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E-MERGENCE OF THE POSTHUMAN

Irrelevance of Incarnation?

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I. Introduction

"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1:14). After 2000 years, "Word" as signifier/signified in God-talk and as a basic tool in linguistic coding and decoding seems to be taking on another metaphorical association in cyberspace. Word is a program based on algorithmic sequences that encodes texts ready for utilization in computer terminals, shipment over information highways and storage on hard drives and flash disks. With Apple, Inc., one can even say, the Word has escaped matter and dwelt in iCloud. Materiality has given way to virtuality. If corporeal materiality is the fulcrum on which Christianity stands or falls in its truth claim of a redemptive God, then the question of the relevance of the Incarnation in a virtual world comes to the fore. This paper hopes to contribute to cybertalk along this theme.

II. E-mergence of the Posthuman

Fukuyama's unease with the posthuman stems from what he deems two dystopias: the Orwellian "panopticon" of information

technology on the one hand, and the biotechnological alteration of human nature (beyond recognition) on the other.[1] Without conceding to the neo-liberal agenda, we accept that these two technologies are continually shaping the world as we know it today. For this paper, we focus on the first.

Cyberspace

The term "cyberspace" originated in the work of William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (1984). He describes the term as a "consensual hallucination … a graphic representation of data abstracted from the bank of every computer in the human system."[2] The term was popularized by John Perry Barlow who predicated of it the "emergence of an alternative virtual world, an electronic frontier."[3] This means that information and communications technologies (ICTs) are not simply media but a new domain of public contestation that transcends temporal and spatial limits. Barlow argues that cyberspace is a harbinger of a "new social space, global and antisovereign, within which anybody, anywhere can express to the rest of humanity whatever he or she believes without fear."[4] This space is incorporeal, replacing physical presence in simulated environments of blogs, discussion threads, multi-user chat rooms, and social networking sites.

But while Barlow seems to mystify the utopian promise of cyberspace, there remains a need for critical reflexivity because of its multifarious, ubiquitous and fluid nature. For example, the synergy of the postmodern culture, with the global socio-political tides as mediated by ICTs, ushers questions on the digital divide, dystopic tendencies of hyperreality a la Baudrillard, relevance of nation-states,

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[1]Francis Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2002).

[2]William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (1984), 51.

[3]Brian Loader, ed., *Governance of Cyberspace* (London: Routledge, 1997), 3.

[4]John Perry Barlow, "Thinking Locally, Acting Globally," *Cyber Rights Electronic List* (January 15, 1996).

and the hegemony of commodification. Theologically, it would seem vital to ask whether Christianity, as a narrative religion, can still make sense given the alliance of postmodern disenchantment for *grand recits* and the encouragement of internet infrastructure for "the proliferation of stories, local narratives without any totalizing gestures and [which place] senders and addresses in symmetrical relations."[5] The hermeneutical question to me seems to focus on the relationship between the universal and particular, the local and the global. In relation to Christianity, it would then seem urgent to ask how relevant the Incarnation is if it is the event *par excellence* of a particularization of the universal God. On the flipside, if the corporeal materiality of this particularization is necessary in theosis, how is the Incarnation relevant in a context of virtualization of the material as, for example, seen in the case of creating avatars?

Cyborgs

In his novel *Neuromancer*, Gibson's "hero" escapes from his flesh-body and enters cyberspace. This heralds the contemporary theme of "transcendence of and escape from the flesh."[6] A variant of this theme, for example, is seen in the character of Neo in *The Matrix* trilogy where the cyborg-hero needs to be logged into cyberspace in order to effectively carry out his mission of leading the "humans" in the war against the machines. Neo exemplifies the e-mergence of the posthuman. The portmanteau term "e-mergence" signifies the merger between the organic flesh (wetware) and technology (software) for the emergence of a new cybernetic organism (cyborg).[7] Nayar speaks of these in terms of disembodiment and re-embodiment in cyberspace. When Neo, the hero, is wired to the Matrix, he becomes disembodied in that he leaves the actual spatial-temporal domain of materiality but

[5]M. Poster, "Postmodern Virtualities," in *Body and Society* (1995), 92.

[6]Pramod Nayar, *An Introduction to New Media and Cybercultures* (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 65.

[7]Nayar, *An Introduction to New Media and Cybercultures*, 67.

is simultaneously re-embodied as the flesh interfaces with the hardware and software of cyberspace.

Donna Haraway contends that to some extent we are all cyborgs: we wear glasses, eat genetically modified food, rely on pacemakers, etc. Haraway talks about networked bodies and hybridized human-machines as having the potential of ending oppression and subverting hierarchical binaries associated with the social-cultural-political baggage of color or gender.[8] From this perspective, the cyborg is an embodiment of a utopian vision that resists fixities associated with identities, cultural and social locations. The hybridization of the corporeal has far reaching implications in reconfiguring the political and the social-cultural.[9] This freedom from fixities implies the possibility for human persons to create their own preferred environments and interact with other users through a constructed identity in the form of an avatar. What might be the implication to body and identity? Rosi Braidotti, a feminist critic, argues that identity in the postmodern context characterized by hybridity is no longer fixed and easily demarcable. With culture playing a major role in generating identity, the body becomes a de-naturalized crossroad as artificial social-cultural codes are inscribed onto it.[10] Braidotti cites Francis Barker's contention that "the disappearance of the body is the apex of the historical process of its de-naturalization."[11] With this, she argues that "it is more adequate to speak of our body in terms of embodiment, that is to say of multiple

[8]See Donna Haraway, "Ein Manifest für Cyborgs," in *Carmen hammer und Immanuel StieB*; also Donna Haraway, *Die Neuerfindung der Natur. Primaten, Cyborgs und Frauen* (Frankfurt/New York: 1995), 33–72; also Veronika Schlor, "Cyborgs: Feminist Approaches to the Cyberworld," in Erik Borgman, Stephan van Erp & Hille Haker, eds., *Cyberspace-Cyberethics-Cybertheology* (London: SCM Press, 2005), 61–67, 62.

[9]Nayar, *An Introduction to New Media and Cybercultures*, 66.

[10]Rosi Braidotti, "Cyberfeminism with a Difference," http://www.let.uu.nl/womens_studies/rosi/cyberfem.htm.

[11]Braidotti, "Cyberfeminism with a Difference." See also Francis Barker, *The Tremulous Private Body: Essays on Subjection* (London: Methuen, 1984).

bodies or sets of embodied positions. Embodiment means that we are situated subjects, capable of performing sets of (inter)actions which are discontinuous in space and time."[12] Schlor makes a good, critical point when she points out that "embodiment" discourse is only a few mouse clicks from reaching a "totally dematerialized symbolized body in cyberspace."[13] If "flesh" disappears entirely, it becomes contentious how to make visible and palpable the realities about oppression of concrete bodies and destruction of concrete undigitized human communities (e.g., indigenous peoples). "Embodiment as cyborg is precisely no incarnation."[14] Indeed, a dematerialized symbolized cyberbody seems to offer a reverse dynamic against incarnation.

III. Reality Bites

The dematerialized cyberworld has its own seductions. The site www.uo.com promises a "world in which you can not only fight, craft, create, explore, and triumph … but a world in which you can live."[15] Aupers and Houtman comment that the site contrasts the boredom of real life and the excitement of the virtual world.[16] Massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG) users even venture into giving spiritual significance to a disembodied presence in cyberspace. "You are not at all confined by your body when you are online. You can go places, you can do things you can't do in real life, you can see differently," says one respondent of a survey made by Aupers.[17] Mark

[12]Braidotti, "Cyberfeminism with a Difference."

[13]Schlor, "Cyborgs: Feminist Approaches to the Cyberworld," 64.

[14]Schlor, "Cyborgs: Feminist Approaches to the Cyberworld," 65.

[15]www.uo.com.

[16]Stef Aupers & Dick Houtman, "'Reality Sucks': On Alienation and Cybergnosis," 82.

[17]Stef Aupers, *In de ban van moderneteit: Da sacralisering can het zelf en computertechnologie* (Aksant: Amsterdam, 2004), cited in Aupers & Houtman, "'Reality Sucks': On

Pesce, the developer of Hypertext Mark Up Language (HTML), points out that the decisive difference between the real and virtual world is the god-like position the user assumes in the latter:

> Cyberspace gives the impulse to disengage from the suffering that the world is … people who pop into cyberspace have to create the world, they have to create their belief system, they have to create the rules. There is no other way! When you pop into cyberspace there is nothing there unless you bring it in. You have to be the magical agent, the god, in that environment for anything to happen.[18]

The extreme version of "excarnation" is represented by the Extropians who seem to be fascinated by the spiritual implications of downloading human consciousness into the cyberworld. This vision is given expression in the film *The Lawnmower Man* (1992) where the central character Jobe believes the final stage of the evolution of his consciousness is to become "pure energy" "existing" in the computer mainframe.

Cybergnosis

The spirituality attached to the dematerialized existence in cyberspace coupled with the condescension of the corporeal whether it be the body (as inscribed with gender, socio-economic and racial codes), suffering, melancholia and lack (it seeks to overcome) reminds one of Gnostic philosophy. Aupers and Houtman found it interesting that there are striking resemblances between cybergnosis and classical Gnosticism. "'The goal of Gnostic striving is the release of the 'inner man' from the bonds of this world and his return to his native realm of life.'"[19] The material world-rejecting ethos, the melancholic dissatisfaction and the disaffection with the limiting particularities that characterize the Gnostic mindset seem to be present in the cybergnostic orientation as well. "Whereas classical

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Alienation and Cybergnosis," 82.

[18]Aupers & Houtman, "'Reality Sucks': On Alienation and Cybergnosis," 83.

[19]Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 44.

Gnosticism seeks salvation from the body and the material world, this discourse of 'cybergnosis' embraces digital technology as promising salvation from real-life suffering and impotence and as enabling one to overcome humanity's state of alienation."[20] The disappearance of the body in cybergnosis seems to fall into the danger of reprising the old body/mind split under a new "avatar." It apparently glosses over the recalcitrant quality of the material as the domicile for personalization. Theologically speaking, it seems to demean the capacity of the material and corporeal to be the locus of the spiritual.

IV. Incarnation as an Hermeneutic Tactic

In a context such as this, Christianity's stance and more specifically the faith option of believing in a salvation not by gnosis but by *Deus Incarnatus* becomes an area of contestation as to its relevance and meaning (upon which Christianity stands or falls). The subtext in this quest for relevance is the question of what critically reflexive resource Christianity has to offer, in a global consumer-driven culture, more than its usual paternalistic pontificating sermons. It might be that the task of the theologian in a cybercontext is to ask the question of how (using its own resources) meanings are created in a "culture that often commodifies religious experience, fetishizes idealized attractive body-images and yet suppresses the substantiality of real bodies as they experience their pleasures and pains, ecstasies and tragedies, lives and deaths."[21]

Here we take incarnation as a hermeneutical tactic, not as a dogmatic statement. In other words, incarnation (and indeed Resurrection) becomes hermeneutically important because, in the context of the cyberage, the issue of corporeality has come to the fore

[20] Aupers & Houtman, "'Reality Sucks': On Alienation and Cybergnosis," 84.

[21] Anthony Godzieba, Lieven Boeve, & Michele Saracino, "Resurrection-Interruption-Transformation: Incarnation as Hermeneutical Strategy," *Theological Studies* 67 (2006): 777–815, 778.

in theo-social and political debate. In this respect, theology needs to contribute to the discussion insofar as

> the heart of the Christian gospel is that the eternal plan of God is realized in a particular time and place, that the perfect self-expression of God has become flesh and dwelled among us (Jn. 1:14). Any attempt to separate the particular and the universal … misunderstands Catholicism. For the hallmark of Catholicism is its radical incarnationalism.[22]

Here is already a hint of the hermeneutic import of this radically immanent proposal; in the incarnation is inscribed the dynamics of relationship between radical particularity and universality. However, a caveat needs to be made here. There is a general falling out from using the term "presence" nowadays. The Heideggerian critique of onto-theology carried on by the likes of Derrida and Vattimo problematizes the metaphysics of presence which may lead to violence and closing out of narratives. Thus one can only speak about the "traces," "crossing out" and "radical kenoticism" because determinacy is suspect. Applied to religion, one can only speak about disembodied, apophatic descriptions of religious experience.[23]

Among the most important hermeneutic readings of the Incarnation is that it expresses and celebrates the ability of the material and particular to mediate the divine. Against the discourse of cybergnosis, the radical incarnationalism of Christianity contends

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[22]Michael Himes & Kenneth Himes, *Fullness of Faith: The Public Significance of Theology* (New York: Paulist, 1993), 130.

[23]Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. & intro. Joan Stambaugh, bilingual ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1969); Jean-Luc Marion, *God without Being: Hors-Texte*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991); Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1978), 79–153; Gianni Vattimo, "History of Salvation, History of Interpretation," in Niels Grønkjaer, ed., *The Return of God: Theological Perspectives in Contemporary Philosophy* (Odense: Odense University, 1998). On this topic, one may also confer Randy Odchigue, "The Radical Kenoticism of Gianni Vattimo and Interreligious Dialogue," *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 16:2 (2006): 173–189.

that materiality is graced and that it is made the locus of redemption in the Incarnation (and Resurrection).[24] Here particularity is being given a revelational value: only in the particular human person, Jesus, is revealed the Word. There is something here in that, through the particularity of Jesus, the Incarnation takes on a unique, unrepeatable character in space and time—something cyberspace may never tolerate. What is defended here is the importance of radical historicity and difference: "when the Word became flesh, the Word did not take on an all purpose, generic, one-size-fits-all human nature. Such a view would not take seriously the radical historicity of both human nature and divine revelation."[25] Before answering the question "so what?" in relation to the Incarnation, we might need to tackle the meaning of particularity not only as a historical-cultural-sociological term but also in relation to Christian particularity and in relation to other discourses (religious and secular).

In reflecting about the Christian particularity of the Incarnation (and Resurrection), Boeve points out that there are two fronts that the theologian has to contend with: first, the hermeneutical strategies of exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism; second, the meaning and implication of Christianity's radical incarnationalism in relation to other faiths and discourses.[26] In relation to the first front, Boeve distances from pluralistic readings as they impair the constitutive character of God-made-flesh. The debates that lead to the Chalcedonian confession and the apophatic debates that revolve around the unknowability of God tend to undermine the irreplaceable and unique salvific quality of the Incarnation. Boeve contends that in order to come to terms with claims from other discourses and other faiths, "pluralistic theologians

[24]Godzieba, Boeve, & Saracino, "Resurrection-Interruption-Transformation: Incarnation as Hermeneutical Strategy," 788–789.

[25]John Meier, "The Present State of the 'Third Quest' for the Historical Jesus: Loss and Gain," *Biblica* 80 (1999): 459–487, 486.

[26]Lieven Boeve, "Resurrection: Saving Christian Particularity: Theological-epistemological Considerations of Incarnation and Truth," *Theological Studies* 67 (2006): 795.

radically relativize the Christian truth claim. At most, Jesus Christ represents God, but he does not incarnate God; Jesus is a human example of God, but not God made flesh."[27] He likewise interrogates the exclusivist approach which embraces a thoroughgoing absolutism that places a limiting norm such that no salvation can be found elsewhere. Inclusivism, on the other hand, allows elements of salvation elsewhere, but its latent sense of superiority may still undermine other discourses of faith. Boeve argues that the three classical approaches come to the issue of the relationship between universalization and pluralization. In the case of inclusivism and exclusivism, the Christian truth claim is deemed to be true for all times and places. Epistemologically speaking, this means other faiths or discourses either are lacking in or share some elements of the fullness of the truth possessed by Christianity.

> The historical-contingent particularity … is immediately positioned within a virtually meta-historical Christian frame of interpretation. Concrete narratives and histories, people, and events are taken up into an all-inclusive vision of history; they stand face to face with *the* truth, *the* salvation, and thereby deprived in principle of their historical accidentality,[28]

Boeve argues. In the case of pluralism, Christian faith is but one perspective that describes only one part of the greater whole. Here the Christian truth-claim is relativized in view of it being an overly historical-particular and contingent event. Boeve argues that "in both instances, 'incarnation' is understood as the absorption of the historical-particular into the universal or the reduction thereof into the universal."[29] Apparently developing his framework along the lines of Lyotard's *differend*,[30] Boeve proposes that the heterogeneity of the

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[27]Boeve, "Resurrection: Saving Christian Particularity: Theological-epistemological Considerations of Incarnation and Truth," 799.

[28]Boeve, "Resurrection: Saving Christian Particularity: Theological-epistemological Considerations of Incarnation and Truth," 801.

[29]Boeve, "Resurrection: Saving Christian Particularity: Theological-epistemological Considerations of Incarnation and Truth," 801.

[30]Jean François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

Incarnation (and Resurrection) serves as a moment of interruption against any universalizing or relativizing narratives. Boeve reflects,

> … is it not possible to understand Incarnation in an opposite sense, namely, by insisting that, if truth exists, it is to be found in the concrete, historical, and particular? In other words, is this not the ultimate meaning of Incarnation: that the "all-too-human" speaks for God, without diminishing God in the process and without assimilating humanity into God?[31]

The hermeneutic task for Boeve is not about a triumphalist and hegemonic proclamation but a trusting dialogue. Trust is the virtue which allows one to hold on to one's particularity, and bears witness to this faith-claim that rests on the affirmation of the liminal event of the Incarnation. The points raised by Boeve relate to the question of the relevance and irrelevance of the Incarnation (as a hermeneutic strategy) on several fronts.

In relation to the contemporary context, the corporeal materiality of the Incarnation gives the Christian discourse a stake in the debate on meaning-giving in the estheticized cyberculture. The Incarnation

> helps Catholicism to resist being coopted and domesticated by certain cultural trends. For example, it can prevent Catholic belief from being reduced to yet another cultural commodity (e.g., as a pawn in the culture wars, or as a therapeutic self-help remedy) or being branded a quite unfashionable, all-too-inadequate "determinable faith" by postmodern philosophy of religion. The postmodern discussion prefers to label as more authentic or "true" those notions of religion that are formalistic and disembodied, such as "religion without religion" and "the impossible"—ironically, a replication of the Enlightenment search for a universal natural religion by an avowedly anti-Enlightenment philosophical discourse.[32]

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[31]Boeve, "Resurrection: Saving Christian Particularity: Theological-epistemological Considerations of Incarnation and Truth," 802.

[32]Godzieba, Boeve, & Saracino, "Resurrection-Interruption-Transformation: Incarnation as Hermeneutical Strategy," 791.

The Incarnation narrative seems to provide a critical resource against the homogenizing and commodifying tendencies in cyberspace where concrete bodies disappear or are subjected to the worst kinds of objectification and voyeurism. While there is value in the capability of cyberspace to free the body from denigrating social, cultural and paternalistic categorizations, there is the possibility of the body losing its irreplaceable historicity and the recalcitrant meaning of the palpable body in the face of adjustable avatars, "photoshoppable" images and "croppable" profile pictures. This of course has implications on ecclesiology.[33]

The defense of the Incarnation regarding the goodness of corporeal materiality is also a critical tool against the pre-modern, modern and post-modern cybergnostic, recurring tendency of body and mind dualism. Against the tendency to disparage the body as limiting, and to scoff at reality as boring and ridden with suffering, the Incarnation affirms the elemental affirmative value of materiality and history. In the incarnation discourse, the world becomes a space of grace. This

[33]The local church praxis as lived by Basic Ecclesial Communities might be the first casualty in the onslaught of an abstract cyberchurch. An example of a cyberchurch may be implied in the proposal of the "Liquid Church." The idea of the "liquid church" is contained in the Anglican theologian Pete Ward's book of the same title (Peabody, MA: Paternoster, 2002). Ward is enthused by the work of the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman in the latter's intimation of postmodernity as implying the dissolution of the "ossified edifices" of institutions. Ward takes over this metaphor and applies it to ecclesiology. He believes that the church as a theological concept has undergone a process of reification as exhibited in the institutional. Against this, he proposes for a de-institutionalized expression of Christian faith which can be found in existing networks and cyber-connections that work for the church. Ward would seem to believe that gatherings, large and small, informal, ephemeral or commercial-church like phenomena have ecclesial relevance, regardless of their connections with particular congregations or denominations. See Pete Ward, *Liquid Church* (Peabody, MA: Paternoster, 2002); Kees de Groot, "The Church in Liquid Modernity: A Sociological and Theological Exploration of a Liquid Church," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 6 (2006): 91–103. On Bauman, see Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000).

not only has implications on traditional discussions on soteriology but also on contemporary sacramental discourse.

> Recent sociological studies of religions as ensembles of meaningful practices have emphasized that bodily metaphors are central to the communication of all types of religious faith. This is because "the body is traditionally always the nearest-to-hand source of metaphors for understanding society," including religious society.[34]

The incarnationalism of Christianity also has a performative implication in relation to ecological praxis.

The particularity of incarnation resonates with the contemporary concern that the political economy of global capitalism unhinges the dialectical bond between empirical referents and the formation of discourse (e.g., women, natives vis-à-vis genderization and racialization).

> Once this dialectical bond is unhinged, advanced capitalism looks like a system that promotes feminism without women, racism without races, natural laws without nature, reproduction without sex, sexuality without genders, multiculturalism without ending racism, economic growth without development, and cash flow without money.[35]

Nowhere is this phenomenon more prevalent than in cyberspace. The cybernetic individualism that seems to focus on quantitative pluralities (and not on qualitative heterogeneities) is a hallmark of the consumerist capitalistic cyberculture.[36] This problematic is what Godzieba mentions as the fetishizing of an idealized image but at the same time the suppressing of the substantiality of real bodies. The

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[34]Godzieba, Boeve, & Saracino, "Resurrection-Interruption-Transformation: Incarnation as Hermeneutical Strategy," 789. See also Bryan S. Turner & Chris Rojek, *Society and Culture: Principles of Scarcity and Solidarity* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001), 215.

[35]Rosi Braidotti, "Affirming the Affirmative: On Nomadic Affectivity," http://www.rhizomes.net/issue11/braidotti.html.

[36]For example, young people in Manhattan wear Che Guevarra shirts because it is the "in thing" or it is "cool" without really asking about the transformative nature of Che Guevarra's revolution (against capitalistic America!). The flesh and blood Guevarra is unhinged so to say from Guevarra the cool figure in cyberculture.

point: incarnation as a hermeneutic strategy puts us back into the trenches where the real battle is fought—the concrete and historical particularity. For example, "being green" is cool and all in cyberspace but the real battle in preserving ecological balance begins to be fought when one plants a real tree in a watershed and not in Farmville.[37] There is no substitute for the particular and the concrete.

Networked Subjectivity

But we also can no longer return to the age of typewriters and analogue cellular phones. There remains the task of constructing a subjectivity which is simultaneously local-global—particular but networked. There are some resonances here with what Braidotti mentions as Deleuze's idea of the subject:

> Deleuze builds and expands upon Foucault's archaeology of the modern subject of "bio-power" but goes much further conceptually. He replaces the old subject formation with a notion of the subject as a cluster of complex and intensive forces—intensive assemblages which connect and inter-relate with others in a variety of ways.[38]

It is an on-going concern indeed what may constitute the assemblage. It is crucial to realize that, as Haraway mentioned, we are already cyborgs. The body is a place where boundary is negotiated nowadays: "the human body is fully immersed in systems of reception and processing of information, what which emanates from its genetic structures, as much as that which is relayed by satellites and wired circuits throughout the advanced world."[39] This global hybridization however might be just another unhinging or quantitative increase of pluralization. Braidotti's plea is to affirm particular and grounded subjectivities collectively bound in some sort of a pan-humanitarian

[37]Farmville is a farming simulation game put together by Zynga in 2009. The game involves all aspects imaginable (and beyond) of farming: from plowing fields, to planting crops, to harvesting trees, to trading farm produce. It presents an idealized image of a farm without agrarian disputes or questions about fair trade and farmers' exploitation.

[38]Braidotti, "Affirming the Affirmative: On Nomadic Affectivity."

[39]Braidotti, "Affirming the Affirmative: On Nomadic Affectivity."

connectivity. That way, the subject becomes grounded "in a materially embedded sense of responsibility and ethical accountability for the environment s/he inhabits."[40]

V. Conclusion

Bodies matter. In the Christian narrative, material corporeality is so important that it is found everywhere in the storyline of what it considers salvation history: Creation, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and the sacraments that continue to re-present the story of the Word-made-flesh. In a context of disembodied discourses and disembodying technological advances, incarnation bears witness to the recalcitrant quality of historical and existential materiality. Incarnation is not terrified by hybridity because nothing can be more hybrid than the discourse of the God-human. But there remains the task of the assemblage of subjectivity in cybercontext. Perhaps on this one, we can turn to the transgressive understanding of Jesus as a borderland person. In postcolonial biblical criticism, Jesus is being interpreted as a liminal person whose voyages transform barriers into bridging symbols.[41] "The frontiers of his land project into his soul: indigenous Galilean, culturally mixed, out-caste, transgressive of borders. That is why he can see new things."[42] The narratives about Jesus' marginal boundary crossings exemplify God's hospitality as unbounded by racial and national boundaries.[43] Perhaps this is the relevance of the Incarnation: the Word made flesh, both networked and accountable, challenging us to a connectivity that does not forget humanity.

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[40]Braidotti, "Affirming the Affirmative: On Nomadic Affectivity."

[41]Werner Kelber, *Mark's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 17, 42.

[42]Marianne Sawicki, *Crossing Galilie: Architectures of Contact in the Occupied Land of Jesus* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 94.

[43]Kwok Pui-lan, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-biblical World*, Bible & Liberation Series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 74–81.