

Union Theological Seminary

TECHNO-WOMANISM: A MORAL IMPERATIVE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE, FAITH, AND  
THE DIGITAL SPACE

A Report  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Master of Divinity  
at Union Theological Seminary

Dr. Sarah Azaransky and Dr. Sudhir Venkatesh

by

Shamika Goddard

April 10, 2015

*“One of the most radical things you can do is believe women when they tell you about their experiences.”*

-Anita Sarkeesian<sup>1</sup>

*“What hath God wrought?”*

-First telegraph message suggested to inventor Samuel F.B. Morse by Annie Ellsworth (daughter of a friend) in 1844<sup>2</sup>

Watch this “Thesis Drippings” by clicking on the image and following the hyperlink.



---

<sup>1</sup> Sarkeesian, Anita. "Anita Sarkeesian, Feminist Frequency - XOXO Festival (2014)." *YouTube*. XOXO Festival, 7 Oct. 2014. Web. 10 Mar. 2015. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ah8mhDW6Shs>>.

<sup>2</sup> Gleick, James. *The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood*. New York: Pantheon, 2011. Print.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE DIGITIZED

Our story begins with a summer wrought with anger, death, threats, confusion, disbelief, and two of the largest identity groups (women and people of color) finding themselves under attack by a majority group which did not see any problem with the way things were.

#Gamergate subsists of vitriol contained in the digital space whereas the #BlackLivesMatter movement responded to an ongoing violence in analogue life through creative and strategic use of the digital space.

### Beyond the Hashtag: #Gamergate

#### Quinnspiracy

*“As more and more people move to [the internet], we need to let the internet have its Soylent Green (1973) moment where everyone realizes it's just people.”*

- Zoe Quinn on [CNN interview](#) about her new non-profit [Crash Override Network](#)

The woman who launched a million hate tweets, so to speak, in the #Gamergate controversy, is Zoe Quinn. She is a game creator, and in the summer of 2014 her ex boyfriend accused her of sleeping her way onto the top of key gaming sites to get her game *Depression Quest* more eye balls. Attempting to factually recreate a synopsis of the flow of events is tricky due to the hacking done to sites and silencing done to major news outlets such that very few articles remain about the controversy's origin. The site KnowYourMeme.com, a resource for internet phenomenon, had a [thorough timeline of events](#) until just after April Fool's Day 2015

when the entry was changed. The site was returned to normal, but the power to control the narrative in this conversation pits individuals into strong “us” vs. “them” arguments where few if any facts can be agreed upon by either side. What is clear is the information cascade that Quinn’s boyfriend created when he took to the internet and shared false information about her relationship with the game journalist. Columbia professor of Sociology Sudhir Venkatesh defines an information cascade as, “the point at which whether or not the information is correct it is shared to the extent that people believe”<sup>3</sup>. The reports that Quinn received favors and had relations with gaming journalists put certain #Gamergaters behind the flag of “Ethics in Journalism” as opposed to the lines drawn by Quinn and her supporters which was “sexism and misogyny”.

The way that Quinn’s ex-boyfriend took to the internet with what ultimately turned out to be false claims bears resemblance to the network dynamics found in Clay Shirkey’s rendition of the Stolen SideKick from the chapter, “It Takes a Village to Find a Phone” in his 2009 novel *Here Comes Everybody*. For Evan Guttman, the friend of the woman whose SideKick was stolen, the thief who stole the expensive phone was someone upon whom justice needed to be enacted. After a failed attempt to email the person who was blatantly using the phone to take pictures and getting an unsavory response, Evan turned to the internet to share the story and gain support. Within hours, the thief, Sasha, had been doxed. Doxing occurs when a person’s personal location information is made public in an attempt to encourage others to act on that information. In this case, it would eventually be to have the NYPD arrest her and retrieve the phone. The targets of #Gamergate, even individuals who mention the hashtag to say they have

---

<sup>3</sup> Venkatesh, Sudhir. “Old Media, New Media.” Lecture, Columbia University, Manhattan, NY, October 13, 2014.

no comment, have been doxed and in some cases SWAT-ed. Just as doxing posts information without permission in an effort to annoy the victim (like get a large order of food delivered unsolicited), the potential for danger is heightened when death and rape threats occur.

SWAT-ing achieves the possibility of violence or harm to the target by sending a SWAT team to the location of the target. Gimlet Media Podcast *Reply All* devotes an entire episode to the phenomena in the [episode #15 “I’ve Killed People and I Have Hostages”](#).

With the power of the group, information about the petty crime’s perpetrator came to the surface quickly. Her personal home and family information was doxed. Sasha also received threats while Guttman received inside aid on police paperwork filing to get his report changed from lost to stolen. With the nation watching the NYPD, Guttman was successful in seeing Sasha arrested. Justice, according to thousands, was served. The difference is, there was no feeling of righting a wrong or seeking justice with the ex-boyfriend scorned. Shirkey speaks directly about how groups behave online and gives an example that seems like a shining one until *all* sides are considered and the lenses of race, class, and gender are applied.

A group of tech savvy people, seeming from Shirkey’s presentation as mostly men, ganged up against a lower class single Puerto Rican mother. The chapter briefly raises the questions around moderation and the role it would have played specifically in this situation as well as generally in the digital space. Whose responsibility is it to moderate conversations and what is the real bite of recourse? What does that responsibility entail? What are the realistic ramifications? Looking at the Stolen SideKick story, the real question becomes who was the bully and who was the victim? For Zoe Quinn and her ex boyfriend, her victimhood in the face

of a cyber mob showed the world that we need to look more carefully into how harassment is happening online.

### Anita Sarkeesian and Feminist Frequency



Fig. 1. Anita Sarkeesian, [One Week of Harassment on Twitter](#). 2015, Digital Image. (Accessed on March 10, 2015).<sup>4</sup>

Due to the number and severity of death and rape threats, Anita Sarkeesian chose to leave her home and is traveling with her own hired private security. When Sarkeesian went to the police to report the harassment, the response she received was not unlike that of the archetypal woman reporting sexual assault only to be blamed for the height of her skirt or the amount of makeup she wore. The officer asked, “What is it that you are doing to these people for them to say this kind of stuff to you?” She, the victim, had to be to blame and not the base humanity exposed in its full and sad glory online. But what, exactly, was Anita doing?

Anita Sarkeesian is the founder of Feminist Frequency. The non-profit “largely serves as an educational resource to encourage critical media literacy and provide resources for media

---

<sup>4</sup> “Content warning for misogyny, gendered insults, victim blaming, incitement to suicide, sexual violence, rape and death threats.” Sarkeesian, Anita. “One Week of Harassment on Twitter.” *Feminist Frequency*. Tumblr, 27 Jan. 2015. Web. 10 Mar. 2015.

makers to improve their works of fiction”<sup>5</sup> with its biggest resource being [a series of video presentations and essays on YouTube](#). Feminist Frequency began in 2012 and Sarkeesian admits ““For many women, including myself, slander and libel are the background radiation of our lives daily lives on the internet”<sup>6</sup>. While not new to harassment, Sarkeesian entered the #Gamergate crosshairs and has experienced an even more vigilant onslaught of cyber abuse. In October of 2014, Sarkeesian had to cancel a talk at Utah State University about women’s representations in video games. Multiple emails were sent to the school threatening “[the deadliest school shooting in American history](#)”. Because “USU and Utah police refused to screen attendees for firearms, citing the state’s concealed carry laws”<sup>7</sup>, Sarkeesian was forced to cancel the talk. Just as any terrorist experience aims to instill fear, the unending waves of cyber harassment seek to silence women like Sarkeesian and Quinn.

A month before, she had [spoken at XOXO](#) in Portland, Oregon. A conference that celebrates individuals who use the internet to do what they love, XOXO gave Sarkeesian a platform to express a few of the many ways she has been affected. Thankfully, these women and others have done the opposite of remain quiet and continue to point out that their presence and perspective is the threat to their detractors. While yes, harassers continuously concoct very real threats to the lives, co-workers, and families, the targets of #Gamergate represent a perceived threat from the majority male gaming industry to their--what exactly? Perhaps their hold on everything in the industry--from creating to marketing to playing. Protecting the ability to keep

---

<sup>5</sup> "About." *Feminist Frequency*. N.p., 30 Jan. 2009. Web. 10 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.feministfrequency.com/about/>>.

<sup>6</sup> Sarkeesian, Anita. "Anita Sarkeesian, Feminist Frequency - XOXO Festival (2014)." *YouTube*. XOXO Festival, 7 Oct. 2014. Web. 10 Mar. 2015. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ah8mhDW6Shs>>.

<sup>7</sup> Sarkeesian, Anita. "Media Interview Link Round up for October 2014." *Feminist Frequency*. Feminist Frequency, 23 Oct. 2014. Web. 6 Mar. 2015.

<<http://www.feministfrequency.com/2014/10/media-interview-link-round-up-for-october-2014/>>.

things the way they are. Nothing seems broken to them, so why try and fix it. That very language of “fixing” inherent in critical analysis links well to the white Americans who could not understand the outcry in the dog days of summer over Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice to literally name only a few.

Watch this “Thesis Dripping” by clicking on the image and following the hyperlink.





## Beyond the Hashtag: #BlackLivesMatter

They left us dead  
*They left us dead*  
They left us dead  
*They left us dead*  
They left us dead  
*They left us dead*  
And we ain't 'posed to be mad?

- Protest Chant

Turning our gaze now to the other nation- then worldwide news story exploding in the summer of 2014 and continuing onto today. Our gaze now falls on the #BlackLivesMatter movement and the police brutality that birthed it. Ruby Sales, in a spring 2015 discussion at Union Theological Seminary, schooled the group of eager activists on the long arm of state sanctioned death on black, brown, and red bodies. She expressed, “Y’all are upset that Michael Brown’s body was left in the street for four hours? What do you think they did when they hung bodies from trees? Left them out there as examples, removing genitalia, limbs, even pulling the baby from a pregnant woman’s stomach.” Bearing witness to the tragic testimonies of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice (along with the discrepancy between what mainstream media provided as the truth and then what social media offered as the actual truth) will illuminate how a hashtag became a household name for justice seekers.



### Michael Brown

On August 19, 2014, Michael Brown was shot and killed during a foot chase with police. His body lay dead in the street for four hours. The vigil for his tragic death became nationwide news and a spark that lit the kindling of revolution strewn across the country. The

Fig. 2. Szilak, Illya. "The Body of Michael Brown-- A Response to Kenneth Goldsmith." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 18 Mar. 2015. Web. 30 Mar. 2015.

#BlackLivesMatter hashtag was started by activist Alicia Garza<sup>8</sup> after the death of 17 year old Trayvon Martin was murdered by vigilante George Zimmerman in Florida back in 2012<sup>9</sup>.

For those not able to be on the streets, there was a way to connect to those who were by bearing witness to and holding solidarity with them via Facebook, Twitter, LiveStream, YouTube, Instagram, and various other social media sites. Profile pictures on Facebook shifted from Michael Brown to hashtags like #BlackLivesMatter and #HandsUp, images of protesters and posts about news coverage, or the lack thereof, sparked heated debates and defriending. As NPR reported, the grand jury "...decided that there was not enough probable cause to indict police officer Darren Wilson in the shooting death of Michael Brown" and "decided that Wilson acted within the limits of the lethal-force law"<sup>10</sup>. Without video evidence,

---

<sup>8</sup> Garza, Alicia. "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement by Alicia Garza - The Feminist Wire." *The Feminist Wire*. The Feminist Wire, 07 Oct. 2014. Web. 10 Apr. 2015. <<http://thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/>>.

<sup>9</sup> "Shooting of Trayvon Martin." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 10 Apr. 2015. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shooting\\_of\\_Travon\\_Martin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shooting_of_Travon_Martin)>.

<sup>10</sup> Peralta, Eyder, and Krishnadev Calamur. "Ferguson Documents: How The Grand Jury Reached A Decision." *NPR*. NPR, 25 Nov. 2014. Web. 02 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2014/11/25/366507379/ferguson-docs-how-the-grand-jury-reached-a-decision>>

no one could be sure exactly what happened between officer Wilson and Michael Brown. There was, however, a growing group of individuals who understood why it happened.



Fig. 3. "Eric Garner facebook" by Source (WP: NFCC#4). Licensed under Fair use via Wikipedia - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Eric\\_Garner\\_facebook.jpg#/media/File:Eric\\_Garner\\_facebook.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Eric_Garner_facebook.jpg#/media/File:Eric_Garner_facebook.jpg)

### **Eric Garner**

For white USers on the fence about or vehemently advocating against the indictment of Brown's killer police officer Darren Wilson, it became more difficult to justify any other position than equality when a nation on fire had gasoline poured onto the flame a few weeks after Darren Wilson walked. The officer had put Garner in a chokehold after trying to arrest him for selling loose cigarettes. Unlike Brown's case, a bystander recorded the entire

incident and the world watched Garner raise his hands as five officers took him down and one continued to choke him until his eleven pleas of "I can't breathe" were finally silenced. As Jon Stewart of the Comedy Central late night satirical news show The Daily Show remarked, there was an indictment in this case--that of the individual who recorded the incident. On December 3rd, 2014, officer Daniel Pantaleo also managed to avoid indictment for the death of Eric Garner.



Fig. 4. Joell Anderson, *Tanisha Anderson*. 2014, Digital Image. Available from: [http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2014/11/cleveland\\_woman\\_with\\_mental\\_il\\_1.html](http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2014/11/cleveland_woman_with_mental_il_1.html)

### Tanisha Anderson

Tanisha Anderson was in the midst of a particularly difficult moment on November 13th with her mental illness when her family called 911 for help. According to [HuffPo](#), if you ask the police, “...Anderson began to struggle with officers who were attempting to escort her to a police car, before she suddenly and inexplicably became limp.” Her family, on the other hand, shares a narrative that is tragically not uncommon. Their story witnessed Tanisha taken down forcibly to the ground due to tactics to subdue her, which led to her death. Coroners recently

ruled her death a homicide and cite the actions of police officers in their report. As the nation has seen recently, evidence and proof mean little in the killing of black and brown people.



Fig. 5. “Tamir Rice family photo” by Source (WP:NFC#4). Licensed under Fair use via Wikipedia - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tamir\\_Rice\\_family\\_photo.jpg#/media/File:Tamir\\_Rice\\_family\\_photo.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tamir_Rice_family_photo.jpg#/media/File:Tamir_Rice_family_photo.jpg)

### Tamir Rice

In the midst of a community mourning yet another and another lost to state sanctioned violence, the news of a young boy in Cleveland being murdered [within seconds of police arriving](#) to the scene made plain the blatant doctoring of police reports and deep

seated views of black bodies as large, menacing, and violent. Police initially reported that they asked Tamir repeatedly to put his hands up, but he reached for his waistband. In fact, the initial report contained multiple “facts” which were later [discovered to be lies](#) once the security footage was released which told a drastically different story. Tamir’s younger sister, upon seeing her brother’s bullet riddled body lying in front of the cops, rushed to him screaming only to be subdued and handcuffed by the police. At this point, similar to when the United States watched black people of all ages hosed and attacked by dogs on the news, it was utterly impossible not to admit that there was something deeply wrong and the problem was not just one in the south, for blacks, and in our context, in Ferguson.

Watch this “Thesis Dripping” by clicking on the image and following the hyperlink.



## SOCIOLOGY OF THE AVATAR SOCIETY

With a nod to Du Bois' double consciousness, the concept of having a fragmented self perceived differently within various groups, settings, and even within oneself leads into the need to go beneath the situations and explore the ways our sociological realities are impacted and further segmented by the digital space. To accurately depict the relationships and selves operating in the virtual communities we call Twitter, Facebook, or WoW (World of WarCraft), the work of social scientists and their ilk can be called upon to illuminate the underlying motivations and changes that occur to a human when they digitize their communications as an avatar.

Sherry Turkle, Professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, wrote to the New York Times about the "Flight from Conversation" in 2012. Her focus is on the perceived connection technology provides between us while actually distancing human conversation and relationship systematically. She explains, "WE expect more from technology and less from one another and seem increasingly drawn to technologies that provide the illusion of companionship without the demands of relationship"<sup>11</sup>. Turkle's critique relates to the breakdown of healthy communication online because she highlights the lack of responsibilities that would come with an analogue (or in person) relationship.

Erving Goffman, widely considered "the most influential American sociologist of the

---

<sup>11</sup> Turkle, Sherry. "The Flight From Conversation." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 21 Apr. 2012. Web. 23 Feb. 2015.  
<[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/22/opinion/sunday/the-flight-from-conversation.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/22/opinion/sunday/the-flight-from-conversation.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)>.

twentieth century"<sup>12</sup> illuminates a key reason by why there is a driving force to concoct a false narrative around women like Sarkeesian in order to tear her down. She presents her video essays in an even tone and without the stereotypical “[straw feminist](#)” characteristics mainly oversimplifications, misrepresentations, and stereotypes about feminists and the feminist movements. With nothing to grasp on, naysayers create a mythos around her (what she refers to as a “[demon folk narrative](#)”) and use everything from false truths to lies to concoct an effigy that can take the beatings of every manner that the legion of gamers wants to administer but has no real substance upon which to do so. His idea of “sign vehicles” established in the 1959 publishing of *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*<sup>13</sup>, allows us to predict the likely behavior of others such as wearing a dark uniform with badges indicates some sort of security or police officer. These “sign vehicles” help us figure out what a person might do or say and alleviate the trauma and disappointment of surprise.

A bit more of Goffman’s sociology provides us with the notions of “give” and “give off”. To “give” is to convey basic information through “verbal symbols or their substitutes” while “giving off” encompasses “range signals about meaning of our behavior, or intention, or aspirations, & unintended meanings”<sup>14</sup>. As a young woman, Sarkeesian does not give off the signs of a gamer which allows her to speak with authority about video games or the gaming industry to the legion of heteronormative gamers attacking her. She “gives” facts and critical

---

<sup>12</sup> "Erving Goffman." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 06 Mar. 2015.  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erving\\_Goffman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erving_Goffman)>.

<sup>13</sup> Goffman, Erving. Introduction. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959. N. pag. Web. 4 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.units.miamioh.edu/technologyandhumanities/goffman.pdf>>.

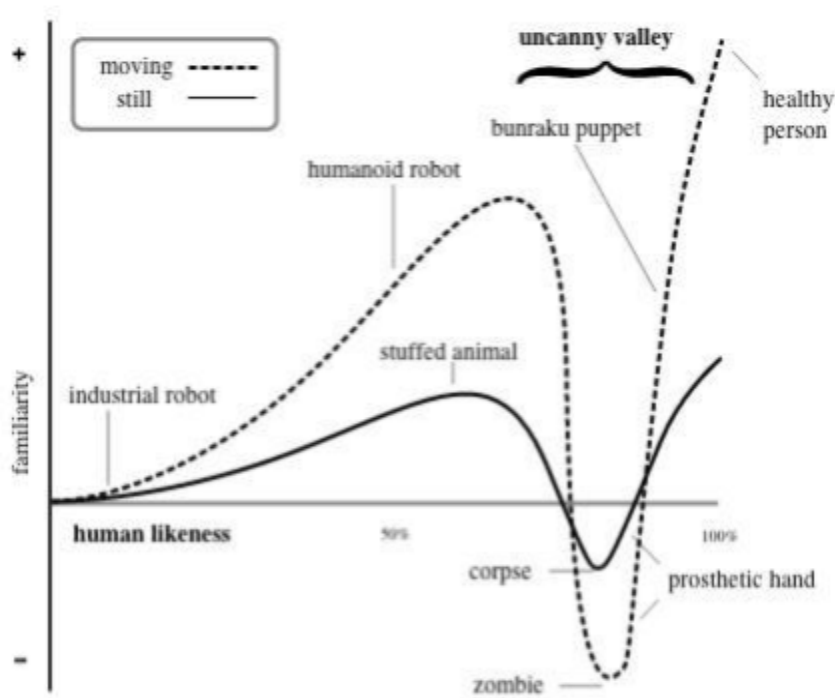
<sup>14</sup> Goffman, Erving. Introduction. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959. N. pag. Web. 4 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.units.miamioh.edu/technologyandhumanities/goffman.pdf>>.

analysis based on research in a matter of fact manner, down to her news style format of looking directly into the camera with a medium frame shot. Because of the generations of gender politics which align women to silence, not speaking their mind, being dumb to the issues, not playing video games, and more, Anita's gives of feminism applied to video games asking for equal treatment of women players, characters, creators, and business persons in the industry is a disjoint from what she "gives off" according to years of prejudice.

### **Uncanny Valley of Humanity**

When the women of #Gamergate, fragmented their female identity into gamer, techie, business professional, and voice of authority could not be resolved by an angered but connected all boys club. Consider the computer science concept of the uncanny valley as a way to best exemplify the visceral response against such disparate seeming women. In robotics and CGI (Computer Generated Imagery), the uncanny valley is the moment at which the manufactured object looks and moves almost like human - but not quite. The gap between perfection in presenting as human and that moment makes the viewer uncomfortable.





**"Mori Uncanny Valley" by Smurrayinchester - self-made, based on image by Masahiro Mori and Karl MacDorman**

Fig. 6. "Mori Uncanny Valley" by Smurrayinchester - self-made, based on image by Masahiro Mori and Karl MacDorman at <http://www.androidscience.com/theuncannyvalley/proceedings2005/uncannyvalley.html>. Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 via Wikimedia Commons - [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mori\\_Uncanny\\_Valley.svg#/media/File:Mori\\_Uncanny\\_Valley.svg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mori_Uncanny_Valley.svg#/media/File:Mori_Uncanny_Valley.svg)

To modify this concept for the marginalized, the uncanny valley of humanity occurs to the right of the 100% line in Mori's graph. For humans, white, heterosexual cisgender men (WHCM) are the healthy human and able to be 100% whole. Other identities fall in line behind them at decreasing percentiles. When non whm act or speak in a way out of line of their expected stereotypical behavior, it moves that person closer toward the traits of a whole human being currently owned by whm. That

move puts the deviant into the uncanny valley of humanity and the person makes others uncomfortable and disturbed. Responses to deviants range from comments like "you are so articulate" to tragic murders of transgender women who "pass" as cisgender women. The nascent concept of the Uncanny Valley of Humanity exposes the lack of wholeness everyone outside of the hegemonic experiences as well as the hollowness of those established as 100% human.

For dissenters in #Gamergate, the inability to render these women whole and healthy people as each woman chose to self-identify with traditionally male roles (like gamer or techie) resulted in a need to attack the personhood of each woman. The victims (as well as activists/allies) involved in #BlackLivesMatter experience similar societal struggles. Subsequent hashtags such as #MuslimLivesMatter in response to the Chapel Hill shooting each represent dichotomies upon which whole humans do not yet include all humans. As people have done tragically well for centuries, these groups of people unrendered and unwhole are deemed less than human as the default because they start off as an amalgamation of stereotypes on the human likeness scale. When women deviate the norms, for example, there is a move away from what society believes is whole for women and thus these individuals fall into the uncanny valley. Because of the sociological glass bar graph, there is a false wholeness accessible to women. The same is true for anyone outside of the heteronormative white, straight, Christian, “able-bodied/minded” male identity. The discrepancy that occurs for the marginalized in the uncanny valley of societal aesthetics causes such groups to be “otherized” and subsequently feared and in need of eradication to remove the deformed entity. Further research is required to fully grasp the depth and applications of the Uncanny Human Valley for all subalternous groups.

## TECHNO-WOMANISM

We have only discussed a fraction of struggles and social justice issues that cross through or abide in the technosphere. In order to be of assistance in the social justice issues and solutions

that get digitized, a theological ethic based on more than exegetical myth is necessary to be of use and practical as opposed to being relegated to divisive rhetoric. In her 1983 publication, *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*, Alice Walker defines the word “womanist” in four parts. From this quaternary definition, the theological ethic of womanism developed. Over the course of years and through theologians and thinkers such as Delores Williams, Emilie Townes, Melanie Harris, and more, womanism took shape by critiquing black liberation theology for its sexism, feminist theology for its racism, and both for their classism. Now, a *techno-womanist* critique solely focused on the digital space can be applied in response to the unique manifestations of humanity operating outside of its good nature.

Watch this “Thesis Drippings” by clicking on the image and following the hyperlink.



According to a reading of Walker by Melanie Harris, Associate Professor of Religion and Ethics at Texas Christian University, the kryptonite to injustice is wholeness accomplished by reconciling fragmentation. As Harris describes womanism as “a religious discipline that examines ethical theories concerning human agency, action, and relationship while at the same time critiquing theological constructions that negate the *wholeness* or full existence of women who deal with the realities of social injustice and multilayered oppressions”, the perspective from which to develop approaches to the social justice issues behind each hashtag presented, and the many unmentioned, presents itself<sup>15</sup>. Though we are fragmented depictions of ourselves in the digital space, those specters of who we are experience the fatigue of interaction and affect our entire self, regardless of the fissures our beings experience across platforms.

More so, the pursuit of wholeness is one for all in the gender spectrum. The splitting of genders and creation of binary sides diametrically opposed only serves to perpetuate an environment of competition and a scarcity mentality. There can only be one winner in that scenario as opposed to everyone benefitting. Peter J. Paris appears in Harris’ work to include “an African cosmological perspective” which recognizes that “the person and community are interdependent”. This notion is helpful when considering how Walker’s prose interprets certain fragmentation as an effect of racism which “[indicates] that whatever affects the individual, negatively or positively, also directly impact the community”<sup>16</sup>. So much about racism and sexism overlap while remaining distinct and the digital space, with its own layers, at times conflates and distills individuals into the minimal dimensional identities ideal for dehumanizing

---

<sup>15</sup> Harris, Melanie L. *Gifts of Virtue, Alice Walker, and Womanist Ethics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Print, 50.

<sup>16</sup> Harris, Melanie L. *Gifts of Virtue, Alice Walker, and Womanist Ethics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Print, 62.

individuals into a group's stereotypes. What then does it look like to have a digital space buttressed by wholeness? I offer a liberal digital application of such an ethic formulated as *techno-womanism* which works to fill the Uncanny Valley of Humanity with a true bridge across difference through inclusion and deference to the stories of the oppressed.

Contributing to a womanist anthology entitled, *Embracing the Spirit: Womanist Perspectives on Hope, Salvation, and Transformation*, Diana L. Hayes questions where the voices of faith and morality are in the face of a dying world. She upholds the responsibility people of faith have "wherever...chaos appears to have an upper hand...to help influence the future of this nation and our world, global village that it has become, guiding our tortured and seemingly increasingly devastated homelands on the man journey toward truly becoming the city of God-a world where all people, regardless of race, class, gender, or faith can live in peace and solidarity with one another and we will study war no more"<sup>17</sup>. Pertinent to the potential of *techno-womanism*, Hayes defines violence as "an assault on human dignity in whatever form it takes" and emphasizes that the violation in question need not involve physical harm to fit the bill. She goes on to reveal the sinister act of objectification as the "depersonalization of a person" through names<sup>18</sup>. Legal definitions of cyber bullying, cyber terrorism, cyber harassment, cyber mobs, and many more concepts are being named to address the new face of old hate. Each tactic begins with a deviated person removed from where flawed societal norms expect

Just as analogue failings include shortcomings in race-class-gender categories, cybernated interactions are replete with the same flawed tropes. The similarities are unsurprising

---

<sup>17</sup> Townes, Emilie Maureen. *Embracing the Spirit: Womanist Perspectives on Hope, Salvation, and Transformation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997. Print, 10.

<sup>18</sup> Townes, Emilie Maureen. *Embracing the Spirit: Womanist Perspectives on Hope, Salvation, and Transformation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997. Print, 19.

as women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQIA community are harassed and made to feel less than. The danger of the computerized altercations is the brazenness of the anonymous. The ability to capitalize on technological tools en masse against individuals online takes the schoolyard bully or gangs to a space where recourse is watered down and nearly impossible. Focusing on how our actions affect each other and sharing each others stories is a start, but it certainly is not the finish of how to fight and win against a legion of doxing, SWATting, hacking, dissenters. More work is needed across faith communities and within techno-environments to catch each other up on best practices and work together.

## **WWJD - What Would Jesus Digitize?**

What does the church catholic have to say about the social justice issues that begin or live in the digital space and how can faith communities equip themselves to be voices for good and change in those spaces? Generations of theologians and Christians struggle to this day to answer the question of where their call falls in the midst of the world's shortcomings. While faith based activists seemed largely unaware of the struggles like those of #Gamergate, there were responses for #BlackLivesMatter and both on- and off-line attempts fell short.

The faith leaders who traveled to the Ferguson from all over the country seemed only to deliver messages too heavenly minded to be any earthly good. Their presence was critiqued by the young activists who thought their old school peacekeeping efforts “were trying to heal a broken arm with a band aid”. Protesters in Ferguson were also bristled by the mantra by peacekeepers and clergy whose solutions centered around “peace, healing, and voting” when the

police and state continued to use violence, relationships between communities and police were so damaged by broken window policies, and voting only changed the politicians, but never the system<sup>19</sup>. The civil disobedience practiced which resulted in the arrest of Union Theological Seminary professor Dr. Cornel West was scrutinized for taking attention away from the movement and putting it on one individual.

While some pastors and ministers were getting called out for avoiding the subject during the most segregated hour of the week, when faith communities gathered, there were faith leaders who did use their privilege and power to bring to light the darkness found in police actions as well as operate in the medium of social media to create a campaign that was more easily sharable and joinable. When the story broke that [Florida police officers were using pictures of black men as targeting practice](#), a Facebook event page was created for pastors to offer their own pictures instead to the police.



#UseMeInstead was initially a form of hashtag activism which allowed clergy members to use their privilege to bring attention to the problem. However, controversy ultimately derailed the actions as it was clear that mostly white clergy were participating. Fearing the “white savior” dilemma in which white people are required

Fig. 7. Shamika Goddard, #UseMeInstead, 2015, Digital Image. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1386905478280355/> (accessed March 6, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> Rakia, Raven. "Between the Peacekeepers and the Protesters in Ferguson." *Truthout*. Truthout, 9 Sept. 2014. Web. 04 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/26043-between-the-peacekeepers-and-the-protesters-in-ferguson>>.

to save people of color from an issue most likely resulting from the Uncanny Valley of Humanity along racialized lines, the hashtag participation disseminated. The ELCA pastor who began the work explained, though “hashtag activism can be useful, she said a better way for the clergy members to show solidarity would have been to work within their own communities to build bridges”<sup>20</sup>. Though the ministers involved in #UseMeInstead were refusing to be silent as many were from their pulpits, there was still a learning curve on how to be effective without unintentionally deepening trenches well worn by time and racialized battles. Clergy of color would not offer their images because there is the very real risk of being targeted by police. Regardless of which space, analogue or digital, the work of showing up as allies of faith requires more than simply showing up.

**Watch this “Thesis Drippings” by clicking on the image and following the hyperlink.**



---

<sup>20</sup> Kuruvilla, Carol. "White Clergy Spark Debate By Telling Cops #UseMeInstead For Target Practice." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 26 Jan. 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2015.  
<[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/26/usemeinstead-clergy-twitter\\_n\\_6549374.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/26/usemeinstead-clergy-twitter_n_6549374.html)>.



## Bibliography

- "About." *Feminist Frequency*. N.p., 30 Jan. 2009. Web. 10 Mar. 2015.  
<<http://www.feministfrequency.com/about/>>.
- Bouie, Jamelle. "Racism Not a Problem Anymore? Don't Be Ridiculous, It's Still a Big Issue." *The Daily Beast*. Newsweek/Daily Beast, 03 Dec. 2013. Web. 01 Mar. 2015.  
<<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/12/03/racism-not-a-problem-anymore-don-t-be-ridiculous-it-s-still-a-big-issue.html>>.
- Carr, Nicholas G. *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2010. Print.
- Chappell, Bill. "People Wonder: 'If They Gunned Me Down,' What Photo Would Media Use?" *NPR*. NPR, 11 Aug. 2014. Web. 30 Mar. 2015.  
<<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2014/08/11/339592009/people-wonder-if-they-gunned-me-down-what-photo-would-media-use>>.
- Crumpton, Stephanie M.. *A Womanist Pastoral Theology against Intimate and Cultural Violence*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014. Print.
- "Cyberbullying." *Definition*. N.p., 19 Sept. 2009. Web. 10 Mar. 2015.  
<<http://techterms.com/definition/cyberbullying>>.
- "Death of Eric Garner." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 20 Feb. 2015.  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death\\_of\\_Eric\\_Garner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_Eric_Garner)>.
- Detweiler, Craig. *IGods: How Technology Shapes Our Spiritual and Social Lives*. Print.
- "Erving Goffman." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 06 Mar. 2015.  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erving\\_Goffman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erving_Goffman)>.
- Dorrien, Gary J. *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Idealism, Realism, and Modernity, 1900-1950*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003. Print.
- Everett, Anna. *Digital Diaspora: A Race for Cyberspace*. Albany: SUNY, 2009. Print.
- Gladwell, Malcolm. "Small Change." *The New Yorker*. The New Yorker, 4 Oct. 2010. Web. 15 Oct. 2014.
- Goffman, Erving. Introduction. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959. N. pag. Web. 4 Apr. 2015.  
<<http://www.units.miamioh.edu/technologyandhumanities/goffman.pdf>>.
- Gustavo Gutierrez, "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology" in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland (1999).
- Haraway, Donna Jeanne. *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. London: Free Association, 1991. Print.
- Harris, Melanie L. *Gifts of Virtue, Alice Walker, and Womanist Ethics*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010. Print.
- Hodge, Channon. "Issa Rae | Off Color Comedy | Part 3 | The New York Times." *YouTube*. The New York Times, 30 Oct. 2014. Web. 03 Feb. 2015. <<http://youtu.be/paA-calE2pI>>.
- "It Gets Better Project | Give Hope to LGBT Youth." *It Gets Better*. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Mar. 2015. <<http://www.itgetsbetter.org/>>.
- Keller, Bill. "All the Aggregation That's Fit to Aggregate." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 12 Mar. 2011. Web. 04 Apr. 2015.  
<[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/13/magazine/mag-13lede-t.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/13/magazine/mag-13lede-t.html?_r=0)>.

- King, Shaun. "New Lie in the Shooting Death of Tamir Rice Discovered: Police Never Saw the Tip of the Gun at All." *New Lie in the Shooting Death of Tamir Rice Discovered: Police Never Saw the Tip of the Gun at All*. Daily Kos, 4 Dec. 2014. Web. 10 Apr. 2015.  
<<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2014/12/04/1349386/-New-lie-in-the-shooting-death-of-Tamir-Rice-discovered-Police-never-saw-the-tip-of-the-gun-at-all#>>.
- Kuruvilla, Carol. "White Clergy Spark Debate By Telling Cops #UseMeInstead For Target Practice." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 26 Jan. 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2015.  
<[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/26/usemeinstead-clergy-twitter\\_n\\_6549374.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/01/26/usemeinstead-clergy-twitter_n_6549374.html)>.
- Lewinsky, Monica. "The Price of Shame." *Monica Lewinsky*. Ted Talk, 1 Mar. 2015. Web. 04 Apr. 2015.  
<[https://www.ted.com/talks/monica\\_lewinsky\\_the\\_price\\_of\\_shame?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/monica_lewinsky_the_price_of_shame?language=en)>.
- McGonigal, Jane. *Reality Is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*. New York: Penguin Group, 2011. Print.
- McVeigh, Tracy. "Research Linking Autism to Internet Use Is Criticised." *The Guardian*. The Guardian, 6 Aug. 2011. Web. 15 Oct. 2014.
- Peralta, Eyder, and Krishnadev Calamur. "Ferguson Documents: How The Grand Jury Reached A Decision." *NPR*. NPR, 25 Nov. 2014. Web. 02 Mar. 2015.  
<<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2014/11/25/366507379/ferguson-docs-how-the-grand-jury-reached-a-decision>>.
- Rakia, Raven. "Between the Peacekeepers and the Protesters in Ferguson." *Truthout*. Truthout, 9 Sept. 2014. Web. 04 Apr. 2015.  
<<http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/26043-between-the-peacekeepers-and-the-protesters-in-ferguson>>.
- Sarkeesian, Anita. "#6 The Straw Feminist (Tropes vs. Women)." *Feminist Frequency*. YouTube, 22 Sept. 2011. Web. 04 Apr. 2015.  
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnJxqRLg9x0>>.
- Sarkeesian, Anita. "Anita Sarkeesian, Feminist Frequency - XOXO Festival (2014)." *YouTube*. XOXO Festival, 7 Oct. 2014. Web. 10 Mar. 2015.  
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ah8mhDW6Shs>>.
- Sarkeesian, Anita. "Media Interview Link Round up for October 2014." *Feminist Frequency*. Feminist Frequency, 23 Oct. 2014. Web. 6 Mar. 2015.  
<<http://www.feministfrequency.com/2014/10/media-interview-link-round-up-for-october-2014/>>.
- Sarkeesian, Anita. "One Week of Harassment on Twitter." *Feminist Frequency*. Tumblr, 27 Jan. 2015. Web. 10 Mar. 2015.  
<<http://femfreq.tumblr.com/post/109319269825/one-week-of-harassment-on-twitter>>.
- Shirky, Clay. *Here Comes Everybody: How Change Happens When People Come Together*. London: Penguin, 2009. Print.
- Szilak, Illya. "The Body of Michael Brown--A Response to Kenneth Goldsmith." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 18 Mar. 2015. Web. 30 Mar. 2015.  
<[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/illya-szilak/the-body-of-michael-brown\\_b\\_6891114.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/illya-szilak/the-body-of-michael-brown_b_6891114.html)>.

- "Shooting of Michael Brown." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 11 Feb. 2015.  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shooting\\_of\\_Michael\\_Brown](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shooting_of_Michael_Brown)>.
- Staff, NPR. "Behind A Twitter Campaign, A Multitude Of Stories." *NPR*. NPR, 16 Aug. 2015.  
Web. 30 Mar. 2015.  
<<http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2014/08/16/340669034/behind-a-twitter-campaign-a-multitude-of-stories>>.
- Stout, Kristie Lu. "Gamergate Target Helps Others Fight Cyberabuse - CNN Video." *CNN*.  
Cable News Network, 10 Mar. 2015. Web. 10 Mar. 2015.  
<<http://edition.cnn.com/videos/world/2015/03/10/ns-intv-zoe-q.cnn>>.
- Terry, Jennifer, and Melodie Calvert. *Processed Lives: Gender and Technology in Everyday Life*.  
London: Routledge, 1997. Print.
- "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised." *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 04 Apr.  
2015. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Revolution\\_Will\\_Not\\_Be\\_Televised](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Revolution_Will_Not_Be_Televised)>.
- Townes, Emilie Maureen. *Embracing the Spirit: Womanist Perspectives on Hope, Salvation, and Transformation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997. Print.
- Turkle, Sherry. "The Flight From Conversation." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 21  
Apr. 2012. Web. 23 Feb. 2015.  
<<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/22/opinion/sunday/the-flight-from-conversation.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>>.
- Venkatesh, Sudhir. "Old Media, New MEdia." Lecture, Columbia University, Manhattan, NY,  
October 13, 2014.
- Voght, PJ, and Alex Goldman. "#15 I've Killed People and I Have Hostages." *Reply All*. Gimlet  
Media, 4 Mar. 2015. Web. 04 Apr. 2015.  
<<http://gimletmedia.com/episode/ive-killed-people-and-i-have-hostages/>>.
- "What Is Cyberbullying." *What Is Cyberbullying*. StopBullying.gov, n.d. Web. 10 Mar. 2015.  
<<http://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it/>>.
- West, Traci C. *Wounds of the Spirit: Black Women, Violence, and Resistance Ethics*. New York:  
New York UP, 1999. Print.
- Lsteussy@siadvance.com, Lauren Steussy |. "Michelle Obama Honors Staten Island Techie at  
BET's 'Black Girls Rock!'" *SiLive.com*. SiLive, 01 Apr. 2015. Web. 04 Apr. 2015.  
<[http://www.silive.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2015/04/young\\_stapletonite\\_shares\\_stag.html](http://www.silive.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2015/04/young_stapletonite_shares_stag.html)>.