

# A Womxn Destroyed

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Figure 1. The performer's Metahuman in the Unreal environment. ©Authors Copyright.

## Abstract

A Womxn Destroyed is a performance that delves into the anger felt by femme or femme-identified individuals who have traversed the spectrum of femme experiences, embracing, transforming, or relinquishing this identity while frequently concealing these emotions. Through this virtual performance, I create a space for the expression and exploration of anger. The first performance is a response to The Monologue, Part 2, of Simone de Beauvoir's 1969 novel The Woman Destroyed. After the first iteration of this performance, other artists will be invited to perform a monologue in their personalized virtual 'skin' as a Metahuman. They will create a digital performance as a response to either "The Monologue", a piece of literature of their choice, or another inspiring text or body of work. Using a set of digital tools, I create a virtual production method using Unreal Engine, Metahumans, biometric data capture from the app Live Link, a microphone, and using Twitch as the distribution platform, as a form of creative expression.

## Keywords

Performance of Literature, Digital Performance, Feminist HCI, Glitch Feminism

## Concept

A Womxn Destroyed is my response to The Monologue from Simone de Beauvoir's 1969 novel The Woman Destroyed in my virtual skin made with Metahuman Creator and performed live on my Twitch channel. Feminist writer and activist Simone de Beauvoir is famous for her book The Woman Destroyed. In the book is The Monologue, a long rambling rant by the main character describing in great detail the desperation of her life. A defining element of this rant is her anger and vitriol in rejecting the state of her life; alone, outcast, and rejected. By rejecting her situation, she rejects societal norms. This is one of the critical basic truths for feminist thought to grow.

The rejection of norms is seen in all future phases of feminism. In Third Wave Feminism, and the early years of cyberfeminism we have The Cyborg Manifesto by Donna Haraway and A Cyberfeminist Manifesto for the 21st Century by VNS Matrix. Since then, digital feminism has been adopted more widely in the Fourth Wave. The Fourth Wave has been defined by terms including but not limited to "...popular feminism, cyberfeminism, feminist cyberactivism, discursive feminism or activism, online feminist

activism, feminist digilantism, social media activism, and Facebook feminism”. [1] In *Glitch Feminism*, Legacy Russell opens her book with E. Jane’s piece NOPE (a manifesto). E. Jane begins NOPE (a manifesto) with the sentence “I am not an identity artist just because I am a black artist with multiple selves”. This manifesto is also built on a refusal to be confined to an expectation imposed on them by their race, gender, and sexuality. Russell extrapolates on the meaning of this sentence, “E. Jane’s naming and claiming of ‘multiple selves’ pushes back against a flattened reading of historically othered bodies”. [2] Announcing emphatically that as an individual, one can have multiple parts of themselves online/virtual and in-person, speaks to the nature of digital feminism.

A *Womxn Destroyed* is a digital performance that expresses resistance to the persistence of societal norms and the flattening of identity in virtual spaces imposed on womxn. The physical spaces or as Legacy Russell calls it in *Glitch Feminism*, “AFK or away from keyboard”, are brought into the virtual through my response to the original text from *The Monologue*. This work whether virtual or AFK is intertwined with the complexity of living in a world where more of ourselves and our bodies are being asked to participate in virtual environments.

### Process



Figure 2. The Metahuman Creator interface. “Vivian”, the performer’s unique adaptation of the Metahuman called Vivian. ©Authors Copyright.

In a *Womxn Destroyed*, I use Unreal Engine and Metahumans to create the avatar and virtual environment. The Metahuman uses biometric data capture from the app Live Link. I use a microphone to capture high-quality sound and ring lights to increase the quality of my video capture. Then I livestreamed my performance on the Twitch web platform.

I use Twitch because this is a platform where it is customary to use game aesthetics to interact with a viewing audience. A *Womxn Destroyed* uses game development software and shares a visual style with other games built with Metahuman Creator or Unreal Engine through a critical lens. Mary Flanagan published *Critical Play: Radical Game Design* in 2009, and defined it “...as a means to create or occupy play environments and activities that represent one

or more questions about aspects of human life.... Criticality in play can be fostered in order to question an aspect of a game’s content,’ or an aspect of a play scenario’s function that might otherwise be considered a given’ or necessary”. [3] Stereotypical depictions of feminized bodies exist on the Twitch streaming platform through digital games that have a long history of misrepresenting or leaving out a diverse range of bodies, genders, races, and cultures outside of the stereotyped images found in popular digital gaming culture. Although there has been much improvement, *A Womxn Destroyed* is a digital performance that subverts this stereotype by performing texts and visuals outside of this norm.

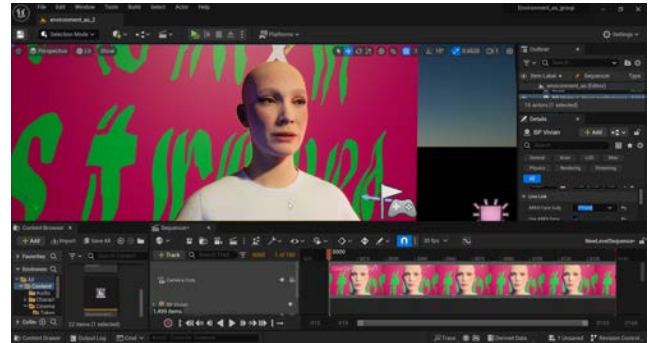


Figure 3. Unreal Interface/Performance environment with the Metahuman and timeline synchronized with Performers live bio data. ©Authors Copyright.

### Performance

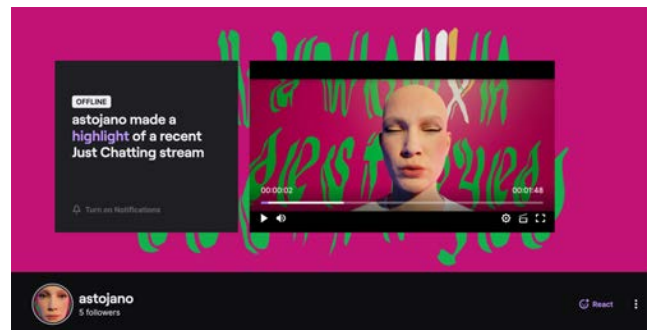


Figure 4. A *Womxn Destroyed* Performance on Twitch.tv. ©Authors Copyright.

Through this work I’m seeking to create a powerful and transformative collective series that honors the authenticity and lived experiences of individual people by performing and responding to literature and expressing anger and frustration. The audience members are invited to witness, communicate via twitch, and empathize with the performers vulnerability and self-expression.

Future adaptations of this work will be through invitation. Participants will receive detailed instructions and support creating their unique Metahuman, Unreal Engine environment, and Live Link connection. The performers will choose

a text and write a response using a similar format to the original performance.

Performances of other works by other creators are important for honoring the multitude of experiences that I want this work to be a conduit for. Honoring the authenticity and lived experiences of individual people by performing and responding to a text and expressing their anger and frustration. The digital performance, *A Womxn Destroyed*, is both a release of emotions and a declaration of living on your terms in virtual space and AFK.

## Acknowledgements

This work was originally created for [Liminalities: A Journal of Performance Studies](#). An expanded essay will be published in 2024-2025 in *Liminalities* a Special Issue on Digital Performance of Literature edited by Lyndsay Michalik Gratch (Syracuse University) and Patricia A. Suchy (Louisiana State University). Thank you to the editors of *Liminalities* for being supportive collaborators throughout the publication process.

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## Author Biography

Amanda is a media artist who investigates how innovations in communication technologies affect perceptions of identity, agency, and visibility, emphasizing concepts of embodiment and the "historically constituted body" within a networked-society. Her work has been shown nationally and internationally in venues such as the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, and Ars Electronica, Linz. Her work has also been featured in publications like *Artillery* magazine, *The New York Times*, and *The Associated Press*.

Through installations and the use of world-building techniques, Amanda investigates how innovations in communication technologies affect perceptions of identity, agency, and visibility, with an emphasis on concepts of embodiment and the "historically constituted body" within a networked-society. Areas of expertise are new media, multi-media installations, design, interactivity, creative coding, and networked media. Research interests are physical computing, game theory, mixed reality, and computer graphics within the context of new media art, critical theory, and society.

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