



Processed

Lives

GENDER and TECHNOLOGY  
in EVERYDAY  
LIFE

EDITED BY

JENNIFER  
TERRY  
+ MELODIE  
CALVERT

6

## Hiatus

*Ericka Beckman*

---

Images from the film, 1996



Figure 6.1 Still from the film, 1996



Figure 6.2 Still from the film, 1996





Figure 6.3 Still from the film, 1996

Christine Tamblyn, in "Remote Control," states that cyberspace commits violence to language and bodies, perhaps even "ungendering" them. Tamblyn is interested in the limits and possibilities of disembodiment allowed by cyberspace and virtual worlds, and she sees the Internet as encouraging users' utopian fantasies about the possibility of "spinning out proliferating identities," which could be a potentially positive effect. But Tamblyn would like to move away from identity and the organic body as grounds for agency, using the dispersing and disembodiment potential of cyberspace to outline an ethic for performative interventions that looks not "to identities as possessions or attributes of bodies, but to the relay of effects on and between bodies." Tamblyn's interactive CD-ROM project, "She Loves It, She Loves It Not," further explores ambivalence engendered by digital worlds, playing humorously on a range of issues related to women's vexed relationship with technology. Her theoretical and artistic work addresses the importance of feminist interventions in the scary new networks of cybertechnology.

"Hiatus," by Ericka Beckman, uses images from her experimental, narrative film of the same name to explore the possibilities of creating new identities in cyberspace. Hiatus is the name of a fictional, on-line computer game created by Beckman in which the female protagonist explores her own identity through the various habitats she has created in the world of the computer. Beckman pictures a near-future which questions the notion that technology can provide the means for empowerment, but imagines the possibilities of appropriating interactive CD-ROM technology to generate new narratives and futures. In her world, the young protagonist is in control of the various environments she makes, including those which look to pre-technological and Native American wisdom to structure these choices. Beckman's artist's pages reflect the on-screen character in her Hiatus persona.

Nina Wakeford, in "Networking Women and Grrrls," argues for an active appreciation of and involvement in the new forms of social and political connection that are offered by the World Wide Web. She notes that the media coverage of instances of sexual harassment of women on the Net and in chat rooms has served to underscore the restrictive stereotype of women as victims of male aggression, for whom cyberspace is characterized as an unsafe space. These stereotypes, Wakeford argues, overshadow the creative and politically astute uses to which women are putting information technologies to weave a web of support and connection among themselves across vast geographical and cultural differences. Although she agrees that it would be no exaggeration to say that the Internet and the Web are dominated by men, Wakeford points out that Web surfing for nerdgrrrls and geekgirls is a way to build community and take part in the creative opportunities of feminist and anti-racist self-representation and political opposition fashioned through a strategic use of information technology.