

SUMMARY

Gendered bodies and new technologies

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Gendered bodies and new technologies has one founding premise, namely that embodiment constitutes a non-negotiable prerequisite for human life. Although this may seem like an obvious statement, it is a statement that needs to be affirmed in the virtual age wherein we live. New technologies in most of its forms tend to discredit the embodied aspects of human life and instead concentrate on the disembodied aspects thereof. Among new technologies the following are specifically noted: microelectronics, telecommunication networks, nano-technology, virtual reality, computer-mediated communications and other forms of computer technologies. In short, "new technologies" refer to all things digital. I explore the issue of embodiment from a gendered perspective, seeing that the female body is the embodiment most likely to be discarded, not only in metaphysical systems, but also in developments within new technologies. The main focus of my gendered analysis is on the visual image and more specifically as it manifests in cinema, advertisements, the Internet, interactive artwork and television. The critical perspective that foregrounds my approach is that of the fairly new field of cyberfeminism. The main concern of cyberfeminism being a critical engagement of women's position in terms of new technologies. In this regard, cyberfeminism does not perpetuate an anti-technology stance, but rather embraces technology by emphasising the embodied nature of our existence.

I have identified four body types to explore the interactions between bodies and new technologies. They are: the techno-transcendent body; the techno-enhanced body; the marked body and the cyborg body. The four body types differ in the way in which gendered embodiment is negotiated in its interaction with new technologies and these are highlighted and discussed in the four chapters dealing with these four body types.

KEYWORDS

Gender studies; new technologies; cyberfeminism; embodiment; cyborgs; visual culture; miming strategies; women and technology.