

Nina Cvar*

Emancipating from (Colonial) Genealogies of the Techno-social Networks or Reversing Power Relations by Turning the Predator into Prey in Jordan Peele's *Nope*

Keywords

body, race, algorithmic governmentality, computational unconscious, Eurocentric matrix of power, *Nope*, Jordan Peele

Abstract

The article aims to map the contemporary techno-social networks, together with delineation of the algorithmic governmentality, computational unconscious, the epistemic structure of the Eurocentric matrix of power haunted by its own repetition of the constant abyss of horrors, only to search for gestures of resistance. Gestures of resistance, contrary to the false conviction of capitalist realism, can be found everywhere, including in Jordan Peele's *Nope* (2022). Through a variety of motifs, themes, and cultural and cinematic references, Peele creates a resistance image, i.e., an image that resists the historical trajectory of the violence of the digital colonial matrix of knowledge. In particular with *Nope*, in which the history of racial violence is disentangled by evoking the relation between the entanglement of capital and epistemic violence embodied in an all-devouring predator UFO. But *Nope* is also about visualizing silenced histories. Indeed, to strive to capture UFO with the camera is to break away from modernity as a totalizing onto-epistemology and in this register generating a false universal subject of a Man.

Emancipiranje od (kolonialnih) genealogij tehnodružbenih omrežij ali preobrat razmerij s spreminjanjem plenilca v plen v filmu *Nak* režiserja Jordana Peele

161

Ključne besede

telo, rasa, algoritmična vladnost, računalniško nezavedno, evropocentrična matrica moči, *Nak*, Jordan Peele

* Department of Sociology, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia | Laboratory of Multimedia, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
nina.cvar@ff.uni-lj.si | <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7404-2778>

Povzetek

Namen članka je kartirati sodobna tehnodružbena omrežja skupaj z razmejitvijo algoritmične vladnosti, računalniškega nezavednega in epistemične strukture evrocentrične matrice moči (ki jo preganja lastno ponavljanje nenehnega brezna grozot) ter poiskati geste upora. V nasprotju z napačnim prepričanjem kapitalističnega realizma, lahko te geste odpora najdemo povsod, tudi v filmu *Nak* Jordana Peeleja (2022). Peele z različnimi motivi, temami ter kulturnimi in filmskimi referencami ustvari podobo odpora, tj. podobo, ki se upira zgodovinski poti nasilja digitalne kolonialne matrice znanja. Zlasti v filmu *Nak* je zgodovina rasnega nasilja razgrnjena z osvetlitvijo razmerja med prepletenostjo kapitala in epistemičnim nasiljem, ki pa je utelešeno v vse požirajočem plenilskem neznancu iz vesolja (NLP). Toda *Nak* govori tudi o vizualiziranju utišanih zgodovin. S kamero ujeti NLP namreč pomeni pretrgati z modernostjo kot totalizirajočo onto-epistemologijo in v takšnem registru generirati lažni univerzalni subjekt Človeka.



Introduction

As argued by Tiziana Terranova and Ravi Sudaram, the techno-social hypothesis is based on the idea that the social is never about the possession of an intrinsic or pre-existing reality, but is, to speak with Michel Foucault, historical, “transactional.”¹ In this way, the articulation of the social in light of the emergence of the digital as the dominant contemporary mode of production is about the interplay of power relations as well as everything that eludes them—in particular, the question of the status of bodies in this new condition of prescriptive humanity generated by the programmability of algorithmic instructions.

How can we think about the body, which is, in Marina Vishmidt’s words, “a site where all politics has to begin but which itself manages to avoid scrutiny as a political problem or a contradictory enunciation,”² in this realm of tech-

¹ Tiziana Terranova and Ravi Sundaram, “Colonial Infrastructures and Techno-Social Networks,” *E-flux Journal* 123 (December 2021), http://workero1.e-flux.com/pdf/article_437385.pdf.

² Marina Vishmidt, “Bodies in Space: On the Ends of Vulnerability,” *Radical Philosophy* 2, no. 8 (Autumn 2020): 35, https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/rp208_vishmidt.pdf.

no-social networks for which Ravi Sudaram argues that one cannot think without considering the importance of the colonial techne and the colonial social?³ Or to go back to the late 2000s: if, according to Marie-Luise Angerer, the central question was *whose body*, affirming the need to understand the body and the subject,⁴ then the pressing question today is how to emancipate bodies from the pervasive postcolonial infrastructure, characterized by the loss of the distinction between the social (government, welfare) and the medial (entertainment, cinema, TV) in the postcolonial environment of the intertwining of sovereignty, government with the multiplicity of circulations (media forms, beliefs, desires, commodities, money)?⁵

This text therefore aims to map the contemporary techno-social networks, together with delineation of the algorithmic governmentality, computational unconscious, the epistemic structure of the Eurocentric matrix of power haunted by its own repetition of the constant abyss of horrors, only to search for gestures of emancipation. Gestures of resistance, contrary to the false conviction of capitalist realism, can be found everywhere, including in Jordan Peele's *Nope* (2022).

The Contemporary Regime of Techno-Social Networks and Its Structural Omnipresence

To map the contemporary regime of techno-social networks, I will redefine Jacques Rancière's notion of regime. If, according to Rancière, a regime is a kind of link between the production of works (or artistic practice) and the forms of visibility that these forms take,⁶ I will define techno-social networks as a regime that operates by creating a link between technology and the social. Contemporary techno-social networks are characterized by the combination of digitalization, global outsourcing, off-shoring, environmental catastrophe,⁷ surplus

³ Terranova and Sundaram, "Colonial Infrastructures."

⁴ Marie-Luise Angerer, "The Body Bytes Back," in "The Body/Le corps/Der Körper," ed. Marina Gržinić Mauhler, special issue, *Filozofski vestnik* 23, no. 2 (2002): 221–32.

⁵ Terranova and Sundaram, "Colonial Infrastructures."

⁶ Jean-Phillipe Deranty, "Regimes of the Arts," in *Jacques Rancière: Key Concepts*, ed. Jean-Phillipe Deranty (Durham: Acumen, 2010), 116–30.

⁷ Achille Mbembe, "Ignorance Too, Is a Form of Power," interview by Malka Gouzer, Chilperic, November 9, 2020, <https://www.chilperic.ch/interview/achille-mbembe-15.html>.

population forced to take precarious jobs with stagnant wages,⁸ leading to an extreme concentration of wealth.⁹ This enmeshing of technology and society is by no means new. Technology is thus revealing not only how we interact with nature, but more importantly, how social relationships are formed and the mental categories that accompany them.¹⁰

With digitalization impacting all social spheres,¹¹ the categories of modernity, i.e., class, gender, and race, are being redefined,¹² resulting in unique forms of the exercise of power. In this regard, the techno-social is not just about delegating social interaction, but also about processing the content generated by social interaction.¹³

Following Tiziana Terranova and Ravi Sundram, technology attains a kind of double position: it acts as a precondition and as an affordance of post-human performative assemblages¹⁴ that lead to the construction of contemporary social formations whose predominant mode of production is the digital mode of production. According to Marina Gržinić, this mode of production exemplifies the techno-capitalist division of labor, a form of social programming that leads to an increased commodification and computerization.¹⁵

⁸ Kohei Saito, *Marx in the Anthropocene: Towards the Idea of Degrowth Communism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 139.

⁹ Martin Ford, *Rise of the Robots: Technology and the Threat of a Jobless Future* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

¹⁰ Karl Marx, *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie; Erster Band, Buch I, Der Produktionsprozess des Kapitals* (Hamburg: Otto Meissner, 1867), 352, <https://oll.libertyfund.org/page/marx-k1-1867>.

¹¹ Christoph Musik and Alexander Bogner, eds., *Digitalization and Society: A Sociology of Technology Perspective on Current Trends in Data, Digital Security and the Internet* (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019), 1–14, 44.

¹² Ezekiel Dixon-Román, “Algo-Ritmo: More-Than-Human Performative Acts and the Racializing Assemblages of Algorithmic Architectures,” *Cultural Studies – Critical Methodologies* 16, no. 5 (October 2016): 482–90, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708616655769>.

¹³ Thomas Erickson, “Social Computing,” in *The Encyclopedia of Human-Computer Interaction*, ed. Mads Soegaard and Rikke Friis Dam, 2nd ed. (Aarhus, Denmark: Interaction Design Foundation, 2014), chap. 4, <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/book/the-encyclopedia-of-human-computer-interaction-2nd-ed/social-computing>.

¹⁴ Terranova and Sundaram, “Colonial Infrastructures.”

¹⁵ Marina Gržinić, “Racialized Bodies and the Digital (Financial) Mode of Production,” in *Regimes of Invisibility in Contemporary Art, Theory and Culture*, ed. Marina Gržinić, Aneta Stojnić, and Miško Šuvaković (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 13–28.

In order for this contemporary regime to operate, the body is subjected to a combination of capital pressures. Technologies are equally important, however, as they constitute bodies as technical means to achieve certain ends, where-in these ends are socially embedded and the embodiment is a conglomerate of different sets of agencies.¹⁶ Achille Mbembe claims, for example, that under neoliberal conditions we witness a “convergence, and at times fusion, between the human being and the objects, artefacts or technologies that supplement or augment us.”¹⁷

This force of capital to which bodies are subjected is perhaps best defined as brutalism.¹⁸ Moreover, Mbembe’s writings assume racialized bodies¹⁹ for which, as Joseph Confavreux argues, neoliberalism has constituted a “gigantic pumping and carbonization mechanism.”²⁰ The genealogy of contemporary techno-social networks thus requires a delineation of the relation between technology, capital, and racialization. However, Mbembe’s thesis of “becoming Black of the world,”²¹ according to which the term “Black” has been generalized and thus has become a new norm of existence that extends to the entire planet, refers to a generalized, vulnerable and precarious mode of existence, which is further transformed into coded digital data in the digital mode of production.²²

Ubiquity of Algorithms: Algorithmic Governmentality

Each historical era develops its own privileged ways of imagining or making sense of the world.²³ Ours is characterized by codes and algorithms. In this re-

¹⁶ See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹⁷ Achille Mbembe, “The Digital Age Erases the Divide between Humans and Objects,” *Mail and Guardian*, January 6, 2017, <https://mg.co.za/article/2017-01-06-00-the-digital-age-erases-the-divide-between-humans-and-objects/>.

¹⁸ Mbembe, “Ignorance.”

¹⁹ Achille Mbembe, “Decolonial Anxieties in a Postcolonial World: An Interview with Achille Mbembe,” interview by Joseph Confavreux, *Postcolonial Studies* 25, no. 1 (2022): 128–35, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2022.2050587>.

²⁰ Mbembe, “Decolonial Anxieties,” 128

²¹ Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, trans. Laurent Dubois (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

²² Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, 5.

²³ Mary Poovey, *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

spect, we are confronted with the need to situate the analysis of the algorithm within the analysis of knowledge/power/subject, which in the case of the analysis of algorithms means considering their intersection with the world in the way they relate to current models of political rationality and governmentality. When we ask how algorithmic governmentality fits within the framework of contemporary capitalism, we cannot bypass racialization as a differentiating social process. In this regard, it makes sense to analyze both liberal governmentality and algorithmic governmentality together.

If the so-called liberal governmentality is characterized by an emphasis on statistical knowledge—whereby not only statistics but also quantitative techniques, together with numerical understanding, provide a discursive guarantee for the calculation of probabilities, with the aim of ensuring an “informed decision”—in algorithmic governmentality we can observe the development of the idea that the so-called technical aspect of the algorithm guarantees impartiality.²⁴ Or, as David Beer points out, the algorithm becomes an integral part of the discourse of “efficiency” and thus of the “normalization” of the actual reality of global capitalism.²⁵ Following Antoinette Rouvroy and Bernard Stiegler, however, algorithmic governmentality erases the distance between raw data and databases, thereby circumventing the site of production of critical thought.²⁶ Consequently, algorithmic governmentality, even if its discursive premise is “apolitical implementation,” successfully coexists with neoliberal forms of governmentality. The latter raises the question of the political and the “use of bodies” in particular. In her analysis, Shoshana Zuboff points out that a mixture of state and capital has formed a unique relation with digital technologies that manifests itself in two groups: the watchers (invisible, unknown and unaccountable) and the watched.²⁷ But who are the watched?

²⁴ Tarleton Gillespie, “The Relevance of Algorithms,” in *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*, ed. Tarleton Gillespie, Pablo J. Boczkowski, and Kirsten A. Foot (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014), 167–93.

²⁵ David Beer, “The Social Power of Algorithms,” *Information, Communication and Society* 20, no. 1 (2017): 9, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1216147>.

²⁶ Antoinette Rouvroy and Bernard Stiegler, “The Digital Regime of Truth: From the Algorithmic Governmentality to a New Rule of Law,” trans. Anaïs Nony and Benoît Dillet, *La Deleuziana* 3 (2016): 6–29, http://www.ladeleuziana.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Rouvroy-Stiegler_eng.pdf.

²⁷ Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2019).

The watched are all the “damned,” the racialized, abandoned migrant bodies left to die in the dominance of the fake vitalism of necropolitics, which feeds its vitalism from automated computational techniques that increasingly operate through prescriptive and mechanical mediation of virtually eliminating the human on the one hand, and by discursively covering precisely this kind of elimination on the other. But what is the status of subjectivity within algorithmic governmentality?

Programming (Of Any Kind) Subjectivities

Contemporary subjectivity is emerging within the so-called logic of programmability by which Wendy Hui Kyong Chun is emphasizing convergence between “user-friendly” computer interfaces, neoliberal governmentality and human capital, adding that that computer interfaces operate as intermediaries between the visible and the invisible, performing as navigational aids which are key in shaping the “informed” individuals who, by mapping their relation to the totality of global capitalism, transcend the chaos of global capitalism.²⁸ This “informed individual” is based on computer programs. Given this result, Chun proposes to relate computer programs to Laplacean determinism, which is about an all-knowing intelligence that can comprehend the future by apprehending the past and present.²⁹ Computers must therefore be understood as dispositive elements

individuating us and also integrating us into a totality, their interfaces offer us a form of mapping, of storing files central to our seemingly sovereign—empowered—subjectivity. By interacting with these interfaces, we are also mapped: data-driven machine learning algorithms process our collective data traces in order to discover underlying patterns (this process reveals that our computers are now more profound programmers than their human counterparts).³⁰

²⁸ Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 8.

²⁹ Chun, 9.

³⁰ Chun, 9.

Chun's contribution demonstrates structural convergence between technological innovation and capitalism, characterized by specific inclination of individual to social formation, quoting Marx:

Technology discloses man's mode of dealing with Nature, the process of production whereby he sustains his life, and thereby also lays bare the mode of formation of his social relations, and of the mental conceptions that flow from them.³¹

Marx's underpinning of a unique aggregate between technology, nature, society and subjectivity confirms Chun's analysis of Laplacean determinism. In particular, due to recent developments of Large Language Models (LLMs) such as Chat GPT as sophisticated statistical models, it can be argued that Laplacean determinism has become even more present as a standardized mental conception. By creating a human-like dialog to answer queries, AI chatbots evoke a kind of Baudrillardian vision of simulation at the level of language, subjecting the unconscious to epistemological and semiotic alterations of digital (algorithmic) governmentality.

Computational Unconscious

In order to understand the digital unconscious, we must first define the psychoanalytic unconscious, because the psychoanalytic unconscious

refers to the existence of ideas which are not just not being thought about (hence not just "not in consciousness") but which are also radically *unavailable* to thought—they cannot be brought to awareness even if the person tries really hard, or at least it is more of a struggle than one person can manage on her or his own. These hidden ideas, however, have a profound influence on psychological life.³²

The political evocation of the psychoanalytic unconscious is well known: from Freud's analysis of group psychology, where types of ties between the subject

³¹ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy; Volume 1, The Process of Capitalist Production*, ed. Frederick Engels, trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (New York: International Publishers, 1967), 352.

³² Stephen Frosh, *Key Concepts in Psychoanalysis* (London: British Library, 2002), 12–13.

and other people via so-called identification mechanisms are addressed,³³ to Althusser, who valorizes Marx's position on ideology as a "camera obscura" or false consciousness, providing a scientific project of ideology through the famous formula of interpellation,³⁴ to end with Rancière's unique conceptualization of emancipation as politics, which operates as an enactment of equality.³⁵ But what happens with the rise of universalizing digital culture?

In the late 20th century, the unconscious was reintroduced by Felix Guattari. Combining theoretical research from fields as diverse as cybernetics, semiotics, ethnology, and ethology, Guattari introduced the concept of machinic unconscious in 1979. With the concept of the machinic unconscious, Guattari succeeded not only in renewing debates about the relation between capitalism, social order, power, and subjectivity, but also in rethinking the concept of the unconscious itself, particularly how it

affects all kinds of perceptions and actions, affecting the possible itself and all forms of communication, not just linguistic ones. [Guattari] uses the term machinic unconscious to stress that it is full of "machinisms that lead it to produce and reproduce these images and words."³⁶

According to Franco Berardi and Geert Lovink, however, Guattari's most important contribution is the way he thought about the relation between the unconscious and technology.³⁷ Guattari argued that, unlike the psychoanalytic uncon-

³³ Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, trans. James Strachey (Vienna: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1922).

³⁴ Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 142–47, 166–76.

³⁵ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

³⁶ Dave Harris, "Notes On: Guattari, F. (2011) *The Machinic Unconscious. Essays in Schizoanalysis*, Translated by Taylor Adkins. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents," Dave Harris and Colleagues, accessed August 1, 2023, <https://www.arasite.org/machincunconsc.html>.

³⁷ Franco Berardi, "Mental Long Covid and the Techno-Social Unconscious: A Conversation with Franco 'Bifo' Berardi," interview by Geert Lovink, *E-flux Notes*, May 12, 2022, <https://www.e-flux.com/notes/468343/mental-long-covid-and-the-techno-social-unconscious-a-conversation-with-franco-bifo-berardi>.

scious, which is representational unconscious crystallized in codified complexes and repartitioned on a genetic axis, unconscious is actually built like a map.³⁸

Recently, Jonathan Beller has presented his work on the de-fetishization of computation. Via the means of production, proposing computation unconscious, Beller argues that the computational process, like the capitalist process, has a corrosive effect on the whole senses system, along with ontological assumptions and traditions. To quote Beller:

Computation has fully colonized the knowable cosmos [. . .], it allows us to propose that seeing the universe as computation, as, in short, simulable, if not itself a simulation (the computational effect of an informatic universe) [. . .]. The universe as it appears to us is figured by—that is, it is a figuration of—computation. That’s what our computers tell us.³⁹

One of the most pressing political questions of our time is what comes out of this computational unconscious, because of the automated decisions and biases associated with algorithms.⁴⁰ It is not only knowledge that is subjected to automatization. Existing power relations are also part of the datafication through which all of life becomes susceptible to being processed through forms of analysis that are automated on a large scale.⁴¹ This autonomous status of automation facilitates the homogenization, standardization, and objectification already predicted by Horkheimer and Adorno within the so-called cultural industries,⁴² even if they manifest themselves a bit differently in digital society, through unique forms of individualization, decentralization, labor distribution, and specific mode of (digital) mediatization.

³⁸ Felix Guattari, *The Machinic Unconscious: Essays in Schizoanalysis*, trans. Taylor Adkins (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011).

³⁹ Jonathan Beller, “The Computational Unconscious,” *B20*, August 1, 2018, <https://www.boundary2.org/2018/08/beller/>.

⁴⁰ See Sašo Dolenc, “Etične dileme umetne inteligence: Predlog moratorija na nadgradnjo sistemov jezikovne umetne inteligence,” *Kvarkadabra*, March 30, 2023, <https://kvarkadabra.net/2023/03/eticne-dileme-umetne-inteligence/>.

⁴¹ See Ulises A. Mejias and Nick Couldry, “Datafication,” *Internet Policy Review* 8, no. 4 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.14763/2019.4.1428>.

⁴² Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialektika razsvetljenstva: Filozofski fragmenti*, trans. Seta Knop, Mojca Kranjc, and Rado Riha (Ljubljana: Studia humanitatis, 2006).

Continuation of (Colonial) Genealogies or Digital Geopolitics of Knowledge

Graham et al. argue that codified knowledge follows a pattern of inequality in terms of geographic representation, with some parts of the world being at the center of global voice and representation while others remaining invisible or unheard.⁴³ The visualization (below) created by the Internet Health Report in 2022 clearly shows the continuation of the Eurocentric geopolitics of knowledge.

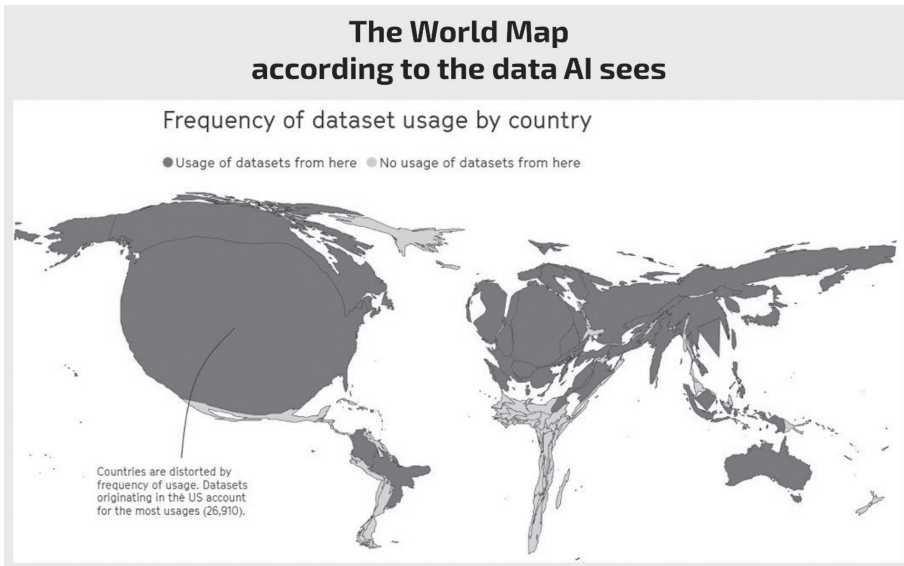


Fig. 1: Image of the map taken from “Who Has Power Over AI?,” Internet Health Report 2022, accessed August 2, 2023, <https://2022.internethealthreport.org/facts/>. Visualisation based on data from Bernard Koch, Emily Denton, Alex Hanna, and Jacob G. Foster, “Reduced, Reused and Recycled: The Life of a Dataset in Machine Learning Research” ArXiv, December 3, 2021, <https://arxiv.org/abs/2112.01716>.

⁴³ Mark Graham, Bernie Hogan, Ralph K. Straumann, and Ahmed Medhat, “Uneven Geographies of User-Generated Information: Patterns of Increasing Informational Poverty,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 104, no. 4 (2014): 746–64, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2014.910087>.

Michael Kwet shows, for example, the intertwining between multinational corporations and U.S. imperialism, which is—and this is probably the most important implication—dissemination of a distinct vision of digitalization.⁴⁴ Therefore, social conditions of digitalization are embedded in the colonial matrix of power. This matrix is intertwined with racial, sexual, ideological, aesthetic, religious, military and patriarchal dimensions.⁴⁵

Thus, unless digitalization is delinked from the colonial matrix of power, it further exacerbates the reality of global capitalism with digital technologies putting our unconscious under the sword of empty epistemic Western circularity. But what is the mechanism behind this epistemic cage?

Vectors of Hauntology: The Repeating Catastrophe of Epistemic Western Circularity, Self-Referentiality, Empty Formalism, and Tautology

Recent images of the abrupt collapse of Silicon Valley Bank (SVB) and the departure of Swiss bank Credit Suisse brought back memories of the global financial crisis of 2007–2008. Yet, as was the case 15 years ago, many words were spoken but very few addressed the structural contours of the lurking manifestation of the latest chapter of global capitalism. As if we were dealing with a kind of blockage that perhaps has less to do with the inability to think than with what Mark Fisher calls “reflexive impotence,” which, according to Fisher, is not so much the result of apathy and cynicism, but springs from a certain kind of reflection.⁴⁶ This reflection is not about passively observing the situation that already exists, but rather springs from a unique understanding of the future itself, resulting in a grim realization that “things are bad.” A much more important condition for the reflexive powerlessness described, however, is not the recognition of the conditions of reality, but the state of prolonged non-action.

172

Although Fisher focused primarily on British youth, his analyzes can be applied elsewhere, particularly with regard to the normalization of capitalist realism, which Fisher defines as “the widespread sense that not only is capitalism the

⁴⁴ Michael Kwet, “Digital Colonialism: US Empire and the New Imperialism in the Global South,” *Race and Class* 60, no. 4 (April–June 2019): 3–26, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396818823172>.

⁴⁵ Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Empire and Global Coloniality and African Subjectivity* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015).

⁴⁶ Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Hampshire: Zero Books, 2009), 21.

only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to *imagine* a coherent alternative to it."⁴⁷

The reactions to the recent turmoil in the “financial paradise” were therefore not really reactions of shock—rather tired sighs of “not again” that in some ways underscored the idea of capitalist realism and capitalism’s inclination for a series of crises and paradoxical events in particular.

Following Santiago López Petit,⁴⁸ Marina Gržinić brought his work into focus, exposing precisely repetition that can be identified by the so-called unrestraintment of capital, which manifests itself as a reversible and conflictual event.⁴⁹ This unrestraintment of capital generates a paradoxical spatialization that requires two repetitions at the same time: a founding repetition, by which a system of hierarchy is re-established, leading to the constant reconstruction of a center and a periphery; and, on the other hand, a de-foundational repetition, which acts as an erosion of hierarchies, generating dispersion, multiplicity and multi-reality.⁵⁰

López Petit and Gržinić’s analyses thus demonstrate the structural conditions of capitalism, but their argument also reveals characteristics of the social bond of contemporary global capitalism, particularly in relation to the categories of global space and time. This research dates back to 2009, the argument of the unrestraintment of capital has been far-reaching, due to repetition of the unrestraintment of capital vertically and horizontally, resulting in circularity of self-referentiality and empty formalism on the one hand and a tautology that produces obviousness on the other. What else is the appearance of another financial crisis if not the circularity of self-referentiality with its exclamations of structural obviousness?

173

It seems that the circularity of self-referentiality haunts contemporary reality. But how does this mechanism of haunting operate?

⁴⁷ Fisher, 6.

⁴⁸ Santiago López Petit, *La movilización global: Breve tratado para atacar la realidad* (Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2009).

⁴⁹ Marina Gržinić, “Capital, Repetition,” *Reartikulacija* 8 (2009): 3.

⁵⁰ Gržinić, 3.

The concept of hauntology was introduced by Jacques Derrida in *Specters of Marx*. Unlike traditional “ontology,” which is about the self-identical present, hauntology is not about the present.⁵¹ For example, in his interpretation of Derrida, Martin Hägglund claims that we can distinguish between two directions in hauntology: the first is no longer but still effective as virtuality, operating as a traumatic compulsion to repeat, while the second is about inactuality, something that has not yet happened but is already effective in the virtual, anticipating behavioral content.⁵²

In terms of the circularity of self-referentiality, both directions can be identified, whether as different modulations of the capitalist mode of production, e.g., the recurring specter of neoliberalism, or, in the epistemic context, Eurocentrism.

But what is the circularity of self-referentiality in relation to the future? It is literary about the failure of the future, resulting in stripping off all potentialities. As if the future is haunting the present, but not as much as virtuality of openness, but more as a token of a capital speculation, which, it seems, haunts the social. If the first decade of the twenty-first century was marked by mourning for the lost futures that the twentieth century had wished for, the following decade led to the decay of a whole kind of social imagination, with financial speculation becoming the sole arbiter of reality, ending in a changed status of the register of real, which has become somehow displaced, due to the omitted criterion for distinguishing between real and imaginary value.⁵³ However, this does not mean that the role of the real is diminished, on the contrary. Since extractivism is crucial to contemporary global capitalist accumulation—according to UNCTAD, more than 100 countries specialize in extracting and exporting raw materials⁵⁴—the so-called real is integral, since extractivism shapes the economy and marks politics.⁵⁵ John Belamy Foster, for example, shows the link between the accelera-

⁵¹ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁵² Martin Hägglund, *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

⁵³ Joseph Vogl, *The Specter of Capital*, trans. Joachim Redner and Robert Savage (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 67.

⁵⁴ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, *State of Commodity Dependence 2021* (New York: United Nations Publications, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.18356/9789210057790>.

⁵⁵ Hannes Warnecke-Berger, Hans-Jürgen Burchardt, and Rachid Ouaisa, “Natural Resources, Raw Materials, and Extractivism: The Dark Side of Sustainability,” *Extractivism Policy Brief* 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.17170/kobra-202305168028>.

tion of extractivism and financialization, with international finance based in the Global North commodifying and managing ecosystem services primarily in the Global South.⁵⁶ But extractive infrastructure is not confined to the periphery of the capitalist world economy, underscoring Martin Arboleda's claim that global extractivism is identified with "generalized monopoly capital" and the conditions of late imperialism.⁵⁷ In relation to extractivism, Eduardo Gudynas points to renewed imperial dependency in the Global South,⁵⁸ and similarly, James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer describe new extractivism as a new imperialist model emerging after the collapse of the neoliberal model, subjecting countries into new forms of dependency.⁵⁹

Contemporary reality is therefore marked by the structural logic that López Petit and Gržinić refer to as the unrestraintment of capital, which manifests itself as a reversible and conflictual event, i.e., the capitalist expropriation of nature, specifically extractivism, which is also accompanied by other necropolitical accumulative systems, in particular with new computational media and digital technologies. These are, to speak with Achille Mbembe, not only extracting surplus value through the annexation and commodification of the human attention span, but also promote the disappearance of transcendence and its re-institutionalization in the guise of the commodity.⁶⁰ In this context, the central question is how to delink from this globalized mode of production.

Turning the Cards Around: *Nope* or When Used Bodies Resist by Turning the Predator into Prey

According to Vishmidt, the body is inherently connected to politics, but it is politically overlooked.⁶¹ With digitalization, most recently through the rise of

⁵⁶ John Belamy Foster, "Extractivism in the Anthropocene: Late Imperialism and the Expropriation of the Earth," *Science for the People* 25, no. 2 (Autumn 2022), <https://magazine.scienceforthepeople.org/vol25-2-bleeding-earth/extractivism-in-the-anthropocene/>.

⁵⁷ Martin Arboleda, *Planetary Mine: Territories of Extraction Under Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2020).

⁵⁸ Eduardo Gudynas, *Extractivisms: Politics, Economy and Ecology* (Blackpoint: Fernwood, 2020).

⁵⁹ James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer, *Extractive Imperialism in the Americas: Capitalism's New Frontier* (Boston: Brill, 2014).

⁶⁰ Mbembe, "Digital Age."

⁶¹ Vishmidt, "Bodies in Space."

AI, the power relations of the colonial matrix did not go away. On the contrary, analysis shows that discourses about AI underpin power structures that already have immense power over the internet (and the world).⁶² The colonial matrix should therefore become a digital colonial matrix, where the visual and the somatic are interwoven through the enormous power of datafication—creating a whole objectivized (human) biplatform with computational unconscious. But can the cards be flipped?

Jordan Peele says they can. In his films, *Get Out* (2017), *Us* (2019) and *Nope* (2022), with the hauntology of four figures, listed by Rizvana Bradley and Denise Ferreira da Silva as “the Savage (the conquered), the Negro (the commodity), the Primitive (the other), and the Traditional (the underdeveloped),” for whom Bradley and Ferreira da Silva argue that they are operating “as the bearers of an ontological dissonance, an immanent declension, we might call blackness.”⁶³ Twisting them through a variety of motifs, themes, and cultural and cinematic references, Peele creates a resistance image, i.e., an image that resists the historical trajectory of the violence of the digital colonial matrix of knowledge. In particular with *Nope*, in which the history of racial violence is disentangled by evoking the relation between the entanglement of capital and epistemic violence embodied in an all-devouring predator UFO. But *Nope* is also about visualizing silenced histories. Indeed, to strive to capture UFO with the camera is to break away from modernity as a totalizing onto-epistemology and in this register generating a false universal subject of a Man.

But to capture UFO with the camera is also to appropriate the society of the spectacle and thus to delink racialized bodies from the regime of a deranged digital colonial matrix.

176

References

Adorno, Theodor W., and Max Horkheimer. *Dialektika razsvetljenstva: Filozofski fragmenti*. Translated by Seta Knop, Mojca Kranjc, and Rado Riha. Ljubljana: Studia Human-

⁶² “Who Has Power Over AI?,” Internet Health Report 2022, accessed August 2, 2023, <https://2022.internethealthreport.org/facts/>.

⁶³ Rizvana Bradley and Denise Ferreira da Silva, “Four Theses on Aesthetics,” *E-flux Journal* 120 (September 2021), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/120/416146/four-theses-on-aesthetics/>.

- itatis, 2006. Published in English as *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002).
- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)." In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, translated by Ben Brewster, 127–86. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971.
- Angerer, Marie-Luise. "The Body Bytes Back." In "The Body/Le corps/Der Körper," edited by Marina Gržinić Mauhler, 221–32. Special issue, *Filozofski vestnik* 23, no. 2 (2002).
- Arboleda, Martin. *Planetary Mine: Territories of Extraction under Late Capitalism*. London: Verso, 2020.
- Beer, David. "The Social Power of Algorithms." *Information, Communication and Society* 20, no. 1 (2017): 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2016.1216147>.
- Beller, Jonathan. "The Computational Unconscious." *B20*, August 1, 2018. <https://www.boundary2.org/2018/08/beller/>.
- Berardi, Franco. "Mental Long Covid and the Techno-Social Unconscious: A Conversation with Franco 'Bifo' Berardi." Interview by Geert Lovink. *E-flux Notes*, May 12, 2022. <https://www.e-flux.com/notes/468343/mental-long-covid-and-the-techno-social-unconscious-a-conversation-with-franco-bifo-berardi>.
- Bradley, Rizvana, and Denise Ferreira da Silva. "Four Theses on Aesthetics." *E-flux Journal* 120 (September 2021). <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/120/416146/four-theses-on-aesthetics/>.
- Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. *Programmed Visions: Software and Memory*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011.
- Deranty, Jean-Phillipe. "Regimes of the Arts." In *Jacques Rancière: Key Concepts*, edited by Jean-Philippe Deranty, 116–30. Durham: Acumen, 2010.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Specters of Marx*. Translated by Peggy Kamuf. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Dixon-Román, Ezekiel. "Algo-Ritmo: More-Than-Human Performative Acts and the Racializing Assemblages of Algorithmic Architectures." *Cultural Studies – Critical Methodologies* 16, no. 5 (October 2016): 482–90. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532708616655769>.
- Dolenc, Sašo. "Etične dileme umetne intelligence: Predlog moratorija na nadgradnjo sistemov jezikovne umetne intelligence." *Kvarkadabra*, March 30, 2023. <https://kvarkadabra.net/2023/03/eticne-dileme-umetne-inteligence/>.
- Erickson, Thomas. "Social Computing." In *The Encyclopedia of Human-Computer Interaction*, edited by Mads Soegaard and Rikke Friis Dam, 2nd ed., chap. 4. Aarhus, Denmark: Interaction Design Foundation, 2014. <https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/book/the-encyclopedia-of-human-computer-interaction-2nd-ed/social-computing>.
- Fisher, Mark. *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* Hampshire: Zero Books, 2009.
- Ford, Martin. *Rise of the Robots: Technology and the Threat of a Jobless Future*. New York: Basic Books, 2015.

- Foster, John Belamy. "Extractivism in the Anthropocene: Late Imperialism and the Expropriation of the Earth." *Science for the People* 25, no. 2 (Autumn 2022). <https://magazine.scienceforthepeople.org/vol25-2-bleeding-earth/extractivism-in-the-anthropocene/>.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. Translated by James Strachey. Vienna: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1922.
- Frosh, Stephen. *Key Concepts in Psychoanalysis*. London: British Library, 2002.
- Gillespie, Tarleton. "The Relevance of Algorithms." In *Media Technologies: Essays on Communication, Materiality, and Society*, edited by Tarleton Gillespie, Pablo J. Boczkowski, and Kirsten A. Foot, 167–93. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014.
- Graham, Mark, Bernie Hogan, Ralph K. Straumann, and Ahmed Medhat. "Uneven Geographies of User-Generated Information: Patterns of Increasing Informational Poverty." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 104, no. 4 (2014): 746–64. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00045608.2014.910087>.
- Gržinić, Marina. "Capital, Repetition." *Reartikulacija* 8 (2009): 3–4.
- . "Racialized Bodies and the Digital (Financial) Mode of Production." In *Regimes of Invisibility in Contemporary Art, Theory and Culture*, edited by Marina Gržinić, Aneta Stojnić, and Miško Šuvaković, 13–28. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
- Guattari, Felix. *The Machinic Unconscious: Essays in Schizoanalysis*. Translated by Taylor Adkins. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011.
- Gudynas, Eduardo. *Extractivisms: Politics, Economy and Ecology*. Blackpoint: Fernwood, 2020.
- Harris, Dave. "Notes On: Guattari, F. (2011) The Machinic Unconscious. Essays in Schizoanalysis, Translated by Taylor Adkins. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents." Dave Harris and Colleagues. Accessed August 1, 2023. <https://www.arasite.org/machincunconsc.html>.
- Hägglund, Martin. *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the Time of Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008.
- Internet Health Report 2022. "Who Has Power Over AI?" Accessed August 2, 2023. <https://2022.internethealthreport.org/facts/>.
- Kwet, Michael. "Digital Colonialism: US Empire and the New Imperialism in the Global South." *Race and Class* 60, no. 4 (April–June 2019): 3–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396818823172>.
- Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- López Petit, Santiago. *La movilización global: Breve tratado para atacar la realidad*. Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2009.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy; Volume 1, The Process of Capitalist Production*. Edited by Frederick Engels. Translated by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling. New York: International Publishers, 1967.

- . *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie; Erster Band, Buch I, Der Produktionsprozess des Kapitals*. Hamburg: Otto Meissner, 1867. <https://oll.libertyfund.org/page/marx-k1-1867>.
- Mbembe, Achille. *Critique of Black Reason*. Translated by Laurent Dubois. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.
- . “Decolonial Anxieties in a Postcolonial World: An Interview with Achille Mbembe.” Interview by Joseph Confavreux. *Postcolonial Studies* 25, no. 1 (2022): 128–35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2022.2050587>.
- . “The Digital Age Erases the Divide between Humans and Objects.” *Mail and Guardian*, January 6, 2017. <https://mg.co.za/article/2017-01-06-00-the-digital-age-erases-the-divide-between-humans-and-objects/>.
- . “Ignorance Too, Is a Form of Power.” Interview by Malka Gouzer. Chilperic, November 9, 2020. <https://www.chilperic.ch/interview/achille-mbembe-15.html>.
- Mejias, Ulises A., and Nick Couldry. “Datafication.” *Internet Policy Review* 8, no. 4 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.14763/2019.4.1428>.
- Musik, Christoph, and Alexander Bogner, eds. *Digitalization and Society: A Sociology of Technology Perspective on Current Trends in Data, Digital Security and the Internet*. Österreichische Zeitschrift für Soziologie Sonderhefte, book [Band] 19. Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019.
- Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo J. *Empire and Global Coloniality and African Subjectivity*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2015.
- Petras, James, and Henry Veltmeyer. *Extractive Imperialism in the Americas: Capitalism’s New Frontier*. Boston: Brill, 2014.
- Poovey, Mary. *A History of the Modern Fact: Problems of Knowledge in the Sciences of Wealth and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Rancière, Jacques. *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. Translated by Julie Rose. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- Rouvroy, Antoinette, and Bernard Stiegler. “The Digital Regime of Truth: From the Algorithmic Governmentality to a New Rule of Law.” Translated by Anaïs Nony and Benoît Dillet. *La Deleuziana* 3 (2016): 6–29. http://www.ladeleuziana.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Rouvroy-Stiegler_eng.pdf.
- Saito, Kohei. *Marx in the Anthropocene: Towards the Idea of Degrowth Communism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023.
- Terranova, Tiziana, and Ravi Sundaram. “Colonial Infrastructures and Techno-Social Networks.” *E-flux Journal* 123 (December 2021). http://workero1.e-flux.com/pdf/article_437385.pdf.
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. *State of Commodity Dependence 2021*. New York: United Nations Publications, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.18356/9789210057790>.

- Vishmidt, Marina. "Bodies in Space: On the Ends of Vulnerability." *Radical Philosophy* 2, no. 8 (Autumn 2020): 33–46. https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/rp208_vishmidt.pdf.
- Vogl, Joseph. *The Specter of Capital*. Translated by Joachim Redner and Robert Savage. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014.
- Warnecke-Berger, Hannes, Hans-Jürgen Burchardt, and Rachid Ouaiassa. "Natural Resources, Raw Materials, and Extractivism: The Dark Side of Sustainability." *Extractivism Policy Brief* 1 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.17170/kobra-202305168028>.
- Zuboff, Shoshana. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. New York: Public Affairs, 2019.