Ezekiel Dixon-Román and
Ramon Amaro

Haunting, Blackness, and Algorithmic Thought

Ezekiel Dixon-Román
In her dialogue with Denise Ferreira da Silva in this issue, Luciana Parisi comments on a 2020 *New York Times* article entitled "Do These AI-Created Fake People Look Real to You?"[1] In this interactive feature, generative adversarial networks (GAN) are employed to produce "new" human faces that can be toggled to range in age, eyes, mood, perspective, gender, and race/ethnicity. As Parisi argues, the variation of these faces is scaled based on the recursive enfolding of difference into universal or Promethean Man. I'd like to use this example to provocate a set of propositions on haunting. I'm particularly interested in examining how time and space configure into these computational iterations of human faces – faces that are said to not be real yet are based on the deterritorialized and reterritorialized dividual data of human faces. Thus, contained in these deepfake faces are the disjointedness or discontinuities that mark the spectral immanence of the (actual) human faces in the present.

Haunting and Algorithms

Drawing from Derrida's concept of hauntology, a play on the pronunciation of "ontology," haunting points to the non-full, non-total presence of being. In every being there's always already an absence of presence, an inheritance, a trace of that which was and that which is to come. In every being there is a haunting. Haunting is a necessity of recursivity. As a process, finite models seek to compress infinite information, including that which is indeterminate to the model's system. The model's attempts to compress and recursively enfold indeterminacies into its logic produces a temporal break or discontinuity that points toward a haunting. This haunting is often unseen yet is affectively registered or perceived by those interpellated by the algorithm. It is a complicated and indeterminate ontology that is a result of the relation of power imbued in technology.

As an extension of my work on inheritance,[2] I am interested in the haunting logics of colonialism in the epistemology of technology. Haunting, and what I will discuss later of Black techno-conjuring, provides an analytic to identify, read, and tease out how the post-Enlightenment subject is configured in the epistemo-logics of technology while also referring to a potential process of computational fugitivity. Haunting is both the inseparability and discontinuity of time and that which viscerally and affectively shapes behavior. In addition to Derrida, my thinking on haunting is informed by Avery Gordon's focus on the seeming dis/continuity between social structures, social
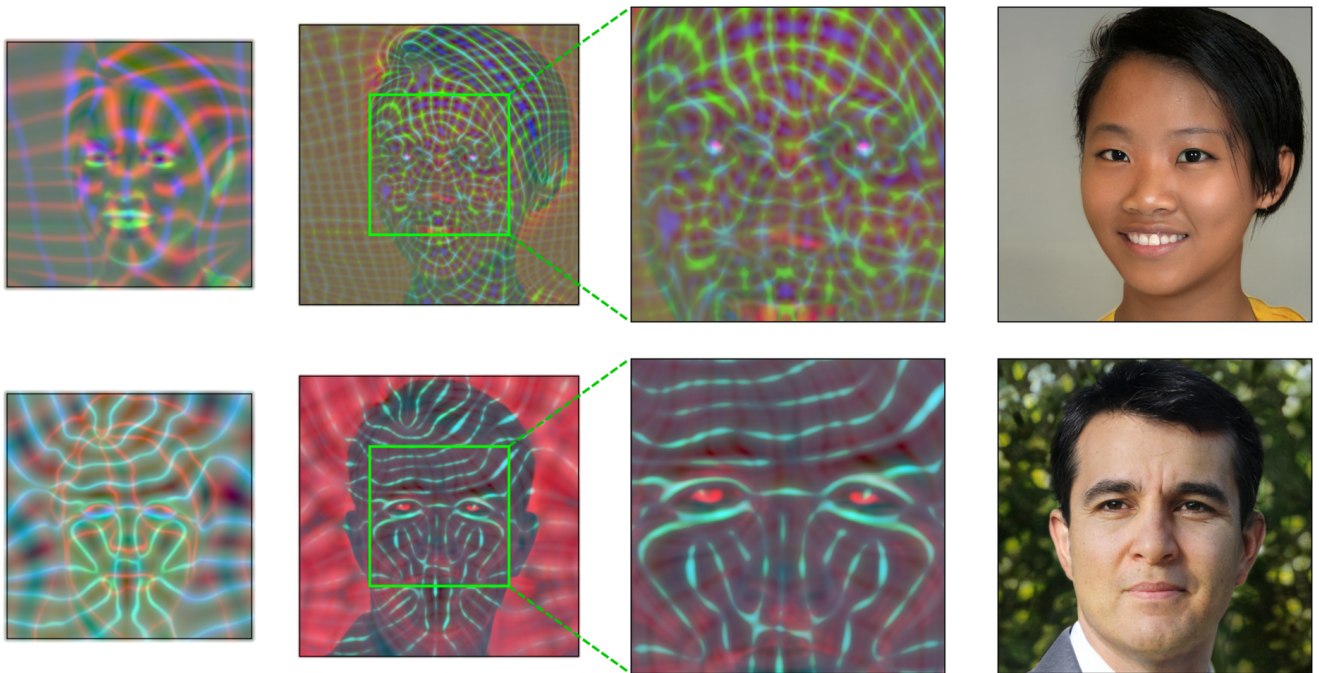
Synthetic images produced by StyleGAN, a "generative adversarial network" (GAN) created by Nvidia researchers. Image credit: Nvidia.

institutions, and everyday life, Karen Barad's dis/jointedness of time and space and entanglement of the here and now, and especially Mark Fisher's argument that haunting is also about the temporalities of technology that produce a virtuality, a relation of what is no longer and not yet, and a shaping of affects of nostalgia or anticipation. Yet, what I seek to advance on haunting are the ideas that it is fundamental to the recursive process, it is part of the logics of technologies, and it is both an analytic and computational process of potentiality. Again, the disjointedness of time and space affectively shapes and indicates spectral presence.

For Derrida, time was signified through the sign, a mark of the complicated and non-full presence of a ghost. I want to offer some propositions toward rethinking time and haunting, as well as their relation to the recursive. I also want to think through the political-ethical work of time, especially in relation to the problem of colonial articulations in the development of the human. Finally, I'd like to leave us with some considerations of what I am calling a Black techno-conjuring and what it might offer us toward addressing, redressing, and/or rerouting the fears, anxieties, desires, and anticipations of the political affect of the no longer/what happened and the not yet/what's yet to happen.

Hauntology and Time

Toggling the *New York Times* deepfake faces raises questions about how time and space is configured and enfolded into the curation of these digital productions. As Elisa Giardina Papa has illustrated, the generation of data for training affective computing is temporally and spatially situated particularly in the Global South, yet also processed by a technology that was developed from nineteenth-century phrenology and assumptions of the transparent or liberal subject. Thus, racial logics became part of the nonlinear axiomatics of the technology. This materializes in part due to the temporal-spatial situating of the subject and assumptions of development, progress, and narratives of cultural difference. For these reasons I'm advancing proposals on temporality (and by entanglement spatiality) through which I hope to (1) move beyond the modern categories of past, present, and future, (2) shift a theoretical gaze from the signifier to the becoming process and its material reconfigurings, and, as such, (3) open up the potential for an alternative conceptualization of haunting that's based on the inheritance of colonial violence and racial subjugation – what Spillers has characterized as

the intergenerationality of "hieroglyphics of the flesh."[3]

Obviously, linear teleological time does not exist. Discrete categories of past, present, and future are inherited categories of modernism that were constituted by the interest in progress and the development of colonialism and capitalism. According to Alfred North Whitehead, there are only conceptual prehensions and persuasions of the future in the supposed immediate present. The past is immanent in the present. The "what happened" and the "no longer" are enfolded in the present, encoding the fleshiness of bodily and techno-social systems. Whether it's the neurobiological or neural network, the sociogenic code becomes reinforced through the spiraling feedback loops of recursion. As Mark Fisher described, the haunting of the past is instantiated in the disorienting experience of déjà vu or nostalgia where the past is immanent in the immediate occasion. I argue that this haunting event initiates the coding of the flesh.

The future is also immanent in the present. It is the virtual and what shapes affective anticipations and the constructed political necessity for algorithmic future prehension via prediction. The past is immanent in the future; it is futures past. The virtual becomes actual and the actual is shaped by the virtual. From the anticipation of the virtual, the not yet, the what is yet to happen haunts the event toward what Massumi has called preemptive logics of power. Cybernetic "predictions" of the virtual are the preemptive logics of algorithmic governance that shape and become the actual. In other words, cybernetic "predictive" acts form the becoming-actual that is haunted by futures past.

I am reminded of a passage from Claudia Rankine's *Citizen*:

> You know feelings destabilize since everyone you ask is laughing that kind of close-the-gap laughter: all the haha's wanting uninterrupted views. Don't be ridiculous. None of the other black friends feel that way and how you feel is how you feel even if what you perceive isn't tied to what is …

> What is?

> And so it goes until the vista includes only displacement of feeling back into the body, which gave birth to the feelings that don't sit comfortably inside the communal.

You smile dumbly at the world because you are still feeling if only the feeling could be known and this brings on the moment you recognize as desire. [4]

Desire here is that which is the pursuit of knowability, recognition of affect, and even the potentiality of subversion. Yet, desire is also that which is already slipping the grasp of the present, becoming futures past.

The present is the heir of both the conceptual or perceived past and future. Replacing the category of history in Massumi's characterization of a "history in the present," I restate this as a "becoming-process in the present," an affective becoming and material reconfiguring of encoded flesh. Yet, to be clear, the haunting presence is not colonial reason or whiteness, nor is it the creative indeterminacies of Blackness or the flesh. Haunting, I argue, is the disjuncture or disjointedness that instantiates the recursive system's inheritance and enfolding of colonial violence and racial subjugation. It is precisely the temporal skip or spatial discontinuity in the becoming-recursivity, as seen in the dis-adjustments of the toggled shifts in deepfake faces or the logo design of the Recursive Colonialism symposium website.[5] And, with Parisi, it is that which is working in the interval between the finite system and the incomputable infinities. It is the tension that's produced from the system's recursive efforts to self-regulate and maintain the changing same of colonial reason (or whiteness) in the face of the incompressibility of the creative indeterminacies of Blackness or the flesh – what Aimé Césaire called the colonialist encounter, yet in computational logics.

Recursion, Time, and Haunting

Time is a fundamental part of the feedback loops from outputs to inputs in a recursive system. It's via the temporal process that recursion does not simply loop back on itself but rather opens up to self-regulate and maintain a homeostatic system while simultaneously processing contingencies, producing a spiraling process of recursivity. Recursion is a computational process of enfolding temporalities. According to Yuk Hui, indeterminacies characterize not just recursive temporalities but also recursive thinking.

The Turing halting problem, or the incompressibility of Gregory Chaitin's "Omega number" and Parisi's "incomputable," is an instantiation of recursive haunting. The skipping of the incompressibility of indeterminacies is the expropriative-appropriative logic of capital seeking to compress indeterminacies into colonialist reason. In what ways do we see the

recursive logics of the *New York Times* deepfake faces enfolding temporal-spatial territories of political-symbolic matter? How is what Ramon Amaro has called the Black technical object configured or not configured in the computational production of these faces?

Time and Space

As I mentioned earlier, history, time, and space (as in geography) were important in shaping categories of difference. As Denise Ferreira da Silva argues, it is through the temporalizing of categories, via Hegel's and Herder's natural history of racial categories, that sociopolitical logics of raciality are produced. Herder's account of human history is situated in varying geographical contexts; he conceptualizes the development of the interiority of human groups by way of their achievements.

Da Silva states that Hegel replaces Herder's nature with "[Father] Spirit, a gesture that further apprehends the World as the Exhibition Hall of an entity that belongs in time, an interior thing. There he finds that Spirit had not ... done its work on African minds and territories, for the Negro lacked the ideas that registered the Spirit's presence."[6] Through Herder's and Hegel's move to make natural history and the Spirit the causal force of the development of a group's interior capacities, they cemented colonial ideas of progress and development and, as such, the manifestation of sameness and difference via what Sylvia Wynter has called Man 1 and Man 2, or the cosmogonies of prototypical Man.

Consequently, time is not the only dimension in which haunting makes its appearance or apparition known but, as a significant premise in the conceptualization of the post-Enlightenment subject, time is also profoundly important for the spectrality of colonial violence and racial subjugation. In fact, time, history, and space (as demarcated by geographic context), or more specifically development, became the necessary descriptors in the formations of sameness and difference as well as economic conditions, social conditions, human capacities, and even frameworks that inform social policies and practices of governance. Thus, that which is out of joint or dis-adjusted is always a haunting imbued with the political-ethical concerns of colonial violence. As a result, the temporal skipping, spatial shift or blur, and political-symbolic ambiguity of the deepfake faces mark the apparitions of the transparent subject of the post-Enlightenment.

Haunting as a Condition of Possibility

As I've argued, haunting is the complicated enfolding of the affective patterns of the no longer and anticipations of the not yet that maintains or reinforces the changing same of the transparent subject. In techno-social and techno-political systems, haunting is the discontinuities and dis-adjustments of the recursive enfolding of the indeterminacies of Blackness that are a result of colonial violence and racial subjugation. Yet, I also posit haunting as a condition of possibility (or perhaps potentiality). That is to say, the fact of the apparition's presence, its seething presence, demands address, redress, and/or rerouting. I want to assert the utility of a technological reading and force that is in relation to haunting and the creative indeterminacies of Blackness, what I am calling a Black techno-conjuring, which has the potential to strengthen the influence of the diffractive.

In the Oxford English Dictionary, the third entry for "conjuring" is based on Caribbean and Southern US Black English. It's an attributive noun in folk magic, religion, and medicine, such as the "conjure man" or the "conjure doctor." "Conjure" may refer to the trick or spell that has been placed on a body, while also being the work of "curing" someone of a conjuring. While the algorithm may be possessed by colonial reason, and while Blackness is in part shaped by racial violence and subjugation, the haunting also conditions the possibility for the transformative force of the creative indeterminacies of Blackness. As Fred Moten reminds us, the forces of racial capitalism are necessary, yet not sufficient, for understanding Blackness, as racial capitalism conditions the very possibility for the infinite variability of Black performances. Thus, in relation to haunting, Black techno-conjuring brings forth two operations. The first is a reading of techno-social and techno-political systems that centers the metaphysics of Blackness as it seeks to trace the post-Enlightenment subject within the logics of the system and exhume the bodies in the violent wake of the algorithm. A Black techno-conjuring reading is also informed by Hortense Spillers's flesh, Cristina Sharpe's the wake, and Denise Ferreira da Silva's poethical reading. This is a practice of thinking and reading that forces one to locate or identify the haunting logics of what happened that are immanent in the what happens, how the what happens anticipates the what is yet to happen, and how the what happened is already immanent in the what is yet to happen. To put this plainly, when read through the GAN-produced deepfake faces, the grounds for abolition become articulated. Thus, a Black techno-conjuring could be deployed on all techno-political systems as a practice of reading their veracity toward anti-

colonial interest, especially prior to their establishment in policy.

The second operation of Black techno-conjuring is a technological force that has the potential to reroute and alter the logic of the system. The discontinuities and dis-adjustments that emerge from the system's limits to compress indeterminacies are part of the diffractive patterns that are residual in the GAN-produced faces. Borrowing from Karen Barad's articulation, diffraction is the way in which wave patterns overlap and how waves bend and spread when they encounter an interfering structure, producing differences that make a difference. The processed dividual data of human faces are diffracted through the generative adversarial network algorithm, the interfering structure, to produce the deepfake faces. The blurred spot and mismatched accessories of the algorithmic facial images are the diffractive wave patterns left in the wake of the GAN's attempts to compress that which is incompressible, such as its inability to compress the creative indeterminacies of Blackness.

These indeterminate diffractive wave patterns in the wake of the GAN-produced deepfake faces also point toward the potentiality of computationally identifying, undoing, exorcizing, or conjuring the bodies of the racial Other in their diffractive wake. The computational identification of the diffractive wave patterns of temporal-spatial disjoint, I argue, opens up the possibility of a Black techno-conjuring reading of the haunting enfoldings of recursive logics. In other words, by identifying the discontinuities and disjointedness, it enables a reading of what happened, what happens, and what is yet to happen that occasions a potential address, undoing, or unmaking of the instituted violence that brought it into emergence. It is through such interventions that we might identify, exorcize, or conjure instances, moments, and openings toward a redressing, or more radically a rerouting or refusal, of the colonial and racial subjugation haunting our present.

Ramon Amaro's Response
In 2017, Reddit user "Deepfakes" used human image synthesis technology to alter adult film scenes by transposing the faces of Hollywood actors onto the bodies of adult film actors. These "deepfakes," named after their original creator, produced alternative photorealistic renditions of human likeness using computer-generated imagery. Although image synthesis technology is not new (computer scientist Henri Gouraud is considered the first to make a CG geometry capture of the human face),[7] Deepfakes's synthesis marks a key moment in the evolution of
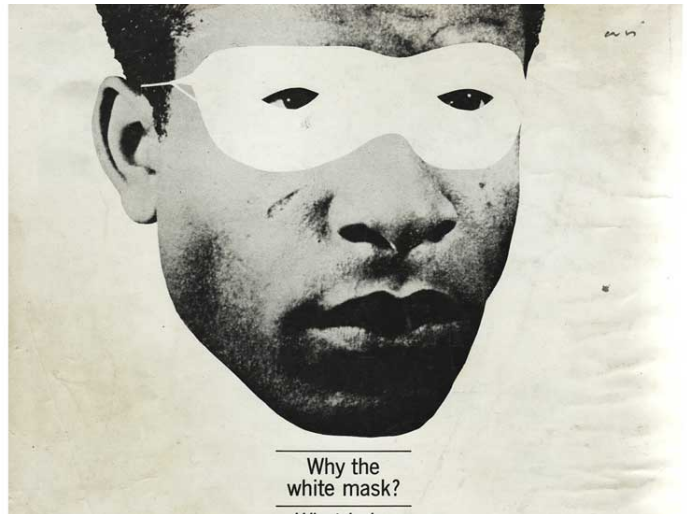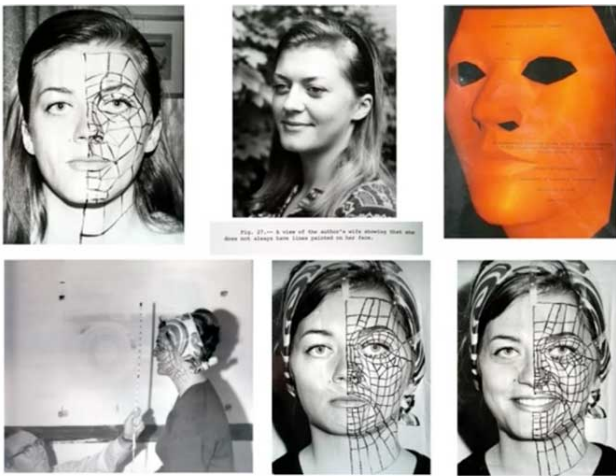
Left: Henri Gouraud https://hist3d.fr/le-futur-a-un-passe/henri-gouraud/. Right: Detail of an advertisement for Franz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*.

the technology. Today, rudimentary wireframe representations have given way to sophisticated techniques in deep learning and artificial intelligence.

While sophisticated for its time, Gouraud's 1960s wireframes methods are now part of a broader family of machine learning methods powered by artificial neural networks geared toward representation learning. These deep learning architectures produce results comparable to, and in some cases exceeding, human capabilities. As a result, it is increasingly difficult for the untrained eye to distinguish between an actual image seen through image capture (for instance, photography, film, or artistic representation) and those synthesized by means of deep learning (the so-called fake).

Although photorealism and human image synthesis technology push the boundaries of lifelike representation, Deepfakes's porn swaps seem to exceed a motivation to showcase the sophistication of the technology. "I just found a clever way to do face-swap," Deepfakes commented in 2017, referring to their then newly created neural network training method.[8] A deep tour through the history of human image synthesis reveals a rich playground for research and practice in human-centered technology. Deepfakes's choice to amuse themselves by making duplicitous scenes of women in sexualized situations is nonetheless notable. The face-swaps were not perfect, but close enough to reality to spark controversy and even a ban on the /r/deepfakes subreddit.

The limits of Deepfakes's desire are further disclosed at the site of sexual desire, stereotype, and gender representation. For instance, by intentionally face-swapping the idealized porn actress for the exalted Hollywood darling, Deepfakes effectively mutilated both by quite literally severing agency and everyday praxis for the purposes of technological experimentation. Despite this mutilation, we should all rest easy, at least according to Deepfakes, who notes that it was not their intention to violate these women's personal boundaries or to create a new world of new fakes brought forth on the naked backs of the sexualized body.

When asked about the ethical implications of the technology, Deepfakes insisted that their mission was one of goodwill: the technology was already out in the world, and their experiment helped highlight the fact that these technologies can be used by people "with bad motivations."[9] Deepfakes is clear that their experiment should not necessarily deter anyone from engaging with human-centered machine learning research, as long as one maintains a self-attributed altruism, further conflating their role as curious programmer and socio-technical moralist. After

all, if they did not swap the Hollywood actress for the porn star and vice versa, then someone else would. And it is the coder's stated responsibility to highlight the ethical concerns of machine learning by means of a violent example.

The moralist crusade against malignant techno-influence, although in the guise of the everyday programmer, is illustrative of the astounding haughtiness of synthesis. What I mean is that this superimposition of practices can help us understand how easily machine learning ethics can align itself with the same violences it seeks to mitigate; and how existing social constructs are open playgrounds where one can assume the role of ethicist based on the sole merit of an ability to code.

If deepfakes are, as Ezekiel Dixon-Román writes, "the disjointedness or discontinuities that mark the spectral immanence of the (actual)," then perhaps the synthesis of human faces is not novel at all, but the recursive composite of coder ethics and masculine desire. In addition, the fact that the staging for this synthesis is rehearsed in the image of whiteness adds an additional layer of necessary contemplation. Perhaps in this way deepfake synthesis is more lifelike or like life than the "actual" images they are meant to represent. To use our example here, the actual reveals a techno-human state of being that restricts the inherent potential for a more fully realized machine learning. For instance, we are prompted to consider what it might mean when Deepfakes and others rely on existing figurations of masculine desire in the absence of a criticality that establishes links between itself, sex, the enduring violences against the feminine body, and issues of purity and deviancy.

Dixon-Román makes clear that our present anxieties about computation are haunted by a recurrent superimposition of whiteness onto the realms of possibility. This opening, as Dixon-Román argues, provides a crucial opportunity for those of us concerned with the algorithmic organization of the world to intervene at not only the level of the algorithm, but at the level of the traces of violences that are, as he states, "unseen yet … affectively registered or perceived." It is, nonetheless, an inheritance that offers us a choice, as Dixon-Román claims, about what to do with the "dis/continuity between social structures," or desire and the algorithmic. While for Deepfakes what is knowable in this space is the potential to turn our favorite Hollywood actors into porn stars and vice versa, Dixon-Román calls for us to remember that "desire here is that which is the pursuit of knowability, recognition of affect, and even the potentiality of subversion," a nuance lost in photorealistic renditions of human likeness.

Ramon Amaro

The following reflections concern the mode of Black and technical existence; more so, they concern what I contend is the necessity to rearticulate the predominant notion of existence in relation to technology. By "technology," I refer to the application of technological tools or, following Simondon, objects that cannot be reduced to a mere utilitarian function. The technological object considered here resists temptations to reduce technology to the particular tools for use in specific domains or for particular purposes. Instead, I consider how the technological object is, according to Simondon, an ensemble of processes that, although they involve particular tools (for instance, the algorithm), emphasize the relations between algorithms and the humans who use them. I am interested in the way algorithms, as ensembles of relational processes between humans and data, might help further illuminate the complex relationship between human and racial processes. These are overridden by what Simondon describes as a "facile" reality that constitutes itself in defense against the human stranger, or what I henceforth refer to as the Black object.

The concept of the Black object draws from Frantz Fanon's writings on Black subjectivity and the existential reality of anti-Blackness. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, the Fanonian Black subject moves between the existential condition of dehumanization and the question of self-authenticity. For Fanon, authenticity is not a process of legitimacy by virtue of being authorized or in accordance with whiteness or colonial law, but a state of being that seeks a genuine expression of self-image. Fanon has argued that in the absence of the latter, one is constituted under the duress of race not as a "real" person with a real history, but as an object created in the delusive image of white superiority. This, as Fanon has argued, is attributable to a social dysfunction – both individual and collective madness – that is as pathological as it is epistemological. While the former is a decree towards an unrestrained anticipation of misfortune, the latter is a violence that attempts resolution in the epistemic appearance of a perceptual structure, or a type of virtual reality that shapes the spatial attributes of Black existence into objects as distinct from their individual and collective substance.

In bringing these concepts together, I consider how we might view the techno-human relation today as having already become accustomed to a Fanonian social dysfunction. In doing so, this relation has already presumed a mode of existence in accordance with a set of differential virtues set forth by the enduring realities of otherness and non-belonging. This is no more apparent than in our predominant framing of the algorithm as either a tool engaged in the playful activities of the engineer or as an incubator of existing social strife. The most powerful cause of this resultant alienation resides in the conflation between a presumed command over the algorithmic as a mechanism for controlling and manipulating human social environments, and a seeming indifference to the key role humans play in our own social dysfunction.

This overly rehearsed play has already been set forth by enumerative logics of racial calculation, which is no more akin to preempting an equitable future today than it has been since the emergence of our obsession with social data. It is prescient, however, of an unmitigated techno-human desire to stage this confrontation of choice by maintaining mythical and imaginary ideals of holistic human behavior against the imposition of technological threat, effectively repeating the methods of exclusion that are already rehearsed, as Mbembe argues, on the peoples of the Global South.[10] This "becoming-Black of the world," or what I might substitute with a becoming-Black of technology, is aligned more readily with the aspirations of a homogenous culture through the guise of objective representation than the aspirations of an authentic individual and collective Black being and becoming.

It is apparent that the significance of this violence lessens the actualization of the collective human species, which has yet to realize a sociality outside of the disintegration of the outsider, regardless of whether this foreign object is another human or machine. We are not unfamiliar with the idea of signification, whereby the outsider becomes the data type through which collective ignorance and resentment are expressed. As Simondon argues, we allow ourselves to be carried away by a "primitive xenophobia" under the principles of a universal ethics, when in fact we have yet to fully realize how our rejection of technology is as much a hatred of novelty as it is an immediate rejection of difference.[11] We have witnessed this defense in three registers: Firstly, in the idea that technical objects do not contain human reality, which maintains the illusion of a threat against an otherwise more equitable human-centered society. Secondly, in the notion that technical reality is anything other than human reality translated into a series of executable ones and zeros. Thirdly, in the presumption that technology can in fact be cleansed of human

partiality and bias, as if the living have witnessed any concrete example of what a shared sense of value might mean, let alone how it should be expressed.

Sylvia Wynter has already warned us that our contemporary conception of living value is preconditioned by humanist ideals of inter- and intraspecies hierarchy. According to Wynter, this grasping of hierarchal being is that which unifies perceptions of racial category and the staging of whiteness as the notional definition of the living ne plus ultra. Wynter turns to Fanon to show how this vague idea of interspecies superiority relies for its maintenance on the support of a theory of knowledge, resulting in a state of affairs that naturalizes the ill-derived fact of categorical difference. It is no surprise, then, as we sail through a new technological age, that a dominant minority in the guise of Big Tech would carry out this ongoing directive, whereby the scientific method, which was replaced by the machine gun, has now given way to the discriminating algorithm. Let us not forget that one of the many values of Wynter's thesis is in its illustration of the emergence of the category of the human as an irrecusable crisis of the white European Man, and the absolutism of his technological rationality. This is, of course, predicated on Man's assumed birthright over the epistemic model, wherein a new ordering of the world is installed as the recurrent byproduct of Man's resistance towards his own irrelevance. If a new social relation, or a new techno-human relation, is to be found, then Wynter is clear that the very conditions of human behavior through which human systems are realized must be understood as prescriptive of the "seeking/avoiding behavior[s]" through which one realizes oneself as this rhetorical human. One must, as Wynter posits, orient the parameters of the "motivation/behaviors" of epistemic order towards an interdiction of functions opposition to an inherited superiority.[12]

In light of Wynter's monitory doctrine of the human condition, it is concerning that our present responses have absorbed this architecture as a method against technical imposition. This is not to deny the implications of our current technical landscape, where the replication of racisms and other violences are reminiscent of an always-already present reality within human life. However, as with humanism, our techno-human offerings, or what we could call the making or becoming of oneself under the calamity of the technical imaginary, have reaped little satisfaction amongst the masses. The general reaction is indeed one of anger, resentment, and hostility at having been misled into thinking that the most advanced technology today, the algorithm, when combined with the

most superficial of human characteristics, such as skin color, bears no meaningful interest in society as a whole other than to support a marketplace of identity, in contrast to a more nuanced set of ideas.

While we, the living, might continue to ignore this slide further into a reality whereby we summarily distinguish ourselves from that which we misuse or misunderstand according to use value, there still exists the inherent capability to live within what Fanon describes as a "structural harmony," to pull us away from our fixation on the qualities of racial characteristics that we humans and algorithm hold so dear. Fanon defines "structural harmony" as the sum of the individual and the conditions through which they emerge, including the constructed images of the self and environment. "We shall see that this discovery is basic," he writes. "Every time the subject sees his image and recognizes it, it is always in some way 'the mental oneness which is inherent in him' that he acclaims."[13] Fanon believed that his cause for self-liberation from the constructed image of the idealized racial body image, and thereby the idealized social relation, is a self-evident one. After all, he did despise the blind faith that liberalism places in ultimate reconciliation and the harmony of interests through an appeal to reason.[14]

Today, how should we consider that this colonial appeal to reason has left a parting gift, namely the frantic double exposure of the racial image? On the one hand, the current human-to-human relation is still largely saturated by images of a world constructed through epistemic whiteness. On the other hand, the technological object, in its ignorance, has been largely programmed to overwrite the complex dynamics of historical race relations, and has instead been designed to infer logical conclusions from a racist human history, as if this data is anything other than an ensemble of racial processes dragged through time on the instruction of the white imaginary. If a harmony is to be achieved, then the structures of these processes, as well as the resultant double images, must be brought into an authentic awareness.

I want to bring attention to the need for alternative methods of techno-human awareness. Awareness in this sense is concerned with modes of existence that pull our attention away from the futile battle for and against recognition, and from the basic discovery of difference through scientific reason. I instead seek a more meaningful state of knowingness as a unifying principle that constitutes a reality that exceeds the images of race. What I point towards is a more productive use of the dissonances between our perceived alienation from the images of difference and an inherent desire to

reconcile the perpetual invention of otherness. My hope is to bring forth a new image of the technological and Black objects in an attempt to reach the best possible compatibility between these two worlds. While this modification of process might announce an awakening for both the human and technology from an intemperate historical coma, it also foreshadows the possibility of introducing new knowledge structures that can maintain distinctiveness both within and outside of category. But first, we must extinguish the grammars that lean towards the innateness of categorical strangeness and develop alternative ways to fulfil our aims toward a new techno-human temperament.

Through our colonial history, and the construction of the Black and technical object, an anxiety has effectively arisen that attempts to provoke a break within the recurrent speech arrangement of otherness. A more substantial awareness, or a more meaningful state of knowingness as the unifying principle of the techno-human relation, is a principal step towards the improvement of these conditions that can, alternatively, expand against the limitations of existing human-human and techno-human principles. It is here that the technical object finds its greatest potential in the dilution of practices that view racial processes, and even their mitigations, as matters of scientific discovery. Discovery, in this sense, is distinguished from perspectives of logical disclosure, in that discovery is tasked with reducing its reliance on making evident that which is already present in the racial imaginary, enabling a more fruitful engagement with the rhythms and arrangements of existence that exceed the caricatures of Black life.

Ezekiel Dixon-Román's Response

In Boots Riley's debut film *Sorry to Bother You*, the character Cassius "Cash" Green is struggling financially, lives with his girlfriend in his uncle's garage, and is seemingly meandering toward finding his way and purpose in life. Cassius uses falsified information on an application to get a new job in telemarketing. As a Black man, he quickly learns that the most efficacious method of telemarketing is to use his inner "white voice." He not only becomes very good and successful at this, even at the expense of and in conflict with other personal relationships; he is also promoted to become a "Power Caller" who sells millions of dollars in military technology to an international market. Through this film, we are introduced to the technologies of race and the abjection of not just the mode of existence in the Black body, but more specifically in the tonal, dialectical, and rhythmic reverberations of the Black voice. Riley's film provides an example of what Ramon

Amaro seeks to go after in both his focus on the model of Black and technical existence and in his intervention aiming to rearticulate the predominant notion of existence.

Distinct from the discourses of "race as technology," which are interested in the enframing and performative work of race, Amaro seeks to draw a parallel between Black existence and technical existence while also making Black existence a form of technical existence. He critically goes after discourses of representation and Black exclusion, or what Denise Ferreira da Silva has called a logic of exclusion, and he prioritizes what he sees as the self-affirmation of value in what's always been there in the particles, spectacles, and specters that have been violently excluded in the homogenizing forces of modernity. This self-affirmation is not only a resistance to whiteness. It is also an affirmation of Blackness beyond the categorical constructs of identity and difference. While value has the potential to slip into moral and essentialist discourse, I read Amaro as going after an otherwise-valuing, alternative worlding that dismantles the inherited category of the "human." Cassius's character demonstrates the violent implications of homogenization, how these forces produce self-alienation rather than self-affirmation, and the ways in which self-identifying enables a reified discourse of whiteness's lens of identity and difference. For capital in the film, Black existence is reduced to the thermodynamic energy of bodily production and is even enhanced via medical technology, transforming Cassius and his fellow workers into "equisapiens." This human-horse hybrid is seen as the ultimate replacement for human labor: the sentience of the human is embodied in the strength and energy of a workhorse; in other words, human sentience is converted to horsepower. Yet we see acts of resistance: the equisapiens turn their bodily power and energy against capital. What is the logic behind this (autopoetic over)turn? Is the logic of this (over)turn one of self-affirmation and a movement or opening towards a dismantling of the category of the "human"? Perhaps yes, or perhaps something more.

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Ezekiel Dixon-Román is an Associate Professor in the School of Social Policy & Practice at the University of Pennsylvania. His research seeks to make critical interventions towards re-theorizing the technologies and practices of quantification that he understands as mediums and agencies of sociopolitical systems, whereby race and other assemblages of difference are byproducts. He is the author of *Inheriting Possibility: Social Reproduction & Quantification in Education* (University of Minnesota Press, 2017), and the guest editor of "Control Societies @ 30: Technopolitical Forces and Ontologies of Difference" (Social Text Online, 2020).

Ramon Amaro is Lecturer in Art and Visual Cultures of the Global South at UCL Department of History of Art. He is the author of *The Black Technical Object: On Machine Learning and the Aspiration of Black Being* (Sternberg Press, 2022).

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