direct control on their works in the sense that they have the right to require remuneration by information society services when their works are uploaded and disseminated through their platforms. Article 17 obliges the service providers to implement "effective and proportionate" preventive measures against copyright infringing acts. Popular social media platforms, like Instagram and Facebook, have already implemented such kind of *filtering measures*. However, in compliance with the safe harbor provisions of the Electronic Commerce Directive, it was not obligatory, until now, for the EU providers to apply filtering systems on their platforms. As it is noted in the explanatory memorandum of the Draft Directive, it is unquestionable that technological breakthroughs have completely changed the way that works of art are created, produced, distributed and exploited. Thus, a reform of the existing EU legal framework seemed to be inevitable. Although it is understood that a fair balance must be achieved between the rights of creators, publishers or producers, and the rights of users, the uploading filtering measures provided by the new Directive may restrict the users' fundamental rights on information, on protection of their personal data and on their freedom of expression. All online platforms, in order to deal with the risk of liability and prevent any copyright infringements, must now use filter mechanisms, much like the authoritarian regimes already do, on all texts, pictures and video circulated on the internet.

It is evident from the aforementioned that the logic of the current copyright law is opposite to the logic of cyberfeminists, which is based on the concept of

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[203] Rose, Jonathan, 'Brexit, Trump, and Post-Truth Politics', *Public Integrity*, 2017, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/10999922.2017.1285540 (accessed 27 November 2019)

[204] European Commission, *DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on copyright in the Digital Single Market*, Brussels, 14.9.2016 COM(2016) 593 final.

appropriation. Despite the fact that hypertext's appearance raised expectations about the deconstruction of the existing relation between the artist, the artwork and the audience, promoting the *author-user symbiosis*,[205] copyright law still maintains the traditional ownership regime. The right of "paternity" for example, is confirming the centrality of the author in the production of the artwork, bequeathing to audience the position of the consumer. Copyright law has also been criticized by feminist voices for the right of "paternity" as well as for the rhetoric of "conception"[206] and other provisions in relation to the protectable subject matter.[207]

This is the reason why a post-cyberfeminist artwork should be communicated equipped with copyright licenses that permit appropriation, declaring thus resistance against the existing copyright law regime. Such licenses are the copyright-based *Creative Commons (CC).* The Creative Commons licenses define the terms for the distribution and reproduction of creative works. CC provides licenses for different use cases and includes open content licenses such as the Attribution license (CC BY) and the Attribution Share Alike license (CC BY-SA) used respectively by many Open Access Scientific Publishers and Wikipedia. CC also include licenses which declare that the content of the artwork is not free or not open when is used under some conditions, like the non- commercial (NC) condition.[208]

II. The 'Fragmented Subjectivities' Project

The idea
In an attempt to produce independent and critical political art against the contemporary sociopolitical situation in Greece and worldwide, fifteen friends with a common cultural and political background, we were gathered around one project. Some of us are photographers, (digital) painters and movie makers, others write texts or make clothes and some have specialized skills in information technologies. The most of us have contributed to the project by more than one means. The material we produce is collectively processed and thus it is difficult to distinguish the author of each image or text. Since we are focused on the collective effect of our work, we prefer to keep individual anonymity and present ourselves only by the collective name '*Fragmented Subjectivities*'. Inspired by 'dollspace's' artistic and political expression, as well as by the way it was produced and disseminated, we created a similar internet artwork. Our idea was to *revise* the 1990's utopian cyberfeminism, *enriching it with our perceptions* upon the existing technomaterial conditions. Thus we created a *post-cyberfeminist* artwork. Web's modular and atemporal structure constituted the

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[205] Montfort N, Wardrip-Fruin N, *The New Media Reader*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2003, p. 14.

[206] See "35 U.S.C. § 102(g) (2005) (requiring the use of the date an inventor conceived an idea if there is a patent related dispute between inventors over the same invention). As cited in Burk, Dan L, 'Copyright and Feminism in Digital Media', *American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law*, vol. 14, no.3, 2006, p. 522. Available from Academia.edu (accessed 2 July 2019).

[207] Ibid p. 521.

[208] Hagedorn G, Mietchen D, Morris RA, Agosti D, Penev L, Berendsohn WG, Hobern D, 'Creative Commons licenses and the non-commercial condition: Implications for the re-use of biodiversity information', in Smith V, Penev L (ed.), *E-Infrastructures for data publishing in biodiversity science*, ZooKeys 150, p. 127–149, 2011. Available from Research Gate (accessed 27 November 2019.

appropriate space to link us with our outmost sisters, assisting us to *open a dialog with other feminist voices, overcoming spatiotemporal restrictions.*

Vision
To become a *glitch* in the heteronormatively constructed and capital dominated World Wide Web of the 21st century.

Mission
'Fragmented Subjectivities' webpage was created as a meeting space, both for its creators and all those who have the need of being expressed outside the patriarchal, racist, speciesistic and capitalistic norms existing in the 'real' and virtual communities of our generation. Positioning *the experience* at the centre of our concern, we start the journey for a *re- invention of self*. Art is our weapon; a code that helps us to understand and communicate the oppressive experiences which constructed us as subjectivities. We share our experiences so as to empower and be empowered. Our wounds are the fragments we use so as to scarify the contemporary social forms.

Values
Against the dominant 'monstrous' relationships of our world, our aim is to build *meaningful and equivalent relationships*. To that direction, we *collectively* organize the production of the artwork, often while eating together, whereas *we do not aim to make a profit* from its dissemination. Because we acknowledge capital's restrictions in criticality and creativity, *we do not accept funding from external stakeholders*. In accordance to Butler's advocacy on '*performativity*', we do not focus on creating a 'beautiful' artwork, but we rather target to the *effects* and *experiences* that art might attribute to society. It is our intention to build a dynamic relation with the visitors of the webpage, since we conceive *artistic experience as the result of the equal collaboration between the artists and the audience.* We confront 'oppression' as a web that circulates all the aspects of our everyday lives. This is the reason why *we produce art inspired by our experiences towards gender, race and class abolition.*

Key strategies
Recognizing *culture's and science's interrelationship*, as well as the adverse effects of the technological industry in the environmental, labor, gender and racial issues, we are employing digital technology's capabilities so as to occupy a space that will function *aggressively* to the status quo. In particular, 'Fragmented Subjectivities' webpage will offer us the opportunity to make an exhibition with global resonance, whilst none of the social media providers may have competence in altering the content of our artwork. What's more, digital technology offers us the tools to create *an interactive artwork that could be affected by the visitors.* The visitors will have the chance, for example, to affect the artwork's streaming, to send us material they wish to embed in it, or to download stickers and billboards so as to stick them on their rooms. In order for the political purpose of the work to be effectuated, the material that visitors will sent will be *evaluated* so as to be *in accordance with the anti-hierarchal, anti-patriarchal, anti-racist and anti-speceistic content of the artwork*. Regarding the economic assets of the project, due to the fact that we do not accept funding nor do we ask for a fee, it will be of a *very low budget*. For that reason, in conjunction with

our intention to make a statement about the environmental change, most of the materials which will be used, will be garbage. The whole project, in general, will be set up only by us, whereas if we do not have the knowledge or the tools for something, we will ask a friend to generously help us. Since we do not perceive our art as our commodified property, but our purpose is to freely transmit cultural product and ideas, the project will be available to others via the Creative Commons copyright license under the Non-Commercial (NC) condition that permits appropriation but not in a commodified way.

Aims

Our aim is to maintain the webpage for many years and constantly update it with new material. Even when most of us will be living in different places, the 'Fragmented Subjectivities' project will keep us connected. 'O*pen source software*' and other digital tools facilitate the collective work from distance. We seek to find the most appropriate ways to disseminate the project globally so as to open a *transnational dialogue* with subjectivities sharing the same needs and desires with us. We also wish to contact Francesca da Rimini, ask her opinion about the initiative we took to produce a remake of her project and elaborate on contemporary feminisms.

Objectives

Production: Until *March 31st 2020* we must have set up the webpage, including a minimum bunch of information. Namely:
-200 images (some of them will include text)
-10 videos
-soundtrack

Dissemination: After we will have collected the aforementioned material and set up the webpage, we shall all take the appropriate actions in order for the project to be disseminated globally to as many individuals possible.

Action plans

Production: We will work in *groups* so as to accomplish the separate parts of the project. At the end of every week, we will meet all together so as each group present its work to the other groups. Those that are based in other countries will send their work via 'dropbox'. During the aforementioned meetings, decisions shall be taken by consensus and will be recorded in the *minutes*. The material which is consented to be uploaded on the webpage will be firstly *inserted in a pdf form*, containing all the bunch of information ready to be uploaded. The teams will be divided as follows:
-Setting up the webpage team
-Designing the webpage team
-Finding places for the photo shootings and video clips team
-Collecting the props and the clothes for photo shootings and video clips team
-Photo shootings team
-Video clips team
-Sketches team
-Text team
-Soundtrack team

-Photoshop team
-Reading team so as to place the project in the relevant theoretical context

Dissemination: We will create a page on all the major social media sites which will include a small part of our material and we will promote it on our profiles and on relevant groups. We will also make large billboards and stickers interconnected with *QR codes* to the 'Fragmented Subjectivities' webpage, so as to stick them on the streets.

Key factors to success
It should be reserved that the material we produce is in accordance with the values and the political background of the project. This is the reason why all the members should *read the thesis* upon which the project is based, as well as the *texts to which the thesis is referred*. Discussions will be also made as it concerns the perspectives of the thesis. In order for the *collaborative spirit* of the team to be preserved, all of the team members should declare their *commitment* from the start, as well as provide information on any external responsibilities they have undertaken that might jeopardize their commitment. The jobs assigned should be clearly *defined and delegated* so as to keep a *strict timeline* that will help us to be consistent with the *deadlines*. It is also essential to contact Francesca da Rimini as soon as possible so as to ask her consent for the official launching of the project. If she is not in consent we have to be ready to readjust our project and act flexibly.

Conclusions

Oriented towards a *reinvention* of the (non white cis straight male) *collective self*, the thesis explores the appropriate interconnections between digital art and politics that promote the *redefinition* process of the collective demands and desires. To that direction, an effort has been made to critically examine the contemporary collective *experience* of oppression. An *interdisciplinary approach* that creates ruptures in the dominant "situated knowledges" of sciences is adopted, as it seems to be quite consistent with the complex and multi-fragmented character of postmodernity. Intersectional feminism, cyberfeminism and xenofeminism have offered the tools for a critical examination of digital culture and its intersection with the contemporary sociopolitical milieu.

In the first chapter of the first part of the thesis, an effort has been made so as to bring in the discussion the fundamental role of new media in shaping the condition of *hyper-reality*. Due to the generative and communicational digital capabilities, reality and imaginary are inextricably fused inside the postmodern cultural matrix, resulting in the hyper-production of meaningless information. On the other hand, the fibrous structuring of new media contradicted western modernism's dualistic theories (matter/spirit, nature/culture), promoting the philosophical discussions on the *redefinition of the limits between the individual and the collective self*.

Despite digital technology's optimistic potentialities of attacking hierarchies, the post-industrial societies are still organized on the basis of the speceistic, racist, capitalistic, patriarchal et al. networks of domination. In the second chapter of the first part of the thesis, some examples are given so as the most dominant post-industrial sociopolitical hierarchies to be examined. The appearance of immaterial labor, for example, demonstrates the fact that technological media have the potentials to *reform* but not to abolish oppressive relations. The contemporary intellectual proletarians, instead of working fewer hours, as the techno-utopians would expect, are demanded to offer even their leisure time. At the same time, proletarians in oriental countries work under extremely oppressive conditions so as to produce hardware components for the demands of the over-consuming global market. Thus, except from the class inequalities, the western dominance over orient in the post-colonial era is validated. Capitalism in intersection with the western anthropocentric discourse over nature has also damaging effects on the environment, resulting in the severe climate change and the extinction of many non-human species. Human privilege in juxtaposition with man privilege and white privilege constitute discourses upon which western dominance is structured. Even though new media technologies have the potentials of creating ruptures in the patriarchal norms, gender inequalities still exist and are yet embedded in the software and hardware digital infrastructure.

The rest of the first part of the thesis is devoted in cyberfeminism's cultural and political contribution to the critical examination of technoculture as a *reflection* of the material sociopolitical reality. In a period in which new media had just started to emerge, cyberfeminsts examined the way that women, gender and sexuality are

represented in digital culture so as to *redefine the collective woman identity*. Donna Haraway's *ironic* cyborg configuration constituted a prominent inspiration for cyberfeminists who tried to define a new collective political identity. Since irony is a method of joining contradictory discourses it became a common tool among cyberfeminists, whose aim was to *elusively* define cyberfeminism as an umbrella term under which oppressed subjectivities could be united without being excluded by strict definitions. Resembling the computer software, which also functions by the sequence of the contradictory events of the existence (one) and non- existence (zero), cyberfeminism embraces multiple and contradictory feminisms. A prominent cyberfeminist artwork is dollyoko's web-based narrative architecture 'dollspace'. The artwork's *hypertextual structure*, which by attacking hierarchies enables *interactivity* (and vice versa)*,* and its *feminist content* expressed in accordance with the medium in which it is embedded, reflect its radical political character.

Contrary to the technologically deterministic dystopian theories of the 1990's, cyberfeminim's utopian character contributed in culture and politics by illuminating the new media emancipatory potentialities for the oppressed subjectivities. Cyberfeminism's theses remain relevant but since the pre-millennial techno-utopianism was never achieved, they are needed to be aligned with the current sociopolitical and technomaterial conditions. Xenofeminists, critically examining the current universal condition of "alienation", are proposing a synthesis of cyberfeminism's identity non-definitions with intersectional feminism's identity politics. As they declare, it is time to accept the fact that we are *inevitably* alienated due to digital technology so as to reinvent a collective rebelling subjectivity that is defined equally by the separate alienated demands and desires of the non white, cis, straight male individual subjectivities.

Inspired by cyberfeminism's techno-utopian character and xenofeminism's "politics of alienation", I have tried to assemble around a post-cyberfeminist project some non-heteronormatevely constructed subjectivities. As it is analyzed in the second part of the thesis, the purpose of the project is to find ways in which new media art can contribute to the struggle for reinvention of the collective self. Art can liberate us from the dominant oppressive discourses that are reproduced through the correct use of language. In this way, we could be free to explore our alienated demands and desires so as to synthesize them in an artwork that will represent our views on the contemporary collective rebelling subjectivity. Since it is important to know your history so as to reinvent it, the theoretical part of the thesis will assist us to that direction. The following text constitutes dollyoko's and Virginia Barratt's homage to *herstory*, underlining the importance of collective memory in the struggle for reinvention.

HOMAGE: Polycephalic Slime Invocation

written before and after by swarming multitudes

31 years after Donna Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto led an exodus from the **divine to hardware**
183 years after Ada Lovelace, **Enchantress of Numbers**, summoned analysis where before there was only difference
67 years after Christine Jorgensen **split atoms** and became gender ground zero
15 years after VNS Matrix's Cyberfeminist manifesto declared each **mainframe a clitoris**
5 years after Maria Alyokhina showcased the feminine rage and resilience that will not be snuffed out and will be heard.
15 years after the CCRU escaped institutional lockdown to turn their asylum inside out
32 years after Rose Kolodny, Steppin' Razor, was **ectogenetically birthed** into the sprawl, hanging garden of Chiba-Babylon.
21 years since Sandy Stone donated a body part to Linda Dement's Cyberflesh Girlmonster and made the **machines restless**
11 centuries since Hildegarde von Bingen, the Sibyl of the Rhine, sang the songs of the blood in theological code, prophesy, activism, and cosmology
10 years after VNS Matrix's Bitch Mutant manifesto became **a tender hex** at 25 Gregorians.
12 years after Silvia Federici's Caliban and the Witch celebrated the resistant classes of vagabonds, paupers and the rest of those with enough magic to burn
14 years after Lisa Nakamura jammed the ideology-machine with **race-as-bug**, articulating critical **recombinant mattering** as a disruption to cybersocial hygiene identity tourism.
45 years after Ursula Le Guin exploded communist utopias in The Dispossessed
62 milliseconds after the ghost of Poly Styrene pushed hair from your ear and screamed silence into your plastic bag mind
19 years after Sadie Plant's Zeros and Ones traced the **almost literal thread** from computation as we know it today, woven into our world as it is, back to its gathering across a Jacquard loom
32 years after Octavia Butler broke the dawn on xenogenesis
8 centuries after Jeanne de Purcelle heard the Voices
35 years after Theresa Hak Kyung Cha dictated both contradiction and positive construction.
3 years after HER multitudinous proliferations and endless love
4 years after Shulamith Firestone **died alone**
27 centuries since Sappho scribed her mysterious agendered hexecutables on Lesbos
22 years after Critical Art Ensemble released The Electronic Disturbance into the noosphere
37 years after Laurie Anderson held us in her petrochemical arms, her military arms, her electronic arms
45 years after Wendy Carlos showed with a single procedure that moving Bach into the world of synthesis was also to **move gender** into the world of synthesis
199 years after Mary Shelley symbiotically birthed the modern Prometheus.
122 hours after Amy Ireland drank wine in Berlin and revealed the hard poetic intricacies of fuck knows everything relevant
Time unknown before and since Laboria Cuboniks, speaking as no one in particular, broke nature's nature with xenocoded alienation, making monsters that speak in **tongues of code and plastic**
1 lifetime after your mother bit through your umbilical and said into your red face **REDEEM ME**

Inestimable time before and beyond finitude, climate change hurtling us all towards a singularity the extropians didn't imagine…

209 Barratt, Virginia, Da Rimini, Francesca, 'Homage: Polycephalic Slime Invocation', *In Her Interior,* 2019.

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Appendix

Skype interview with dollyoko 2.1.2020

L.T: Hello Francesca, I am so glad to meet you. When I saw 'Dollspace' I said to myself that these girls are part of my history and I think it is very important to know your history and built upon this so as to bring it to the future generations. So, I am very happy to meet you.

dollyoko: Oh I am gonna cry! I'm sorry I cannot speak Greek. Greek is one of the languages, which I would really love to learn.

L.T: It's ok… I would like to ask you a few questions about climate change in Australia but you said you are not emotionally ready yet, so I don't want to push you.

dollyoko: Yeah, it's very surreal at the moment. I live in Adelaide, in South Australia, so we have bushfires near here but not to near. But, you know, a lot of my friends live in Sydney, and the sky has been red there for four or five weeks. There's now a stage of emergency in New South Wales, the fires have been joining up and so we have this idiot federal government that is still –now they say that they don't deny climate change, but they basically do. We have very strong fossil fuel interests here, the coal industry… it's ridiculous. It's just crazy. What is happening in Australia? There's never been so many bushfires - Australia is a big continent - all at the same time, with no respite.

L.T: In my essay, I would like to elaborate about speciesism, and I would like to hear your opinion about this. How speciesism plays a role in climate change. The dominance of humans over animals, the dominant discourse…

dollyoko: I guess this is just a huge manifestation of privilege, added to white or class and gender privilege. It's human privilege over species. There's an Australian based ecofeminist called Ariel Salleh. She wrote a book over 20 years ago called Ecofeminism, which was republished maybe 2 years ago, and I would recommend it to you. She is a Marxist and being doing this stuff for many years. She talks about the kind of feminist environmental practices that are happening in less industrialized countries. She is not only a theorist but she is an environmental activist and has written on the species' superiority and what that brings. And I guess in Australia too, we have the oldest living continuous indigenous culture here, with Aboriginal people, who now have been thought to live here for over 60,000 years and their whole philosophy is about unity with nature, respect for nature. So that has had a really big impact, at least on environmental activists and feminists and others, because indigenous scientific knowledge and indigenous environmental knowledge it's a model on how it would be if there wasn't species dominance. So that remains an inspiration, while at the same time we've got a shitload of, you know, Australia is a racist colonial country. This is not to exoticize "pure" Aboriginal knowledge but indigenous activists have [played] and continue to play a really important role in all of these different kinds of environmental

struggles at the moment in Australia. Because, you know, we've got the highest rate I think of species' extinction here. It's horrible. And the land clearing goes on and so does the drilling and fracking.

L.T: Very fruitful information and thank you for that... Changing the subject a bit, I wanted to ask you about how you curated "dollspace".

dollyoko: Actually Yvonne Volkart curated dollspace [in one exhibition] and another theorist and friend, Katrien Jacobs [curated in another show]. In a nutshell, in 1997 I went to Japan, to Kyoto, my first time ever in Japan, and on my first night, my friend showed me a famous pond, like a small lake, where women practiced female infanticide. That was a very strong image and indeed later I did some research and also a Japanese friend of mine verified that. At that time I was in correspondence with a writer and an activist called Ricardo Dominguez. I told him I was haunted by this image of women forced by social circumstances to kill their baby girls, and he said "well why don't you build a pond on the internet for those girls?" So that was the trigger. He gave that idea and at that time, 1997, I was exchanging a lot of "text-based" emails with lots of people, you know the old school emails, I don't know if you are familiar with them…

L.T: No I am not… I actually wanted to ask you what was your relationship with the other collaborators of dollspace. You were friends or you didn't have close relations?

dollyoko: I was in Japan for 6 weeks, living by myself in a big farm house and having a strong emotional experience, and that created the right circumstances for this little ghost to grow inside of me. I was emailing friends - and there was only text, not any visual web back then, and so, you know, the less visual information the more the imagination comes in the fore. At some point later on I came back to Adelaide and out of the blue a local independent film organization offered me a 3-month paid residency. Residencies are really different now, in the era of hyper-commodification, but back then they invited you to come use their facilities and paid you to do whatever you like. It was just beautiful, and it was in these 3 months that the website was formed, by using basic html code and receiving help from friends. Michael Grimm ended up doing the soundtrack –I deeply love that soundtrack-, my friend Claudia [Raddatz] who is Chilean, made the translation into Spanish and produced some lovely animations, Ricardo made some writings and other people contributed dreams and their own hauntings. I thought that the website was going to be a hundred pages but it ended up to be 700-800 pages. When the residency ended I asked them if I could stay for a little bit longer, and indeed I stayed for 3 more months. So that's how a core of dollspace was made, and then I begun working on internet art, competitions and exhibitions and by submitting the dollspace in different contexts and installations and I attracted the interest of some curators. In 2001 we got invited into the Sonar Festival in Barcelona. I decided then to add some more story lines, so it became even bigger. I haven't added anything since 2001 and I should probably go in and make it tidier. I really love that work, it's very close to me and I do consider it a big collaboration with a number of people.

L.T: How long did it take you to collect all the material - soundtrack, text, images – because I was amazed of the large amount of information in there.

dollyoko: I think we can say that first six-month period in 1997, [it was] a pretty intensive work, and then adding a few more things in 2001. Worth mentioning is that there was never a script, the whole project just grew, and that's what I love about hypertext.

L.T: What was the rationale behind it, or there wasn't any?

dollyoko: The rationale was to make a pond of dead girls. That was the motivation and some kind of release-the-spirit.

L.T: Regarding the VNS Matrix, what were your relations with the other girls before you decided to create the collective?

dollyoko: We knew each other, we were friends but we weren't working together artistically.

L.T: Ok, because I think the most important contribution of feminists is the "politics based on the experience", and the project we are making with my friends is based on the experiences we have built upon for some years now.

dollyoko: The experiences we talk about is something broader of just being authors, writers, performers. You know, the shared experience of living a creative life. We weren't a tight friendship group, to begin with.

L.T: You were all based in Adelaide?

dollyoko: At the time, Yeah.

L.T: Do you think that this played an important role to your experiences? That you were based in the same town?

dollyoko: Yeah, definitely, the physical proximity and the fact that Adelaide is I would say a really good place for experimenting with anything creatively, like fantastic music has come out from a small town, very interesting films and filmmakers, visual art… Because Adelaide is a small town, it's not Sydney, not New York, nor London. In a way, no one gives a shit, if you know what I mean. You've got nothing to lose. Even though it's a city of one million people, the art community is very small and fairly fragmented often too. There used to be an experimental film community, experimental music, a handful of people working with technology…sometimes there was an overlap, but, overall it's a good seed bed because it's not a big cosmopolitan city. It's a backwater. It gives freedom.

L.T: What was the political situation back then that made you start the collective?

dollyoko: I can't answer the question the way you pictured but I could talk only about myself. I didn't have much of political awareness then. I never heard of neoliberalism before I met Ricardo in 1997. So in 1991 I don't know what part of the bigger world I was looking at. I didn't have the same analysis as now, but I think we were really

interested in how technology was being promoted, and I was looking at feminism and technology and all the promises of technology. This was 1991 and it was very much a brave new world of mainly men. The web was being promoted and even though women were really active as coders, even in the gaming community, the interest was for us the intersection of feminism and technology. But yeah, Australia is a colonial country, and everything is true about it now, was true back then.

L.T: You said that you have also studied law…

dollyoko: Sociology. I did my masters in 2005 and that's when I made the Netmonster project with a friend of mine called Harwood [Graham Harwood]. It was a very beautiful project, and then, between 2006 and 2010 I did my PhD on cultural activism. On new forms of collective identity and activism that technology enabled. I did that within the [theoretical] framework of Autonomous Marxism. Since then I've been working as a sociologist for different people on different projects. You know, the labor situation I guess here is better than in Greece with the high unemployment especially for young people, but even here many people are employed precariously. So I have worked on three projects at the Adelaide Law School, with teams of legal theorists or legal experts and I have also worked at the Climate Justice Research Center in Sydney and doing a few other things, so law is not my theme but I have worked on a number of law projects and I've been coauthor on a number of papers on property theory of all things!

L.T: Permit me a question on a more personal interest. As I am into handmade clothing, I was wondering if you have any idea as to how underground fashion can be combined with cyberfeminism? How can I add this to make art in cyberfemism…

dollyoko: I love all your rings, by the way, and I feel completely underdressed… With the little I've read, I think it's quite interesting the issue of ethical fashion and the supply chains, from the production of the fabrics to the design making. I'm more interested on the political economy of things and the chains of production. However I also like speculative work and creating spills against capitalism, "hexes", so I'm just thinking now – this is trying to make something off the top of my head after coughing a bit. I don't know, focus on the production of cotton, hemp or whatever, how is it produced, cut or glued, putting it all together, how is it designed, and then some of those fashions being used in speculative performances, magics.. You know, I have two little grandchildren in my life and I teach my granddaughter to be a witch and she does it pretty well! The other day, she told me, out of the blue, "You know, Nonna, I have a third eye!" "Who told you about the third eye", I asked. "No one, I just know" she replied. So I'm really committed to magic. But anyway, I think it's a beautiful and perfect theme to check out lots of things, in terms of alternative modes of production, forms of labor, affective labor, social labor, magic… you know, stick knife into the belly of the beast wherever possible. What kind of ideas have you thought on how fashion can be mobilized in any way?

L.T: With my friends we make photo shootings, we want to have a political content, and I think that cyberfeminism suit us best in relation to our aesthetics too. Because we listen to electronic music and so it's a combination of these aesthetics… and I was

thinking about the performances too. As far as I am concerned, I had this thing… on the one hand I was a good student, studied law, on the other hand I was a fashion freak, so I want to find a way to combine fashion, academics and politics.

dollyoko: Sounds fantastic. You know, a lot of our projects were vapourwave. We've never had a complete game, just parts of games, but I really believe in the power of speculative artwork. We have to work on the level of imagination both of ourselves and the people who are going to be interacting with our ideas.

L.T: Can I find somewhere the games you've created?

dollyoko: Yeah. We've created two projects, the first was 'All New Gen', which we called a game but it was much more an interactive project…

L.T: I loved the names of the characters of the game…

dollyoko: Yeah, we had a lot of fun with that… and then the people would say "why don't you make a real game?" and so we applied for funding from the film commission and we got a lot of money back then to make the first two or three levels of the real game called 'Bad Code'. But we should never have called it bad code. We had enough money to employ our friends, a fantastic 3d graphic designer…The first game was built on a really old operating system of the mac, so it only works now through an emulator, and we haven't put that online, so the short answer is no. And the Bad Code, we don't even know where to begin with that, so, again, the short answer is no.

L.T: Ok, I was thinking of sending you a video we made on fragmented subjectivities, which was inspired by dollspace, so that you can see the work we do. We don't have the webpage set up yet. The idea of setting up the site started because I was thinking that it's important to bring your history to the future. As the sociopolitical situation has changed since the 1990s, I was thinking that maybe we could set up a site that it would be similar to yours but more updated and focused on the new politics and aesthetics of the period and the country that we live in.

dollyoko: Fantastic. I really look forward to seeing it. You' re a group of people…

L.T: Basically, we are friends that we were active in feminist, anarcho-queer assemblies for many years and some of us are either photographers, painters… we make art based on our experiences. Not academic art. More like "the aesthetics of slime" that characterize your work.

dollyoko: Has your group started working and making a business plan and planning that by the 31st of January will have something started?

L.T: We have started to meet and collecting material but I am now very busy with my essay. Cyberfeminism is intersectional feminism, and as such it discusses issues of gender, capitalism, race and all these themes that I didn't have previous academic

background on(as I studied law), so I do all this work by myself. The site won't be ready by the 31st of January but we will make it for sure.

dollyoko: I'm fully committed to the idea of slow art, you know, the art that takes its own time. The group that I've gotten back together with, identity runners, Agnese [Trocchi] is in Rome, Diane [Ludin] in New York and I'm in Adelaide. We last made a work in 2005 but we've always remained friends and we want to do stuff again now. We have some little things on the side but it has to be slow, it has to be pleasurable. Still there's a sense of urgency but we also have to have our strength to do it.

L.T: Yes, and because it is based on our experiences it takes time to build upon things, to first meet in person and then make art. I think this is what adds value to your work.

dollyoko: I agree. The connections are really important. That makes the glue between us. Will that project be in Greek or multi-languages?

L.T: I liked your multi-language site, so we will have text in English and in Greek and probably in Spanish too.

dollyoko: Have you seen Holobiontes on cyberfeminism? That's a publisher. They launched a book a month ago. It is in Spanish, I haven't seen it yet. They've got quite a lot of stuff on the VNS Matrix in there and our friend Melinda [Rackham] who wrote the essays on VNS Matrix. I forget what the book is called. Something like: "from VNS Matrix to Xenofeminism." Have you read the Xenofeminist Manifesto?

L.T: Yes and I have include it to my essay. I think it's the only feminism after cyberfeminism that relates feminism to technology.

dollyoko: They were some women who worked on technofeminism. Cornelia Sollfrank's book on feminism came out two-three months ago. She would be taking a different angle as well. She was part of the "Old Boys Network".

L.T: Oh yeah, thanks a lot for the information!

dollyoko: As far as 'VNS Matrix' is concerned –because we have always been answering letters from students but recently the interest is focused on how it started- we wrote in 2016 a new text with the title: 'A Tender Hex for the Anthropocene'. I do a lot of experimental writing, where you make up rules and then you generate a text, sort of like computer programming but very manual. So if you write yourself a few rules, you've then got a text. One of the texts I sent you is about how 'Tender Hex' was created.
Dollspace was such a long time ago but I am really attached to that and I have to say that I still pay the server 20 US dollars a month just to keep dollspace and some other projects, because to me it's very important politically, to keep it online as long as I can. Dollspace in particular has been threatened with censorship both in Belgium and in Italy.

L.T: Actually we might face a problem with the server here. We don't want to pay and we're thinking of a non-commercial server…

dollyoko: Well, I was happy to pay because they have protected my work, but maybe I should introduce you to my friend Agnese in Italy who is in contact with various activist and anarchist run of servers.

L.T: Thank you very much about that.

dollyoko: It is lovely to meet you, really lovely. I hope it was a useful discussion. The politics is all about the contact and what we can do together in this world that we are confronting at the moment. We will keep in contact.