



## A CAMERA WITH A VIEW

### JenniCAM, visual representation, and cyborg subjectivity

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#### Abstract

Hailed as the originator of the digital camera 'homecam' phenomenon, Jennifer Ringley has garnered national media attention for her website, JenniCAM (Ringley 1998c), which offers viewers a constant window into the bedroom of a young woman through internet technology. Using the JenniCAM website as my primary text, I examine how Jenni integrates flesh and machine in the formation and display of a cyborg subjectivity, a hybridized identity (re)presented through the new technology of the digital camera. Towards that end I use feminist film theory to demonstrate how the construction and display of the female body – via the medium of digital camera – transforms our readings of gendered bodies as sites of knowledge production and pleasure. I assert that JenniCAM, a cyborg subject created through the integration of the electronic image and the internet, exposes more than just flesh. JenniCAM reveals cultural tensions surrounding epistemological conceptions of vision, gender, and identity and raises questions for future conversations regarding the role of technology in the representation and construction of gendered subjects.

#### Keywords

JenniCAM, digital camera, cyborg, subjectivity, gender

#### SNAPSHOT

Since its inception in April 1996, the website known as JenniCAM has blossomed into a web phenomenon, complete with fan sites dedicated to FAQs (frequently asked questions), old pictures of its creator, Jennifer Ringley, in various poses, and discussion areas that monitor her daily activities. The central web page of the JenniCAM site features the most up-to-date image of Jenni's bedroom as captured by the digital camera mounted on the top of her computer. The site has other components that supplement the viewer's knowledge of Jenni and her life, for example, in 1998 Jenni expanded the presentation of her life by creating short online video clips called 'The Jenni Show' (Ringley 1998g). These interludes feature Jenni giving tours of her apartment or answering commonly asked questions about her life via real-time

streaming audio and video clips. Additionally, viewers can study cropped images of Jenni's body, read her poetry, or email her at other areas of the site (Ringley 1998f). While all of these different components are not to be overlooked, they are organized around the web page that publishes the continually refreshed flow of images captured by the digital camera. JenniCAM 'guest' images upload every twenty minutes and are available for viewers free of charge. However, Jenni charges a subscription fee of US\$15 per year to viewers willing to pay for access to a password-protected web page, which uploads a new image every two minutes (Ringley 1998d).

Conveniently, Jenni is self-employed and works at home as a freelance web site designer. Thus she has availed herself to be in front of the camera for the majority of the day. Her daily routine, as recorded by the digital camera, looks something like this: for the majority of the morning she sleeps, getting up around noon. In the afternoon, Jenni begins to work at her computer, checking the 700+ email messages from fans, or chatting with friends on the phone. Every few weeks her boyfriend comes over to visit, and they spend time together. She is often up late at night, and Jenni heads to bed usually after midnight. Such is the life of Jennifer Ringley. According to a *Reuters* report, 'Most of the time, the photos are anything but thrilling' (Hagenbaugh 1997). In offering her viewers a glimpse at real life, JenniCAM replicates the ebb and flow of the everyday.

Although Jenni is a self-proclaimed nudist and does have sex with her boyfriend on camera, JenniCAM does not deliver sexually explicit or nude images at all times. As Jenni explains:

This site is not pornography. Yes, it contains nudity from time to time. *Real life* contains nudity. Yes, it contains sexual material from time to time. *Real life* contains sexual material. However, this is not a site about nudity and sexual material. It is a site about *real life*. (Ringley 1998d)

JenniCAM has raised more than a few eyebrows since the start of the project. JenniCAM would seem to offer the perfect heterosexual male fantasy – a voyeuristic window into a woman's bedroom – and could easily be dismissed as yet another example of a sexualized woman. On the other hand, the digital window is often filled with nothing but images of Jenni's bedroom furniture and yet, people continue to watch. In analysing JenniCAM, it is important not to overlook the fact that Jenni endeavours to present life as she lives it. That is, Jenni promises an unstaged display of her activity, not necessarily a staged fantasy. With the presentation of 'real life' as the project, JenniCAM offers a

text that writer Simon Firth describes as 'visually fascinating, disconcertingly erotic and a provocative reflection of ourselves' (Firth 1998).

## INTRODUCTION

JenniCAM brings to the fore issues at the intersection of digital camera technology, visual representation, and the gendered subject. In constructing her 'real life' through the use of a new visual medium, Jennifer Ringley throws into question many identity categories often thought to be stable. Throughout this essay, I employ Judith Butler's definition of subject construction as something that 'not only takes place *in time*, but is itself a temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms'. For Butler, identity-forming categories, such as sex, are 'both produced and destabilized in the course of this reiteration' (1993: 11). In JenniCAM, we witness both the production and the contradiction of a gendered subject. It is the unique way in which JenniCAM exposes the contradictions in gender identity and desire that are of interest here. JenniCAM represents a subject that is constituted by fusing together disparate entities: the corporeal and the mechanic. In doing so, JenniCAM offers a unique presentation of subjectivity, called here 'cyborg subjectivity'. The integration of the concept of subjectivity with characteristics associated with cyborgs makes for a new definition of what it means to be a subject. Donna Haraway defines a cyborg as 'a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as creature of fiction' (1991b: 149). In Haraway's conception, cyborgs are material creatures as well as manifestations of the fantastic, and the cyborg is 'resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity' (1991b: 151). These qualities are also found within JenniCAM. Through the integration of body and technology, JenniCAM is a hybrid, neither fully human nor fully machine yet constituted, in part, by both. Through Jenni's presentation of the private, she trespasses across traditional visual boundaries, always winking back at her audience. Through the playful negotiation of a subject/object position, JenniCAM emerges as a particular type of cyborg subject, one that seems to require and yet simultaneously resist certain traditional readings of female embodiment.

In the second half of this article, feminist film theory is used in combination with psychoanalysis to demonstrate the cyborg qualities of irony, intimacy, and perversity within JenniCAM. Feminist film theory is employed because it provides the vocabulary of the visual, of gender, and of desire to discuss what is happening in this unique text. As a perverse text, JenniCAM takes on characteristics of the traditional and then turns them on their head. For

example, the reading of Jenni's body by viewers is often highly sexualized and functions to perpetuate stereotypical representations of women. The images of Jenni's body lend themselves to a reading of JenniCAM through feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey's notion of the 'male gaze' (1988). However, this approach does not reveal the whole story: a psychoanalytic reading of the way in which the digital camera delivers images to audiences yields an ironic understanding of desire and self-objectification. A pre-oedipal reading of the function of the camera through Freud's notion of *fort-da* (1975) and his conception of the 'deferral of meaning' allows for the pleasure of both male and female viewers and opens up room for a new conversation about subjectivity in relation to objectification. Each of these readings of JenniCAM helps to define this unique phenomenon as a cyborg subject.

### HYBRIDITY

JenniCAM challenges traditional definitions of the subject and poses a unique way to conceive of subjectivity and the agency and power that is implied therein. If subjectivity as a clean category is no longer unified or dichotomous as asserted by postmodern theorists, then this paper takes on the project of describing an emergent subjectivity, one that is multiple and ironic. The locus of inquiry starts with the hybridized moniker: JenniCAM. Through this classification, both woman and machine become united in the creation of the cyborg subject. Haraway's cyborg counters the notion of the unified subject because it is a compilation, a combination of parts rather than a singular organism or machine. In the combination of flesh and hardware, a dynamic and unique entity arises. Within Haraway's framework, JenniCAM exists as a cyborg, disrupting boundaries and resisting monolithic definitions of the subject simply by the fact that Jenni has integrated herself with technology. Just like Haraway's cyborg, JenniCAM embraces aggregation rather than unification. In confusing dichotomous boundaries such as body/machine, private/public, and real/fiction, JenniCAM forces a rethinking of the female subject in relation to each binary opposition.

The constitution of the cyborg subject in JenniCAM through hybridity rather than through monolithic unity redefines what has once been normative. On the most fundamental level, the combination of what has been conceived of as living (organism) and non-living (machine) confuses the boundaries of what it means to be human. JenniCAM serves as a visual representation of the end of the unified body. The images of Jenni offered by the camera oscillate between a female body disconnected from her machine to the blurring of the distinction

between woman and her computer. When Jenni is in her bed, getting dressed, or on the phone, viewers can readily discern her body from the keyboard or computer. When Jenni sits at her computer, however, one has the sense that she has plugged her body into the machine and is connected to the mechanics of her equipment. The image of Jenni at her computer becomes an icon for that fusion, with her flesh melting into her keyboard. Fundamentally, viewers' knowledge of Jenni is shaped by the way in which the camera delivers the images. Viewers derive knowledge of Jenni's life through non-synchronous, interrupted images that change at regular intervals. The pace and narrative of Jenni's life is experienced by viewers in a timed, regimented, mechanical way rather than through serendipity or her own authored narrative. Instead, her life narrative is mechanized. This presentation of self transforms Jenni from a woman into a cyborg, as her life unfolds through technology.

### PERVERSIETY

Another component of being a cyborg is JenniCAM's undermining of traditional, unspoken lines of the public and private self. The erosion of the line between the private and the public composes part of the fascination with and abhorrence of JenniCAM, a perverse text. For many, Jenni is making a spectacle of herself—a 'specifically feminine danger' (Russo 1995: 53)—by transgressing notions of bourgeois femininity that uphold the woman as the guardian of morality and piety. Cultural politics have maintained a certain set of rules for the display of the female body. Jenni flouts these rules and offers herself to be looked at as both a public and a private subject. The entire world can see Jenni in her private space, her boudoir. Then again, this is nothing new, as Rebecca Schneider notes, 'The feminine is emblematic of the private sphere—the home, the family, and consumption—while the sphere of production bears gender as a masculine domain' (Schneider 1997: 72). The image of a woman in a bedroom is, in many ways, a cultural norm. What is unusual in this instance is that it is not only the woman in front of the camera, but it is the woman behind it too. Jenni is both viewer and viewee: she occupies the hybrid position of both object and subject; she is composer and is composed.

One of the most common questions asked of Jenni is 'why are you doing this?' (1998c: interview). People find it puzzling, peculiar, and perverted that someone would expose herself in such a graphic, public way. Descriptions of the JenniCAM phenomenon often garner remarks of astonishment and disgust. As one Washington, D.C. news anchor stated in reaction to a report on JenniCAM, 'Lotta strange things on that internet' (1998b: interview). The aversion to

JenniCAM lies in its 'profane' nature, the way in which it pushes against traditional definitions, particularly of private and public. That JenniCAM provokes such charged responses suggests that Jenni's presentation of identity transgresses normative expressions of subjectivity. Jenni's representation of her identity stabilizes and yet disrupts the process of subject formation by repeating yet resisting cultural norms. Through this new means of representation, JenniCAM confounds 'the domains of political and linguistic "representation" that have 'set out in advance the criterion by which subjects themselves are formed' (Butler 1990: 1) by simultaneously signifying as a woman and yet acting in a very unwomanly manner. The anxieties centred on JenniCAM suggest a breakdown in normative practices in how subjects are constituted. By acknowledging and repeating traditional representations of women, JenniCAM reiterates normative standards regarding gender. Yet, JenniCAM also discloses the ideological rules that govern binary oppositions by evincing tensions and de-naturalizing the formation of subjects.

References to JenniCAM in the media invariably mention the 'voyeuristic' elements of the phenomenon. As used by Freud, 'voyeurism' involves seeing what should not be seen. The object of the voyeur's gaze does not know it is being watched. Yet, Jenni anticipates and even invites the gaze of the world into her bedroom: she situates herself in front of the camera as well as behind it. Again, this dual position of viewer and viewee uncloaks the performativity involved in the production and reproduction of JenniCAM. By tempting the viewer with the fantasy of complete vision, of total knowledge, JenniCAM forces a reevaluation of the term 'voyeur.' JenniCAM uses its own images to rewrite a new relationship between the camera, the photographer, and the viewer by announcing the status of Jenni as an object yet refuting and resisting the traditional representations of objectification. By investing the object with vision and a camera, the multiple subjects of JenniCAM inhabit a space of plurality and abundance. Never pinned to positions of either subject or object, Jenni snaps her own picture, oversees her own viewing.

## PSYCHOANALYTIC READINGS OF JENNICAM

Due to the fact that Jenni is female and that JenniCAM supplies images of her partially clothed, naked, or engaged in sex at various moments, the dispute arises as to whether or not JenniCAM is simply pornography (1998c: interview). While the intentions and goals of this paper do not lie in defining what is and what is not pornographic, this inquiry is put forward in order to focus on the ways in which JenniCAM is ironic, intimate, and perverse – key

characteristics of cyborgs. The interest of feminist film theorists in disclosing the connection between vision, vulnerability and power fosters insightful readings that open new discussions of female representation.

The tools and lexicon of psychoanalysis and the writings of feminist film theorists provide a framework for uncovering **how human desire operates in the formation of the subject in JenniCAM**. The often-contradictory ways in which desire has been theorized demand an explanation of **JenniCAM not as a monolithic text, but as a text of diverse pleasures**. Firstly, oedipal desires at work in JenniCAM will be examined by using Laura Mulvey's concept of the 'male gaze' (1988). Then a discussion of what is called the pre-oedipal desires of this text will be used to provide an explanation of the multiplicity of viewers' desires. These two uses of psychoanalysis will be juxtaposed in order to dramatize the **contradictory, ironic nature of desire at work in JenniCAM**. In the first reading, the long-standing tradition of feminist film criticism that regards vision as the desire for mastery and control helps to place JenniCAM into a historical tradition of images of objectified women's bodies. In the second reading, the pre-oedipal stage of development provides the vocabulary to show how **fusing a digital camera and the World Wide Web produces the pleasures created through the simulation of the *fort-da* game described by Freud**. In this 'game', pleasure is gained through the continual deferral of both meaning and a sense of wholeness and control. In fact, in contrast to oedipal desire, control is given up in order to **achieve pre-oedipal pleasure**. These two psychoanalytic readings of JenniCAM reveal the multiple, often contradictory, ways in which desire works, whether it be through the oedipal fetishization of Jenni's body or the treatment of her body as the site of pre-oedipal unity and wholeness in the *fort-da* game. In combination, these two different mechanisms of desire offer readings of JenniCAM that account for the pleasurable readings of both male and female viewers. Moreover, the structure of the JenniCAM site itself speaks to Jenni's awareness of the mechanisms of desires. It reveals **a playful manipulation of pleasure on her part**, which raises questions about traditional definitions of the gendered subject.

### JenniCAM as object

Given that JenniCAM is produced, and made available, through language, **its images cannot exist outside the realm of the patriarchal binary of male and female, masculine and feminine**. Consequently the knowledge produced is not neutral. **Western society has a long history of objectifying women, whether it be through the fresco or the JPEG**. The 'problem' of representation brings to the fore the struggles within feminism to find a satisfactory solution.

Particularly in photographic media, the situation has become one where, as feminist film theorist Mary Ann Doane notes, 'The simple gesture of directing a camera toward a woman has become equivalent to a terrorist act' (1988: 216). Is this the case in JenniCAM? For some feminists, the critique of the dominant discourses of gender through psychoanalysis continues to provide productive readings of material hegemony.

According to Laura Mulvey, women inhabit the traditional exhibitionist role and understand themselves to 'connote to-be-looked-at-ness' (1988: 62). The female body always signifies the other. In psychoanalytic theory, the marked status of the female figure is explained as representing the threat of castration because her body reveals an absence or lack of the phallus. Marked as such, women continually signify castration anxiety. According to Mulvey, the male unconscious adopts two strategies for reconciling this castration anxiety:

The preoccupation with the original trauma (investigating the woman, demystifying her mystery), counterbalanced by the devaluation, punishment or saving of the guilty object . . . or else complete disavowal of castration by the substitution of a fetish object or turning the represented figure itself into a fetish so that it becomes reassuring rather than dangerous. (Mulvey 1998: 64)

The first avenue – that of the preoccupation with the female body – introduces the notion of the voyeur. In the instance of JenniCAM, there is a voyeuristic pleasure derived from the study and analysis of the body and life of a female subject, the othered body. In addition, the site of observation, Jenni's boudoir, invokes the semiotics of the most private of spaces. Thus, the voyeur has crossed over into a once-secret space in an attempt to 'demystify the mystery' of woman, which is the goal of oedipal desire. In contrast to the airbrushed images of the pornographic websites easily found on the internet, Jenni's natural body becomes the fetish, the sexualized object. Definitions of 'real' female bodies are imported and mapped onto Jenni's body, this time as a means to obtain pleasure.

Another method of escape from the fear of castration involves the fetishization of the woman in order to transform her into something pleasurable and thus repress the notion that the woman is linked to the threat. This disavowal fosters fetishistic scopophilia, whereby certain objects – not necessarily connected to sexual pleasure – come to stand in for the erotic. JenniCAM plays with the notion of the fetish through the development of an auxiliary feature on the JenniCAM site. On the 'anatomy one-oh-one' portion of the website, Jenni segments her own body by cropping images of her face and torso into smaller and smaller areas. Singular web pages highlight isolated parts such as her

eyes, toes, tongue, and feet. In addition, Jenni writes a short paragraph on each featured body part. For example, when supplementing an image of her eyes she writes:

I've been told (though you wouldn't know it by looking at this picture) that my eyes look like sunflowers: there's a dark blue outside ring, like the sky. There's a green middle ring, like the leaves. And in the middle is a bright yellow spot, like the petals with the iris at centre. My eyelashes are a light brown colour. And in school (elementary, that is) I could always cross my eyes better than anyone else. That's talent for you. Maybe I'll have to include a cool video of the really neat trick I can do – it usually grosses people out, but it seems worth it, doesn't it?  
(Ringley 1998a).

In an excessive and overt manner, Jenni breaks apart the image of her body and offers it to her viewers as a way to get to know her. The conversational discussions of her body act as a means to study and scrutinize Jenni's body, but also help viewers learn about her history, her opinions, and her personality. Jenni embraces the reading of her body as a fetish as a means to introduce herself to her viewers, to convey her identity.

In this example, the hegemonic portrait of the fragmented female body offered by Jenni is positioned next to an autobiographical description of the fetishized object. In contrast to the body part in isolation, these body parts are supplemented with a caption written by Jenni herself. This auxiliary, explanatory text allows Jenni to author a discourse about her own body at the same time that she formulates the fetish. This autobiographical fetish reveals how Jenni reads her body as a text across which others write meaning. She does not start out by saying, 'I think my eyes look like sunflowers', rather, she uses the phrase, 'I've been told . . .'. This reference to the description of her body by others, which occurs in other descriptions of body parts as well, points to how Jenni focuses on the reading of her body by others. This integration of objectification with the creation of a subject 'I' forms a complicated text that defies the traditional readings of the female body as an object.

### Multiple pleasures in JenniCAM

Although the reading of JenniCAM through the lens of voyeurism and fetishistic scopophilia is quite useful, to give the impression that desire operates through a singular mode in JenniCAM is to do an injustice to the multiple ways in which pleasure manifests itself in human experience and to make monolithic judgements about the demographics of JenniCAM spectators. In fact, these readings of JenniCAM leave out the pleasure that female viewers may receive

from watching Jenni and the way in which Jenni herself plays with her own objectification. Building on the concept of desire as that which cannot be obtained, feminist film theorists writing after Mulvey (Studlar 1988) rethink the grounding of desire in the wish for control and look to the search for the return of pre-oedipal unity as a motivation of desire. While the continual deferral of meaning is frightening, it also operates as a source of pleasure that is derived from that which is just out of reach, a situation that mirrors the viewer's engagement with JenniCAM in certain ways. In other words, the pre-oedipal unconscious propels and motivates the repetition of certain acts in order to gain pleasure from what Freud called the *fort-da*, the back and forth, the loss and return of objects that signify the memory of the mother.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud develops a theory of desire from his observations of his grandson's engaged play with a ball attached to a string. By watching his grandson's joy from throwing a ball away from his body and then retrieving it by pulling on a string, Freud conceives of his grandson's wish for the mother's return. The figure of the mother, the source of pleasure and unity, was lost in the establishment of the infant's ego through the entrance into 'language'. The entrance into language inaugurates the infant in the world of the symbolic. At this moment, the profound loss of the pre-linguistic, unified mother commences what Lacan would characterize as the continual wish to return to the earliest stage of secure meaning. Instead, language hails the endless metonymic system of deferral where one object is endlessly substituted for another. Freud believed this object (for his infant grandson, the ball) stood in for the memory of the unified mother. He theorizes that in the game, the terror of loss is endured and even repeated in order to bring about the pleasure generated by the hopeful return of the object. According to Freud, the ball-as-mother serves as reminder of a time prior to the establishment of the symbolic order, to a moment of stasis and wholeness (Eagleton 1996). Hence, the formation of the relationship of *fort-da* offers an explanation of the pleasure of the repetitive in contrast to the theories of desire centred on control and mastery. If an object is endowed as a site of meaning and wholeness, the continual disappearance and reappearance of that object can be a source of intense pleasure, despite the fact that the wish for a return to wholeness is never fulfilled. Both men and women can derive pleasure from the system of *fort-da*, as it is not dependent on the establishment of an ego.

The mapping of the *fort-da* game onto the functionality of JenniCAM yields a background for understanding the pleasures of such a text. Structured remarkably like the *fort-da* game, JenniCAM engages the viewer in the back and forth, presence and absence, of not only Jenni's body but of the JenniCAM

image itself. Jenni's body is conceived as the source of unified meaning, disappearing and reappearing at random. Her corporeality operates as a metonym of meaning. JenniCAM images are uploaded to the web and replace the old in a continual cycle of refreshment. From one clip to the next, the image has the potential to radically change from, for example, a picture of Jenni sleeping in her bed to one where her bed is made and she is no longer present. Jenni's body is not a fixed symbol within the text: it changes and moves, disappears and reappears. In fact, the promise of witnessing Jenni's body is often not met either because she is physically not present or because the image is blurry. The viewer takes pleasure in the disappearance and return of the image; its loss and return brings great pleasure to those engaged in the *fort-da* pleasure of JenniCAM. The pleasure of repetition does not originate in mastery over or control of the object (Jenni's body); it stems from a search for unity, a return to a past that cannot be retrieved.

No matter how viewers hear about JenniCAM, their first glimpse of the site may or may not involve the display of Jenni's body. There is the risk that Jenni will be on vacation, out shopping, or in another room, creating the anxiety of the potential of her absence. What is critical, however, is that despite the fact that Jenni's body is not necessarily present in the production of JenniCAM, the site does not make sense without a notion of her body, her being. Thinking back to the hybridity of the name (Jenni + CAM), the synthesis requires at the very least the promise of a corporeal Jenni. Within the psychoanalytic framework of the *fort-da* game, it is this promise of her return that propels the viewing of JenniCAM. The promise of her return also offers a potential answer to the question of why people watch JenniCAM, especially when there is nothing there the majority of the time. Further, her expected return can be anticipated. Although this seems insignificant, the gratification derived from anticipated pleasure should not be underestimated in JenniCAM. Aided by a timer directly below the image, the JenniCAM viewer can wait with relish to see what happens in the next sequence. Even if Jenni is not present, there is always the promise of the next reload, whether in twenty minutes or two minutes. Without the concept of Jenni's body, whether supplemented with a visual representation of Jenni or not, JenniCAM does not make sense. Framed in this way, Jenni's body functions as the locus of meaning, as the site of plenitude, as the root of unified meaning of JenniCAM.

The e-mail correspondence and fan sites that are produced in order to keep track of Jenni's presence on camera buttress the concept that Jenni's body serves to provide meaning for JenniCAM. Her viewers send e-mails to friends or use electronic mailing lists to alert each other when something exciting or new is

occurring on JenniCAM. For example, short e-mails like, 'Jenni is naked on JenniCAM.org just now!!!!..,' are dispersed to inform others of the goings-on of JenniCAM (May 1998). Through this type of behaviour, fans demonstrate the value they place on the corporeality of JenniCAM. Their excitement surrounds the possibility of witnessing Jenni's body in action, and part of the pleasure becomes trying to catch Jenni in motion, to freeze her in time and space in the hopes of gaining knowledge of the 'real' Jenni.

In another instance, a fan from the UK developed a 'JenniCAM activity graph' to allow viewers to know when Jenni is most active. At this website, a graph charts Jenni's movement patterns over the previous 24 hours, measuring the fluctuation of motion in between clips. This website's internal mechanism 'attempts to assign an activity rating to the current image, telling us just how much is going on between images. The graph shows {her activities over the course of} the last hour and the last day (Manley 1998). This site also gives users the option of opening another smaller browser of the graph so that viewers can be conscious of Jenni's movement while doing other work.

Fan activity like this points to the deep investment viewers have in witnessing Jenni's presence. Whether naked or not, Jenni's body and, moreover, her activity, is of extreme interest to viewers. Although the first analysis signals a preoccupation with Jenni's body as a sexual object, the second seeks to track Jenni, to know when she is animate. In both cases, the implication stands that without the embodied subject, JenniCAM provides little meaning to viewers. It is the presence of Jenni that viewers desire. Thus, Jenni opens up a space for conversations about desires not rooted in mastery and control but in the wish for pre-oedipal unity.

Further, the premise on which viewers pay for access to JenniCAM also supports the use of *fort-da* pleasure in explaining the behaviour of viewers of JenniCAM. 'Guest' viewers receive a new image every twenty minutes without a fee while 'members' receive a new picture every two minutes by connecting to a password-protected site. The membership access does not provide anything more than a faster refresh rate of the digital images; it does not provide a secret archive of nude images of Jenni made available when one signs on and pays US\$15. That is to say, what the membership provides is the opportunity to cycle through the *fort-da* cycle of pleasure at a faster rate. The tensions of whether or not the source of unified meaning (Jenni) will return are more quickly confirmed or quelled through membership. Thus, viewers pay a fee in order to reduce the length of time required to wait for the next return of the image. The apparatus of the digital camera in combination with the two psychoanalytic readings of JenniCAM offer identificatory positions for both male and female

viewers. The viewers of JenniCAM cannot be conceived as a monolithic group, particularly given the global nature of the internet. Offering multiple ways that pleasure functions in JenniCAM addresses this plurality. In its capacity to address various kinds of viewers, JenniCAM demands an investigation into not only the images produced but also the mechanism involved in the creation and delivery of those images.

## CONCLUSION

JenniCAM's display of the weaving and unweaving of epistemological categories serves as 'technological drag' in the same way that Butler talks about how dressing in drag undermines the naturalization of the categories of male and female (Butler 1993). JenniCAM embraces a playfulness, an ironic stance in this subject/object position. At the same time that Jenni creates and sees, she announces her awareness of her position as something to be seen. She acknowledges her objectification through web pages like 'anatomy one-oh-one,' where she posts images of specific fragmented body parts, such as her eyes, along with a narrative about her eyes. As Haraway writes, the cyborg is '{n}o longer structured by the polarity of public and private' (Haraway 1991b: 151). The cyborg has no ties to protecting aspects of itself from the social, for the cyborg exceeds the boundaries by making explicit the link between 'sexuality, vulnerability, and power' (Schneider 1997: 77).

Jenni's combination of the web and her digital camera confuses ideological rubrics, categories that implicitly bear the mark of gender. In its hybridity, JenniCAM suggests a type of 'subversive reterritorialization' of the semiotics of gender contemporaneous with the process of subject formation and evolution (Butler 1993: 19). By pushing against categories such as private/public, Jenni tacitly redefines what it means to be female within a given binary classification. In other words, Jenni may not be using the traditional tools of drag – her clothing, her make-up, etc. – to push against notions of gender, but in the production of JenniCAM, she forces a questioning of the arbitrary boundaries through which identity is constituted, repeated, and naturalized.

In order to imagine a new discourse, the visionary descriptions of feminist film theorists offer clues to redefining the terms of representation and subjectivity of JenniCAM. Teresa de Lauretis proscribes the invention of not only new strategies or texts but also conceiving of an entirely new 'social subject.' She suggests that the project of feminist filmmakers is to ask 'how to effect another vision: to construct other objects and subjects of vision, and to formulate the conditions of representability of another social subject' (de Lauretis 1987: 135).

The challenges faced by feminist filmmakers to envision and imagine new relationships within the sphere of the social provide a window through which to see the potential of the medium of the internet. Ringley may not have an overt, articulated feminist agenda, but those who follow in her footsteps may expand the uses of the digital camera as a tool for political change. The potential to stretch the definitions of vision and representation and to reconceive of the position of the object as well as the subject that is suggested by JenniCAM may prove fruitful as a tool of feminist transformation. By offering a new type of social subject, JenniCAM serves as a cairn, a memorial to the past as well as a signal of things to come. We can only wonder what new configurations of vision and gender the realm of digital cameras will bring.

JenniCAM highlights the way in which the vision of the viewer does not produce stable knowledge. Jenni is always on the move, never allowing for a final reading yet inviting the viewer to use her body as a canvas for the creation of meaning. JenniCAM muddies our understanding of the power of watching and the privilege of sight in the way in which she pushes against definitions of private and public as well as the way she exposes the shifting meanings of bodies. In closing, it is asserted that despite its seeming hegemony, JenniCAM is a text filled with play and complexity. JenniCAM offers an ironic cyborg subjectivity, one that uses the historical traditions of vision to tinker with the semiotics of representation.

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