ELECTRIFYING MARGARET FULLER’S

# WOMAN IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

A Paper

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ABSTRACT

The pervasiveness of electronic communication technologies, especially hypermedia and the World Wide Web, compels us to imagine and realize rich electronic environments for research and learning where non-traditional rhetorical standards like network, collaboration, dialogue, and multiplicity compete with more traditional stylistic ideals like unity, coherence, and exactness. These technologies are reshaping our notions of literacy, and it is compelling to consider the advantages and implications of transferring “high voltage” texts into electronic format. Margaret Fuller’s Woman in the Nineteenth Century (1845), an important feminist work, is one such text that is particularly suited to electrification. In this paper, I consider three questions: 1) Why should we (i.e., humanities scholars) electrify texts? 2) Why should we electrify Woman in the Nineteenth Century? 3) How can a Web-based learning environment electrify and transform Woman in the Nineteenth Century and other print texts, and provide rich opportunities for teaching and learning?

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Woman in the Nineteenth Century (1845, hereafter referred to as Woman) by Margaret Fuller (1810-1850) is “considered the foundational text of the women’s rights movement in America,” a necessary precursor to later, more radical, feminist and women’s rights statements (Reynolds, “Preface” ix). In his essay on Fuller, David Robinson calls Woman “a long essay on the status and prospects of women that included a ringing plea for their liberation” (243). Although Woman is highly valued by many as a feminist text, the work has received numerous negative reviews and criticism during Fuller’s era as well as our own. Fuller’s unusual style of writing, with its teeming intertextuality, unstructured digressive format, and conversational style, did not fare well when the criteria for criticism was traditional nineteenth century rhetorical values like unity, coherence, emphasis, and exactness. Today, the inexorable pervasiveness of electronic writing, especially hypertext, compels us to consider and assess the value of rhetorical standards that compete with those more traditional ideals. Concepts like network, multilinearity, multiplicity (of voices, forms, and media), collaboration, and dialogue are altering and extending our views of reading, writing, and texts themselves. As these concepts gain momentum in the ongoing discussion of how electronic writing is reshaping our notions of literacy and culture, it is compelling to consider the advantages and implications of transferring “high voltage” texts like Fuller’s into electronic format.

Thinking about texts in terms of networks is not a new idea and not one that is confined to the realm of electronic writing. George Landow and Jay David Bolter draw on Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and Jacques Derrida to show historical precedence for viewing print texts as discourse networks and to show connections between network theories and hypertext (Landow, Hypertext 2.0 3, 33-48; Bolter 179-80). Hypertext can be described as a type of electronic discourse consisting of blocks of text and images that are linked electronically, forming physical networks or webs of information. When hypertextual discourse contains images, sound, and/or video, it is often referred to as “hypermedia.” In their book Multimedia for Learning: Methods and Development, Stephen Alessi and Stanley Trollip offer a broad definition of hypermedia: “Hypermedia represents the integration, extension, and improvement of books and other media [. . .] in the electronic domain” (140). They say “improvement” because hypermedia provides “better search and navigation capabilities” and is “user modifiable, easily updated, and most important, easily duplicated and distributed” (140). Since the emergence of hypertext and hypermedia, we can do more than re-examine texts in terms of network theories: we can “electrify” texts by restructuring them, situating them in hypertext format so that the texts physically exist within networks of other texts and other media. As Bolter says, the book “as an ideal has been challenged by poststructuralist and postmodern theorists for decades, and now the computer provides a medium in which that theoretical challenge can be realized in practice” (3).

The rapid, incessant advancement of technology presents ever-expanding possibilities for converting texts into digital format, also called “digitizing texts.” The World Wide Web—open, highly expandable, associative, ubiquitous—is an environment particularly suited for experimenting with and researching hypertexts and hypermedia that form literary networks. Accentuating connectivity, the very nature of the Web demands that we think not merely in terms of digitizing solitary texts, but rather in terms of electrifying texts by placing them in physical networks of other texts and media where they can be interacted with and acted upon. In addition to its associative nature, the Web functions as a versatile standardized delivery system for various forms of media (“multimedia”) and software, including media that enable Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) and other forms of interactivity. Thus, the potential exists for the creation of rich environments for research and learning, environments that might infuse new power, functionality, and relevancy into important texts like Fuller’s. In the process, we might also enhance our understanding of rhetoric and reassess our perceptions of texts like Fuller’s with its hypertextual qualities, texts that often have been misunderstood and undervalued. The term “electrifying texts” has far-reaching implications and possibilities.

Converting print texts into electronic format is time-intensive; therefore, it is essential that the possible benefits from such an effort be carefully considered. In his book Hypertext 2.0, George Landow presents what he considers to be valid reasons for translating print texts into digital texts: “for accessibility, for convenience, and for intellectual, experiential, or aesthetic enrichment impractical or impossible with print” (154). The following benefits could be gained from electrifyingWoman:

* An electronic version of Woman could become part of an ever-expanding network of related scholarly and non-scholarly resources. Convenient access to such networks offers possibilities for connections and collaborations that are not likely to be realized outside an electronic environment.
* An electronic version of Woman could be situated in a Web-based learning environment, designed for college students but open to all, that contains multimedia, links to related resources, and media for enabling.

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| Table 1: Statement-level instrumentation and Original execution | | | | |
| Object | Call graph construction | Method-level instrumentation | Statement-level instrumentation | Original execution |
| jtopas-v1 | 46 | 4,074 | 17,191 | 624 |
| jtopas-v2 | 32 | 4,092 | 17,222 | 608 |
| jtopas-v3 | 93 | 11,945 | 33,836 | 5,008 |
| xmlsec-v1 | 234 | 2,274 | 2,808 | 2,137 |
| xmlsec-v2 | 235 | 7,175 | 10,998 | 4,961 |
| xmlsec-v3 | 203 | 7,526 | 13,089 | 6,614 |
| jmeter-v1 | 251 | 11,275 | 11,294 | 10,904 |
| jmeter-v2 | 234 | 11,246 | 11,357 | 10,935 |
| jmeter-v3 | 608 | 11,388 | 11,528 | 11,045 |
| jmeter-v4 | 344 | 11,457 | 11,654 | 11,061 |
| jmeter-v5 | 422 | 11,428 | 11,622 | 11,092 |

* Students, instructors, and others to interact with the text(s) and one another in various ways. This type of learning environment could provide opportunities for rich pedagogical activities in which students not only study the text itself, but also study and learn about electronic communication technologies.
* An electronic version of Womancould provide opportunities for dialogue among students and scholars of many disciplines. The online work could be one connecting point for students and scholars in American history studies, women’s studies, communication, composition and rhetorical studies, literary studies (e.g., transcendentalist), sociological studies, religious studies, and others.
* An electronic version of Woman on the World Wide Web might engender increased, expanded appeal and access to Fuller’s important work for the general public. If we are to appeal to today’s young reader, we will need to consider how that reader is different from readers in the past.
* Electrifying Fuller’s work, and others like it, could effect greater integration of those texts into our society, which might result in a better understanding of our society and ourselves as individuals. For example, we can gain a clearer understanding of woman in the twenty-first century by being conscious of the condition of woman in the nineteenth century.
* An electronic version of Woman could provide opportunities to re-evaluate Fuller in an environment where her conversational style might be better situated than it seems in print form. Taken a step further, re-evaluating Fuller might prompt us to examine the history of rhetoric itself in light of how our perceptions of texts might change when viewed through the lens of multi-faceted electronic communication technologies which appear to privilege unconventional stylistic characteristics.

In this paper, I will focus on electrifying Woman; however, the above benefits could be gained from electrifying many other important works as well.

As we consider electrifying Woman, we must consider whether such an act is timely and fitting. William Covino and David Jolliffe call rhetoric a “situationally contingent art [. . . that] guides prospective writers and speakers to consider the timeliness and suitability for the particular situation of any text they might produce” (7). Just as in the mid-nineteenth century Fuller had to be acutely aware of the public realm in which her text would be received, today a scholar who is considering electrifying her text must be aware of the public realm in which Fuller’s electrified text would be introduced. The time is right for electrifying Woman. In a century and a half, Fuller has come a long way. In his article “Prospects for the Study of Margaret Fuller,” Larry J. Reynolds, professor and scholar at Texas A&M University, provides a comprehensive review of Fuller scholarship, claiming that she has “gained canonical status” (“Prospects” 139). In addition, Fuller’s ideas are more readily accepted today, and contemporary scholarship is lending credibility to her writing style. The next logical step is to electrify Fuller, to bring Woman into the writing space of the twenty-first century.

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| Table 2: Monthly Expenditures for the first five months | | | | | |
| Months | Food | Education | Miscellaneous | Rent | Gas |
| January | 520 | 5678 | 753 | 450 | 45 |
| February | 354 | 5485 | 532 | 450 | 52 |
| March | 451 | 5265 | 645 | 450 | 65 |
| April | 651 | 644 | 524 | 450 | 54 |
| May | 451 | 5345 | 452 | 450 | 65 |

Three questions are particularly relevant to electrifying Woman, and they will shape and organize my paper:

* Why should we (i.e., humanities scholars) electrify texts in general?
* Why should we electrify Woman in particular?
* How can a Web-based learning environment electrify and transform Woman and other print texts, and provide rich opportunities for teaching and learning?

Electrifying print texts is a relevant and powerful rhetorical activity. In Chapter 2, drawing mainly on work by Kathleen Welch and Jay David Bolter, I will discuss Welch’s idea of electric rhetoric as an “emerging consciousness” that is extending our traditional notions of literacy and Bolter’s claim that electronic writing is “remediating” our writing space. After providing evidence that young readers are different today, with different learning styles and needs, I will discuss how electronic writing technologies can transform “high voltage” texts like Fuller’s into texts that are more functional and relevant for today’s “electric” readers. Finally, to further establish the relevance of electrifying texts, I will briefly examine some existing digital text projects and electronic learning environments. The environments and the scholars who have been involved in creating them can be a rich source of knowledge, guidance, and inspiration for someone who is considering electrifying texts. Although interesting work is being done online, many Web-based learning environments could do more to address the new readers’ needs for interactivity. For example, they could incorporate media for enabling asynchronous and synchronous dialogue.

In Chapter 3, I will present a rationale for electrifying Woman. After establishing that Fuller is an important literary figure whose work deserves scholarly attention, I will propose three reasons for electrifying Woman. First, early literary criticism of Woman was largely negative, and much of the criticism alluded to hypertextual stylistic qualities inherent in Fuller’s work; Woman might seem more natural and better situated in hypertext format. Two other characteristics of Fuller and her writing are important reasons to electrify her work: Fuller’s own association with and ideas about electricity and her connection with conversation.

After establishing that it is important to electrify texts and that Woman is ideal for electrifying, in Chapter 4, I will discuss how I would electrify Woman. I will illustrate how it could be beneficial to reformat the text of Woman for stronger appeal. It is not enough, however, to simply convert Fuller’s text to electronic format and place it on the Web; Woman could be at the center of an interactive, dynamic Web site that incorporates multimedia and CMC. My intention is not to provide a comprehensive plan for electrifying Woman, but rather to examine the potential of the Web as an instructional medium and highlight some ways that a Web-based environment could make Woman electric.

Although the scope of this paper does not allow me to explore these far-reaching, and in some cases controversial, ideas and issues thoroughly, my aim is to effect awareness, to enter the ongoing dialogue about electronic writing, and to encourage other scholars to do the same. I will add my voice to Welch’s, Bolter’s, Landow’s, and others who are challenging humanities scholars to stop resisting the technological current and pay critical attention to the inexorable trend that offers both promising possibilities and challenging problems.

**CHAPTER 2. A RATIONALE FOR Electrifying Print Texts**

Electrifying print texts is a relevant and powerful rhetorical activity for humanities scholars to engage in and to study. It is relevant because electronic communication technologies will continue to impact us in every part of our personal and professional lives in ways that we are perhaps only beginning to understand. Indeed, the prevailing notion of network that informs electronic communication technologies and current discourse theories shapes our lives in many ways. In Writing Space, Bolter claims that we exploit communication technologies “to facilitate a culture of temporary allegiances and changing cultural positions—to fashion our ‘network culture’” (203). It is relevant because our young readers are different today: in contrast to the printed books many of us grew up with, the “texts” they interact with (e.g., television, Web, and video games) are most often a blend of oral, visual, and print media, organized in a network structure and constructed by electricity. The technologies tend to encourage participation and collaboration, which in recent years have become important pedagogical concerns. Electrifying important texts like Fuller’s will make the texts, as well as our teaching, more germane and appealing for today’s college students.

In today’s culture, electrifying print texts is not only relevant, but powerful as well. The new technologies, especially the World Wide Web, offer exciting possibilities for new, and in some cases richer, ways to do what we have always done: engage in scholarly research and create learning opportunities for our students. Engaging in this type of work brings communication media to the forefront, helping us to understand how these technologies affect our lives as individuals, as a society, and as instructors and scholars.

**Electric Rhetoric and Extensions of Literacy**

No one has been more outspoken on the need for humanists to change in response to emerging electronic communication technologies than Kathleen Welch. She says the emergence of these technologies began with the invention of the telegraph in 1840, five years before Woman was published. They gained momentum with the creation of motion pictures and later television, video, and the electronic discourse of computers (“Electrifying” 764). According to Welch, these technologies have led us into an era of secondary orality, which is closely related to primary orality, a discourse in which performance was primary: hearing, speaking, and viewing were the means of communicating (as opposed to reading and writing). Just as the emergence of a print culture was revolutionary and changed the way we viewed our culture and our world, secondary orality might be viewed as a revolutionizing force, with its strong dependence on oral discourse and pictorial communication, its participatory and collaborative nature, as well as its connection to print culture. Welch calls for a re-examination of the marginal status of electronic communications (i.e., television, film, video, and computer discourse) in humanities departments, claiming that demarginalization of these technologies could revitalize and transform the humanities (“Electrifying” 777).

According to Welch, electronic communication technologies and their characteristics define and inform electric rhetoric, which she describes as

an emergent consciousness [. . .] within discourse communities, [. . .] the new merger of the written and the oral, both now newly empowered and reconstructed by electricity and both dependent on print literacy. Electronic technologies have led to electronic consciousness, an awareness [. . .] that now changes literacy but in no way diminishes it. (Electric Rhetoric 104)

Welch is careful to point out that electric rhetoric is a new literacy and that this new literacy does not replace or destroy, but extends and merges with our current understanding of literacy (Electric Rhetoric 157). Relatively recent electronic communication technologies like email, the World Wide Web, CD ROM, and databases continue to reflect a merger of oral, visual, and textual literacies, and this merger reveals characteristics of the new “extended” literacy to which Welch refers. Even if they do not always enable dialogue, these technologies encourage activity rather than passivity, and they often overlap and blur the acts of reading, writing, and speaking. According to Welch, “hypertext electronic discourse is reader-dominant, or merges reading and writing, making the former much less passive. [. . .] At the same time, in its rapidity and informality, electronic mail resembles speaking” (Electric Rhetoric 107). Also, these technologies encourage collaboration and dialogue. According to Welch, “The associative property of electrically transmitted speech continues to condition current literacy.” Welch says this associative property “strongly resists the corrosive topos (a line of inquiry) that thought is a container that holds meaning. [. . .] This whatness has been replaced with discourse communities, with collaborative constructions” (Electric Rhetoric 103).

Welch and others believe it is “past time for the humanities to theorize [. . .] the new communication technologies [. . . because] the computer is hegemonic. Rhetoric is electric. Writing is now electric” (Electric Rhetoric 6). It is impossible to use electronic communication technologies without realizing how they have changed the way we communicate, the way we interact with our texts and with one another. Our dominant print technology has long been “invisible” in our classrooms, although we can imagine a time when the emergence of print texts must have brought about a new consciousness similar to what we are experiencing now, a time when instructors who participated in the “new” print medium were acutely aware of how the new technology changed the existing literate culture. Unlike traditional print texts, electronic communication technologies are not yet invisible, although they will likely become so, especially as the “digital natives” (young people who are growing up with electric rhetoric) become teachers and scholars.

The new “consciousness” and the extended literacy that Welch speaks of are manifested in many ways. University course offerings designed to study the new media are widespread. At North Dakota State University, Kevin Brooks, for example, is currently teaching a class on Electronic Communication Technologies and plans to offer a class on Visual Culture and Language in the near future. DePaul University in Chicago has implemented a new MA degree program called New Media Studies: “By ‘new media’ we mean web and internet based communication as well as compact disk and other media that convey similar messages” (“New Media Studies”). Students study “the convergence of existing media into the new media: voice, text and video” (“New Media Studies”).

These courses are growing in number, and while their focus is to study and theorize the new media, literature or composition courses that incorporate the new media often have a dual focus or purpose as they combine content studies and media studies. For example, Haskell Springer is editor of Bartleby the Scrivner. A Story of Wall-Street, a Web site used to teach Melville’s “Bartleby, the Scrivner.” Springer believes that along with studying “Bartleby,” “[s]tudents today should be taught the differences between print and electronic textuality” (11). In his article “Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants,” Marc Prensky says this dual-focus is actually two types of content that he calls “Legacy content” and “Future content.” Legacy content includes our traditional curriculum (reading, writing, math, etc.) while Future content is mainly “digital and technological. But while it includes [topics like] software, hardware, robotics, [etc., . . .] it also includes the ethics, politics, sociology, languages and other things that go with them” (“Digital”). He believes it is essential for educators to teach both content areas.

The book is giving way to new technologies; print dominance is giving way to screen dominance. We must resist the prevailing idea that “reading is good and viewing is bad” and begin to embrace the “new literacy” that Welch, Bolter, and others maintain is here. If texts like Woman are to thrive in the twenty-first century, they need to be electrified; if humanities departments are to thrive, instructors and scholars must study and utilize the new technologies.

**Remediation and Transformation of Print Texts**

If Welch paints the big picture for us, Jay David Bolter gives us the concepts of “writing space” and “remediation” to help us make sense of electrifying texts like Woman. In his book Writing Space, Bolter says, “The printed book is no longer the only or necessarily the most important space in which we locate our texts and images,” and he focuses on a writing space that is computer-based (xiii). Electronic writing, he says, “includes word processing, email, listservs, chat rooms, MUDs [Multi-User Dungeon or Dimension], and MOOs [Mud, Object Oriented], none of which have the node and link structure of classic hypertext, [. . . but share] important qualities with hypertext (flexibility, instability, interactivity)” (xiii). The computer has become a convenient space for writing, reading, conversing, and sending and receiving mail.

Bolter asserts that the emergence of electronic writing remediates or refashions our writing space, just as emerging communication technologies in the past have remediated previous and existing ones. Bolter uses the term remediation “in the sense that a newer medium takes the place of an older one, borrowing and reorganizing the characteristics of writing in the older medium and reforming its cultural space” (23). During the last century, our literate culture has changed dramatically as we have enthusiastically embraced forms of communication other than the printed book (i.e., television, film, and radio). Electronic writing, Bolter claims, both pays homage to and rivals these other communication media: for example, “the World Wide Web absorbs and refashions almost every previous visual and textual medium including television, film, radio, and print” (25). Hypertext “is the remediation of print media”; while it continues to be dependent on print, the new medium (hypertext) brings attention and emphasis to different rhetorical characteristics, offering new possibilities for ways of interacting with and viewing texts (Bolter 42). For example, while “print is linear; Hypertext is multiple/associative” (Bolter 42). Indeed, as the Web becomes more media intensive, the term “hypertext” may become obsolete as the term “hypermedia” becomes more appropriate; we might think of hypermedia as the remediation of hypertext.

***Hypermedia remediates print text:***

Hypermedia remediates print text. Print on the computer screen exceeds its traditional bounds as it simultaneously merges with and competes with other literacies, now mostly visual. Like Welch, Bolter believes that visual literacy still depends on print literacy: “In uniting the verbal and the pictorial, the screen constitutes a visual unit that depends on but also attempts to surpass the typography of the printed page” (66). In an electronic environment, however, the printed word no longer enjoys the dominant place it held, and still holds, in the traditional printed book. While in printed books, the graphic has been granted marginal status, on screen, the graphic appears to have increased in prominence. Bolter and McLuhan speculate that print literacy and the word are in decline: Bolters wonders “whether alphabetic texts can compete effectively with the visual and aural sensorium that surrounds us” (6); and McLuhan says, the “computer screen has no more use for literacy than does the television screen. The alphabet is the least efficient and least satisfying imaginable use of the screen” (134-35). In the light of McLuhan and Bolter’s claims, the future of print texts like Fuller’s Woman can seem dismal.



Figure 1: Tulips from North Dakota in summer time

If indeed electric rhetoric is pushing print texts aside and if Welch is right when she says that “[e]lectric rhetoric will supplant print/paper hegemony,” then it is crucial for humanities scholars to use and study the new technologies (Electric Rhetoric 108). Electrifying texts is a good place to start and will ensure that important texts like Fuller’s are not only preserved, but revitalized for today’s culture. Instead of focusing on the declining status of print texts in electronic environments, it can be more beneficial to ask how texts can be presented on the computer screen so that they are satisfying and appealing. Instead of competing with other forms of media, how might print texts like Fuller’s change or need to change as they merge with other media forms?

As texts like Fuller’s are brought into the new writing space, many scholars will find themselves re-examining long-held notions about literacy, e.g., their attitudes towards the graphic. According to Welch, “Print-imprinted intellectuals, including professors, must [. . .] relinquish semiconscious resistance to pictorial communication and its technologies” (Electric Rhetoric 208). Participating in the new technologies and reflecting on current attitudes will empower instructors by giving them control over how the technologies shape and affect their pedagogy and their teaching/learning environments.

Electronic communication technologies, as they privilege active participation and network, not only remediate or refashion our writing space; they also have the power to “transform” our writing (and reading) space as well as texts themselves. To use electricity itself as a metaphor, transformers are used to convert very high voltage into useful units of power that we use in every part of our lives. The high voltage is necessary for transmission of energy, but it is too powerful for everyday use. In other words, it is unusable until it is transformed into various strengths and then distributed to an ever-growing network of consumers until it reaches the ultimate consumer. Similarly, electronic writing technologies could function as a transformer by transforming a “high voltage” print text like Fuller’s that is to many (or most) individuals unapproachable, authoritative, and fixed into a text that is approachable, functional, and dynamic. Just as unused sources of energy exist, “high voltage” texts like Fuller’s exist, but until those works are transformed into something usable, they are unattainable to most individuals.

It is important to note that transforming Woman (as well as other texts) does not mean simply changing how the text looks, i.e., its outward appearance, although that will surely occur in the process. According to Webster’s New Dictionary of Synonyms, the word transform “may imply a mere changing of outward form or appearance, [. . .] or it may imply a basic changing of character, nature, or function <transform electrical energy into light>.” We can more fruitfully consider—and hope—that electrifying Woman would change the function of Fuller’s text and infuse it with new power as it sheds light on many aspects of the historical as well as the current condition of women and other potential or real victims of discrimination. In addition to the condition of women, Fuller was highly sensitive to the plight of slaves and Native Americans. In her writing, she often referred to them, comparing their circumstances with those of women; thus, her text has a broad scope of potential influence and is highly relevant today as we continue to debate issues of gender and race.

Woman, with its conversational style and dense, intertextual format, seems incongruous in print form, and it might “work” better in digitized format. It is likely that Woman is one of those texts Bolter is referring to when he says that texts “can be translated into hypertextual structures. In some cases, the translation would refashion texts into a form closer to their original, conversational tone” (110). Electronic writing technologies offer many possibilities for transforming and empowering texts like Fuller’s. For example, the text can be reformatted to be more appealing for today’s readers; the text can be enhanced by multimedia; intertextual and intratextual links can be applied to allow readers immediate access to explanatory or additional information; and electronic search technologies can enable advanced textual analysis. Fuller’s dense print text with its inherent oral characteristics, if electrified, could become a unique example of electric rhetoric, merging the visual and “the written and the oral, both now empowered and reconstructed by electricity and both dependent on print literacy” (Electric Rhetoric 104).

**Today’s “Electric” Readers**

One of the most compelling reasons for electrifying texts is that students entering universities today are different from those of twenty years ago. Many (perhaps most) of these young readers are familiar with the notion of network and seek to be active participants rather than passive decoders when they engage with texts. In addition, these readers have grown up in an oral-based culture where the majority of “texts” they engage with are performance- and/or screen-based and contain multiple forms of media—sound, images, video, and text. In her article “Cybernetic Esthetics, Hypertext and the Future of Literature,” Molly Travis describes the typical hypertext reader:

[S/He] is being constructed through sustained exposure to the intertextualities and virtualities of mass media and information technologies. This is a reader whose experience includes exposure to cinematic fast cuts (MTV short-attention span), ever more extraordinary visual images and effects, information as sound bites, Nintendo and Sega game systems, computer video games and interactive fantasy-adventure games in a computer network.

In his article “Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants,” Marc Prensky calls young readers who have grown up in this electric environment “Digital Natives,” and he aptly describes them: “Digital Natives are used to receiving information really fast. They like to parallel process and multi-task. They prefer their graphics before their text rather than the opposite. They prefer random access (like hypertext). They function best when networked. They thrive on instant gratification and frequent rewards. They prefer games to ‘serious’ work.” Prensky calls those students who are past the age of a traditional college student “Digital Immigrants,” and he claims that even those who have adapted well to the new technologies still have an “accent” that sets them apart from the Digital Natives. He believes the most serious problem in education today is that the Digital Immigrants are “struggling to teach a population that speaks an entirely new language”; current methods of teaching, he says, do not fit their learning needs (“Digital”). Traditional academic learning environments (i.e., the lecture format and the traditional print-based textbook) for the most part, do not facilitate interactivity and active participation or provide a variety of experiences. If instructors are to teach these students effectively, they need to supplement their current methods with new ways of teaching; they need to use the new technologies to create learning opportunities that will reach these students and motivate them to learn.

Like Prensky, Welch believes that humanities scholars must attempt to “explain the pervasive seductiveness of the current electronic forms of discourse, all of which are embedded in a merger of written, oral, aural, and visual structures of articulation.” She says that if “we do come to understand them, then we can lead the way to [. . .] a new pedagogy that more meaningfully interacts with cultures outside the academy” (Electric Rhetoric 7). Participating in the new technologies will increase our individual and collective understanding of the new technologies and should be a central part of teaching and learning in the humanities.

Electrifying texts is only a beginning. The electrified text becomes part of a network of texts and media (that students can help to construct), and that network can be used in innovative ways as a part of a learning environment. Not only can this kind of work “connect us with cultures outside the academy” and make learning more appealing for students, some scholars argue that it can help students learn important life skills. According to Alexander Romiszowski:

We may argue that due, at least in part, to the technological networking of society in general, and the world of work in particular, the mix of essential human intellectual “survival skills” is of necessity changing. The employable adult of the future must develop the skills of thinking critically and reflectively, both using and creating new knowledge structures or networks. (34)

Alessi and Trollip claim, “creating Web sites may be a skill as necessary for tomorrow’s citizens and workers as writing is today” (382).



Figure 2: Arctic Koala Bear

Learning how to use electronic communication technologies, to navigate and communicate in networked information structures, and to create Web sites will be important skills for students to acquire. Perhaps even more important, however, engaging students in pedagogically sound learning activities with electronic texts and networks can empower students by providing them with opportunities to learn about the very media that shape their lives—opportunities not only to learn how to use it, but to manipulate it, to use it for their own purposes, and to learn about its power. Welch says that studying the technology of literacy and secondary orality is a necessity. Not studying it, she says, will result in functionally illiterate populations. Studying it would, she says, make students less passive, promote dialective and interactive thinking, and counter the banking concept/method of teaching and learning (“Electrifying” 773).

In his book Electric Language, Eric McLuhan says that every “technology of communication instills an unconscious bias in the sensory lives of the users, a new configuration of perception that brings with it a freshly heightened sensitivity to self and society” (65). Does this inward bias affect our outward expression? Kathleen Welch claims that communication technology has the power to condition “how people articulate within and around their ideas, their culture and themselves, including their subject positions” (Electric Rhetoric 7). Welch would have us acknowledge and study this phenomenon, and electrifying texts like Woman, texts that in the past have been marginalized and undervalued, would provide opportunities to do so.

**Review of Digital Text Projects and Electronic Learning Environments**

Instructors and scholars who are contemplating electrifying texts can benefit from examining various models of extant electronic literature and learn from scholars and developers who have already helped to digitize texts and/or construct hypermedia projects. In this section, I will briefly identify some collections of electronic books (“e-books”) and other media; then, I will examine Web sites with a scholarly research and textual studies focus and/or a learning focus. Often, electronic educational environments combine a scholarly and learning focus, so it is difficult to categorize them.

Electronic books, in many forms, are abundant on the Internet. The distributive powers of the Web along with its open, associative nature have led many organizations and individuals to become involved in digitizing texts and other media, and linking to or posting them on the World Wide Web. The Library of Congress Web site leads the way with more than seven million historical items currently online, providing easy access to rich primary sources (“American Memory”).

The Web challenges our notions of copyright and intellectual property. Not surprisingly, there is a growing presence of people who believe books should be online, available and free for everyone. Thousands of books are available on the Web, and, undoubtedly, the number grows daily. Many “e-books” can be accessed from sites like Online Books, hosted by the University of Pennsylvania Library, “a website that facilitates access to books that are freely readable over the Internet. It also aims to encourage the development of such online books, for the benefit and edification of all” (“About the Online Books”). Online Books provides access to more than 15,000 digitized texts as well as links to other directories and archives of online texts.

Project Gutenberg is probably one of the oldest, if not the oldest, Web sites containing digitized texts. Founded in 1971 by Michael Hart, Project Gutenberg is a Web site that makes electronic texts “available in the simplest, easiest to use forms available” (“What Is PG?”). Texts are not authoritative or written for particular readers. The works chosen are important works from public domain that will appeal to large numbers of people. Usually, texts are converted into digital format by scanning them, and volunteers who share the philosophy behind Project Gutenberg do this time-consuming work.

Sites like Library of Congress, Online Books, and Project Gutenberg are important, especially in terms of storage, accessibility, and convenience. Considering the nature of the Web, however, it is not surprising that some scholars have gone beyond digitizing solitary texts to exploit the networking capabilities of the Web by creating networked environments that facilitate scholarly research.

One of the best examples of how digitizing texts can facilitate research is The Complete Writings of Dante Gabriel Rossetti: A Hypermedia Research Archive (hereafter referred to as The Rossetti Archive), a hypermedia work with a clear purpose that contains “the entire extant corpus of [Dante Gabriel] Rossetti’s textual documents (all editions, all proofs, all manuscripts)” (McGann, “Textual”). Jerome McGann is the John Steward Bryan University Professor at the University of Virginia and co-creator of The Rossetti Archive. McGann and his colleagues have gone beyond archiving Rossetti’s entire collection of works in digital format by creating a system that allows them “to carry out comprehensive collations as well as other search and analysis operations [on this body of material]” (McGann, “Textual”). It is not difficult to imagine what a valuable tool this work would be for a Rossetti scholar.

The goals of the Rossetti project were “first, to design a multi-media electronic model for scholarly editing that would have general applicability; second, to use this practical task as a vehicle for exploring the theoretical structure of imaginative texts and other aesthetic works as seen from a critical or ‘user’s’ perspective” (McGann, “Textual”). In support of their second purpose, the creators of the site invite dialogue as they post “theoretical and practical essays by Rossetti Archive staff, critiques of the Archive and of current text encoding principles, links to similar projects and to resources for humanities computing and bibliography” (“Rossetti Archive Related Resources”).

In his article “The Rationale of HyperText,” McGann makes strong claims about the importance and value of electrifying print texts for scholarly use in light of advanced technological developments. McGann’s argument is convincing as he presents examples of collections of works that would likely be well-situated in electronic, multimedia environments, perhaps more well-situated than they are in print text form. Robert Burns, William Blake, and Emily Dickinson are all authors whose works incorporated elements beyond the written word. For example, as McGann points out, “Burns’ work is grounded in an oral and song tradition” (“Rationale”), and electronic media offer possibilities for presenting facets of his work that print text alone cannot.

In his article, McGann acknowledges that the topic of digitizing texts often generates suspicion among literary scholars, but he says that “it is clear to anyone who has looked carefully at our postmodern condition that no real resistance to such developments is possible, even if it were desirable” (“Rationale”). McGann challenges his fellow literary scholars to embrace the opportunities that electronic writing technologies present, claiming that since textual studies is ground zero of everything we do, [. . .] the new information and media technologies go to the core of our work. As humane scholars we should not leave the development of these tools, which includes their introduction into our institutions, to administrators, systems analysts, and electronic engineers. (“Textual”)

One of the most daunting aspects of and hindrances to becoming a producer of a hypermedia project, particularly for a humanities scholar, is the technical knowledge needed to design, implement, and maintain hypermedia environments. McGann has written extensively about his experiences, often—and easily—using terms like “TEI and SGML protocols,” “HTML,” “VRML,” “markup,” “database,” and “digitized forms” in his writing, terms that can intimidate even the most enthusiastic researcher of electronic environments (“Textual”). McGann explains that when he began work on The Rossetti Archive, he was fortunate to be thrown in with some very astute engineers, who approached their work with me under the following rule: Tell us what are the kinds of activities you do as a textual scholar, the kinds of problems and questions you’re interested in, and we’ll tell you whether our computer tools and resources can help you do better what you’re already doing. (“Textual”)

Few scholars would likely attempt a project of the magnitude of The Rossetti Archive, but the project serves as an example of what is possible with adequate resources and collaboration.

Not all electronic research environments are as elaborate as The Rossetti Archive, with its use of database and search technologies and its wide-ranging scope. The Web site Margaret Fuller: Summer on the Lakes, in 1843 is an example of what can be done at little or no cost and with limited technical expertise and assistance. Graduate students Trudy Mercer and Meg Roland created this Web site as a project for a graduate seminar called “Hypertext and Textual Studies” (Humanities 523) at the University of Washington. The Web site originated on May 7, 1999, and was still accessible and fully functional when I visited it on January 6, 2002.

Summer on the Lakes, in 1843, published in 1844, is an account of Fuller’s travels “to Niagara Falls, the Great Lakes, Chicago, and the Wisconsin Territory” (Mercer and Roland). Mercer and Roland acquired digital texts of two editions of Fuller’s Summer on the Lakes, in 1843: one was the original edition (1844), and the other was a revised edition that was edited and published in 1856 by Arthur B. Fuller, Fuller’s brother, after her death. The two editions can be viewed on the Web in parallel-text format, i.e., side by side. A markup system (colored text) was used to illustrate Arthur’s emendations and deletions. The parallel-text formatted editions are the main focus of the Web site. Also included are links to “About This Site,” “Textual Introduction,” “Table of Contents,” “Etchings,” “Fuller’s Sources,” “Chronology,” “Bibliography,” and “Related Sites” (Mercer and Roland). The creators of the site also included a link to a “Meta-Edition,” which is a textual transcript of their email correspondence while they collaborated on the project.

The goals of the students were “to produce reliable scholarly texts in hypertext format, and to provide primary online resources as well as links to other sites related to Margaret Fuller’s life and work” (Mercer and Roland). They hoped “to provide concise yet comprehensive information in a clear manner” (Mercer and Roland). In my opinion, these students have achieved their goal and have provided a valuable service to Fuller scholars by the work they have undertaken. The site was easy to navigate; most of the links worked; and the text was easy to read and formatted so that it did not seem overwhelming. In their communication transcripts, the students discussed incorporating a search component, but such a feature, that would obviously be very useful to a scholar, is not available on the site. As a graduate student contemplating electrifying texts, I especially appreciate the details provided regarding the technical aspects of producing the text and images. The site posted a lengthy list of related resources, but a number of the links were no longer active (one of the major drawbacks of linking to Web sites). Despite that fact, an electrified Woman would be richer by being connected to this Web site.

Creating electronic spaces for close, scholarly, textual studies is an important endeavor, and The Rossetti Archive and Margaret Fuller: Summer on the Lakes, in 1843 are good examples of electrifying texts to facilitate scholarly research. Many Web sites, however, have combined goals, i.e., to facilitate research and to promote learning.

George Landow’s Web-based Victorian Web is perhaps one of the most well- known electronic research and learning environments. According to Bolter, The Victorian Web remediates the forms of “the anthology, commentary, and textbook [. . . and] has grown out of materials developed since the 1980s on a variety of networked systems. It is an archive of primary sources, essays on primary sources, and images—a database to which students as well as Landow himself and other experts have contributed texts and links” (116). Landow recognizes that when we reconstruct texts in hypertext form, we open up endless possibilities for linking that text to other texts and other forms of media, possibilities that print technology closes off (Hypertext 59).

One aspect of The Victorian Web that makes this site somewhat more “active,” or “electric,” than others is that the site clearly solicits contributions. The first link on the home page (other than the navigational map) is “Directions for contributors” and provides clear directions on how to prepare your document for The Victorian Web (Victorian Web). Student texts are solicited as well as more scholarly texts. Empowering students by allowing them to contribute media and add links to an existing networked structure challenges the traditional authority and fixity of print texts. As Bolter says, “electronic writing reforms print by replacing the qualities of authority and fixity with [. . .] flexibility and responsiveness,” thus creating an environment where the authority of the author(s) is diminished and the experience and knowledge of the student is valorized as student texts exist alongside canonized texts (165). It should be noted that this environment is not truly an open environment that allows unrestricted postings and associations but, in some ways, reflects our traditional methods of submitting works for publication: the solicitor submits work for inclusion in The Victorian Web, and reviewers deem the work worthy of inclusion or not. A truly open, flexible, responsive network, like some open synchronous and asynchronous discussion forums, would allow a user to post text or media without requiring that the work first be appraised.



Figure 3: Under the Sea

One site that combines “the goals of a scholarly edition and a teaching one” is Bartleby the Scrivner. A Story of Wall-Street, edited by Haskell Springer, University of Kansas (Springer). With the help of two students, Springer created an electronic version of Melville’s “Bartleby, the Scrivner” in approximately eight months. The work is “an edition that attends to and records pertinent textual scholarship, that also incorporates other sorts of scholarship, but that exists mainly [. . .] for the benefit of teachers and their students, most of whom seldom have access to the resources it offers” (Springer). While the Summer on the Lakes, in 1843 Web site is primarily intended for scholars, the creator of the Bartleby the Scrivner Web site identifies his intended users as “first my own students, next both teachers and students in higher education; and third, secondary school teachers and students” (Springer). Like Summer on the Lakes, in 1843, the Bartleby the Scrivner Web site “contains two versions of the Text” (Springer). Other features include

a History of textual difference, explanatory Notes, pertinent Images, a section on Sources and Analogues, a Search function, and links to Other Melville resources. In addition, the Criticism section contains a huge bibliography on “Bartleby” (approximately 350 items), many hyperlinked to full texts of commentary (about 75 of them at this point). (Springer)

Springer claims the Bartleby the Scrivner Web site was created “in a relatively short time, and at reasonable cost”; he encourages other scholars to engage in similar work (Springer).

The Rossetti Archive could be viewed as being at one end of the spectrum of electronic versions of acclaimed texts: a highly developed, complex hypermedia system created by using highly advanced electronic tools, designed to appeal to—and be used by—a relatively small number of people, mainly scholars. At the other end of the spectrum is Project Gutenberg, a collection of books that are stored and retrieved in the simplest technical form, unconnected to one another, existing mainly for archival purposes and designed to appeal to a large number of people. An electronic version of Woman would fall somewhere between these two extremes, as do most of the electronic texts on the Web. The Bartleby the Scrivner Web site with the text at the center of the site, could serve as an initial model for electrifying Woman.

Using available technologies in creative ways, these Web-based learning environments serve as models and resources for instructors and students who wish to engage in electrifying texts. Many educational Web sites, however, are mostly reflections of our traditional print culture; the sites are used “to perform ordinary tasks more efficiently—providing course syllabi and readings, establishing communications links between faculty members and students and among students, and creating the means to improve student research” (Newman and Scurry B7). Alessi and Trollip claim that electronic learning environments are too often “loose collections of information containing hot words, but lacking in purpose or focus” (138). Efficiency and convenience are worthwhile endeavors, but the Web has the potential to offer so much more in terms of opportunities for learning. For example, technologies that enable dialogue and collaboration present exciting possibilities for cross-disciplinary studies and team teaching, with collaborating classes as likely to be across the world from one another as just down the hall since boundaries of location are easily overcome.

The paucity of successful interactive hypermedia learning environments is probably due to many factors: time, technical knowledge, funding, and support required to produce such systems. Currently, interactivity and CMC are sometimes difficult to implement because they require a high level of technical skills and are time-consuming to plan and construct. However, emerging technologies and software will be easier to use and will “directly [engage] students in more effective learning” (Newman and Scurry B7). In their article “Online Technology Pushes Pedagogy to the Forefront,” Newman and Scurry estimate that “over the next five or six years, the use of such software will become commonplace. It will transform the way learning occurs in most, if not all, college classrooms” (B7).

Libraries, of course, have always been primarily interested in preserving literary works, and they have effectively used electronic technologies to that end. As important as passive preservation might be, however, humanities scholars might also consider the importance of actively preserving “great” texts by bringing them into the twenty-first century, integrating them into our world, especially into teaching and learning environments, electrifying them so they can be interacted with and acted upon. Rather than resist the move towards digitizing canonized works, humanities scholars might consider what could be gained by electrifying these “high voltage” texts.

Clearly, the ideas of scholars like McGann, Landow, Mercer, Roland, and Springer, as well as their works, are manifestations of the new literacy and the new consciousness. For many of us in the humanities, who did not grow up with computers, it seems easier to resist than to embrace the changes that so many scholars are bringing to light. In her book Electric Rhetoric, Welch addresses this resistance, and because her message is so important, I quote her at length. Electric rhetoric, she says, is

not a destroyer of literacy, as is commonly thought. It is, instead, an extension of literacy, a thrilling extension. Although one can understand the sense of loss for those committed deeply to the printed book (for example, perhaps most of the humanities professoriat), this sense of loss often drives literacy research and teaching in the wrong direction. [. . .] Electric rhetoric is an extension of literacy that will bring about many important changes and may bring about good changes. The direction of emerging technologies has proceeded with little influence from those working in the humanities. The fact that many intelligent and sensitive humanists believe—really believe—that electric rhetoric threatens print-based literacy is a phenomenon that needs more investigation. (157)

Welch says that electric rhetoric “may bring about good changes” (my emphasis, 157). My contention is that it is more likely to bring about good changes if educators and scholars have a hand in shaping the future of these technologies by electrifying print texts and creating, implementing, and evaluating electronic learning environments. Electrifying Woman would be a positive step in that direction, and in Chapter 3, I will discuss why Fuller and her text are interesting and relevant subjects for such a project.

**CHAPTER 3. A RATIONALE FOR ELECTRIFYING WOMAN**

Margaret Fuller was a prolific writer who has gained respect and admiration among scholars in recent years, and preserving her works in any format is undoubtedly a worthwhile endeavor. In his comprehensive review of Fuller scholarship, Larry Reynolds claims: “Given Fuller’s recent inclusion in the canon and the growing interest in her writings, it is time [. . .] to undertake the publication of ‘The Collected Works of Margaret Fuller’” (“Prospects” 142). Reynolds envisions “a series of volumes containing Fuller’s journals, her poetry, her collected early essays, her New York journalism, her European dispatches, her translations, [. . .] Summer on the Lakes, and Woman in the NineteenthCentury” (142). In addition, he suggests a CD ROM publication containing her letters. According to Reynolds, much of the remains of Fuller’s journals and journal fragments are in “poor” or “deteriorating” quality, indicating a need to preserve her work (“Prospects” 141).

Compiling a “Collected Works of Margaret Fuller” is an excellent idea. Instead of “a series of volumes,” however, Margaret Fuller’s works might be well situated in a complex electronic networked environment like The Rossetti Archive. A scholar who is interested in such a project could benefit from examining The Rossetti Archive and talking with Jerome McGann, who advises scholars who are considering what he calls a “HyperEditing” project to imagine the project “in terms of the largest and most ambitious goals” (“Rationale”). Database and search technologies would enable scholars to examine—and more importantly, to use—Fuller’s work in ways that are now too time-consuming or even impossible. A hyperediting project on the order of The Rossetti Archive would be a daunting task, one that would require not only dedication and a tremendous amount of work, but also substantial monetary and technical support. And it would be an exciting, rewarding, and worthwhile endeavor. In this paper, I propose a hyperediting project that would be more feasible for an instructor/scholar with limited resources and technical skills, a project more like Bartleby the Scrivner, a Web-based learning environment with one text at its center and a growing network of related resources.

I will propose three important reasons to electrify Woman. First, early criticism of the book is very similar to contemporary descriptions of hypertext, revealing the hypertextual characteristics inherent in Fuller’s text and illustrating its relevancy for electrification. Two other characteristics of Fuller and her work will serve as additional grounds for electrifying Woman: Fuller’s association with electricity and her fondness for, dependence upon, and use of conversation.

**Fuller and Hypertext**

One of the most compelling reasons for electrifying Woman is that early criticism of the book matches characteristics of hypertext. Fuller’s education in rhetoric grounded her in the widely accepted, traditional view of rhetoric and composition that valued qualities like unity, coherence, emphasis, and exactness. These principles for writing were to be accepted without question by writers of the time, according to Henry Pearson, author of Freshman Composition, 1897 (qtd. in Kitzhaber 116-17). Although it is clear that Fuller was aware of the rules and even well practiced in writing concisely and clearly, she did not strive to practice these obligatory principles. Like some texts written today in hypertext format, Woman deviated from traditional rhetorical standards, especially those of unity and coherence. In 1845, Frederic Dan Huntington, an early critic of Fuller’s, refers to a lack of unity in Woman: the “book lacks method sadly, and should have been relieved to the reader by the kindly intervention, here and there, of a sectional or capital division. It is rather a collection of clever sayings and bright intimations, than a logical treatise, or a profound examination of the subject it discusses” (222). Huntington, like others, is looking for a complete, structured text and not finding it in Woman. Rather, he finds a document that is “open-ended, expandable, and incomplete,” terms that George Landow uses to describe hypertextual materials (Hypertext 59). Hypertext, Landow says, “destroys the notion of a fixed unitary text” (Hypertext 54).

Fuller’s work has been criticized for being obscure. In “Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft” (October 1855), George Eliot describes her experience of reading Fuller: “Fuller’s mind was like some regions of our own American continent, where you are constantly stepping from the sunny ‘clearings’ into the mysterious twilight of the tangled forest—she often passes in one breath from forcible reasoning to dreamy vagueness” (233). As late as 1963, in his book American Feminists, Robert E. Riegel refers to Fuller’s writing as “diffuse, often incomprehensible” (101). This sense of vagueness was probably in large part due to Fuller’s “unusual” writing style (i.e., conversational and digressive) and the wealth of literary and historical allusions she so freely connected to her ideas (reminiscent of a hypermedia environment). Also, Fuller’s writing, if ambiguous, reflects the ambiguity of the subject upon which she was writing. Few women before her had spoken out on the sensitive issues concerning women that she was addressing, and in her text Fuller often refers to the lack of clarity about the issues. In Woman, she says, “vaguely are these questions proposed and discussed at present” (16); and she refers to the man/woman issue as “a great and still obscure subject” (5-6). Ambiguity, digressiveness, and lack of structure are terms that have been applied to Fuller’s style as well as to the organization of her book. These terms have also been used to describe hypertext, especially in the context of discussions about disorientation, a sense of feeling lost or confused that is experienced by some readers of hypertext. Landow discusses the issue of disorientation in his book Hypertext 2.0 (113-23).

Orestes A. Brownson, who reviewed Woman in 1845, could easily be referring to a hypertext document when he complains that Fuller’s book is not artistic, that it is not even a book, “but a long talk on matters and things in general, and men and women in particular. It has neither beginning, middle, nor end, and may be read backwards as well as forwards, and from the center outwards each way, without affecting the continuity of the thought or the succession of ideas” (213). Brownson’s description of Fuller’s text is strikingly similar to Roland Barthes’ description of the ideal text. Landow quotes Barthes: “‘In this ideal text, [. . .] the networks are many and interact, without any of them being able to surpass the rest; this text [. . .] has not beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can authoritatively declared to be the main one’” (qtd. in Hypertext 2.0 3). Landow claims that Barthes’ idea of ideal textuality is identical to hypertext (Hypertext 2.0 3).

***The implications of a text having multiple openings:***

What are the implications of a text having multiple openings, no true beginning and end (boundaries), and no clear sense of sequence? In an attempt to answer this question, Landow cites Ted Nelson, “one of the originators of hypertext”:

There is no Final Word. There can be no final version, no last thought. There is a always a new view, a new idea, a reinterpretation. And literature, which we propose to electronify, is a system for preserving continuity in the face of this fact. [. . .] Remember the analogy between text and water. Water flows freely, ice does not. The free-flowing, live documents on the network are subject to constant new use and linkage, and those new links continually become interactively available. Any detached copy someone keeps is frozen and dead, lacking access to the new linkage. (qtd. in Hypertext 58-59)

By no means did Fuller claim to have the “Final Word” on the woman issue. Rather, Fuller wanted active readers; she wanted people—men and women—to think on a “great and still obscure subject” and to respond in some way, to enter the dialogue. In her “Preface,” she asks that women would “search their own experience and intuitions for better, and fill up with fit materials the trenches that hedge them in,” and from men she asked for “a noble and earnest attention to anything that can be offered on this [. . .] subject” (Woman 5). Fuller entered what she perceived as an ongoing dialogue on women’s issues and wanted other voices, many voices, to join that dialogue, hoping that such interchange might shed light on an obscure subject, light that would benefit all humankind.

***Subject to constant new use and linkage:***

Undoubtedly, Woman would benefit from being a “‘free-flowing, live’” document on the Web that is “‘subject to constant new use and linkage’” (qtd. in Landow, Hypertext 59). Because of linking capabilities, Woman on the Web could make many mutually favorable associations. Particularly relevant would be connections with networked environments and/or documents pertaining to transcendentalism and those related to feminism. Robinson calls Fuller’s Woman “compelling and historically important; it is not only a major feminist document, [. . .] but also a key expression of the values of American transcendentalism” (244-45).

Intuitively, critics recognized the hypertextual qualities in Fuller’s work. Those qualities were unfamiliar to them; they strayed too far from the rhetorical standards of the day, resulting in negative reviews. When Woman is viewed alongside Landow’s theory of hypertext, the same qualities in her work that early critics identified are evident. However, a new set of criteria for evaluation is being used, compelling examiners to re-evaluate negative perceptions of Fuller’s text and her writing style, and allowing them to gain insights into and imagine possibilities for Fuller’s text that earlier critics could not. A necessary step towards realizing those possibilities is electrifying Woman and situating the text in a hypertext environment.

**Fuller and Electricity**

Not only does Fuller’s writing exemplify hypertextual qualities, but also the phenomenon and idea of electricity permeates Fuller’s work and her life. Like many of her peers, Fuller was fascinated with electricity, especially in terms of a psychic energy or aura that has to do with attraction-repulsion and intuition. According to Jeffrey Steele, “Nineteenth-century mesmerists and phrenologists believed that human beings manifested an electrical magnetic aura that linked them with others” (289). Edgar Allen Poe, one of Fuller’s literary critics, was convinced that all of life was associated with electrical and gravitational attraction and repulsion (Urbanski 242).

In her own work, Fuller uses electricity, both metaphorically and literally, as a quality of human nature and personality, but, perhaps most importantly, she refers to the feminine psyche or temperament as “electric.” In Woman, Fuller states that the “electric, the magnetic element in woman” manifests itself as “intuitions [that] are more rapid and more correct,” “quick impulses,” “depth of eye and powerful motion,” and “impassioned sensibility” (61). Fuller says, if not circumscribed, “the electric fluid will be found to invigorate and embellish, not destroy life” (61).

Like static electricity clings to an object, the idea of electricity adheres to Fuller, crossing the boundary of time. Both Fuller and her work have been described as “electric,” in her time as well as our own. A woman who attended Fuller’s conversations, Miss Sarah Freeman, said, “Encountering her glance, something like an electric shock was felt” (Higginson 117). Ralph Waldo Emerson, a close friend of Fuller’s, referred to “attractive-repelling talks with Margaret” (qtd. in Durning 21). When Emerson referred to Fuller’s questionable writing skills, he did so in terms of her electric nature: “’Her pen was a non-conductor’” (qtd. in Robinson 244).

In our own time, Judith Strong Albert, in her article “Currents of Influence,” uses the electricity metaphor when discussing Fuller and her work. Albert says that “something in her [Fuller’s] nature touched and matched corresponding parts in the make-up of the characters of her listeners” (203). She refers to the invisible but extant electrical energy evident during Fuller’s “Conversations” when she says “the vibrations between the lines were everywhere in the room, perhaps more real than specific issues could be” (204). Although confined to static print form, that same electrical energy vibrates between the lines of Woman as well.

Electricity is often used today as a powerful metaphor for our culture, especially our literary culture. Welch’s Electric Rhetoric and McLuhan’s Electric Language are just two examples of contemporary texts that use electricity as a central metaphor, as a way to view our changing literate culture. Electricity connects Fuller, her ideas, and her texts with contemporary ideas and texts.

**Fuller and Conversation**

Fuller’s conversational writing style in Woman was essential, appropriate, and natural for her topic and purpose as well as necessary for the evolution of her ideas. In the act of writing Woman, Fuller not only disrupted conventional ideas about femininity, but she also disrupted conventional ideas about rhetoric. Rhetorical scholars in our own era have examined Fuller’s Woman, and a recurring theme in their work is that Fuller intentionally chose to use a conversational style in her work as a rhetorical strategy.

Conversation held a place of prominence throughout Fuller’s lifetime, and she spent much of her life encouraging others, especially women, to think for themselves and actively participate in debating important issues of the time. Fuller clearly preferred speaking over writing, and she was (and is) known as one of the best conversationalists of her time. From 1839-1844, Fuller “conducted a series of conversations [for women] on different subjects, ranging widely from mythology through philosophy and the arts” (Kolodny 365). By Fuller’s own admission, she was “not there ‘to teach anything,’ but ‘to call . . . out the thought of others’” (qtd. in Kolodny 366).

In “Inventing a Feminist Discourse: Rhetoric and Resistance in Margaret Fuller’s Woman in the Nineteenth Century,” Annette Kolodny details Fuller’s extensive use of Whately’s Elements of Rhetoric while teaching a course for senior girls. Kolodny claims that Fuller was preparing herself “for her first Boston conversation series” and “trying to fashion a set of rhetorical strategies appropriate to the emerging feminist consciousness of her era” (361). As a teacher of young women, Fuller required her students to recite Whately every week, but the exercise was not to exhibit rote memorization like the boys did but instead to share ideas through conversation (361-62). Kolodny says Fuller “rejected alike the authoritarianism of coercion and the manipulative strategies of the disempowered, endeavoring instead to create a collaborative process of assertion and response in which multiple voices could—and did—find a place” (375).

Judith Mattson Bean in “Conversation as Rhetoric in Margaret Fuller’s Woman in the Nineteenth Century” examines Fuller’s use of conversational strategies:

She employs informal strategies at the lexical, sentence, paragraph, and segmental levels. At the sentence level, Fuller uses comments inserted by parentheses or dashes, giving the impression of a comment spoken aside in a different tone. [. . .] [T]hree other elements give Fuller’s text an interactive, conversational style: self-disclosure, dialogic techniques, and topical cohesion. Her style creates involvement or engrossment, establishes bonds of trust, initiates interaction with the reader, and emphasizes immediacy, fluidity, and interaction among multiple voices.(my emphasis, 29)

Fuller’s conversational style not only serves as a rationale for electrifying her text, but is also important as we determine how to electrify Woman. The nature of her work (a reflection of her own “electric” nature) makes it essential to go beyond simply putting her text online, to imagine an electronic discourse environment that does what Bean claims Fuller’s style did (see underlined text above). Interestingly, the last sentence in the above quotation could also describe a hypermedia environment containing Fuller’s text, media like sound and video, and opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous conversation. Like Fuller, electronic environments are oriented towards action and interaction, not passivity. Also like Fuller, electronic writing technologies valorize collaboration and multiplicity: multiplicity of forms, of voices, of media.

It is fruitful to study Fuller in a traditional way: to consider hypertextual, electrical, and conversational qualities in her work and to reflect on their rhetorical implications. However, we can go beyond talking about electrifying Fuller to literally electrify Woman, to rewrite the text in hypermedia form. Although I am convinced that Fuller would approve of a plan to electrify her text, she clearly privileged action over thinking, and she would likely be more interested in the act itself than in the plan. As her text reflects, Fuller was a woman inspired by action. Edgar Allen Poe once said that Fuller’s books “are less thoughts than acts” (Wade 155), and Fuller herself said, “‘Say, is it not better to live than to think?’” (qtd. in Wade 119). In the next chapter, I will discuss how I might actually electrify Fuller’s text and situate it in a networked environment on the World Wide Web.

**CHAPTER 4. ELECTRIFYING WOMAN ON THE WEB**

In Chapter 2, I suggested that instructors have only begun to exploit the Web’s pedagogical potential. In fact, educational Web sites tend to be research focused, more likely to provide static information than opportunities for active learning. In this chapter, I will illustrate how a Web-based learning environment can electrify and transform Woman, and provide rich opportunities for teaching and learning. Following a brief description of the World Wide Web and its potential for teaching and learning, I will discuss how I would electrify Woman, using as a framework three characteristics of her work: electricity, hypertext, and conversation. Discussion in these categories will unavoidably overlap; for example, conversation components will make Woman more electric, and the notions of hypertext encompass both electricity and conversation. However, these key concepts are useful since they apply not only to Woman, but to Web-based learning environments as well.

**The Web for Teaching and Learning**

If electric rhetoric does bring about important and good changes in our literate culture, it will likely be due to the instructional use of the World Wide Web. When Kathleen Welch began her study of electric rhetoric more than ten years ago, she could not have foreseen the astonishing emergence of the World Wide Web as a standardized platform for delivering networked resources to personal computers on a global scale. One of the most interesting and promising applications of the Web is its use as a medium for learning and instruction. What makes the Web so powerful and appealing for use as a teaching and learning tool is its multiplatform capabilities and its networking capabilities. Alessi and Trollip claim, “Use of the Web will probably have more impact on learning than all the developments in instructional technology of the past thirty years. The Web may also facilitate the accomplishment of many of our old hopes about effecting educational change through electronic technology” (372). Larry Reynolds envisioned a Margaret Fuller CD ROM, but he did not mention the Web in his article on Fuller scholarship. The Web, with its open, additive nature and its diverse technological capabilities, is an ideal location for Woman.

A digitized version of Woman, with its electric qualities, could provide opportunities for pedagogical activities based on the constructivist theory of learning, especially if it was located in a dynamic Web-based learning environment containing multimedia, media for dialogue, and links to relevant resources. According to Alessi and Trollip, deciding to place learning material on the Web “is not only a delivery decision but also a learning methodology decision” (373).Because of its additive, open nature, the Web is conducive to the constructivist theory of learning, which emphasizes “cooperative and collaborative learning” (Alessi and Trollip 33) and views learning as a process of knowledge construction by learners. The constructivist approach to teaching and learning suggests that “methodologies such as hypermedia, simulation, virtual reality, and open-ended learning environments are of more benefit to learners, allowing them to explore information freely, apply their own learning styles, and use software as a resource rather than as a teacher” (Alessi and Trollip 36).

An electronic version of Woman is important for preserving Fuller’s important work, and locating a solitary digitized version of the text on the Web would be a worthwhile accomplishment. However, I propose making Woman more electric by developing a Web site with Woman at its center. Web development involves a three-step process: purpose, content, and design. Regarding purpose, initially, the Web site would mainly be used for teaching. However, it is easy to imagine how the network might grow to include related literary and scholarly works, eventually having goals more similar to those of Bartleby the Scrivner, a Web site that combines “the goals of a scholarly edition and a teaching one” (Bartleby the Scrivner). The second step is identifying content. The content for Woman on the Web will consist of the electronic version of Woman; navigational components; multimedia components like images and video and sound files; media for enabling asynchronous and synchronous communication; and external, internal, and intertextual links. The third step in the development process is design, which involves creating a site that is functional and attractive. This part of the development process requires some knowledge of layout and graphical design, an area in which many prospective Web developers lack proficiency. One option is to enlist the help of people who are skilled in graphic design. I have recently begun working with a graphic design student who is using her talent to help me electrify Woman. Our collaborative relationship is mutually rewarding and has shown me that collaboration is an essential and natural part of the Web development process.

Since I am only in the beginning stages of literally electrifying Woman, my purpose here is not to provide an organized, comprehensive plan for electrifying Woman, but rather to highlight some important features of a Woman Web site and to suggest some possible pedagogical activities.

**Electrified Woman**

The first step in making Woman electric is converting the text into an electronic file for manipulation. The best method for digitizing texts is to scan the text, using a scanner and software that interprets the printed page as text and converts it to electronic format. Although the final output will require some editing in a word processor, this procedure is faster than typing the text.

Once I have a digitized version of Woman, my primary concern will be how to visually represent the digitized text. How will I format it? Initially, I must address ethical questions like these: is it appropriate to reformat Woman, and if it is, how much liberty can I reasonably take with her text? Woman, published in 1845, is in the public domain, so I would have legal freedom to re-construct Fuller’s text. Legal issues aside, however, Fuller was clearly supportive of using literature to suit her purpose, to illustrate her thinking. She did not consider literature to be sacred, fixed, or static; rather, she considered it to be functional and dynamic. For example, as a prelude to Woman, Fuller quotes a passage from a poem by Ben Jonson, “On Lucy, Countess of Bedford,” and changes the term “manly soul” to “heavenward and instructed soul” (Woman 3). In another place, she modifies a quotation from Hamlet to read, “Frailty, thy name is MAN” instead of “Frailty, thy name is WOMAN” (Woman 7). Fuller used literature to help her do her work, to present multiple perspectives, to promote new understanding, and to construct knowledge. Having similar goals in mind, I propose that it is appropriate, even desirable, to use Woman, to make the text more relevant for today’s readers by converting it into electronic format.

How will Woman change as it moves from book format to electronic format? In his chapter on “Refashioned Dialogues,” Bolter says, “A text always undergoes typographical changes as it moves from one writing space to another” (110). For example, Greek literature “has moved from the papyrus roll, to codex, and finally to the printed book” (110). It is important to remember that modern representations of these texts do not reflect the original manuscripts, and that our neat and tidy print texts are often “significant intrusions into the original work” (111). Bolter’s example is worth quoting: “We would find it difficult to read an English manuscript of the 14th century, or even an early printed book, because of the visual conventions. Transferring earlier texts to digital form will be just another in the series of such transitions” (111). Bolter points out that only a small number of scholars access these early texts, and those scholars will determine whether the texts will ever “undergo a remediation” (111). To preserve works like Woman and to increase their functionality, we must redesign them to be useful and appealing in electronic writing spaces.

Woman in its print form is around one hundred pages of dense, digressive text, not separated by headings or chapters, containing rambling sentences and paragraphs. Digitizing Woman and presenting it in an appealing, readable way will be a challenging task. As I consider how to reformat and re-construct Woman, I must, once again, thoughtfully consider today’s readers. Like Molly Travis, Eric McLuhan in Electric Language maintains that readers are different today, and his claims are somewhat daunting as I consider the implications for electrifying Woman in a way that will induce people to use it. McLuhan maintains that “the average reader has [. . .] no firm sense of the paragraph or of larger organization” and that optimum length for a paragraph is three sentences (98). His description of this prose echoes the experiences of today’s reader as related by Travis: “kinetic and dramatic, [invoking] a feeling of momentum, urgency, impatience.”

According to McLuhan, three new writing styles that he calls “the poetics of the PC” have emerged: a staccato style, consisting of one-sentence paragraphs; a more fluid running style, consisting of two and three-sentence paragraphs; and the point or bullet list form (102). The first style, the staccato style, consists of one-sentence paragraphs with transitions; text can be moved around like snapshots or slides. This style “does not arouse contemplative or meditative humors”; it is “abrupt, non-linear, discontinuous” and “serves to communicate a feeling of heightened emotion” (104). This style is like a “discontinuous mosaic”; it “goes like the wind and hits hard” (108). The second style, the fluid running style, consists of two- and three-sentence paragraphs, containing a lead sentence followed by a definition, amplification, contrast/comparison, or analogy. The third style, the point or bullet form, is like a rhetorical summary. McLuhan says it is like poetry, a more graphical layout. It is easy to see how these writing styles would appeal to individuals who live in a visual and oral-based culture. The styles invite dialogue, give-and-take, and reaction as does the structure and content of Woman.

The digitized text ofWoman could not be constrained to one or even all of these styles; however, I can use the styles as guides as I consider how to re-create Woman. Like the first style, Fuller’s style might be compared to a discontinuous mosaic; her style is digressive; she will leave one subject to discuss another and then “return to the thread” of her subject (Woman 55), sometimes with little regard for providing transitions. The wealth of references and allusions Fuller uses to extend or support her arguments, which at times provide opportunities for her to digress, also help to create that effect. Her text is amply sprinkled with references to people, past and present; dialogues; and passages from other texts and poems—her own, others’, occasionally her revised version of another’s, or an anonymous text. Rejecting traditional rhetorical standards and choosing a conversational style of writing, Fuller allows herself to digress, to follow what she called “the subtle and indirect motions of imagination and feeling” (“Autobiographical” 146).

Fuller’s copious allusions, references, and digressions sometimes make it difficult to follow her thought. She does, however, identify topics for her discussions, e.g., “signs of the times,” “what women need,” “what women want,” and “two aspects of women’s nature.” If these discussions were clearly identified with section headings, they might be easier for readers to understand and digest. Section headings and chunking the text in this way could also be useful for applying appropriate intertextual links later.

Keeping McLuhan’s styles in mind, I will try to keep paragraphs and sentences short, to provide spaces between paragraphs, and to use bullet lists when desirable. Acknowledging that she may be “guilty of much repetition,” Fuller occasionally uses a rhetorical summary style “to retrace, once more, the scope of my design in points” (Woman 99), so bullet lists will be appropriate in some instances.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 3: Women in liberal arts by state | | | | | | |
| States |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Alabama |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| North Dakota |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Wyoming |  |  |  |  |  |  |

The concept of electricity, so integral both to the idea and actual task of electrifying Woman, could play an important role in the development of the site. For example, if used as a navigational metaphor, electricity could become an effective visual and ideological component of the Web site. One possibility, among many, is to use images of nineteenth century light fixtures for navigation buttons. Navigation buttons can have several states, so the buttons could be designed so that when a mouse moves across the image, the image could appear to glow. Navigation is a vital concern for a Web designer, and if carefully designed and implemented, a navigational metaphor can enhance the user’s experience with and understanding of the overall Web site.

Another way electricity could be brought into the site is in the form of some type of visual component that appears when the initial Web page launches. The component could be an animated or static image, text, or a combination of images and text designed to depict the electric natures of Woman the text, Fuller the Woman, and Woman in general. An example of how imagery is used as “an interpretive and pedagogical strategy” is found on the Bartleby the Scrivner Web site. Upon reaching the first screen of the Web site, the user is confronted by a brick wall and is informed: “You have reached Bartleby’s blank wall. As you PREFER, please stare at it a while to reach the mood of Melvillean and Bartlebyan emptiness implied by the story, Then/Or you may move on to the story and its entire Web site.” An arrow points the way around the wall. Springer, who is convinced that in addition to studying important texts, students must learn about the new communication technologies, considers

the wall to be a metaphor of the limitations of codex editions. Just as with the arrow on the wall, then, electronic editing points the way to paths or means around and beyond the familiar brick-wall limitations of print editions [. . . including] finality, great limitations in textual comparison, awkwardness in annotation, and prohibitively expensive illustration costs. (Springer)

Interesting, meaningful images can create opportunities for reflecting, making associations, and seeing/realizing multiple perspectives as well as enhance understanding of the text.

Images can electrify a text, and images were important to Fuller. Within the confines of print media, Fuller’s Woman might seem, at first glance, to be somewhat closed to possibilities for associating images with the text. Reynolds, however, states in his review of Fuller scholarship, that several scholars have studied Fuller’s use of imagery to convey her ideas. Reynolds says that “Fuller’s early study of fine art and her interest in perception and optics [. . .] lend themselves well to using current theories of visual culture and current methods of cultural iconography” (“Prospects” 148). Reynolds suggests that future scholarship could address questions like these: “[D]id Fuller’s interest in certain pictures model particular identity formations, including her own? Did she draw upon images to construct, maintain, and disseminate key cultural values [. . .]? How alert was she to the power of images to naturalize injustice and mask the reality of oppression?” (“Prospects” 148). Questions like these encourage students to connect Fuller and nineteenth century media culture with twenty-first century media culture.

Fuller’s text offers many opportunities for including appropriate images along with the text. For example, in one brief paragraph, Fuller refers to Lady Rachel Russell, Lady Godiva, Boadice (a first century warrior queen), Anne Hutchinson, and Emma, an early queen of England. Textual information about these women, on the order of footnotes, would be valuable; however, pictures would enhance the experience of the reader as well. In another location, Fuller points out that during the French Revolution, the concept of liberty was represented by the image of a woman. Images alongside the text or links to political cartoons and paintings would likely interest readers and enhance their understanding of Fuller’s ideas and the connections she makes. An added benefit to electronic publication is that reproducing images electronically is more economical than reproducing them in print since there are no limits of space and color images are not more costly than black and white.

Electrifying Woman creates extensive possibilities for linking Fuller’s text to other, external texts and media, as well as possibilities for enhancing her own text. I will examine some of those potentialities in the next section on hypertext.

**Hypertextual Woman**

Network is the underlying concept of hypertext. Bolter says, “If linear and hierarchical structures dominate current writing, our cultural construction of electronic writing is now adding a third: the network as a visible and operative structure.” (106). Oral and written texts have always used the “network as an organizing principle” (Bolter 106). Since the invention of writing, the writer must use allusions and references to connect to that network. In a printed text, access to intertextual and intratextual networks is possible via tables of contents, pagination, indexes, footnotes, endnotes, works cited pages, and bibliographies. According to Bolter, “Now the network can rise to the surface of the text. In pages on the World Wide Web, the network is visualized as [. . .] hotspots that when clicked, can immediately provide further information” (106). Networks in electronic writing (hypertexts) could be considered to be a remediation of networks in print text, retaining and depending on traditional print characteristics, yet reconstructed by electricity, exhibiting new characteristics, opening up new “possibilities that print technology closes off” (Landow, Hypertext 59).

Fuller’s text is richly dense with literary and historical allusions and references. A hypertext version of her text could be nothing more than linking to annotations, in essence, electronic footnotes. The footnotes could be extended, however, to link to entire texts of those works to which Fuller alludes. Links could connect relevant external references as well as those related to allusions and references within her text. These linked texts could include Fuller’s writings, i.e., “her journals, her poetry, her collected early essays, her New York journalism, her European dispatches, her translations” and so on (Reynolds, “Prospects” 142). A transcription of Fuller’s “Conversations” with Boston women in 1839-1844, recorded by Elizabeth Peabody and edited by Nancy Craig Simmons, has recently been published and would be a valuable addition to the site, although it might be difficult to acquire permission to make it available electronically (“Prospects” 142). Other relevant external references include Fuller criticism, biographies, background information, etc. as well as topics that are more indirectly related to Fuller like transcendentalism and other feminist writings. In essence, this type of network would be on the order of an extended Norton Critical Edition.

Haskell Springer points out that acquiring pertinent material or permission to use the material is an important “weakness with this feature.” Springer has acquired a “huge bibliography on ‘Bartleby’ (approximately 350 items), many hyperlinked to full texts of commentary (about 75 [. . .] at this point)” (Springer). However, he says that “the available critical texts are those in the public domain, or ones for which I sought and was able to get permission. Some very desirable critical materials are absent merely because their publishers asked too large a payment or denied permission under any circumstances” (Springer). This situation, he says, makes randomness a factor and necessitates that library research be used as an “appropriate supplement to research among the many full-text items on this site” (Springer). I can assume that Landow, editor of The Victorian Web, and others who engage in this work would have similar experiences.

Although, in a physical sense, a Web environment is closed to many associations, it is, at the same time, open to endless connections. Thus, it can be useful to think of the Web environment, as well as the text of Woman itself, as being always incomplete, open to new connections, inviting new associations. Although images and footnotes have long been included in print versions of texts, the open, additive nature of the Web can bring texts to life; they become dynamic and growing rather than static.

When we add section headings and other organizational features to Woman, it might seem that we are imposing order and a sense of linearity upon Woman. In one sense, we are, but we are also imposing multilinearity and encouraging interactivity. As Bolter says, “Where a printed text is static, a hypertext responds to the reader’s touch. The reader can move through a hypertext document in a variety of reading orders” (42). Of course, this type of reading is also possible in printed texts since tables of contents, pagination, and indexes allow readers to read in a nonlinear way. Hypertext and electricity, however, enhance the reader’s experience by offering immediate access to relevant information and allow the editor to juxtapose the text in various ways and include multimedia (images, sound, and video) to enhance the text. Also, database technologies can enable extensive search and analysis. One of the most powerful features of electronic publication is that these networks are easily modifiable, creating endless opportunities for experimentation.

As I consider the incompleteness of texts and Web environments and the endless possibilities for associations, I am reminded of another “weakness” of Web sites. It can be disconcerting for readers to access a site that is constantly changing, and many readers value consistency and sameness. A Web designer will need to address this issue and carefully design the site so that additions might be made without changing the overall appearance and navigational components of the site. Concerning external links, i.e., links to Web pages and sites outside the Woman Web site, a designer could group external links into categories of links and simply add links for newly acquired related information.

The text of Woman itself offers many opportunities for linking to additional resources. These links, however, would not need to open a new browser window, forcing the reader to leave the text. The text could be formatted so that when a mouse cursor rests on some text (called a mouse rollover), a small window appears to identify the source, explain the reference/allusion, and/or display an image. Instead of opening a window containing further information, mouse rollovers or clicking could activate popup menus containing a list of hot links that provide the user with choices. At one point, Fuller refers to Orpheus, a mythological poet and musician. In addition, she refers to American sculptor Thomas Crawford’s depiction of Orpheus and Cerbus, and she includes a related poem of her own. The popup menu could offer access to a picture of the sculpture, a short explanation of the story of Orpheus and Cerbus, a commentary on Fuller’s poem, or numerous other pieces of information. Again, since multiple windows can be open simultaneously, the reader would not need to leave the text to view additional information, maintaining a sense of linearity for those readers who desire it.

The powerful ability to provide the reader with choices could be used in other interesting ways. Fuller includes many quotations in her text, sometimes very long passages. At one point, she quotes a long passage from Cyropaedia by Xenophon (c. 430-c. 355 B.C.), a Greek historian, to provide an example of noble wedded love (50-54). The passage is roughly 2,000 words. In an electronic version of Woman, this passage could be made optional for the reader to access. Since the story is a necessary part of Fuller’s argument, a brief summary of the story could be made available and the reader allowed to choose to read the actual passage or the summary. Although such a modification might appear to be excessively intrusive, taking liberties like this would make Fuller’s text more accessible and appealing to students.

The Victorian Web actively solicits contributions to the site, and a Woman Web site could benefit from taking such a stance. Increasingly, instructors in many disciplinary areas are requiring their students to create Web documents or sites, and then post them on the Web. Instructors in various disciplines could use the Woman site as a connecting point for collaborating and sharing their work. Requiring students to design Web sites and then posting them alongside an important text is a pedagogical activity that displays a constructivist approach to learning and can “facilitate motivation, social learning, metacognition, equity, and achievement” (Alessi and Trollip 38). The students’ work becomes public in a way that was previously impossible as they become authors, creators in their own right. Even a learning environment that is not designed to incorporate student texts or responses does not prevent students from linking to the Web site from their own site or even from copying text and using it in some way.

Fuller’s numerous quotations, references, and allusions could provide learning opportunities as well. Students, in groups or individually, could research Fuller’s references and allusions, and develop annotations to explain them. These annotations could incorporate media other than text, e.g., images, sound, and video, and they could be posted on the Web site.

More than once in this paper, I have described the Web site I am envisioning as an electronic learning environment with Woman at the center. However, when I consider the endless possible links that could be incorporated into hypertext documents, I realize that one consequence of placing a text within such an environment is decentralization of the text. The reader—not the author or the text—dictates the path taken. As Landow says, hypertext “does not only redefine the central by refusing to grant centrality to anything, [. . .] in hypertext, centrality, like beauty and relevance, resides in the mind of the beholder” (Hypertext 70). Thus, the reader gains power while the author loses power. Potentially, each reader “rewrites” the text(s) in a way that is unique and distinct. Literature can exist as a static entity but has the potential to be used and manipulated in active, dynamic ways.

Hypertext transfers power from the writer to the reader. This transference of power, along with the blurring of reader and writer roles, threatens traditional views of text that situate the author in a position of authority and appears to be a basic tenet of electronic discourse in general. In the next section, I will discuss conversation which, like hypertext, can empower the reader as it enables interactivity.

**Conversational Woman**

Digitizing the text of Woman and placing it on the Web is the first step, the core of the learning environment. Linking to additional information and incorporating multimedia takes advantage of the connective, additive features of the Web and enhances our understanding of and experience with the text. But to stop here would be to overlook the potential for using the Web to encourage and enable interactivity. Alessi and Trollip remind us that interactions are not simply navigation actions, but are learning activities that “enhance involvement, motivation, attention, and learning,” and they are disappointed in the lack of interactivity in most educational sites (166).

In any educational setting, one of the most important forms of interactivity is communication between the members of a learning community. Online communication has come to be known as CMC, or Computer-Mediated Communication, and is often used to augment classroom communication. According to Romiszowski, “CMC is probably the fastest growing area of educational technology research and development” (33). Although Web-based learning seems to privilege a constructivist view of learning, i.e., where the learner is actively involved in constructing knowledge, CMC does not necessarily reflect that view. Traditional, didactic (“instructor-as-expert delivers instruction to the students”) examples of CMC abound on the Web (Sherry and Wilson 67). For example, one-way communication can exist when the instructor places lectures or lecture notes on the Web that a student can read or download. Two-way communication could mean no more than enabling students to send email to the instructor (and vice versa), asking questions or providing information about course policies, schedule, or grades.

CMC, however, has the potential to offer much more. Electronic discussion forums create opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous dialogue to take place between members of a learning environment as well as those outside it, if desired. The most common forms of CMC are email, asynchronous discussion forums, and synchronous discussion forums in the form of text-based or visual chat rooms, called MUDs and MOOs. Because of its conversational style, Fuller’s text invites dialogue and is very well suited for CMC, perhaps more so than many other texts.

Asynchronous online discussions allow students time for reflection before responding and can be less threatening for students who have difficulty contributing to discussions in face-to-face classroom environments. Although, at this time, synchronous communication environments are not widely used for educational purposes, they offer interesting possibilities. MOOs are “text-based media for synchronous communication among multiple users” (Harris). MOOs are “virtual worlds created out of language [. . . that] provide a more concrete sense of reality through verbal descriptions of the environment (Harris). MUDs, “interactive adventure games,” are the predecessors of MOOs (Bolter 74). In a MOO environment, a participator adapts a persona and can move in and out of various rooms or buildings as he or she engages in dialogue with other users. In some cases, the users can help to define the spaces as well. In her article “Literary Microworlds: Using MOOs to Teach Composition and Literature,” Leslie Harris describes how she used a MOO to teach Dante’s Inferno. Dante’s use of rich physical description and his reference to locations make this text appropriate for such an application. Harris had students “work in groups to recreate levels of Dante’s Inferno in MOO space” (Harris). She says the students enjoyed the challenging project as they collaborated “on a creative project that not only taught them how to read Dante’s text closely, but that also gave rise to an interactive version of Dante’s work that others can visit as well” (Harris).

MOOs are text-based. Even more provocative are graphical MOOs, also called visual chat environments. The Palace is free, downloadable Web-based software that allows users to create and use graphical environments for synchronous dialogue. The Buddhist Palace is a Web-based educational environment that uses Palace software to “teach the student (‘visitor’) the basic values and precepts of Buddhism in a self-paced, self-assessing graphical environment” (Buddhist Palace). The Buddhist Palace is a robust environment which, upon completion, “will be the equivalent of a week of an introductory-level college class (or an advanced high school one) and should take about five hours in the environment and about ten hours of reading time” (Buddhist Palace). The site solicits contributions. Although synchronous discussion is enabled in this environment, the users are asked to wander quietly through the palace so they do not disturb other “pilgrims.” Static Web pages are used to present textual information. The graphical environment displays images that match the theme of the site. There is a game component built into the environment. To enhance motivation, pilgrims earn rewards and demotions as they journey through the Palace.

Conversation was such an important part of Fuller’s life and work that it is intriguing to imagine incorporating a MOO or visual chat component into the Woman Web. Fuller’s “Conversations” were held in Elizabeth Peabody’s bookshop from 1839-1844, and the condition of woman was a common topic. In a visual chat environment, graphics could be used to produce a visual representation of a bookshop from the 1840s, alluding to the environment where Fuller held her “Conversations.” Students would adapt a character and converse in real time. The environment could offer opportunities for many types of discussion, including role-playing. Whether text-based or graphical, this real-time conversation component could enable students and instructors from many fields, like American literature, sociology, women’s studies, composition, and rhetoric, to come together virtually to discuss Fuller’s work.

Synchronous and asynchronous discussions can take place in a traditional classroom, with one example of asynchronous discussion occurring when students write essays and read/respond to one another’s essays. Online discussions, however, offer some advantages over traditional classroom discussion:

* Contributions can be made to a discussion at any time or from any place, with necessary computer equipment and access.
* Discussions, whether synchronous or asynchronous, can be logged and therefore analyzed or referred to at a later time.
* Discussions can be open to individuals or groups, from any place, who are not members of the primary learning environment, e.g., instructors and students from other classes or disciplines, experts in the field, or students from other countries with different cultural perspectives.
* When asynchronous discussion is enabled, learners have time to reflect before responding. According to Romiszowski, “CMC has great potential for facilitating situations that enable the development of reflective, creative, and critical thinking and planning skills” (33).
* Learners can immediately access or refer to “an unlimited number of people, activities, and knowledge databases through the Web” (Sherry and Wilson 68).
* The possibilities for anonymity and gender switching present interesting possibilities for discussion and role-playing that are not possible in a classroom.

CMC tends to be more informal than formal as it merges the oral (conversation, dialogue) and the written (students must type comments and responses).

Another way to incorporate conversation into the Woman Web site would be to use video and audio clips. Fuller often uses dialogue to present opposing viewpoints, and those conversations could be staged, recorded, and available as audio or video clips. The media could be digitized and available on the Web as links from the text-based dialogue in Woman. Throughout Woman, Fuller uses dialogue to express her views and the views of others. Her conversational style is electric as she brings multiple voices into her work. One example is found early in her book, where she anticipates objections to her appeal for women’s rights, and it is easy to envision the brief conversation between Fuller and an irritated trader as an audio or video clip:

“It is not enough,” cries the irritated trader, “that you have done all you could to break up the national union, and thus destroy the prosperity of our country [referring to Fuller’s objection of slavery], but now you must be trying to break up family union, to take my wife away from the cradle and the kitchen hearth to vote at polls, and preach from a pulpit? Of course, if she does such things, she cannot attend to those of her own sphere. She is happy enough as it is. She has more leisure than I have, every means of improvement, every indulgence.”

“Have you asked her whether she was satisfied with these indulgences?”

“No, but I know she is. She is too amiable to wish what would make me unhappy, and too judicious to wish to step beyond the sphere of her sex. I will never consent to have our peace disturbed by any such discussions.”

“Consent—you? It is not consent from you that is in question, it is assent from your wife.”

“Am I not the head of my house?”

“You are not the head of your wife. God has given her a mind of her own.”

“I am the head and she the heart.”

“God grant you play true to one another then. I suppose I am to be grateful that you did not say she was only the hand. If the head represses no natural pulse of the heart, there can be no question as to your giving your consent. Both will be of one accord, and there needs but to present any question to get a full and true answer. There is no need of precaution, of indulgence, or consent. But our doubt is whether the heart does consent with the head, or only obeys its decrees with a passiveness that precludes the exercise of its natural powers, or a repugnance that turns sweet qualities to bitter, or a doubt that lays waste the fair occasions of life. It is to ascertain the truth, that we propose some liberating measures.” (Woman 15-16)

Fuller has already electrified her text by using dialogue in her work, and these passages could provide valuable pedagogical opportunities for students. Although the following activities could be accomplished without a Web site, by publishing students’ work on the Web, their work becomes a part of the network, public and available to others inside and outside the primary learning environment. Two possible activities are as follows:

* Students could re-create her conversations in video or audio format. The conversations could be extended; other voices could be added, e.g., the wife’s voice in the irritated trader passage.
* The conversations could be updated for today. For example, what kinds of conversations might represent debates going on in our time?

In her article “Cybernetic Esthetics, Hypertext and the Future of Literature,” Molly Travis identifies interactivity as a crucial element in hypertext when she says that hypertext will only survive “by offering the pleasures of virtual immediacy, spontaneity, intricate movement, a rich web of texts in various media (graphic, audio and film) and interactivity for the reader.” Here, Travis is referring to hypertext fiction; however, I would extend her argument to claim that if hypermedia systems containing non-fiction works like Woman are to survive and thrive, those environments must meet those same requirements.

**Some Challenges of Web-Based Learning Environments**

Along with exciting possibilities, there are a number of challenges presented by Web-based learning environments:

* Instructors and students depend upon the technology to work consistently and usually have little control over whether it does or does not.
* Not everyone has equal access to computers and the Internet. Sherry and Wilson discuss economic factors, the “haves” and “have-nots” (68).
* The learning curve can be steep for creating Web pages or designing multimedia modules, so these activities can increase or decrease motivation, depending upon the student. CMC usually requires typing skills; students who have not acquired keyboarding skills can become frustrated quickly.
* It is not easy to develop a Web-based learning environment that will meet the needs of different students with different learning styles and at varying skill and knowledge levels. “Educators should use a variety of [. . .] materials and approaches, and thus provide flexible learning environments meeting the needs of the greatest number of their learners” (Alessi and Trollip 40). The environment should support both beginning and advanced computer users (Sherry and Wilson 68).
* Although templates can help, some layout and design skills are required for developing appealing and functional Web sites.
* For some interactive technological components, a high level of technical skills are needed (e.g., JavaScript, CGI scripting, or database technology).
* A designer must take time and special care to become knowledgeable about creating Web-based learning environments that are accessible to people with various disabilities.
* Desirable material can be difficult or costly to acquire (Springer).
* Many users still connect to the Internet at a slow speed via a modem, and users can become frustrated when downloading Web pages with many multimedia components.
* It can be difficult to find information on the Web because of the vast amount of information and inefficient search engines.
* Web sites are unstable, i.e., a site that is available today may be gone tomorrow. Designers can link to external sites, but they have no control over those sites.
* Web browsers, not the designers, control many aspects of how a Web page appears when accessed by a user.
* Technical support and institutional support are needed to implement and maintain Web-based learning environments; this support can be lacking or even nonexistent.
* Creating Web environments is time-consuming.
* Web sites must be maintained to keep them functional, requiring an ongoing commitment.

Despite these challenges, the Web offers exciting possibilities for teaching and learning. Many of the above challenges can and will be successfully met through participation, collaboration, and commitment. As technology advances and the Web evolves, it will become increasingly difficult for educators to remain indifferent towards the Web.

**CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION**

Electrifying Fuller and her text could shed light on Fuller’s “rhetorical, technological, and literary” history, in particular, her journey from an obscure female writer to her current status as an important women’s rights author (Welch, Electric Rhetoric 201). An electrified Woman in a teaching and learning environment could provide opportunities to study how communication technologies condition “how people articulate within and around their ideas, their culture and themselves, including their subject positions” (Welch, Electric Rhetoric 7). According to Kathleen Welch,

Many women, most minorities, and other marginalized Others have been erased in subtle and not so subtle ways from the screens of computers and the screens of television. [. . .] Humanists and posthumanists have so far been unable or unwilling to teach a large audience the nature of the changes in subjectivity and identity, and their rhetorical, technological, and literary histories. (Electric Rhetoric 201)

Was Fuller’s expression conditioned by the communication technologies of her day? Was Woman, in some ways, “erased” because she did not adhere to the rules of that technology? Kolodny observed that the impact of Fuller’s arguments was “obscured amid the reluctance of critics seriously to analyze [. . .] her rhetorical strategies” (356). How did Fuller’s status as a woman and her controversial ideas about women contribute to her dismissal (or erasure)? Other early women writers like Mary Wollstonecraft, who also deviated from the “norm,” experienced a similar fate (Harrell 7). Today, scholars like Kolodny, Bean, and Steele are analyzing Fuller’s and others’ rhetorical strategies, and some of the characteristics they are applying to these works (i.e., conversation, multiplicity, and fluidity) can also be observed in electronic communication technologies.

Similar questions emerge about electronic communication technologies. Do “rules” exist about communicating on the Web? If so, who or what is determining what the rules are? Is the new technology also conditioning, in some ways, who speaks and who does not? Are some erased and others valorized? An electrified Woman could cross boundaries of space and time to exist in a new electronic writing space: how would the new Woman fare, and what could she help us learn?

Dialogue, multiple voices, and interaction by readers and listeners, all forms of networks, are becoming important components of our ideas about rhetoric and composition in this century. Fuller was an important literary figure, and she was also a rhetorician. Rather than viewing Fuller as an authority figure or presenter of static information and knowledge, we might view her as a rhetorician in Kenneth Burke’s sense of the word:

A rhetorician, I take it, is like one voice in a dialogue. Put several such voices together, with each voicing its own special assertion, let them act upon one another in cooperative competition, and you get a dialectic that, properly developed, can lead to the views transcending the limitations of each. (qtd. in Covino and Jolliffe 3)

“transcending the limitations of each”: that is exactly what Fuller wished her book would do, and she chose a writing style that fit her needs. Just as Fuller’s ideas stimulated dialogue and action in the nineteenth century, an electrified Woman would transcend the limitations of the printed book to become dynamic and functional for this century. Upon finishing Woman, Fuller wrote: “’Then I felt a delightful glow, as if I had put a good deal of my true life in it, . . . the measure of my footprint would be left on the earth’” (qtd. in Higginson 201). Electrifying Woman is, in essence, placing Fuller’s footprint on the Internet, a step that could greatly expand the realm of her influence as it connects her with today’s culture.

Today’s conception of network informs and decenters traditional views of rhetoric and composition. Eliot’s metaphor of a “tangled forest” to describe Fuller’s writing had negative connotations in the mid-eighteen hundreds. Today, applying such a metaphor to Fuller’s work evokes a new view of Woman as a dense, rich, fertile network of ideas connected by allusions, references, and dialogue. Similarly, Burke’s view of a rhetorician takes on new meaning in light of the literal power of hypertext and other technologies to “[p]ut voices together” and “let them act upon one another in cooperative competition” (qtd. in Covino and Joliffe 3). The ability to electrify texts offers exciting possibilities for demarginalizing works like Woman, for realizing their relevancy in today’s world, and for connecting our world to Fuller’s world. As these texts are reinterpreted and reconceptualized, insights will be gained into the revolutionary changes that are taking place in our literate culture.

As we bring texts like Fuller’s into the new writing space of the twenty-first century, we “electrify” those texts, not only in the literal sense of the word, but also in the sense that they become more appealing and functional for today’s students and readers. According to Sherry and Wilson, “Web-based instruction is bound to upset the existing system; it will either force change or cause resistance. By bringing new capabilities into existing instruction, however, the Web is redefining the rules and expanding the frontiers of curriculum and instruction” (72). Change always begins first in our minds, and if electric rhetoric is to bring about good changes in our literate culture, the first step is for educators to imagine innovative ways to use the new technologies for teaching and learning. Like Fuller, Gloria Steinem recognizes the power of imagination and ideas: “[T]here can be no big social change [. . .] without words and phrases that first create a dream of change in our heads” (2). Fuller was a dreamer, but she also understood the importance of taking action. In his biography of Fuller, Thomas Higginson called Fuller’s career “a career of mingled thought and action” (4). Writing Woman was a courageous rhetorical act that brought attention to the condition of women in the nineteenth century and called for social and political change. Educators must not only imagine new environments for learning, but they must also act by electrifying texts, experimenting with existing and emerging technologies, and sharing their experiences with others.

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