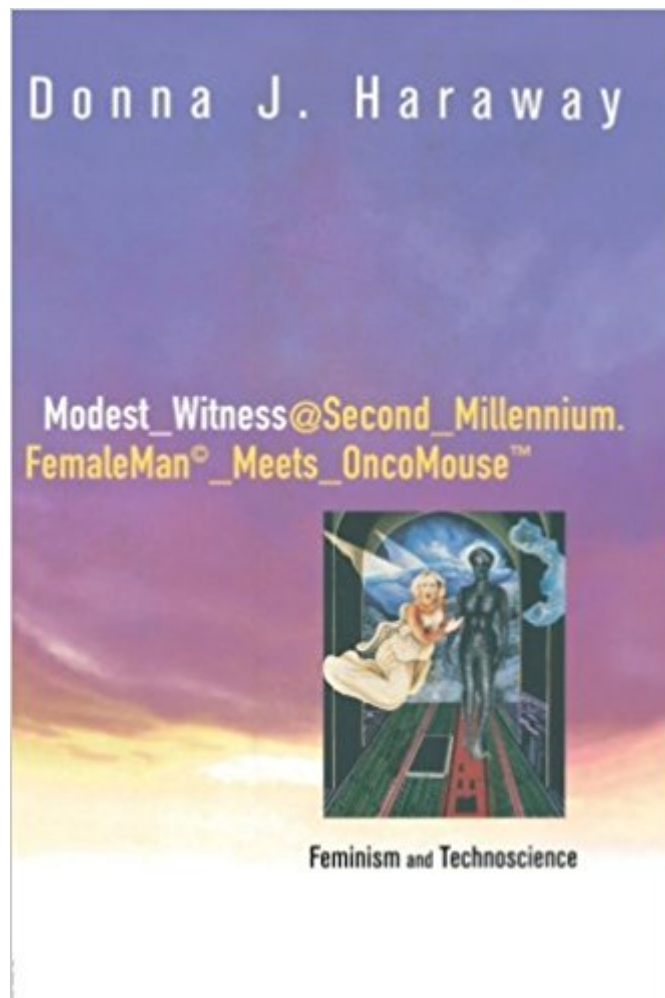




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Modest_Witness@Second_Millenniu m.FemaleMan_Meets_OncoMouse: Feminism And Technoscience



Synopsis

Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan_Meets_OncoMouse explores the roles of stories, figures, dreams, theories, facts, delusions, advertising, institutions, economic arrangements, publishing practices, scientific advances, and politics in twentieth-century technoscience. The book's title is an e-mail address. With it, Haraway locates herself and her readers in a sprawling net of associations more far-flung than the Internet. The address is not a cozy home. There is no innocent place to stand in the world where the book's author figure, FemaleMan, encounters DuPont's controversial laboratory rodent, OncoMouse.

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Customer Reviews

"Donna Haraway writes about science like nobody else. She's exploring new territory, she's drawing new maps, she's onto something--the metaphors come thick and fast. Love her or loathe her, you ignore her at your peril."-"New Scientist "Haraway's 'modest witness' is a fascinating figure....In a contribution that is by itself worth the price of the book, Haraway produces a wonderfully thoughtful and complex account of...the interpenetration of biology and capitalism, two central players on the stage of politics....Haraway has produced a volume that richly rewards the hard work and generous literacy it demands of its reader. It is challenging, powerful, and unsettling to comfortable notions worth distressing."-"LSojourner "A mixture of passionate polemic, abstruse theory, and technological musing."-"Detroit Free Press "A conversation with Haraway is an experience you don't soon forget."-"Santa Cruz County Sentinel "It can change the way you think."-"San Francisco Examiner

and Chronicle

Donna Haraway is the author of *Primate Visions: Gender, Race and Nature in the World of Modern Science and Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*, both published by Routledge. She teaches science studies, feminist theory and women's studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

For anyone who considers themselves a "future focused" feminist, that is a feminist deeply concerned (and excited!) about the intersection between gender and technology. Or if you are someone interested in the expanding definition(s) (and hierarchies) of "life" on earth in the age/field of what Haraway terms 'technoscience' And if you are willing to openly embrace (and interrogate) the politics of those blurred boundaries, so as to make "sense" of a non-senical world, where the human and non-human conflict and intersect...then this book is for you! Haraway can be a tough read, however (for the most part) it is surely worth it. Her writing is engaging and in some ways...fun! She is not a "clear cut" scholar, she is a philosopher, cultural critic, post-gender biologist, and post-modern feminist all-in-one, so it is not surprising that her writing is often frayed. However, I have found that Haraway's "easiest" work :The Cyborg Manifesto & The Companion Species Manifesto, are not actually easy so much as impassioned..the stakes are high and Haraway always lets you know this...this book is equally (yet playfully) enraged...or at least concerned, thus making it not "accessible" per se...but something which you Wish to access...and maybe thats enough? You may not get through this book very easily but when you put it down after reading through a bit, you'll know that someday...you must return(despite the headache!)

complex. worth it

A note to be made to any potential readers regarding the accessibility of this book is that there are two areas in which some background is extremely helpful: critical theory (certain terms and concepts) and Sandra Harding's idea of strong objectivity, which is used, in Haraway's altered form, as a central concept in the book. Neither critical theory terminology nor strong objectivity is explained in enough depth for a reader unfamiliar with them to understand well, and, in the case of the latter, have a strong enough grasp to consider crucial differences in the approaches of Harding and Haraway. Haraway's stated purpose of the book is that it is an "exercise regime and self-help manual for how not to be literal-minded, while engaging promiscuously in serious moral and political

inquiry (...). I also want [readers] to have a good time. Comedy is both object of attention and method" (15). There is a certain tension throughout the book resulting from her dual commitment to the non-literal and playful and to the very serious. Her way of delving deeply into the adventures and symbolic meaning of fictional characters to use them to illustrate her points and her penchant for word-play are rather distracting, and frequently detract from the substance and clarity of her arguments. Additionally, the content of Haraway's book is enmeshed in a perhaps altogether unnecessarily elaborate format, for example, with sections of the book intended to correspond with parts of the study of semiotics. Yet, Haraway's main argument concerning technoscience, that there is a need to create what has been called a politicoscientific community based on participatory democratic structures, is well supported by her numerous and thought-provoking inquiries into who the actors in technoscience are, who is benefiting, who is suffering, etc. She offers effective criticism of conventional scientific (weak) objectivity, which is grounded in an ideal of the scientist as neutral or value-free, and seeks to build a strong objectivity that will bring into focus the interests and contributions of humans and non-humans who remain unseen or unheard in technoscientific development and practice. I cannot help but wonder, however, why a book intending to promote participatory democratic involvement has been written in so complex a manner that it is inaccessible to countless numbers of people. I have two main reservations about what Haraway writes. First, she is using her own version of Harding's strong objectivity, which differs in important ways from the original concept. Haraway attempts to generate knowledge from the perspectives of both fictional characters, ones from paintings and ones that Haraway helps invent, and non-humans, and this is much out of keeping with Harding's approach and yet no implications of the altered meaning of this key concept are discussed. Second, Haraway has a clear bias toward, even a romanticization of, certain technoscientific feats like putting fish genes in tomatoes. While she makes no attempts to conceal this bias, I do think it influences her too-quick dismissal of activists working against such human tinkering, as she claims she "cannot hear discussion of disharmonious crosses among organic beings and of implanted alien genes without hearing a racially inflected and xenophobic symphony" (62). The activists to which she is referring simply deserve more credit than this.

Haraway's work is stunning in the risks she takes. Refusing to buy into categorical distinctions between disciplines, Haraway references and subreferences science, literature, technology, art, and anything else that could possibly be used to emphasize the cultural production of knowledge. I disagree with just about all of Haraway's conclusions about capitalism, but I love what she says about technology, and find in her work a fresh and innovative alternative to that of stuffy analytic

philosophers and overly pedantic sociologists of science. Not the easiest read, but worth a look if you're into SSK, STS, HPS or any other initials having to do with the study of science. Whether you take the book to bed with you at night or toss it out the nearest fifth story window, Haraway's work is bound to impress. Check it out.

Donna Haraway is without question America's most gifted postmodern cultural critic. In this book, Haraway considers the realms of "technoscience," focussing mostly on genetic research, to consider how this emerging science constructs race, gender, and human relations. Haraway is an extremely witty writer and a true humanitarian, dedicated to questioning those cultural assumptions which hurt so many social groups. Well written, well organized, well illustrated (by Lynn Randolph)... a great book.

Haraway attempts to pull together many different disciplines, thoughts, and ideas in her book, but unfortunately there is no praxis. The book is written and directed towards scientists, but from the outset the book alienates them. The book has very little to substantiate the ideas, other than self referencing. The ideas presented are interesting, and if you are able to delve through layers of meta-linguistic jargon the Modest_Witness could perhaps have a good discussion, but her synthetic form of muddled argumentation makes for a poor read. The ideas could have been presented with the tropes in a much clearer manner, the theories could have been supplied with some way to put them into action. I urge anyone who attempts to read this book, to thoroughly question the ideas presented in an attempt to find real world possible applications.

I fancy myself an intelligent individual, but this text was well beyond my comprehension. It was assigned to my class in college and all my efforts to understand the detailed discourse failed.

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