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Amy J. Barnickel
University of Central Florida

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A SCREEN OF ONE'S OWN: THE TPEC AND
FEMINIST TECHNOLOGICAL TEXTUALITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

by
AMY J. BARNICKEL
B.A. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1992
M.A University of Central Florida, 1999

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I analyze the 20th century text, *A Room of One's Own*, by Virginia Woolf (2005), and I engage with Woolf's concept of a woman's need for a room of her own in which she can be free to think for herself, study, write, or pursue other interests away from the oppression of patriarchal societal expectations and demands. Through library-based research, I identify four screens in Woolf's work through which she viewed and critiqued culture, and I use these screens to reconceptualize "a room of one's own" in 21st Century terms. I determine that the new "room" is intimately and intricately technological and textual and it is reformulated in the digital spaces of blogs, social media, and Web sites. Further, I introduce the new concept of the technologized politically embodied cyborg, or TPEC, and examine the ways 21st Century TPECs are shaping U.S. culture in progressive ways.

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Nancy J. Barnickel, and my beautiful girls, Amaya Zhané and Sigourney Bijou, who have sustained me in so many ways through this journey. I also thank my kitties, Lotus and Daffodil, for their typing assistance and stress therapy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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> *Born and dead too soon*
> *Troubled gender writing faith*
> *Genius vision drowned*
>
> Amy Barnickel (2010)
> Haiku Biography of Virginia Woolf

I always have been drawn to studying women and the various contexts in which they interact with and are influenced by the myriad of texts and technologies that they encounter in their day-to-day lives. Primarily, I study these phenomena by screening them through the lenses of literature and feminism. I analyze the 20th century text, *A Room of One's Own*, by Virginia Woolf (2005), and I connect what troubled her about women's lives to what continues to weigh on my mind about them. Most specifically, I engage with Woolf's concept of a woman's need for a room of her own in which she can be free to think for herself, study, write, or pursue other interests away from the oppression of patriarchal societal expectations and demands. To build on Woolf's conceptualization of a space and a place for this type of womanly activity, I theorize a 21st Century reconceptualization of a room of one's own and determine that the new "room" is intimately and intricately technological,

textual, and feminist, and this century's digital cultural feminists are using it to promote woman-friendly ideas and empower themselves and others in interesting, effective, and creative ways through everyday activism in blogs, social media, and Web sites.

Virginia Woolf and I agree that some women's issues cannot be resolved within existing western patriarchal culture. And, in some ways, blogs, social media, and Web sites by women can and do promote anti-feminist and quite stereotypical portrayals of women. But the history of feminism includes struggles with aims that may seemingly be at odds with each other but are necessary parts of the overall historical movement. For example, in 2009, Thomas H. Ford remarked that "on the one hand, the rhetoric of motherhood has been a central target in the feminist project of exposing and repudiating the cultural logics that perpetuate the oppression of women. And on the other, feminists have turned to this same rhetoric when reflecting on the development of feminism itself" (189). I acknowledge similar aspects of women's activity on the World Wide Web, but my primary focus in this dissertation is the women who advance knowledge of women's issues and actively live their lives in ways that I believe Woolf would have admired. The women you will read about in this dissertation are enacting Woolf's vision for empowering women to

write and participate in a cultural dialogue that values them and their work. I also argue that 21st century technologies offer avenues for the promotion of feminist ideals through a variety of feminist textualities, and they can lead to higher than present levels of cultural participation and influence by women through various forms of writing that employ technological tools.

I necessarily offer explanations of my understanding and use of a number of important terms that I use throughout this dissertation. Woolf thought of words as ever-changing, shifting, and resistant to definition. I honor her relationship with words and her sentiments about them, so it is important to me that I share the meaning that I intend when I use and re-use certain terms in this dissertation. Further, the terms that are defined in this introduction have been particularly troublesome for women. Their meanings have been constructed through the influences of culture, literature, politics, and more, so it is important to me to acknowledge their and my situations (situatedness) within U.S. culture and the academy through which I study them.

The Screening of Woolf

Virginia Woolf was an early feminist textual activist. Woolf's examples of technological textuality are models for current-era breakthroughs for women who seek a non-patriarchal literary and aesthetic authority and use feminist textual technological textuality to influence the world in personal, cultural, political, and global ways.

In this dissertation, I use the framework of four screens that literary author Virginia Woolf used in her cultural critiques to analyze critical, theoretical, and historical works that relate to feminism, some aspects of social science, and epistemology. I show how Woolf presciently wrote about timeless women's issues that resonate in today's digital culture and in some ways I resolve or at least address the concerns she expressed in her essays and literary works. Finally, I show how these texts and theories inform women in contemporary U.S. culture who use textual technologies for activist purposes and to promote feminist ideals.

As an extension and further analysis of Gubar's (2005) observations and especially of Woolf's own writing, I analyze Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (2005) using four screens. In some regards, the screens blur and become layered, as any

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technological screen would if complicated by intense analysis and interference. Although the Woolfian screens resist categorization and linear models, they are useful as an explanatory tool, and I think that their straightforwardness will aid the reader in understanding the shifts that take place when conformative, linear, rational, standardized, traditional textual composition becomes intentionally and unintentionally layered, personal, fluid, and ultimately activist through the use of 21st Century technologies.

The four activist screens in Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (2005) are: sex, sexuality, and gender; aesthetics; misogyny and the economics of enough; and epistemology. In the chapters that invoke these screens, I demonstrate Woolf's introduction of these concepts by using her own textual examples. Additionally, I show interesting examples of activist writing that experiment with a variety of approaches that engender similar thoughts and ideas but that are expressed on Web sites, via Facebook, and in blogs that use virtual spaces to evoke a cyber-culture imagined, image-rich, feminist screen of one's own. I believe that Woolf would have encouraged my approach to analyzing her work. She often stated that reflection on difficult subjects was important to understanding one's own identity and one's cultural context. When she wrote, "Whatever may be their use in civilized

societies, mirrors are essential to all violent and heroic action" (35), she understood the value of reflective practice and analysis.

By employing these screens, I expose pervasive and discursive systems that encourage and discourage women's active involvement with and influence on culture through their use of Internet technologies. For example, some methods of 'scientific' data collection are flawed from a feminist perspective. They may inadvertently or intentionally influence the results of an ostensibly objective, empirical study because of pervasive but often unrecognized biases, assumptions, and power dynamics (such as homogeneity). In the area of cognitive science, I examine epistemology, or how we know what we know, and I illuminate the work of feminist scientists who are revolutionizing and deconstructing previously concretized scientific facts about the brain, the mind, and the body. I respond to and disrupt cultural dynamics that influence how women are able to function within digital culture, such as the availability of resources, financial autonomy, the patriarchal environment of U.S. culture, and the favor of masculine aesthetics, which Woolf wrote about and very keenly understood well before the age of the Internet, but which persist today.

The Technologized Politically Embodied Cyborg (TPEC)

I introduce the concept and definition of the TPEC early in this dissertation because I think it is important to situate the TPEC and its relationship with the other terms in this introduction. With an early understanding of what the TPEC is, the reader of this dissertation should be able to share the nuances of meaning that I provide in the remaining important terms.

There are many reasons to embrace the expansive ideas that were put forward in Varela, Thompson, and Rosch's (1991) *The Embodied Mind.* The doors to understanding the world and the way humans know it no longer need to be locked by the polarizing notions of scientific secrecy or metaphysical mysticism. The keys are available, and humans need only use them. Another way of phrasing this might be, humans need only *become* them. In the TPEC's room of her own, technological tools are no longer just prostheses; they are essential, embodied elements of the TPEC's position and place in the world. So, when technological tools become so ingrained in the make-up of a TPEC—body, mind, environment, space, and place—they can no longer be characterized as being "used." TPECs are in various stages of becoming the tools they employ. Charles Wolfe (2005) stated this

idea well when he wrote, "If mind and body belong together, as do body and brain, so do brain and world" (3). These are relational concepts that integrate with one another, cross-inform, and adapt, and they require an acknowledgment and acceptance of the particularity of any observable phenomenon or bit of knowledge. Moreover, by approaching scientific inquiry in this way, especially as science relates to the brain and mind, political maneuvers that enforce the cultural marginalizing that is brokered by the perpetuation of all sorts of binaries such as male/female, reason/emotion, universal/particular, and more, can be returned to their more legitimate places on the spectra of which they are a part.

But the restructuring of the way western culture conducts scientific studies is just one way to progress toward embodied science. In another way, western culture needs to set itself free from antiquated notions that hold metaphysics, language, and culture separate and distinct from the realm of science and solely in the hands of the white male academic authority. Indeed, because of the inclusiveness inherent in situatedness and embodiment, it is imperative that, as Dougherty (2001) states, "If such studies of man and society are finally to be free of the taint of their old association with philosophy and religion, then for the computationalists and memeticists there

is only one true way for them to achieve legitimacy: *they must become physical sciences*"(92).

Dougherty's claim is critical to the TPEC's evolution as a being that embodies the technological, fleshy, and spatial in relationships with each other. Similarly, Dougherty believes science must become a relational construct with philosophy/metaphysics/religion/culture, and philosophy/metaphysics/religion/culture must become relational constructs with physical sciences. Hayles (2002) further supports this claim when she states:

> Beginning with relation rather than preexisting entities changes everything. It enables us to see that embodied experience comes not only from the complex interlay between brain and viscera that Antonio R. Damasio compellingly describes in *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain*, but also from the constant engagement of our embodied interactions with the environment. Abstract ideas of the body likewise arise from the interplay between prevailing cultural formations and the beliefs, observations, and experiences that count as empirical evidence in a given society. In this view, embodiment and the body are emergent phenomena arising from the dynamic flux that we try to understand analytically by parsing it into such concepts as biology and culture, evolution and technology(298).

Hayles (2002) goes on to say that this interplay between environment, enculturations, and empirical evidence resulting in categorical enculturations do not happen overnight—they take time. And although disjunctures sometimes occur in the speed

with which humans adapt and change (slow) and the rate at which

technology changes and progresses (rapid), ultimately the TPEC

(the *posthuman,* to Hayles) will emerge. In this regard, Hayles

(2002) remarks,

> The posthuman, whether understood as a biological
> organism or a cyborg seamlessly joined with
> intelligent machines, is seen as a construction that
> participates in distributed cognition dispersed
> throughout the body and the environment. Agency still
> exists, but for the posthuman it becomes a distributed
> function. Consciousness for the posthuman ceases to be
> seen as the seat of identity and becomes instead an
> epiphenomenon, a late evolutionary add-on whose
> principal function is to narrate just-so stories that
> often have little to do with what is actually
> happening (319).

In my view, Hayles' (2002) assertion that agency for

technological beings is a distributed function supports my

vision for a TPEC culture. Further, she states, "Here the

posthuman is embraced as the occasion to rethink the mind/body

split and the premise that mind and body, like the rest of the

world, preexist our experiences of them. As we have seen, the

relational stance . . . puts the emphasis instead on dynamic

interactive processes from which both mindbody and world emerge

together" (320). In other words, culture can no longer develop

alongside technology or vice versa—humans and machines are

becoming one and the same, and therefore, the TPEC is integrated

body-mind-machine that restricts the rigid categorization and

binarial relationships that in patriarchy have marginalized women.

Ultimately, the TPEC world will embrace feminist theories and related cognitive theories such as those proposed in *The Embodied Mind*. That world will further incorporate the interdisciplinary conjunctures that inform feminism and embodied cognition, such as philosophy, psychology, metaphysics, aesthetics, literature and language, and technology, and it will understand them through accessible theories such as Dougherty's (2001) re-use of Balkin's cultural software and Blackmore's selfplex, Hayles'(2002) mindbody, Wolfe's (2005) social brain, Ramachandran's (1998) body/mind/brain, Haraway's (1991) situated scientist, Clark's (1997) extended mind, and Woolf's (2005) man-woman/woman-man. In the age of the TPEC, formerly exclusive science- and technology-related fields can be broached through a situated, embodied feminist technological screen, and expanded acceptable ways of knowing the world will result from the practice.

Throughout this dissertation, I divulge that the room of one's own that Woolf envisioned for women is, in the 21st Century, a textual and technological screen located in a physical and ethereal, embodied and prosthetic space/place. Additionally, I introduce another dichotomous notion that may

not have been investigated before: some 21st Century

technologies, such as Web sites, Facebook pages, and blogs, are

social AND solitary. They have melded the binarial notion of

either/or by transgressing the binarial notion of social and

solitary as opposites. TPECs who write in these environments are

effectively writing "poetically and prosaically at one and the

same moment" (Woolf 44). They are on their way toward figuring

out how women can achieve in a new way the ideal of having a

room of one's own for personal growth, promotion of feminist

ideas, and greater participation and influence on culture. The

paradigm shift is interesting and important because TPECs

incorporate these ostensibly social technologies in very

personal and intimate ways. In other words, in using newer

social technologies, women are effectively employing the

isolationist aspects of the practices associated with

technologies and therefore living out Woolf's admonition for

isolation, but they also embrace the connectivity and community

that writing in a "public" space affords. In some ways, TPECs

using technological tools in this way is an extension of the

early feminist adage, "the personal is political." This phrase

is indicative of what the TPECs are writing about: personal

issues that they grapple with and feel oppressed by but that

also have meaning in much broader, cultural political contexts.

This phenomenon will be elaborated on through the examples analyzed in subsequent chapters.

Though the TPEC's functions, boundaries, and cultural phenomena are complex and problematic because they emerge from patriarchy, they transgress formalized, patriarchal structures that have been ingrained into western culture, and they move feminism forward. In other words, the room of one's own is within the TPEC as well as it is a creation of the TPEC. Space and place, as seen through the screens of the TPEC, follow different and ever-changing rules. The room of one's own is a technological screen that is located in physical, ethereal, and possibly other realms.

The TPEC and Interdisciplinarity

The TPEC has a place among many theoretical heuristics. In this dissertation, I identify the discourses of "social relations, identity, knowledge, and power [that] are constructed through written and spoken texts" (Luke section 1, ¶1), that are produced in digital environments, and that affect and are affected by women's participation in them. By drawing from cultural and feminist theory, I make clear the distinctions I see between the social behavior and expectations of women

(individually and collectively) and the cultural traditions that support or restrict them. These concepts are related, but they elicit distinct analyses that add nuance to the suggestions I make and the possibilities I perceive for women who write and act in digital environments.

Further, one of the many identities of Virginia Woolf was rhetor. In other words, she wrote persuasive arguments on a number subjects, including the education of women, literature, economics, mental health, and others. In doing so, she sometimes used experimental styles that may have camouflaged in some ways her very progressive ideas about women and their intellectual abilities. Virginia Woolf, I argue, used and appreciated a variety of approaches to rhetoric that did not necessarily conform to traditional, male-standardized styles, such as the essay, or even persuasive articles. Woolf was able to subvert patriarchal cultural expectations of writing through her appreciation and use of non-linear, experimental writing styles. In doing so, she enacted covert political statements about western culture and what could and should be expected of women.

Her own experimentation and her appreciation for it in others' writing reminds me of what Barthes (1977) refers to in his essay "Third Meaning" and elsewhere in *Image, Music, Text* as the "obtuse" meaning that "appears to extend outside culture,

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knowledge, information: analytically, it has something derisory about it . . . indifferent to moral or aesthetic categories . . . it is on the side of the carnival" (55). In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf records emphatically the exquisite moment during which she realized what it meant to her and for literature in general that Mary Carmichael "tamper[ed] with the expected sequence" (80) when she wrote the simple three words, "Chloe liked Olivia" (80). For Woolf, the brazen while at the same time subtle "third meaning" of these words broke women away from the cultural, sociological, and rhetorical necessity to exist only in relation to men or maleness. With these words, Woolf remarked, "Mary Carmichael set to work to catch those unrecorded gestures, those unsaid or half-said words, which form themselves, no more palpably than the shadows of moths on the ceiling, when women are alone, unlit by the capricious and coloured light of the other sex" (83). In other words, Woolf recognized exactly what Barthes (1977) desired: the importance of third meaning. Further, for Woolf, the effect that this third meaning brought forward was more complex than these few words on a page might suggest: its statement transformed words into an image, an image of women lifted into a space of freedom of expression outside of the patriarchal authority of the male gaze.

Additionally, Foucault and Derrida, who are discourse theorists, assert that "language and discourse are not transparent or neutral means for describing or analyzing the social and biological world. Rather they effectively construct, regulate and control knowledge, social relations and institutions" (Luke section 2, ¶2). Derrida's idea of "signing my proper name" in his work critically informs feminist technological textuality and the TPEC. Additionally, the French feminist writer, social critic, and activist, Luce Irigaray (1985) uses similar terminology when she claims in her essay, "This Sex Which Is Not One," that, historically, woman has been denied a definition of her own and that indeed, she has "no proper name" (251). In Chapter Four, I elaborate further on these concepts and analyze some TPEC writing that, in my view, expands on these concepts to create meaning for women using technology for feminist activism.

Ultimately, Woolf (2005), Haraway (1991), Barthes (1977), Derrida (1978, 1982), and Irigaray (1985) acknowledge that writing needs to be freed from chronology, an established literary format, a predetermined meaning, or other organizational device that prohibits the reader and text from encountering the other on their own terms. For example, it may be more revealing of some insight for an author or a reader to

follow a seemingly insignificant thread for his thoughts than it would for him to construct a logical, planned, incremental argument because the point of interruption of routine or trajectory is often the moment when an innovative idea will occur. When a writer proceeds along a pre-set path, she pays less attention to ideas that lie along the periphery of the writing subject. Intervening in the momentum of that straightforwardness can yield new insights and ideas. This can be done in any way that is appealing to the author. For example, she may write a poem or Haiku such as the one I wrote at the beginning of this chapter. Then, using the words and the few syllables that make up the poem, the feminist textual technological activist may choose to "google" the terms to discover associations among them that she may not have been aware of before. Choosing and researching further some of those associative findings may reveal insights into patriarchal cultural assumptions and practices that affect women negatively, and which may inspire the TPEC to perform an act of technological textuality.

Upon first encounter, this type of experimentation in writing seems strange, random, or even silly, but its value is great—if for no other reason than its instantaneous disruption of hierarchized, binarily organized, conformist (patriarchal)

writing structure. Barthes conducted similar textual experiments with his works *S/Z* and *Image, Music, Text*, along with his essay on third meaning in which he introduces the concepts of the readerly and writerly texts. Woolf used similar techniques to engender her own writing, and in doing so she performed landmark textual acts that still resonate in contemporary western digital culture.

Additionally, biographers and scholars have noted often that Virginia Woolf was aware of and familiar with the work of Sigmund Freud, one of the world's most renowned psychologists and the originator of psychoanalysis. And though many Freudian theories have since been proven suspect or obsolete, interesting and useful Freudian-inspired writing methods inform the TPEC and are similar to the approaches to writing that Woolf used and promoted to other women who would write. For example, Freud's approach to "dream work" (1952) evokes comparison to Woolf's admonition that "it is in our idleness, in our dreams, that the submerged truth sometimes comes to the top" (Woolf 2005 31). Similarly, Freud used in his psychoanalytic practice of dream work "the rule of giving equal notice to everything" (357) in which the therapist and the patient (and for my purposes, the writer) "should simply listen, and not bother about whether he is keeping anything in mind" (357). Further, when a writer uses

Freudian dream-work writing methods, she considers "foreground and background, conditions, digressions, and illustrations, chains of evidence and counterarguments" (Freud 40). Interestingly, Woolf also wrote, "we need to skip and saunter, to suspend judgment, to lounge and loaf down the alleys and bye-streets of letters" (Lee 407). Lee states that Woolf also described "her roaming and observations in London streets (on her way to buy a pencil) as a form of reading. She becomes 'an enormous eye' which can leave 'I' behind, leave the 'tether' of a 'single mind' and 'the straight lines of personality,' and deviate into the bodies and minds of others'" (407), which further echoes and expands on Freud's dream work approach.

Additionally, writing using the methodology of the dream work helps the writer and the reader by making it more obvious that "each train of thought is almost invariably accompanied by its contradictory counterpart" (Freud 40), and "the logical links which have hitherto held the psychical material together are lost" (Freud 41). In dream work, this loss is not a bad thing but a liberating condition that allows associative thoughts, ideas, and ways of understanding to emerge. What becomes important for scholarly dream work are the break in associative thought patterns, the interruption of assumed meanings, and the divergence of non-linear thoughts.

Freudian dream work writing and Woolf's idling, daydreaming method are the opposites of patriarchal academic, linear, formulaic approaches in which the writer pre-formulates a hypothesis and sets about to prove it. Engendering dream work and Woolfian writing entails conducting crucial analysis on the non-obvious or the formerly neglected detail. I use contemporary examples of similarly-third-meaning-laden words, Freudian dream work inspired method, and Woolf-like idleness to demonstrate how women who write in digital formats evoke the obtuse meanings of our time that may seem simple but may transform their roles in U.S. culture.

The TPEC's Scope

The observations and arguments put forward in this dissertation are centralized to U.S. culture specifically, and western culture generally, and I recognize that this limits the scope of the project. Because of concerns for time and space, I do not treat every aspect of western nor non-western cultures and their sometimes drastically different conditions relating to women, writing, and the various technologies that influence them. In fact, eighty percent of the rest of the world "still lacks basic communication infrastructure, and two-thirds of the world's population have never made a phone call" (Emerging

Technologies 1997). So I want to acknowledge at least on some

level that the disparate treatment of women, women's writing,

and women's participation in writing and other creative pursuits

in U.S. culture, though very important and critical in my view

to the progress of women globally, must be weighed against

realities such as those identified above that many of the

world's citizens continue to endure.

Masculinity and Femininity

I refer to *masculinity* and *femininity* as cultural terms

that include sex (genitalia), gender (western traditional male

and female roles), and cultural connotations that include power,

intelligence, dominance, and place within hierarchical social

structures. In masculinity, sexuality is external, dominant, and

sometimes violent. In femininity, sexuality is internal,

vulnerable, and passive. Masculine and masculinity are more

highly valued in western culture, and feminine and femininity

are undervalued, often to the point of ridicule. For example, it

is valuable (for men, but not for women) in many western

contexts to be physically strong, loud- and low-voiced, dominant

over others, and in charge—attributes that are generally

associated with men. Similarly, in U.S. culture it is less

desirable (for men and for women) to be soft-spoken and higher-pitched, weak-muscled, petite, and cooperative—attributes that are generally associated with women.

These traits become problematic for women and men who exhibit counter-gender-stereotypical qualities in dominant cultural contexts. For example, a woman may be criticized for having a low voice or large muscles, or a man may be marginalized for having a high-pitched voice or diminutive size. Even greater cultural pressure is wielded against individuals who gender-identify as a gender different from the one that their sexual organs indicate.

Therefore, understanding these terms is important to comprehending my position that technologies, especially since the industrial revolution, have been and continue to be gendered, and they are gendered because they developed in patriarchal social and economic systems. In particular, computer technology is inherently masculine because it was and continues to be developed within a culture that values masculinity over femininity or other identifications. And therefore, it follows that computer-generated or influenced texts embed masculine features that require examination at deep levels and exposure by cultural critics like me.

Throughout this dissertation, I critique the masculine and feminine influences on textual technologies and I divulge their confluences. I draw from a variety of feminist models to inform my understanding of these terms and their constructions. African American and womanist feminisms, for example, insist that gender, class, race, differing abilities, and other factors should be considered when texts and technologies are developed for users. They ask that scientists, authors, or other creators consider "how and under what conditions the technology will be used" (Rosser 6) and that the consumer of the technology or text be included in the design and shape of the product. Radical feminists might agree that users should help design technologies according to their needs and wishes, but radical feminists might also say that doing so is not possible for women because maleness, masculinity, and patriarchy are so "intertwined with technology and computer systems in our society" (Rosser 11) that no woman-centered technology or text could possibly exist within that framework. These theories collide with traditional canonical literature of all kinds, and much has been written and debated about which works should be included in literary canons because of these inherent inequalities and marginalizations.

In this dissertation, I agree with Woolf that women should write not as the men of the canon have written but as

themselves. For Woolf, writing as one's self does not mean writing as a woman or writing in a feminine way. In Woolf's view, "it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple. One must be woman-manly or man-womanly" (Woolf 2005 103). I draw on this avenue of discussion in Woolf's writing when I divulge and dissect the complexities, possibilities, and dangers of writing in digital and Web-based environments in which, presumably, women find it (easier, more fulfilling, acceptable, accessible?) to establish themselves as "woman-manly or man-womanly" authors who, by virtue of the technological environment, are ostensibly free from societal norms and expectations. In this regard, the literature is mixed, with some scholars heralding the androgynous nature of the World Wide Web and other digital environments. Other scholars, including some feminist theorists, condemn the Internet for polarizing the sexes and reaffirming sexist stereotypes and social constructs. Even more interestingly, this body-mind complexity is supported by cognitive scientists such as Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991), who substantiate their multivariant heuristic for epistemology, which I elaborate on further in Chapter Seven. I use the theory of situated, embodied cognition that they put forth to delve deeper into my analyses by explaining, using at least this one

cognitive theory, how the brain and mind formulate what women know and how they come to know it. I suggest that researching the brain and mind in this way is critical to establishing that feminist approaches are valid, worthy, and revealing means through which reality and the truth of the nature of the western world can be divulged.

There is support for my assertions among other cognitive scientists as well, and indeed, the very definition of cognitive science that is offered by Hubert Dreyfus in his essay "Cognitivism Abandoned," (1995) indicates that cognitive science is a multidisciplinary field and would welcome this diversified approach to analyzing women's technological lives. Dreyfus defined the term cognitive science in a very understandable and approachable way, and his definition is the one that I maintain in my discussion. Dreyfus stated, "Cognitive science is any attempt to explain how the mind and brain produce intelligent behavior . . . it's just the name for a natural confluence of all the disciplines that study the mind-brain: philosophy, linguistics, computer science, anthropology, neuroscience, psychology" (72). And I believe that Dreyfus would agree that feminist theory; theories of texts and technology deserve a place in that definition as well (73).

Further, many older constructs of how humans know things or how knowledge is produced are based on the positivist model of science that supports the notion that genius, eureka-like discoveries are rare and that knowledge is built in incremental stages that work toward some ultimate truth about the world. But at least since the 1990s, cognitive scientists such as Clark (1997, 2003) and Varela, Thompson & Rosch (1991) have begun to acknowledge what feminists have argued for a very long time: what we know (or what we think we know) is based on our situation, our particular experiences, and the social constructs (Wittig 1992) that influence the way we think and behave.

Because of the multiplicity of influences on our ways of knowing, I argue that epistemology must abandon old notions such as disciplines or fields that segregate sciences from art, for example, or literature from technology, and embrace an interdisciplinarity that promotes an understanding that for most truths there are exceptions and that most exceptions expose some type of marginalization, erasure, or compromise, and often, those effects are based on gender. With this notion I connect and show how feminist theories and theories of knowing converge and how these can enlighten what 21st century feminists are beginning to know about women's participation in textual technologies.

For example, in very interesting ways, Katherine Hayles

(1990, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2008), whom I consider an

epistemologist, a feminist, and a scholar of technology and

literature, especially and expertly intersects the realms of

textual technologies and cognitive theory in ingenious ways that

provide insight into embodiment issues that were important to

Woolf and remain critical to current culture. Woolf was

incredibly astute in screening the world through the history and

reality of the people who read and write. As a woman denied a

formal education, she was already keenly aware in 1929 of a fact

that Vanevar Bush observed in "As We May Think," which was

originally published nearly twenty years later in 1948, that the

library (the great bastion and icon of formal higher education),

even the great libraries, are not "adequate maps of knowledge"

(Murray 3), especially with regard to the history,

contributions, and capabilities of women.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is the systemic, systematic, governmental,

communal, and familial domination of virtually everything by

men. Patriarchy is a cultural construct that values masculinity

and traditionally male-associated qualities, aesthetics, and

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hierarchies over all others. And it is also a system that
devalues women and the feminine. In fact, its opposite,
matriarchy, rarely, if ever, exists in the larger contexts of
communities and societies.

Historically, cultures that valued the "organic, female
world view" (Kilbourne & Weeks 246) have existed, but since the
industrial revolution, patriarchal values have taken hold in
almost all cultures—western, Asian, middle eastern, African, and
others—and have escaped much criticism. I agree with Kilbourne &
Weeks (1997) that patriarchy values the mechanical and sanctions
the scientific, material control and domination of nature and
women and that U.S. culture is entrenched in patriarchy.

In this dissertation, I critique some of the patriarchal
societal conditions that affect women and their ability to
participate fully in the emerging textual technological society
of the west. Identifying my understanding of patriarchy is
necessary to help readers see some of the difficulties involved
with women's participation with texts and technologies,
especially Internet technologies. For example, a common
assertion about the World Wide Web is that its technological
environments are great gender equalizers—that men and women are
free of gender roles, sexual identifications, and other societal
constrictions that limit how they can behave (Bryson 1996). In

other words, this technology is not simply an instrument or a means of production, but its essence is a construct itself of societal values, dominant cultural norms, patriarchal hierarchies, and other influences. In cyber environments, ostensibly women can be men and vice versa, or each can be non-human, partially-human, cyborg, or even another species altogether. That assertion may sound believable and even benign, but unless it is examined by uncovering and exposing the patriarchal values that allow people to operate in cyberspace in cross-gendered ways, we may not know that research has also shown that gender stereotypes, aggressive behavior, and other patriarchal cultural signifiers are meted out in cyberspace just as they are in 'real' life. In fact, the stereotypical differences among genders, for example, are sometimes magnified and exploited at even higher levels (Balsamo 1999).

<div align="center">Essentialism</div>

My general understanding and definition of the term *essentialism* is that it describes a certain group of beliefs that claim that many things, animals, and humans have undeniable, basic qualities that are always present in their makeup, even when personal choices or environmental factors

suppress or mask those qualities or encourage expression of others. When I use the term with regard to my feminist critiques of various issues, I understand it to mean that U.S. culture in particular and western culture in general, which dominate many of the world's environments in their cultural pervasiveness and ubiquity (English language is the world's default language, money in all financial realms is valued in comparison with the dollar, white skinned, thin female bodies are idealized, etc.). These cultural dominations include technology in many respects, because many technologies assume women's qualities at their supposed very basic human level when women's capabilities, attitudes, intellect, and competence are considered.

Further, because of the entrenched cultural values begun in The Enlightenment, western culture has established certain universal characteristics of maleness and femaleness. Some among many possible examples are the essentialistic notions of dichotomies that assume certain male and female relationships such as male:culture, female:nature. And, in a patriarchal western society as I have described above, maleness and culture also mean power, privilege, and freedom; femaleness and nature also mean restricted usefulness and boundary-enforced existence. Deeply embedded understandings such as these are very difficult to negotiate, and I argue that they are especially difficult to

negotiate when technologies have the potential to allow their borders to be permeated. For example, women's bodies have been some of the first to incorporate technological prostheses, and our culture manipulates women's bodies through medical technologies every day--breast implants are an obvious example, but other examples from the medical field are infertility treatments and cesarean births. Societal conflicts arise from technologizing the natural, or essential, woman, and they begin to emerge and cause tension when members of western culture realize that to be technological is to be at the forefront of creativity, production, information, and power—the things that more typically make up majority culture or the masculine essential--but are now also deployed in large measure by women (even when these deployments are by choice or by force).

Embodiment

Throughout this dissertation, my arguments are informed by Donna J. Haraway's *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991), which heavily influences my views on feminist technological textuality. Haraway's and Woolf's works recognize and repudiate dualisms such as male/female and body/mind, and these binary notions and others are taken up by contemporary

textual technological feminist activists and me, and all of us
acknowledge in our writing the importance and examination of
embodiment.

Embodiment, especially as it relates to a woman's place in
the world and also as it relates to writing, voice, agency, and
being acknowledged as human, is a critical element of textual
technologies. Embodiment is a relational term—and as mentioned
earlier, even the notion of the term woman is relational; women
and women's bodies have almost always been understood as, by
many definitions, what they are not (Irigaray 1985), or what
they lack as compared to men and men's bodies. There is
negativity associated with the womanly or feminine qualities:
weak, not strong; feeling, not thinking; hysterical, not
rational. The woman's body itself in Freudian terms is the
castrated male—somehow undeveloped, incomplete, and lacking
because it has no phallus. Woolf agreed when she wrote, "almost
without exception they are shown in their relation to men . . .
[they] were . . . seen only in relation to the other sex" (81).

Donna Haraway (1991) clearly elaborated the fact that
embodiment has historically been used to marginalize women as
incapable of the scientific ideal of distance, objectivity, and
externality. For example, in her "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science,
Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth

Century," Haraway (1991) describes the cyborg in a way reminiscent of Woolf's description of the ideal woman writer who is man-womanly or woman-manly. And Haraway (1991) goes further by introducing the concept of the technologized body into the description when she states, "The cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women's experience . . . this is a struggle over life and death, but the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion" (149). Their ideals are similar and both Woolf (2005) and Haraway (1991) acknowledge the necessary transgression of boundaries as well as the harmful nature of dualisms that impede women's progress, activity, and participation in their cultures. The similarity and urgency of Woolf's and Haraway's arguments in this regard make a bridge between the literature of Woolf and the science and technology of Haraway that I find useful for understanding technological textuality and its digitization of the concept of a room of one's own in the 21st century in the form of Web sites, Facebook accounts, and blogs.

It is important to note that one of the newest, most challenging forms of feminism has sprung directly out of computer and Internet technology: Cyberfeminism. Cyberfeminism is a woman-centered perspective that "advocates women's use of

new information and communications technologies for empowerment"
(Millar 200). Cyberfeminism also positions these technologies as
"inherently liberatory" (Millar 200) because women are "uniquely
suited to life in the digital age" (Millar 200) because of their
socialization toward relationships, networking, and community-
building, which are also concepts that underlie computer coding
and Internet navigation and usage.

Embodiment and Power

Finally, if people in western culture are to begin to think
about writing, scholarship, and ways of knowing as always-
already[1] embodied, then proper attention has to be given to how
embodiment is related to power and how power relates to women's
agency. Women's bodies have historically been objectified and
commodified by patriarchal systems. Irigaray makes this point in
her essay "This Sex Which is Not One" (1985), which I mentioned
earlier. It is very difficult for women to gain agency for
themselves when the very bodies that they have to move around in

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[1] I don't want to spend an undue amount of time unpacking the use of the term
"always-already," especially because there is some controversy over the
originator of the term. Generally, when I use this term, I refer to it in a
Derridian sense, which means that though there may be a perceived or
generally accepted beginning to some phenomenon or event, typically, when the
phenomenon or event involves expectations of women, there are other forces
already at work that influence its course and skew meaning or outcome.

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are immobilized, negated, neglected, and ignored. From her specific example of compulsory heterosexuality's literal splitting of the female body (through the heterosexual sex act) and rendering it a mere vessel for a man to her more philosophical idea that before women can be liberated they must physically, culturally, and in other tactical and practical ways separate themselves from men and their patriarchal systems of domination, Irigaray proposes radical moves that disrupt traditional power dynamics.

In another way, Aimee Carrillo Rowe (2005) adds to the discussion of embodiment and agency by suggesting that women have also become adept at negotiating their identities based on the politics of their location and their relation to the environment in which they act—what she calls "belonging" (28). For example, Carillo Rowe takes apart the idea of 'home'—a concept that carries with it assumptions of safety, insularity, comfort, and ease, but that, for women, often delivers an environment contrary to those ideals and that changes her level of agency and her understanding of her identity. Carrillo Rowe also acknowledges that women constantly negotiate their sense of belonging, and that the negotiations "are all functions of power" (16). She argues that although standpoint theory such as the one Haraway (1991) suggests has value and is a progressive

idea, a more nuanced way to interrogate discourse is to examine the belonging in which one's standpoint is "placed in motion" (28) and offers the "possibility for the formation of critical and collective modes of agency as well as new demands for accountability" (28). In the example of home, above, the word carries with it white, heterosexual, and nuclear familial assumptions that are so embedded in the term that they may go completely unrecognized by the powerful white majority in the U.S., but they carry with them great amounts of power and dismissal for women who don't 'belong' in that definition. In other words, standpoint recognition is not enough to explain our situatedness; accountability for complicity in unspoken privileges is also important to feminist work and it is a critical factor in the amount of agency a woman can access. In contrast to Irigaray, Carrillo Rowe's 'belonging' is much less utopian and in my view, it furthers the discussion of situatedness and brings practicality into this philosophical discussion surrounding the TPEC and feminist technological textuality. Additionally, belonging adds nuance to the always-alreadiness of embodiment.

Carrillo Rowe's work moves toward what Claire Colebrook (1997) seems to have been looking for when she wrote "Feminist Philosophy and the Philosophy of Feminism". Colebrook wonders

whether a feminist philosophy can even exist apart from being

defined, much as Irigaray argued about women, by what it is not.

Carrillo Rowe's insistence on acknowledging one's 'belonging' is

one way of moving toward what Colebrook calls the "truly

philosophical . . . less gender-biased . . . privileged notions—

of reason, subjectivity, rights, and so on" (80). Colebrook

argues (and she claims that Heidegger also does) that western

philosophies have traditionally disregarded difference, and in

so doing, have contributed to the perpetuation of patriarchal

power dynamics. What Colebrook and Carrillo Rowe have in common

is their ultimate insistence that "philosophy may not just be a

question of ideality, pure truth, universalizable ethics, and

transcendental conditions" (Colebrook 95) and that a feminist

philosophy would not be "philosophy's essential other"

(Colebrook 95) but would be one among many.

These are some examples of how feminist theorists approach

the probing questions that Virginia Woolf asked about her

culture and the status of women. These juxtapositions indicate

that real problems still exist regardless of how careful and

inclusive a philosophy or theory attempts to be: who remains

excluded? Who is forgotten? which constructions of the term

'women' are being left out of the discourses that dominate? For

women, the philosophical and the practical have always been

intertwined, interconnected, and inseparable. That is why the issue of women's agency is so difficult to sort out and negotiate. But I think that, at least for many women in the U.S. who have access to computers, education, employment, and other relative freedoms such as sexuality and religion, part of the key to increased agency is their participation in emerging technologies, especially Internet technologies that promote a sense of a woman's having her own place for writing, formulation of ideas, and expressions of creativity—the very things that Virginia Woolf was calling for through her own essays and fiction. [2]

Additionally, self- or un-labeled feminists in- and outside the academy are enacting the theoretical model of the TPEC by participating in technological textuality that shapes western culture in profound ways that can potentially free women of some

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[2] I must acknowledge my own positionality with regard to the material I present. Although I believe that I have presented well the complications of women's agency, I must acknowledge that I argue as a person who is situated in conditions of relative power. I am a white woman who works in administration in a large university in the U.S. I make a decent wage, I own a home, and I have much power and agency because of those situations. I may have marginalized other women who are different from me; I may not understand that I haven't escaped many binarial notions at all. I need to learn a whole lot more about the situations of women that are not like my own. I would like to better live the ideals that I espouse, because the very fact that I can write down my words for others to read is a form of power than many millions of women in the world do not presently have. I do not intentionally assume to know what all the challenges are for women of cultural backgrounds that are different from my own. I am careful to at least remain aware of the privileges I describe and carry within my writing, but I understand that at times my situated analysis may fall short.

of the oppressions of patriarchy that hold them down.

Ultimately, though Irigaray and Wittig may disagree that turning

the world "right side up again" (Truth 232) should be the goal,

I do know that "these women together ought to be able to" (Truth

232).

A Screen of One's Own: The TPEC and Feminist Technological Textuality in the 21st Century

Throughout this dissertation, I use the terms defined in

Chapter One to help flesh out my primary argument that TPECs are

enacting the call to write that Virginia Woolf put forward in

the early 20th Century. Nearly 100 years later, her ideas

resonate deeply with feminists. For women in general there is

still much progress to be made in many areas, but most assuredly

in the academy, as serious scholars of ourselves, we must

investigate women's issues thoroughly. In Chapters Two through

Six, I use the screens I have identified in Virginia Woolf's *A

Room of One's Own* to analyze the practices of current-day

textual technologists who write using new media in new ways that

promote a feminist agenda. Finally, in Chapter Seven, I make

some suggestions about what this all means for women, TPECs, and

U.S. culture. The following synopses of Chapters Two through Six identify the primary focus of each chapter.

In Chapter Two, I assert that technological textuality is the use of textual technologies to promote cultural change, shift ways of thinking, or transgress boundaries through writing or using images in progressive ways. An extension of this term is feminist technological textuality. In feminist technological textuality, the cultural changes, shifts in ways of thinking, and transgressions of boundaries are promoted by individuals and groups who use technology to educate, critically analyze norms, traditions, and the status quo, and spread awareness of cultural traditions and assumptions that oppress, marginalize, or are counter-productive to women. It follows, then, that TPECs are feminist textual technological activists, whether they aspire to be or not. And because of the media through which they write, which is a visual, fluid, fluctuating environment, their work becomes a force for positive cultural change.

In Chapter Three, I assert that eighty-some years after Woolf wrote *A Room of One's Own* (2005), it is still true that many women are not allowed and also do not often claim for themselves the time, space, and freedom of thought to be creative, even though womens' ability and desire for creativity are arguably more recognized and accepted today. What

complicates this fact in the 21st Century is that, despite some

progress in terms of autonomy and independence that women have

realized, they continue to be marginalized through a patriarchal

culture that denies them freedoms that are taken for granted by

men. In other words, gender matters in writing. But gender is a

nebulous term that is ill-defined in 21st Century digital

culture, where gender-bending, gender-switching, gender-

identifying, trans-gendering, and other forms of gender

negotiations are moving from the margins toward the center. This

fact complicates but also enlivens the scholarly conversation

about who gets to write, who has access, and who uses digital

technologies for progressive purposes. The TPEC is at the

forefront of this phenomenon.

In Chapter Four, I look at the screen of aesthetics.

Aesthetic ideals and preferences are inexorably linked to

culture. In U.S. culture, aesthetics are indoctrinated through a

patriarchal viewpoint that values male over female. Further,

many technologies, especially since the industrial revolution,

have been and continue to be gendered, and they are gendered

because they developed in patriarchal social and economic

systems. In particular, computer technology is inherently

masculine. This fact can be demonstrated by surveying the

historical underpinnings of technological developments,

examining the various approaches that feminist theories have taken toward computer technology, and finally, by situating Virginia Woolf's work relative to this position and describing how women are using Internet technologies to create their own aesthetically pleasing environments and increase their personal and collective agency.

Further, I take up the notion of identity(ies) as texts and connect foundational feminist theories, theories of texts and technologies, Woolf, and TPECs. In my view, studying texts and their influence by, on, and within technologies, is one way that women can participate in refashioning how western culture perceives and appreciates identity, individuality, interconnectedness, relationships, and power. Ultimately, those also are the aspects of society that continue to perplex the TPEC and that continue to be addressed by feminist textual technological activists who host Web sites, use Facebook accounts, and write blogs.

In Chapter Five, I approach the idea that in 21st Century digital culture, the TPEC is constantly mediated through a series of screens, or screenings. Woolf recognized this in her time, and some of her astute observations about misogyny and its relationship with economics apply still today. In one of her deepest and most heart-felt observations, Woolf prophetically

stated about the women's conundrum, "I thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and I thought how it is worse perhaps to be locked in" (Woolf 2005 24). She movingly iterates how so many women, even to this day, feel about living within patriarchy, even those who don't know intellectually against what they are struggling: fighting to gain foothold within the constructs of a society that doesn't allow women to fully engage and participate, even when success is realized, is often bitter-sweet and dissatisfying to women because, once "in," they face alienation, envy, and jealousy from those who remain without as well as emptiness of meaning within themselves because the 'inside" remains aesthetically barren, intellectually unrewarding, and materially insufficient. The balance that ideally could exist between the man-womanly and the woman-manly remains skewed in favor of the manly.

In Chapter Six, I explain epistemology as a feminist concept and elaborate the areas of conjuncture among the various disciplines and theories that grapple with how we know what we know. This last screen, epistemology, is very important, and I use this chapter to explain how cognitive theory, feminist theory, and theories of texts and technologies work together and can effect change in the way knowledge is constructed, perceived, and evaluated. While doing so, I also draw on Woolf's

astute observations about epistemology to demonstrate the connections I make between her work, the theoretical underpinnings, and the examples of contemporary TPECs who use digital technologies to advance the work and worth of women. Moreover, by understanding that the brain and the body have been shown scientifically to be intimately co-important, a feminist epistemology that values context and situation, that posits facts as social constructions, and that favors the particular over the universal, when it is paired with the concept of the embodied mind, has the potential to be adopted by western culture in general and enacted in technological environments that can empower women.

Finally, Chapter Seven is a chapter of possibilities. In the decades since Woolf's time, women have emerged through the aftermath of several wars, sexual revolutions, the "me" decade of the 80s, the return to "balance" in the 90s, and the current new millennial era, which is unfolding as I write. These screens translate into current cultural topics that can be used in technological environments such as Web pages, Facebook accounts, and blogs that garner attention from the media, academicians, and the general public. It is clear that Woolf embodied the TPEC's fluid identity. Unfortunately for Woolf, there were few

if any outlets besides her writing in which she could express her multiple selves.

Woolf clearly envisioned a TPEC future for politically engaged feminist textual technological activist women writers. The TPEC in the 21st Century combines Woolf's politically embodied writer with Haraway's cyborg and the capabilities of women who use Internet technologies. The TPEC honors Woolf's assertion that "a book is not made of sentences laid end to end, but of sentences built, if an image helps, into arcades and domes" (Woolf 2005: 76). I show how her work may have influenced the creative post-postmodernized writing of the women who run Web sites, update Facebook accounts, and blog. In the end TPEC writing is "adapted to the body"(Woolf 2005: 77), tampers "with the expected sequence" (Woolf 2005: 80), and "catch[es] those unrecorded gestures, those unsaid or half-said words, moths on the ceiling, when women are alone, unlit by the capricious and coloured light of the other sex" (Woolf 2005: 83).

CHAPTER 2: THE TPEC AS FEMINIST TEXTUAL TECHNOLOGICAL ACTIVIST
AND THE SCREENING OF VIRGINIA WOOLF

They are highly democratic.
They believe that one word
is as good as another . . .
They hate being useful,
they hate making money,
they hate being lectured about in public.
In short, they hate anything
that stamps them with one meaning
or confines them to one attitude.
For that is their nature: to change.

Virginia Woolf
(BBC 1937)

Feminist Technological Textuality

As mentioned in Chapter One, the theoretical basis of this

dissertation is multidisciplinary and includes aspects of

cognitive theory, feminist theory, and theories of texts and

technologies. I use these theories to observe and analyze the

changes in societal norms and expectations that have taken place

in the recent past and that continue to pervade the present and

inform and influence the future. Specifically, Internet

technologies such as Web sites, Facebook accounts, and blogs are

vehicles for feminist technological textuality in current times.

Textual technologies are technological tools that transform

earlier versions of high-technology and formerly low-technology

resources into hybrids of the two. I primarily use the term to refer to the transformation of books, news, social commentary, and other media through computer technology and its applications such as Facebook, Web sites, and blogs.

Technological textuality is the use of textual technologies to promote cultural change, shift ways of thinking, or transgress boundaries through writing or using images in progressive ways. An extension of this term is feminist technological textuality. In feminist technological textuality, the cultural changes, shifts in ways of thinking, and transgressions of boundaries are promoted by individuals and groups who use technology. Through their use of technology, they educate others and critically analyze norms, traditions, and the status quo, and they spread awareness of cultural traditions and assumptions that oppress, marginalize, or are counter-productive to women.

In current western culture, women can use, and are using, technological textuality that promotes personal, cultural, and scholarly feminist ideas. It often has been said in recent years that millennial generation women are rejecting older forms of feminism, and they are reluctant to claim the term feminism and describe themselves as feminist. Some claim the current era is post-feminist in part because of the everyday activist

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opportunities that textual technologies afford, and their

increasingly inherent or "seamless" presence in western culture,

I argue that feminist technological textuality resists and

transforms the controversial label of feminism. Through using

textual technologies, women in some ways have embraced the

ideals of feminism by simultaneously blurring some of the

perceived boundaries between feminist and mainstream culture.

Later, I will describe how Virginia Woolf's writing can be

understood as early feminist textuality. Her work, *A Room of

One's Own* (2005),and many of her other texts are easily compared

to contemporary textual technological activist texts that

criticize and demand similar things in 21st Century technological

environments such as social networking sites, Web sites, and

blogs.

The TPEC As Feminist Textual Technological Activist

In *A Room of One's Own* (2005), Woolf fervently calls for a

woman to have a room of her own and money that is not tied to

her family or a man. But in addition to this, she also declares

the need for silence for women. In other words, she believes

that a woman who would write cannot achieve writing without

being able to be alone with her thoughts, away from distractions

of the home and other concerns. More recent research suggests,
however, that the 21st century woman--especially the younger,
coming-of-age woman (the age of the women that Woolf addressed
in the original lecture she gave on the subject)--views silence
in a very different way. Currently twenty-something aged women
in the U.S. do not value isolation, time alone, or even quiet,
according to a recent article in *The Chronicle Review* by William
Deresiewicz (2009), who outlined the "romantic ideal of
solitude" (B7) as "the arena of heroic self-discovery" (B8). He
declares that modernism created the suburb, and with it, the
"universal threat of loneliness" (B8) that seems to pervade U.S.
culture even now, in the postmodern age. Though he, like Woolf,
believes in the value of silence and quiet contemplation, he
goes on to state that the invention of computers and Internet
technology was a turn of events that is not without its positive
qualities--such as its ability to allow "isolated people to
communicate with one another and marginalized people to find one
another" (B8). But Dereseiwicz also observes that "as the
internet's dimensionality has grown, it has quickly become too
much of a good thing" (B8) in that "a constant stream of
mediated contact, virtual, notional, or simulated, keeps us
wired to the electronic hive" (B8). And I argue that the TPEC is
situated right in the middle of this complex and complicated set

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of older vs. newer cultural expectations. And, the TPEC has learned to adapt the intrusive technologies to her own need, which is the need to establish a space and a place in which her thoughts, ideas, and creative products are her own and over which she has control.

For the younger generation of women currently in their twenties, this constant interruption of technological devices has become "completely natural" (Deresiewicz B8), and they have "no desire for solitude, have never heard of it, can't imagine why it would be worth having" (B8). This might or might not have been viewed as sad news to Virginia Woolf. Like me, she might have proclaimed that there is a difference between silence and being "unplugged." And there are nuances that make solitude different from loneliness that might not resonate with the younger generation of women who have grown up with computers, cell phones, and all sorts of high-tech devices. But unless Woolf and I proclaim such things in 160-character Facebook updates, they may go unnoticed. Woolf might have agreed with Deresiewicz that the younger generation should understand that "solitude enables us to secure the integrity of the self as well as to explore it" (B9) and that longer periods of sustained reading are necessary because "no real excellence, personal or social, artistic or philosophical, scientific or moral, can

arise without solitude" (B9). But Virginia Woolf did not know about computers, and I speculate that, had she had access to them, she might have embraced the possibility of simultaneously keeping connected with culture, family, friends, news, and world events and fulfilling her personal desire for solitude and deep sustained thought and her natural tendency toward shyness. Her need for these things might have thrown her into depression and suicide in her day, but I argue that, had she access to Facebook or the Internet, for example, she might have, like so many 20-somethings today, found a balance between the social aspects of the technologies and their isolative qualities that in some ways fulfill some women's needs. After all, social networking is typically not done in groups. At its surface, it is a "plugged in" technology that seems to encourage constant contact, disclosure, and brevity of thought. But at its deeper levels, the act of being logged in to a social network, a Web site, a blog, or even texting on the cell phone, is a solitary act. One performs it alone, at one's own speed, at one's own will, and one comes and goes from it at her own choosing. Potentially, the act of using Internet and social networking technologies may engender the idleness of which Woolf spoke, the free association of thoughts that Barthes embraced, and the paying of equal

attention to the seemingly insignificant details that Freud espoused.

Katherine Hayles (2008) and many others in recent years disagree with the notion that the twenty-something and younger generations are incapable of deep thought and prolonged consideration of complex subjects that Deresciewicz suggests. At a video-conferenced lecture that I attended at the University of Central Florida in 2008, Hayles stated that although the millennial generation learns differently and may have a shorter attention span, one of the ways to engage the younger generation is to meet them on their own turf, to consider how video games, for example, might be adapted to introduce classic literature or complicated theories. At the time of Hayles' lecture, Facebook was not as pervasive as it is today, but I think she might have agreed that the introduction of classic literature and complicated theories is taking place in this forum, and there is some evidence that people are paying attention and engaging with it. For example, a quick search on Facebook for the term "Virginia Woolf" yields 247 Facebook accounts, 54 of which are obviously dedicated to the author. These 54 accounts garner a total of 884 "friends." Aside from the biographical information on the author, many of these accounts delve into Woolf's

content, themes, feminism, and other higher-level areas of thought.

Unlike Deresiewicz, Hayles hasn't (nor have I) lost hope that younger generations will continue in their own ways to contribute, argue with, and create new paradigms that allow formerly marginalized voices to be heard. But, if Web pages, Facebook accounts, and blogs in themselves are aspects of the 21st century rooms of one's own, of what historical importance could the texts that they produce become? Are the texts themselves important historically, or are the engagement, action, and pervasive cultural influence of these phenomena the most historically relevant and transformative? The TPEC sheds some light on these questions.

Scholars have speculated about the possibility that the Internet might provide spaces in which marginalized communities can come together and individuals can seek refuge from bodily-worldly customs or constrictions. Moreover, these technology-based social, political, and interest-based communities are responsible for revolutionary changes in societal constructs and knowledge, such as those described in Canada by Francois Lyotard in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984). Baudrillard (1975), too, argued more than two decades ago that images, or, in other words, anything that is viewed through or

on a screen, trump reality and "supercede reality in importance" (Hill 26), at least in postmodern western culture. Gregory Ulmer (1985, 1994) might agree because he uses similar analogies in his theoretical work about moving from literacy to electracy. And, Virginia Woolf's screens help formulate the TPEC's imag/e/ined room of one's own, on/in/through which the TPEC performs activist texts that contribute to and influence in positive, feminist ways the culture in which they live.

As mentioned earlier, the metaphorical frames that I use to extend arguments are characterized as screens. I use this method for several reasons, but primarily, the term screen resonates on a number of levels with the critical and progressive writing of Virginia Woolf. She clearly viewed the world through screens that were different from those that were used and expected of women in her dominant culture. I use the screen metaphor to connect her classic work to current feminist technological textuality on Web pages, Facebook accounts, and blogs.

Using the screen approach works well for paying respect to Virginia Woolf's writing and progressive ideals. Susan Gubar pointed out in her introduction to the annotated edition of *A Room of One's Own* (2005), for example, that Woolf employs a number of feminist "diatribes" (lii). One of the first of these diatribes is "'the instinct for possession, the rage for

acquisition' driving those in its thrall 'to desire other

people's fields and goods perpetually; to make frontiers and

flags; battleships and poison gas; to offer up their own lives

and their children's lives'" (lii). In other words, Woolf often

chose to diatribe against the patriarchal cultural ideal of war,

which is a rather common trope in feminist criticism. I also

agree with Gubar that Woolf is particularly insistent in *A Room*

of One's Own (2005) that what the west embraces as capitalism

is, at its core, detrimental to the situation of women. Woolf

recognized that capitalistic practices are born out of

patriarchy and perpetuate war, violence, border-building, and

death because capitalism pursues acquisition above all else.

Woolf was adamantly opposed to these behaviors and ideals. By

processing her socio-political critique through the screen that

I label "misogyny and the economics of enough," Woolf discerned

what would be necessary for women if they were to be able to

participate fully in life, education, politics, writing,

literature, and more.

Woolf's feminist admonitions still ring true, and I add to

them by linking Woolf's experimental writing style with

contemporary technology-influenced experimental, activist

writing that takes place on Web sites, blogs, and Facebook

accounts such as jezebel.com, current.com, mom-101, and Minal

Hajratwala.

Woolf published *A Room of One's Own* in 1929, the year after

women in England won the right to vote. It is important to note

that I wrote the preceding sentence in the active voice—because

Virginia Woolf did literally publish her own works at Hogarth

Press, which she established with her husband in 1917. Although

she had been widely published in England and in the U.S. prior

to beginning her own publishing operation, after 1921 she

published all of her work in England at Hogarth Press. I mention

these facts because later, they become important to my project

of drawing parallels between Woolf's life and work and women

currently working or establishing themselves as authors by self-

publishing in digital contexts, an activity, I wager, of which

Woolf certainly would have approved.

Further, in *A Room of One's Own* (2005), Woolf establishes

one primary argument and several secondary arguments. Her main

idea is that women should write by whatever means they have,

through whatever avenues are available to them, for whomever

will read it, and even if nobody reads it. The imperative is

that women write: "Therefore I would ask you to write all kinds

of books, hesitating at no subject however trivial or however

vast. By hook or by crook, I hope that you will possess

yourselves of money enough to travel and to idle, to contemplate

the future or the past of the world, to dream over books and

loiter at street corners and let the line of thought dip deep

into the stream"(107). In my view, Woolf would have enjoyed the

grass-roots style of writing and participating that the Internet

allows in its free blog spots, email accounts, social networks,

and Web site access. Indeed, the blogger who writes mom-101 (see

Figure 1), who is known only as "Liz," commented on a similar

phenomenon that happens on her blog and the comments that are

shared on it.

Figure 1: Mom-101 blog logo

Mom-101 writes in her entry from July 21, 2008, "There's

this funny thing I've discovered about comments on blog posts.

You can spend hours crafting a long, heartfelt essay about

falling in love with your baby, close with some offhanded line

about oh...let's say, lime popsicles, and then 80% of your

commenters will weigh in about lime popsicles." Mom-101 is being

facetious, but her thought echoes Woolf's in that she points out

that sometimes what we think is important turns out not to be,

and sometimes what we think is unimportant turns out to be the

idea that sparks interest in a continued conversation. And like

Woolf, mom-101 decides by the end of this post that this

meandering of her mind and the minds of her readers is

acceptable, and writing for writing's sake is an incredible

achievement in its own right. She writes,

> We don't have to be ashamed about what we do or why we do
> it. Whether we blog for money or friendship or approval or
> attention or magical beans. I said it in the first
> Momosphere panel and I meant it: It's all good . . .
> Sometimes writing for an audience leads you to a ballroom
> stage in front of 1000 other writers so you can finally
> start to banish the voices in your head that tell you
> you're not good enough. But that's not the only place it
> leads. Maybe your writing leads to you a party where you
> meet someone who may end up becoming a dear friend for the
> rest of your life. Maybe it leads you to shake hands with a
> celebrity. Or maybe this kind of writing leads you to
> contribute to a book . . . Thank you to *you* for being the
> place that my writing leads. Because you were there. Or
> because you are here . . . It's freaking hot in New York
> today. I could go for a lime popsicle (July 21, 2008).

Further, even at face-to-face conferences of participants

in the "blogosphere," participants are embracing the gender-

neutral ideals of some feminist digital practices. As evidenced

by the photo in Figure 2, which shows the registration table at

the 2008 BlogHer conference.
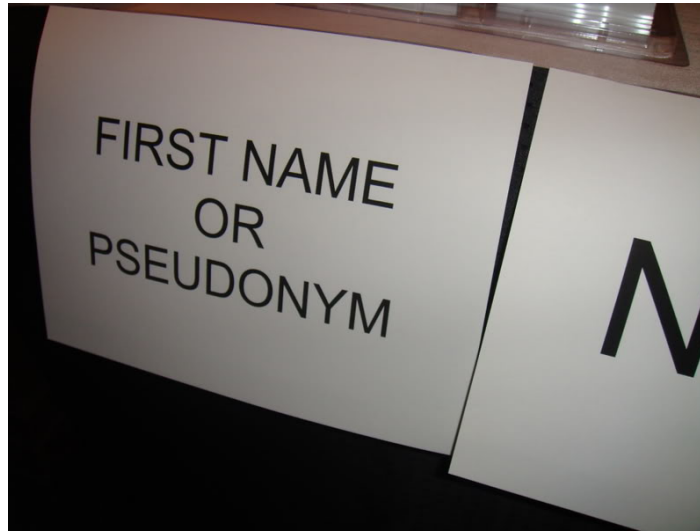
Figure 2: BlogHer 08 Conference registration table

Indeed, Woolf wrote that one of the most remarkable moments

in history occurred outside any professorial textbook or

governmental accounting of wars: "towards the end of the

eighteenth century a change came about which, if I were

rewriting history, I should describe more fully and think of

greater importance than the Crusades or the War of the Roses.

The middle-class woman began to write" (Woolf 2005 64). Indeed,

using 21st Century technologies, the TPEC is the new middle-class

woman, and her Web sites, Facebook updates, and blogs are her

new way of writing. And even though Woolf acknowledges a number

of serious obstacles to women writing, which include lack of

isolation for sustained thought, dedicated space, money, and

material things, ultimately she insists that "if we have the

habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think

. . . *that* (emphasis mine). . . even in poverty and obscurity,

is worthwhile" (112).

The Image-Writing of the TPEC

Woolf's writing embodies the woman-manliness and the man-

womanliness that she advocates in *A Room of One's Own* (2005). In

it, Woolf describes the way that she approached her own writing

when she had been asked to give the lecture at a women's college

in England, the text of which would eventually become the book *A

Room of One's Own* (2005). Because the method seemed counter-

productive at the time she experienced it, the route she took to

discovering what she really wanted to say would foreshadow the

methods of later scholars who put forward theories for

engendering writing, such as Barthes in *A Lover's Discourse*

(1978), Derrida (1978, 1982), and Ulmer's (1994) Heuretics and

Mystory. In her final remarks, she laid out how she researched

the topic that she was asked to speak on--women and fiction. She

described how paralyzing it was for her to sit in the library

for hours with "a blank sheet of paper on which was written in

large letters WOMEN AND FICTION, but no more" (Woolf 2005 25).

Because she had probably learned from the men who taught her

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(family members and Bloomsbury associates) to write in a very

linear way, beginning with a topic, forming an outline,

sketching basic ideas, and so on, she assumed that doing so was

the only appropriate tactic. But Woolf's bitterness about her

father's denial to her of a formal education may have spurred

her to embrace the method that she employed and ultimately

recommended to the audience of her lecture. In other words, the

actual process that she undertook for accomplishing her writing

of that lecture was much less linear and directive than she had

been taught to expect. She was shocked at the time, too, when

she arrived at the messages of *A Room of One's Own* (2005) in

very circular and roundabout ways that were not at all familiar

and that certainly were not intellectual or academic as the

terms were understood in her time. Rather, her process for

writing the lecture was prompted by a series of seemingly

inconsequential events that happened to her while she prepared,

such as a direct encounter with patriarchal systems in place in

the university environment when she was forced by a beadle, or

supervisor, to vacate the men's university grounds onto which

she had strayed. And in another instance, when she contrasted

her experiences of having participated in a dinner amongst the

university men at which they enjoyed lavish courses, much wine,

and exquisite desserts and at a dinner among college women at

which they had stale meat and bread pudding with only water to drink. Earlier, she wrote that "while I pondered I had unconsciously, in my listlessness, in my desperation, been drawing a picture where I should, like my neighbor, have been writing a conclusion" (Woolf 2005 31). Even in her daydreaming, she was a performative, embodied writer, and her actions offered a premonition of Ulmer's later recommendations for discovery through image-writing and the aforementioned research by Lyotard and Baudrillard on images.

Woolf allowed these experiences—the feelings, the images, the dialogues, as well as the more traditional textual research, to enter her writing and to influence her observations about the world, and she exhorted the women students to whom she lectured to continue their learning, earn their own money, and establish for themselves their own private spaces within their homes so that they might continue to produce valuable textual works for themselves. Woolf's writing, as well as her methods for engendering it, are excellent examples of feminist textual activist writing that infuse the personal and the political and that, through apparent haphazardness and fluidity, led to prophetic insight. She knew that drawing a picture was not supposed to lead her into composing a thoughtful and provocative lecture, but nonetheless she allowed herself to do it, and the

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result was a phenomenal feminist classic piece of literature

that later solidified her reputation as a serious author and

scholar.

Woolf's techniques might be considered early methods of

mystory, a concept that was introduced by Gregory Ulmer, who has

done an immense amount of scholarly work developing his concepts

of 'mystory' and 'electracy'. Ulmer (Invent-L Conference 2007)

stated "the grammatological interest in imaging place is the

possibility (by analogy with the invention of conceptual

categories, topics and the like) of inventing a practice of

electrate reasoning." In my view, Woolf was an early imager of

place who understood, before the phenomena of the Internet and

the World Wide Web, that a sense of place, whether imaged, as

Ulmer refers to it, or imagined, as Appadurai (1996) might say,

is important to writing in new, creative, and, I argue, activist

ways. The TPEC as a feminist textual technological activist

engages these imaged/imagined spaces to perform her writing and

reach newer and wider audiences with progressive ideas.

Further, Ulmer's (1994) description of mystory includes a

similar approach, and, specifically, he states that mystory is:

> designed to simulate the experience of invention, the
> crossing of discourses that has been shown to occur in the
> invention process. Realizing that learning is much closer
> to invention than to verification, I intended
> mystoriography primarily as a pedagogy. The modes of

>academic writing now taught in school tend to be positioned
>on the side of the already known rather than on the side of
>wanting to find out (of theoretical curiosity) and hence
>discourage learning how to learn *(*xxi).

Ulmer echoes Woolf's admonition to move away from established

formulas and academic, institutional methods for creating texts

and write "as women write, not as men write" and to ignore "the

perpetual admonitions of the eternal pedagogue" (Woolf 2005 74).

The TPEC in Performance

So, what does TPEC writing look like? How does one know

when she is reading a TPEC text? There are many adjectives that

describe TPEC writing: reflective, political, personal,

confrontational/challenging, inviting, commentary and

discussion-inducing, non-formulaic, feminist, re-mapping,

embodied, contributory, social and solitary, negotiative. To put

these descriptors into any type of hierarchical scheme would be

disingenuous and anathema to a TPEC writer; at times the TPEC is

more one than the other, less negotiative and more

confrontational, more personal and less political, etc. But a

TPEC's writing necessarily includes feminist insight and

content, and it consciously or unconsciously disrupts

patriarchal assumptions about its topic whether the topic be culture, literature, information, or any other.

In the performative writing that is featured below, I construct a story whose characters are the TPECs, who are used as examples in this dissertation, and me (whose examples are taken from my Facebook page). This conversation did not take place in real time, and these "characters," I believe, do not know or even know of one another in reality other than that some of them are now my "friends" on Facebook. But as a TPEC writing exercise, I construct this conversation as a demonstration not only of TPEC writing, but also to show how TPECs from across the globe from quite different cultural environments recognize themselves in each other because they perform their feminism in similar, familiar textual ways. Although their conversation below did not actually happen, their statements, feedback, and responses mesh together as if it did. This exercise shows in a creative way how TPECs can know and recognize each other, even when they come from disparate backgrounds, locations, time periods, and circumstances.

This story is not traditionally crafted. The statements that each TPEC makes are lifted directly from her Facebook page, her blog, her Web site, or another form of her writing. Some of the statements are her own and some are comments to her content

by other TPECs who contribute to her digital space. But make no mistake: that they come together as a conversational story is no accident. TPECs embody textual technological feminism, and these qualities are especially present in their words. Whether they come from the Mexico-U.S. borderlands, L.A., the Mid-west, or anywhere else, their words are recognizable to each other and their thoughts and ideas complement each other as a conversation that reveals their ideals, politics, and important contributions the culture-building conversation they are a part of.

The Characters:

Liz: The writer of a mommy blog, mother of two, married in
          a heterosexual relationship

Shannon: The homosexually married lesbian moderator of a
          Facebook page about feminism in the 21st Century

Minal: American of Indian descent, writer, lesbian, believer
          in unicorns

Amy: The moderator. Single feminist mother of two girls,
          divorced, doctoral candidate desperate to produce a
          compelling feminist dissertation that means something
          for women writers

Carmen: Mexican Maquiladora worker, single mother of three,
           living in a ramshackle home with a dirt floor just
           south of the U.S.-Mexico boarder

Sarah: 30-something single woman with a budding career in TV
           journalism and comedy writing

Jezebel: Multiply-dimensioned and personalitied writer for a
           pop culture Web site with a feminist twist

Virginia: A prolific, childless, androgynous, manic, brilliant
           feminist matriarch writer

Their Conversation:

Amy: What exactly is a TPEC?

Sarah: Mostly, we just look like women.

Jezebel: We need to target the mother. Call it sexist, but
           that's the way nature made it.

Amy: She is the very epitome of understatement, but at the
           same time she is the strongest, most generous,
           compassionate person. Give thanks for great moms!

Sarah: Because she's a woman. Stick yourself in the middle of
           enough women, and it's like you practically are one.

Amy: If she's nothing else, she's brave. But what does a

          TPEC woman do?

Carmen: Every day, we clear new paths.

Sarah: Tell me more about this foolproof system.

Amy: Sometimes you just got to take the trash out,

          girlfriend. Put it out at the curb and don't wait til

          Friday.

Carmen: We make changes in our daily lives, in our

          communities, in our workplaces, and within ourselves.

Virginia: do what will be for your good and for the good of the

          world at large.

Amy: How does she fare economically and physically for

          doing all of this?

Carmen: When I started working there, my nose used to bleed.

Amy: Unbelievable.

Shannon: The raw wage gap continues to be used in misleading

          ways to advance public policy agendas without fully

          explaining the reasons behind the gap.

Jezebel: Misogyny is sucking the life force today.

Liz: Sadly, I'm used to it.

Carmen: When I started to work there, I liked the environment.

Sarah: It all comes down to people like her.

Shannon: The seemingly unbridgeable chasm between the size of

           the paycheck brought home by the woman and the larger

           one earned by a man doing the same job.

Sarah: Here, have $.75 of my dollar.

Liz: I can be better, we can all be better. At giving

           credit and acknowledging inspiration and simply

           supporting one another.

Amy: What is important to TPECs politically?

Sarah: This year, nothing is hotter than politics.

Liz: So today, [election day] I want to go out on a limb

           (with encouragement by Julie and Jon Stewart) to take

           on the crazy. Because the only crazy I like in this

           country is on Bravo every night around 9pm and

           involves Botox.

Sarah: If they want to know what's important to us, they

           should just watch our favorite show!

Shannon: Well, that's good! And thankfully none of them are

           Republicans.

Amy: I have no idea whether this Krystal Ball is fit for

           congressional service, but her response to her

           republican detractors is spot on. I say keep on

           running, Krystal!

Jezebel: Repubs are so dead set on all of us wimmenz having

            babies whether we want to or not. Denying us the most

            basic rights over our own bodies, and yet, if you

            happen to be a woman of the wrong skin color, you're

            using your womb to invade our country.

Shannon: We have been sleepwalking into an authoritarian police

            state and our civil liberties continue to be taken

            from us without restraint or justification. We must

            protect our rights!

Liz: Now these initiatives may not line up with your

            values, and in that case, I will try to respect that,

            but they certainly line up with mine.

Shannon: Sign this petition in case it helps.

Amy: Is the TPEC angry?

Sarah: Particularly women are angry.

Virginia: Anger had snatched my pencil while I dreamt. But what

            was anger doing there?

Sarah: They ask some serious questions.

Amy: In honor of . . . all the other women who explode at

            inopportune times and cause a mess.

Sarah: It's not arguing, it's just looking for consensus

            loudly.

Virginia: All I retrieved for that morning's work had been the
          one fact of anger.

Sarah: I am a woman, so I must be angry.

Amy: So how does a TPEC go about writing?

Carmen: We see things differently.

Sarah: You may need to adopt an approach based on a metaphor
          or simile.

Virginia: The artist as 'lightening conductor' has the capacity
          to feel the shock of electricity and convey it without
          being consumed by it.

Shannon: There surely is no higher form of humor, indeed no
          more fulfilling calling, than being deliberately
          offensive.

Sarah: some women do need a more empirical approach.

Liz: We generate ideas and put together words in ways that
          engage our audience and connect us with our
          communities. It's profoundly personal, whether you're
          writing about apple tarts or your baby's first steps.

Minal: I was thinking about scuba diving, about water as my
          element (I'm a Cancer) and about my name which means
          fish . . . I woke up . . . by my dreams, which were
          very beautiful and involved a lot of wild swimming. It

was a beautiful sunny day. . . I felt this was an

excellent beginning . . . so I went down the hill to

the bakery, ate a grilled fennel focaccia, had an

affogato across the street at the gelato place, and

drove to the beach. I boogie boarded and swam in the

ocean for a couple of hours, then laid on the beach

for awhile. Now I'm off to dinner with a friend . . .

I did them with joy.

Virginia: It poured itself out, higgledy-piggledy, in

torrents of rhyme and prose, poetry and philosophy

which stand congealed in quartos and folios that

nobody ever reads.

Amy: Maya Angelou once said, "People all over the world use

words: the writer comes along and has to use these

most-in-use objects, put together a few nouns,

pronouns, verbs, adjectives . . . and pull them

together and make them bounce, throw them against the

wall and make people say, 'I never thought of it that

way.'"

Minal: How beautiful to hear the cadences and languages, to

watch the faces and take in the voices that—finally—

made sense.

Virginia: When a woman speaks to women she should have something
         very unpleasant up her sleeve . . . let us agree,
         then, that a paper read by a woman to women should end
         with something particularly disagreeable.

Liz: My references to writer's rape has struck quite the
         negative chord with survivors of sexual violence, and
         I can't say I blame them. It was strong, provocative
         language, and I employed it based on my understanding
         of the traditional definition and other uses of the
         word. My intent here is never to hurt anyone, and
         certainly not to marginalize the survivors of real
         physical and emotional harm in any way.

Sarah: Yeah, I think, duh, too.

Minal: I want to be present for whatever's going on in life,
         too. So if I end up not being able to write as much as
         all that, I figure I'll at least have several thousand
         words through the effort, which is more than I'd
         probably produce otherwise. Hooray for productive
         failure!

Virginia: There must be no obstacle in it, no foreign matter
         unconsumed.

Liz: Because that says, this person has smart ideas. This
         person writes good words.

Minal: I've been noticing this lack of language myself. What

           language there is sounds rather mundane, and doesn't

           in any case communicate the actual experience to

           someone who hasn't had it.

Liz: Our ideas and our words: They're all we got. That's

           it. Ideas and words.

Amy: Final thoughts?

Sarah: I learned a lesson from that.

Amy: Some happenings are very difficult to believe.

Virginia: Ought not education to bring out and fortify the

           differences rather than the similarities?

Shannon: Hooray! I'm finally useful despite my lack of a penis!

Sarah: I cannot wait for this all to be over.

Carmen: We have learned about our rights as women and as

           workers.

Jezebel: Now, I realize, I *have* to be here. I have to be the

           one to speak up, to notice the injustice, and to yell

           out for everyone that is treated as less than human.

Shannon: Feminism isn't merely important to the 21st Century, if

           there is to be any progress, feminism IS the 21st

           Century.

Sarah: Oh yes. I went there.

Through their various feminist textual acts, TPECs are involved in an ongoing conversation that flows, interacts, reacts, and pushes boundaries that may formerly have kept them from realizing the power of their words, their deeds, and their progressive ideals. In Chapters Three through Seven, the TPECs in the conversation above are featured in examples of Woolf's cultural screens at work in digital feminist textual environments. They illustrate the value of observing and critiquing culture through a feminist technological lens, and in doing so, they add to the repository of historical texts that document the TPEC's important role in negotiating digital culture.

CHAPTER 3: SCREENING SEX, SEXUALITY, AND GENDER

> *Have you any notion of how many books are written about women in the course of one year? Have you any notion how many are written by men? Are you aware that you are, perhaps, the most discussed animal in the universe?*
>
> -Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (2005)

When Woolf wrote about the need for a room of one's own, she wrote a truism that inspired generations of feminist textual activists. In 2010, eighty-some years after she wrote *A Room of One's Own*, it is still true that many women are not allowed and also do not often claim for themselves the time, space, and freedom of thought to be creative, even though women's ability and desire for creativity are arguably more recognized and accepted today. But what complicates this fact in the 21st Century is that, despite some progress in terms of autonomy and independence that women have realized, they continue to be marginalized through a patriarchal culture that denies them freedoms that are taken for granted by men. Women still perform the majority of childrearing, household chores, and cooking duties, and, whether they are married or not, often are expected to work and provide income for the family. Women who choose to not participate in traditional male-female marriages, living

arrangements, and societal norms are denied opportunities in other ways because of their identification as single, single mother, homosexual, or childless (among others), all terms that marginalize many women as Other (Other meaning a group of others with similar qualities) and lacking. Monique Wittig (1992) sums up the phenomenon of the "Other" when she states, "What has happened in history throughout the revolutions which we have known is that the Other (a category of others) has substituted itself for the One, keeping under it huge groups of oppressed peoples that would in turn become the Other of the ex-others, become by then the One" (53). Scholars such as Grosz 1994; Haraway 1991; Hayles 2001; and Miller 2001 have observed this phenomenon of "othering." They recognize the influence of technologies on everyday households in western culture, and they realize that women continue to risk being "othered" through technologies, including Internet technologies. But the TPEC's use of Woolfian and other critical screens to examine culture are creating a new reality in which they resist oppression and claim their own space and place in western culture.

Woolf and Women as a Sex

Susan Gubar asks in her introduction to *A Room of One's Own* (2005), "How does this . . . affirmation of art inform Virginia Woolf's approach to sexuality and to the much discussed ideal of androgyny" (lvi)? Gubar elucidates Woolf's attention to sexuality and gender issues and points to one of Woolf's primary arguments in so many of her texts: in patriarchy, women, as a *sex*[3] are nearly always defined by what they are NOT or what they lack in relationship to men. Further, women are an astoundingly often-treated subject in the works of men. Woolf continuously calls out the mistakes made by centuries of men who have defined the sex "women" incorrectly and, quite frankly, badly! For example, Woolf asks, "Have you any notion of how many books are written about women in the course of one year? Have you any notion how many are written by men? Are you aware that you are, perhaps, the most discussed animal in the universe" (Woolf 2005 26)? Moreover, Woolf assertively recognizes that "men . . . have no apparent qualification save that they are not women . . .

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[3] I use the term *sex* because that is the term most often used by Woolf—today, I would opt for the term *gender*, but cultural influences have irrevocably changed the way westerners interpret these words, so I want to try to at least invoke the spirit of Woolf's terminology, even if the effect is not completely realized.

." and that "many [books that were written about women] . . . were serious and prophetic, moral and hortatory" (27).

But, it is when she remarks, "Why are women . . . so much more interesting to men than men are to women?" (27) that she uncovers a key difference among the sexes in how they approach interactions with each other. She further writes, "Men were no longer to her 'the opposing faction'; she need not waste her time railing against them; she need not climb on to the roof and ruin her peace of mind longing for travel, experience and a knowledge of the world and character that were denied her" (91). In other words, when women began to take up the pen, they wrote about the more important and interesting subjects to them, were decidedly not patronizing to men, and were disinterested in wasting the valuable, short periods of time they had for writing with speculations about the opposite sex. Woolf realized that women who write understand that the exercise of writing explanations of the opposite sex is futile and a waste of everyone's time; she wrote, "Here I drew a breath and added, indeed, in the margin, Why does Samuel Butler say, 'Wise men never say what they think of women?' Wise men never say anything else apparently . . . what is so unfortunate is that wise men never think the same thing about women" (Woolf 2005 29).

An example of how this phenomenon remains evident in the current context of the Internet is provided on the Web site Jezebel.com. This Web site states that it is "celebrity, sex, fashion for women: without airbrushing" (Jezebel 2010). In a post by Hortense Smith, Jezebel revealed that the magazine *Men's Health* recently included a feature article, ostensibly written by a woman of authority, about "25 Secrets She Wishes You Knew." Among the "secrets" were gems such as "Manicures and pedicures are a woman's gift to her man. I love looking pretty for you. The time to worry is when I stop going for them." I could engage Woolf's arguments with this type of writing about women on many levels, including its assumptions of heteronormativity, that women do nothing for themselves except when it comes to an end that pleases a man, that women who do not get manis and pedis are assumed to be not heterosexual and therefore undesirable even amongst themselves. I could go on. But while Jezebel uses this post as a forum for discussion on the misguided topics featured in men's magazines, in doing so, it also reveals the significance of the difference between the content of media outlets such as *Men's Health* and its own. In reviewing approximately two hundred posts under the section on "sex" on Jezebel.com, the posts that were about men or relationships with men were similar to this one in that they exposed men's media

outlets for their inherent misogyny and lack of insight into
women. In the "sex" section of Jezebel.com, at least, women
write far more often about what interests women, and most of the
time, that interest does not involve trying to elucidate
explanations of the male human as a species.

From the viewpoint that discussing men and women as
separate, distinct, and profoundly different sexes is an
exercise in futility, Woolf explicitly unravels her
groundbreaking ideas about sexuality in *A Room of One's Own*
(2005), but she takes the ideas further, in more stylistic ways,
in the semi-autobiographical, semi-fictional, somewhat magically
realistic *Orlando*. In my view, the treatment of sexuality in *A
Room of One's Own* (2005) is a sort of explanation for what, in
retrospect, she had accomplished in writing *Orlando*, which had
been published the year prior. For example, Woolf wrote,
"perhaps, to think, as I had been thinking these two days, of
one sex as distinct from the other is an effort. It interferes
with the unity of the mind" (Woolf 2005 95). Yet again, the
transgression that is enacted by Woolf's sex, sexuality, and
gender screen illustrates the profundity of her realization that
there may indeed be no essential, organic, biological
distinction between the sexes, save, perhaps, for actual sexual
organs, in the case of most humans.

Gubar notes Woolf's contemplation of the differences

between the sexes. Woolf pondered, "Different though the sexes

are, they intermix" (Gubar 2005 189). And Gubar further observes

that, "particularly toward the conclusion of *A Room of One's Own*

(2005), this idea results in a meditation on androgyny, though

throughout Woolf could be said to be grappling with issues of

sexuality" with "some interpreting it as a renunciation of

sexuality altogether" (Woolf 2005 lvii). And I agree with Gubar

that "*A Room of One's Own* (2005) is an effort to transcend the

partiality and competition of binary terms (like male and

female) so as to arrive at "liberating moments of resonant being

available to men as well as women" (Woolf 2005 lviii). Woolf

continues to screen culture through the lens of sex, sexuality,

and gender by rejecting the rigidity of binary behavior, delving

even into the area of race relationships.

The argument over the decades that European and U.S.

feminism has historically been racist and exclusionary to women

of color is not a new one. And what can even be seen here in

Woolf's writing is that she acknowledges the difficulty of

living in a culture that devalues certain races of color, and

she equates those ways of thinking with the devaluation of women

that she so keenly experiences herself and observes in other

ways. And because of her own experiences and the experiences of

other women (she often wrote of her concern for the poor) within patriarchal culture, she illustrates yet another shift between the inherent domination-submission paradigm of patriarchy and the more egalitarian feminist approach to societal matters. For example, Woolf writes, "it is one of the great advantages of being a woman that one can pass even a very fine negress without wishing to make an Englishwoman of her" (Woolf 2005 50). In other words, in Woolf's view, there is nothing wrong with or less-than in a woman of color who may have different mannerisms, features, comportment, or cultural ideals. But the effects produced by so many years of patriarchal English colonialism throughout the world that have affected and established norms in contemporary English society have produced the superior attitudes that prevail as she writes, and many of which persist today in U.S. culture.

The Web site Jezebel.com confronts majority societal criticism and rejection of homosexuality and androgyny on a regular basis. For example, since 2008, the Web site posted nineteen items that dealt directly with androgyny, some of which are posted below. Included in those postings was one particular item of note that focuses on the androgyny of the actor who played Orlando in the film adaptation of Woolf's *Orlando*. The contributors to Jezebel.com are continuing the important TPEC

work of screening sex, sexuality, and gender societal constructs

and transgressing lines of assumption based on them to move

forward the cultural discussion of the meanings of gender (see

Figure 3-7).

Figure 3: A sample Jezebel.com post on androgyny

Figure 4: A sample Jezebel.com post on androgyny

Does Cutting Your Hair Mean You Don't Want Sex?

It's always amazing the questions people are willing to ask in public advice forums. In today's *Guardian*, a man writes in to the advice columnist to ask whether his wife's new short haircut indicates a subconscious distaste for sex — and, yes, their sex life is bad. Therapist Pamela Stephenson Connolly's advice is okay, but I think we can add to it.

Writes the anonymous person:

" Is it true that a woman with a short hairstyle is subconsciously indicating that she does not want sex? My wife had a drastic haircut four days before our wedding and our sex life was a damp squib from the start. The erotic side of our marriage has died completely. My wife considers me childish and says that as all other elements of our relationship are fine, I should not want more than this.

Figure 5: A sample Jezebel.com post on androgyny

A (Sort Of) Paean To Tilda Swinton

Tilda Swinton taught me it was okay to have pubic hair. I was 14, and friends with some mean boys who had me convinced that no one would ever touch me unless it was completely shaved. Swinton was naked on the TV screen in my English class — in Sally Potter's *Orlando* — and there was her bush for all to see. If pubes were okay for a *movie star*, they were all right for me too. Later, I realized that Swinton was less a movie star per se and more, as nerve.com put it, "the least ordinary actress around." She's an awesome performer, and an icon of a kind of bizarro-femininity that makes prettiness look passé. She's also on the cover of this month's *BlackBook*; inside the magazine she discusses her androgyny, her fashion sense, and her lover's penis.

My favorite moment in the interview is this one:

> [...] when the photographer says she looks a bit too much like a boy in one of the pictures, several hours into the shoot, she leans in and, as if letting him in on a secret, stage whispers: "That's *kind of* who I am."

Swinton's not into being cute, or girly, and although she describes herself as "resigned" rather then "comfortable" with her looks, she says, "I never had an aspiration to look like a doll, which is fortunate." Fortunate for her and fortunate for us, because we get a woman BlackBook calls "to some, the most beautiful woman on the planet," who is frankly odd-looking. I like to think of Swinton as post-beautiful, a visitor from some paradisaical future time when it's more important to look fascinating than to have big breasts or pouty lips (not that these things can't also be fascinating — they're just not the be-all and end-all of female hotness).

Figure 6: Jezebel.com post on Tilda Swinton's androgyny

Part of Swinton's otherworldly look comes from her fashion sense, of which she says, "'red carpet dressing' sounds like something that would take you out of your own instincts, but haven't gotten there yet. I will wear what I want to wear." Which includes a one-shoulder Lanvin gown that looked, to my mind, space-age awesome.

When Swinton's iconoclasm goes beyond style, however, it gets a little more complicated. She calls the MPAA "the Motion Academy of doo da — what was it called?" And she says of her 2008 Oscar, "a lot of people really want one — really, *really* want one. And I'm embarrassed because I never did, and I feel a little ashamed that I was given one when I didn't really want one." What starts out as a bit of Doris-Lessing-style cussedness ends up sounding kind of ungracious, even holier-than-thou. And her opinions on Hollywood politics are just kind of confusing. She lists Javier Bardem and Marion Cotillard as proof that "there is a possibility for our generation, point being that one doesn't necessarily have to give it all up. One can actually stand up and be counted." Maybe her interviewer didn't push hard enough, but I'm not sure what she, Bardem, and Cotillard are being counted for, unless it's good acting and European hotness. Worthwhile pursuits both, but hardly revolutionary.

But perhaps I'm expecting too much of Swinton. I originally encountered her as a counterexample to a particular borrowed-*Playboy* standard of female sexuality, and she remains one to this day. She is also a very, very good actress. A woman doesn't have to be inspiring in every way to be inspiring, and looks are still important — or rather, it's important for us to see someone who still looks how she wants to look and wears what she wants to wear. Tilda Swinton shows that female beauty and sexuality can be creative, self-determined, and weird, rather than mere products of the male gaze. That — and *Orlando* — are enough for me.

Figure 7: Further discussion on Tilda Swinton's androgyny

Further, Woolf adopts a much more liberal view of what some may term alternative lifestyles, even among Englishmen and women, and she asserts in many ways throughout *A Room of One's Own* (2005) and her other work that homosexuality and androgyny are not abhorrent or wrong, but completely natural, acceptable, and inevitable. She first observes this relationship among women in *A Room of One's Own* (2005) when she cites what many readers, including the young women to whom she was lecturing, may have passed over completely in the work of author Mary Carmichael. Woolf keenly observes in Carmichael's work a change in the tenor and tone of meaning in Carmichael's brief sentence "Chloe liked Olivia." Woolf writes, "I may tell you that the very next words I read were these—'Chloe liked Olivia . . .' Do not start. Do not blush. Let us admit in the privacy of our own society that these things sometimes happen. Sometimes women do like women" (81). And Woolf continues, "'Chloe liked Olivia,' I read. And then it struck me how immense a change was there. Chloe liked Olivia perhaps for the first time in literature" (81). With this passage, Woolf begins to directly address the importance of writing for women—writing for writing's sake, yes, but also writing for the promotion of feminist ideals. Her assertion that such a simple phrase in a literary work can carry such weight and importance for women clarifies how critical she believes

writing to be for women. The example she uses, "Chloe liked Olivia," also demonstrates how very impactful and meaningful only a few choice words can be, a concept which resonates deeply with me as I draw meaning from Woolf's way of screening sex, sexuality, and gender to analyze the power of current-era digitally-produced, often abbreviated, activist technological texts.

I respect Woolf's attention to the mood of a phrase, the tone of an idea, and the absolute importance of a relatively simple statement, and I speculate that some Facebook status updates engender a similar impact. For example, in a discussion post on the Facebook account "Feminism is important to the 21st Century, fifteen-year-old JillAnn Meunier wrote, "I'm 15, but if I had known the word feminist when I was a toddler, I would have been one then, too." And in another discussion thread on the same account, Chris O'Leary wrote, "why don't we all just call ourselves equalists?" On some level, these posts touch on some very important feminist issues such as how to get around the negative "f-word" syndrome associated with the word feminism that leads the mainstream public to think of feminists as man-haters. For example, in U.S. culture, most people assume that toddlers are pure and that they have not yet been too deeply corrupted by the politics of their parents or the cultural

expectations of their environment. Yet this young woman seems to

indicate rather profoundly that she could think for herself and

perform her identity, despite a limited vocabulary, at a very

young age. And therefore, if one agrees that toddlers are

relatively pure in mind and heart, this young woman knew at the

age of three or younger that she was a feminist and that she

knew that she was equal to any other toddler. It's a very

simple, but quite provocative statement that raises all sorts of

questions. When do children begin to know the cultural

expectations of being a girl or a boy? How do they know them?

Who teaches them and how do they learn or not learn to rely on

their own thoughts and ideas to establish their world view? Is

it possible to NOT learn cultural norms or to reject them at

such an early age? These questions are complicated by the

evolution of "post feminism," which is a culture-based opinion

held by many women who are currently in their twenties. Woolf

herself was troubled by the emergence of the word "feminism,"

which came into common use during her lifetime. She actually

denied that she was a feminist, preferring at some moments to be

called a "Sapphist" and at others to refute her identity as

either, though she continued to live, write, and love in very

feminist ways. Perhaps it is not the term itself that is

operative for millennials nor Woolf but the perceived

patriarchal cultural negativity associated with it. The TPEC

also resists labels by being simultaneously human and machine,

flesh and ether, technology-enabled and technology-restricted.

Therefore, TPECs may be able to transcend boundaries self-

imposed or imposed upon them by a culture that changes more

slowly than they.

Woolf's work and these Web sites, blogs, and Facebook

accounts offer commentary and suggestions that address some of

these questions and illuminate some of the ways women in 21st

Century digital environments are applying feminist principles to

the subject matter of their writing.

<u>Gender and Writing</u>

In her work, Woolf identifies some key characteristics of

feminist writing that prevail to this day and that can guide the

TPEC and other feminist textual activists in the 21st century who

use different devices and mechanisms for feminist technological

textuality but who nonetheless observe and manipulate texts in

various forms to promote the valuable ideals of feminism. For

Woolf, a feminist writer is someone who uses "both sides of his

mind equally" (Woolf 2005 102). And she even refers to the fact

that some of the west's most revered writers, those revered by

men and women and by many cultures, employed this approach to writing. She remarked, for example, "the obvious reason would be that it is natural for the sexes to cooperate" (Woolf 2005 96) in two ways: first, in the sense that the male and female aspects of a writer can manifest to produce extremely powerful and influential literature, and second, in the sense that men and women should influence each other's writing for the benefit of the writing, and if they do so, the writing that results will be more compelling and meaningful. But Woolf pushes this assertion even deeper by citing Shakespeare's work. She states that "one must turn back to Shakespeare, then, for Shakespeare was androgynous" (Woolf 2005 102) and that "it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex. It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple. One must be woman-manly or man-womanly" (103).

Finally, it is this woman-manly or man-womanly approach to writing that I am so grateful to Woolf for observing and to today's feminist textual activists for using to promote feminist ideals and influence cultural change.

The second example above by Chris O'Leary also intentionally or unintentionally disrupts culturally-ingrained thought paradigms by changing the vocabulary of feminism and also transgressing gender boundaries. First and second wave

feminists may argue that there is nothing wrong with the term feminist and those who disagree with or are uncomfortable with the word should just get over it, stop apologizing for it, or stop looking for an escape from it to appease newer generations of women or "post-feminists." But what is disruptive about the suggestion of using the term "equalist" is not just the word itself. Part of the disruption occurs because the person who posted the suggestion could be a man or a woman—the name is Chris O'Leary. Chris has a non-gender specific photo on her or his Facebook account and has concealed his or her gender. As an audience to this statement, the reader can't automatically identify by gender with man or woman. Chris O'Leary may not have intended to write such a profound thought, but in writing it, Chris accomplished something similar to what Mary Carmichel accomplished by writing "Chloe liked Olivia," and in doing so prompted the people who read it to think and to write at least several more pages of comments on this discussion thread. While I do not take up a detailed discussion of the Chris O'Leary post in this dissertation, I acknowledge that Chris may have expressed a term, "equalist," that might help to resolve to some extent the culturally problematic term "feminist."

CHAPTER 4: AESTHETICS AS A SCREEN

> *Women have served all these centuries*
> *as looking-glasses possessing the magic*
> *and delicious power of reflecting*
> *the figure of man at*
> *twice its natural size*

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (2005)

Defining Woolfian and TPEC Aesthetics

Historically, the term aesthetics has been difficult to define because it inevitably involves descriptors that are not objective or concrete. Aesthetics is also a difficult term because it is used across disciplines in different ways. As Adorno stated, "it is self-evident that nothing concerning art is self-evident" (1997). I agree, and I would also argue that "aesthetics" is a meta-term that contains within it a multitude of meanings that refer to itself and to other very closely related concepts such as values, senses, feelings, and perceptions.

I use the term aesthetics in this dissertation as a way of describing what is valued in terms of feelings, perceptions, and senses in contemporary U.S. culture. My stance on aesthetics is that dominant cultural aesthetics in the U.S. privilege

patriarchal values and that TPECs reject many of these values and re-use them for their own purposes.

Primarily, I describe the term aesthetics as a gendered concept. In patriarchy, male aesthetics are privileged, and some of those privileges are expressed in binarial concepts such as dominant/submissive, male/female and man/woman, dominant/submissive, educated/uneducated, intelligent/ignorant, etc. These are aesthetic privileges that Woolf and the TPEC reject. One way that I take up an analysis of patriarchal aesthetics is by looking at embodiment in terms of seeing the human body as a machine. Following Woolf's views on the value of androgyny, I move the idea further by analyzing the binarial notion of human/machine by acknowledging that humans in western culture are becoming human-machine, their embodiment incorporating human and technological characteristics that are no longer disassemblable prostheses, but fully embodied aesthetic features.

The following Woolfian aesthetic principles apply also to the TPEC.

- o Woolf's aesthetics recognize the writer as creator as well as collaborator with her audience and reader. Woolfian aesthetics and TPEC aesthetics are collaborative.
- o Woolf's aesthetics are negotiable when it comes to space and place within and outside of texts. TPECs

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bodily and intellectually enact negotiations between space and place and within and outside of texts and technological environments.

- o Woolf's aesthetics are relational, a give and take, strong and weak, male and female, man and woman, basic and abundant—not binarial. The TPEC performs a spectrum of embodiments that are negotiable depending on context, environment, or even whim.
- o Woolf's aesthetics do not privilege patriarchal values such as individualism, colonialism, power, naturalizing, etc., but do privilege networks, connectives, affinities, experience. The TPEC embraces an identity that is fluid, connected through people, ideas, machines, and environment, and values personal experience as well as paid or scientific expertise.

TPECs participate in refashioning western cultural aesthetic perceptions of identity, individuality, interconnectedness, relationships, and power by participating in and influencing the aesthetics of textual technologies. For example, later, I describe in greater detail how computer technology is aesthetically masculine and therefore contains inherent patriarchal aesthetics. The same hierarchies valued by patriarchal culture are replicated in technological/digital tools. But the TPEC subverts these influences by re-using and refashioning the textual technological tools to further a feminist agenda.

The History of Gendered Aesthetics

Technologies, especially since the industrial revolution, have been and continue to be gendered, and they are gendered because they developed in patriarchal social and economic systems. In particular, computer technology is inherently masculine. This fact can be demonstrated by surveying the historical underpinnings of technological developments, examining the various approaches that feminist theories have taken toward computer technology, and finally, by situating Virginia Woolf's work relative to this position and describing how women are using Internet technologies to increase their personal and collective agency.

Walter Ong, in *Orality and Literacy* (1982), took a position on the nature of technology. Contrary to technological determinists, some cyberfeminists, and others, Ong believes that technologies develop in concert with cultural needs and desires, and technologies are used by cultures as vehicles that enable users to accomplish things that they could not accomplish with earlier technologies. Additionally, Ong refers to the nature of the human-machine interaction that occurs with computer technology, insisting that computers are not mere appendages or external prostheses that assist human life, and that computers

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have actually become so ingrained in human life that they are,

in Ong's terms, a form of secondary orality. He states, "The

electronic age is also an age of 'secondary orality', the

orality . . . which depends on writing and print for existence"

(3). In my view, this means that transitional western digital

society, in which textual (print and other texts) technologies

are ever-present and becoming embodied aspects of identities,

depends on technology for its very existence, and the new

technologies that develop and continue to improve on each other

depend on each other for their very existence. This is one

reason why the millennial generation mentioned earlier, having

grown up knowing nothing of pre-Internet culture, is hesitant to

embrace a pre-digital cultural ideal of silence and isolation

that does not include technological, "always on" textual

technologies.

The complexity and multitude of forces that influence

decisions, developments, and uses of technologies have outgrown

the relatively simplistic conceptualizations of technologies

proposed by the determinists, and feminist scholars denounce

theories that are completely linear because linearity assumes a

hierarchical progression of binarial notions such as first/last,

top/bottom, lowest/highest, etc. Further, as cognitive

scientists have studied the brain over centuries and especially

within the most recent one, they have discovered the phenomenal

intimacy of the brain's synapses and neurological connections,

and the remarkable adaptability of humankind's most valuable

organ. They realize that forces such as culture, environment and

many others impact the development of all humans (Varela,

Thompson & Rosch 1991) and the machines, technologies, and tools

they choose to use.

But because of the way the scientific humanists and others

had ingrained into western culture the idea that the body is a

machine, made of parts, dissassemblable and reassemblable, heat-

generating and forceful, the male-dominated world of science has

made the contention believable that the human body is not only

machine, but it is process, a complicated computer, but

decipherable if we can just break down the codes that inscribe

it.

I believe that there has been a major shift in the

development of computing for personal purposes in the 21st

century because it is now possible to envision the computerized

body (quite literally through medical technology and other

technologies that increasingly make the body transparent) as not

just an appendage or a prosthesis, but an integral part of the

TPEC cyborgs we are becoming, it is not out of our reach to

continue to develop cultural norms that acknowledge the complexities of the mind/body/machine.

My views on the aesthetic nature of computers and the body are informed by feminist texts such as Woolf (1982, 2005), Haraway (1991), Hayles (1999, 2002), Balsamo (1999), and many others. Additionally, by looking at the historical positions taken to analyze the ways that technologies develop, I connect some of western culture's understandings of technological (especially computer) developments with the more recent theorization and study of the brain and mind through cognitive science. For example, Bolter's idea in *Writing Space* (2001) is remediation. Remediation, Bolter argues, means that new technologies incorporate aspects of former technologies into them. The newer technologies can carry with them remnants of what was good and what worked from the older technologies. In other words, technologies don't just spontaneously invent themselves and get taken up by a culture—they emerge based on what the culture uses, what the culture needs, and what the technology promises is possible. Likewise, through studying even the most basic historical positions on cognitive development, we know that those theorists have espoused stage theories such as infancy, childhood, middle childhood, adolescence, etc., terms that have been commonly accepted for a long time. It is not

difficult to see the similarities in the ways the technology

theories and cognitive theories have moved in similar

directions: from distinct and separated to embodied, from

universality to differentiation, from linear to circular and

fluid. Bolter's stance that multiple forces create environments

in which certain applications or aspects of technologies can

flourish is more progressive than the stringent, restrictive

ideas of technological determinism, such as technology driving

social developments and cultural pathways. Likewise, newer

cognitive theories such as those of Varela, Thompson, and Rosch

(1991), that include a multiplicity and complexity of influences

on the brain's development further develop formerly linear,

rigidly categorical theories of human development. Similarly,

through Internet technology, TPEC activists create communities

that are not bound by the formerly restrictive notions of home,

community, religious affiliation, the body, or territoriality.

In summary, the Internet is a complex interaction of social

forces that is especially informed by patriarchy, codes,

hardware, prostheses, embodiment, and other factors that make

its isolation as an object of study impracticable. One must

consider all of these forces and more when analyzing the

aesthetics of TPEC feminist technological textuality in the 21st

Century.

The Historical Aesthetics of Women and Technology

Earlier, pre-capitalist societies that were not
industrialized were less hierarchical and were, as Kilbourne &
Weeks (2002) stated, "based on cooperation rather than
competition, community rather than self-interest, and usufruct
(the right to use of another's property)" (245). These pre-
capitalist societal norms, while they may be problematic in some
other ways for women, hold closer to a feminist mindset than do
most capitalist ideals such as individualism, colonialism, power
dynamics, and the tendency to naturalize whatever the (white)
male majority prioritizes as aesthetic, desirable, or worthy. I
do not denounce capitalism entirely, however, because in my
view, capitalism has a role to play in women's potential to
realize the admonitions of Virginia Woolf and to earn their own
money and enjoy their own spaces/places in whatever tangible or
intangible forms that serve that purpose. Ultimately, Web pages,
Facebook accounts, and blogs offer new frontiers for women that
have the potential to transform women's lives by increasing
their personal and collective agency outside of the realm of
rhetorics and relationships based on power and domination and
inside the arena of networks, communities, affinities, and paid

or unpaid work based on collectives instead of competition. To be clear, mine is not an essentialist stance, but I do recognize and acknowledge that women have been deeply enculturated through patriarchy to behave in certain ways that make them, somewhat ironically, very well suited for Internet technologies that work using these concepts.

Some of the earliest historical groupings of humans are genders (Kilbourne & Weeks 245). So, division among human beings according to gender is nothing new. But pre-capitalist societies tended toward gender groupings because social networks were based on the tasks that were typically completed by one gender or the other, such as men conducting civil affairs and women managing domestic ones. Important to note, however, is that some current-culture "women's work," such as laundry, ironing, and other now domesticated tasks, were formerly industrialized jobs performed by men who earned pay for doing them. One difference between then and now, however, is that after the division of types of labor by genders and the domestication of many of these jobs, such as laundry, the types of labor themselves were regarded equally in terms of respectability and importance. Once women's domestic work became individualized, home-bound, and unpaid, it was devalued by the culture and the technologies themselves that ostensibly liberated and eased workloads

(Kilbourne & Weeks). But the technological "advancements" such
as in-home laundry were products of the emerging hierarchies of
patriarchal capitalism that resulted in the preoccupation and
predominance of class rhetorics that are so embedded as to be
nearly invisible in western cultures today. Since the industrial
revolution, the most used (and for a long time most respected)
social, literary, and other criticisms have analyzed class and
have lost track of the criticism of patriarchy, except in
relatively small and specialized fields such as women's studies
and feminist studies (of course Marxism is probably the most
famous analysis of class). The switch from valuing the "organic,
female world view" (Kilbourne & Weeks 246) to revering the
mechanical and sanctioning the scientific and material control
and domination of nature and women is key to the "entrenchment
of patriarchy" (Kilbourne & Weeks 246).

So, fast-forward a bit from the previously described
masculine turn in worldview to the more recent but
scientifically-related developments in computer technologies,
and one can see the small step it takes to connect the values of
entrenched and naturalized patriarchy with computer technology.
In fact, the first computers were developed through experiments
that were funded by U.S. and other western governments to
produce better and more efficient war tactics for the military,

so the agenda of patriarchal domination of information and information systems and masculine values are inextricably imbedded in computer technology. Studies have also shown that women not only contend with the ubiquitous patriarchy of the technology itself, they must also overcome discriminatory stereotypes that label them technologically incompetent, uninterested, or unworthy. The Facebook account "Feminism is Important to the 21st Century" posted Figure 8 on its page. This political cartoon graphically portrays Woolf's and many other feminist's views about patriarchal aesthetics as a silent, assumed, ingrained part of current U.S. culture and history. Woolf (2005) opined about government-sponsored and commissioned works on history that "by no possible means could middle-class women with nothing but brains and character at their command have taken part in any one of the great movements which, brought together, constitute the historian's view of the past" (44). In other words, she seemed to be one of few who noticed that women were absent from history as it was recorded. And she noted how far from the truth those histories must have been, knowing her own intelligence and opinions and those of her contemporaries in spite of their lack of formal education and "place" at the proverbial table of serious discussion.
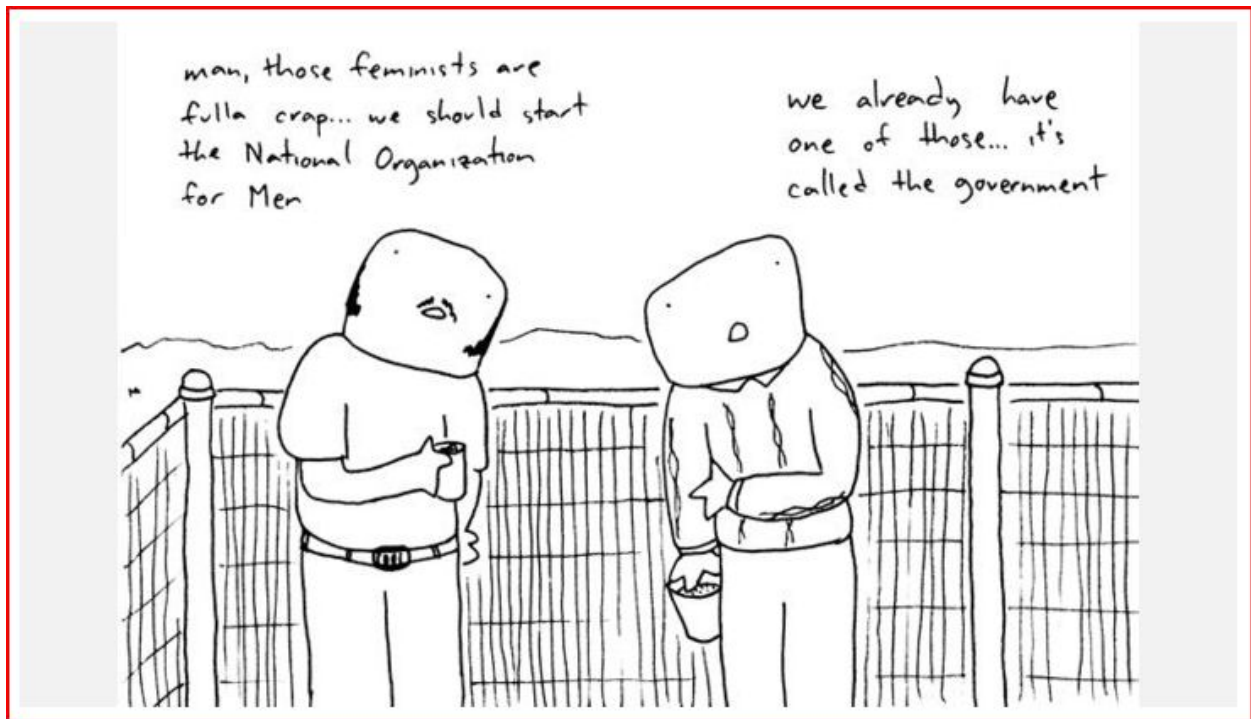
Figure 8: Feminist political comic posted on Feminism is Important to the 21st Century Facebook account

Further, as Bryson (1996) argues, "women live, paradoxically, in a state of intimate connection with technologies of re-/production and yet are represented as perennially inadequate—groping towards and never reaching competence—technophobic and Luddite" (121). But most feminists would not argue that women should retreat to the essentialist state of earth mother who is devoid of mechanical, scientific, and computer knowledges to escape patriarchal domination. In fact, it may be that computer technology among other high-

technologies "may be necessary for women's autonomy" (Smith 13),

and, we should not underestimate women's ability to subvert

underlying motives.

Feminist Critiques of the Aesthetics of Computer Technology

Women users of computer technology have been studied and

theorized about by feminists. Further, women have been

positioned by these theories relative to their use of computer

technology (as opposed to its influence on them in the

workplace, or the influence of its design on them, for example).

Liberal feminists tend to focus on the fact that most

computer technologists are men, and therefore they create

systems and programs that reflect male perspectives and values

and ignore those that are valuable to women. Liberal feminists

point to, as I stated earlier, the military origins of computer

technology, but they also note that one of the women-friendly

aspects of Internet technology is that the Internet is based on

networks (originally fashioned to prevent military attacks on a

singular, nuclear center of military knowledge/power) (Misa

2004), and because western women have been socialized to and are

adept at network-style relationships, aesthetics, and modes of

understanding, women may enjoy an advantage when it comes to using the Internet.

Socialist feminists such as Wajcman, Eisenstein, Ehrenreich, and Enloe, argue that the direction that computer technologies have taken is a direct result of capitalist interests and profit margins (Rosser 4) and that those motives move the decisions about developments even further away from the public realm (government-funded) into the private. But their concern is deeper than this simplified statement: there is a complex and often hidden relationship between publicly-funded research and privately held patents, copyrights, and other intellectual properties that cannot be easily sorted out. The basic thing that is at stake for socialist feminists is access—who gets to use and who gets to benefit from government-funded technological developments that get privatized, and therefore owned, in this way?

There are similarities among womanist, African American, and radical feminist theories about computer technologies. Some African American and womanist feminists, for example, insist that gender, class, race, differing abilities, and other factors should be considered when technologies are developed for users. They ask that scientists consider "how and under what conditions the technology will be used" (Rosser 6) and that the consumer of

the technology be included in the design and shape of the product (a form of stakeholder review). Radical feminists, in a similar way, might agree that users should help design technologies according to their needs and wishes, but they might also say that doing so is not possible for women because maleness, masculinity, and patriarchy are so "intertwined with technology and computer systems in our society" (Rosser 11) that no woman-centered technology could possibly exist within that framework. All three of these feminisms might agree that it is very difficult to imagine computer technology that is premised on cooperation, collaboration, and working with nature (instead of controlling or dominating it), though there are examples of computer technologies that lean in this direction, such as wikis, shareware, and open source applications.

Finally, in a related way, postmodern feminists might argue that the fluid nature of women's identities requires computer technologies that are inclusive and relevant to the wide variety of constructions of women that exist. Therefore, women's participation in the design and use of technologies is important to ensuring that their needs are addressed by the technologies they must use. Women in different contexts react to, embrace or reject, and use or ignore technologies for many reasons that are based on race, class, age, parental status, and other

considerations. The problem for postmodern feminists is universalism—in some respects, any computer technology has to be universalized to some degree so that as many users as possible can access and benefit from it, but in making technology this way, it always-already excludes a great number of people who do not belong to the paradigm that informed the decisions and influenced the creation of it.

One of the newest, most exciting forms of feminism has sprung directly out of computer and Internet technology: Cyberfeminism. Cyberfeminism is a woman-centered perspective that "advocates women's use of new information and communications technologies for empowerment" (Millar 200) and that positions these technologies as "inherently liberatory" (Millar 200) because women are "uniquely suited to life in the digital age" (Millar 200) and because of the reasons I have mentioned earlier, such as their socialization toward relationships, networking, and community-building. These socializations, or enculturations have become part of the western female aesthetic. TPECs tend to favor relational constructs, networked affinities, and membership in communities over unarguable truths or facts, boundaries, and individualistic ideals.

In summary, various feminist theories have addressed the question of computer technology. Like them, I acknowledge the problems inherent in trying to establish a route for women to take so that they may gain personal and collective agency for writing and other creative pursuits by using the Internet. But I also find promise in the Internet's unintended consequences, such as an aesthetic prioritizing of relational constructs, networked affinities, and membership in communities, that may create opportunities for women to flourish and make their situations better by using it.

Social Science, Women, and Technology

Some social scientists who study texts and technology contend that the trajectory that Internet technology is taking is centered in many ways around its forms of social interaction among users. I agree. Many pre-computer age foundational texts by social critics such as Lacan, Derrida, Foucault, Barthes, and others laid the ground work for examining technological phenomena from myriad points of entry. Feminist scholars have added to the literature about the sociality of Internet technologies. Many fields of study intersect and divulge critical junctures in the development of the technology itself

as well as the development of the ways TPECs use it for feminist technological textuality.

One of the areas of conjuncture among the various fields that are concerned about technology is the phenomenon of globalization. Globalization, in my view, especially in the sense of a "shrinking world" would not be possible without the aid of computer technologies. Theorists such as Appadurai (1996) and Tabb (2002) question the tsunami-like force of neo-liberal globalization on the world and its people. They ask what is at stake for marginalized cultures that cannot, because of internal struggles and/or state indebtedness, among other reasons, participate and compete in the global information economy; and they inquire about the social responsibility of the purveyors of the neo-liberal globalization machine. Among the world's poorest and most deprived people are women and children, so the intensely stratifying effects of neo-liberal globalization often have greater consequences for women in terms of access, poverty, hunger, and mobility. And even in westernized, globally powerful nations such as the United States, women are becoming the majority of the population, and thus have a greater stake in issues from the personal to the global.

Appadurai (1996) and Tabb (2002), among others, also question more conservative theorists, such as Thomas Friedman,

who argue that forces such as global capitalism, which is in many ways driven by technology and digitally-instantaneous flows of immense amounts of money, have a flattening effect on the world and that the flattening contributes to a trickle-down of economic gain, among other benefits such as access to technologies, for nearly everyone . . . eventually. Manual Castells, who is a sociologist by training, also writes about the effects of being perpetually available via communication devices such as cell phones and PDAs and how information literacy is a commodity in the global world. But he questions this commodity's steep price--cultural hegemony and false notions of prosperity that can't be reconciled with other realities such as high unemployment rates, dangerous employment situations (especially such as women in sweat shops), lack of medical and social services, and in many cases, lack of basic infrastructures such as roads and clean water. Technology is intricately tied up with 'development' that often adversely affects women.

Sherry Turkle (1999), an anthropological sociologist from MIT, offers another set of questions about humans, texts, and technology. Her questions often revolve around what she perceives as a change in the way people understand their identities once cyber technology becomes a factor. Her computer

metaphor for this change refers to identity as being "recast in terms of multiple windows and parallel lives" (643). The change comes from the "fact that self-presentation is written in text" and "means that there is time to reflect upon and edit one's 'composition'" (643). And her concern with this paradigm shift is that "the self no longer simply plays different roles in different settings—something that people experience, when, for example, one wakes up as a lover, makes breakfast as a mother, and drives to work as a lawyer" (644). In other words, and in this example she does refer explicitly to women, a woman can be all of these identities (or more) at one time by virtue of cyberspace texts and technology, but doing so can have profound psychological and material effects. In essence, the texts become the identities. And the notion of identity(ies) as texts, though more recent in the context of computers and the Internet, is not *new*: Those foundational theorists that I mentioned earlier were all about the embodiment of a person's life texts. For example, in reference to Foucault's *The History of Sexuality,* Turkle (1979) argues that his point was "in order to put into question assumptions deeply embedded in our ordinary language, one has to use language in extraordinary ways" (94). In my view, studying texts and their influence by, on, and within technologies, is one way that women can participate in refashioning western

cultural aesthetics perceptions of identity, individuality, interconnectedness, relationships, and power. Ultimately, these are the aspects of society that continue to perplex the TPEC and that continue to be addressed by feminist textual technological activists who host Web sites, use Facebook accounts, and write blogs.

One of the biggest issues for the TPEC feminist textual technological activist is embodiment. And although I wrote about the issues surrounding embodiment in Chapter One, I return to it here because embodiment is always-already connected to gender. In particular, women's bodies have been coerced, co-opted, used, marginalized, and dismissed throughout history in many ways, but the ways in which they are so affected by technologies and the rhetoric and texts that surround the technologies are particularly important. N. Katherine Hayles (1999) does not shy away from this complicated subject. Hayles, like me, is excited about the possibilities of a cyborg (posthuman, to use her term, and TPEC, to use mine) future for women. She states, "the posthuman evokes the exhilarating prospect of getting out of some of the old boxes and opening up new ways of thinking about what being human means" (285). Hayles also cites scholars in fields such as cognitive science and psychology who have argued that information technologies have contributed just as much as

any other factor in shaping contemporary worldviews and brain function (284). In the ways mentioned above, the theories of aesthetics, social science, psychology, and other disciplines complement feminist theories for a critical examination of the embodiment and spaces involved with writing in digital culture shed a lot of light on how the TPEC will evolve in and with cyberculture.

Further, Anne Balsamo (1999), questions the ways in which technologies, especially computer technologies, affect and have been affected by the organic bodies of women. She pursues such issues as the rationalization of new body technologies as "life-enhancing and even life-saving" (5), especially through popular culture and the media. She argues that, though many technologies that affect bodies, especially the bodies of women, such as many modern-era kitchen appliances and in-home laundry machines, are purported to be time-saving, life-saving, and liberating, the same technologies are also used to re-assert domination over women by male-dominated culture, norms, and institutions. Technologies such as the ones listed above ostensibly liberate women from more labor-intensive versions of the same work, but within that liberation is the continued assumption that the work should be unpaid, home-bound, and restricted to the women for whom they were made. In other words, the work is "easier," so

women should shut up and stop complaining. Balsamo (1999)

indicates that, despite technological advances, especially those

of the past five decades, women continue to be confined to

restrictive roles and viewed as primarily reproductive bodies.

Balsamo (1999) asserts that "Gender, in this schema, is both a

determining cultural condition and a social consequence of

technological deployment" (9). Balsamo (1999) claims that

certain technologies "serve to reinforce traditional gendered

patterns of power and authority" (10), and I think that she

believes that becoming cyborgs is inevitable for women and all

humans. However, if the inevitable is to happen, Balsamo (1999),

similarly to Hayles, insists that we have to come to terms with

how women's bodies will maintain corporeal, "natural" (12)

functioning and also assert themselves in the discourses of

various technologies that affect them. Recognizing and

addressing at least these two aspects of the female body, in

Balsamo's (1999) view, is critical to the future of women and

feminism. In fact, both Hayles and Balsamo refer to each other

in their work. Hayles' (arguably) most influential text, *My

Mother Was a Computer,* and Balsamo's *Technologies of the

Gendered Body*, describe to the clerical work called "computing"

that many young women as well as Balsamo's mother performed.

Both refer to women as computers in metaphorical and literal

terms. In these texts, writing theory, feminist theory, and theories of texts and technology work closely together to formulate new ways of approaching problematic cultural assumptions.

Finally, the "question concerning technology" (Heidegger 1977), still plagues the complex nature of the Internet and women's interaction with it. In *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger is also concerned with essentialism in the sense that, to him, "technology is not equivalent to the essence of technology" (4). For the TPEC and feminist textual technological activists, I believe that Heidegger means that TPECs have to first uncover, reveal, or determine the underlying social constructs and patriarchal aesthetics that define what is meant by technology. In other words, technology is not simply an instrument or a means of production, but its essence is a construct itself of aesthetic expectations, societal values, dominant cultural norms, patriarchal hierarchies, and other influences. Whether the word that is used is epistemology, techne, or any other name, the TPEC has to consider how it comes to know what it knows and from what standpoint those truths are formulated. The TPEC questions the texts, images, labels, media, and other products of technology and challenges and alters cultural aesthetic norms that marginalize, silence, and

dominate. Ronald Deibert (1997) said that some of the most
monumental shifts in world order have been made because some
influence brought a marginalized practice to the center. As a
feminist, I know personally that remarkable transformation can
occur when the voices of the "Other" can be heard. The TPEC
activists analyzed in this dissertation are producing texts that
bring marginalized voices to the center and expose cultural
assumptions that can be misleading, prejudicial, and even
dangerous.

Situating Woolfian Aesthetics in an Historical Context

Susan Gubar remarks in her introduction to *A Room of One's
Own* (2005) that Woolf identifies and emphasizes "the importance
of aesthetics: the talent or gift that it is death to hide, the
integrity of the work of art, the transformative capacities of
the imaginative faculty in readers and in writers" (Woolf 2005
liv). And Gubar goes on to note that,

> Woolf places the aesthetic at the center of her discussion
> of women's issues not simply to evaluate the historical
> factors that impeded female writers in the past; not simply
> to criticize evaluative criteria that privilege the
> subjects, styles, and genres mined by men over those
> crafted by women; but to suggest the enduring vital
> influence of novels, plays, and poems on their present and
> future audiences (lvi).

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I cite these passages because they inform my arguments about the

aesthetics of today's feminist textual activists. I clearly see

a connection between what Woolf observed about aesthetics and

what is happening today in the ways women use technology to

construct and assert their identities, artistic abilities,

contributions, and values in ways that change and enhance the

cultural aesthetics of the present and future. In the example

below, I explain further how the foundations of Woolf's beliefs

about aesthetics are performed by marginalized people who use

technologies that Woolf may never have imagined would be

available to perform activist work. To frame this argument, I

draw on globalization theorist Appadurai's (1996) notion of

'scapes' to illustrate the impact that Internet technologies

such as Facebook can have on not only personal, local subjects,

but importantly, on a global-level issue that affects women and

homosexual writers and readers, and, less directly, other

marginalized groups.

The Aesthetics of Activist Scapes

Arjun Appadurai (1996) identifies five theoretical "scapes" in his 1996 book, *Modernity at Large,* which I contend can be applied to the phenomenon of women using technology to write in activist ways. The first four scapes are mediascape, ideoscape, ethnoscape, and financescape. The fifth scape, technoscape, in my view, permeates all of the other scapes so inseparably that it can no longer remain a stand-alone scape as Appadurai (1996) initially identified it. In other words, the technoscape is a common element throughout all scapes, and it is intimately rather than marginally connected to all four. These four technology-enhanced scapes show "fluid, irregular[ity]" (Appadurai 33), which is an aesthetic quality of writing that Woolf employed and that is present in the writing that women perform using Internet-based technologies. Appadurai's (1996) scapes are a good tool for examining textual technologies' influence on culture and the status of women in local and global contexts.

Appadurai (1996) defines ethnoscapes as "the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers, and other moving groups and individuals" (33). In addition, I would add to

this list the broader category of women, who often make up the majority of the immigrants, refugees, exiles, and guestworkers that Appadurai (1996) categorizes. The ethnoscape also includes those individuals, groups, and systems that would protect others who have no voice or agency to protect themselves, and often those people are women and children. The ethnoscape permeates borders and shifts the power of economics and politics (which are parts of the financescape) from the elite to the masses.

The Internet, as an ethnoscape system, connects the ethnoscape with the technoscape to produce movement across borders of all kinds—gender, class, and ethnicity, for example--and it provides mobility of collective voices through technological textuality such as e-mail petitions that garner virtual signatures and represent the voices of people who are adversely affected by the actions of other people, corporations, laws, and other potential oppressors.

In one excellent example of an activist techno-ethnoscape at work, I cite the story of Minal Hajratwala, author of the book *Leaving India* (2009)(see Figure 9). As a recently published author, from time to time, Hajratwala would check Amazon.com for the rankings of her book sales. One day, she tried to find her book on Amazon.com and couldn't. Later, friends of hers

recounted that they had looked for her book on Amazon.com and couldn't find it either.

Figure 9: *Leaving India* by Minal Hajratwala
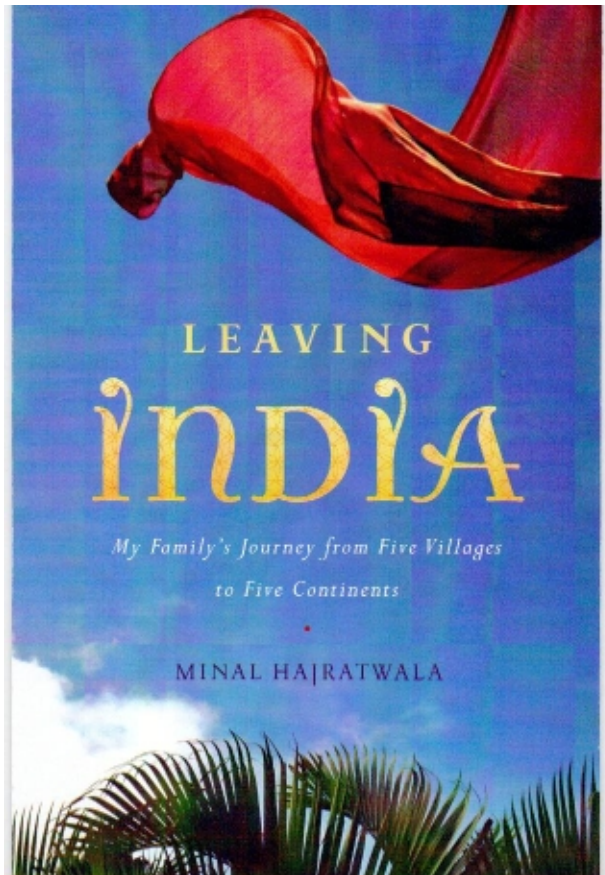
Leaving India (is a book about many aspects of Hajratwala's immigrant experience, and part of that experience is her coming of age as an Indian lesbian. But that is a relatively small part of the book overall, which deals with Indian history, culture, and customs, as well as the more standard immigrant experience fare. After some investigation, Hajratwala discovered that some

Amazon.com reviewers of her book had tagged it as lesbian. That in itself was no problem for her, but their doing so led Amazon.com to flag the book "adult," and relegate it to searches only accessible to adults who are allowed to search for mature material. In a second policy assault, her book was no longer being ranked because of its place in the adult category. Hajratwala's book is by no stretch of the imagination pornographic or obscene yet Amazon.com refused its customers access to it based on the one word "lesbian" that appeared in customer reviews.

Hajratwala went online and discovered that "she wasn't the only lesbian and gay author to have this experience. It was even affecting classics by James Baldwin and Virginia Woolf" (Sydell 2009). And soon, her experiences were chronicled in online fora such as Facebook and Twitter. Sydell stated, "Hajratwala was one of many authors who wrote about it on Facebook and this weekend, it was all over Twitter" (Sydell 2009). Further, the Hajratwala case, along with the cases of other authors to whom this had happened, spurred an Internet-based activist campaign against Amazon.com, which was flooded by complaint emails and petitions from users who were against relegating contemporary authors as well as authors of classic literature to adult-only searches. Sydell went on to state that Christopher Rice, board chair of

the Lambda Literary Foundation, claimed, "the reaction has been something of a testament to Internet activism" (Sydell 2009) that ultimately led Amazon.com to reverse its policy. And although Amazon.com claimed to NPR that "it was an embarrassing and ham-fisted catalog error," as of April 2009, Amazon.com officials stated that they are "fixing the problem" (Sydell 2009) and as of July 2010 they have adjusted their policy to more carefully screen explicit content and not categorically exclude gay material. The full back story of Hajratwala's experience can be found on her blog at http://www.minalhajratwala.com/2009/04/amazon-and-invisibility/.

By moving the imaginative constructs that were made possible by the ethno-technoscape into action, the Facebook-informed Amazon.com petitioners became a powerful "global force, forever slipping in and through the cracks" (Appadurai 41) of emerging, porously-bordered Internet technology. Through the technologies of Facebook and Twitter, people who may have been otherwise separated or limited by geography (nations as well as states), able-embodiment, or marginalized because of their sexuality, gained agency to affect change in corporate policy and influence the global techno-financescape that Amazon.com represents.

According to Appadurai (1996), financescapes are "the very complex fiscal and investment flows" (34) that link economies. There is no doubt that Amazon.com is a global entity, and the example of the Internet-based textual technological campaign above shows how marginalized individuals can act as a like-minded group to affect the business practices of a global financial conglomerate. Further, this example illustrates that all of the scapes, including the financescape, can no longer be separated from the technoscape—the activists in this Amazon.com scenario literally embodied the techno-financescape of contemporary culture to enact change. Additionally, the feminist adage that the personal is political was also enacted here—and expanded to the idea that the personal is techno-financial. Not only were these individual authors' livelihoods at stake because of Amazon.com's policy, but because of the global forum that Amazon.com operates in, their actions affected a world-wide corporate financial policy that has implications that far outreach the individuals who performed the technological textuality in this case.

Further, the Amazon.com example also entered the mediascape, which, according to Appadurai (1996), refers to the distribution of electronic capabilities that produce and disseminate information, such as newspapers, magazines, books,

television stations, and film-production studios, which are now

available throughout the world, and to the images of the world

created by these media (35). In this example, mediascapes freed

the imagination and allowed readers (or consumers of Amazon.com

products) and "others living in other places" (Appadurai 35) to

join together to develop an imagined community that held real-

world power and influence. As demonstrated above, mediascapes

worked in concert with technoscapes, overlapping and propelling

one another. In this example, mediascapes were facilitated

through technoscapes, the technologies that allow distribution

of information and imagination, to form the hybrid techno-

mediascape. The activists' imaginations helped them script a set

of ideals beyond the daily experiences of the individual (who

may or may not have labeled herself an activist in real life),

that became the impetus for "acquisition and movement" (36) in

the techno-media and techno-financescapes.

Appadurai (1996) attests that "*Ideoscapes* are also

concatenations of images, but they are often directly political

and frequently have to do with . . . ideologies and

"counterideologies" (36). Additionally, the ideoscape and the

ethnoscape are linked by a conjuncture: The ideoscapes are

concerned with slippery terms such as "freedom, welfare, rights,

sovereignty, representation" (Appadurai 36). In the case above,

a techno-ideoscape formed because of concerns over freedom, rights, and representation. A powerful imag/e/in/nation produced by the techno-ethnoscapes, techno-financescapes, techno-mediascapes and techno-ideoscapes of the Amazon.com case resulted in activist success.

Cultural Aesthetics and Fluidity

Another observation that Woolf makes about aesthetics occurs on a cultural level. She remarks in *A Room of One's Own* (2005) that "women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (35), and she continues, "How is he to go on giving judgment, civilizing natives, making laws, writing books, dressing up and speechifying at banquets, unless he can see himself at breakfast and at dinner at least twice the size he really is" (36)? And further, while, in Woolf's assessment, men have garnered all of the authority to pronounce the courses and great accomplishments of history, they have done so at the expense of women by not acknowledging women's roles in the development of the world except in the cases of the most famous of queens and great ladies. Woolf remarks that there are nearly no historical

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accounts of middle-class women who did everyday things to
influence culture or resist the patriarchal systems that
dominate them (such as the suffragist movement, of which she was
a part). Indeed, it is difficult to imagine what time women
would have had to engage in any material or non-material
pursuits at all, because, according to historical records, women
"had no tradition behind them, or one so short and partial that
it was of little help" (Woolf 2005 75). And even if women had
historical documents written by men at their disposal and
discretion, Woolf argues, and I agree, that these accounts would
have been incorrect, misleading, and wrong on many levels,
especially including the aesthetic. Historical accounts
typically universalize patriarchal aesthetics, so, even if they
had included accounts of everyday women and their influence on
culture, society, and commerce, they would have been
fundamentally inaccurate because, as Woolf states, "we think
back through our mothers if we are women" (75). The aesthetic
practice of "thinking back through our mothers" continues to
influence the writing that TPECs produce and the approach they
take to observing the culture in which they live.

Woolf's views on aesthetics shed light on how women can
move on from the restrictive and prevailing attitudes and
cultural devaluation of women and women's writing. For Woolf,

and ultimately for me, it came down to the fact that, "these monsters" (Woolf 2005 44), the women who are depicted in histories, "however amusing to the imagination, have no existence in fact. What one must do to bring her to life is to think poetically and prosaically at one and the same moment, thus keeping in touch with fact" (Woolf 2005 44). What this means in the contemporary context of the TPEC is that TPECS transform patriarchal aesthetics into collaborative aesthetics that are not based on a necessarily solitary culmination, but a distributed, non-linear, shared set of experiences that are personal and specific.

There are scholars, especially in contemporary theoretical circles, who observe that similar characteristics are important to authentic historical and experiential accounts of every day culture and life. For example, Ulmer's concept of "mystory" is one such way of approaching writing that, in an aesthetic sense, resonates with what Woolf was calling for. In other words, the author must not try to extract herself in restraint or false objectivity from the writing that she produces; she is always-already present within it and her very existence, in historical terms at least, is at stake. Similar observations are made by Donna Haraway (1991), for example, when she writes about women's absence from the performance and accounting of scientific

studies. Haraway (1991) advocated for a standpoint theory of

scientific inquiry in which the former objective, removed

scientific observer would be replaced by a scientist who

acknowledged her own participation and influence on the study

and accounted for those influences in the reporting of her work.

In similar ways, TPECs have enacted new forms of writing that

employ the scientific, the aesthetic, and the cultural. My

observations and analyses of feminist technological textuality

add to this body of work.

Woolf observed long before the invention of transitory

textual technologies such as Web sites, Facebook, and blogs,

that "at any rate, . . . it is notoriously difficult to fix

labels of merit in such a way that they do not come off" (104).

In other words, the scene on the screen of technological

textuality is constantly changing at nearly the same rate at

which the technologies themselves evolve. It is too early in the

process of enacting textual technological activist gestures to

determine their enduring or lasting value to western culture.

But, I imagine myself peeling away some of the "labels of merit"

that have been perpetuated through U.S. patriarchal culture by

analyzing and performing the transgressive aesthetic writing

that is a form of progressive technological textuality.

Participation, Pitch, Politics, and Power

Interestingly, though Woolf was incensed by many cultural norms that negatively affected women, she preferred a quiet feminism that was not about protesting vociferously or making demands in public--feminism that in more recent decades has been referred to as armchair feminism or everyday feminism. For example, Lee (1998) wrote of Woolf, "Woolf's writing was always explicitly on the radical, subversive and modern side" (274) . . . but "screams of rage and pain are not what she wants to hear from other women, or what she allows herself" (17). However, Woolf was involved in, even if not always radically outspoken about, some impactful movements of her era, such as the cause for women's suffrage, political satire and critique (the Dreadnought Hoax is her most famous), and her public commentary about post-expressionism. Moreover, "her own skeptical resistance to authority, and her horror of being dominated . . . meant that she was always against a coercive government" (Lee 524). In fact, Lee (1998) identifies some of Woolf's activities as having legitimate "historical weight" (275) and notes that, "in 1910, [Woolf] was involved with three events which came to be read as connected expressions of British subversiveness: the suffrage movement, the Dreadnought Hoax, and the Post-

Impressionist exhibition" (275). Though "she would not join up .

. . she was also a political participant" and "this position was

fundamental to her feminism" (Lee 524). In all of these

instances, Woolf clearly exhibited aspects of her alternative

selves and found satisfaction, pleasure, and validity in doing

so.

In a similar way, 21st century Internet culture provides

evidence that women from all varieties of circumstances,

educational levels, and relationship and employment statuses

continue to pursue their interests and identities through

activities that may prove to be historically and politically

important, even if they remain relatively quietly carried out.

For instance, in 2008, many women became more deeply involved in

voting because for the first time in history, a viable woman

presidential candidate was on the ticket (Hillary Clinton), as

well as a promising minority feminist man (Barack Obama). In

these candidates, women in record numbers became engaged with

the progression of the political election process and expressed

themselves through the right to vote. Moreover, much of that

campaign was conducted in cyberspace, and Hillary Clinton, a

woman presidential candidate who held that status well after a

number of more traditional white male candidates had conceded,

was a pioneer in conducting Web-based meetings, providing online

information, and engaging in fundraising opportunities through her campaign Web site. Barack Obama, the eventual winner of that presidential election, also engaged his constituents through progressive rhetoric and historic levels of participation through political technological textuality. Media in general were intimately and intricately involved in every aspect of this long, unprecedented presidential race, securing a marker in historical terms of a sea change in expectations for political candidates and their campaigns with regard to their use of a variety of media, including Internet technology. I conclude that because of this monumental increase in the use of Web sites, Facebook accounts, and blogs to inform the general public about political campaigns and their candidates, the feminist adage that "the personal is political" has entered a new age and has earned a fresh meaning that resonates with the middle class women that Woolf saw so much promise in and who are becoming today's TPECs.

In her recurring satirical spot entitled "Target Women" on Current TV and current.com, TPEC Sarah Haskins has used television and Web site media to sardonically criticize stereotypical media portrayals of women. She, too, commented on the media spectacle that was the 2008 presidential campaign in her installment entitled "Obama Arms" (see Figure 10-13).

Figure 10: Current.com's Sarah Haskins' segment "Obama Arms"

In this segment, Haskins exposes with the cultural
phenomenon of objectifying women, criticizing women of power and
intellect, and assuming that there is nothing of substance to
talk about with regard to women because, in the end, all they
care about is beauty, popularity, and fashion. Following is the
transcript of this segment:

> Sarah Haskins: Michelle Obama has been in office just over
> 100 days. And she is already caught up in a constitutional
> controversy. The culprit, that pesky second amendment, the
> right to bear arms. (kisses each of her biceps)
>
> That's right. Welcome to the pun show.

(These are some clips of the many TV news stories about Obama's "right to bare arms.")

First lady Michelle Obama has ignited a controversy over her right to bear arms. And we're not talking about weapons here, but her actual arms!
An unlikely proponent of your right to bear arms: A Democrat! Michelle Obama is not working out with the NRA, but she has been flaunting her guns of late.

The first lady's sense of style and of course her toned arms have been generating a lot of fashion buzz lately, and of course speculation as to whether bare arms are appropriate for all occasions.

Sarah Haskins: America is a nation with a puritan legacy. So a first lady without sleeves is a shock to our system. We need to express our concerns about her blatant arm nudity. Luckily, the first amendment protects our right to sound super dumb in man on the street interviews.

First interviewee (female): You look better when you're fully clothed.

Second interviewee (male): I love it. If he screws up, I'm in there. She's a nice tall girl.

Third interviewee (who is wearing a tank top): I think she should look a little more presentable.

Interviewer: So you think that the sleeveless is a little too much that you've seen her in? [sic]

Third interviewee: Yea.

Sarah Haskins: Point taken . . . lady not wearing sleeves! But behind the controversy lies another question: *Why* would she do this?

Another excerpt from a TV newscast:

Well, some believe that the first lady is willing to bare her arms because she's unwilling to show much of her legs or her chest.

Sarah Haskins: Yeah, show your tits Michelle Obama!
wwooooohhh!

Figure 11: Screen shot of Michelle Obama in Haskins' "Obama
Arms" segment

And just when armsgate '09 seemed to be at its boiling
point, a USA today survey conclusively proved that we
really don't give a shit.

We don't want her to <u>not</u> bare her arms, we just want her to
bare her arms because ooohhh they're just so pretty!
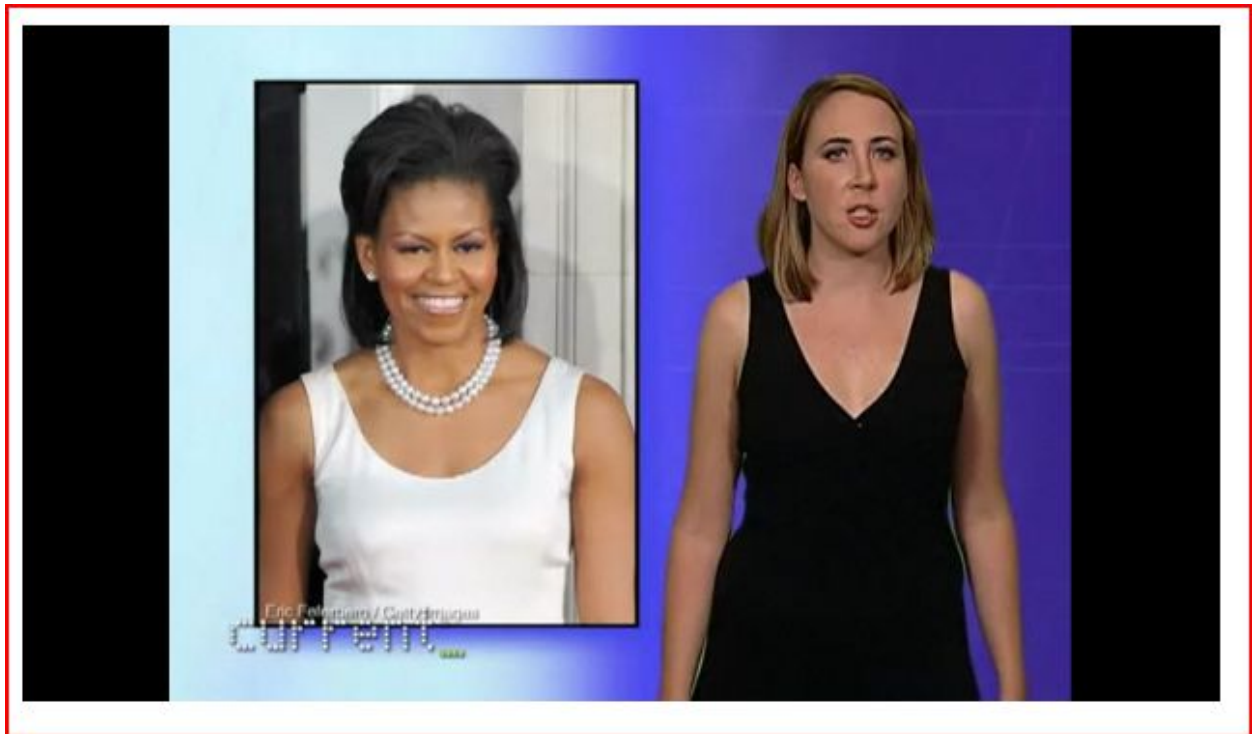
Figure 12: Screen shot of Sarah Haskins' "Obama Arms" segment

A clip of Kirstie Ally on the Oprah Winfrey Show:

I'm like look Michelle Obama's guns, I'm like, I could have those arms!

More news stories about how to get Michelle Obama arms:

Newscaster to a show guest (feeling her arms): Oh my god, she's like Michelle Obama arms!

You too could have the same amazing arms as the first lady.

Women all over are asking their fitness trainers, how do I get arms like hers?

You want Michelle Obama arms? That's easy, just hop right down on your big ball.

Sarah Haskins: I know what you're thinking. Are we going to start doing everything Michelle Obama does? The answer is:

Probably yes. Sooner or later, the whole country is going to go to Princeton, then Harvard, then be Barack Obama's boss, then be an executive at the University of Chicago hospitals, and then support local sustainable food initiatives with a garden, and then . . . have sweet fucking arms!

Figure 13: Screen shot of Haskins' "Obama Arms" segment

You can pry my guns out of my cold dead hands, but that's going to be hard, because my hands (holding out hands). . . are attached to my guns (holding arms in bodybuilder pose).

Haskins shares her opinion of the media's portrayal of accomplished, smart women through comedy. Using the digital media of TV and the Web, Haskins situates herself in a digital room of her own in which she can write and perform in feminist activist ways but continue to be included in more mainstream

media. And it has worked. She has garnered a good reputation, a solid number of fans, and her work as a TPEC has launched her career to new levels. Moreover, she has succeeded in bringing light to the politics of the TPEC, and she has exposed the sexism inherent in U.S. culture through her creative use of words and images. Her TPEC activism is becoming a mainstream cultural pathway to an aesthetic that challenges patriarchal assumptions about women, intelligence, and beauty.

If she had seen it and used it, Woolf might have agreed that the Internet is a valuable tool for enacting one's politics as well as a venue for participating via a more subtle entry point, yet she also might have found it, as many contemporary women do, a powerful method of self-expression. But more than that, as Lee (1998) stated about Woolf, "her late writing links the old battle for the vote to women's struggle for empowerment in all areas: to earn their living, to escape the sexual double standard and to gain equal opportunities in education" (277). Woolf's writing was her expressive outlet for deeply troubling concerns for women, who, in her culture and indeed in her own personal familial experience, having been denied a formal education by her own father, were considered "the intellectual inferiors of men" (Lee 282). Unfortunately, she began to consciously assert this willingness to reject custom only near

the end of her life. In her 1941 diary, she wrote, "the idea

came to me that why I dislike, and like, so many things

idiosyncratically now, is because of my growing detachment from

the hierarchy, the patriarchy . . . I am I: and must follow that

furrow, not copy another" (Woolf 1954 346). Who knows what

masterpieces might have come from her pen in her elder years of

self-realization had she not committed suicide at 59. One can

only speculate.

The Aesthetic Situation of the TPEC

I argue that the TPEC resides among the theories of

aesthetics described earlier in this chapter. I admire women's

use of Internet technologies to increase their personal and

collective agency and to enact everyday forms of feminist

technological textuality. The TPEC is a cyberfeminist in that

one of its basic principles is to challenge male-centered

culture (especially of the Internet) and imprint women's models

of open and accessible computer-mediated communication on new

technologies (Luckman 36). The implementation does not

necessarily take the form of participation in role-playing games

(though many cyberfeminists emerged because of gaming

communities and the games' gender-encoded expectations), and the

implementation is not a technological-determinist venture, though some cyberfeminists think that Internet technology can save the world. The TPEC operates from the perspective of a feminist who uses computer technologies as a central part of its "everyday, lived feminist politics" (Luckman 37). And although cyberfeminism has been associated primarily with young women in their teens and twenties, older TPECs such as Sarah Haskins and mom-101, who are in their 30s, as well as Katherine Hayles, who is considerably older than these two generations, and others, also use technologies in similar ways and lead our culture in determining more useful, efficient, and creative ways to use the Internet to organize, maintain, and manage extremely busy lives, multiple roles, and shifting identities as well as to engage in right/writ/ing some of the wrongs that are committed against women as a gender group. Donna Haraway (1991) inspired and, in my view, founded TPEC feminism, and her cyborgs resonate with the TPEC as cyberfeminists because through them, she advocates new ways of operating, relating to others, and managing women's lives in a world of "partial subjectivities" (147, 196).

Luckman argued that "women excel within fluid systems and processes" and that they have already become adept at recognizing these familiar patterns in digital technologies, such as N. Katherine Hayles' (1999) feminist examination of one

of the first electronic fiction books, *Patchwork Girl*. The TPEC

agrees with womanist, African American, and postmodern feminists

that there is probably no way for any computer technology to

include all women, all the time, but it recognizes that women

will probably be the first to exploit the metaphor of the

Internet as a "multiple, distributed system" (Luckman 41) to

their advantage. In doing so, however, the TPEC cautions women

that any electronic freedom and any emergent digital body,

because of their locations in a "gendered, raced, classed, and

geographically" (Luckman 42) conditioned patriarchal world, will

exclude many and include only few unless and until women succeed

in participating in and influencing the expectations of culture

at large.

CHAPTER 5: ALWAYS-ALREADY SCREENED: MISOGYNY AND THE ECONOMICS OF ENOUGH

> *There was an enormous body*
> *of masculine opinion to the effect*
> *that nothing could be expected*
> *of women intellectually*

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (2005)

One example of women of relative privilege in the U.S. who are helping women maquiladora workers on the Mexican-U.S. border empower themselves to improve their lives through creative uses of technology is La Casa de la Mujer--Grupo Factor X. Some women from Grupo Factor X participated in the making of a documentary film entitled *Maquilapolis*, (see Figure 14) which is about the young Mexican women who work in maquiladoras. Maquiladoras are U.S.-owned factories that moved across the border because of relaxed trade agreements like NAFTA. These women are taking action to improve their work environments by affiliating with U.S.-based feminist groups that provide them with video cameras, union information, and other resources. And, through computer technologies that help them communicate and make connections with other oppressed workers and their allies, coalitions of feminist groups and sweatshop workers across the globe are coming together to increase their power and influence. Though their success is most often very slow in coming, the constant

flow of texts, resources, technologies, people, and information

is key to these women's empowerment. Particularly poignant,

moving, and equally important are the non-traditional methods

these women have used to document their environments and appeal

for help on a much larger scale using digital film technology

that resonates with larger, ostensibly more powerful and

influential, groups of people who spread their message and

thereby give them leverage in asserting their rights (see Figure

14).

Figure 14: Film still from *Maquilapolis* (2007), featuring some
of the maquiladoras from Grupo Factor X and the products they
manufacture

Another example of Grupo Factor X's use of Internet technology to continue the awareness campaign and to garner financial, political, and activist support of its efforts includes the group's making and maintaining contacts with other organizations throughout the world using digital technologies to initiate publicity campaigns within companies and government institutions, which allows the maquiladoras and their allies to stay informed and to further generate a self-sufficient and active organization (Grupo Factor X 2010).

The work of the women maquiladoras in Grupo Factor X and the others who participated in the making of *Maquilapolis*, as well as other similar organizations in Baja, California and elsewhere, further Woolf's argument about the importance of the middle class woman who writes. In most respects, the maquiladora workers cannot be considered even lower middle class—they are poor and have few and unreliable life-sustaining resources such as food, water, shelter, and sanitation. Yet, through textual technologies such as documentary film-making and Internet coalition building via the help of others, they are able to mobilize for their own interests and manifest in a literal and figurative sense, rooms of their own (see Figure 15).

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Figure 15: A room in Delfina's house, under construction. Photo by Luz Aida Ruiz Martinez, Grupo Factor X

Woolf and Misogyny

A great deal of Woolf's thoughts in *A Room of One's Own* (2005) are about the misogyny and the rule of the father that are ingrained in western patriarchal society. She questions many things about the culture in which she lives, a culture that objectifies and devalues women, and she critically examines how this culture affects women and their ability to realize their

full potential as human beings. In the introduction to *A Room of One's Own* (2005), Susan Gubar observes that Woolf probes "not only the causes but also the consequences of misogyny" (Gubar 2005 liii), but also how "self-confidence [is] undermined . . . by interdictions against female intellectual ambition" (Gubar 2005 liii). Indeed, Woolf was well-read in psychology, and Freud, whom many feminists in the 21st century clearly identify as a misogynist, was gaining popularity during her time. His works influenced Woolf's writing and her reactions to explanations and declarations that were made about women, their psychological faculties, and their behavior. In fact, Gubar observes that "the psychology of creativity forms the central core of her genealogical thinking about the differences between male and female artistry. Under what circumstances, she wants to know, does incandescent creativity become deformed by self-destructive humility or bitterness" (Gubar 2005 liii)—characteristics that Woolf found to be ever present in women so that they generally doubted their very ability to qualify as creative beings in any sense of the word. In fact, Woolf observed about the psychological literature about women that "there was an enormous body of masculine opinion to the effect that nothing could be expected of women intellectually" (Woolf 2005 53) and she bristled against this prevailing societal

construct because, as a matter of fact, she was quite intelligent herself, self-taught and schooled by her brother, well-read, and even respected among some contemporary male intellectuals. She knew the prognostications of the various experts were untrue about her and about many other women who, given an opportunity and "enough," could participate in and add value to their environments. In one of her deepest and most heart-felt observations, Woolf prophetically stated about the women's conundrum, "I thought how unpleasant it is to be locked out; and I thought how it is worse perhaps to be locked in" (Woolf 2005 24). She movingly writes about how so many women, even to this day, feel about living within patriarchy, even those who don't know intellectually against what they are struggling: fighting to gain foothold within the constructs of a society that doesn't allow women to fully engage and participate, even when success is realized, is often bitter-sweet and dissatisfying to women because, once "in," they face alienation, envy, and jealousy from those who remain without as well as emptiness of meaning within themselves because the "inside" remains aesthetically barren, intellectually unrewarding, and materially insufficient. The balance that ideally could exist between the man-womanly and the woman-manly remains skewed in favor of the manly.

Woolf maintains that observers from outside of her own
culture and experience could ultimately "not fail to be aware,
even from this scattered testimony, that England is under the
rule of patriarchy. Nobody in their senses could fail to detect
the dominance of the professor" (Woolf 2005 33).

Woolf further explains her understanding of patriarchy and
misogyny by acknowledging that, throughout history and
literature, as stated earlier, women have been practically non-
existent except in the sense that they are objectified or
portrayed as mystical, puzzling, but spiritually powerful
creatures. She observes that because of this,

> a very queer, composite being thus emerges. Imaginatively
> she is of the highest importance; practically she is
> completely insignificant. She pervades poetry from cover to
> cover; she is all but absent from history. She dominates
> the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she
> was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon
> her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the
> most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in
> real life she could hardly read, could scarcely spell, and
> was the property of her husband (Woolf 2005 43).

Further, Woolf observes, "she never writes her own life and
scarcely keeps a diary" (Woolf 2005 44) because she has to bear
the burden of the practical.

In fact, Woolf's own diary reveals very personal and
intimate thoughts that relate to the ideas that she voiced
publicly in *A Room of One's Own* (2005). Her own fears and self-

loathing are evident in her private thoughts when she writes about her anticipation of the impending publication of *A Room of One's Own* (2005), "It is a little ominous that Morgan (E.M. Forster) won't review it. It makes me suspect that there is a shrill feminine tone in it which my intimate friends will dislike . . . also I shall be attacked for a feminist and hinted at for a Sapphist . . . I am afraid it will not be taken seriously" (Woolf 1954 145). Many of her intimate friends were the famous men of Bloomsbury, accomplished thinkers and authors themselves. She naturally wants their approval, but her elation followed by insecurities upon finishing a book, essay, or other piece of writing, occur throughout her life. Indeed, she laments that the periods between writings, when she is not at work, are when she suffers most from her bouts with depression and mental illness (Woolf 1954 1954).

For Woolf, the work of writing was her salvation and her refuge. Without it, she was literally driven mad. This tug-of-war between her desire to write and be respected among significant authors and the culture of her time, which dictated the inadequacies of women in any form of paid work, but especially intellectual work, contributed significantly to her ultimate suicide. It is clear from reading her *A Writer's Diary* that she felt this manic sway over and over again as she wrote

her various works of fiction, review, and essay. In her diary on Thursday, December 31st, 1936, she writes, "I could make some interesting and perhaps valuable notes on the absolute necessity for me of my work. Always to be after something" (Woolf 1954 264). Later, she writes, "I stop working [and] I feel that I am sinking down, down. And as usual I feel that if I sink further I shall reach the truth . . . I shall make myself face the fact that there is nothing—nothing for any of us. Work, reading, writing are all disguises" (Woolf 1954 141). And in the year of her death, 1941, she writes, "A battle against depression, rejection . . . this trough of despair, shall not, I swear, engulf me. The solitude is great . . . The house is damp . . . But there is no alternative . . . 'Your true life, like mine, is in ideas' Desmond (McCarthy) said to me once" (Woolf 1954 350). The cultural misogyny Woolf experienced with regard to her writing was nearly always couched in praise of her work and qualified by many of her male reviewers as good work "for a woman." While some of her insecurity may have been due to untreated mental illness, some of her reasons for anxiety about reviews and rejection of her work were very real. Woolf struggled and ultimately failed to balance her need to work, think, and write with the cultural expectation to be pleasant, well-thought-of, and at least mildly pleasing to men.

Moreover, Woolf observed that it wasn't just that women were ignored and marginalized throughout history, but they were additionally "snubbed, slapped, lectured and exhorted. Her mind must have been strained and her vitality lowered by the need of opposing this, of disproving that" (Woolf 2005 54). In other words, not only did she have to live within the constraints of the very narrow allowances provided to women in patriarchal culture, she also often endured literal abuse and suspicion. Additionally, Woolf observed that "almost without exception [women] are shown in their relation to men . . . all the great women of fiction were, until Jane Austen's day, not only seen by the other sex, but seen only in relation to the other sex" (Woolf 2005 81).

Because she witnessed the situation of women in her own culture and as a result of the history that she studied well, Woolf remarked that "nothing is known about women before the eighteenth century" (Woolf 2005 45), and it was this notion that informed her feminism and spurred her to encourage women to write about themselves, for themselves, and for their mothers and daughters so that history, including the history of women, would not remain unwritten and unacknowledged. In my view, Web pages, Facebook updates, and blogs are this century's metaphorical waste heap that future generations of

anthropologists and social scientists will dig into to mine the

nuggets that began a TPEC culture that is more inclusive of

women even though they may also unearth some trainwrecks and

reified misogynistic fossils. They will see that women are

contributing to dispelling myths, exposing the effects of

patriarchy on the status of women, and using technology to

engage in everyday textuality that, intentional or not, promotes

the independence, autonomy, safety, and respect of women in U.S.

culture.

Woolf's screening of culture through critiquing

misogynistic practices can be used to evaluate the following

post from the Web site Jezebel.com. In this September 17, 2010,

posting, contributor Dodai Stewart provided the following post,

based on an inquiry from a Jezebel.com reader (See Figure 16-

19). The reader describes her encounter with another user who

approached her on the social networking site OKCupid. OKCupid is

a free social networking Web site that allows users to instant

message each other, phone each other privately via their

personal phones whose numbers have been masked by the site, and

otherwise interact. This post demonstrates the condundrum that

social networking sites place women in. In some senses the

practice is liberatory in that any woman with access to an

Internet-ready computer can create an account and interact with

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like-minded people who share her interests and background or who might be interested in dating or friendship. But she may not have known that the site is well-known for its reputation as a casual sex hook-up "location," which obviously put the woman in this exchange in an awkward, difficult, and insulting position that she could not initially control.

In the comments to the post shown in Figure 18 and 19, visitors to Jezebel.com share their thoughts and reactions to such blatant misogyny and racism on the part of the man who initiated the online conversation. It is clear from the comments to this post that many Jezebel.com readers are feminists who call sexism, misogyny, and racism what it is. The commentators give voice to other women to whom similar interactions have happened but who may not have had a community of supporters to defend them after such an abrasive encounter. In these ways, Jezebel.com screens U.S. culture through the lens of misogyny and moves the discussion of misogynistic men from margin to center, using new technology-enhanced methods that were not available to Woolf. Jezebel.com enlightens contemporary culture by encouraging its readers to learn about misogyny and racism in contemporary culture and speak out against hatred of and violence against women.

Figure 16: Jezebel.com OKCupid post title

The reader — we'll call her "Alice" — writes:

> **❝** Please keep in mind I've never chatted with, emailed, winked at this sorry sack of crap. This is the exchange in its entirety; there was no preceding chat. "get your black ass over here with some comic books," was his opening line. I must have re-read this ten times before responding. Granted, my profile reflects the fact that I'm black and white, and that I like comics. This chump really ran with that. He then goes on to mention a graphic novel I make no reference to on my page, which is the only potential source for information he has about me. After I question what the hell he's saying he tells me,"dont be so serious" and "hmm thats crazy cause I grew up with a black stepdad and two black stepbros." Would it be asking too much to have a semi literate racist offend me? His closing line makes me saddest of all – "nothing I did was remotely racist. grow up."
>
> I'm a mixed woman in my mid twenties living in the Bay Area. I like to think I have a good sense of humor. I'm generally known to be a habitual line stepper in regards to acceptance of mildly racist humor…and some pretty totally racist humor. That is to say, I'm not easily offended. Nothing on my page could even loosely be interpreted to mean I'd be ok with this kind of ignorant b.s. A particularly vile skinhead at a punk show once beat me up, and aside from the physical damage this made me feel almost as bad.

Here's the exchange; Alice's remarks are in gray, and he gentleman's are in black:

Figure 17: Jezebel.com OKCupid post background information
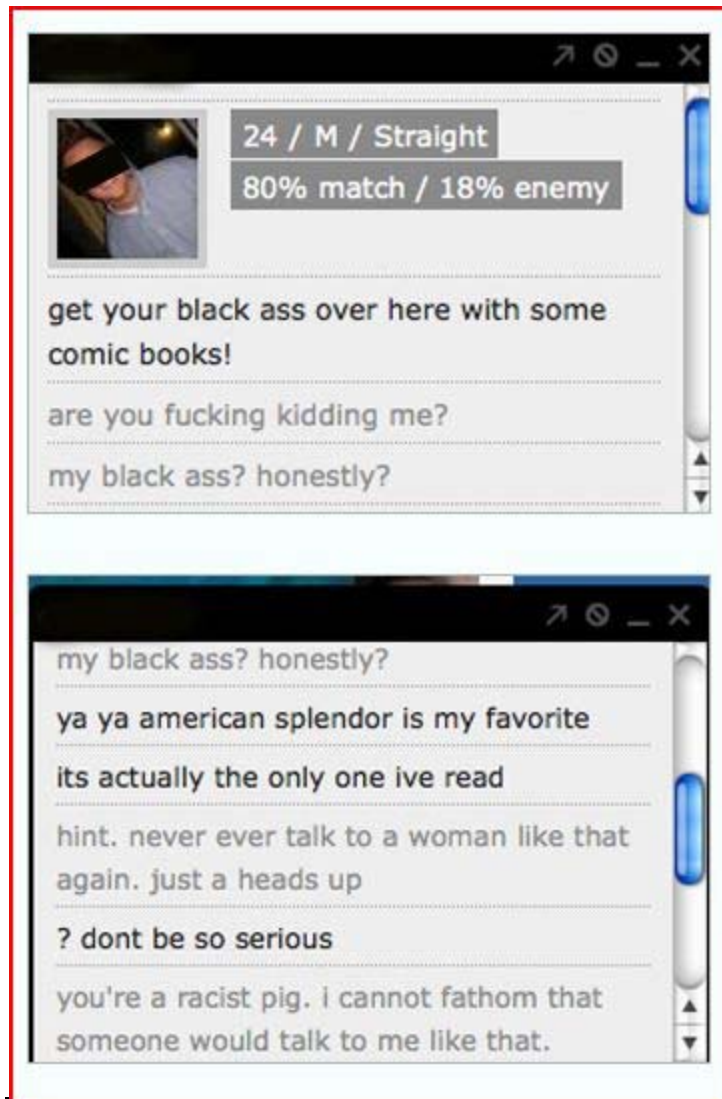
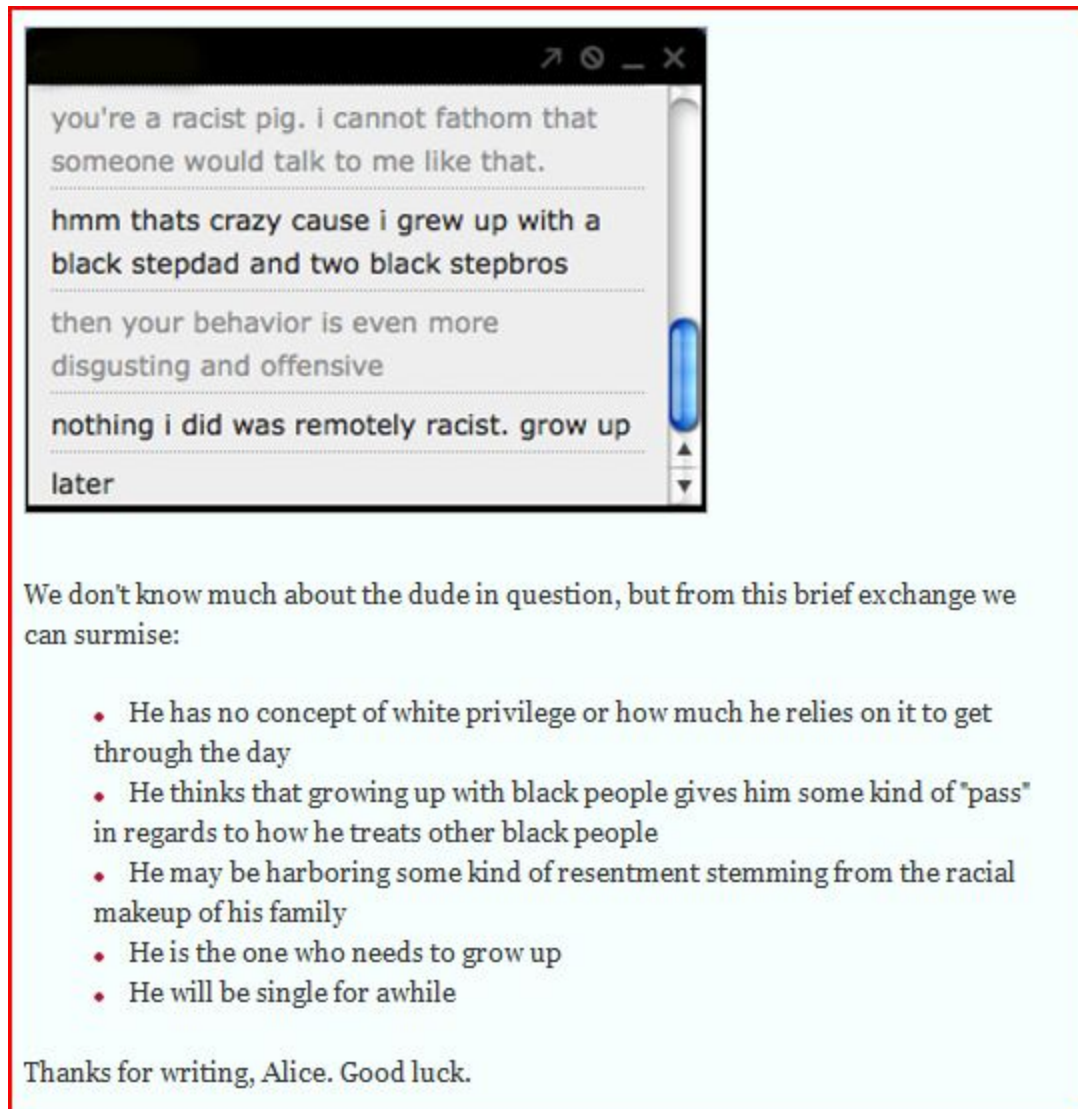Figure 18: Jezebel.com OKCupid interaction transcript Part 1

Figure 19: Jezebel.com OKCupid interaction transcript Part 2 and analysis by Dodai Stewart

Stewart, the poster, points out the obvious racist aspects of this post in her commentary. But if we were to additionally lay Woolf's misogyny screen over this exchange, the following

points could also be made in addition to the comments that

Jezebel.com readers provided.

- The offender is apparently a white man. Would he speak this way to a white woman on OKCupid or does he reserve his misogyny for women he perceives as "black?"
- Let's say he was trying to be humorous. Humor is no longer funny when it degrades a woman.
- In *A Room of One's Own,* Woolf noted that men in patriarchy treat women "not so much that she shall be inferior as that he shall be superior, which plants him wherever one looks . . . even when the risk to himself seems infinitesimal and the suppliant humble and devoted" (54). In other words, there was no provocation of this interaction by the woman, other than her having a registered account on OKCupid. This man assumed power over her by immediately writing derogatory words without any sense of whether she might be offended. His default assumption was that her thoughts and feelings didn't matter at all or certainly mattered less than his.

The Fluidity of Sexuality

After she had married, Woolf expressed dissatisfaction with

the confining aspects of marriage on women, while at the same

time, she acknowledged the societal necessity of being married

for her ability to write and be published. Figure 20 shows a

photo of a feminist button that was posted on the Facebook page

Feminism is Important to the 21st Century that Woolf might have

found humorous considering her views on marriage. In her younger

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years, Woolf wrote about the possibilities in remaining single

or being married when she stated,

> O how blessed it would be never to marry, or grow old; but
> to spend one's life innocently and indifferently among the
> trees and rivers which alone can keep one cool and
> childlike in the mist of the troubles of the world!
> Marriage or any other great joy would confuse the clear
> vision which is still mine. And at the thought of losing
> that, I cried in my heart, 'no, I will never leave you—for
> a husband or a lover' (Lee 230).

Figure 20: Don't marry be happy button from Feminism is
Important to the 21st Century Facebook page

Later, Lee (1998) wrote of Woolf's husband Leonard, with

whom Woolf ran Hogarth Press, "He may have constrained her, but

he also provided conditions favourable for writing" and "It is

clear how much he admired her strenuous work habits and how much

she would have felt that admiration" (332). Similarly, in many

cases today, women who, like Woolf, conform to cultural norms

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such as heterosexual marriages, express themselves through online fora such as blogs, interest groups, self-publishing, Internet-based businesses, and even in relatively simple Web surfing and purchasing. In many instances, these activities are well within the range of acceptable behavior for women who otherwise hold traditional roles but who, by their involvement with and participation in an emerging culture, may become leaders in and shapers of the larger culture in which they live. Alexander (2005) noted the historical importance of women winning the right to vote on Woolf's and other women's participation in writing. She stated, "one of the effects of post-suffrage feminism was that working class women's experience began to be not only observed and imagined but listened to, written down—often by themselves—and published. This was the first generation to be fully literate. The feminine demotic shaped twentieth-century knowledge and aspiration in concrete ways" (274). Moreover, the more contemporary examples of gentle but symbolic and important entrances into the culture of a less gender-specific cyberspace are rife with examples of the everyday feminism and textuality that Woolf found appealing. Additionally, Woolf's piercing yet subtle ways of putting forward her ideas were an essential component of who she was. In my view, she would have appreciated digital technology for its

ability to assist women in empowering themselves toward their own goals and in search of their own spaces, because, for Woolf, the "roles of wives and daughters in history was uppermost in her mind" (Lee 631).

But, Woolf also recognized the complexities of remaining subtle by acknowledging that doing so in some ways equated to being silenced, ignored, and considered inconsequential. Woolf wrote in her notes that this duality was an "opposition" that "would sink deep into her mind" (Lee 324) because, though there was "nothing ignoble in being a consumer . . . man wage-earner can make his power felt, woman consumer very little power. Wage earner's view predominates" (324). Unfortunately, this is still the case in some respects today. But increasingly, research shows that although marketing efforts are relatively slow to recognize the power of the woman as consumer and breadwinner, she is nonetheless growing more and more powerful because of her behavior in the world of money, household budgets, and larger financial systems, planning, and transactions (Grossbard-Shechtman 2003). Much of this women-based research is possible because of the data-gathering and measurement capabilities of Internet technology.

The Economics of Enough

Present throughout Woolf's writing is her commentary about economic issues, especially with regard to the agency that enough money can afford a woman. This concept pervades her writing. Many readers of this dissertation are already familiar with Woolf's groundbreaking and pervasive concept of a room of one's own. These words were stated, re-phrased, and re-emphasized many times in her book, *A Room of One's Own* (2005), almost as if she knew that the ideal would emerge as an iconic phrase and a feminist anthem over time. For example, her statement that "it is necessary to have five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door if you are to write fiction or poetry" (Woolf 2005 103) illustrates the necessity to writing of time, space, and control of one's environment on a number of levels. Her admonition to "earn five hundred a year by your wits" (Woolf 2005 65), and "earn money and have a room of your own" (Woolf 2005 109) promotes the independence and autonomy of mind, spirit, and body that is necessary for a woman to not have to rely on men for her basic needs of shelter, food, and clothing. Further, these accommodations can afford a woman much more than time, space, and financial resources to write. They also provide her with the opportunity to "live in the presence

of reality, an invigorating life" (Woolf 2005 109). The concept of living in the presence of reality and living an invigorating life are important to my arguments about how women in this century embrace technologies to their benefit and work with them to realize the ideal of presently living an invigorating life in their own digitally-influenced realities.

Some scholars and lay people have tried to monetarily equate Woolf's 500 pounds to a current monetary value. But the exact figure is not the point; the essence of her admonition is freedom, and freedom, to her, meant space, place, time, and provisions. Today, the requirements of a room of one's own may be different, but the essential need for women who would write put forth by Woolf remains the same, regardless of class.

The blogger mom-101 provides an example of how women in present-day western culture are using digital technologies to assert their right to write in a space and place of their own. Although she is in a traditional male-female marriage with two young children, she writes about the benefits to her and her family of asserting her individuality and her right to write. In her post dated June 18, 2010, she writes,

> When I see Sage seated in her little rocking chair, a small black board—an IKEA media shelf in another life—on her lap and she tells me she's "on the computer," my heart sinks a little.

I'm on the computer too much.

She can't get my attention and so she's emulating me.

She sees me working from home sometimes in our small apartment and reads it as "mommy's not playing with us." Even if Nate is home. Even if their sitter is with them.

So I close my own black laptop and play her game. "What are you doing with your computer sweetie? Playing a game?"

"NO!"

She shouts NO! More than she ever simply says it. You know…threes).

"I'm writing a book, mommy."

"You're writing a book? What kind of book?"

"A book about me and Thal. And we're playing and we jump and there's Peter Pan and at the end Bart Sim-Sim comes out."

"That sounds like a great book, Sage!"

"I'm writing a book like you."

I thought, three year olds pretend to be firefighters and tea party hosts and stuffed animal caretakers and fairies and princesses and doctors and Woody the cowboy. If she's playing Be a Writer Like Mommy, that's not such a bad thing at all.

And yes I'm writing a book. With Kristin. The book we've wanted to write for three years, but didn't know what it was, and now we do. Posting here may be lighter for a bit; proposal is almost done and is making me more happy than happy.

My kids see that in me too.

In this U.S. culture, there is validation for women in remaining committed to the work they love as well as the families they love. In this case, the young daughter finds her mother's writing admirable even in the presence of the self-doubt expressed by her mother. Culture changes from generation to generation, and perhaps this young girl will grow up without the guilt her mother feels for having spent hours writing, editing, and contributing money to the household as well as ideas to the world.

Some may claim that the ideal behind a room of one's own and five hundred pounds a year is superficial and unrealistic for many women of the world who may not have access to the comforts of western culture or the relatively high quality of life that a modernized country and culture can provide. But Woolf, like I try to do in my work, acknowledges that not all women have the same level of resources available to them and that it is indeed much more difficult for some women to believe that a time might exist when they enjoy their own income and their own environment free of external responsibilities, even if for short periods of time during their lives. But Woolf insists that, although these facts are true, and that "still you may say that the mind should rise above such things; and that great poets have often been poor men" (Woolf 2005 105), it also rings

true that "making a fortune and bearing thirteen children—no

human being could stand it" (Woolf 2005 22), and that "in the

first place, to earn money was impossible for [women], and in

the second . . . the law denied [women] the right to possess

what money they earned" (Woolf 2005 22). In other words, there

are always forces that work against the transgressive and

liberatory work of women on behalf of women, and, even though

the work may be difficult, slow, and often fruitless, the work

is essential nonetheless, and the concept of a room of one's own

evokes, even if only in the minds of women and not in their

realities, a sense of accomplishment and a sense of the value

for having done it for themselves without the rules,

restrictions, and oppressions of the culture at large, or, as

Woolf put it, "the claims and tyrannies of their families"

(Woolf 2005 52).

Woolf goes on to observe that "certainly our mothers had

not provided us with anything comparable to all this—our mothers

who found it difficult to scrape together thirty thousand

pounds, our mothers who bore thirteen children"(23). Indeed, it

would have been difficult for Virginia's mother to imagine even

the level of autonomy that Virginia realized by good fortune, or

luck, in her own life. But women in the 21st century can

recognize the value and importance of the early observations of

Woolf to their own lives. Many women work and earn their own

money; many women pursue education and gain independence of

thought and action; and many women own or have access to

"rooms," whether material, digital, or imagined, of their own in

which to write or pursue whatever independent activities they

enjoy. Without these trappings that symbolize and actualize

independence for women, women in contemporary U.S. culture would

arguably be in comparable conditions to those in which Woolf

lived. In these ways, Woolf is arguing for the economics of

enough in that, although there are marked and highly pervasive

patriarchal systems working against women and the concept of a

room of one's own, even in the virtual, real, or mental

conceptualization of this idea, there is liberation and

empowerment.

　　Because the notion of a room of one's own can engender a

confidence and sense of self-agency for women, I argue that

women are able to assert claims to their "rooms" in material,

intellectual, and intangible ways. About the material benefits

of a woman's own room, Woolf writes, "what change of temper a

fixed income will bring about. No force in the world can take

from me my five hundred pounds. Food, house and clothing are

mine for ever. Therefore not merely do effort and labour cease,

but also hatred and bitterness. I need not hate any man; he

cannot hurt me. I need not flatter any man; he has nothing to give me"(38).

Further, women can, through the concept of the economics of enough and a room of one's own, realize a form of intellectual freedom that is not often available to those who may have the capacity to produce literature, poetry, fiction, and other texts, but who are restricted by poverty. She writes, "the poor poet has not in these days, nor has had for two hundred years, a dog's chance . . . That is it. Intellectual freedom depends upon material things. Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor, not for two hundred years merely, but from the beginning of time" (Woolf 2005 106).

Finally, Woolf advocates for women producing writing regardless of the reward or materiality that it might produce. Her insistence on this is based on her knowledge that independent thought, intangible but undeniable words, when written down, live on in perpetuity to influence the future. And that, in and of itself, is of great importance to the progression of women and the ideals of feminism. In defense of this, Woolf states, "if we live another century or so . . . and have five hundred a year each of us and rooms of our own; if we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what

we think . . . I maintain *that* [emphasis added] . . . even in poverty and obscurity, is worth while" (Woolf 2005 112).

In summary, the economics of enough demonstrates how women in U.S. culture today are using digital technologies to write their own thoughts, to write exactly what they think, even if it appears to be only for the sake of having written it and in spite of whether it yields material gain or profound levels of observation and acknowledgment by wide audiences. And even though, for example, some women make money by blogging and endorsing products, Woolf might agree that it is the act of writing itself that is most liberating. Their words, en masse, are the markers of progress, even if some of them cross over the proverbial materialistic, self-centered line of commercial influence.

CHAPTER 6: THE SCREENING OF EPISTEMOLOGY

The human frame . . .
is, heart, body and brain
all mixed together,
and not contained
in separate compartments.

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (2005)

Epistemology as a Feminist Concept

Epistemology is important to my arguments. Rather than simply observing patriarchy at the level of characteristics and consequences, like Woolf did so many years ago, I understand that changes in social constructs cannot be realized unless the underlying cultural thought processes and learned ways of knowing the world are examined and processed. In my work, I analyze how technologies are being used by women in U.S. culture to promote feminist ideals, and I equate that work, and the women enacting it, with concepts that Woolf put forward in her writing and technological textuality. So far, I have illuminated the screens that Woolf used to evaluate and critique how women and men understand the world and know what they know. I have also discussed the manifestation of those screens through similar activities of textual technology in the 21st century. But the last screen, epistemology, is very important, and I use this

chapter to explain how cognitive theory, feminist theory, and theories of texts and technologies work together and can effect change in the way knowledge is constructed, perceived, and evaluated. While doing so, I also draw on Woolf's astute observations about epistemology to demonstrate the connections I make between her work, the theoretical underpinnings, and the examples of contemporary TPECs who use digital technologies to advance the work and worth of women.

Many of Woolf's ideas about epistemology were ahead of their time. Only in very recent decades with the work of such scientists as Eleanor Rosch and Antonio Varela, among others, have some of the basic ideas that Woolf had about women's understanding of their lives, thought processes, and knowledge been validated by more recent theories of subjective and situational epistemology such as environmental, economic, genetic, and other factors. For example, Woolf stated that "the human frame . . . is, heart, body and brain all mixed together, and not contained in separate compartments"(Woolf 2005 18). In other words, much like Varela and Rosch observed from the 1970s on, the human brain is not a separate and discrete organ that functions on its own in isolation from the other systems of the internal body but its function is also affected by the circumstances of a person's experiences, culture, and external

environments. The synapses that occur because of environmental factors and experience influence the nervous and other body systems that control human behavior. But more importantly, Woolf suspected ahead of her time that these synapses that were formerly believed to be fixed and inflexible are actually re-programmable and remarkably resilient.

Woolf also asks probing questions about how we know what we know. She states while combing through artifacts at the British Museum, "where, I asked myself, picking up a notebook and a pencil, is truth" (26)? This is the type of question that I ask when I examine the 21st century technologies that are available to women and which women use to promote feminist ideals through textuality. Where does truth, or Truth (the collective set of "knowns"), if you will, reside in the 21st Century? Museums still exist, but libraries, for example, as Virginia Woolf knew them, large, revered, austere repositories of Truth, no longer exist solely in that (quite literally concrete) form. Many people nowadays never set foot in a library, even when conducting extensive academic research. Libraries have embraced new technologies and have evolved into "cybraries" (my term). Technology has changed where wisdom and truth reside, it has allowed more people to contribute to the repository, and it has

also changed the length, situation, and verifiability of truths because of its relatively transitory and fluid nature.

The following segment of the Rachel Maddow cable TV show, which was featured recently on Jezebel.com, provides a good example of how Woolf's screen of epistemology, or her continuous examination of how we know what we know, is being used in contemporary digital contexts. The Jezebel.com post is entitled "And This is Why it Matters Who Goes on Cable News," and in this segment (see Figure 21-22), Rachel Maddow speaks with Princeton professor Melissa Harris Lacewell, who very succinctly and intelligently elaborates on the recent trend in women political candidates to run on anti-abortion or pro-life platforms. Portions of the transcript of this interview include:

> Let's be completely clear about the facts here. There is no place in the world and no time in history where restricting women's reproductive rights makes a people or a nation more free or more equal . . .

> These extreme positions on abortion are without question a war on girls and women . . .

> It is incredibly important that we recognize that despite the fact that we can be very proud of these women as women and as politicians. The question is how do women as citizens fare on the other side of them either being elected or not elected . . .

> It has more to do with our ignorance about our understanding about women's life experience. When you talk about the rape and incest clause, I suspect that many Americans, maybe even many pro-choice Americans, think that rape and incest and pregnancy resulting from it is a pretty

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unusual occurrence. They suspect that there are maybe a
dozen or so women for whom that would make a difference in
any given year . . .

It's still true that one in four women and girls is likely
to be sexually assaulted in their lifetimes. The
possibility of pregnancy is very real; . . . We're talking
about thousands of women and thousands of pregnancies . . .

The point of government isn't to make life so hard for half
of our citizens that the only force there to help them is
God. We as a government and as a people deserve and should
do better (Jezebel.com).

And This Is Why It Matters Who Goes On Cable News

So more people can hear necessary perspectives expressed as eloquently as Princeton professor Melissa Harris Lacewell did last night on *The Rachel Maddow* Show. The topic? Right wing women and why reproductive choice matters for everyone.

Send an email to Irin Carmon, the author of this post, at irin@jezebel.com.

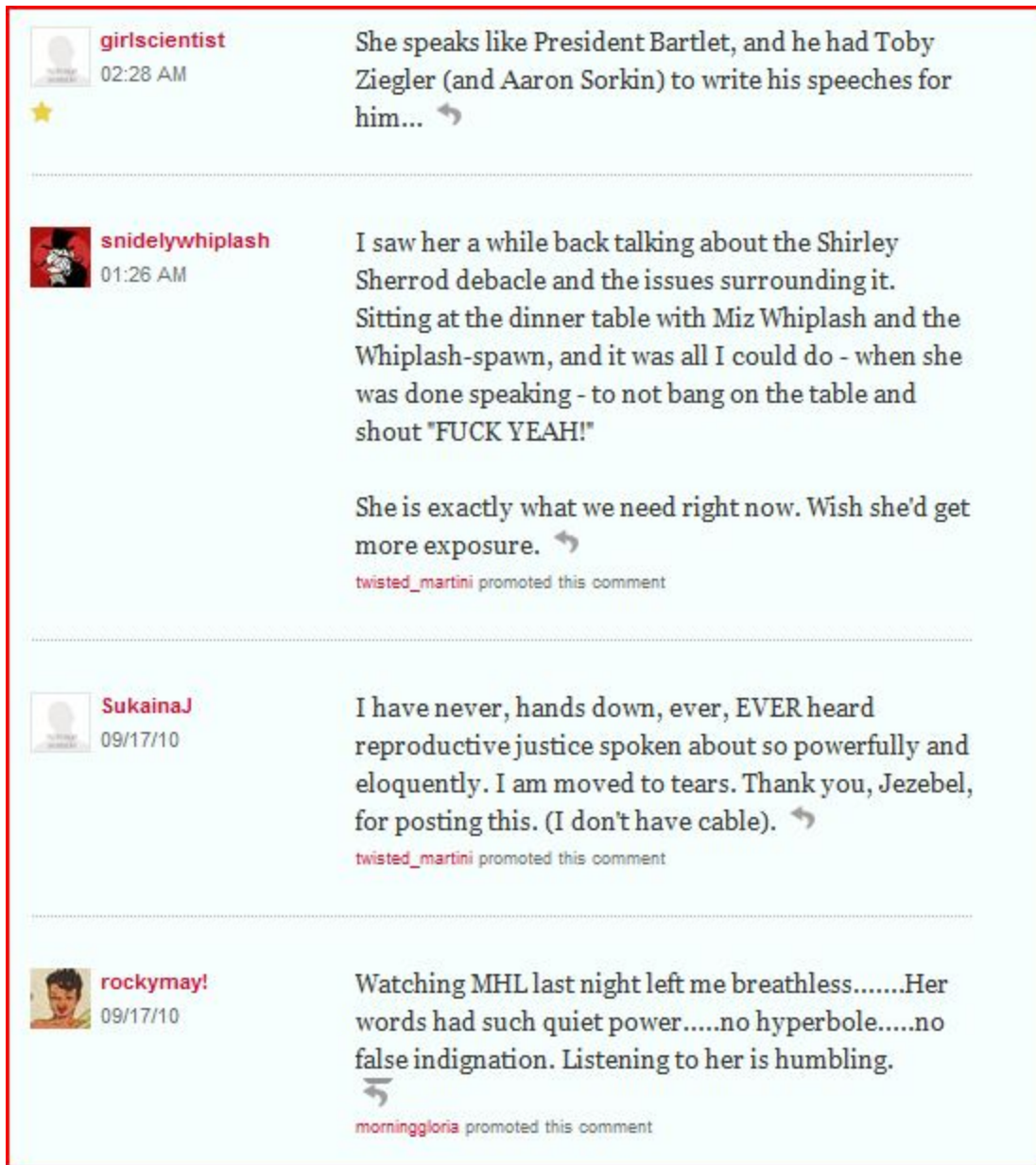Figure 21: Screen shot of Harris-Lacewell interview

Figure 22: Commentary on Jezebel.com's post "And This is Why It Matters Who Goes on Cable News"

Engaging posts and political commentary such as the type

that is offered on Jezebel.com offer readers an opportunity to

learn more about issues that affect their everyday lives.

Without posts like this, some women may not know the difference

between pro-choice, pro-life, or anti-abortion platforms. Using

the screen of feminist epistemology to filter misleading party-

driven ads and confusion-inducing campaign speeches, Jezebel.com

(and in this case, Rachel Maddow, of course) illuminate what

otherwise may not be seen and elucidate arguments that may

otherwise be taken at face value. In other words, media outlets

such as Jezebel.com help us to understand and question how we

know what we know.

Defining Epistemology

In the ways I have introduced above, textual technologies

that are available to women have increased their ability to

determine for themselves how they know what they know or even

how to find out what to know. In many ways, they construct their

own screens (or frames) of reference via the technologies that

they use. I think that Woolf would have agreed with me in this

regard. For example, if technology had not intervened and women

had not taken it up to use for their own benefit, the situation

that Woolf describes in *A Room of One's Own* (2005) might still

be women's circumstance today. She states, "for it needs little

skill in psychology to be sure that a highly gifted girl who had

tried to use her gift for poetry would have been so thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts, that she must have lost her health and sanity to a certainty" (Woolf 2005 49). Finally, she also opined that, in her time, these new paradigms for understanding the construction of knowledge were not possible when she wrote, "but these are difficult questions which lie in the twilight of the future" (Woolf 2005 76).

I insist that including research on the brain and mind is critical to my work in feminist texts and technology because there are valid, worthy, and revealing studies about cognition that disrupt the things that western culture believes about the real, the true, and the nature of the world. There is support for my thesis within the field of cognitive science, and in fact, the very definition of *cognitive science* that is offered by Hubert Dreyfus in his essay "Cognitivism Abandoned," indicates that cognitive science is indeed a multidisciplinary field that can and should draw from a multiplicity of resources to determine how it is that we know what we know. Dreyfus (1995) defined the term cognitive science in a very understandable and approachable way, and his definition is the one that I maintain. Dreyfus (1995) stated, "Cognitive science is any attempt to explain how the mind and brain produce intelligent behavior. . .

. it's just the name for a natural confluence of all the

disciplines that study the mind-brain: philosophy, linguistics,

computer science, anthropology, neuroscience, psychology" (72).

And of course, I believe that Dreyfus (1995) might agree that

feminist theories and some theories of texts and technologies

have a place in that definition as well (73).

A Shift From Linear Epistemological Models

In their 1991 book *The Embodied Mind*, Francisco Varela,

Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch described their vision of a

unique but promising entry point for studying cognition. Namely,

they argued that the mindful meditative qualities of Buddhism

can successfully marry with some of the precepts of cognitive

science to produce a more accurate way of studying the brain and

mind. The word *embodied* resonated with my reading of the

feminist theoretical idea that language, ideas, identities, and

even scientific facts are socially and situationally constructed

notions perpetuated by a western patriarchal culture in which

women must negotiate their lives. Donna Haraway, in *Simians,*

Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature (1991), describes

situated knowledges as those that "require that the object of

knowledge be pictured as an actor and agent, not a screen or a

ground or a resource, never finally as slave to the master that closes off the dialectic in his unique agency and authorship of 'objective' knowledge" (198).

Rosch's earlier work in categorization and computation suggested that the brain's propensity to categorize ideas, objects, and perceptions is based largely on one's life experience and/or shared socialized agreements about the way things are. Lakoff (1995) describes Rosch's early work on categorization in an easily understandable way, and he points out that even in her earlier work, Rosch began to understand that the brain does not work as a simple computational device, but relies on its embodied nature to construct the way an individual sees the world. Lakoff stated of Rosch's stance, "the psychologically basic categories are in the middle of the category hierarchy, that they depend on things like perception and motor movement and memory. . . . any objectivist account of categorization could not work. . . . Rosch had shown that the human body was involved in determining the nature of categorization" (Lakoff 119). To paraphrase Lakoff, and to get to the basis of Rosch's point, how humans know the world is not the result of objective, removed, scientific facts. In fact, it may be that nothing of what we know is disembodied and independent of the particularities of the human mind.

Varela, Thompson, and Rosch's (1991) approach to studying

cognition was quite reminiscent of feminist standpoint theory,

and indeed, they wrote about their ideas at nearly exactly the

same time as Haraway. Haraway wrote *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women:*

The Reinvention of Nature in 1991, the same year in which *The*

Embodied Mind was first published. Though N. Katherine Hayles

didn't write her groundbreaking and highly relevant work *How We*

Became Posthuman until 1999, she began writing on the subjects

of technology, scientific inquiry, and embodiment in her earlier

work of less acclaim, *Chaos Bound: Orderly Disorder in*

Contemporary Literature and Science, in 1990. In these three

works, I found the beginnings of the great connections that

exist among the disciplines, and interestingly, that each area

of cognitive screening is affected by a variety of technologies.

Haraway, Hayles, and others have engaged in discourse with

cognitive theoretical ideas. In fact, Hayles wrote the book

review that is quoted on the back cover of *The Embodied Mind*.

These well-known theorists, along with Varela, Thompson, and

Rosch, (1991) as well as many feminist theorists who grapple

with science--especially the science of technology--have been

correct all along.

The Feminist Science of Texts and Technology

Donna Haraway (1991) summed up the essence of feminist science when she wrote, "Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. In this way we might become answerable for what we learn how to see" (190). And Haraway (1991) further insisted that feminists should "demythologize masculinist science" (79); and, she continued by acknowledging Hubbard's claim that feminists should be able to "'think beyond it, [we] must do the necessary work in the field, in the laboratories, and in the libraries and come up with ways of seeing the facts and of interpreting them'" (qtd. in Haraway 1991: 79). In the field of cognitive science, Rosch and her colleagues began to construct their studies of the brain and mind in this feminist way, and they confirmed that formerly exclusive science- and technology-related fields can be studied and theorized through a situated, embodied feminist technological screen.

Ulric Neisser (1997), in his essay "The Future of Cognitive Science: An Ecological Analysis," describes Varela, Thompson, and Rosch's (1991) work on embodiment as the beginning of a trend that takes a more realistic and holistic view of the brain

and mind. He states of their work, "many contemporary models of
information processing are coming to the same conclusion. In a
trend that seems likely to continue, multiple systems and
parallel processing have replaced 'central processing units' as
the most popular theoretical architectures in cognitive science"
(250).

Varela, Thompson, and Rosch's (1991) primary thesis in the
book is that they use tenets of French philosopher Maurice
Merleau-Ponty's early works such as *The Structure of Behavior*
and *Phenomenology of Perception* to inform their proposal that
the concept of the body as a physical and an experiential
structure is not oppositional but relational (xv).
Additionally, they argue that "science . . . incarnates its
understanding in technological artifacts . . . thinking/acting
machines, which have the potential to transform everyday life"
(xvii). Further, they assert that "the concept of a nonunified
or decentered . . . cognitive being is the cornerstone of the
entire Buddhist tradition" (xviii). Throughout the formulation
of their ideas, they introduce ideas such as the "reflective
scientist" (3), examine what they mean by "human experience"
(15), identify the "role of reflection in the analysis of
experience," (27), explore the foundations of cognitivism and
computation (37-84), define mindfulness, selflessness, and

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meditative scientific inquiry (85-207), and call for a mindful,

selfless, more global approach to scientific study of the brain

and mind (237-245). In my view, the approach that Varela,

Thompson, and Rosch (1991) take in *The Embodied Mind* may be a

bit more spiritual in its emphasis on Buddhism than is feminism

in general, but because it always-already locates the activities

of the brain and the mind in situated and embodied

circumstances, it remains a feminist-scientific approach.

Areas of Conjuncture Among the Disciplines

Varela, Thompson, and Rosch's *The Embodied Mind* (1991)

connects to other cognitive theories as well as theories from

other disciplines. I researched the connections among embodied

cognition and other cognitive theories, feminist theory and

feminist epistemology, memetics, cognitive theories, and

theories of texts and technology. These theories support an

integrated and interdisciplinary approach to the study of the

epistemology that accounts for many of the concerns that critics

from the above-mentioned fields have addressed with regard to

traditional, western-formulated constructs that inhibit and

constrict knowledge acquisition and creation and that deny

alternative ways of knowing. They also support Woolf's early and

progressive feminist ideas about knowledge, rights, personal

experience, and the intellectual capabilities of women. Donna

Haraway described her feminism in her book *Simians, Cyborgs, and

Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991), when she stated,

"Feminism loves another science: the sciences and politics of

interpretation, translation, stuttering, and the partly

understood. Feminism is about the sciences of the multiple

subject with (at least) double vision. Feminism is about a

critical vision consequent upon a critical positioning in

inhomogenous gendered social space" (195). By approaching the

study of the human brain in this multi-faceted way, feminist-

technology theorists can embody the breakthroughs they want to

realize with regard to societal attitudes about women and their

identities, politics, and textuality.

In just one example of the variety of connections with

other cognitive theories, V.S. Ramachandran developed a

mechanism for treating phantom limb syndrome in patients who had

suffered arm and hand amputations. With his invention of the

mirror box, Ramachandran (1998) broke new ground in

demonstrating the brain's uncanny ability to re-map itself and

allow amputees, and later, stroke victims, to begin addressing

their difficulties with movement and pain (See Figure 23).
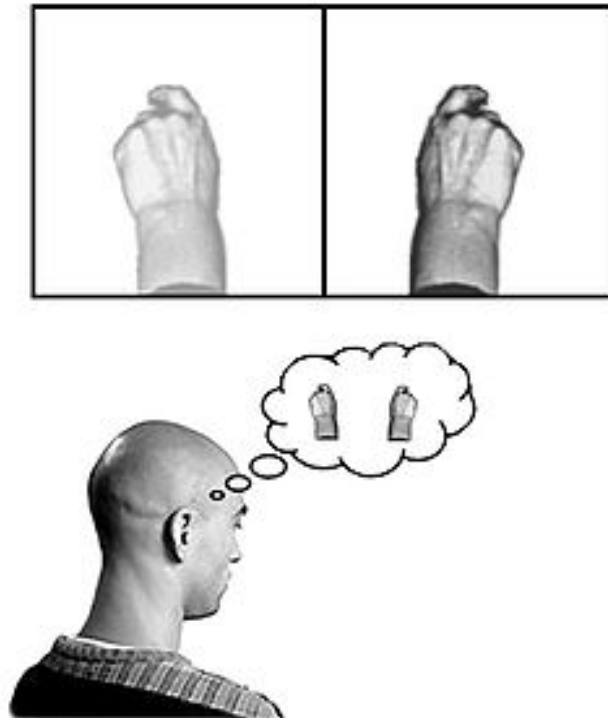
Figure 23: Visual representation of the mirror box (2010)

This is just one of the most famous ways in which Ramachandran revolutionized the way scientists think about the brain, vision, and the possibilities offered by conceptualizing the brain as an embodied organ. Charles Wolfe (2005) agrees that Ramachandran's (1998) tenets are key to working through the complexities inherent in conceptualizing the embodied mind. He states, "Consider for instance the fact of volitional control of a phantom limb, as described in Ramachandran's (1998) famous mirror box experiment (which he also describes as the 'virtual

reality box') and its implications for an integrated vision of the body, mind, and brain" (2). In other words, since Ramachandran's approaches are noted and lauded for their simple processes that yield profound insights, his embracing of the idea of an integrated mind-body is quite important for advancing this theory.

In Wolfe's own work, he has moved forward the concept of the *social brain*, which links the body, the brain, and the world. In this construct, Wolfe argues, the social brain "must also be an *embedded* vision of the brain, not just in the body but in the network of symbolic relations. One can describe this as the 'social brain', and emphasize the coeval, co-originary relation between organ and prosthesis, so that the difference between an original substrate and an artifact disappears or becomes purely instrumental" (Wolfe 2005). My interpretation of Wolfe's statement concludes that his social brain corresponds with Ramachandran's (1998) mirror box in that the brain allows itself to re-learn its embodiment within a new or different material, corporeal reality such as an arm prosthesis or a paralyzed hand. Because researchers like Ramachandran have shown, and theorists such as Wolfe have demonstrated, that the brain is able to recreate a new sense of embodiment and overcome seriously quality-of-life-restricting physical, mental, and

emotional circumstances, they have opened new doors in the world of science that may allow for even greater reimaginings in related fields such as sociology, psychology, technology, writing, and more, and those new imaginings could connect these fields with science to come close to the more egalitarian cyborg future that Donna Haraway and other feminists envision or the man-womanly, woman-manly identity that Woolf idealized. In other words, if the brain itself can adapt and thrive, certainly the social contracts and constructs of men and women also can change.

N. Katherine Hayles (2002) questions how the embodied mind approach may impact the way we continue to study human relationships in the future when she states, "Consider first the force of habits that shape embodied responses—especially proprioception, the internal sense that gives us the feeling that we *occupy* our bodies rather than merely possess them" (299). Hayles (2002) further elaborates on this concept by referring to philosopher Clark's (1997) assertion that "cognition should not be seen as taking place in the brain alone" (302) and that "the distinctive characteristic of humans has always been to enroll objects into their cognitive systems, creating a distributed functionality [Clark] calls *extended mind*" (302). Moreover, Hayles (2002) agrees with Clark that the

extended mind is not a new concept. Even David Hume recognized

that embodiment had something to do with perception and knowing.

Neisser, in his 1997 essay "The Future of Cognitive Science: An

Ecological Analysis," cites Hume's early suspicions about the

concept of the human self when he states that Hume intimately

studied his own concept of self and determined that in no way

could he perceive of his self without simultaneously perceiving

some other perception along with it. In other words, when Hume

thought of self, the thought always was accompanied by some

sense of light or darkness, love or hatred, pain or pleasure,

and those associated thoughts indicated some of the first

recorded revelations that perceptions, especially perceptions of

the brain, mind, and self, are embodied (250).

But Hayles (2002) took the notion of embodiment even

further when she stated, "the joining of technology with biology

has created a 'cognitive machinery' that is 'now intrinsically

geared to transformation, technology-based expansions and a

snowballing and self-perpetuating process of computational and

representational growth'" (302). In the final chapter, I

explicitly bring together Woolf's ideas about writing,

creativity, and space/place with feminist theories and theories

of texts and technology to illuminate the connections among them

with regard to the 21st century technologized mind/body that I have described above.

In the following section, I demonstrate how the examples I have shown above can be combined with feminist epistemology and feminist theory to renew the necessary examination of western culture, politics, and the situation of women and what those renewals mean for a technology-saturated future in which more and more demands are placed on women to be all-accessible, all-plugged-in, and all-able, all the time. Further, I suggest how Woolf's ideals of autonomy and isolation relate to these expanded ideas about epistemology and women's participation in creative acts. Moreover, I draw conclusions about women's creativity using technology that support my claim that many of these technological forms of writing are demonstrations of creative feminist textuality.

Feminist Theory and Epistemology

So, if the brain can re-map, re-learn, and re-interpret its embodied self as I have so far defended, I argue that humans can also re-map, re-learn, and re-interpret their social contracts and socialized institutions of power and privilege, which are tenets of feminism. By understanding that the brain and the body

have been shown scientifically to be intimately interdependent, a feminist epistemology that values context and situation, that posits facts as social constructions, and that favors the particular over the universal, when it is paired with the concept of the embodied mind, has the potential to be adopted by western culture in general and enacted in technological environments that can empower women. I say this because the realm of science has typically been associated with maleness and authority, and the body has remained in the realm of femaleness, as Pressley (2008) describes when she states, "dualistic thinking has led to the association of maleness with reason, mind, objectivity, and universals while femaleness is associated with emotion, body, subjectivity, and particulars" (5), a cultural condition that Woolf wrote about often in derogatory terms. Similarly, Haraway asserted in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991) that, "An epistemology that justifies not taking a stand on the nature of things is of little use to women trying to build a shared politics. But feminists also know that the power of naming a thing is the power of objectifying, of totalizing" (79). So, since the (male) realm of science, as demonstrated in the examples above from Ramachandran, Wolfe, Hume, and others, knowingly or not, perpetuates and substantiates longstanding feminist theorists'

claims that the (male) mind and (female) body are codependent,

inseparable entities, it remains possible that socially

constructed, faulty patriarchal practices relating to authority,

power, and privilege can be re-negotiated and re-learned, and

more inclusive ones can be re-institutionalized, as Woolf may

have fantasized and as I have described using technology-based

examples.

Moreover, feminist epistemology can be paired with feminist

theories such as *standpoint theory*, which analyzes the systems

that validate oppressive systems; *de-dichotomizes* binarial

notions such as reason/emotion, mind/body, universal/particular,

good/bad, woman/man, and others; and investigates the

relationships between knowers and known objects, to expand

western culture's acceptance of values, aesthetics, and ways of

knowing that are currently marginalized, denied, or ignored.

Pressley (2008) may agree with this assertion, because she

further states, "Feminism has also interplayed with . . . social

investigations of knowledge. . . . Feminist epistemologists do

not suggest that empirical evidence is wrong, but rather that it

is necessary to understand that most beliefs are as much a

result of their social context as they are factually true. . .

These philosophers are often working on undertakings that are

political in addition to intellectual" (48). This is the exact

type of science that Woolf envisioned as a vindicator of the

many intuitional things she knew about the intellectual

capabilities of women that were not allowed voice during her own

time. In a similar way, Lorraine Code (1994) writes about her

term, *epistemic responsibility*, which refers to cognitive agency

and choice, as being

> framed within a construction of intellectual virtue—
> epistemic character—that owes a debt to virtue ethics.
> It is premised on the assumption that the items that a
> person knows quite unequivocally, as she knows that a
> cup is on the table, comprise a small part of her—or
> anyone's—knowledge. The persistent exemplary status of
> such items in foundational and coherentist theories of
> knowledge obscures the extent to which there are
> genuine choices about how to know the world and its
> inhabitants, choices that become apparent only in more
> complex epistemic circumstances—for example, in
> knowing other cultures, negotiating an environmental
> policy, assessing the significance of certain actions
> and policies, or predicting the implications of tests
> and experiments. Such circumstances and others like
> them, occasion questions about epistemic
> responsibility. In so doing they broaden the scope of
> epistemology to include considerations of credibility
> and trust, of epistemic obligations and the legitimate
> scope of enquiry. These issues, in turn, make
> knowledge production more a communal than an
> individual endeavor (2).

In my own words, there is now a new direction for the old

feminist adage that 'the personal is political;' my new but

similar adage becomes "the technologized, embodied mind is

political."

Memetics

So far I have established connections between the scientific embodied mind and the political embodied mind, and I have implied that inherent in these terms is the notion that they are relational concepts that result from continual changes and shifts in the ways that brains and bodies interact with and co-create the world in which they exist. Now I transition into the concept that I refer to as the *politically embodied cyborg* that holds promise and possibilities for a more inclusive, tolerant, and less socially restricting future by introducing the concept of memetics.

Dougherty (2001) describes memetics as a concept that assumes that "belief is more manipulable and controllable than the inadequately scientific social scientists of both the past and the present had ever imagined" (87). Dougherty (2001) reinscribes Dawkins' work on memes that equates them to sociological DNA, when he states, "These fast-evolving new genes, or memes, include cultural products such as religious beliefs, political convictions, pop culture fads, or virtually anything else that can get passed on by imitation. These things too are living replicators, since, as Dawkins concurs with N.K. Humphrey, "[m]emes should be regarded as living structures"

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(88). And Dougherty (2001) also recalls Susan Blackmore's

description of memetics as "a new way of looking at the self"

(94) that she labels a *selfplex* for which "our brains provide

the ideal machinery" and "our society provides the selective

environment" (qtd. in Dougherty: 94) for it to construct and

thrive.

In these ways, I formulate my synthesis of mind, body, and

technology. For example, DNA has often been referred to as

genetic code, and code is a term intimately associated with

computer technology, so it could be said that DNA is a bodily

manifestation of a type of encoded, technological system.

Dougherty (2001) carries this idea further when he states that

Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991) offer "a helpful comparison

between computationalism and connectionism," where "symbolic

regularities emerge from parallel distributed processes" (qtd.

in Dougherty: 88). In other words, the mind is not just a

computer, it is a much more sophisticated thinking, feeling,

adapting, re-mapping, environmentally-responsive machine that

requires definite material conditions for survival.

Additionally, Dougherty (2001) believes that "this computer

model possesses a simple elegance. And Dougherty agrees with

J.M. Balkin's proposition that "we can [thus] compare certain

features of culture, and of the way that culture operates, to

the software that is installed on a computer and that allows a

computer to process information" (90). Further, this *cultural*

software enjoys "scientific credibility" (90) because culture

allows certain beliefs to perpetuate and it disallows others

their voice. And Dougherty offered that Balkin's cultural

software "answers the question of how traditions, beliefs,

desires, practices, and basic cultural 'know-how' spread through

society. For culture, think software installed on a computer;

for the human bearers of culture, think the computer hardware

that processes the software data" (qtd. in Dougherty: 90).

Through this technological screen, those of us who live in

western culture can more fully comprehend the importance and

significance of studying the brain, mind, and body through the

mind-body as software-hardware analogy. Likewise, Hayles (2002),

in an elaboration of her mind-body theory, similarly stated that

"the human who inhabits the information-rich environments of

contemporary technological societies knows that the dynamic and

fluctuating boundaries of her embodied cognitions develop in

relation to other cognizing agents embedded throughout the

environment, among which the most powerful are intelligent

machines" (303). And Haraway (1991) also offered ideas about the

influence of technologies on the way knowledge about the world

is constructed when she stated that there is "room for surprises

and ironies at the heart of all knowledge production; we are not in charge of the world. We just live here and try to strike up non-innocent conversations by means of our prosthetic devices, including our visualization technologies" (199).

Through the series of conjunctures I have described above, I developed my theory of the TPEC, the post-postmodern human cultural machine that is able to stratify itself among the formerly restrictive boundaries of cognitive science, psychology, sociology, feminism, and technology to help western culture move in new directions that acknowledge situatedness, particularity, and more inclusive ranges of culturally accepted values and ways of acquiring knowledge and knowing the world, and participating in it. The idea of the politically embodied cyborg is not the stuff of science fiction and fantasy, but it is indeed the emerging reality of people (at least people in U.S. culture). I maintain that this is especially true for women in the western culture.

In this analysis by Hayles (2002), she draws on Roland Barthes' meditation on Albert Einstein and states, "Barthes related the duality of physical brain and prodigious mind to a split between Einstein the researcher and Einstein the knower of the world's innermost secrets. Rooted in the physical brain, Einstein's mind nevertheless seemed to have nearly occult powers

of insight, at least in the popular imagination. This oscillation between ordinary physical reality and occult power translates . . . into a desire to use advanced technology to reveal the constructedness of our everyday world" (310). Hayles (2002) illustrates in a very powerful way that the embodied mind approach to studying the brain, ways of knowing, and the perpetuation of cultural values and norms can yield extraordinary new insights into the ways humans shape and are shaped by their internal, external, and digital worlds. And for me, when the embodied mindset combines with feminism, texts and technology, and thereby, politics, the opportunities for women's participation, empowerment, and respect, as well as more inclusive worldviews expand exponentially. It is this technological politically embodied cyborg, or TPEC, who writes this dissertation.

CHAPTER 7: THE FUTURE OF THE TPEC

> *A book is not made of sentences*
> *laid end to end,*
> *but of sentences built . . .*
> *into arcades and domes*

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (2005)

<u>Conclusions</u>

The four major screens through which Virginia Woolf
examined her life and the lives of women, sex, sexuality, and
gender; aesthetics; misogyny and the economics of enough; and
epistemology are the filters through which she critiqued her
culture and the status of women within it during the time that
she lived (1882-1941). I think that it is evident from the
textual technological examples that I have provided that the
screens Woolf employed are still relevant today, especially for
women, and they are useful tools for exploring women's creative
work in digital environments.

In the 21st Century U.S., women are engaged in every aspect
of society, including those areas that maintain labels such as
non-traditional, progressive, and feminist, as well as the more
traditional, home-based roles ("housewives" being one, whose
cultural meaning is currently in a state of rapid change because

of a variety of cultural influences, not the least of which is the "Housewives Of" series on the Bravo cable TV channel). In the decades since Woolf's time, women have emerged through the aftermath of several wars, sexual revolutions, the "me" decade of the 80s, the return to "balance" in the 90's, and the current new millennial era, which is unfolding as I write, as TPECs who are still struggling for equality but also are well-equipped to fully participate in the shaping of the digital future. These Woolfian screens resonate with current cultural topics that can be used in technological environments such as Web sites like Jezebel.com, Grupo Factor X, and Current.com, Facebook accounts such as Minal Hajratwala and Feminism is Important to the 21st Century, and blogs such as Mom-101, all of which garner attention from the media, academicians, and the general public, have something to say about how women live, work, play, and struggle in the world, and assist TPECs in recognizing each other and supporting like-minded contributions.

When examining contemporary culture by screening through the ways that men and women perceive their sexuality and gender roles, certain trends quickly surface that continue to resonate in the digital culture of the U.S. today. The fluid identities that our culture includes, such as gender-bending avatars in online gaming, gender-neutral screen names in interest groups

and chat rooms, and even anonymous cyber-sexual experiences

resonate with Woolf's fascination with "alternative membership"

(Lee 638). These concerns appear at the forefront of Woolf's *A

Room of One's Own* (2005), and they bear the weight of careful

examination of progressive theories of epistemology and

scientific study. In fact, Lee (1998) describes the powerful *A

Room of One's Own* (2005) as "bids for freedom" (520). She also

states that *A Room of One's Own* (2005) has a "utopian ending"

and sets women "free from histories of repressions and

limitations" (520). I have shown how 21st Century TPECs are

proving Woolf right through their progressive work in digital

environments.

Had she lived in the 21st Century, Woolf might have found

another outlet for her own progressive thoughts, words, and

actions in some of the digital venues that are available today.

In doing so, she too might have felt freed "through the idea of

a woman's writing, from the pressures of the family, the doom of

fate, the prison of madness" (Lee 521). For example, Lee (1998)

states in her biography of Woolf that,

> In her twenties Virginia Stephen was sexually confused and
> uncertain . . . there was no acceptable outlet for her
> erotic feelings about women—as there were accredited ways
> of behaving for the Apostolic Cambridge homosexuals, or for
> randy bohemian artists . . . with their wives and
> mistresses. Except as a joke, she did not define herself as
> a lesbian (or, as she would say, as a 'Sapphist'): it was

> not a concept for her, or a group for her to join, or a
> political identity. Instead, she was poised between
> incompatible identities and roles (241).

Further, through her writing, especially through *A Room of One's Own* (2005), Woolf found ways to express her ideas about and struggles with identity. Lee (1998) wrote that Woolf had "her own great variety of selves" (522), and additionally, "She knew that she had different ways of presenting her own identity" (522).

It is clear that Woolf embodied the TPEC's fluid identity. Unfortunately for Woolf, there were few if any outlets in which she could express her multiple selves, and this void, in part, might have contributed to her well-known lack of self-worth, depression, and anxiety. Had Woolf access to communities of like-minded individuals that included women, stabilizing psychotropic medications (a complicated suggestion which, with regard to women's use of them in current times, could fill many another entire dissertation and then some), some progress towards equality for women, and other advancements, she might have found a validity in her ideas and ideals that may have helped her through some of her mental crises.

It is no secret that Virginia Woolf committed suicide, and I don't want to finish this dissertation, which contains so much analysis of the positive attributes of her mind and her work

without in some way confronting this difficult subject. Though I
am not a psychologist, I can't help but wonder whether her bouts
with self-loathing may have been soothed in some way by
connecting with like-minded individuals who may have "liked" her
Facebook update or provided an affirming comment on her blog
post? Could her emerging feminist identity have been validated
by understanding that many people grapple with similar
psychological issues and that in some ways these can be mediated
by participation in textual technologies? How would currently-
available psychotropic medications for bipolar disorder have
affected Woolf's writing, convictions, and persistence of
thought? These questions really can't be answered, but I
understand that they exist and add a troubling dimension to the
arguments that I make. But Woolf was not unaware of her mental
condition. In fact, she was keenly aware of her idiosyncracies,
mental frailties, and inconsistent health. In reading Lee's
biography, it became clear to me that Woolf's health problems
actually made her convictions stronger, intensified her desire
for expression, and increased her ability to take risks.

Woolf also struggled with some of the issues that concern
cultural critics, theorists, and commentators today about the
Internet, especially the notion that anyone can be anything in
cyberspace. In the virtual world, "lying" is the norm. Woolf

commented on the unease caused by the shifting, in some ways fabricated, identities that she recognized in herself when she stated that "Lying had always seemed to her a dull form of conversation; but after all, lie one must" (qtd. in Lee: 517). In other words, in order for women to make progress, they sometimes have to devise ways of working within their patriarchal culture to subvert it. The notion of working from within patriarchal culture to subvert its oppression of women is the basis of many feminist arguments and theories. That cyberspace becomes a field of exploration for this conversation is not surprising because in many ways, the online world is a frontier that has yet to be settled. Opportunities for women abound, and perhaps the TPEC will enable such a fluid perception of truth that "lying," under its current derogatory definition, will no longer exist.

Woolf often wrote about the therapeutic value of reading and writing, but those pursuits also troubled her because she found the content of almost all literature, histories, political documents, and biographies lacking of input by women and respect for women. And although she struggled with the meaning of the term feminism, I believe she would have agreed that feminism is central to women's progress in writing, to their ability to use words to improve the culture in which they live, and to

perpetuating a TPEC future that values women's contributions, ideas, and intelligence.

Woolf clearly envisioned a TPEC future for politically engaged feminist textual technological activist women writers when she wrote, "these are difficult questions which lie in the twilight of the future" (76). The TPEC in the 21st Century combines Woolf's politically embodied writer with Haraway's cyborg and the capabilities of women who use Internet technologies. The TPEC honors Woolf's (2005) assertion that "a book is not made of sentences laid end to end, but of sentences built, if an image helps, into arcades and domes" (76), and I show how her work may have influenced the creative postmodernized writing of the women who run Web sites, update Facebook accounts, and blog.

I have researched and analyzed the variety of technology-enhanced methods TPECs use to engender writing, assert their identities, bring their thoughts to light, and make their positions known. In the end, TPEC writing is "adapted to the body"(Woolf 2005 77), tampers "with the expected sequence" (Woolf 2005 80), and "catch[es] those unrecorded gestures, those unsaid or half-said words, moths on the ceiling, when women are alone, unlit by the capricious and coloured light of the other sex" (Woolf 2005 83). The TPEC understands "the effects of

oppression on the body—giving it its form, its gestures, its movement, its motricity, and even its muscles" (Wittig 1992). The TPEC writes "unconsciously, merely giving things their natural order, as a woman would, if she wrote like a woman . . . who has forgotten that she is a woman, so that her pages [are] full of that curious sexual quality which comes only when sex is unconscious of itself" (Woolf 2005 90-91). And finally, The TPEC writes "what [it wishes] to write, that is all that matters; and whether it matters for ages or only for hours, nobody can say" (Woolf 2005 105). Would that we as scholars and/or our students manifest *any* of these qualities in our writing, universities and U.S. culture in general would become richer, more diverse, and thoroughly dynamic environments in which to live.

APPENDIX A: PERMISSION TO USE SCREEN SHOTS FROM JEZEBEL.COM

Yes, screen shots are always fine. Thanks!
-j

On Sep 19, 2010, at 11:30 AM, Amy Barnickel wrote:

Dear Editors:

I have been studying Jezebel.com as part of my research for my
doctoral dissertation at the University of Central Florida. I would
like to use some of screen shots from your blog in my dissertation. I
have captured the screen shots below that I think are going to make
the final product. May I please have permission to use them? This is
strictly a doctoral dissertation for academic purposes--I will NOT be
making any money off of this or republishing it anywhere else besides
the University of Central Florida archives. Of course proper citation
and reference credit will be made to each screen shot used. I very
much admire your Web site and I hope that you will grant this request.
Thank you. Amy

Amy J. Barnickel
Sr. Executive Assistant
Office of the President
Assistant Editor, *STUDIES in Art Education*
Doctoral candidate, Texts and Technology Program
University of Central Florida
P.O. Box 160002
Orlando, FL 32816-0002
(407) 823-1825
Fax (407) 823-2264
abarnick@mail.ucf.edu

UCF STANDS FOR OPPORTUNITY

Jessica Coen
Editor-in-Chief, Jezebel.com
jessica@jezebel.com
twitter.com/jessicacoen

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION TO USE IMAGES FROM MOM-101 BLOG

Liz Gumbinner mom101@mac.com 9/19/2010 6:18 PM

Amy Barnickel

Re: Permission to use screen shots from Mom-101

Oh, hilarious Amy! Of all the posts...

I'd be honored if you wanted to use them. Permission granted. If you
feel like sending me your dissertation at some point I'd really enjoy
reading it. Unless of course your topic is "Why bloggers should all be
swallowed up by a giant sink hole and never heard from again, and also
they smell." Then you can just hang onto it.

Best of luck with it,

Liz

On Sep 19, 2010, at 11:24 AM, Amy Barnickel wrote:

Hi Liz. I have been studying your blog as part of my dissertation
research, and I would like to use some of screen shots from your blog
in my dissertation. I have captured the screen shots below that I
think are going to make the final product for a section on the writing
process. May I please have permission to use them? This is strictly a
doctoral dissertation for academic purposes--I will NOT be making any
money off of this or republishing it anywhere else besides the
University of Central Florida archives. I very much admire your blog
and I hope that you will grant this request. Thank you. Amy

Amy J. Barnickel
Sr. Executive Assistant
Office of the President
Assistant Editor, *STUDIES in Art Education*
Doctoral candidate, Texts and Technology Program
University of Central Florida
P.O. Box 160002
Orlando, FL 32816-0002
(407) 823-1825
Fax (407) 823-2264
abarnick@mail.ucf.edu

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APPENDIX C: PERMISSION TO USE IMAGES FROM FEMINISM IS IMPORTANT
TO THE 21ST CENTURY

Hello Amy,

Thanks for the interest in my Facebook group! I'm not sure which photos you're referring to, but I don't have the copyright to them or anything - they are just random photos that other group members uploaded and I have no idea about the copyright status of any of them.

What is your dissertation topic about? I would love to know more! I am just starting my own dissertation - very preliminary as I am still at the background reading stage.

Take care!

-S

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