

# Post-Human Feminism and Digital Humanities: Representing Women and Violence

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## Abstract

This work seeks to explore the intricate relationships posthuman feminism may have with digital humanities and how these may further alter the understanding of the representation of women and violence in today's world and society. Digital testimonies archived in community webpages, crafted through online storytelling platforms and even those that lie at the very heart of social media activism do much more than offer personal perspectives. They integrate various individual narratives into a collective social memory and expose the underlying structural violence of systemic gender violence. As Luxon suggests, posthuman feminism attempts to reframe the analysis of violence 'beyond the human' and, thus, situates the act within vastly larger techno-social-ecologicals. Such 'deeper' framed focus illustrates how violence is reproduced through digital and non-digital conditions of the mundane, embodied and lived everyday world. Concurrently, the ethical feminist act of digitising trauma testimonies does raise some uncomfortable realities regarding the right to privacy, ownership, and the principle of consent. These questions can only be addressed within frameworks that prioritise the survivors' voices and decisions. Bridging the gaps between digital humanities and feminist scholarship, this work seeks to explore innovative approaches to representing women's experiences that emphasise openness, cooperation and difficulty in being silenced. This approach expands the boundaries of literary and cultural studies as well as opens new avenues in pedagogy, such as the case of students working with digital narratives to discover the realities of violence and the potential to imagine ways of resistance.

**Keywords:** *Posthuman Feminism, Digital Humanities, Women's Voices, Gendered Violence*

## 1. Introduction

Today's digital changes have led to the combination of posthuman feminism with digital humanities, which, in turn, has led to the redefinition of gender, identity and representation in new and profound ways. Communication and narrative strategy of storytelling has also provided women with new methods to document and respond to the violence they endured, which has revolutionised the way women's violence is treated (Braidotti, 2013). The other digital storytelling platforms and feminist archives, along with social media, have allowed women to reclaim and reconstruct a controlled narrative and a collective past (Klein, L. F., & Gold, 2023). This particular feminist media studies

amalgam, with its focus on the ethics of social narratives of silencing and transgressing the silences of and the boundaries to cardinal forms of humanism, is unique.

The globe's Internet has nearly turned into a marketplace of traumas and resistances for other people's use and consultation. Online movements and campaigns, such as the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements and other local projects, have shown the capacity of digitally mediated activism in growing transnational and intercultural solidarities. These digital testimonies of violence against women are unique and individual acts of artistic expression, but at the same time, they are acts of collective resistance, which highlight the pervasive nature of gendered violence (Mendes, K., Ringrose, J., & Keller, 2019). When a survivor comes forward to share her story on social media, the story shifts from one of private anguish to a collective act of recognition and resistance. An offender is '*candidly*' revealed and from that point onward, the tellers become '*tangible*'.

The story undergoes a metamorphosis and, through the intervention of Mother Nature, becomes a living entity. The metamorphosis is instigated through the process of 'like', 'tag', 'comment', 'share', 'hashtag' and the like (Papacharissi, 2015). The '*candid*' piece transforms into a '*conscious*' entity and joins a collective that is '*articulated*' through the liquid architecture of the web and becomes a '*vocal*' instrument that advocates for the construction of a social framework that holds the '*offender*' accountable and '*just*' to the '*conscious*' (Parikka, 2015).

## **2. *Research Problem and Gap***

However, feminist theories of violence and trauma have received scholarly attention, Digital Humanities has studied archiving and narratives in digital form, and work integrating posthuman feminist theory with digital humanities methods remains scarce. In particular, how digital platforms mediate women have lived realities, construct collective memory and shape ethical obligation toward victims reveals a gap in the scholarship.

## **3. *Aim, Objectives and Research Questions***

### **3.1. *Aim***

This paper aims to examine how post-human feminist perspectives and digital humanities frameworks together offer new ways of representing women and violence.

### **3.2. *Objectives***

- To analyse digital testimonies of gender-based violence through a post-human feminist lens.

- To study how digital networks transform individual experiences into collective memory.
- To identify ethical challenges related to ownership, consent, and representation.

### 3.3. Research Questions

1. How do digital platforms reshape the representation of women's experiences of violence?
2. What does a post-human feminist perspective reveal about techno-social mediation of trauma narratives?
3. What ethical considerations arise when testimonies are digitised, archived or circulated online?

#### 4. *Scope and Significance of the Study*

Feminist discourse, digital humanities scholarship, trauma studies and cultural representation are some areas that this study impacts. This study redefines literary and cultural analysis to include collaborative, intersectional, survivor-centric and technological approaches. Such a redefinition is undoubtedly beneficial to researchers, educators, activists, archivists and policy-makers.

### 5. Methodology

The research employs a qualitative methodology within the scope of feminist interpretivism to analyse how women's experiences of gendered virtual violence are articulated on digital platforms. The data consists of specific digital testimonies drawn from online archives, narrative sharing and social media activism, including hashtag activism.

The research applies thematic coding and critical discourse analysis to complex patterns of networked and technological memory, representation and mediation. The study is grounded in posthuman feminist theory with particular attention to nonhuman indexical actors: algorithms, frameworks of interface metadata and the platforms themselves.

In view of the extreme sensitivity of trauma narratives, ethical issues are especially salient; the research is predicated on anonymity and consent, no-harm principles and survivor-centred practices of non-harm or re-victimisation. The methodology, while straightforward, granted the affirmation of constraints of language, bias of particular platforms, is still sufficient in articulating meaning, context and relations of power in digital representation.

## 6. Findings and Discussion

The research and archival work of the drones and women as heard in Testimony and Witness not only constructs detailed individual stories but also interlaces them into a masterwork of collective, interrelated memory. The research archives highlight important elements of algorithmic witnessing, solidarity and solidarity. In addition, a post-human feminist view suggests that the culture of representation results from the entanglement of the human body with the technocultural web as...artefacts, voices and metalayers, platforms and voices intertwine and determine which stories come to the surface and which are cast away to the margins. Digital networks afford a voice to the silenced survivors of violence on an unprecedented scale and by so doing, produce new forms of resistance and new constitutive elements of 'feminist new'.

In this case, also, planners also build new forms of violence, which in this case are not only human-to-human, but also violence enabled through digital architectures. In general, the conjunction of digital and post-human feminisms offers an understanding of the constitutive relation of memory, culture and contemporary politics that is broader. The culture of resistance can hold disavowed and silenced elements. Memory, alongside the folder testimony, defends the absence of the culture, which is accessible, fortified and a motif running through available cultural silences, which becomes the silences that memory blankets. The folder of testimony defence, which culture endorses as absent. The available culture submits disavowed cables, which memory anchors, disavowed testimony.

The importance of posthuman feminism and digital testimony relates to how it moves past the human and machine binary. As Rosi Braidotti (2013) notes, it is posthuman feminism that advocates for an 'unthinking' framework in which the human experience is not the primary locus. Rather, life and subjectivity must be conceived of in relation, as networked and as materially interdependent. From this perspective, violence is not defined as an intersubjective encounter. Rather, it is constituted through the media, social algorithms and digital systems that simultaneously grant and limit the visibility and audibility of women.

Women's experiences in cyberspace are not only devoid of meaning but are also abstracted as sets of data, photographs, and textual fragments. These experiences are painful with both liberating and imprisoning aspects. Survivors attempt speech acts in these spaces, but are met with online harassment, data monetisation and automated surveillance. As Gill and Orgad (2018) put it, visibility is a form of power that is parasitic.

It is a “double-edged sword... cutting deeply within women’s activism and, then... adding to the peril of re-exploitation – via the sensationalised and commodified trauma.” This is the fundamental paradox of any posthuman feminist critique.

The digital humanities, as a field, illustrate the intersection of several branches of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ disciplines. It provides, with rigour, the methodological structures to deal with the issues of concern. It construes the creation, dissemination and critique of born digital works and online narratives as scholarly worthy cultural artefacts (Klein & Gold, 2023). Feminism within such studies has long ceased to be an issue of frivolous description. She dedicates herself to critical scholarship woven into a tapestry of power, agency, and social justice. Through data visualisation, digital archives and storytelling platforms, women’s violence-centred narratives are transformed into acts of resistance and commemoration.

Digital feminist archives, including projects like The Speak Project and The Everyday Sexism Project, along with some efforts in India, act as guardians to experiences that may have otherwise languished undocumented and unnoticed. Such archives go beyond testimonial preservation; they map the cartography and the history of violence against women. They animate dark digital silences, which capture moments of brave resistance. The author Patrick Jagoda (2016) describes the connection of the individual with the collective through new forms of aesthetics and ethics networked in coalition politics. The digital archive is the site at which trauma is transformed into data. The digital document does not lose the personal aspect of the trauma, for the emotions and the structurality of the narratives are not in contradiction.

Still, the ethics of trauma and digitisation are problematic. The movement from oral or written testimony to a digital version raises issues of privacy, control and permission. Stories go viral, which makes them susceptible to inconsistent, inappropriate and even harmful interpretations. This is what Stoler (2009) has called “archival anxiety.” It is particularly concerning because of the endemic survivor silencing, also referred to as secondary silencing. The control placed by the survivor over her narrative is challenged by the digital permanence of records. Archival practices, including a feminist digital ethics, must be attuned to the fragility of consent and the swift, survivor-led practices that document their lives. Posthuman feminism reminds us that data is never neutral. Data is always because of the affection, things, and politics in the surrounding environment.

The affective dimension of digital activism is crucial for comprehending women’s representation. Focusing on networked communication and its attendant emotions, Zizi

Papacharissi's (2015) concept of "affective publics" elucidates how certain emotions circulate and how such circulation engenders some sort of political consciousness. In digital feminist activism, affect is both method and message. The emotional charge of pain, anger and solidarity powers digital activism. Such currents of affect do, of course, disrupt the rational and detached modes of discourse that have often characterised traditional scholarship within the humanities. In doing so, feminists practising digital activism affect the integration of empathy into the data and digital worlds, or what we may refer to as the 'humanising of data.'

Technology and emotion intertwine and they affect pedagogy equally. University students participating in feminist accounts of violence in digital humanities projects and engages with the data and ethics of digital scholarship lacking in digital scholarship. Students engage in counter-narratives and produce counter-narratives to gendered violence in digital storytelling, mapping and interactive archives. As I have shown in other contexts, these participatory frameworks turn educational environments into sites of empathy and collaborative resistance. Feminist pedagogy, as Ahmed (2017) explains, is always concerned with the change in the content as well as the form of knowing. Here, the digital tools do not merely stand as integrations, but as integrations that make the processes of the transformation, enhancement, greater engagement and globalisation much smoother.

The effects reach far beyond the realm of scholarship. Unlike most academic work, feminist digital humanities projects act as public interventions and the engagement they attract goes far beyond the usual. They facilitate unmediated information access and empower the Survivors to express their messages in their preferred manner. Such access comes with its own contradictions. The same feminist technologies of communication that strengthen the feminist position also conceal more insidious forms of domination. Many amplifying technologies exist, but the voices they project are captured and constrained by the narrow interests of corporate capitalist sponsorship and biased algorithms, which determine which stories are deemed important. It is affluent, marginally situated class women who are more visible in the digital realm, unlike poor, marginally situated and systematically underrepresented women, who lack digital visibility. This phenomenon is what Van Dijck (2013) calls 'connectivity culture' – a culture in which visibility as a form of capital comes with a hierarchy.

Considering the critiques of Posthuman Feminism, the technological hierarchy of feminism, in turn, focuses on the intersections of human and more-than-human. Violence is ingrained not only in human interactions but also in the architecture, informatics

systems and digital ecologies. Technologies do not simply subserviently execute the is of a user; they are agents in the fabrication and construction of oppressive and resistant realities. Thus, the posthuman subject is merged with technology, the nonhuman world and socials. Feminism, after all, the endless intertwining enables posthuman scholarship to be less simplistic in binary terms of protagonism and victimisation. It has, then, a digital embodiment more advanced than what has previously been conceived.

A body can have both a physical and a nonphysical presence simultaneously. Gendered bodies are physical and digitally exist as images, avatars and data remnants in cyberspace. This kind of dispersed embodiment brings up serious issues of self-representation, autonomy and control. In conjunction with posthuman theory, digital feminism critiques the idea that representation is the same as access. It probes what other structures and mechanisms representation access is subordinated to. Braidotti's posthuman ethics, as she elaborates in 2013, brings attention to the need for accountability to all, human and nonhuman, in full recognition of the tangled web of life, data, and code.

In this context, Participatory archiving, as described by feminist scholars and digital archivists, permits survivors and affected communities to dictate the terms of the preservation process. This aligns with Mendes, Ringrose and Keller's (2019) digital feminist activism as activism. The community-driven, open-access frameworks of digital feminist activism, which these scholars advocate, counter the exploitative, data colonialist logics of digital archiving. The division of posthuman feminism and the digital humanities reaches deeper into cultural studies, particularly in relation to women and violence, which are no longer confined to the pages of books or other art forms. They have now evolved into interactive web narratives, digital installations, and virtual exhibits, which exemplify the hybrid and multilinear forms of art that defy traditional representations of trauma. These works encourage active participation, thus facilitating a shift in the audience's position from passive consumers to active witnesses. Works of this sort demonstrate how the digital humanities are capable of posthumanizing specific contexts and altering modes of refusal.

When approached through the lenses of care and responsibility, digital culture's treatment of women and violence needs protection and in this scenario, it is the digital archive that needs protecting. It must be stressed that digital feminist research, in its primary form, must engage with the primary question of who is telling the story, to whom and in what social circumstances it is being recounted. In posthuman feminism, equity and shared responsibility focus in particular on this enduring struggle formulation

is helpful. It compels us to recognise technology as part of the ethical ecology and not outside, within which feminist activism operates.

## 7. Conclusion

Posthuman feminism in digital engagements provides more voice, experience and acts of resistance than before. It highlights the paradox of technology as both freeing and imprisoning. The paradox is further deepened by the incorporation of feminist ethics in digital practice, which offers more justice-centred frameworks of described and analysed complexity, care, and interdependence. The digital and more so, video testimonies, which are treated as data objects and not as part of a collective struggle, violate the geography of cultural memory and activism. These testimonies compel us to confront the fact that technology is never devoid of human sentiment, politics and a particular moral geography.

Her arguments are best exemplified in the posthuman feminist approach in which representation includes visibility, though she makes what I would term 'relational accountability' '...on the accountability in what she terms' ethical aspects of digital pedagogy, to which the field shifts from 'information-centric' to care, embodiment and ethical centring.' The lived experiences of women, in particular, as scholars, educators and advocates, are to be preserved, respected and contextualised within the digital sphere paradoxically. The point of intersection of posthuman feminism and digital humanities is, therefore, beyond just a scholarly conjunction. It is ethical to remember '...with a moral vision', witnessing and imagining of resistance and activism in every digital voice is acknowledged.

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