

(MEDIA REVIEW)

Performing the Border. 42 minutes, VHS, color, 1999.

Writing Desire, 25 minutes, VHS, color, 2000.

Remote Sensing. 53 minutes, VHS, color, 2001.

Filmmaker Ursula Biemann, Switzerland. Distributed by Women Make Movies, 462 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. Tel: (212) 925-0606; e-mail: cinema@wmm.com; website: www.wmm.com; Sale \$250.00, rental \$60.00 (each).

Europlex. 20 minutes, VHS, color, English or Spanish, 2003.

Filmmaker Ursula Biemann in collaboration with Angela Sanders, Switzerland.

Distributed by Women Make Movies, 462 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10012. Tel: (212) 925-0606; e-mail: cinema@wmm.com; website: www.wmm.com; Sale \$195.00, rental \$60.00.

Reviewed by Pamela C. Rosi⁸

Swiss-based filmmaker, curator, and cultural theorist, Ursula Biemann has recently created a series of critical feminist video essays that interrogate and map the physical, metaphorical, and gendered geographies of borderlands produced by the intersection of new technologies and globalized capitalist economies. Like the transitional performative spaces that are the subject of this series, video essays are a mixed “genre” of practice that taps the creative potential of mediating between cultural spaces while deploying innovative aesthetic strategies.

In her commentary on her video essays, Biemann categorizes them as part documentary, part art, transgressing the borders of both. In a documentary tradition they engage reality, but their gaze is subjective, disassociative, and theoretically situated in post-colonial situations of diaspora, migration, and ambivalent experiences of nation, borders, and belonging. Likewise, as art, video essays concern more than aesthetics since they are socially involved and explicitly political. In reviewing Biemann’s videos, it is qualities of contingency and ambivalence that configure their transdisciplinary nature and experimental qualities. Reflective of the digital age we live in, the imagery of video essays is highly concentrated, non-linear, and draws on multiple sources of knowledge and audio-visual effects. As cultural studies theorist Imre Szeman notes: “it is no easy task to deconstruct these visual documents” (1). “Stuff it! Distill it! Stratify and compress it” are mottos of the digital essayist.

In mapping the transnational topographies of border zones, Biemann focuses on several places to investigate their layered complexity. The first video, *Performing the Border*, focuses on Ciudad Juarez, a Mexican border town located in a Free Trade Zone where the first US high-tech assembly plants were built some twenty years ago. The second, *Writing Desire*, examines the internet as a space for the construction and pathways of desire. The third, *Remote Sensing*, utilizes satellite technology to monitor the trafficking and migration of women who transverse national borders to work in the world-wide sex industry. And the fourth, *Europlex*, fixes on the Spanish-Moroccan

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border to follow the crossings of three groups of Moroccan women: those who clandestinely smuggle clothing on their bodies; *domesticas* moving in and out of Moroccan and European time zones; and women working in trans-national zones for the European market.

While all four of Biemann's videos link border zones to globalization, they utilize diverse ways of recording this. Shooting from an aerial perspective gives a remote view of traffic but eliminates specificities; shooting from the ground gives visibility to the movements of people, capital, and technology to make gender and power relations evident. And camera zooming can distance or embed the viewer in border spaces providing a sense of their compressed reality.

Performing the Border opens with the camera's lens positioned in the front of a car as it speeds through the landscapes of the Mexican city of Ciudad Juarez and its desert hinterlands. This topography covers the "entertainment" area, the industrial parks of the *maquiladoras* (golden factories), and thousands of shacks spread out across the desert built by the *maquilas'* largely female work force as unauthorized housing. Gendered power relations are clearly imprinted on this geography. Shifting to an aerial view, the camera next scans the 5000 mile militarized border to visualize its physical reality. This surveillance continues through the film but is interjected with interviews made with women activists, members of local women's organizations, and discharged workers. According to Biemann, this "flow" of discourse references the video's title that the border is a metaphor of performance constructed and reconstructed by the movements of people and things crossing it ("Border videographies" 3). In other words, there can be no border without crossings and the discursive space they open up to document its lived reality.

One of the first stories narrated is about Concha, who first crossed the border to smuggle cigarettes but later organized ways to illicitly transport pregnant Mexican women wanting to give birth in the United States. This idea of "crossings" is further reinforced by video clips showing women pouring into the *maquiladoras*, the bus rides women take to these factories at dawn, cars and horsemen crossing the desert, and dinghies seen floating down a swirling river. This flow of images and verbal commentaries intersect to illuminate the three features of border lands that Biemann wishes to examine and theorize: the feminization of the labor force, the sexualization of the border, and the violence that borderlands instigate against young women.

Outsourcing the production of high-tech components by US firms to free trade zones along the U.S.-Mexican border has feminized the labor force in Mexican towns, including Ciudad Juarez. As a voiceover explains, "within a short time, a new technological culture of repetition, registration, and control was introduced into the desert city." Because control and dexterity were vital to the robotic processes required by assembly line production, young women were recruited to the labor force, not men. The female worker is thereby "technologized" and "dehumanized" as her body parts are assigned different technological functions "turning it into a disposable, exchangeable, and marketable component" ("Border videographies" 2). In the video, Biemann does not show extensive footage of these "technologies of repression" (Volkart 2) but gets activists and discharged workers to describe their effects on the regulation of female lives and bodies. As a voiceover announces, "the *maquiladora* is a laboratory of deregulation." But the women interviewed describe a different situation. Rather than being employed in

an equitable system, the productive and reproductive lives of female workers are regulated by the patriarchal structures of the *maquiladora*, where even a request for a cafeteria can be a cause for dismissal.

Given the economic pressures on outsourcing to keep wages low, Biemann's interest in the feminization of the labor concerns the effects that substandard pay has had on sexualizing the border. "Gender matters to capital" is a text that appears on the video screen as an old prostitute describes how many women working in the *macquiladoras* do not make enough money to fulfill family obligations and so turn to prostitution for more income. One disturbing insight Biemann says she gained working on the border was the interpenetration of the sexual and labor markets, which, for many women, became "a long sensitive negotiation of survival" (Szeman 2).

However, a more positive effect shown in the video about the feminization of the labor force is the effect that changing income patterns are having on gender relations. Because women outnumber men in Ciudad Juarez, one aspect of their new consumer power is to feminize the entertainment industry where, women cheer at male stripper shows and enjoy song lyrics composed to appeal to female sexual desires. To symbolize the opening of this new eroticized female space, images of dancing women are tinted blue because, as an overvoice comments, "this space is not merely defined by material circumstances but by the emotional imaginary world of women who want to be in command of their bodies" ("Border videographies" 6).

Nevertheless, the shift in income patterns and traditional gender relations brought about by the *macquiladoras* has resulted in violent reprisals for some women. The most disturbing aspect of *Performing the Border* is the footage of serial murders that, since 1994, have taken the lives of more than three hundred Mexican women. Most victims have been dismembered and, in a bizarre twist, some have had their clothing interchanged with those belonging to other corpses.

What motivates such depraved violence against women? In concluding the video, Biemann dismisses arguments linking the killings to drug trafficking, prostitution, or cultural machismo. Instead, she argues that a systematic connection exists between *maquila* culture--which treats women's bodies as interchangeable machine parts lacking personal identity--and the murders, where victims' bodies and identities are also fragmented. Serial killing is thus theorized as "pathology proper to machine culture" (Ali 3; "Performing the Border" 4). While this proposition is likely to raise some eyebrows, the video is certain to stimulate discussion about free trade zones, as well as the complex dynamics of U.S.-Mexican border culture, including its pathologies.

Writing Desire, Biemann's second video essay, has fewer documentary qualities than *Performing the Borders*, and is more experimental. Its topic is the "dream" screen of the Internet and how its fantasies disembody sexuality and promote the global movement of women from the Third World to the First World. Although the Internet is becoming more accessible around the world, www services are not free but are a growing arm of capitalism expanded by new web technologies. How, then, are Internet consumers to be enticed into long distance sexual desires and attachments by cyber electronics? *Writing Desire* explores and theorizes this process, including the gender inequalities it perpetuates and the role sexual and racial stereotypes play in romantic fantasies, which, viewers are reminded, are "always culturally constituted."

To simulate sites of desire as they appear on a computer monitor, the video opens with a view of a tropical island to be entered through categories of country, sex, age, occupation, etc. This is followed by flashing photos of Asian women and video clips of Caucasian women to suggest the choice of female bodies and faces available to arouse the fantasies of the web browser. However, to document that these flat robotic images can produce romantic partnerships in the “real” world, Maris Bustamante, a Mexican professor and feminist, describes how, after becoming frustrated by local machismo, she turned to the internet to meet and marry a U.S. Marine--a success substantiated for viewers by a smiling family portrait.

In theorizing the “bridging of fantasies” that made such an unlikely match become reality, Biemann proposes in voiceover comments that in cyberspace, people are taken out of context, which enables material signs of political, ideological, and class values to be sublimated or blended out. When this occurs, fantasies are intensified and the body is cut off from its local and social ties. In this state of suspended realities, the seductive powers of writing are then given space to develop a sense of intimacy and attachment. As Bustamante herself explains, she could not believe she could fall in love with a US Marine--but she did not know him in “real” life.

In the video’s visual imagery, which is as important to communicating theoretical concepts as the scripted dialogue, night scenes of planes coasting into docking stations are metaphors for the sensation of approaching while being suspended in space (“Female Geobodies” 2). Airports are, after all, quintessential transit locations which people pass through to reach other destinations. As a female voice is heard saying off camera, “suspended realities simulate a permanent state of being in love...a sense of always approaching but never reaching...” Following this statement, another space of suspended desire is framed as the camera pans a darkened room in which a woman in a black bra is shown typing at her computer. Perhaps a double entendre is being suggested here: she is both a desirable and desiring woman. But as in many other places of this fast-paced video, meanings are elusive. This reflects how learning occurs on the Internet where, “meaning has to be extracted and combined individually by the viewer” (Szeman 6).

Moving on from the post-modern discourse of gender-theoreticians speaking about writing desire and its disembodiments, the video turns to the fantasies and economics of the globalized bride market. Commercial sites, such as *Russian.brides.com* flash on the screen, followed by digitalized images of women giving their geographic location and body measurements. Most women participating in the global bride market are screened by agencies, which manage the presentation of the women’s bodies and messages of desire. In one scene, women are filmed having their legs measured to see if they conform to western standards of thinness. A voiceover briefly refers to the pathology of anorexia, but the warning is lost in the primary focus on how websites package Third World women’s bodies and dreams. As an example, a young blonde Russian woman appears on camera in a seductive gown. As she models her body, a list of her desirable qualities moves across the screen to market her as a perfect object for consumption:

she is beautiful and feminine...she is loving and traditional...she is humble and devoted...she likes to listen to mellow music...the smile is her rhetorical gesture...she believes in lasting marriage and a happy home...she is the copy of the First World’s past....

This romantic message--many others are available with the click of a mouse--is made to appeal to the fantasies of western men searching for traditional wives who are docile, supportive, and aspire to being loving home-makers--but with a touch of the exotic.

Advertising women's bodies for romance is not, however, new since the mail order bride business has been carried on through catalogues since the 70's. What is new is the speed and space which electronic technologies now make available for these liaisons. Beyond this, Berman also wants to emphasize that, while the marketing strategies of global bride sites package women as sex objects for male consumption, women use their sex appeal for their own ends--something Biemann also noted in *Performing the Border* about prostitution. This means women cannot be reduced to being mere objects of desire. To escape the poverty of their lives, women living in Asia or Eastern Europe utilize the Internet dream world as active subjects pursuing their dream to migrate to the West. Biemann points out that, unlike many Western women who experience writing desire in cyberspace as something that is "playful and fun," Third World women see virtual reality and its activities as having real life consequences. For them, "discourses of romantic desire intertwine with a desire for survival" ("Female Geobodies" 2).

However, what interests Biemann most in the intertwining of the inscription of desire on the female body and female agency is that it opens up a speculative space in representation and broadens restrictive figures of femininity bound by the binary contrast of subject/object ("Female Geobodies" 2). By exploring this in-between space artistically and discursively, *Writing Desire* raises challenging questions about women's sexuality, desire, and agency, as well as relations of gender, cyber technology, and transnational capitalism affecting the global circulation of women's bodies from East to West--particularly in the booming bride market.

In her third video essay, *Remote Sensing*, Biemann focuses again on the flow of women and capital across national borders and the gendered topographies this produces. However, unlike *Writing Desire*, which focuses on how Internet technologies assist these displacements, *Remote Sensing* investigates ways that remote electronic data collected by NASA satellites can be recoded to create a feminine geography of border zones and their trajectories. As viewers are told at the beginning of the video, although the geography produced by satellites is very accurate, it is highly abstract and cannot provide social meanings for the movements it records. For this information, a "ground-up view" is needed to fill in the data recorded by remote sensing.

To suggest the space to be explored between orbital and ground-level perspectives on sexual trafficking, the camera deploys visual effects similar to those seen in both earlier videos: i.e., zooming, split screens showing simultaneous views of geographical spaces and movements, blurring, and layered imagery combining written information and moving events. For example, viewers often see printed itineraries superimposed on film clips of journeys or scenes at border crossings where trafficking of women is concentrated. Furthermore, because crossings occur legally and illegally, Biemann describes them as creating geographies and counter-geographies, arguing that both need recognition in the layered gendered spaces of border topographies.

In *Remote Sensing*, trajectories of movement given special attention include: the Mekong Delta, which traffics women from Laos, Burma, Vietnam and Cambodia into

Thailand; the German-Czech border, which attracts women from countries of the former Soviet block; the flow of Filipina women into Nigeria; and traffic produced by military bases in South-Asia, where large zones of prostitution appeared around every military camp. As the video records, the numbers of women involved in sex work at these sites are substantial. Today, for example, 27,000 prostitutes are servicing U.S. military bases in Korea. And after U.S. bases were closed in Thailand and the Philippines, these zones became new epicenters of sex tourism and trafficking, which are visualized in the video by shots of Angeles City, Philippines.

In the Mekong Delta, the border zone that the video focuses on first, Thailand is theorized as a site of destination and dispersal where the movement of women is both voluntary and involuntary, making the interpretation of trafficking complex. Women from the poorer countries--Laos, Burma, and Cambodia--were trafficked to work in lower-end brothels of the Thai sex industry, where they were kept as semi-slaves to pay off their transportation costs. Some girls were tricked at home by promises of being hired as dancers; others were sold by parents living in extreme poverty.

Documenting the constraints put on young prostitutes, the video shows clips of a Burmese brothel in Thailand. Shot in semi-darkness, it shows a large caption stating: "SHE GETS PAID BY CLIENTS IN CONDOM WRAPPERS. SHE NEVER SEES CASH." Without money or a passport, it is difficult for these women to escape enforced prostitution. On the other hand, the thrills of city life draw village girls to Bangkok or Chiang Mai, and others are kidnapped and sent to China for purposes of forced marriage because the Chinese one-child birth policy has created a shortage of girls.

Scenes shot at the Thai-Cambodian border also illustrate Biemann's argument that border ethnography needs to pay attention to "counter-geography"--that is, to illicit or illegal border crossings as alternative circuits of survival. As seen in the video, although some women have their passports stamped "dancer," a stamp that allows them to enter the sex industry legally, many others cross the border illegally. They do so by bribing guards or by hiring escorts who, like Concha in *Performing the Border*, serve as paid guides for alternative crossing routes.

On the East German-Czech border, shown next in film, Biemann observes that, just as in Thailand, young women work as prostitutes voluntarily and involuntarily, but with the expectation that the dreary work is transitory. Underscoring this, the video shows bleak film clips of young women soliciting along highways or standing in brothel windows displaying their bodies to passing cars. As Biemann describes in her voiceover commentary, the work is robotic and impersonal. Price is negotiated quickly and the product is delivered automatically, as on a *maquiladora* assembly line.

Similar to the situation on the Thai border, the German government, in secret complicity with trafficking, lets girls cross the border as cabaret or bar workers knowing that their sexual services will add valuable capital to the national economy. It's the same when prostitutes working in Germany seek to migrate west to countries like Switzerland; they are only issued visas for work in the lucrative entertainment business. However, topographies of the global sex trade may always be re-routed in response to factors affecting their growth or retrenchment.

As an example of re-routing, *Remote Sensing* shows footage of young Filipina girls being trafficked to work in brothels in Nigeria. As a girl who is interviewed describes, she and others were duped into believing they were going to Greece to work as

waitresses. Instead, they discovered that their passports were stamped Nigeria. Why were these girls re-routed to Africa? As they learned on arrival, they were there to work in brothels just set up to service Chinese business men visiting Nigeria to negotiate trade deals--but who also wanted sex with virgins.

Returning to Southeast Asia, the final segment of *Remote Sensing* examines satellite sensing data connected to US military bases in Korea and the Philippines, where trafficking has produced large zones of prostitution around each site. As viewers learn from a representative of a women's group working to stop trafficking, this is difficult when it is supported by military policies of providing "Rest and Recreation" areas for US servicemen. Each time a large US carrier docks, 10,000 men are discharged, each, "eventually ending up with a girl on his arm." To visualize nightlife in these "R and R" zones, the camera pans scenes of go-go girls dancing or caressing men at bars. Interviews with prostitutes then demonstrate their desire to create "romantic" relationships with men to escape from grueling hours of sex work in brothels.

In contrast to the mechanized sex work practiced by European prostitutes in the video, Biemann states that prostitutes in South-East Asia cater to the nostalgic desires of western men and seek to develop personal rapport with clients to encourage them to return. In military zones, this strategy often leads to liaisons where prostitutes leave bar work temporarily to live with one client as a dutiful wifely housekeeper. Now that former military bases in Thailand and the Philippines have been transformed into sites of new sex tourism, these places have become famous for their tropical beaches and for the warm hospitality of their "girls." To visualize this pleasure scene, video clips show prostitutes giving clients soothing massages, while pot-bellied older men ogle at the bodies of young girls soliciting on the street. These young girls may also display their bodies on internet sites of the global bride market, as suggested by several clips from *Writing Desire* that are edited into the video.

These images raise questions about how prostitution should be interpreted, which is the issue that most concerns Biemann and other woman activists. For example, should prostitutes be seen as victims of patriarchal capitalist systems, or is their sex work better considered a job allowing them agency for their own desires? Is there a moral distinction to be made between trafficked women and women who voluntarily chose prostitution as their means of survival? Biemann argues, however, that posing binary questions limits them like the data gathering of satellite geographic information systems. They are unable to explore the "grey zone of negotiation," which women engage in while doing sex work, and the different concepts of prostitution to which they adhere. From an orbital perspective, the routes of the global sex economy gets sensed and identified, but it is only on the ground that the multilayered meanings and strategies of prostitution can be identified as women move in and out of sex work in often contradictory ways as they adopt alternative circuits of survival ("Border videographies" 7-8).

With its interest in linking satellite technology to the sexualization and prostitution of women in global capitalism, *Remote Sensing* will provoke sharp questions about state complicity in supporting the international trafficking of women, the consequences for women of the U.S. military presence in South East Asia, and whether prostitution should be legalized and destigmatized as work. But there are also lacunae in this video. While it focuses on border crossings and seeks to widen the space of the feminine, it does not include transgendered females or the topographies of transgendered

sex work. The counter geographies of transgendered crossings should be made visible and mapped in theorizing about borderlands.

Europlex, Biemann's fourth video essay, made with anthropologist Angela Sanders, is about traffic crossing the Spanish-Moroccan border, including routes across the Mediterranean Sea and those into the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, situated in Moroccan territory. In this intersection of Europe and Africa, traffic is dense as people and goods flow in open and clandestine circuits across sovereign borders. Like Biemann's other videos, *Europlex* is shot with an array of camera techniques and a cacophonous sound track to suggest the complex layers of this cultural, economic, and gendered border zone. Because of its strategic importance to NATO and the territorial interests of local populations, this coastal corridor is surveyed aerially by remote sensors and jet fighters and by ground surveillance made by motor and camel patrols.

Because Biemann's theoretical interest in *Europlex* is in the daily routines of female workers regularly crossing the border, she adopts what she calls "border logs" to trace these local circuits and also to reveal transnational connections created by economic outsourcing and migration. Setting up her camera at border stations, she records the times when crossing activities take place and films them. *Border logs* are then created from time logs made at specific sites, ethnographic recordings, and editing practices intended to create a "montage" of temporal-spatial processes constructing the border. As with her other work, Biemann sees this video as "a cognitive tool "for viewers to "make sense" of the "confusing exhilarating course of affairs" visible on the Spanish-Moroccan border. However, to "make sense" of this border requires more than observing it; it depends as well on understanding the logic of the "multidirectional stream" of people and goods that dynamically create its complex geography ("Border videographies" 9-10).

To introduce viewers to the concept of the border as condensed geography, the video opens with a voiceover observing that "material reality comes into being in most surprising and diverse ways." Viewers then see and learn about a meteorite that crashed into the Moroccan desert, setting in motion a set of spatial and material relations spreading far beyond the site of impact. This extra terrestrial border crossing therefore opens up a space created from the convergence of diverse relations whose distinct trajectories all give meaning to the space and to each other. Following this explanatory prologue, the video screens the three video logs of female work activities whose logic Biemann intends to theorize as border circuits.

Border Log I, is situated on the border of the Spanish enclave-city of Ceuta, where early every morning women cross the border to buy clothing in nearby warehouses. Strapping these garments to their bodies so they double in size, the women smuggle this contraband back into Morocco in full sight of guards, who let them through. As a voiceover comments, "every piece increases the profit margin of their passage, and economic logic inscribes itself onto every layer of the transforming, mobile, female body." Filming the border is illegal, however, so Biemann must conceal her camera or, as noted in the video, have her film destroyed. But this reaction is not surprising because, as documented in *Remote Sensing*, the logic of border economics must not overlook an official "architecture" of corruption.

Border Log II maps another circuit of movement inscribing the border at Ceuta—the daily commute of "domesticas" (Moroccan maids) who work in Spanish households in the enclave. As the camera visualizes and a voiceover informs, "Every time a Spanish

woman enters the workplace, a *domestica* is brought in to clean, shop, and care for her children and elderly family members.” In the economy of the border, this transaction transforms a once private space into a workplace where Europeans sustain themselves on the cheap labor of a Third World neighbor. Since the border at Ceuta is located between two time zones with a two-hour difference, female workers also become “permanent time-travelers” and “deferred time becomes the mode of their cultural positionality.” Color symbolism encodes these two cultural worlds: Moroccan scenes are filmed in color; Spanish Ceuta is shot in black and white.

Border Log III, the final segment of the video, focuses on the transnational zone of the Mediterranean corridor where, at Gibraltar large container ships, shown in video clips, transport goods to subcontracting companies in the free trade port town of Tangier. Under trade names like Boratex, Sotema or Europlex, these factories employ a large female work force that, as in the *maquiladoras*, work for minimal wages processing biological products or assembling small parts for the electronic and toy industries. As in Mexico, this labor is highly mechanized and, despite scenes of young factory girls smiling at the camera, voiceover commentary states that girls working in Moroccan factories experience a sharp dislocation from their cultural environment as they conform to the regulatory practices of the work place. In image technology, this notion of identity loss is performed by freezing close-up images of factory girls’ faces as contextual backgrounds fade into unrecognizable blurriness. Dehumanization in the workplace does not, however, stop girls from seeking factory employment because the poverty of Moroccan village life makes finding work an imperative for survival.

Europlex also documents that poverty is a significant reason why young women migrate to work as illegal laborers in the agricultural zones of Southern Spain, which grow vegetables to “Euronorms.” The video could have ended here with commentary on newspaper accounts reporting on the desperate sea voyages many migrants make in small boats that often end up shipwrecked off Spanish shores. But as previously mentioned, Biemann does not like to portray her subjects as victims, preferring to show they have agency. *Europlex* consequently concludes with a story that embodies this concept, but with an ironic twist. After a local crew was hired to film migrants attempting clandestine voyages to Spain, it appears that they took their work “so seriously” that they sailed away with the migrants and took the camera equipment with them.

Besides agency, Biemann is showing that borders are permeable and subject to subversion. Southern Spain and Northern Morocco form a trading space that is fuelled and controlled by the European economy, yet produced by people who move circuitously--legally and illicitly--across its sovereign borders. As Europe as an economic union has grown, it has expanded its outer rim into North Africa, using a low wage feminized workforce and material resources available there to produce for the European market. Biemann argues that it is therefore important “to produce knowledge and visual intelligence about the course and meaning of these border circuits” as well as about the bodies and things that “imprint” and give significance to this performative space and its topographies (“Border videographies” 10).

For teaching purposes, all four of Biemann’s video essays reviewed here may be used in a wide range of courses, including post-structural film studies, cultural theory, women’s studies--particularly those concerned with women ‘s labor practices, female bodies and sexuality, and women and high speed technologies--and courses in

anthropology, including women and economic development, gender, and visual anthropology. I do have one caveat about these videos: their scripted discourse is dense and rapid and the meaning of the visual symbolism and effects may be elusive for students with no background in cultural or contemporary film studies. Biemann and others have written a number of essays explaining the theoretical underpinnings of her work, several of which can now be accessed over the Internet. At times, Biemann's visual effects are somewhat overextended, which tends, in my view, to distract from rather than aid learning. But this is a small criticism and the subject matter of these videos is, as Biemann intended, sure to challenge students and widen the space of discussion, particularly topographies of gender.

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