



1. preamble

**"Slimy metaphors for technology:
'the clitoris is a direct line to the
Matrix'"**



2. the
plot

Dr. Jyanni Steffensen



3. cyber
feminist
theory



4. cunt
metaphors

This paper examines some futuristic fantasy possibilities for constructions of perversely signified female desire through the work of techno-artists, **VNS Matrix's ALL NEW GEN** (1994). The framework within which this cyborgian text is read utilises recent theoretical developments in cyberfeminist thinking, including that of Donna Haraway, Zoë Sofoulis, and Sadie Plant.



5. footnotes



back to array

ANG is an electronic art installation by Australian cyberfeminist collective, VNS Matrix. This hypertext includes a computer game; a video installation; an acoustic installation; a cyberfeminist manifesto for the 21st Century; and a 'shrine' to the Oracle Snatch. Spectators double as interactive participants - reading the text is dependent on how one negotiates the installation space. This paper, which focuses on VNS' assertion that: "the clitoris is a direct line to the Matrix," concentrates on the computer game and video installation.



One of the narrative outcomes of the game is (re) routed through a lesbian s/m video installation called the "Bonding Booth." The objective of the game is to join a band of (s)heroes - the renegade DNA Sluts - on a quest to defeat Big Daddy Mainframe, the imperialist, militaristic Machine and his technophilic son (a "techno-bimbo") called Circuit Boy. Appropriating the language of computer technology and the imaging of cyberpunk, VNS (re)structure female sexuality through a futuristic fantasy discourse which encodes the clitoris as a laser beam "phallus" - a signifier of power and a direct on-line connection - in this multi-dimensional cyberspatial Matrix. Circuit Boy's on-line access to the Matrix is possible only by unscrewing his penis-phallus and transforming it into a telecommunications device, a cellular phone. This paper also examines what might be useful for feminist theorising beyond psychoanalytically inscribed cultural myths and practices through selective readings of Michel Foucault's accounts of the "technologies of sex," the cultural production of multiple and perverse sexualities, and Gilles Deleuze's "desiring machines" - a concept which envisages desire as productive, manufacturing things and forging alliances. My reading also turns implicitly back to Irigarayan psychoanalytic critical theory in that the maternal configured entity ALL NEW GEN collaborates with the multi-sexed "daughters" in disordering the Father's Law.

Author's biographical note

Dr. Jyanni Steffensen is an Australian Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Department of Social Inquiry (Women's Studies, Labour Studies) at the University of Adelaide. She is currently researching a project titled '*Queer Machines: Narrative Constructions of the Subject in Technoculture*' which examines the ways in which the body, gender and sexuality are fantasmatically understood in various artistic and scientific discourses. Virtual subjects for analysis have been selected from the creative ideas and practices in experimental digital arts (eg Suzanne Treister's *Rosalind Brodsky* and Francesca da Rimini's *gashgirl*), scientific softbots (artificially intelligent programs) and hardbots (robots), and some figures of science-fiction cinema (eg. replicants, fembots).

This paper was presented at a conference at Duke University, Durham, North Carolina (2-4 October 1998) titled "*Discipline and Deviance: Technology, Gender, Machines*"

