INORGANIC ASIAN NORTH AMERICAN LIVES

INORGANIC ASIAN NORTH AMERICAN LIVES: VIRTUAL DISMEMBERMENTS, COPIES AND WELLBEING

By DANIELLE WONG, B.Journ., M.A.

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (2017) Hamilton, Ontario (English and Cultural Studies)

TITLE: Inorganic Asian North American Lives: Virtual Dismemberments, Copies and Wellbeing AUTHOR: Danielle Wong, B.Journ. (Ryerson University), M.A. (McMaster University) SUPERVISOR: Professor Donald Goellnicht NUMBER OF PAGES: viii, 255

LAY ABSTRACT

This thesis examines historical and contemporary figurations of inorganic or "not quite" human Asian North Americans, including the Asian "coolie" and clone, and asks: What would it mean for Asian North Americans to rearticulate, embody, perform or cultivate inorganic life? In particular, my project analyzes (new) media productions and performances by Asians in North America to consider how online dismemberment, the Asian "copy," and abstracting labour that is not typically seen as "real" work create muted resistances or "glitches" in the Information Age's postracial, neoliberal progress.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Asian North American rearticulations of the inorganic—a quality that has historically been assigned to Asians, rendering them counterfeit, abstract or not-quite-human—in new media, film and literature. By analyzing circulations of Asian North American disassembled body parts, "copies," and gendered inter/faces, I argue that the excess, failures and ambivalence of Asian North American labour and performance constitute virtual modes of racialization that disrupt neoliberal, postracial temporalities in the Information Age.

Asian American studies has held in tension its critiques of the West's monopoly of liberal humanism in techno-Orientalist narratives (David S. Roh, Betsy Huang and Greta A. Niu) and the oppositional strategies of reappropriating techno-Orientalist tropes. My project does not seek to recuperate the Asian North American subject from the dehumanizing processes of fragmentation, surplus reproduction or abstraction—an impulse described by Rachel C. Lee as returning the "extracted body part" to the racialized "whole" in order to resolve anxieties about subjective "incoherence" or cultural inauthenticity. Instead, I turn to modes of inorganic life that do not produce an agential, autonomous Asian North American subject, but engender racializing disassemblages that work out survival and wellbeing within the neoliberal, abstracting pulls of the Information Age.

ACKNOWLEGEMENTS

I would not have been able to complete this project without the mentorship, generosity and support of my supervisory committee. First and foremost, I must thank my supervisor Donald Goellnicht, who guided me through the Ph.D. process by always providing integral comments on my works-in-progress and by making himself available for meetings, emails, texts or phone calls whenever I doubted myself or my project. I also want to thank Nadine Attewell for her perceptive and brilliant insights on various versions of the dissertation. Our conversations helped me see my own work more clearly and shaped so much of this project. I am also very grateful to have worked with Eugenia Zuroski, whose ability to draw incisive connections across texts, histories and concepts in ways I never considered made this dissertation richer.

I must also express immense gratitude for my external examiner, Stephen Hong Sohn, who generously offered his time, comments, questions and advice on this project.

I would also like to thank Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, who gave me feedback on my developing thesis and welcomed me into the Modern Culture and Media community at Brown University for a term.

This dissertation is a product of my family's love and support. Many thanks to my sister Agatha, Uncle Barnabas, Auntie Linda and my cousin Conan for being my home. In particular, I want to express immense gratitude for my mother, Lydia Wong, whose strength, sharp humour and leadership in her community inspire my writing.

Many thanks as well to my dear friends in Hamilton, Toronto and beyond who have cheered me on these past five years in the form of encouraging texts, funny cards, hugs, late-night drinks, delicious meals, prayers, dance parties, walks and tea dates.

Finally, I want to thank Brett Klassen, whose patience, constant reassurance and unwavering support before I even began my doctoral studies made it possible for me to finish this project.

I dedicate this project to the memory of my father, Victor Lung Long Wong, who shared his love of reading and writing with me. His unfinished dissertation reminds me what a privilege these past five years have been.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Introduction | Mediation, Dis/Embodiment and Inorganic Life

In its 2017 adaptation of Puccini's in/famous opera *Madama Butterfly*, Danish theatre company Hotel Pro Forma reimagines the character of Cio-Cio-San as a human-sized puppet. All the characters in this production, which was performed at La Monnaie in Brussels during the winter season of 2017, are played by actor-singers "in the flesh," except for Cio-Cio-San and her son, who is initially represented by a doll and then by a larger-than-life balloon after Butterfly's death in the final scene. As a team of puppeteers dressed in black brings Butterfly "to life," the Japanese geisha's ghost and voice—perhaps her soul—are disembodied and re-embodied by Greek soprano Alexia Voulgaridou, who narrates the tragedy as a white-haired phantom off to the side of the stage.

For the production's director, Kristen Dehlholm, the disembodiment of Cio-Cio-San's voice and the puppet's silence recuperate the tale from its Orientalist origins by, ironically, authenticating Butterfly's story. Dehlholm's approach to contemporizing Puccini's geisha is to see her as a "symbolic victim of Western colonial behaviour," and thus Dehlholm revisits the operatic classic from the perspective of Cio-Cio-San's ghost, noting that the "concept of ghosts is very significant in Asian culture" (qtd. in Mergeay). The "life-sized" puppet of a geisha, which was apparently inspired by the Japanese puppet theatre tradition Bunraku and manufactured by the Amsterdam-based Ulrike Quade Company, is animated not only by Voulgaridou's voice, but by a team of puppeteers and prop handlers dressed in black whom Dehlholm calls the "ninjas." While

Voulgaridou carries the voice of Cio-Cio-San, Dehlholm says, the puppet "amplifies the emotion of the music through the simplicity and expressiveness of its mute gestures" (qtd. in Mergeay).

While the marionette resurrects a long-critiqued, century-old Orientalist fantasy of docile, subservient Asian femininity, it also performs ambivalent functions as a racialized theatrical device that foregrounds how racialization itself is a mediation. On the one hand, the Cio-Cio-San puppet "frees" the theatrical production from a racist history of casting white sopranos in yellowface and from having to cast a "real" Japanese woman in a traditionally Orientalist role (which, arguably, would make Butterfly's problematic role as suicidal victim even more apparent "in the flesh"). In this way, the inorganic actor presents a solution for authenticating—making more organic—a Western production that is now aware of its own colonial baggage. As a puppet meant to pay homage to a "real" Japanese theatre tradition, Hotel Pro Forma's Cio-Cio-San is presented as a way to update an anachronistic Western cultural narrative by bringing "East and West together" ("Madama Butterfly"). On the other hand, the "modernized" Cio-Cio-San is a *mediation*—mediating and mediated by white performers' embodied storytelling—that emphasizes the inorganic processes of racialization. Alexander Weheliye theorizes racialization as a "technological assemblage of humanity, technology circumscribed here in the broadest sense as the application of knowledge to the practical aims of human life or to changing and manipulating the human environment" (12). To see the Cio-Cio-San puppet as a performance of the technological assemblage of humanity is therefore not about rescuing Butterfly from dehumanization, but about considering how her inorganic

life might speak to and *back at* the story for which she was created. To consider how she is both *mediated by* and *mediates* the "organic" white bodies on stage is to consider both her subjugation and subversive presence as an inorganic life.

I begin this introduction with the life-like Cio-Cio-San puppet because she articulates both the problem and possibility of technological mediation and disembodiment for Asian North Americans: while the Danish theatre company uses the puppet to "free" an Orientalist text from the apparent baggage of the racialized body, the puppet also brings to centre stage the mediated nature of Asianness itself as a "representational sign" (Kandice Chuh) that produces relationships between data (histories, knowledge regimes, legislation, economic flows, etc.) and flesh. Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska argue that mediation is not just part of life after new media, but engenders a "theory of life" by articulating "our being in, and becoming with the technological world" (xv). Following their theorization of mediation's vitality, my dissertation approaches the persistent figuration of "not quite" human Asians as a racist, imperialist affirmation of the humanness of white subjectivity *and* as site of inquiry that reveals the possibilities and potentialities of inorganic life. My project does not seek to recuperate an organic Asian North American subject from the dehumanizing processes of fragmentation, posthuman assemblage, disembodiment or abstraction. Instead, through a reading of Asian North American virtual performances and productions, I argue that these dehumanizing processes engender modes of inorganic life—racializing disassemblages (to riff of Weheliye's wording), failing copies and virtual labour—that do not produce

agential, autonomous subjects, but work out ambivalent, mediated wellbeing within the abstracting pulls of the neoliberal Information Age.[1]

My dissertation focuses on rearticulations of inorganic Asianness in Asian North American digital media because new questions about the stakes of dis/embodiment have emerged alongside the development of online networks and because Asian online virality is understood in North America as an exemplary success story of contemporary technological mediation. These two reasons are mutually constitutive: the neoliberal promises of transcending the bodily barriers of race, gender, ability and age are affirmed by the idea of the digitized Asian North American model minority. In a 2016 article about popular Asian YouTubers, for instance, Rhea Panela suggests that while Asian Americans face challenges breaking into the "unattainable dream" of Hollywood, they have found a "shortcut" into the entertainment industry through YouTube (Panela). Shortly after the 2012 #Linsanity phenomenon, in which Asian American NBA player Jeremy Lin suddenly rose to international fame, Konrad Ng observed that the "digital world is becoming a privileged site for the Asian American experience" (130). Reflecting on the proliferation of blog posts and YouTube videos produced by Asian Americans in response to Lin's breakout performance, Ng concludes that "digital media is the incubator for fresh and meaningful forms of Asian American engagement and scholarship" (131). Ng's and Panela's comments suggest that Asian American studies is moving forward into the new territory of the digital world, where Asian Americans are successfully navigating

[1] The Information Age names a set of discourses and assumptions about the postindustrial turn to an information economy, and has a mutually constitutive relationship with the neoliberal phenomena of financial deregulation, free markets, economic globalization and individualism.

their way into existence and recognition. However, by studying Asian North American digital media as performances and enactments of the concurrent violence and transformative possibilities of virtuality, my project investigates how virtual Asianness, which I use to name both online mediation and subjective incoherence and excess, interrogates the very notion of liberal progress or success.

Taking heed of Kember and Zylinska's call for scholars to move beyond fascination with or fear of "new media" (xiii), my project does not merely equate the "new" in new media with specific recent online forms and formats. Rather, it situates digital productions and performances within the ongoing histories of Asian North American immigration, labour, activism and cultural production in order to examine ongoing relationships between the labouring and performing Asian body, dis/embodiment and mediation. In doing so, I draw connections between seemingly dissimilar texts and temporalities, reading Asian North American literary texts, films, photography, and social media alongside one another. These unlikely connections allow social media performances to breathe inorganic life into Asian North American histories that are often disassociated from the digital age, and vice versa, tracing a *genealogy of virtual Asianness* that neither romanticizes nor renders dystopic the contemporary digital age, but historicizes, critiques and reworks its seemingly abstracting, disembodying forces.

Asian North Americans, after all, have had a long history of being imagined with and as "new" technology. The life-*like* Asian body has been and continues to be used as a tool or prop through which the white subject is authenticated and rendered organically human. In fact, the Orientalist discourses that informed Yellow Peril configurations of

machine-like, mass-produced and inscrutable Asians have always been *techno*-Orientalist discourses. As scholars like Eric Hayot and Colleen Lye demonstrate, the late-nineteenth-century understanding of the Chinese "coolie" in America figured him as machine-like, lacking nerves and capable of enduring pain without complaining. The coolie therefore signified "both the *process* of industrial production and its *product*" and was imagined to be identically "stamped out on a production line like so many millions of pins" (Hayot 141). As Hayot's and others' scholarship reveals, the early Asian migrant already figured as the West's Orientalized future, for the "Asiatic body represented to (white) America the newly created subject of modern technology and modern labor . . . exceed[ing] the measure of 'humanity' itself" (Hayot 68). The nineteenth-century idea of the interchangeable, mass-produced Asian body resonates with contemporary Western perceptions of Asians looking the same, lacking individuality and being "affectually absent" (Sohn 8)—tropes that inform popular cultural imaginations of Orientalized clones and robots. As Fan Yang has recently shown, the concept of not-quite-human, interchangeable Asian labourers also underlies the West's image of "fake" China and more broadly "fake" Asia as a site of imitative and unoriginal production—from so-called counterfeit goods to the lip-synch fiasco of the opening ceremony at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games. An earlier figuration of "fake Asia" was the portrayal of the Japanese auto industry as a cheap "rip-off" of the West's. Leading up to WWII and the decades that followed the war, Japanese cars were considered knock-offs of other manufacturers, with Toyota's first passenger car in 1936, the Model AA, being described by one columnist as a "blatant copy of Dodge and Chevrolet designs" (Cheney).

The genealogy of Asianness as new technology not only includes representations of inorganic Asian bodies, but the material and *discursive* functions of Asianness as a medium. Early techno-Orientalist narratives saw the inorganic Asian subject as a concurrently embodied and abstract figure that performed material and immaterial functions. As Lisa Lowe's analysis of the early-nineteenth-century "Trinidad Experiment" in the British West Indies demonstrates, the transatlantic coolie was meant to constitute a "racial barrier" between black slaves and white bodies in imperial and colonial imaginations. Functioning as a gauge for whiteness and blackness, Asianness was a measuring tool for the liberal human subject. Lowe argues that the racial barrier of the coolie affirmed a "fantasy of 'free' yet racialized and indentured labor, at a time when the possession of body, work, life, and death was foreclosed to the enslaved and the indentured alike" after the abolition of the slave trade (24). As a measuring tool used by imperial and settler colonial projects to differently racialize labour, and therefore to produce different degrees of humanity, Asianness functioned as a bodily and figurative firewall that secured the autonomy and humanness of white subjectivity and labour.

Importantly, it was and continues to be the perceived *technologized temporality* of Asian labourers in North America—the apparently mechanized efficiency of Chinese railroad workers, the "nimble" fingers of Asian garment labourers or the Asian American student who survives on very little sleep—that facilitates the portrayal of Asianness as an abstraction. As Iyko Day argues, under settler colonial logics, the abstract or quantitative elements of commodities have been typically racialized as Asian in contrast to the "concrete," qualitative nature of white labour in North America (16). She argues that

Asian North Americans have come to personify "abstract processes of value formation anchored by labor" by giving human shape to the "abstract circuits of capitalism" (8). Hence, while we typically discuss abstraction or disembodiment within the contexts of new media and Big Data, early techno-Orientalism already conceived of the Asian body as a firewall, a biotechnology and a virtual circulation.

Asian Americanist critiques of techno-Orientalism also understands this set of discourses as one with a long history. As David Roh, Besty Huang and Greta Niu point out, "the phenomenon of imagining Asia and Asians in hypo- or hypertechnological terms in cultural productions and political discourse" developed alongside industrial advancements in the West and is integral to the West's project to secure itself as the "architects of the future, a project that requires configurations of the East as the very technology with which to shape it" (2). Techno-Orientalist narratives understand Eastern modernity as simultaneously too advanced and regressive. The images of Asians producing cheap imitations of Western technology and of a dehumanized Asian high-tech future affirm the West's superiority as the architect of a more moral, human future. Roh et al. argue that the West is the "economic and ontological beneficiary" of the techno-Orientalist depiction of Eastern modernity as both the process and product of dehumanization. They note that, according to techno-Orientalist discourses, if this modernity should ever turn into a threatening hypermodernity, its dehumanization "reaffirm[s] the West's monopoly over liberal humanism" (223). Hence, while Hotel Pro Forma's production of *Madama Butterfly* is an attempt to update a traditionally "old-school" Orientalist tale, its use of a puppet for a Japanese protagonist reveals the opera's

enduring techno-Orientalist project. The manufactured, life-like marionette of a white-faced, red-lipped geisha remains the narrative and stage prop by which West seeks to "meet" East, and in this meeting, affirm its organic claim to liberal humanism in contrast to Eastern artifice.

Yet, as Roh, Huang and Niu, and other Asian Americanists have pointed out, the field of Asian American studies holds in tension its critiques of techno-Orientalist discourses and the oppositional strategies of reappropriating techno-Orientalist tropes to "make race do different things," as Wendy Hui Kyong Chun suggests in her formulation of "race as technology" ("Introduction" 28). Along similar lines, Roh, Huang and Niu ask: "If technology has come to mediate 'contact' between East and West through techno-Orientalist discourses, how, then, might we fashion representational technologies that engender 'encounter' rather than empty contact?" (10). After all, to consider Cio-Cio-San's performance in Hotel Pro Forma's *Madama Butterfly* as a technological one is to see her inorganic life not only within, but against, a techno-Orientalist narrative. Despite being completely covered in black and being named "ninjas"—the name connoting Orientalized surreptitiousness—Butterfly's choreographed handlers are very much part of the performance, particularly when watched as a filmed recording with close-up shots of Cio-Cio-San. When the audience watches the puppet fly, fall, or run, it is also watching the ninjas' choreographed dance, their interactions with, and sometimes embrace of, Cio-Cio-San. Butterfly's open-eyed, slightly smiling face remains the same throughout the story, as her soprano ghost sings emotionally, gesticulating and with vigorous facial expressions that are captured in frequent close-up shots in the recording of the 2017

production in Brussels. In many ways, this adaption of *Madama Butterfly* is about white bodies' dehumanization, narration and possessive embrace of Butterfly, as well as their ultimate inability to hold on to her. Although Bunraku puppets tend to be significantly smaller and arguably are not made to be "life-like," the Cio-Cio-San puppet is made to human scale and meant to substitute for yellowface—another kind of inorganic performance. Her life-like presence acknowledges the inanimate nature of the suicidal geisha, emphasizing that the Japanese woman who kills herself at the end of the production has always already been inanimate—an inorganic figure of a Western fantasy. Her mediated performance brings out her inorganic life as emphatically a prop, a tool, a racial technology.

The geisha-puppet indexes the ways in which the posthuman subject and the inorganic processes of racialization are yoked. In her analysis of Alan Turing's famous Turing Test,[2] N. Katherine Hayles theorizes assemblage as a continual process of the posthuman subject. Turing's test asked whether an interrogator using teleprinter communication would be able to tell that he was speaking to a machine who has replaced a man in the game. Hayles contends that the test already renders its subject a cyborg because the represented and enacted bodies are combined through mediating technology so that the "overlay between the enacted and represented bodies is no longer a natural inevitability but a contingent production" (xiv). The posthuman subject, according to Hayles, is precisely such a contingent production: an "amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo

[2] I examine and intervene in the Turing Test more thoroughly in Chapter 1.

continuous construction and reconstruction" (3). Similarly, Weheliye's conceptualization of racialization does not do away with material embodiment, but considers how the biological body is *always already mediated* to produce a scale of human life. He argues that racialization is neither a biological nor a cultural descriptor but, a "conglomerate of sociopolitical relations that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and non-humans" (3).

Both Hayles's and Weheliye's theorizations of mediated assemblage engage with, by putting pressure on, the liberal humanist figure of "Man as the master-subject." Weheliye asks what "different modalities of the human" emerge if we do not take the liberal human Man as master-subject, but consider how "humanity has been imagined and lived by those subjects excluded from that domain" (8). Hayles argues that while the cybernetic notion of the posthuman has sought to deconstruct the liberal humanist subject—a subject that feminist and postcolonial theorists critique as being historically universalized as white and male—it has done so by downplaying or erasing embodiment (4). This erasure, she argues, is a feature of both the cybernetic posthuman and the universalizing liberal humanist subject, for the latter emerged as a rational mind *possessing* a body, not *being* a body:

> Only because the body is not identified with the self is it possible to claim for the liberal subject its notorious universality, a claim that depends on erasing markers of bodily difference, including sex, race, and ethnicity . . . To the extent that the posthuman constructs embodiment as the instantiation of thought/information, it continues the liberal tradition rather than disrupts it. (4-5)

Rachel Lee notes that Asian American studies tends not to engage with the developing interdisciplines of posthuman studies and medical humanities partly because the field of

Asian American studies is wary of "fixity" or the risk of essentialism associated with the biological framing of race (11). Hence, the field's impulse to discursively return the "extracted body part" removed in dehumanizing processes to the racialized "whole" is a reparative move that resolves its anxieties about subjective "incoherence" and naturalizes a "prior state of organic intactness and individuality" to the racialized body (8). In her scholarship, however, Lee puts Asian American studies in conversation with posthuman studies and medical humanities by querying whether literary and performance theory can remain humanist by turning to the patterns of "distributed parts" rather than attempting to recuperate organic structures (7). Following Lee, I consider how the inorganic Asian North American body, its labour, and its performances put pressure on the very notion of the liberal subject—and the liberal subject that is reassembled in postracial conceptualizations of the posthuman—which has historically defaulted to being white and male.

Lee's turn away from the authority of the organic whole, with which I engage more thoroughly in my first chapter on android and virtual dismemberments, opens up possibilities for what Weheliye describes as the "alternative modes of life alongside the violence, subjection, exploitation, and racialization that define the modern human" (1-2). With these scholars' interventions in the liberal humanist genealogy of the individual and the human in mind, I ask in this project: What would it mean for Asian North Americans to live inorganically? Or, what modes of racialized inorganic or not-quite life are possible in the so-called disembodied turn of the Information Age? If, as Roh et al. argue, the dehumanization of Asians as well as the representation of Asian modernity as

dehumanizing operate within the techno-Orientalist tradition to grant the West monopoly over liberal humanism, perhaps an emphasis on dehumanizing or not-quite-human modes of Asian North American production and performance offers alternatives for seeing life beyond that which is socio-politically legible as real or organic. By drawing together Asian North American studies, posthuman studies and new media theory, my project interrogates the posthuman subject's reincarnation of the liberal human subject by highlighting how the posthuman as a continually mediated amalgam articulates the inorganic processes of racialization and gender performance.

Kandice Chuh's influential call for the field of Asian American studies to "imagine otherwise" a "subjectless discourse" that prioritizes difference emphasizes that subjectivity is discursively constructed and thus resists the American celebration of citizenship and modernity to which liberal subjectivity is so central (9-10). For Chuh, the term "Asian American" is literary in nature and thus a *representational sign* that speaks both to the ongoing denial of personhood to people inhabiting those bodies and the "enormous capacity for life" that has conquered racism's attempts to dehumanize them:

> It transfers the properties of the racialized and gendered nation onto bodies—of people, of literatures, of fields of study. Far from being a transparent, objective description of a knowable identity, the term may be conceived of as a *mediating presence* that links bodies to the knowledge regimes of the U.S. nation. 'Asian American' is in this sense a metaphor for resistance and racism. (27)

Conceiving of "Asian American" as a doubled metaphor, Chuh theorizes this term as a *mediation* between bodies racialized as Asian American and the knowledge regimes of the nation-state. Hence, to see "Asian American" as a metaphor is to stress how the notion of "Asian American" performs as a technology that accounts for Asianness as a

material-information amalgam in relation to and within structures of power. As a mediation, the term abstracts, transfers, and re-embodies the varying meanings and practices of Asianness within its specific contexts, and also provides a set of tools that can be used to navigate the denial of personhood.

I am intrigued by the way the Cio-Cio-San puppet operates as a material and visualizing sign (or symbol, according to Dehlholm) of colonial violence that is, paradoxically, operated by a Danish theatre company as a way of *disembodying* that historical violence. Yet, the puppet performs inorganically—both in the sense that she serves a narrative and design function as an inanimate prop, and that she conveys meaning and elicits affective responses in her not-quiteness. As Cio-Cio-San "dies" in the final act of the opera, her three ninja puppeteers slowly lay her down in a fetal position on centre stage. Finally separated from Voulgaridou's voice, and from the pull and push of the puppeteers, Butterfly lies as a lifeless heap on centre stage, her open-eyed, slightly smiling face tucked into her arm and hidden from view. Pinkerton runs out from stage left with his wife, singing the famous last refrain of the opera over and over, "Butterfly!" As Cio-Cio-San lies motionless under the spotlight, unresponsive to Pinkerton's cries, she becomes more human-like in her performed death. Her posture resembles that of a "real" human corpse, even as we are reminded that she has always been, in a sense, not alive. This visualization of a life-sized corpse is unsettling not only because it re-embodies the colonial violence of *Madama Butterfly*'s narrative, attaching it to a "realistic" Orientalized corpse, but also because it reframes the production as a tale about the white, imperialistic use of an Asian woman deemed a plaything from the beginning.

My turn to inorganic Asian North American life straddles this unstable line between the violence of mediation and its transformative possibilities. To consider mediation as "life itself" is to take into account the phenomena of *being in* and *becoming with* one's environment—a conceptualization of mediated life that suggests that we are concurrently used by and use the technological world. Hence, my project considers the ambivalence of inorganic Asian North American life by suggesting that—like the mediated and mediating Cio-Cio-San puppet—the not-quiteness of Asian bodies, labour and production is neither completely resistant nor simply complicit in techno-Orientalist narratives and capitalist systems. Instead, I argue that from these ambivalent performances, Asian North Americans carve out possibilities for theorizing and enacting modalities of life that do not adhere to the legitimizing call of organic wholeness and its commitment to the liberal-subject-as-human. Rather, they create temporalities and practices for being partial, excessive and well, within a neoliberal Information Age that relies upon racialized people's incompleteness, excess and ability to work "well" in order to bestow more life on some and take life from others.

My dissertation contends that these Asian North American temporalities and practices of being inorganic can be named as *virtual*, and therefore focuses on Asian North American online performances and productions. In fact, my theorization of Asianness as a virtuality expands upon Chuh's formulation of "Asian American" as literary. I suggest that Asianness as a signifying or metaphorical device not only gestures to its own functions as a mediation of state knowledge regimes and bodies, but emphasizes the *not-quiteness* of this metaphor. In other words, like a literary metaphor,

virtual Asianness is both the partial and excessive meanings circulated by the presence of a "like" or "almost" device. Hence, virtuality names the ways in which Asianness connotes the not-quiteness (not quite human, not quite material, inscrutable, etc.) and not-yet temporality of a transformative process of racialization. I choose the idea of virtuality to articulate inorganic Asian North American life precisely because it can be used to name techno-Orientalist ideas about Asians as well as the oppositional strategies of occupying such tropes. Johan Fornäs, Kajsa Klein, Martina Ladendorf, Jenny Sundén and Malin Svenningsson trace the origins of the word "virtual" to the terms "virtue" and "virtuoso," which were gendered concepts of a skilled man who had mastery over the fabrication of new things. The media scholars note that:

> A virtual phenomenon is *almost like* something else, a simulated or emulated version that imitates something else in reality . . . Virtual reality is not actual reality, though it is pretty much like it, standing in for some absent real world. The two realities are neither completely identical nor absolute opposites. Their strange relationship easily induces some confusion. (29)

This definition resonates with historical figurations of Asian North Americans as *almost* something real and therefore "standing in for something," such as the "emblematic" Asian migrant labourer who was seen in the nineteenth century as a "future substitute" for the waning slave trade (Lye 20), or the Asian North American model minority figure whose perceived imitation of whiteness is almost like whiteness, but emphatically a simulation because of her lack of organic spontaneity or "natural" sociability.

The Cio-Cio-San puppet, as an emulation of an emulation of a Japanese woman, is in this sense virtual in her body and performance. Yet, she also shows us that virtuality engenders possibility for counter-readings, alternative temporalities and inorganic

performances. Indeed, Tiziana Terranova's formative work on network culture conceives of virtualization as a process that opens up "a real understood as devoid of transformative potential" to the biophysical and sociocultural forces—that is, the material and informational processes—of the "unlikely and the inventive" (27). Terranova writes, "What lies beyond the possible and the real is thus the openness of the virtual, of the invention and the fluctuation, of what cannot be planned or even thought in advance, of what has no real permanence but only reverberations" (Ibid). Engaging with Terranova's concept of the virtual, I query how inhabiting, reoccupying or refashioning the "almost" and simulative qualities assigned to Asian North Americans cultivates a "transformative potential" that puts pressure on that which has historically been considered the "reality" that Asianness imitates. Of course, to consider the virtual as "the unlikely and the inventive" is also to consider its limits and its susceptibility to being mined for late capitalist, neoliberal, or what Terranova calls postindustrial (75), economies. Thus, as I examine virtual Asian North American dismemberments, copies and modes of mediated wellbeing, I ask what disruptions or ruptures to postraciality or neo/liberal progress they engender from *within* and as *part of* those very temporalities and structures.

Each of my three chapters discusses and historicizes a specific manifestation of inorganic Asian North American life in order to unpack another layer in the meanings of virtuality, and examine the ways in which "the virtual" and Asianness are mutually constitutive. In Chapter 1, "Racializing Disassemblages," I analyze Asian/American android women's dismemberments in the critically acclaimed 2015 film *Ex Machina* in order to begin theorizing an inorganic Asian North American critique of the white-as-

postracial posthuman subject of the Information Age. I examine the film within the contexts of contemporary Big Data surveillance and its assumed colourblindness to argue that the Asian androids' self-dismemberments perform glitches in their programmed functions to securitize the centrality of whiteness in the disembodied future, "contaminating" these postracial circulations with the labouring racialized and gendered body part. Engaging with Lee's work, I ask whether inorganic Asian fragments "live" and perform differently from the wholes onto which they are grafted. I then build on my reading of *Ex Machina* to analyze the virtual dismemberments of gay Asian men's headless torsos on hook-up apps and the overly faced, decapitated selfies made by Jus Reign, a Sikh Canadian social media producer, as acts that concurrently invite, produce and disrupt everyday surveillance culture.

In the second chapter, "Inorganic Asian Copies," I discuss inscrutable or inorganic Asian masks in Philip Kan Gotanda's play *Yankee Dawg You Die* alongside Asian American YouTuber Ryan Higa's "Skitzo" series and Asian Canadian comedian Peter Chao/Davin Tong's "Chinese Guy" performances on his YouTube channel. Here, I use Homi Bhabha's famous theorization of colonial mimicry and his contention that colonial mimicry renders the colonial subject a "partial" or "virtual" presence, in order to suggest that these Asian North American performances of failing Asian versions are *partial* or incomplete (inscrutable) in their strategic excessiveness. These Asian copies and versions, which gesture to tropes about Asians "all looking the same" and being interchangeable, are inorganic in two senses: first, the interchangeability of Asian versions connotes that these copies are inorganically mass produced, cloned or simulations of an original;

second, these performances of Asian versions are *bad copies* who fail to faithfully reproduce one another and consequently engender misrecognitions. While the circulated incompletion of Asian North American parts provided a site for examining virtuality in the first chapter, virtuality in this chapter is examined as the subversive mischief and tragedy of failed Asian North American reproduction and its excesses.

My second chapter concludes by discussing how Higa's "skitzos" and Chao's "Chinese Guy" perform—not unproblematically—a gendered and racialized lag that invokes notions of disability and mental illness. I suggest that this temporal drag is also a component of the dominant mental health discourse concerning Asian North Americans, as Asian families are often depicted in public health narratives as being disabled in their apparent lack of language for, and their lateness in, addressing mental illness. I ask, what would it mean, then, to consider wellness within the virtuality of the "not yet," to conceive of wellness not necessarily as possessing subjective wholeness in order to participate in the ableist civic future, but as unstable modes of the "not quite"? My third chapter, "Mediated Wellbeing" attempts to address this question through an examination of Asian North American rest and work that is not quite recognized as rest or work, including the sleeping Asian meme, Asian American women's half-life sleep in Jennifer Phang's film *Advantageous*, and the "facework" (Erving Goffman) of K-beauty regimens, experimentations, blogging and vlogging. My exploration of the virtual is focused on temporality in this third chapter, as I consider how neoliberal logics of efficiency and productivity are yoked to concepts of wellbeing and self-care. I suggest that virtual

labour, or work that is not recognized as such, can enact temporalities of lingering and loitering in a presentness in spite of and within neoliberal progress.

My methodology emulates the not-quiteness that I theorize in Asian North American performance and production. By moving in between and bringing together seemingly disparate texts, events and academic disciplines, my project performs an inorganic study that does not quite develop linearly nor progress toward a stable "goal." In other words, my project at times enacts the irruptions and recessions of the virtual—theorizing the potential resistance of inorganic Asian North American life, only at times to dismantle those possibilities. My inorganic methodology in some ways follows Lee's multidirectional, non-teleological "sideways" approach to Asian American cultural production and critique—a strategy that recognizes that "as much as we'd like the problems we confront to conform to a simple causal logic . . . our social-justice and biological systems do not quite operate in these mechanistically predictable ways" (Lee 243). I hope that by conjuring modalities of life that exist beyond, beside or despite the Man-as-master subject, these spectral hauntings and glitches will reverberate in transformative, undetermined ways in our scholarship, relationships, and creative productions. After all, virtual Asianness is not completely ephemeral. It has a long history of inorganic bodies, body parts, labour, practices and performances that continue to breathe life into our shifting contemporary moments.

Chapter 1 | Racializing Disassemblages

> In considering the functions of the mind or the brain we find certain operations which we can explain in purely mechanical terms . . . it is a sort of skin which we must strip off if we are to find the real mind. But then in what remains we find a further skin to be stripped off, and so on.
>
> - Alan Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence"

> What does it mean to be "totally naked" at the turn of the twenty-first century?"
>
> - Rachel C. Lee, *The Exquisite Corpse of Asian America*

In the final moments of the critically acclaimed 2015 film *Ex Machina*, an android with a missing arm who has just stabbed her creator to death stands in front of a row of wardrobes that contain her predecessors: five android women, each eventually turned off to make room for the next artificial intelligence prototype. Ava, who was held captive since "birth" in an enclosed room in her programmer Nathan Bateman's remote research facility, pauses when she opens the door to a defunct "Asian" android. The discarded robot, whom Nathan named Jade, looks like a naked Asian woman with smooth skin and long, black hair. It's Ava, however, who is technically naked; her body-structure made of carbon fibre, metal, and plastic is shaped in the frame of a young, thin woman, but is not covered up with synthetic skin. Ava's face, as the British film's script describes it, is the "one part of her that is not obviously an inorganic construct" (Garland 18). This face belongs to white Swedish actor Alicia Vikander. Ava disconnects Jade's left arm and seamlessly fastens it to herself, as if already knowing that it would be a perfect fit. She then proceeds to peel the skin off of the Asian android and transfers Jade's skin, piece by

piece, to her robot frame. The inorganic epidermis sticks to her automatically, also as if designed to be transferrable. Jade, who has been seemingly lifeless and immobile this whole time, now has her head turned towards Ava with a slight smile on her face and the two androids look at one another in silence. When her whole body except for her face is covered with Asian skin, Ava dons a brunette wig from another "white" android and stands in front of the mirrored panels of the wardrobes, turning to look at her new body from different angles. The android takes a white dress off of the one clothed robot and then walks out of Nathan's mansion and eventually comes across a helicopter in a field. The film concludes with Ava standing in the middle of a busy urban intersection, successfully passing as a white woman. Ava is now free.

In this chapter, I analyze the dismemberment and dispersal of Asian/American[3] androids in *Ex Machina*[4] in order to theorize what I call an *inorganic Asian North American critique*. This mode of critique, I contend, interrogates the historical and ongoing discourses that render Asians not quite alive, as well as online performances of life beyond or apart from the organic, whole body-as-subject. In particular, I consider the possible critical turns that the posthuman has to offer Asian North American studies while concurrently using Asian Americanist critiques of imperialism and the colonial, imperial liberal human subject to interrogate notions of the posthuman. The Asian android women

[3] I use "Asian/American" to describe the Asian androids in *Ex Machina* because these robots are racialized as Asian and the film implies, but does not make explicit, that they were made by a large American corporation.

[4] The film's title alludes to the Greek tragedy device "deus ex machina" ("God from the machine") whereby a new character or event is introduced to resolve a seemingly irresolvable conflict—an expression evolved from the literal practice of using machines to lower actors playing deities to the stage.

in *Ex Machina* exemplify not only the long-held beliefs that the Asian body is not quite natural or human, that Asian labourers can work with machine or computer-like efficiency, or that Asian women are silent in their servitude; they mark a mediated tomorrow in which Asian body parts are convertible and transferrable biotechnologies. Thus, instead of merely reading Asian parts as prostheses that facilitate Ava's seamless transformation into the posthuman subject, whose prosthetic transformations mark the future's constant mediated reconstructions, I suggest that these fragments cause a lag in the process of futurity by circulating the past into the future. I contend that the Asian/American android-coolie in *Ex Machina* is an embodiment of the histories of labour and migration that haunt futures laden with techno-Orientalist anxieties—an embodiment that emphasizes the body part over the whole in order to perform race beyond or outside of the intact organism qua personhood. Jade and another Asian android named Kyoko, who is Nathan's domestic worker, alienate certain pieces of their bodies to "expose" other parts of their synthesized frames, throwing the limits of the individual body into confusion, and disorienting the gaze of the white coder or Internet user. Their dismemberments circulate to generate temporalities, lives and afterlives apart from, as well as part of, the legible, liberal human subject.

The biological or anatomical part, as Rachel Lee points out, is "relished" in Asian American literature both for the affects that circulate from the "ballistic force" of "tactile cuts, tears from context, and plastic transformations" and as a site of anxiety around subjective "incoherence" or cultural inauthenticity in the field of Asian American studies (7-8). She notes that the field has yet to resolve this tension, but that it has made moral,

ethical, and political claims about human body parts "*through a distinctive rhetorical move that putatively returns the extracted body part of the violated racialized whole—a move that naturalizes a prior state of organic intactness and individuality to that racialized body*" (8). Asian North American texts like Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995), David Henry Hwang's play *M. Butterfly* (1988), Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictee* (1982), Ruth Ozeki's *My Year of Meats* (1998), and Larissa Lai's sci-fi novel *Salt Fish Girl* (2002) interrogate the anatomy of their Asian American or Asian Canadian characters' bodies, probing the strangeness of and taking pleasure in particular body parts and molecular combinations. In Cha's text, for example, her narrator expresses the pain of losing the Korean language under colonial oppression as an embodied violence experienced in her individuated organs: "Tongue inside the mouth inside / the throat inside / the lung organ alone. The only organ. / All assembled as one. Just one . . . To bite the tongue. / Swallow. Deep. Deeper. / Swallow. Again even more. / Just until there would be no more of organ. / Organ no more. / Cries" (67, 69). This imagery of swallowing an organ is not only a metaphor for the loss of language but perhaps also an invocation of a Korean/American anatomy that transcends language—the body's ingestion of its own organs as an act of simultaneous self-dismemberment and self-consumption that can only produce cries and noises beyond the verbal.

Lee observes that Asian American studies' lack of engagement with the developing interdisciplines of posthuman studies and medical humanities is partly because of its dismissal of the "biological" framing of race as problematically connoting "something like fixity" (11). She queries whether literary and performance theory can

remain humanist by turning to the patterns and circulations of "distributed parts" and fragments rather than organic structures, "or, more exactly, turn fragment and substance into patterns—circulations of energy, affects, atoms, and liquidity" (7). To recast her question: Can the notion of "Asian North American" retain its concern with political resistance, anti-oppression, and cross-racial solidarity if Asianness is located not in the intact subject but in the posthuman processes of implosion and dispersal?

While Asian Americanist critique has been concerned with the personification and humanization of the legal-political category of the "not-quite-human: immigrant, coolie, neocolonial, transnational laborer, sex worker, call center operator" (Lee 20), I seek not to return the severed part or the so-called subhuman to the legal-political subject, but to consider other forms of life that emerge in their separation from the whole. The movement of Asian body parts in *Ex Machina* demonstrates two key aspects of query in this chapter: the transferrable nature of Asianness as a *proxy* and the role of Asian parts as firewalls for securing whiteness against and within "risky" contact with racialized contagion. By reading Asian North American social media productions alongside *Ex Machina*, I contend that Asian proxies leak in order to facilitate the circulation of and intimacies between spectral labouring parts that continue to "live" beyond the subject.

My contention follows Sara Ahmed's "call to arms," which conceives of willfulness as the resistive possibility of parts that are *too* willful, that do not submit their will to the general will of the "whole social body" (*Willful* 99). She writes, "A rebellion is a rebellion of a part. The rebel is the one who compromises the whole, that is, the body of which she is a part" (*Willful* 100). When arms refuse to labour, that is, refuse to support

and carry, Ahmed posits, "they reach. We don't know what the arms can reach" (*Willful* 204). If, as Ahmed argues, the preservation of the (white) social body depends on certain parts or workers aligning with the "general will" of the whole, the rebellious, "willful" part that threatens to break the body apart finds new life in its detachment from the whole (*Willful* 103-104, 108). I suggest that life beyond the subject not only probes the limit of liberal subjectivity; it also examines what it means to be posthuman by disrupting the progress of postracial-as-white futurity and infecting it with the spectral racialized labouring fragment. The infections to which I turn are thus hauntings, or what Avery Gordon describes as "ghostly matters" that are projected and repressed by the "postmodern, late-capitalist, postcolonial world" (12) and, I would add, also by the posthuman turn. And if, as Gordon suggests, the postmodern, "overstated" emphasis on new communication technologies and consumerism is an "antighost" move that puts everything "on view" (13), the spectral labouring part that has posthumous life, or life post-separation from the body, conjures the posthuman phantoms of racial memory.

The Turing Test in the Information Age: Gender and the Spectre of Race

Ex Machina's exploration of what it means to be human and what qualifies as sentience is premised on the famous Turing test, which Alan Turing theorized by using the analogy of an "imitation game" in his 1950 paper "Computing Machinery and Intelligence." Caleb Smith, a young coder who works for Nathan's (presumably American) company Blue Book, the world's largest Internet search engine, arrives at his employer's estate after winning a competition and learns that he will be examining an

android to determine whether she has true artificial intelligence—that is, whether she exhibits qualities that would allow her to pass for human. Turing likened the question "Can machines think?" to a game in which an interrogator is in a separate room from a man and a woman, and must determine who the man is and who the woman is by asking them questions through teleprinter communication (434). He wondered what would happen if a machine replaced the man in this game and whether the human interrogator could tell the difference, asking, "Will the interrogator decide wrongly as often when the game is played like this as he does when the game is played between a man and a woman?" (Ibid). In Turing's test, passing for human, or successfully taking on human behaviour, therefore, is dependent on the machine's ability to deceive its human interrogator—a sign of artificial intelligence that is made analogous with gender performance. The initial premise of the Turing test involves discerning man from woman based on their *performances* via technological communication. By replacing the man in the test with a machine, the the test illustrates the performativity of gender: the machine passes by successfully performing as a man, and does so by distinguishing itself from a woman.

N. Katherine Hayles contends that by including gender in this pivotal turn away from the fixity of embodiment, Turing brought into question the characteristics of the liberal humanist subject by distinguishing between the "enacted body" on one side of the computer screen and the "represented body," which is produced by verbal and semiotic signifiers in the electronic environment (xiii). According to Hayles, the test renders the subject a cyborg, as the represented and enacted bodies are combined through the

technology that mediates them so that the "overlay between the enacted and represented bodies is no longer a natural inevitability but a contingent production" (xiv). This contingent production is what Hayles identifies as the posthuman, which she describes as a "point of view" that privileges the informational pattern over material instantiation to posit that embodiment is an "accident of history" rather than an inevitability, sees prostheses as continuations of the already-prosthetic body, and suggests that the human being is articulated with intelligent machines (2-3). She writes, "The posthuman subject is an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction" (3). As an android whose face was designed based on Caleb's online pornography searches and whose brain contains the patterns of Internet users' behaviours, Ava is a posthuman figure who incarnates the virtual informational patterns of a mass in a body that is constructed ("inorganic") and continues to be reconstructed by parts coded as Asian in their assembled "whole," but seemingly racially fluid in their disassemblage.

Ex Machina reimagines the Turing test in the Information Age not only by emphasizing Turing's inclusion of gender in his test, but by complicating the turn toward disembodiment (virtuality) with an emphasis on how race—as both material and information—labours in the production of the posthuman. In the evolutionary succession of the human by the posthuman, race is, quite literally, deconstructed and disassembled in order for Ava to continue her prosthetic evolution by incorporating Asian skin and an Asian limb. Ava's transformation from being a posthuman figure into a *free* posthuman subject seemingly involves the conflation of the posthuman with the postracial, as the

Asian skin and arm seem to blend seamlessly with the rest of Ava. I would argue, however, that the film's sustained gaze on the removal of Jade's arm and skin, and on Kyoko when she slowly takes off her skin in one climatic scene, foreground race and racialized labour as a necessary part of the configuration of the posthuman or the postracial as white. Ava represents a revised liberal human subject: as a "free" posthuman subject gendered as a woman she "updates" Man as master-subject, but is haunted by the imperial and colonial configuration of the human as white and therefore free, and as free and therefore white. After all, as Hayles notes, the cybernetic concept of the posthuman simultaneously deconstructs the Enlightenment model of the liberal humanist subject and *extends* it by emphasizing disembodiment, for the liberal subject was "identified with the rational mind . . . [and] possessed a body but was not usually represented as *being* a body. Only because the body is not identified with the self is it possible to claim for the liberal subject its notorious universality" (4).

The Asian and black android women's failure to pass Nathan's test in effect amends the Turing test and expands Hayles's intervention. Nathan's experiment is not only hinged on convincing heteronormative gender performance, the mediated processes of racialization are also required to be seamless and undetectable. Considering human flesh as a kind of mediation of the processes by which race becomes attached to physiology, Alexander Weheliye posits that racialization is neither a biological nor a cultural descriptor, but an amalgamation of "sociopolitical relations that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and non-humans" (3, 12). His theory of racialization responds to shortcomings in Giorgio Agamben's notion of bare life and

Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics—ideas that Weheliye argues disavow the "alternative modes of life" to the liberal humanist subject of Man that exist alongside racialization and exploitation (2, 8). Flesh, according to Weheliye, "represents racializing assemblages of subjection that can never annihilate . . . practices of liberation, and possibilities of other worlds" (2). Therefore, understanding racialization as sociopolitical amalgamations and flesh as mediation importantly helps us to foreground race in discussions about the posthuman and artificial intelligence. As the Asian/American and black androids fail to pass for human, they make evident the material-informational processes of racialization by individuating the body part—flesh that is not quite, or not yet, human. Their bodily disassemblages probe whiteness's seamless transition into the postracial, posthuman future by emphasising the labour, unevenness and disjunctive temporalities of racialization. The posthuman future emerging out of the Information Age grafts onto itself skin that remembers the histories of racialized slave and indentured labour that gave rise to Western modernity so that the posthuman cannot elude the spectres of Empire and of race.

The depiction of artificial intelligence as Asian or Asian-like is a familiar one, and one that Asian North American studies and cultural productions have both critiqued and reimagined. From the cyborgian Chinese-German villain Dr. No of the James Bond franchise, to the Somni clone-slaves who serve fast-food customers in the Neo-Seoul of 2144 in the 2004 novel and 2012 film *Cloud Atlas*, techno-Orientalist narratives reimagine Yellow Peril anxieties by envisioning the "affectually absent" (Sohn 8) and technologically efficient Asian body as a technological product of late capitalism. As Eric

Hayot observes, the nineteenth-century imagination of the West's "Chinese future" understood the Chinese body as a threat of the artifice with dehumanizing implications:

> [T]he Chinese body could figure the West's potentially "Chinese" future, as though somewhere in the particular embodied qualities of the Chinese—which included, as Yellow Perilist discourse made clear throughout the period, the fact of their sheer number—lay the obscured and secret fulcrum of the future to come. Angle the lever one way, and you got the return to mass slavery and oligarchic despotism presaged by Chinese labor in the United States. (147)

Recalling David Roh, Betsy Huang and Greta Aiyu's contention that techno-Orientalism presents the East as the "very technology" that shapes a future designed by the West (2), Asian body parts in *Ex Machina* are material technologies for materially and figuratively shaping and *securing* a white posthuman future. Not only is Jade's skin peeled off of her frame to complete Ava's transformation, Nathan's mute domestic helper Kyoko, who is kept in the mansion for the millionaire's sexual and housekeeping needs, appears to be killed when Nathan strikes her with a weight barbell, disjointing her jaw and taking the skin off of her metallic, android face during Ava's escape. The bodies of labouring android Asian women are violently disassembled in the name of progress, for the apparent evolution of a posthuman future in which white subjectivity is articulated as postracial and, therefore, free to move onward into tomorrow.

My reading of the Asian/American android in *Ex Machina* sets up an entry point into theorizing an inorganic Asian North American critique at the intersection of cybernetics, new media theory, Asian American studies, and medical narratives in order to bring together the artificial life of the posthuman with Asian North American social media performance. As I analyze the functions and alternative possibilities of disjointed Asian android body parts, I also meditate upon how the paradoxes of postraciality operate

in the so-called Information Age. The dismemberment of Asian/American inorganic bodies, and Ava's transformation via Asian extraction in *Ex Machina*, articulate the tension between the visuality of race on the Internet and its disembodiment in the reconfiguration of race as informational pattern and predicted behaviour under the biometrical apparatuses of Big Data surveillance and computer vision. Using *Ex Machina* as a point of entry for thinking about the inorganic life of data and the bodies that visualize such data in conjunction with the labouring Asian body and its segmented parts, I draw out an inorganic critique that engages with Asian North American body parts that "do the work" of race apart from the subject.

Specifically, I turn to the transmission of queer headlessness on gay dating apps and Canadian social media producer Jasmeet Singh's overly faced intimacy with his drone-smartphone. I examine how Asian North Americans perform virtual dismemberment as a mode of navigating or causing glitches in postracial logics that maintain whiteness as the computerized, and therefore *neutral*, lens of social media. While postracial narratives about the digital era safeguard the white body from racialized contact and histories, the gay Asian headless torso and Singh's floating head engender viral circulations that cause a lag in virtual whiteness's postraciality. I suggest that these circulations take Kyoko's destabilization of Caleb's white intactness one step further by performing as material and *data* fragments that temporarily elude the convergence of information and flesh. Hence, my turn to queerness is another revision of the Turing Test test, as the game's conceptualization of a posthuman subject who emerges from the successful performance of gendered humanness—the proper convergence of data

(gender) and "biological" body—is complicated by the mediated body's failure to perform proper heterosexuality. Looking at how the queer Asian headless torso and Singh's selfies occupy a queer "botthomhood" (Hoang Tan Nguyen), I argue that these virtual self-dismemberments interface intimately with the gaze of social media technology to break up the recognizable, healthy (straight) or "whole" liberal subject. They index the pleasures and violence of racializing *dis*assemblages—a play on Weheliye's notion of racializing assemblages.

"Some Alarm Clock, Huh?": The Technology of Labouring Racialized Bodies

On his first morning at Nathan's facility, which the clean shooting script locates in Alaska but whose location is not specified in the film, Caleb is startled awake by a young Asian woman in a short white dress who comes into his bedroom unannounced, carrying his breakfast on a tray. She does not respond when Caleb says hello, and remains completely silent for the entirety of the movie. Kyoko, according to the film's script, "looks Japanese. She's stunningly pretty. And she doesn't say anything" (Garland 33). The British film does not specify whether Nathan and Caleb are American, but the actors' American accents and Blue Book's resemblance to Google mark them as American, despite the state of national borders being unclear in the world of the film. When Caleb joins Nathan in his garden later that morning, the tech company CEO apologizes to his guest for sending Kyoko to wake him up, and smirks, "She's some alarm clock, huh? Gets you right up in the morning." Nathan never reveals that Kyoko is an android, but Kyoko's blank, expressionless face, silence and apparent lack of volition render the

"Japanese" domestic servant and sex worker a nonhuman labourer. Scholars like Rhacel Salazar Parreñas and Kalindi Vora have noted how migrant workers in "intimate" labour spheres are rendered not fully human, with Parreñas contending that states downplay the "human" side of domestic-worker migration in favour of foreign capital and Vora arguing that call centres produce a "machinic subjectivity" around which workers must reorganize themselves (Parreñas 1137; Vora 35). Similarly, Kyoko's "affectually absent," silent Asian labour that meets Nathan's housekeeping and sexual needs figures her as a machine, even without the revelation that she was programmed and built by Nathan.

In one scene, Caleb, who is frantically looking for Nathan after seeing his boss rip up Ava's drawings on his bedroom's security monitor, runs into Kyoko, who stares blankly at him. As he repeatedly asks her where Nathan is, Kyoko, who appears not to understand, begins to unbutton her dress, as if responding automatically to a command she's been given numerous times. Thus, when Nathan describes his assistant as an alarm clock, the sexual innuendo is both metaphorical and literal, for Kyoko functions as sexualized technology. When Kyoko finally unveils her android body to Caleb one night by wordlessly taking off a layer of skin from her torso and then proceeding to peel off the skin under her eye to reveal a skeletal robot visage, the scene is not so much a surprise as it is unsettling. Although Ava is introduced from the outset as an AI, she more closely approximates human life because of her language abilities and her organic-looking face, which is never disassembled. In the end, it is Kyoko's stoic face—her skin—that is knocked off by an enraged Nathan, while Ava's face, as she turns her head slightly to take a final glance at Caleb before leaving him locked inside Nathan's room, seems to show

signs of potential remorse, malice, and ambivalence. If the Asian face is too artificial, too inorganic, to pass for human, Ava's face convincingly portrays volition because her face and brain were built from what Nathan calls the "raw material" of human online activity (Garland 63). Ava's brain, which is "a/live" in the sense that it is online as it flickers and pulsates inside a gel orb, was designed based on Blue Book users' online search patterns and her face was modelled after Caleb's pornography searches. Ava's face is not quite alive due to the very fact that it was produced by mining a man's sexualized data—perhaps a dystopic version of Adam's rib being extracted to form Eve—but becomes more human, more affectual, in contrast to Kyoko, whose face resembled that of a rubber mask that barely moves.

The Asian North American face has, and continues to be, read as an inauthentic surface associated with both the machine and the mask. As Hayot notes, the so-called Asiatic body in the nineteenth century represented to white America the subject of modern technology and modern labour, "born to endure processes occurring on scales extreme enough to exceed the measure of 'humanity' itself" (168). The multiple representations or falsehood caught up in the Chinese figure was perceived as "an anthropomorphized cascade of masks and misrepresentations that concealed some withheld inner kernel" (168-169). The nineteenth-century association between Asians and the mask continues to be cast upon the Asian face as it continues to *inter/face* with—or is interfaced by—the United States. The Asian face as mask was a central discourse in American imperial relations with Korea after the Korean War, insofar as the currently debated and gawked over popularity of double-eyelid surgery among Korean and other

Asian women can be traced to a public relations campaign by American occupational forces in Korea that offered free reconstructive surgeries to disfigured war victims. David Palumbo-Liu observes that this rehabilitative campaign entailed the correction of a perceived "defect" of the Asian face, for the drooping upper eyelid was associated with dullness, lack of emotion, and mystery, and consequently needed to be corrected if "the east [was] to have any authentic contact with the west" after the Korean War (100). Similarly, a 1955 American campaign called the Hiroshima Maidens Project provided a group of women disfigured in the U.S. atomic bombing of Japan with plastic surgery procedures—what Thy Phu argues was a "*manner* of apology" that affirms feminine modes of civil comportment, as these commitments to "repairing" disfigured Asian women ravaged by U.S.-involved wars are "earnestly avowed" by the sentimental discourses of "presentability, marriageability, and productivity" (87). Akin to the ways in which the surgical transformations of Asian faces, while entrenched in a history of American Empire, are now cultural norms for self-fashioning in certain contexts like the South Korean one, Kyoko's removable face at once exposes the past and figures as a mode of inorganic futurity. The android's face-mask reveals the android-labourer's Asiatic biology as both a technology made to endure work beyond the limits of the human or humane, and as an inter/face constructed by American scientific innovation to "realistically" or safely encounter the android Other. Like the discourses that accuse Asian women's faces of being artificial because of their lack of "authentic" affect—either their faces are inscrutable because of their perceived stoic demeanour, or their edited or reconstructed faces are deemed fake—Kyoko is given a human-looking face and skin to

cover up the unpresentability of her brute form and function as slave labour so that Nathan can encounter her sexually. However, as I will more fully explore later in this chapter, the deconstruction and reconstruction of Kyoko's face disorients its gazer (a phenomenon evident in the Western gawking over Korean plastic surgery), and articulates the spectral and ongoing work of race in building possible futures.

While the white face never separates from the body in *Ex Machina*, and the Asian face is dismantled, the black android in this film is never given a face. When Caleb looks through videos of Nathan's experiments on past AI prototypes, he sees the progression of artificial intelligence that led up to the creation of Ava: a blonde "white" android named Lily, a faceless, black-bodied android named Jasmine, and Jade. While Nathan gives Jasmine a body and skin, Jasmine is the only android whose head does not evolve past the metallic robot skull, even as the rest of her body resembles a human black woman. Lily and Jade can convincingly walk like human runway models, but Jasmine is immobile, seated at a desk and nonresponsive when Nathan speaks to her in an attempt to get the robot to draw on a piece of paper. The next shot shows a row of wigs sitting on the desk and Jasmine's "lifeless" body lying facedown on the other side of the glass before Nathan picks her up. The film's ominous soundtrack intensifies as Caleb watches these sessions, and when the white coder witnesses Nathan eventually discarding Jasmine as a heap on the floor, he whispers in horror, "Jesus Christ." Caleb's disgust culminates when the recording arrives at Jade, the final android in Nathan's recorded sessions, sitting naked (with skin covering her robot frame) in a room separated from Nathan by a glass wall. She is the first android in this montage to speak, asking her maker, "Why won't you let

me out?" As Jade's demand gets louder and angrier, Caleb watches in horror as she bangs on the glass over and over until it cracks and her arms shred apart from the impact.

The disavowal of a face signifies Nathan's assessment of Jasmine as lacking intelligence and sentience, visualizing the stereotype of black women being *overly* bodied—the commodified "erotic icon" of the black woman in which, as Ann DuCille points out, gender and racial difference meet to constitute an "other Otherness, a hyperstatic alerity" (82). The linearity of the recorded experiment footage is in effect disrupted by the introduction of the black body, as the first android in the evolutionary timeline is a blond robot with a face who can already walk on her own. However, the nonresponsive and faceless Jasmine—essentially a black corpse—is a necessary atavistic stage in this American company's ushering in of the future. The disconnection of black body parts from black subjectivity in the name of science is a colonial tradition—one that includes the violent fragmentation and commodification of black women such as Sartjie Baartman (the "Hottentot Venus") and Henrietta Lacks, whose cancerous cervical cells were used to develop medical breakthroughs (Barker 337). The violated black corpse is signalled in the footage of Nathan's experiments on Jasmine, as Caleb's expressions of horror in witnessing these recordings convey what the viewer is likely also registering from this image: the ongoing history of the dehumanization of the black body in the name of modernization.

The Western tendency to assign personhood, and the moral and social relationship one has with that personhood, to the presentation of the face informs the different encounters that Caleb and Nathan have with these women-androids. Erving Goffman,

who defined the face as "an image of the self delineated in terms of approved social attributes" (5), argued that a person could "be in," "maintain," or "have" face when her verbal and nonverbal expressions present an image that is "internally consistent" (6). According to Goffman, the face is not stuck to the body but located in the interpretation of the appraisals expressed in an encounter (6-7). Emmanuel Levinas also theorizes the face as a mediation between self and Other, arguing that the "facing position, opposition par excellence, can be only as moral summons" because it is in *expression* that a being manifests itself (196, 199). If we follow Levinas's line of argument, the faceless black android cannot summon a moral response because she does not have the ability to express herself as a being to whom the (male) subject has a moral obligation. Levinas's ethics of the "facing position" with the Other posits that a being expressing itself "imposes itself, but does so precisely by appealing to me with its destitution and nudity—its hunger—without my being able to be deaf to that appeal. Thus in expression the being that imposes itself does not limit but promotes my freedom, by arousing my goodness" (200). As Caleb watches a recording of a faceless black robot, he is aroused to goodness not for Jade or Jasmine, who does not have a face, but for the facially expressive Ava. His freedom is indeed "promoted" by his watching of this faceless android, but he is free because this act of witnessing a dehumanized black female body ensures his safe distance from it and reaffirms his white masculinity and humanness. In fact, his expressions of horror mark his human capacity to feel and to respond morally.

As Levinas and Goffman's scholarship suggests, the pre-digital face was already conceptualized as an interface; the notions of constructed mediation and the presentation

of a surface meant to be encountered by another inform the human face and the inter/faces of contemporary screens. Ingrid Richardson notes that the "frontal ontology" of the window that frames the visual field continues to be prevalent even as it concerns human-technology interfacing, and that the viewing of interactive screen media, in comparison to the "leaning back" posture entailed in watching television screens, demands a body posture in which we "lean forward" and "face the screen more proximally and directly" ("Faces"). If we read Ava as a complex form of new media whose face and mind are programmed based on online activity, it is telling that *Ex Machina* titles each encounter Caleb has with Ava as an "Ava Session," right up until the moment when a glass wall no longer mediates the two. These "Ava Sessions," in which Caleb seeks to test the android's "true" AI, involve face-to-face conversations, sometimes with both parties sitting down or standing across from each other. Each of these encounters is mediated by the glass wall that separates human from android, but in the final Ava Session, in which Ava has escaped her room, the mediation is Ava's human-looking face. She passes this final test, as Caleb cannot discern the android's intent until he is locked inside Nathan's facility. Instead, Caleb responds to her facial expression and verbal signifiers of fear, loneliness, and romantic infatuation as a moral summons, and is "aroused to goodness," to help Ava escape.

As the premise of the Turing test denotes, and as Levinas's ethics of the face suggests, deception and deceit are precisely what constitute life or a "being." Just as a machine proves its ability to think by tricking its interrogator into believing it is a man or woman, blurring the lines between those gendered and species categories, Levinas's

concept of the Other is of a being *with the freedom to lie through expression*. According to Levinas, expression does not "give" us the Other's interiority—the face is not necessarily authentic—but the face is an "exceptional presentation of self by self . . . always suspect of some swindle, possibly dreamt up" (202). To see truth, one must establish a relationship with a face that can "guarantee itself" and manifest itself as a "word of honor" (Ibid). Thus, to recall Palumbo-Liu and Phu, the American history of providing facial reconstructive surgeries to Asian women devastated by U.S. imperialism and military violence demonstrates such a desire for repairing the Other's presentability to the West, or to the white self. The correction of Asian "dullness" entailed making the Asian female face not only expressive but *truthful* in contrast to its historical manifestation as the inscrutable mask. Jasmine's facelessness and Kyoko's apparent absence of facial expression render these androids more Other than what Levinas calls the "absolute other"; they are outside the purview of ethical discourse. Caleb grimaces and conveys feelings of horror when he watches the crass treatment of a black body without a face, and offers to help Kyoko when Nathan yells at and demeans his android-worker, and yet his moral obligation is to Ava, even though he sees that all the other previous androids are still kept in Nathan's closets. He is morally summoned by Ava's "white" face, despite the exceptionally raw outpouring of expression upon Jade's face in the security videos.

Jade is the next evolutionary step after Jasmine in the surveillance video's portrayal of the progression of artificial life, as she is the first android who has linguistic ability, and who is aware of her enslavement because she demands, in what sounds like an East Asian accent, to be free. Her expression of anger in her tone of voice and her

contorted face in moments when she is pounding against the glass partition until her arms disintegrate alarm Caleb not only because he is a witness to what looks like a body in pain, but because the violent disjointing of Jade's arms signal that the android does not feel physical pain. In addition to reincarnating the persistent anti-Chinese immigration image of the Asiatic body that is "enduring, impervious to pain" (Hayot 139), the Asian android-captive who cannot break through the glass partition acts, itself, as a border between Caleb and the facelessness of the black android. In his scholarship on the LA police killing of Rodney King, Min Hyoung Song argues that the icon of the black body in pain divides people into the two camps: those who feel this pain on their own bodies and those who "feel separated from, and even protected by, the pain inflicted" (72). Caleb is disturbed by the flippant manner with which Nathan handles Jasmine not because he feels morally summoned by her, but because the figuration of black artificial intelligence as the lack of intellect does not line up with the postracial and post-racist promises of the Information Age. The white coder is horrified by this atavistic moment in the development of the future. He is further perturbed by the recordings of Jade, as the emotion on her face and in her voice is not reconciled to her insensitivity to embodied pain; she continues to pound at the partition, breaching the human limit of what would be tolerable, without regard to her crumbling body. In this figuration, Jade approximates the human more than Ava in "raw," emotive expression, but reveals her machine nature by destroying her arms. She must remain on the other side of the glass that protects Nathan

and Caleb, ultimately separating the men[5] from the dreadful figure of the machine that has consciousness without the ability to *feel* the body.

This line of "progress" in the development of artificial intelligence recounts a colonial history of how labour and race articulated each other under the imperial notion of the modern human—a notion that saw Asian labour as a kind of frontier for measuring freedom and, therefore, whiteness. The British Empire's shift from African slave labour to the introduction of indentured Chinese coolies in its West Indian colonies after the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 was, as Lisa Lowe remarks, a "modern utilitarian move" that conveniently figured as an "enlightened" solution, for the import of Chinese workers was supposed to signify the emancipation of black slaves. Lowe notes that the Chinese transatlantic coolie was imagined as a "racial barrier" between the British and the "Negroes," and was a "*figure*, a fantasy of 'free' yet racialized and indentured labor, at a time when the possession of body, work, life, and death was foreclosed to the enslaved and the indentured alike" (*Intimacies* 24). While the British described the Chinese labourers as "free," these workers were transported on the same ships that carried the slaves they were meant to replace, and worked in oppressive conditions that "approximat[ed] slavery" (Jung 677-701). Thus, as Lowe posits, the promises of emancipation and abolition in the achievement of liberal progress did not contradict slavery and colonialism, but accommodated forms of neoslavery within the expansion of

[5] I do not call them "white men" because Nathan Bateman's race is not foregrounded by the film and could be perceived, because of its lack of specificity, as white, yet the character is played by Guatemalan American actor Oscar Isaac. In a sense, the cinematic screen mediates Isaac, racializing him, by default, as white.

international trade (107). The Asian coolie, thus, functioned as a technology for measuring humanness as freedom and was/is a figure distancing the white British subject (human) from the unfree slave (subhuman), while also constituting a figure at the frontier of Western modernity that is/was both free and unfree.

In his 1950 book *The Human Use of Human Beings*, mathematician and founder of cybernetics Norbert Wiener remarked that the automatic machine, "whatever we think of any feelings it may have or may not have, is the precise equivalent of slave labor. It is perfectly clear that this will produce an unemployment situation, with which the present recession and even the depression of the thirties will seem like a pleasant joke" (162). The nineteenth-century transatlantic Asian coolie and the persistent North American fear of cheap Asian labour taking jobs away from white workers—an anxiety perpetuated by the Yellow Peril idea that machine-like Asians endure harsher working conditions and have higher pain tolerance—are re-articulations of the machine as unfree labour that differentiate from the *sub*humanity of the black slave. After all, it was the apparent "*excessive* efficiency" of nineteenth-century Chinese labour that was seen as regressively excessive, as being responsible for destroying normative, or white, proletariat labour (Day 116). Jade, as an intermediary model between Jasmine, the brutish automatic machine, and Ava the posthuman—a recasting of the separation between animal and human—is racialized according to this imperial logic of the "free" human, which is a schema that still informs contemporary US racial politics and pits the Asian American "model minority" against the "bad subject" of the African American. Jade is a gesture to the free-yet-unfree Asian coolie, as she protests her captivity on the other side of the glass that

separates human from machine, asking the man who programmed her why he will not let her out. *Ex Machina*'s exploration of the unstable boundaries between organic and inorganic, human and machine, and freedom and programmed desires, is haunted by race as labour. Its imagination of the posthuman is, in both the conceptual and material senses, built upon the bodies of the coolie and the slave.

"It's Like a Firewall Against Leaks"

Part of the imagination of the Asian "racial barrier" was colonial administrators' interest in the importation of Chinese women—figures of virtuous women who would bring stability and social order to the labouring community in this context (Lowe, *Intimacies* 33-34). As Lowe remarks, the Chinese woman in this discourse, "[a]s a figure who promised social order . . . was a *supplement* who appeared to complete the prospective future society of the colony" (Lowe, *Intimacies* 34). In contrast, Chinese prostitutes with European clients in the second half of the nineteenth century were subject to medical inspections—European, American, and Chinese prostitutes working in exclusively Chinese brothels were exempted from these "contagious disease" legislations—based on the belief that Chinese women were responsible for the transmission of venereal disease that threatened the British empire, and that prostitution was part of Chinese culture (Lowe, *Intimacies* 124-125). Regulating and surveilling Chinese women's bodies, Lowe notes, was a way of regulating Hong Kong as the "strategic 'gateway'" for the British empire's trade in China—an "imperial strategy to ensure European security in the colonial 'contact zones' where there were intimate

encounters with Chinese women" (*Intimacies* 127). The historically paradoxical figure of the Asian woman who is both supplement (bio-security) for British futurity as well as a contagious threat to the white body is reconfigured in the Asian/American android woman *firewall* who is meant to secure her programmer's superiority, is penetrable, and yet threatens to leak.

Nathan programs his android-coolie Kyoko without the ability to understand English, although it is not clear what other languages she can comprehend or speak, in order to ensure the American or Western dominance of a postmodern world through scientific and technological innovation. In one scene, Kyoko knocks over Caleb's glass of wine while serving dinner, causing Nathan to swear at her and Caleb to tell her, "It's all right; I got it." Nathan tells Caleb not to bother because she cannot understand English: "It's like a firewall against leaks. It means I can talk trade secrets over dinner and know that it'll go no further." Caleb, who has not been told that Kyoko is an android, likely assumes that Kyoko is an effective firewall because of her foreignness as an Asian woman, but Kyoko's function as a security system is to operate primitively at the base level of instruction and automated response—a state that mirrors the notion of the unliberated foreign woman. In a highly secure facility where guests have limited card access to most rooms, Kyoko is allowed access into parts of the research facility that Caleb is barred from, including Nathan's private room, where he watches the surveillance feed and monitors Caleb's sessions with Ava. In one of the film's shots, Nathan observes Caleb and Ava's conversations on his computer monitor, while Kyoko lies down behind him, silently looking on. Believing that his domestic worker is too unintelligent and

submissive to disclose or sabotage his research, Nathan secures his innovation—an (presumably) American tech company's declaration of the posthuman Western future—by conceiving of a firewall incarnated as an Asian American woman, a figure who has historically been seen as a foreigner because of the perceived incompatibility between "Asian" and "American" (Chen 17).

Despite Nathan's confidence that his domestic worker is not a threat to his technological developments, Kyoko is a leaky firewall who facilitates the ultimate leak of Nathan's classified research by helping Ava escape from the remote facility. Throughout the film, the viewer sees that Kyoko watches Ava's interactions with Caleb and has access to Nathan's surveillance monitors, but the android does not seem to have any contact with Ava until near the end of the film when she silently appears outside Ava's room. In one of the last scenes, Kyoko holds a kitchen blade and stands in the hallway to meet Ava, who has just stepped out of her room for the first time. The younger prototype whispers inaudibly into Kyoko's ear, suggesting either that the labourer has understood English the whole time or that the androids are able to communicate using another linguistic system. Again, Kyoko functions as the keeper of secrets, the technology that stores information to ensure the advancement of a white Western future. However, I would suggest that Kyoko's self-dismemberment both advances and *suspends* this advancement, disorienting the white subject from his vantage point of observer, tester, and active user, through her "glitches" as a firewall and machine-labourer.

Asian American dismemberment as data leak both exposes whiteness to risky and contagious contact, and prompts the reconstruction of security measures to protect the

futurity of whiteness. When Caleb hacks into Nathan's digital files, it is recognizable to audiences as a data or new media leak. The seemingly secret information that surfaces as an exposure of Nathan's top-secret research[6] is familiar in its likeness to national scandals that require America's appalled condemnation, but are framed as exceptions to American civil society. After all, Caleb must breach the facility's security system by stealing Nathan's key card and his discovery of his employer's controversial research methods occurs, tellingly, in a bedroom, where Nathan keeps a row of defunct androids in wardrobes that look like they would otherwise hold clothes. This "discovery" occurs in a space coded as private and intimate, as the spaces of exception from the public domains of government policy or surveillance. However, just like the leaked photos of the American military torture and sexual abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib, or Eric Snowden's revelation that the National Security Agency was monitoring people's phone records and online activities, these exceptions are not exceptions but part of the ongoing, violent operations of empire and U.S. nationalism, which involves both the military and multinational corporate surveillance of its subjects.

As Agamben has argued, the "state of exception" is neither internal nor external to the juridical order, and is therefore difficult to define because it concerns "a threshold, or a zone of indifference, where inside and outside do not exclude each other but rather blur with each other" (23). Hence, these scandals, signalled in *Ex Machina* through Caleb's discovery of what he reads as the torture of enslaved life forms, are part of what Wendy

[6] Nathan has Caleb sign an unconventional nondisclosure agreement before letting him see Ava and there is no cellphone service available anywhere on his property.

Hui Kyong Chun calls an "epistemology of outing" that is "focused on the revelation of secrets, which are most often open secrets, in order to secure a form of privacy that offers no privacy" (*Updating* 202). Building on Eve Sedgwick's criticism of the private/public binary within the "epistemology of the closet," Chun contends that social media reverse the private/public divide by positioning the subject who is "caught" on the inside rather than the outside, and that this leads to fears around surveillance and privacy, and political moves to reinstate this boundary (Ibid). Kyoko's knowing glance sets into motion Caleb's opening of the literal closets that contain Nathan's classified androids, outing the closeted bodies that Caleb already anticipates.

Hence, when Kyoko reveals her true form to Caleb by peeling off her inorganic skin, she discloses a secret that was never a secret; the viewer already suspects that the racialized, mute woman is a robot. This open secret reveals the already assumed artifice of the Asian woman, a form of racial knowledge that is exposed and then subverted by the android. Similarly, Caleb gets Nathan drunk in order to steal his access card and log into Nathan's computer because he anticipates the surveillance footage before he clicks on it. After all, Nathan's treatment of his Orientalized androids has its precedence in the slave and in the Asian coolie—figures that were integral to Western "progress." Following Chun, these leaks in Nathan and Blue Book's security system prompt the reinforcement of another security system—one that also reinstates a separation between the white self and racialized Other. The anxieties that surface because of the revealed secrets of Kyoko's true form as slave labour (machine labour) and because of the corpses of female androids upon which Ava was constructed are resolved in the securing of a

future personified by the face of a white woman. Nathan's facility research is breached in order to be re-secured, locking away the dead programmer, his android-coolie, and a closet of disposable not-quite-human women, so that Ava can emerge into the public, free and with her secret intact. It is Caleb who is incarcerated at the end of this film and at the beginning of the imagined posthuman future, as the film signals an evolutionary step from the "organically" racialized white and gendered male human to the postracial posthuman future predicted by Nathan earlier in the film when Caleb asks him why he created Ava: "The arrival of strong artificial intelligence has been inevitable for decades. And the variable was when not if. So I don't see Ava as a decision, just an evolution."

However, Kyoko's self-exposing removal of skin can be read as an enactment of an inorganic Asian North American critique that probes the intactness or "realness" of the white/human.[7] After Caleb watches the videos on Nathan's desktop, he goes into his employer's bedroom, where the mirror-panelled wardrobes stand across from a bed on which Kyoko is reclining, disrobed. Caleb stares at Kyoko quizzically, as if already suspecting she is not human, and proceeds to open the closets one at a time, first to a brunette android in a lace dress, then a legless and armless blonde android hung up by her shoulders, next Jade, followed by headless Jasmine, and finally a white-looking android who is covered with skin except on the stomach. Kyoko, who has been watching him this whole time, slowly gets up to face Caleb and peels the skin off of her unclothed torso, and

[7] As I will examine later in this chapter, the transfer of Kyoko's inorganic skin grafts onto Ava's transforming frame is analogous to what Judith Butler theorizes as the possibilities of drag: the performance of gender that emphasizes the artifice or imitative processes of the heterosexual project (384).

picks apart the human-skin mask covering her metallic face and synthetic eyeballs (see Figures 1-2). Later that night, a traumatized Caleb is kept awake by images of Kyoko's peeled-back face staring at him, as "flashbacks" of her skinned face appear on the screen. Getting out of bed, the white man stands in front of his bathroom mirror, scrutinizing the "realness" of his body by picking at the skin on his ribs and around his eyes—the same area of the skin that he saw dismembered from Kyoko's frame. He takes the blade out of his shaving razor and digs into his arm, watching as the blood oozes out of his arm and then nonchalantly smears the blood onto his reflection in the mirror. Staring at his reflection, Caleb suddenly punches the mirror, cracking the glass. The film then cuts to a shot from behind Nathan's all-seeing computer, but as the camera rises, we see that it is Kyoko who is watching Caleb's meltdown on the screen. Caleb's smashing of the mirror echoes Jade's desperate breaking of the glass wall separating her from organic beings, demonstrating how the disassembled Asian/American body prompts in the white man a frantic uncertainty about his humanness and, consequently, his whiteness. This time, though, it is Kyoko who sits at the other side the glass, of the screen or interface, surveilling the white man.

This is not the first time in the film that Kyoko's silence functions as a mode of surveillance. During the fourth "Ava Session," the film cuts back and forth between Nathan monitoring the conversation on his computers in his bedroom, and Caleb and Ava's conversation about why the coder was brought to meet her. Kyoko is lying on a bed behind a shirtless Nathan with her eyes closed, hinting that the rich programmer has just had sex with his android-servant, or that the two often share this

bedroom/surveillance station. When Caleb tells Ava, "I'm here to test whether you have a consciousness or if you're just simulating one," the camera cuts to a close-up of Kyoko's eyes suddenly opening before panning back out to Nathan watching the session at his desk. Caleb asks Ava how this revelation makes her feel, and the film returns to the tight close-up of Kyoko's silent, watchful face, while Ava's response is heard through Nathan's computer speakers: "It makes me feel sad." As the camera follows the direction of Kyoko's gaze to the surveillance feed of Caleb and Ava's conversation on Nathan's computer monitor, the viewer is made to realize that she is aware of and attentive to Nathan's ongoing research. Moreover, by overlapping Ava's verbal expression of sadness to Kyoko's gaze, Kyoko is aligned with Ava as a thinking, conscious, and imprisoned subject.

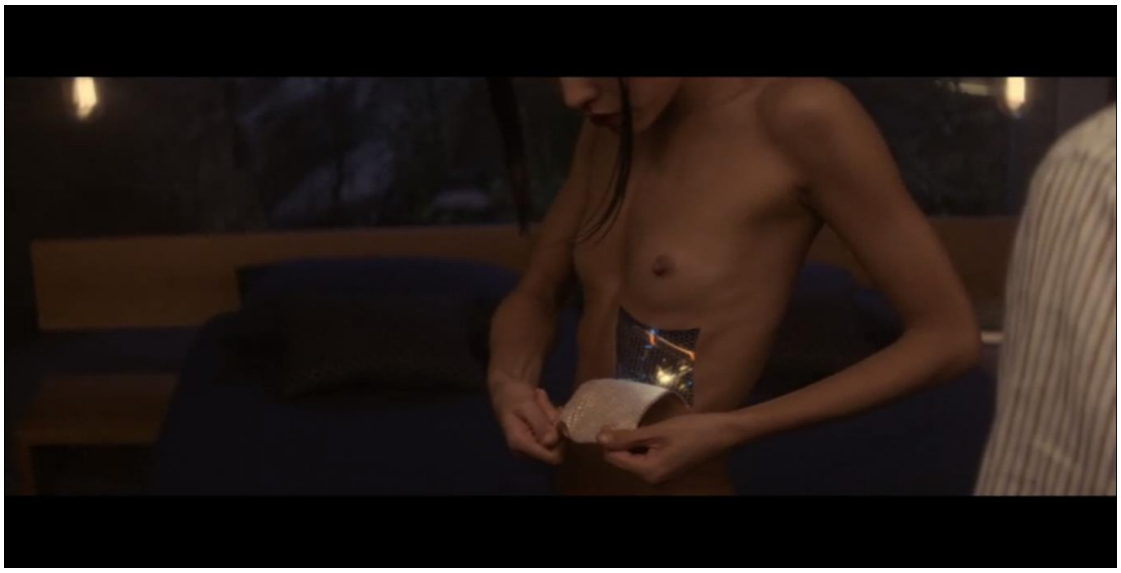

Figure 1. Kyoko removes her skin in front of Caleb. A screenshot of a scene in *Ex Machina.*

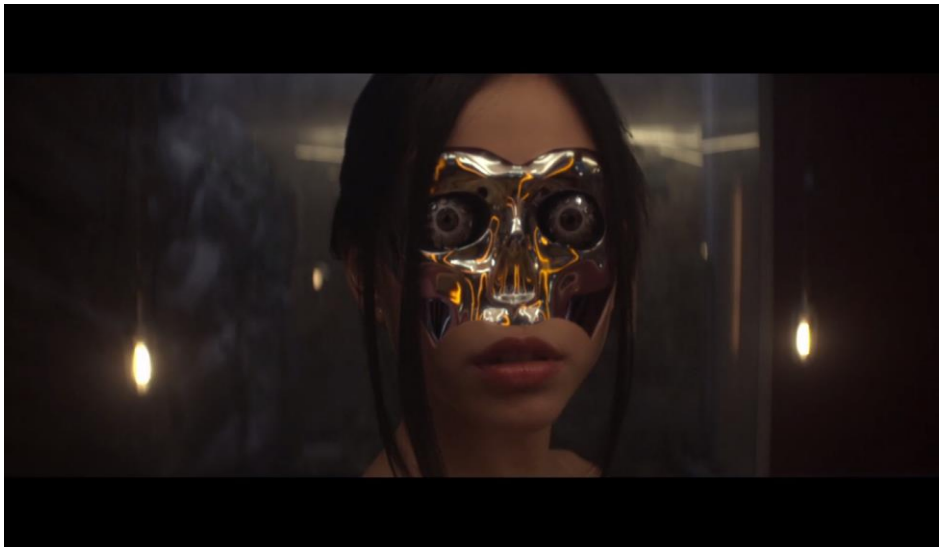

Figure 2. Caleb's nightmare flashbacks to Kyoko's "revealed" face. A screenshot of the film.

In Barbara Johnson's meditation on her childhood inability to eat anything with a face on it, she notes, "The image in my mind was of a face that *did not respond* to a painful stimulus; a face that was inanimate or stony in the present . . . It was as though I were responding to something that *had been alive* but was now unaware of what was happening; it was alive enough to die but not alive enough to respond" (181). This appears to accurately describe Kyoko, whose inanimate and silent face does not respond even as Nathan slams a weight barbell across her face and takes apart her jaw, rendering her motionless on the floor. And yet, as Johnson suggests, what is alarming about the inanimate face is that it can still look at her posthumously, that "its aliveness lay neither in its death nor its smiling face, but in its awareness of *my* face" (Ibid).

Thus, while Caleb is guaranteed safety as an intact, white *user* of the computer interface when he watches the mutilated black and Asian bodies on Nathan's computer screen, or when he lustfully watches from his bedroom live surveillance footage of Ava

held captive in her room, Kyoko's impenetrable silence, her watchful gaze throughout the film, and her eventual assumption of Nathan's seat at the all-seeing computer resist surveillance's demanding gaze. Her fragmentation disorients the "single axis of difference" (Song 70) of the white gaze, positioning Caleb as the object of surveillance as he picks at his skin, digs beneath his layer of flesh, and tries to pry open his mouth before smashing the mirror behind which the surveillance camera is installed. Kyoko, emotionless, sits in Nathan's chair and looks on from behind the computer monitor. Her gaze at the screen unsettles what the viewer may have read in the android's behaviour as submission, and instead reframes her silence as a mode of counter-surveillance. Kyoko's inanimate face—her mask— is a screen or *inter/face* that is "used," programmed and navigated as much as it sees, documents, and programs the party on the other side of it. Even after she is seemingly killed when her jaw is disjointed, it is unclear whether the Asian android has really been shut off, as the lack of expressed pain—the refusal to display on her inter/face—gives the impression that the robot continues to watch posthumously.

Although the Asian gaze in *Ex Machina* seems to operate as a sign of acquiescence and sacrificial approval of Ava's escape in the moment that Jade smiles at Ava, I would suggest that it also marks the potentiality of an Asian American inorganic future that is mobilized by dispersal and leakage. The brief shot of Jade's head turned toward Ava in what appears like a smile perhaps indicates a recognition between the two androids as products of gendered labour for a tech-bro's company (see Figure 3). This recognition is fraught with the way in which the desirability of Asian genetic material in

visions of the mixed-race or postracial future occlude blackness. As Jinny Huh notes, the demand for Asian genetics in the biotechnologies of "designing" babies through adoption and assisted reproductive technology contrasts with the low demand for black babies, marking an assumption that the reproductive future of a "super race" includes the "genius" traits of the model minority Asian and excludes the "contaminant" of blackness (102). In a sense, the grafting of Jade's skin onto Ava's frame is a queer reproduction that rejects Caleb's heteronormative expectations of a future with Ava and subverts Nathan's paternalistic creation of these androids. Jade's smile at the end of the film possibly demonstrates her agency in this reproduction, her approval of Ava as both her child and her child's mother—a posthuman not born, but built out of and by a lineage of inorganic women considered subhuman even as they are imagined as an evolutionary step forward. Within this reading, Jade's turned head is a turn toward Ava and *away* from the headless black body beside her; this queer reproduction forecloses blackness from tomorrow's "super race" or post-race. In this instance, the Asian/American firewall ensures the security of racial borders precisely *because* it is imagined as a proxy—a model-minority technology of the future that is simultaneously a racial barrier between black and white, and ap*prox*imate to whiteness. While Jade's skin passes for white and human, as it is compatible with Ava's body shape and face, Jasmine's skin cannot because of its pigmentation and the contour and size of her constructed frame. Asian skin secures Ava's "secret" form and allows for the next evolutionary step in a Western future, covering up Ava's android frame in order to protect the longevity of white personhood into the posthuman age. Because Asianness is rendered surrogate or supplementary genetic

material that does not contaminate or threaten white personhood, this queer reproduction is a techno-Orientalist figuration of Asianness as biotechnological supplement or surrogate, or what Lee calls the "bare bio-available" in contrast to the "privileged bio-supplementable" subject (63).

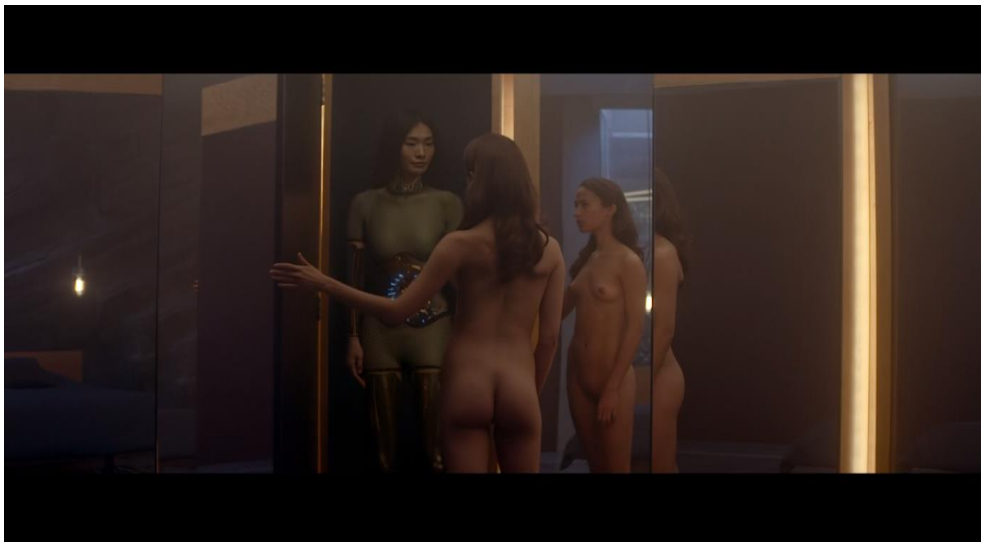

Figure 3. Jade and Ava, who wears Jade's skin, share a glance. Screenshot of a scene in *Ex Machina*.

And yet, as my reading of Kyoko indicates, the Asian proxy is not a "safe" one; its surrogacy may cause infection. If we follow the part, we wonder: how does Jade's removable skin *perform* or *do* Asianness independently and inorganically from Ava's face? How does the Asian fragment "live" inorganically? These questions recast Jade's smile at the end of the film as a sign of life at the moment of dismemberment, for the Asian face "comes to life" on its own—autonomously—once an arm is removed and skin is stripped away, and Jade's limb and skin pass for human once they are attached to Ava's frame and leak out of the remote property and into the "outside" world. Lee's emphasis on the patterns and circulations of the fragment is key here: the removal of Asian body

parts propels into motion the dispersal of fragments, of their breaching of borders and their queer reproductive potentiality as transferrable tissue. This movement can be further theorized through our contemporary viral mode of "sharing" over online networks, as *Ex Machina* demonstrates how posthuman biologies intersect with new media in the configuration of Ava as a subject whose brain and face were constructed from Internet users' online behaviours, and in her choice to transform herself using Asian skin.

Moreover, our contemporary vernacular for online contact—sharing, liking, linking—names racialized, gendered and, as my following analyses will emphasize, sexualized flesh-data dis/assemblage. While the Internet has been Orientalized as a space of sensual exploration of the Other, Chun remarks that attempts to constrain the Internet this way do not "guarantee safety . . . [r]ather, they carry with them the fear of the yellow peril, or uncontrollable and contagious intercourse; they carry fears of overwhelming contact, of being taken over by the very thing they seek to control" (*Control* 242-243). Perhaps, then, Ava's queer re-assemblage with Jade's body parts involves a racialized contact that does not erase Asianness, but is *contaminated and haunted by this intercourse*. In the next section of this chapter, I explore two modes of Asian North American dismemberment on social media that pose the threat of overwhelming Asian contact and perform Asianness in its circulation of parts: the headless torso on gay dating and hook-up apps and the floating turbaned head on mobile apps. I examine how these body parts leak and circulate past fixed racial barriers in online networks, and infect these networks with the viral memories that they store, threatening to cause a lag in—to *drag*—the postracial future's progress.

Queer Decapitations: Headless Torsos and the Barrier Technology of Facelessness

In a 2011 *Vanity Fair* article headlined "Grindr: Welcome to the World's Biggest, Scariest Gay Bar," author Matt Kapp observes that the location-based gay hook-up app is dominated by two competing archetypes: the hypermasculine, shirtless "Headless Torsos," who see the app solely as a tool for casual sex, and the "uppity Faces," who use the app for many social purposes. It should be noted, however, that since Kapp's article was written, the phenomenon of the Headless Torso has expanded beyond the legibly hypermasculine to include other body types and other visual pleasures, such as the slimmer or skinny "twink"—a physique stereotypically embodied by and associated with gay Asian men. For Kapp, what is "scary" about the app, which launched in 2009, is its lack of security or required authentication: "Anyone can download Grindr, anytime, anywhere, and nobody needs to send you a 'friend request' before chatting you up and/or sending you nudie pics. This lack of a front gate is bound to backfire sooner or later." In other words, the incomplete body of the Headless Torso articulates the perceived risks of intimate queer interactions across a network that facilitates anonymity or inauthenticity.

This notion of risk is not only an abstract one, but one attached to the health of the user's material body. Grindr is depicted as a site of contamination not only in media discourse but in public health rhetoric, seen in the AIDS Healthcare Foundation's 2015 billboard campaign that associated Tinder and Grindr with chlamydia and gonorrhea, and the Rhode Island public health official warning in the same year that attributed increased national STD rates to "high-risk" behaviours such as "using social media to arrange casual and often anonymous sexual encounters" ("HEALTH Releases"). Scholarly work

on location-based dating apps for men who have sex with men (MSM) also tend to situate their findings and the stakes of their research within concerns about rising HIV rates in the United States. For example, one of the central research questions in a 2014 study on men using Grindr to connect with other men in New York City asks: "To what extent is risky sexual behavior associated with newer and older social networking technologies?" (Grosskopf et. al. 510). While the authors do not find significant differences in the sexual activity between men who use online dating sites compared to those who use newer forms of location-based apps, they suggest that future research should look into whether neighbourhoods with higher rates of HIV also see increased app use (Grosskopf 518).

The Headless Torso is a junction where public health rhetoric about safe and risky intimacy intersects with the language of contagion that is used to describe racial contact. As scholars, Grindr users, and the tech company itself have acknowledged, there is a significant amount of anti-Asian sentiment in this network, with users' profiles specifying "No Asian," "Asians, preave reave me arone," "I block more Asians than the Great Wall of China!!!" and "Asians need not apply" (Nguyen 2). In a much-read editorial in *Out Magazine,* novelist Alexander Chee notes that this anti-Asian "preference" on Grindr users' profiles is articulated through the language of contagion, usually accompanied by "no fatz/femmes/poz [HIV positive] . . . as if being Asian is something treated with a visit to the gym, doctor, or behavioral therapy." Similar scholarship on other gay dating websites and apps also note the "racial hierarchy" in virtual gay spaces in which the white man tops and the Asian man bottoms because of the affiliation of Asianness with effeminacy (Miller 642). In his scholarship on representations of Asian American

masculinity and sexuality, Hoang Tan Nguyen theorizes the common association of gay Asian men with the apparently "poorly endowed," effeminate position of the bottom[8] as a "sexual, social, and political program that one tactically assumes and consciously cultivates" (195). Nguyen contends that gay Asian men (GAMS) employ a "tactic of the bottom" on gay male sex cruising websites by enacting a "racial-sexual masquerade that mobilizes exposure and concealment" to challenge virtual whiteness and interrogate GAMS[9] online legibility (195-196). In a space where online anonymity is conflated with virtual whiteness and a user is assumed to be white unless declared otherwise, GAMS post faceless, sexually explicit "self-pics" of body parts—"chest, stomach, torso, ass, cock"—as a "tactical masking" that allows them to "temporally and performatively 'drag out' their racial and ethnic difference" by emphasizing an attractive trait that resembles the ideal body of a young, white man in order to resist being knowable and consequently ignored, blocked or deleted (Nguyen 196-198). Nguyen warns that reading this form of virtual self-decapitation as gay Asian men passing or hiding their race problematically recentres whiteness as the "default category" and puts the onus on people of colour to "confess their difference and deviation from the unspoken norm" (197). Rather, the headless torso is what Nguyen calls a "radical decapitation" that refuses to make gay Asian men knowable, allowing these body parts to potentially slip by the "No Asian" blocks, deletes, and ignores on the social media platform.

[8] Richard Fung examined the eroticization and gendered figurations of gay Asian men in pornography in his 1991 article "Looking for My Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn."

[9] This term is usually used to describe East and Southeast Asian men on gay cruising platforms, and not South Asian, Arab or Middle Eastern men.

This "dragging out" involves both racial masquerade and *temporal* glitches that confound the assumed postraciality of white anonymity in social media. The gay Asian headless torso that temporarily 'drags out' its Asianness is thus an inversion of the abject position of Asian parts as bio-supplements available to white personhood in *Ex Machina*, and also reimagines a reproduction of those parts that does not necessarily turn toward constructing the white subject. These parts, which are so seamlessly grafted onto Ava's frame, potentially resist such easy convergence with white subjectivity in their viral life as fragments—viral in the sense that they are circulated and breach the limits of the contained individual body. As Chee notes, the "No Asian" sentiment on Grindr and other gay online networks pathologizes "femme" Asian sexuality as part of a category of the "sick" that includes "fatz" and "poz." The dick pic or Headless Torso, however, infects the pristineness of white masculinity by taking on the form of both an exposure and containment. The anxiety over one's ability to be faceless on social media networks like Grindr—to be an inauthentic and therefore "risky" encounter[10]—downplays the everyday allowances afforded to white men to be the default, universal subject of personhood (usually conflated with citizenship) and therefore the presumed "safe" or healthy subject. The exposure of "private" body parts in a public online network is a method of containment for the Asian user looking to erase his racialized face, but these fragments circulate as leaks that seep into and contaminate the whiteness of anonymity, throwing into question what it means to "see" and "click on" race.

[10] In the popular imaginary on gay hook-up apps, it tends to be black men who are excessively associated with HIV/AIDS virality. They usually do not have the option of passing as white via headless pics.

If the default of the nondescript user on the Internet is the white male subject, queer radical decapitation unhinges this default setting and "does race" through the editing of the body and the sharing of images, not in the representational "truth" of the visualized body. The typical outbreak narrative often employs the expertise of visual technologies to attempt to make visible the invisible world by, as Priscilla Wald argues, exposing "the nature of those exchanges that are often concealed; communicable disease offers records of desire, of violence, of sexual commerce, all of which are especially apparent in sexually transmitted diseases" (38). The associations of GAMS with transmittable disease, physical weakness, or unhealthy sexuality figure the gay Asian man as the "stranger/carrier" of contagion (Wald 57) in this context, but the racial masquerade of decapitation involves the use of visual technologies to expose not the invisible world of contagion but to protect its wearer from another kind of exposure, throwing into confusion the binary between the carrier and the healthy subject.

The employment of the language of contagion to block Asians on online networks and the notion of racial masquerade as strategic facelessness converge in the public health call for forms of protection. Alison Bashford's scholarship traces how public health, as it was developed in the nineteenth century, was tied to Empire and, importantly, about the "management of whiteness" (1-2). Bashford remarks that public health was partly a spatial form of government that regulated the "circulation of matter (or people) constituted as dangerous because of their circulation and contact with unknown people in unknown places" through its institutions, knowledges, and practices (2). She argues that the barriers drawn across local, global, and bodily circulations "constituted public health

measures: cordons sanitaires of various kinds" (Ibid). These imperial practices to regulate the movements of "unsanitary" parts and whole organisms carried into the development of the Internet, continuing to frame the evolving screen and the forms of contact it produces. We can turn to examples in computing history to consider how sexualized and racialized notions of sanitization informed the emerging digital screen. The computer virus scare of the late 1980s and early 1990s that led to a lucrative anti-virus computer software industry is intertwined with the AIDS discourse of the 1980s and beyond. Jussi Parikka points out that "safe hex" (safe computing) became a responsibility of the ethical computer user, and, "[a]s in the AIDS-discourse, sex with strangers became an irrational risk, and similarly computer security culture warned against the dangers of non-secure software" ("Digital Monsters"). Scholarship on mobile media and cell phone culture has also focused on questions of security, framed as concerns with intimacy, sexuality, and the shifting boundaries between public and private (Goggin 127; Villi 218). In particular, the development of the cell phone and, later, the smartphone, has incited moral and health panics, manifesting in the early 1990s as fears around electromagnetic radiation from cellphones causing cancer, as well as anxieties about the threat that cell phones pose to literacy and normative sociability (Goggin 110, 115).

Because it is entrenched in the racism and pleasures of both safe and "risky" computer use, the racial masquerading of gay online self-decapitation can be aligned with the medical mask—an icon made synonymous with Asian contagion during the SARS

and H1N1 outbreaks in 2003 and 2009, respectively.[11] Observing that photographs and images of masked Asian women vastly outnumber any other visual depictions of the "lay public" during the SARS outbreak, Clare Ching Jen argues that the masked Asian woman, "[a]s a human-technology figure," is a "principal configuration of the SARS crisis" and "a commodification of SARS risk and responsibility" (112). Jen contends that the masked Asian/American woman is a border-crossing subject who is responsible, risky, and at-risk; she is a marker of unidentifiable and obscured Asian masses that is produced by biomedical and defence technologies to "make visible what is normally invisible to the naked eye" (113-114). In contrast, GAMS' facelessness is a masking that does not bring to light what is *believed* to be made visible on the Asian face—the associations of effeminacy, weakness, or transmittable disease—but a temporary refusal to disclose. Phu argues that although the surgical mask in the early twentieth century signaled the protection of the patient from the wearer by "distinguishing and identifying its wearer," the so-called SARS mask reverses this signification, marking instead a *protected wearer* (128). Phu writes, "Rather than disclose identity, today's widespread adoption of the mask screens a confluence of urgent questions—regarding the ethics of otherness, the constitution of community, and the mobility of bodies—that focus on the surface that the mask most obscures, the face. This 'face' of SARS is its seeming facelessness" (129). Phu theorizes the mask as a "barrier technology" that confirms the

[11] Colin Fitzpatrick et. al. found in their study of self-disclosure on Grindr that racial self-categorization decreased the likelihood that a user would post a face-revealing photo. The study also found that about a quarter of users did not share their racial identification, but of those who did, 49 per cent of them self-identified as white, while about 5 per cent self-identified as Asian and 3 per cent as black (1987-1990).

wearing body's "civil distance" from other bodies, and paradoxically also places these masked, less intelligible bodies potentially outside the gaze of state surveillance (125).

The barrier technology of facelessness, I would suggest, is an interface that facilitates encounter with the gendered Asian subject and simultaneously acts as a barrier in this contact. In other words, the faceless body part is a firewall that is fraught because it secures the "facedness" of the white, usually male, Internet user, while causing a disruption of seamless surveillance in its separation from the knowable, intact subject. As today's tech companies and nation-states continue to monitor global online activities and connections over social networks, the ocular and non-ocular nature of "race" is articulated in the figuration of race as information that predicts consumer behaviour, as well as the affiliations, loyalties, and activities that lump bodies into categories that are targeted and enforced by the state surveillance of certain subjects.

The intertwining of corporate, social and government surveillance, which links our activities on social media platforms to a broader "surveillant assemblage" that abstracts individuals into data (Haggerty and Ericson 606), creates what has been described by feminist scholars like Rachel Hall and Rachel Dubrofsky as surveillance society or surveillance culture. In addition to the practices of national security that include the monitoring of certain bodies marked by their affiliations with religious and racialized communities, people in North America are monitored via their social networks, as seen in Chicago, where police determine who is likely to be involved in a homicide by using "network analysis" to map the relationships between active gang members. Contemporary biotechnology is not only the extraction of the regenerative or reproductive potential of

genetic material but a new media tool for biometrics—for mapping immaterial networks and patterns as part of the regulation of material bodies.

Hence, queer self-decapitation is both masquerade and a way of returning the gaze at the scholarly, government, and corporate institutions that seek to collect and trace markers of race and sexuality. This strategic dichotomy of exposure and invisibility stresses the movement, sharing, and circulation of fragments so that the isolated penis or torso straddles the line between being a consumable object and an empowering mode of oversharing that temporarily eludes surveillance culture's converging pulls to reassemble data into what Kevin Haggerty and Richard Ericson call "data doubles" that can be matched to individuals and scrutinized (606). In sending or posting the parts that GAMS want to display on gay apps, they not only refuse to disclose their race as information but *watch* how their torsos, penises or asses are reacted to or engaged with. The fragmentation of their bodies through the cropping, editing, sharing, and posting of selected parts also entails the voyeuristic pleasure of *seeing* their parts in online circulation, in their possible consumption and relishing by others. This pleasure comes from and with a degree of control in where and how their bodies are seen and "used," as well as the pleasure of looking at one's *own* dismembered body fragments as separate from the face, from the eyes that look on.

Richardson argues that contemporary screens, particularly smartphone screens, mould body postures and behaviours that do not necessarily conform to the frontal ontology of engaging with a screen like a window or frame to a visual field. She contends that small mobile screens instead facilitate "oscillating technosomatic registers of

attention, inattention and distraction" that refuse the "facial dedication" demanded usually of engagements with larger screens ("Faces"). Observing that mobile phone users tend to move between focused attention and awareness of social surroundings when on their phones, Richardson contends that interactive mobile media involves an "environmental knowing" that is concurrent with managing one's "alone-ness" in public. In other words, being on your phone does not necessarily mean frontal inter/facing.

Queer decapitations on an app that is designed to be navigated on a mobile device during one's "downtime" or private time thus visualizes, and enacts to a greater degree, the habits that embody the mobile screen: their non-frontal positions—though another kind of frontal in that they are "full frontal"—resist the "authenticity" of the front-facing encounter and indicate how smartphones are interacted with in general. The bottomhood embraced and enacted by GAMS on mobile app networks denies the frontal demand of the camera—Levinas's notion of a face-to-face ethics. Instead, this performance turns the "face" of the device into a body part that does not facilitate "direct" linguistic, verbal, or emotive communication, but the directness of a disembodied part's own desires and pleasures. Following Richardson's conceptualization of screen modalities as different modes of embodiment, or a "different way of 'having a body,'" GAMS' decapitation on mobile apps morphs these Asian North American bodies into cyborgs who self-fragment and can see their fragments as extensions of themselves, even as they are severed and dispersed. Moreover, as Celine Parreñas Shimizu notes, the online cruising site is a medium that can "generate self-touch, so that while it looks like a two-dimensional image, it compels and enables a physical experience through the power of the visual,

while at first remaining a virtual medium" (248). In other words, while the racial masquerade is virtual, the pleasures circulated by these transmissions are material and visceral both for the GAM who watches his own body parts and the white body who consumes them.

Of course, as Nguyen points out, even if the desirable GAM headless torso passes for a racially "unmarked ideal homo body," it is eventually reattached to the Asian face and returns GAMS to their "abject status once more" if there is an offline encounter or hook-up (200). In a sense, the virtual life of a body or body part—a life that is understood as *resembling* "real" life but is not quite real—reveals the temporariness of the subversive glitch as well as of the counter-strategy of performing information waywardly (to borrow Ahmed's term) from that which is or can be matched to the material body. Analogizing its form as a "partial" image of an "incomplete" body, the Headless Torso is not "fully" subversive in that its masquerade is most likely temporary and it splits off into multiple trajectories in virtual-material circulations—circulating as images that prompt online pleasure, visceral pleasure and potential offline abjection. Hence, as I will suggest in my analysis of Jasmeet Singh's selfie productions on the particularly ephemeral platform of Snapchat, which I will discuss more thoroughly in the next section of this chapter, the virtual lives and *afterlives* of the willful body part engender temporal ruptures between the material and the virtual body. These temporal disruptions, like the dragged out re-attachment of the Asian face with the Headless Torso or the glitches in Kyoko's performance of human-like labour, expose the new media processes that match material

bodies with their data doubles and the potential of performing asynchronously as fragmented, unauthenticated parts.

Contrasting the fixity of Ava's face with Kyoko's incredibly removable face-mask, *Ex Machina* illustrates how Asian/American bodies embody the habits and characteristics that are aligned with mobile media devices—an alignment that views Asian bodies as (bio)technological extensions or surrogates. While GAMS take on the formal qualities of mobile media devices in order to perform their way around the racism on social media networks, racial masquerade via decapitation is not available to many brown and black bodies or body parts. If self-decapitation is a mode of counter-surveillance, does the headless black android in *Ex Machina* offer possibilities beyond the historical and ongoing dehumanization of black people? Unlike the gay Asian male's headless torso or close-up penis, black men's decapitation does not allow them to perform a racial masquerade like that of GAMS' headlessness. Moreover the isolation of these black body parts signifies differently because of the stereotypes that frame black men and their bodies as hypersexual, hypermasculine, and overly embodied. A recent study of self-representations on the gay dating app Jack'd found that while white men were overrepresented in having profiles that displayed their face, black men were overrepresented in faceless profiles and in self-descriptions of their masculinity compared to white, Asian and Latino men (Miller 650). This study suggests that the performance of masculinity without a face demonstrates the cultural taboo of being queer in the black community (654). Perhaps these findings also indicate the ways in which surveillance is

still implicated, particularly for certain racialized bodies, on apps understood as being casual, trivial or pleasurable in function.

The gay Asian and black body fragments that are shared and spread within these online networks haunt the colourblind progress of what David Eng has called queer liberalism, which declares, through the logic of colourblindness, that society has progressed because it has bestowed legal rights to certain gay and lesbian citizen-subjects while abetting the forgetting of racial difference (3). Jasmine, who is faceless in the experiment footage but completely headless by the time Caleb "discovers" her black body in the closets of androids, cannot and does not turn to look at her observers. Even after Ava amalgamates into her own body Jade's Asian skin and arm, and walks out of her prison, the film brings the viewer "back" to the research facility and to Kyoko's body on the floor. The lingering images of the disjointed androids, and of the Asian face who has been resurrected, continue to trouble the viewer, as the film goes back and forth between shots of Ava making her escape and of the locked-down facility. Hence, while neoliberal and posthuman "inclusions" of Asian North Americans as model minorities or as desirable genetic material for futures entail a relegation of blackness to the past, the past is a generative space for a resistance to this kind of future and for imagining other futures. What happens *after* Ava leaves the facility? Will the black, Asian, and orientalized women-androids "resurrect" or awaken? What memories do they have, and what futures will they write with their android bodies?

Jade's gaze at the end of the film indicates that she can see her own parts as they leave, moving away from her and onto another body. Similar to the pleasure that gay

Asian men may take in sharing their decapitated selfies, in seeing their parts detach, seduce, and deceive others, Jade's glance at the posthuman amalgam that is Ava is concurrently an act of looking at the other robot *and an act of looking at herself*. Analyzing social media self-dismemberment through the developing scholarship on "selfieness" situates the turn to the racialized part within the study of the android/posthuman, as Jesse Shipley Weaver posits that selfies turn the mobile phone "into both an extension of the body and a technology for abstracting the self" (404). Recalling Hayles's description of the posthuman as the contingent production of the material-informational body, the selfie, a type of self-portraiture that turns the mobile phone camera onto its user, is a key component of the emergence of the posthuman. Weaver describes selfieness as an "emotional and semiotic field . . . that emerges through the potential ever-presence of the selfie. This ubiquity affects how people around the world react to cameras, reshape the protocols and contexts for image taking, and, by extension, reimagine themselves as part of dispersed and transnational publics" (404). Weaver includes dismembered body parts—"pictures of erect and nonerect penises, breasts, asses ("belfies"), flexing biceps, and so on"—within the purview of the selfie, arguing that these selfies mark an eroticized self-contemplation through public presentation (407). As Weaver emphasizes, the selfie form is one that is meant to be circulated and explicitly elicits feedback, which often also appears as public comments. While the selfie is often discussed as a medium that invites others to look at "me," selfies—especially of dismembered parts—allow people to take pleasure in not only looking at themselves, but in watching their bodies in virtual dispersal and reproduction.

Rebekah Sheldon contends that the "double-visioned logic" of the selfie is one in which the subject is concurrently inside and outside of the screen that she holds (36), highlighting the body as a mediated process that allows the body to witness its own conversions into material, affective, and informational patterns. To be both inside and outside of the screen you hold can mean that you are "outed" even for acting publicly. This, as Chun notes, is how the epistemology of outing in new media operates. As I have examined above, facelessness is a strategy for navigating queer online spaces and for possibly resisting different forms of outing. The vernacular of outing, which now tends to be most associated with coming out of the queer closet, is ubiquitous in the Information Age precisely because the breach of the perceived borders between private and public in the social media age is now experienced as a *desirable* and *safe* breach. Rachel Hall argues that the desirable blurring of private and public spheres is a demand for people's willingness to "open the live body" and its digital double to routine inspection and analysis (132). This willingness to disclose and "open" the body for ongoing scrutiny is not only apparent in overtly surveillant spaces like the airport, but in the social media platforms that ask us to locate ourselves, "check in," "live tweet" and "confess" publicly.

The headless GAM photo demonstrates, however, how the performance of transparency on social media apps is affirmed and disciplined unevenly on different kinds of online platforms. Because, as Dubrofsky contends, the body that is seen as not having anything to hide tends to be white (185), gay Asian self-erasure of the face on gay hook-up apps indexes the perception that Asian faces do not "speak for [themselves]" but instead hide diseases and risky transmissions. In other words, the Asian face on these

online cruising sites and apps does not "out" itself but exposes the rest of the body to further scrutiny, suspicion and inspection. The headless torsos that pass for white or are racially ambiguous concurrently tap into this assumption about organic whiteness and probe its assumed authenticity with momentary, virtual masquerade.

It is telling, then, that recent events in the ongoing post-9/11 War on Terror have taken on the form of sexualized, new media outing and leakage. While photo or selfie leaks in the social media age tend to catch and expose subjects acting "privately," the case of Canadian Sikh man Veerender Jubbal in the wake of the 2015 Paris attacks demonstrates how even public, "transparent" and frontal interfacing with the smartphone's gaze can be leaked in order to contain, *by producing*, a *sexual* and national threat. In the remaining sections of this chapter, I examine how the production of a sexualized, brown threat to national borders is framed as a form of outing, and how Singh takes on the form of new media outing in order to challenge such heteronationalist discourses.

Outing Selfies, Securing Hetero-National Borders

Shortly after a series of terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015, a selfie that Canadian freelance journalist Veerender Jubbal had posted on Twitter three months earlier was circulated widely online and published by European news outlets falsely identifying him as one of the terrorists behind the attacks. The viral image of the Sikh man had been altered so that it looked like he was holding a Qur'an instead of an iPad and wearing a suicide bomber's vest, with a dildo resting on his bathtub in the background

(see Figure 4). Jubbal alleged that the people who doctored the image were affiliated with #GamerGate[12] because he had spoken out against the misogynist movement on Twitter a year before by creating the hashtag #stopgamergate2014 (McDonald). In post-9/11 North America, and more broadly in the West, the veiled Muslim woman's face and the turbaned brown man's head are key examples of how a part of the body is made to embody race and is also abstracted as information for national security. Writing prior to the capture and killing of Osama bin Laden, Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai state that, since the very first post-9/11 arrest of a turbaned Sikh man who was removed from an Amtrak train in Providence, Rhode Island, "turbaned Sikh men have become substitutes for an elusive Osama bin Laden . . . Within this fetish of the visible, the turban acquires the force of a tool of the panopticon" ("The Remaking" 82).

This editing and circulation of Jubbal's selfie articulates an epistemology of outing that falsely leaks in order to redraw national security lines that figure the turbaned head a threat to the *straight* nation. The leaked bathroom selfie indexes how in the brown body's intimacy with the smartphone camera—Jubbal's photo was presented as an exposed moment of *private* face-camera interfacing—is figured as a national security threat while functioning as a mode of re-securing, or reaffirming, the national body's white heteronormativity. Jubbal's doctored selfie finds itself within narratives of the new media leak, which often blame the victim for her own leakiness, her viral promiscuity.

[12] #GamerGate came to a head in 2014 when it involved a misogynist campaign to threaten, harass and "dox" (disclose personal information about) journalists, game-makers and scholars, particularly women, who spoke out about the sexism and racism in the gaming community and industry.

Similarly, the dildo edited into Jubbal's iPad photo indicates deviant, excessive sexuality by marking the Sikh man as a *queer* threat to the national body—a figure of failed masculinity (see Puar and Rai "Monster") that can be penetrated, breached, doxed in order to re-establish safe borders. As Puar and Rai posit, post-9/11 American patriotism is deployed as a heteronormative patriotism that is simultaneously about positioning the U.S. as more feminist and gay-friendlier than Afghanistan: "[T]he deployment of heteronormative patriotism is, on the one hand, the quarantining of the terrorist-monster-fag using the bodies and practices of a queered other, and on the other, the incorporation of aspects of queer subjectivity into the body of the normalized nation" ("Monster" 126-127).

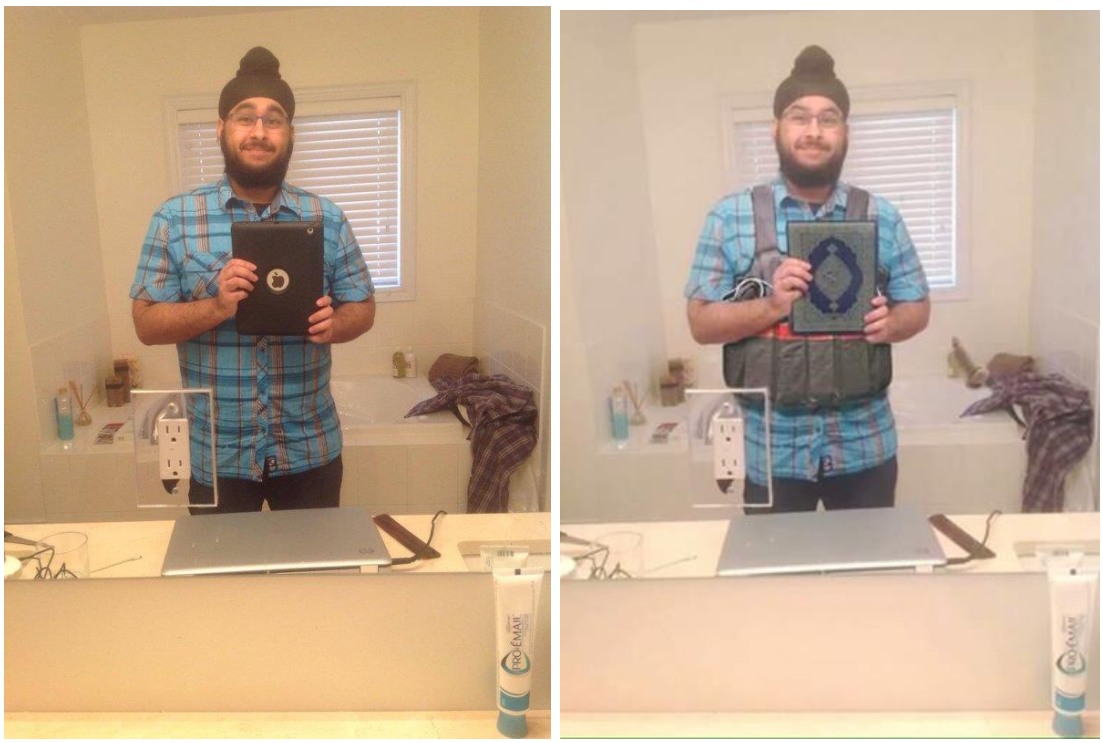

Figure 4. Jubbal tweeted a selfie of himself from a bathroom (left), which was later edited and recirculated after the Paris attacks (right). Images adapted from photos on *BuzzFeedNews*.

That the smartphone is now a site of sexualized, corporate and state surveillance has become even more apparent in the wake of Donald Trump's January 2017 executive orders on travellers, immigrants and refugees from seven and then six Muslim-majority countries, as travellers reported being asked about their views on Trump and to turn over their phones at the U.S. border. One Moroccan-born Canadian citizen, Fadwa Alaoui, was even turned away at the border shortly after the ban because agents said that the Muslim prayers on her smartphone "concerned" them (Mann). Mark Andrejevic argues that the smartphone, tablet or laptop can be understood as a drone or probe in an age when the "figure of the drone unites ballistic and information technology: it is not simply a weaponized mobile camera . . . but an indefinitely expandable probe that foregrounds the seemingly inevitable logic of algorithmic decision making" (195-196). Andrejevic contends that the effects of the "promise of the drone" include the extension and multiplication of the reach of sense, the saturation of the times and spaces in which sensing happens, the automation of the sense-making process, and the automation of response (195). Under this promise, the drone is today's "(inter)face" of emerging practices of monitoring and surveillance, as it is the "always-on, networked, mobile, sensing device" (Andrejevic 196). Sensing implies both prediction—as in the biometrics that predict what your next purchase on Amazon should be—and *feeling*, an animate attribute of the smartphone that is always so intimate to its user's bodies, questions, daily routine and social networks.

In the following section, I examine another Canadian Sikh man's encounters with his drone-smartphone's gaze in order to move between, by drawing together, surveillance

in its more "raw" form (e.g. the Transportation Security Administration scanner) and comparatively more trivial, fun or pleasurable forms of surveillance and counter-surveillance—of which GAMS' headlessness is one example. By analyzing Jasmeet Singh's *overly faced* performances in social media, I argue that the fun, or "voluntary" selfie platform of Snapchat, in particular, is implicated in the kinds of technological and racial histories of computer vision that it seeks to forget. While the blocks, deletes and scrutiny of gay Asian men on apps like Grindr engender a form of seemingly "casual" or everyday surveillance, the so-called terrorist selfie demonstrates that modes of state surveillance cannot be divorced from sexualized, gendered and heteronational borders. In a sense, both the faceless GAM and Singh's excessively frontal subversion of the leaked terrorist selfie reveal the ways in which online performance and self-presentation are indicative of the intimacies, pleasures and the violence of ubiquitous surveillance culture.

Jus Reign's Selfie-Love and the Intimacies of Counter/Surveillance

In February 2016, Jus Reign made Canadian media headlines after he tweeted and made a Snapchat story about his ordeal with Transportation Security Administration (TSA) staff on his way home to Toronto from San Francisco. In the Snapchat story (a series of short Snapchat videos) that Jus Reign filmed on his mobile phone at his gate in the San Francisco airport after being released from private inspection, he says that TSA agents, after already giving him a pat-down at the security check, asked him to remove his turban and, when he refused, ushered him into a private screening room. Jus Reign recalls that he told a TSA manager who later arrived at the private inspection room that he

would "rather not" take off his turban, but that the manager told him he had to either take it off or book another flight. After he removed his turban and had his hair "played" with by TSA officers, he was refused a mirror to use for re-tying his turban, forcing him to walk in public across the terminal with an uncovered head to the nearest bathroom ("TSA ASKS"). As Jus Reign narrates his ordeal at the American border in his Snapchat story, he brings his iPhone closer and closer to his face so that only the front section of his face is visible in the frame when he emphasizes that TSA agents did not provide him with a mirror for retying his turban (see Figure 4). The Snapchat story, even though it seemingly "disappeared" from viewers' phones after they viewed it, was widely shared and circulated online and through broadcast news media in Canada.

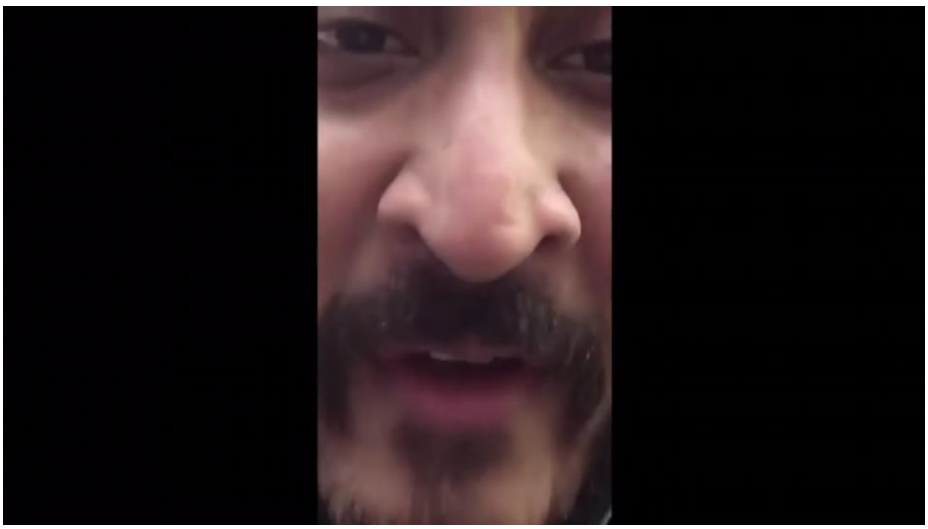

Figure 5. A screenshot of a YouTube video of Jus Reign's March 2016 Snapchat story.

Although Jus Reign was documenting an actual event of racial profiling, his Snapchat story about his detainment was not much of a departure from his previous comical Snaps, Vines, and Instagram videos. In fact, he had already predicted and performed his detainment at the American border several times before his material body

was "matched" to his data double. For example, in a Vine titled "Gotta be more careful of how I say things at airport security" posted in July 2015 and looped more than 7 million times, Jus Reign plays both an American border control officer and "himself" in an "airport." Shot in what looks like a bedroom, the mobile phone camera whips back and forth between the "officer," who is portrayed by Jus Reign sitting on a bed, and Jus Reign as himself, standing on the right side of the frame. The border control officer asks Jus Reign where he is travelling to and when Jus Reign replies that he is flying "straight into LAX," the officer motions as if he is reaching for a gun from an imaginary holster and screams at him(self), "Sir, get down on the ground, hands—" before he is cut off by the clip looping back to the beginning. The comedian has many Vines and Snapchat stories depicting both micro and macroagressive forms of racism directed at brown and turbaned men. One is a Snapchat story in which Jus Reign, wearing a poorly fitting red wig, plays a "white roommate" who refuses to touch Jus Reign's dish of leftover paneer; another is a Vine filmed in Jus Reign's home in which the comedian, wearing an ill-fitting black wig to play a white student, rushes toward Jus Reign (himself) when he says he thinks he "bombed" his test. In this Vine, like in many other similar selfie performances by Jus Reign, the comical wig falls off the Sikh man's turban, rupturing the performance and exposing his inability to be invisible in an era of augmented borders. The comedian's use of ill-fitting and makeshift wigs to "stare back" at his iPhone and his viewers' gazes not only draws more attention to his turbaned head, a body part that already has become an overdetermining target of post-9/11 surveillance in North America, but declares his inability to be invisible to structures of monitoring not just at the site of national borders

but under the corporate gaze of tech companies. His use of makeshift wigs is emphatically about their absurdity on his head, as they often topple off during his videos, or sit loosely on top of his still-visible turban.

Jus Reign employs the "everyday" characteristic of social media production by re-locating institutional spaces—the classroom, the workplace, the airport—within the so-called private space of the home. For example, in his "Gotta be more careful of how I say things at airport security" Vine, his bedroom functions as the site of his imminent detainment. By situating these institutional forms of monitoring and border patrol within spaces traditionally understood as domestic or private, Jus Reign blurs the private-public binary to highlight how, as Btihaj Ajana points out, the incorporation of Big Data into border management strategies augments borders so that they are ubiquitous and "*everywhere*," not just at official border stops (61). Moreover, by performing his future detainment as well as his experiences of being labelled a terrorist threat against the backdrop of his home, the comedian visualizes the growing North American and European narrative that terrorists are *within* the borders, posing a *domestic* threat. In a public memo posted in October 2015, then FBI director James Comey stated that "counterrorism" remained the agency's top priority, but that "the threat" has changed significantly from being a foreign one in which outside terrorist operatives get within American borders to recruit to the threat of "homegrown violent extremists who may aspire to attack the United States from within" after being indoctrinated by "poisonous propaganda and training" on the Internet ("Threats"). The image of the domestic terrorist threat, therefore, is of susceptible, Internet-using brown, and likely Muslim, subjects.

Jus Reign's tactic of framing his head and face at an intimate, almost uncomfortably close, distance from the camera and from the viewer breaches the limits of the acceptable encounter—what Phu calls the "civil distance"—between the racially marked/masked subject and its others that protects others from racialized contagion. His floating turbaned head is formally disembodied in the Snapchat stories and Vines to both embrace "head-on" his always-surveilling drone/probe iPhone and dislocate the Sikh Canadian subject in the separation of his head-in-circulation from his material body. In a contemporary context where the mobile phone, to recall Richardson, is engaged with attentively and distractedly, Jus Reign's use of the mobile app form is "in-your-face" because he asserts his front, leaning into his viewers faces and demanding an encounter. Thus, Jus Reign's intentionally amusing call for viewers to hold him, watch him, and love him on his YouTube account is a demand that is enacted by his use of the Vine and selfie platform. The intimate framing of his face forces a closeness with his viewers that invites them to stare, to watch, to fixate on his head. Jus Reign's invasion of the viewer's "personal space" by overwhelming and filling the viewer's mobile screen with his head takes the social media practice of "sharing" and renders it a form of infective transmission. In breaching a "healthy" or civil distance, Jus Reign's expressive and sometimes silly-looking face is a comedic strategy as well as a tactic that concurrently reverses and parallels the strategy of racial masking. His (over)exposure reveals his fraught relationship to the nation-state as a drone/probe technology that continues to watch him even as he defiantly stares back.

His overly faced selfies constitute not only a comedic strategy that concurrently stares back at the viewer and his iPhone's gaze while performing into existence normalized and everyday surveillance, but also a mode of self-desire or *selfie-love*—a pleasurable gaze and desire for his own body and body parts. In addition to playing both "himself" and his own "bae" (significant other) by using the bad drag of makeshift wigs such as T-shirts or towels thrown over his head, Jus Reign performs a desire for his own image on the screen. At times making kissing faces or self-mocking seductive expressions at his camera, Jus Reign in essence kisses or seduces his own face and, in the contingent production of his body that renders the iPhone a part of him, *desires his own body part*—in this case, his own face. In a 2015 Snapchat story about a stranger under his bed (played by himself), Jus Reign lies on his bed and addresses the phone camera to say that he is about to throw a meet-and-greet in his bedroom when he is "interrupted" by his double popping out from under his bedframe. His double-under-the-bed asks Jus Reign not to host the event because he needs to sleep. Jus Reign agrees and draws his phone, which is filming his face from below, closer to his face as he says to the man under his bed/himself: "I love you" and makes kissing motions (see Figure 6). The man under the bed asks for a bedtime song and sends back more kisses. The story goes back and forth between close-up shots of Jus Reign's face as the top and his face underneath, sending kisses to each other/himself.

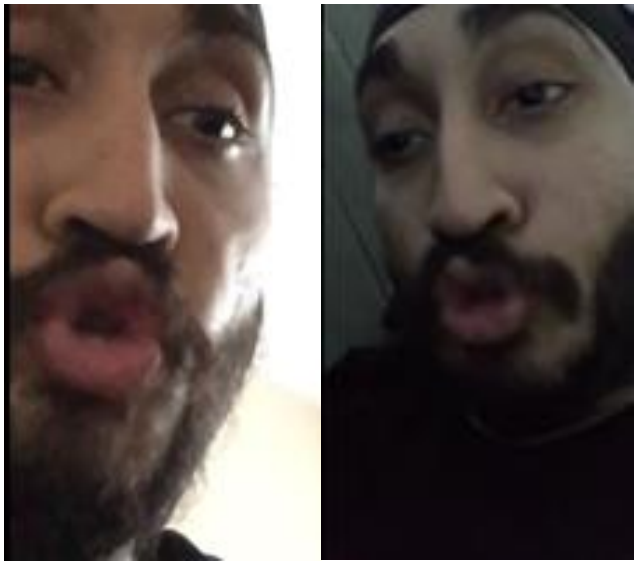

Figure 6. Jus Reign as both himself and the man under his bed, sending kissy faces. Screenshots taken from YouTube videos of Jus Reign's Snapchat videos.

Jus Reign rearticulates the post-9/11 figuration of brown men's simultaneous threatening masculinity and sexual "perversity"—an image of failed heterosexual masculinity that was invoked by the dildo in Jubbal's edited selfie. The sex toy is associated with self-pleasure meant to criminalize the perceived queerness of Sikh Canadian masculinity by not only "disciplining" him for being penetrable and therefore a bottom to be penetrated, but also by punishing his self-circulation on Twitter—both his selfie posted on Twitter and, allegedly, his social media condemnation of #GamerGate—by framing his selfie as a form of "deviant" self-penetration. The doctored selfie represents a dual punishment: Jubbal is marked as a failed heterosexual masculine figure not only because of his brownness, but because of the gendered or queer narcissism and vanity associated with the bathroom-mirror selfie—a form that tends to be seen as a *feminine* or effeminately queer kind of photography. However, by using absurdist humour, Jus Reign's floating head on the mobile screen takes on the "infectivity" or

contagion of South Asian Canadian self-transmission in order to self-reproduce as a mode of resistance to racial profiling. This selfie-love mischievously breaches the limits of "civil" or heteronormative "distance" by queering the intimacy between Jus Reign's body and his drone/probe iPhone, rendering it a distance of *excessive interfacing*: at once visualizing the invasiveness or "too-closeness" of the augmented borders of Big Data surveillance and the possible resistance, or necessity, of staring back. It is important to remember, after all, that Jus Reign has built a career from producing online videos and self-transmission. As he simultaneously kisses his own face, the viewer and his phone, this overly faced performance at once self-presents within a frontal ontology and ruptures that frontal ontology by bringing it to its visual limit. In particular, as I will explore in the last section of this chapter, Jus Reign's use of Snapchat confronts the app's facial detection technology and the histories of racial scrutiny it inherits by "interrupting" the Snapchat lens or filter, causing its algorithm to temporarily glitch.

Race as Lens: Snapchat's Facial Detection and its 'Immune Response'

Now in its sixth year, Snapchat's interface and central functions seem to have developed into a platform that facilitates Jus Reign's selfie mode of performance and self-viewing. Snapchat purchased the Ukrainian facial detection and editing tool Looksery in 2015 and has since allowed users to edit their faces in real-time with an array of cartoonish filters that superimpose endearing features, such as a flower crown, dog ears and nose, rainbow vomit, and a panda's face. Snapchat calls these filters "lenses" and describes their detection technology as "object recognition"—an algorithm that the

company claims is designed to understand the "general nature of things" in an image, but is not the same as facial recognition because it does not identify a specific face ("Our Approach"). In other words, according to Snapchat, users' faces might be detected as a face by the app, but not specifically recognized or remembered. However, just like the tech company's claim that photos and videos captured by the app are "deleted" from its servers, these deletions are not so much disappearances as they are modes of *forgetting* that which cannot be forgotten. After all, Snapchat claims that it deletes snaps after they are viewed, but there are methods of saving a snap, including downloading apps that store (remember) these images and taking a screenshot of snaps on the phone. Moreover, Snapchat's newest product, Spectacles, which are sunglasses that allow the wearer to record a 10-second video of what they "see" and store it in their account, is marketed as an appealing way to "make memories" from one's perspective. Filtering its facial detection technology with colourful and "fun" lenses not only abets the forgetting of anxieties over surveillance—despite the fact that the lenses available to the user are GPS-activated and dependent on the user's tracked location—and user monitoring, but filters the histories and ongoing practices of scrutinizing and visualizing the racialized face.

The rise of Snapchat is directly related to the fear of gendered new media leaks, as its launch in 2011 came in the midst of heightened anxiety around the teenage exchange and sharing of sexts and nude photos. Two years after its launch, Snapchat had accrued 100 million users, who were sending 350 million photos per day, prompting an *Atlantic* article to observe that Snapchat is an "immune response . . . to the forces of Big Data, behavioral targeting, and the need to record every stupid little thing in the world.

Snapchat might be the defining product of our technophilic, technoanxious age" (Madrigal). The app's appeal was its promise of ephemerality, particularly for women and those whose bodies are especially targeted by slut-shaming because this multimedia platform was designed to secure one's content from coming back to haunt. While an immune response in medical terms describes how a body's system detects and destroys a harmful virus or bacterium in order to protect itself, describing the Snapchat phenomenon as an immune response reverses this process: the "private" body part is deleted in order to protect it from exposure. In the case of Snapchat, an immune response to the tracking and monitoring probe of the smartphone involves the destruction of the body part. Of course, this containment is not guaranteed, as subsequently developed apps allow people to save a Snapchat video or photo, and well-known social media producers' snaps are at times uploaded by others onto YouTube. Ironically, Snapchat's logo is a cartoon ghost, at once signalling its promise to make content disappear and the spectre of this data that continues to haunt. What is intriguing, however, is how apps designed for brevity and ephemerality—apps that are designed *to forget*, like Snapchat and Vine—are used as social media tools for the circulation and sharing of identity performances. For these platforms, the temporariness of a cultural production is caught up in its hyper-exposure and transnational distribution.

Like the apparent ephemerality of Jade and Kyoko's synthetic body parts—they are temporary to the point that they can be transferred and taken apart—the seeming spectrality of these fragments engender recirculations of racial memories. Snapchat's presentation of its lenses as fun editing tools works to forget how the human/white face

emerged in contrast to the inscrutability of the machine/alien Asian in Yellow Peril narratives and continues to emerge today in contrast to the emphatically artificial or designed Asian face. In 2016, Snapchat launched a "Bob Marley lens" that edited users' faces to resemble the singer, darkening the skin, superimposing dreads and adding a knit cap. Later in the same year, it released a yellowface filter that enlarged users' front teeth, cartoonishly slanted their eyes and rounded out their faces. While Snapchat eventually pulled the two filters from their app after media coverage of the controversies and complaints of racism, these events reveal the platform's intrinsic function of forgetting that which lingers by resurrecting it through postracial lenses. On one level, the tech company released blackface and yellowface lenses within the same year, as if immediately forgetting its own racism without deleting it from its corporate and programming memory. On another level, the company's claim that its yellowface feature was an attempt to offer an "anime-inspired" lens that was "meant to be playful and never to offend" (qtd. in Meyer) demonstrates that Snapchat actively forgets not only its recent past of designing racist interfaces, but the imperial logics that "see" faces unevenly.

The mobile app's facial detection technology works by creating a face "mesh" that is based on detected "feature reference points" on the human face, such as mouth width, width of eyes, jaw drop, and the nose's upward point, and matching that mesh in real-time to the user's face so that its algorithm can map and then alter the appearance of the face on the screen as it moves (Shaburova). In a sense, it visualizes how abstracted data is matched to a material body at border crossings or moments of surveillant encounter. The technology uses the Viola-Jones algorithm, a real-time face detection method developed

by Paul Viola and Michael Jones. Neither Looksery's patent nor Viola and Jones's paper on their algorithm refer to race. In fact, the Looksery patent includes "exemplary" images of a face marked with "landmarks" or feature reference points and a face-mesh alignment, images that appear to depict only white men. In particular, the document's image of a "mean face" (or average human face) is legible as a *white* face (Shaburova). Viola and Jones's paper on their influential method, however, also includes a sample grid of faces from their training dataset, a collection of 4,916 front-facing, mostly smiling faces taken from a "random crawl of the World Wide Web," that includes differently racialized visages (148). This "face training set" includes the faces of differently racialized people, concurrently suggesting the *universality* of computer vision and its comprehensiveness of a "diversity" of faces.

The popular explanation given for computerized vision's issues with seeing people of colour is that the problem is a *design* one. For example, when an engineering student named Robert Lee attempted to apply for a New Zealand passport through an online system in 2016, the system rejected the photo he submitted of himself, giving him the notice: "The photo you want to upload does not meet our criteria because: subject eyes are closed" (Griffiths). Media coverage of this incident tended to describe the event as a "robot" misreading or being incapable for reading the Asian face, while the New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs cited "lighting issues" with Lee's photo as the reason why his eyes were not properly detected (Ibid). Erica Baker, a black engineer for the workplace messaging start-up company Slack, offers a "concrete" example of how having diversity on an engineering team can improve the product: facial-recognition

problems in cameras often do not recognize black people because "the people who are building these products are white people and they're testing it on themselves" (qtd. in Harris). If we follow Baker's contention to its logical conclusion, facial detection technologies' apparent difficulties with seeing faces of colour should be addressed by hiring people of colour themselves to design these systems. This widely shared desire for "diversity" in Silicon Valley often suggests that the issue of racism in tech companies and in the products they manufacture can be solved by *improving the technology* so that it sees bodies of colour better.

Yet, as Kelly Gates points out, despite the claim that digitized vision is by nature "more accurate and objective and less subject to the prejudices and apparent inadequacies of human perception," the story of modern facial recognition technology's developments is yoked to post-9/11 national defence and counterterrorism in North America (10). A claim that circulated in the wake of the 9/11 attacks was that the availability of automated facial recognition systems would have prevented the plane crashes, because in the case of the two alleged hijackers Mohammad Atta and Abdulaziz Alomari, the men were caught on airport security cameras but not identified because the system did not have the technology to recognize them (Gates 1-2). Gates points out that leading up to the events of 9/11, facial recognition technology vendors were experimenting with applying systems in the "real world," so when the attacks occurred, 9/11 engendered a moment in which facial recognition was defined as a homeland security technology that "made use of an implicit classifying logic, including rhetorical moves that resuscitated antiquated notions of deviant facial types" (101). In other words, contemporary computer recognition of

human faces comes out of and is yoked to the narratives and anxieties of the War on Terror, and the "national security" need to "see" brown faces better—more accurately—in order to monitor their activities. This "better" surveillance's accuracy is marked by its ability to match the data double with flesh, consolidating data and the body. Gates contends that biometric facial recognition is part of an "array" of technologies that are being developed to address "the problem of 'disembodied identities,' or the existence of visual and textual representations of individuals that circulate independent of their physical bodies" (12). Thus, this kind of bioinformatics works to re-embody disembodied performances and circulations in order to "read" by making legible the whole, intact individual subject.

Although the face plays a pivotal role of authentication in this move to return body parts—as well as the "fragments" of tweets, Facebook posts and other virtual transmissions—to the "real," singular and monitorable body, Jus Reign's transmissions of his head and face circulate as performances of disembodiment. When Vine was still operating, before its closure in 2016, its users tended to not only film themselves but to turn the phone's camera lens on others or to have others film them in order to play with more complicated narratives in their productions, sometimes adding special effects and more sophisticated editing. While Jus Reign played with various shots and angles, as well as with green screens and graphics on his YouTube videos, his widely "looped" Vine productions and Snapchat stories are mainly composed of self-recorded, tight close-ups of his head, with only a small portion of the rest of his body visible in fleeting moments or, at times, without showing the rest of his body at all. Part of the appeal of Vine culture was

the mastery of the "perfect loop" or "infinite loop," as the app would automatically replay the six-second video immediately and users would play into this function to create the effect of a seamless, continual sequence. As Jus Reign brings the phone's camera lens progressively nearer to his face just before "cutting off" videos like the one where he performs his own airport detainment in his bedroom, his head is disembodied by his extreme proximity to the drone/probe smartphone's gaze, and by his head's escape from surveillance's fruition—the arrival of state violence—by momentarily disappearing only to re-appear at the restart of the Vine. In the infinite loop, surveillance's "conclusion" in the detainment or disciplining of Jus Reign's body never arrives. This paradox of at once disappearing off-screen and being caught in a continual loop demonstrates how Vine's formal quality of the "infinite loop" engenders a virtual reproduction of the body part that is also an elusive splitting of the body—a dismemberment that becomes a disembodiment. The abrupt (in)conclusions of these videos give "life" to Jus Reign's head and face outside of the reachability of the gaze of the iPhone, carving out another space and temporality in which viewers are prompted to imagine Jus Reign continues to "live." His virtual, disembodied performances become detached from his body, and escape the conclusions of racial profiling, even as his physical body is stopped, patted down and scrutinized. Thus, Jus Reign's turn to Snapchat just after he was stopped and ordered to remove his turban is telling: even as the Sikh man will likely continue to have to submit his body to observation, scanning and interrogation, his selfie-love transmissions circulate and re-circulate apart from his grounded body.

Jus Reign performs such a separation from his material and virtual face on Snapchat through his use of its lenses. At times, he aligns his face with the app's algorithmic "mesh" only to momentarily disrupt this face-reading by being *too* front-facing for its detection, causing its lenses to "glitch" and fall off for a second because it cannot recognize his face as a human one. Instead of aligning his face "civilly" with the app in order to have his face properly read, Jus Reign at times "throws off" the Snapchat lens by coming too close to his phone. In a Snapchat story uploaded shortly after Alexandre Bissonnette shot and killed six Muslim men and injured other worshippers in the Centre Culturel Islamique de Quebec in Quebec City at the end of January 2017, Jus Reign again plays two people: Jim, who basically presents as Jus Reign without any costumes or filters but with an American southern or "rural" accent, and Bill, who is Jus Reign with a photo of a white man's face superimposed on top of his face—an effect created by using one of Snapchat's "face-swapping" lenses that allows the users to map an image of a face stored on their smartphone apps onto their faces in real-time. This feature is made available by facial recognition technology that identifies human faces in photos from users' Facebook profiles, WhatsApp messages, and other stored photos. Included among the other selfie lenses on the app's selfie-recording interface, this face-swap option is presented as another humorous or playful way to augment the front-facing mobile camera.

In this Snapchat story, Jim is shocked to learn while reading the news online on what appears to be his bed—again, the camera is too close to Jus Reign for the viewer to see his location clearly—that the terrorist who attacked the Quebec City mosque was not

a "jihadi Muslim mud-faced piece of shit," but a white man. Bill appears and tells Jim not to believe this because it is "fake news" by the "left-wing, mama's titty-suckin' cocks that wanna blame the white man." As the two continue to argue over the facts of the Quebec City mosque murders, the framing of Jim and Bill becomes increasingly narrowed in on their faces. Bill yells into the camera that they need to be "tough" and "vigilant," and go into "those countries" to "start shootin' them up, all those terrorists." When Jim tells Bill that Bissonnette attacked the mosque and killed Muslims, and that those are the "facts," Bill hollers back that those are not real facts, but "alternative facts." The term "alternative facts" was coined by Trump's campaign strategist Kellyanne Conway when she defended Press Secretary Sean Spicer's claim that the media had lied about the small crowd that attended Trump's presidential inauguration. Calling Spicer's false statements "alternative facts," Conway's choice of words became known as a way of naming the apparent post-truth, white nationalist resurgence under Trump's presidency.

At this point in the story, the filter of the white man's face and Jus Reign's "actual" face begin splitting apart, as he comes so close to his phone's camera that the Snapchat lens starts to glitch (see Figure 7). In some moments, the white-face lens no longer fits "properly" on Jus Reign's face, and the Sikh man's beard and mouth are visible as he talks while the white face continues to be attached to the upper region of his face. Like his ill-fitting and toppling makeshift wigs, the white face at times "slips"' from its position to reveal Jus Reign's inability to be postracial or raceless. The text caption on the selfie video as Bill continues to yell about "left-wing" false news is "ALTERNATIVE FACTS COME ON," which is a commentary on both the dual-facedness of Jus Reign's

augmented selfie and the falsehood of his performance as a white man. In the remainder of the Snapchat story, Bill begins chanting in support of future Trump re-elections, calling for Trump presidential victories up until the year 2048. With each election year he yells, he thrusts his head forward, "throwing off" the white-face lens so that the superimposed image disappears for a "split second" and reveal Jus Reign's face underneath. In these "split seconds" when his face is temporarily illegible as a traceable human face to the app software, Jus Reign is disembodied beyond the augmented interface. For just a moment, his face eludes the tracking meshes of the face-altering lens and is too virtual—not human-like enough in the facing position—to be detected properly. By performing the ridiculousness of the Trump administration's racist, sexist and xenophobic "alternative facts," Jus Reign's glitchy augmented selfies expose not only that computer vision sees white and brown or Muslim faces unevenly, but that this unevenness of surveillance functions to reinforce the brown, turbaned, bearded or veiled "face of terrorism."

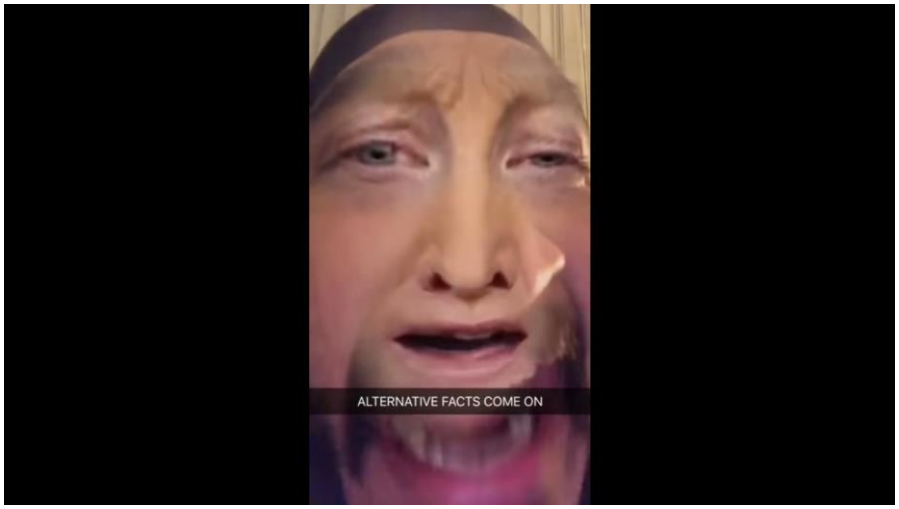

Figure 7. Jus Reign's face and the filter split temporarily in his Snapchat story about alternative facts. Screenshot of a YouTube upload of Jus Reign's story.

While Snapchat's insistence on its own playful nature may distance its interface of playful reality augmentation from that of state or corporate surveillance, Jus Reign's use of Snapchat highlights the stakes of the selfie in issues of racial profiling, surveillance and the state monitoring of certain bodies and body parts. Using Snapchat as his platform for documenting the forced removal of his turban while crossing the American border, the Sikh man foregrounds his fraught relationship with his smartphone's surveillance. Jus Reign's overly faced Snapchat productions reveal the impossibility of forgetting that which is intentionally forgotten. By facing head-on the scrutiny of his smartphone's camera lens, the South Asian Canadian man calls attention to and visualizes the relationship between the apparently trivial or vain gaze of his smartphone in selfie mode, and the demanding gaze of state and corporate surveillance. His displays of selfie-love disrupt the seamlessness of Snapchat's innocuous facial detection because his head is *too* close to the lens to be read as a face. Instead, Jus Reign's face *is* the screen and takes over the interface as the fun colourful filters glitch or fall off, leaving the Sikh man to confront a gaze that has become too intimate.

Conclusion: The Inorganic Possibilities of Mediated Asianness

As Jus Reign's selfies glitch and the app's lens "falls off" to split his virtual inter/face and render his brown facial parts illegible, we are reminded of the ending of *Ex Machina*. Just as Ava is about to approach a helicopter to complete her escape, the film returns to Kyoko from an angle that directly faces her disjointed face, her eyes still staring blankly while her metallic jaw is unhinged from the rest of her visage. The next frame

depicts the Japanese android's immobile legs and Caleb sitting on the ground inside Nathan's room, dejectedly staring out the glass door. We then see the helicopter containing Ava take off and fly into the distance. Kyoko's inorganic corpse haunts this future of the white posthuman, formally and discursively interrupting the narrative of Ava's escape and emergence into human society, her watchful silence critiquing Ava's transformation into a free, white posthuman woman. The android-coolie's eyes continue to look, continue to watch seemingly inanimately, perhaps even *posthumously*, as Ava flies away in a helicopter.

The narrative of white, female progress of the lifeform that follows the liberal human subject, who has historically been tied to whiteness and masculinity, is also a kind of posthumous life that marks the end of the "real" human (arguably represented by Nathan and Caleb), but Kyoko's inorganic stare brings Ava's liberation into question by highlighting the inorganic assemblage—the labour—that led to her "freedom." While her limb and skin emerge into the "outside world" attached to Ava's carbon-fibre frame, Jade's Asian face remains intact, reawakened in its separation from her dismembered parts. Her watchful face signals a yet-to-be-seen queer Asian/American future—a future not ushered in by the restoration of the organic whole, but in Asian American fragmentation and dispersal. It is a future brought forth from violence, and at the same time, her distributed fragments, now attached to Ava but portable as proxies, haunt the posthuman subject and her future, threatening to resurrect and infect this progress with its memories. While Ava escapes by properly performing heterosexual desire for Caleb, Jade, whose body parts joined with Ava's to constitute a "rebirth," Jasmin, the black

android, and the other inorganic women remain in the facility, threatening to come "alive" at the dawn of a progress that was meant to erase their queer histories.

The dispersal of Jade and Kyoko's skin, and the counter-surveillance of their watchful gazes, illustrate possibilities for engaging with an Asian North American inorganic critique that straddles the unstable line between techno-Orientalist narratives and enacting virtual or inorganic Asianness. In a sense, this chapter has laid out the underlying queries of this dissertation by turning to the inorganic labour of "not quite" Asian figures and their possible reimaginations and re-embodiments of data. As I consider the reproduction of inorganic Asian copies in my next chapter and the *inter/face* of self-care and mediated wellbeing in the Information Age in my final chapter, I continue to meditate upon the not-quiteness of Asian bodies and labour in relation to technological mediation and the racialized temporalities of progress.

In an era of bioinformatics and Big Data predictions, in which race is not only about the body but also about informational patterns of behaviour and networked affiliations, an inorganic Asian North American critique turns from within these so-called disembodied shifts to disrupt the abstraction or erasure of race, while complicating the subjective autonomy or personhood assigned to organic performances of embodiment. Turning to the inorganic labour of the Asian android reveals how race haunts the discourses, interfaces, and temporalities that seek to elide it, and calls for alternative understandings of liberation and acts of resistance apart from the restored or intact whole, liberal subject. As my turn to queer headless pics and Jus Reign's overly faced selfie-love has demonstrated, following the willful Asian North American body part, and the

mediated patterns and interfaced encounters from which Asianness emerges, can split open or trigger glitches in posthuman moves to forget by appropriating racialized, gendered and queer circulations.

Chapter 2 | Inorganic Asian Copies

we dream our broken
reproductions online
we repeat
on department store shelves

- Larissa Lai, *Automaton Biographies*

Three days after the *Sewol* ferry sank off the coast of South Korea on April 16, 2014, drowning about 300 people—most of whom were students from Danwon High School in Ansan City—*Fox News* ran a segment that cut to footage of grieving family members of the drowning victims and zoomed in on a crying elderly woman. That woman featured in the *Fox News* clip, however, was actually the mother of climbing guide Ang Kaji Sherpa, who died in an avalanche on Mount Everest two days after the South Korean ferry disaster. At the time that she was filmed, the grieving mother was waiting for his body at the Sherpa Monastery in Katmandu, Nepal. Rick Phillips of the Korean Cultural Center in Los Angeles responded to the mix-up of Asians by sending three letters to the network and telling *The Washington Post* in an interview that *Fox* had "used footage of random sad Asians instead of going to Korea" (Wemple). Korean American blog *KoreAm* responded to the network's blunder with a post stating that the footage was of "Asian people who are clearly not Korean" and chided that *Fox News* may want to add "ignorant" and "racially insensitive" to its motto "Fair and Balanced" ("In SKorean Ferry Disaster"). When the media outlet finally confirmed this error on a *Washington Post* columnist's blog the month after the segment was broadcast, a *Fox News* spokesperson explained that the wrong video was pulled from the international

feed, that the blunder would be addressed on air, and that the footage would be corrected online.

The use of "random sad Asians" is not a random event; the randomization of Asian bodies and the belief that all Asians look the same are entrenched in Yellow Peril discourses that presented the Chinese figure as a multiplicity and as a falsehood—an "anthropomorphized cascade of masks and misrepresentations that concealed some withheld inner kernel" (Hayot 169). These discourses underlie techno-Orientalist depictions of Asian clones, androids and other not-quite-humans in North American popular cultural productions like *Cloud Atlas* and *Blade Runner*. The Asian student in the West, in particular, has come to represent academe's failure because of her relationship to excess and nondescript mass. The overtly neoliberal university that does not hide its prioritization of efficient productivity and high achievement is criticized for being too similar to the assembly line and, therefore, is "too Asian," as one infamous *Maclean's* magazine article put it 2010. The "too Asian" article, which quoted white students bemoaning their inability to compete with "Asian and Asian Canadian students for spots in top schools or to properly party in those schools" (Findlay and Kohler), demonstrates that Asian interchangeability and Asian multitude continue to articulate each other within the narrative of inorganic Asianness. This pervasive conflation of Asianness and unoriginality is commonly depicted in what Fan Yang describes as China's reputation for being a "making and faking" nation of counterfeit goods and performances (*Faked* 3).

That the interchangeability of Asians is articulated as the *replicability* of Asian bodies demonstrates the perceived technological nature of Asians not only in the belief

that they are nonhuman, but that Asianness is itself a kind of reproduction. Greta Aiyu Niu's understanding of techno-Orientalism emphasizes the ways in which techno-Orientalist discourses erase the history of Asian people and technology that would be considered revolutionary, and instead see Asians as "master copiers who lack Western ingenuity" (74, 78). Asia's—in particular East Asia's—illegitimate or failed replications of white modernity and progress are portrayed widely in the contemporary moment as the result of the continent's lax patent, trademark, and copyright laws, which facilitate the proliferation of counterfeit products in Asian countries. The affiliation of Asia and Asianness with replication is part of a long tradition that includes Karl Marx's perspective of the "Asiatic mode of production" as cyclical, or without "cumulative" or "dynamic" development, because of the absence of private property in land, stagnant, bureaucratic cities, the "despotic state machine," and the lack of intermediate forces between the state and self-sufficient village communities (Anderson 483). The "Asiatic" way of producing meant cyclical production without progressive innovation. In 1902, the American Federation of Labor issued a pamphlet advocating for the extension of the Chinese Exclusion Act that called Chinese labourers an "incubus," and compared California's economic advancement based on Chinese labour to "the growth of a child with a malignant tumor upon his back" (qtd. in Hayot 139). Eric Hayot observes that this comparison of Chinese labour to an incubus is animated by the belief in the Asiatic stereotype of "sexuality without reproduction and effort without progress" (139).

Understandably, in moments of Asian "mix-ups" or misidentification, the tendency is to *correct* the error or stereotype by restoring Asians to individual, distinct

subjectivity—that is, to better *recognize* the Asian North American subject. According to this logic, the solution to racist assumptions of Asian interchangeability is to make the Inscrutable Oriental known as a legible and human subject, often expressed in the emphasis on ethnic difference or the insistence on Asian nonconformity to one another or to popular stereotypes: a disavowal of the popular claim that "all Asians look alike." However, this reparative move is yoked to the logic of neoliberal multiculturalism as well as neo/olonial forms of knowing the Other—knowledge regimes that acknowledge and celebrate difference through "authentic" cultural experiences while downplaying systemic racism. Seeing better or more accurate recognition as the solution to racism thus oversimplifies the intimacies and survival tactics involved in being "like" and "not-quite." Therefore, this chapter, rather than seeking to correct Asian interchangeability via subject recognition, considers what misrecognitions might offer us a way of thinking about virtuality, racialization and the body. I continue to consider the subversive possibilities, creative alternatives and capitalist contradictions of inorganic Asian North American lives by turning to what I theorize as the *failed Asian copy*, a re/production[13] that takes on the form of an inorganic or "not-quite" copy[14] and disrupts—at times mischievously—"successful" reproduction.

[13] I use a slash in "re/production" in order to differentiate this term from "reproduction" by indicating a disruption in the imperial drive for linear productivity, which is rooted in gendered notions around biological reproduction. The slash "opens up" a gap between the sense of copies and production in order to probe the relationship between the copy, the apparently interchangeable, with labour and cultural production.

[14] John Stuart Mill in his 1859 seminal text *On Liberty*, warned that Europe's progress was "advancing towards the Chinese ideal of making all people alike" because of decreasing social support for individuality and nonconformity (88).

More specifically, I examine three sets of seemingly disparate performances of inorganic Asian copies in order to, as I discussed in my Introduction, draw out a genealogy of virtual Asianness: Philip Kan Gotanda's play *Yankee Dawg You Die* (1991), Asian Canadian Peter Chao/Davin Tong's online character "Chinese Guy," and Asian American YouTuber Ryan Higa's "Skitzo" series. By failing to properly or *fully* reproduce one another, the Asian/North American versions in these productions take on the form of Asian interchangeability—a trope that characterizes the model minority's embodiment of capitalist production—while "trolling" this reproduction in their failures. Considering what Jack Halberstam calls the queer "counterhegemonic discourse of losing"—a strategy that critiques the assumed connections between success and profit within capitalism (18)—I suggest that while these inorganic versions index how self-reproduction is marked as a success in the digital era, they also create queer, unruly circuits of hypersubjectivity. Scholars, including Christina Bacareza Balance and Konrad Ng, have described social media as a medium particularly conducive to Asian American celebrity and virality because, as a group that struggled to be visible in a "constrictive [mainstream] media system" but had been engaged in viral and DIY production prior to the Internet, Asian American artists and entrepreneurs "easily shifted into the digital mode" (Balance 143). In this chapter, I examine how new media virality shifts into yet another mode: a postviral mode that appropriates racial reproduction. My use of the term "postviral" is informed by Robert Payne's contention that contemporary networked media is post-viral because it shifts the meaning of "viral" from infective, homophobic discourses of the computer virus to a meaning of virality that "seems to connote a

successful and desirable kind of circulation rather than an intrusive and destructive one" (20-21). Payne observes that in this postviral shift, the kind of intimacy that is seen as "a failure of institutionalized heteronormativity," and borrowed selectively from the earlier vernacular of viruses including that of computer viruses and HIV, is rebranded as capitalist success (7, 26). In other words, postvirality, according to Payne's intervention, seems to repackage queer and possibly racialized viral risk into desirable, neoliberal "sharing."

This chapter interrogates the postviral and viral circulations of inorganic Asian copies within surveillance culture's demand for *voluntary*—even aestheticized—transparency and self-disclosure under the digital screen's gaze. A key component of the postviral flattening of queer "risk" in online sharing is what Rachel Hall describes as "transparency chic." Hall argues that post-9/11 "counterrorism" involves the demand for docile, "voluntary" submission to inspection and thus requires that subjects perform whiteness before surveillant technologies. This performance is what Hall calls "transparency chic," an aesthetic that "takes on the form of a willingness to open the live body, its accoutrements and possessions, as well as its digital double, to routine inspection and analysis" (132). I examine how Chao's and Higa's performances of transparency—specifically, Chao's "reveal" vlog in which he removes his sunglasses for the first time and Higa's autobiographical "Draw My Life" video—do not amalgamate their "doubles" or their versions into an intact, organic racialized subject. Rather, these performances of transparency, while they take on the form of postviral sharing and online authenticity, render Chao and Higa more opaque in their circulations of subjective excess.

Part of this refusal to converge is their refusal, or perhaps inability, to produce a stable and *able* body. The demand for voluntary transparency in the Information Age's surveillant assemblage (Haggerty and Ericson) is an ableist expectation for bodies to pass as the state's idea of a "normal" body. Hall notes that "[l]ike whiteness or heterosexuality, transparency claims the ground of neutrality, while in fact the transparent body desired by the security state is not neutral but, more accurately, normate" (133). Expanding on Hall's work, Rachel Dubrofsky argues that visual surveillance culture idealizes a self-reflexive and *stable*, authentic self—a core identity "naturally enacted by white bodies" (185). Thus, in surveillance society, bodies are not only expected to conform to a norm; they must also organically enact a stable, authentic "core" subjectivity—a subjectivity that is only recognized as such when it is coded as white. I suggest that Chao's and Higa's evocations of racialized, gendered and intellectual slowness, and of subjective excess (seen especially in "Skitzo") highlight the links between dis/ability and successful online transmission. Instead of producing a "healthily" stable subject, these Asian North American comedians produce conflicting and *unstable* performances of temporal illogic and neoliberal achievement. In doing so, these examples reveal the fraught ways in which Asian North American "skitzo" versions engender ableist liberal progress as well as strategies for disrupting this narrative of success.

The post-viral shift names a disciplining or *mining* of excess that yields the right kind of online "active user-subjects"—a role that Payne argues is fetishized in the post-viral moment over other positions and pleasures (21). One such overlooked position or pleasure is that of the hyper-subject, who Paul Rodaway argues is subject to the hyper-

reality of consumer choices and preferences, and is therefore a "ghost of a subject, locked within a simulation of subjectivity" that is "passive" and "hedonistic" (241). This spectral figure of a consuming, passive subject has tended to be associated with the wired Asian American model minority. Lisa Nakamura points out that Asian Americans have been mainly represented in studies of Internet usage as consumers instead of cultural producers because surveys are interested in measuring the use of online services rather than cultural production (172). This traditional portrayal of the online shopper and *user*, as opposed to producer, is of course entrenched in the techno-Orientalist discourse that Asians lack Western ingenuity and are instead "master copiers" of Western technology (Niu 78), and in the persistent conflation of the Asian with the machine that disavows Asians' and Asian North Americans' relationships with innovation. Nakamura points out that demographic studies of Internet use tend to figure Asian Americans as "honorary whites" when it comes to Internet access, without taking into account how surveys do not use Asian languages, and how the data collection measures the use of services and not online cultural production (172). She also points out that popular representations of Asian Americans as a "wired" minority that is a privileged group when it comes to cybertechnologies possibly increases the online marketing directed towards them, and frames them as consumers more powerful than they actually are (173).

Hence, my analyses of popular Asian Canadian and Asian American YouTubers will examine the appeal of Asian versions for online and capitalist success, as well as consider how Asian North American versions engender *uneven* circulations instead of smooth, seamless modes of social media "sharing." In other words, I ask, what sorts of

disruptions in capitalist and heteronormative discourses about online production and dissemination can the different failures of Asian North American versions open up? Can re/productions by popular and successful Asian North American social media producers be viral when they seem to function post-virally? In asking these questions, I amplify the glitches that I explored in my first chapter's reading of *Ex Machina* to meditate upon the interruptions, dismemberments and apparent silences that mark Asians as concurrently malfunctioning technologies and figures that are not organic enough. As I ask these questions, I grapple with the tragedy, negation and disavowal of not being known in tandem with the resistant subjectlessness (Kandice Chuh) of hypersubjectivity. In doing so, I consider both the successful, postviral functions of hypersubjectivity—modes that disavow the subject's agency, according to Rodaway's theorization of the hypersubject—and the queer failures of Asian North American transmission and re/production.

The excesses or surplus produced by "successful" or legitimized reproductions are importantly *incomplete*; they are, to continue thinking along the lines of dismemberment and parts from Chapter 1, what Homi Bhabha would call *virtual*. In his famous theorization of colonial mimicry, Bhabha argues that the in-between of mimicry and mockery is where "the reforming, civilizing mission is threatened by the displacing gaze of its disciplinary double" (86). The excess of "slippage" produced by the ambivalence of mimicry—of being "almost the same, *but not quite*"—does not only "rupture" colonial civilizing discourse, but figures the colonial subject as a "partial" presence that is both "incomplete" and "virtual" (Ibid). Bhabha argues that the success of colonial appropriation relies upon the production of "inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic

failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace" (Ibid). According to him, the strategic failures of colonial appropriation, made evident by failed copies, renders mimicry ambivalently about likeness and subversive not-quiteness. Following Bhabha, I reads how this notion of the virtual parallels or engenders disability, particularly as the mimic or failed copy is temporally "behind" the able-bodied original, as well as an incomplete body (a "partial presence"). As I suggest in this chapter that the Asian North American copies are mimics not only of colonial whiteness, but also of blackness, femininity, and citizen-subjectivity, I consider how strategic failure in these cases disrupts *and engenders* postviral success by invoking the vernacular of disease and disability. These inorganic Asian copies, by failing to reproduce standards of black masculinity, femininity and citizenship, expose how the liberal demand of intact, authentic subjectivity is an ableist one that racializes and genders slowness as black, feminine or a characteristic of the Asian immigrant. Thus, I query how these inorganic copies' performances of lateness rupture as well as reproduce the heteronormative progress of postvirality.

"Why Can't You See Me As I Really Am?"

The Asian double or double agent has been a recurring trope not only in Western discourses, but also within the field of Asian American studies and Asian North American cultural productions, including Chang-rae Lee's novel *Native Speaker* (1995), David Henry Hwang's play *M. Butterfly* (1988) and, more recently, Viet Thanh Nguyen's novel *The Sympathizer* (2015). In her theorization of Asian American "double agency," Tina Chen argues that Asian Americans "perform into existence their identities *as Asian*

Americans" through acts of impersonation (xvi) and that impersonation is a way of thinking through the "impossible subject" of Asian America—of seeing impersonation as involving multiple allegiances rather than as a matter of loyalty versus betrayal (xviii). Kandice Chuh argues that seeing "Asian American" as a subjectless discourse means to recognize how the term "Asian American" involves a "difference from itself" (8). In a similar vein, Chen theorizes impersonation as "a textual and metatexual tactic, a strategic performance calculated to foreground the limits of subjectivity even as it insists upon the undeniable importance of subjecthood" (xvii). In other words, impersonation has a doubled intent because it simultaneously performs and challenges identity (Chen 15). In this way, Chen conceptualizes Asian Americans as "double agents"—a label that is yoked to the historical representation of Asian Americans as being linked to fraud and espionage, as *pretending* to be docile (18)—who seek to claim American identity while critiquing the U.S. institutions that have figured them as suspicious aliens (xix).

In her reading of Philip Kan Gotanda's 1991 play *Yankee Dawg You Die*, Chen considers the possibilities of "out-posing the poses of stereotype" (76). The play demonstrates the slippage that emerges in pan-ethnic and colonial mimicry, as the drama's two protagonists, Asian American actors Bradley Yamashita and Vincent Chang, "perform into existence" stereotypical Asian characters, acting out each other's film roles on the stage as their encounters with one another reveal an industry that sees them as interchangeable. The production opens with the stage set and lighting establishing the mood of a black-and-white 1940's film in which Vincent, who claims to be Chinese, plays "Jap soldier" Sergeant Moto. Vincent as Sergeant Moto catches American prisoners

escaping in this scene, and screams a monologue that is later repeated two more times in the play:

> VINCENT: What is wrong with you? You sickee in the head? What the hell is wrong with you? Why can't you hear what I'm saying? Why can't you see me as I really am? (1. 1. 4)

Vincent repeats these words in the closing scene of *Yankee Dawg You Die*, but quickly loses the accent and passionately adds to the monologue:

> VINCENT: I graduated from the University of California right here in Los Angeles. I was born and raised in the San Joaquin Valley and spent my entire life growing up in California. Why can't you hear what I'm saying? Why can't you see me as I really am? (2. 8 .82)

Vincent probes the identity constructed for him by performing the stereotype that forms such an identity; he embodies a colonial mimicry in "out-posing" the trope of the WWII "Jap" enemy of the American state in order to challenge the discourses that produce such a subject. Chen argues that the Asian American actors' pleasure of re-performing stereotypes demonstrates how identity is formed by stereotype, and that the three-time repetition of the "Why can't you see me as I really am?" monologue "reviews," and puts into question, this enactment of stereotype (76). I would further suggest that the play's form re-enacts the issue it takes up with Hollywood's tendency to typecast Asians as foreigners and to use Asian North American actors interchangeably despite their ethnic backgrounds. The repetition of the monologue not only reviews the stereotype itself; the repeated speech on stage *edits* itself as it is repeated, mirroring the impossible-yet-reified

sameness that exists between Bradley and Vincent, and between the Asian American actors and the on-screen roles they play.

Expanding upon Louis Althusser's theory of interpellation, Judith Butler contends that, if the subject is hailed into existence by the "call" of state and legal authority, "the parodic inhabiting of conformity . . . subtly calls into question the legitimacy of the command, [producing] a repetition of the law into hyperbole, a rearticulation of the law against the authority of the one who delivers it" (122). Vincent and Bradley repeat the "law" of being "Asian" enforced by state and hegemonic whiteness in a way that parodies conformity and questions the "legitimacy of the command." With parallel beginning and ending scenes, Gotanda's play traces a timeline that moves from on-screen tropes of Asians to a bodily performance of Asian Americanness that veers off-screen to the stage and inverts the imagined "progress" of the visual medium, concurrently imagining an inversion of the imperial "progress" involved in the assimilation of the Asian into America. The repetition of the "Why can't you see me as I really am?" monologue from the beginning of the play at the end is not a replication, but a revision or "rearticulation" that challenges the authority of the original. In Vincent's opening-scene monologue as Sergeant Moto, he says with an accent, "I speakee your language. I graduate UCLA, Class of '34." In the revised monologue in the play's final scene, however, Vincent's accent "fades" after the line "I speakee your language" (2. 8. 82). The actor goes on to add to the "original" script, seemingly changing it "in the moment" by saying, "I graduated from the University of California right here in Los Angeles. I was born and raised in the San Joaquin Valley and spent my entire life growing up in California." The

loss of the accent may reflect a cultural nationalist urge to "claim America" (Cheung *An Interethnic* 1) and to insist on the Americanness of Vincent's Asian American subjectivity, but I would suggest that the loss of the accent is a loss that constitutes what Halberstam calls "unbecoming." The accent that at once erases and hails the Asian American subject disappears in Vincent's plea to be seen "as [he] really [is]." This desire to be seen is simultaneously a refusal to be read, as Vincent remains illegible, inscrutable, by the end of the play; the loss of the accent is not the shedding of a mask but another mask. Considering Halberstam's theorization of failure, loss and unbecoming as "unregulated territories" outside of conventional knowledge (7), the loss of the accent in *Yankee Dawg You Die* is an unbecoming that does not reveal the "authentic" Vincent, whose face is already suspect because of rumours surrounding his multiple nose surgeries. Instead, the loss of the accent mid-speech indicates how Vincent's Asian Americanness emerges in between the desire for and impossibility of a "real" identity that is recognized by the state and by white society.

The question of whether Vincent's face is "real" or not resonates with questions in the field of Asian North American studies' long debate concerning authenticity in Asian North American literature. In his 1991 essay "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake," Frank Chin calls out Asian American writers Maxine Hong Kingston, David Henry Hwang, and Amy Tan for being "yellow engineers of the stereotype" (92) whose popularity among white readers is due to their works' exaggeration of and emphasis on the patriarchy of Chinese culture (2). Chin accuses Kingston and Hwang of rewriting the Fa Mulan story in order to "dramatize" Chinese

cruelty to women: “Fake works breed fake work” (3). He concludes his essay in *The Big Aiiieee!: An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature* by demanding a clear distinction between the inauthentic and the authentic: “It matters that all the Chinese and Japanese American writers in this book, no matter what they believe or what literary form they favor, make the difference between the real and the fake” (92). Lisa Lowe, in her influential scholarship on the heterogeneity, hybridity and multiplicity of the Asian American experience, argues that while Chin’s attack on “fake” Asian American authors frames the tension as existing between Asian American cultural nationalism and assimilation, the struggle is actually between the desire to essentialize Asian American identity and “the condition of heterogeneous differences against which such a desire is broken” (*Immigrant* 76). Essentializing the group “Asian American,” Lowe writes, is based on and reaffirms the false nationalism-assimilation binary so that the critique of sexism is reduced to a betrayal of Asian American nationalism through the assimilation into dominant white culture (*Immigrant* 71).

Vincent’s contested nose also demonstrates the trope of Asian versions or masks seen more broadly in Asian North American and Asian diasporic literature. In Chang-Rae Lee’s novel *Native Speaker* (1995), Henry Park is assigned to spy on politician John Kwang’s campaign team and becomes entangled in Kwang’s multiple lives and personalities. Henry describes the end of his mission as watching Kwang’s “faces” fall away until “he revealed to [Henry] a final level that would not strip off. The last mask” (141). The final layer of the Korean American politician’s many faces is still a mask, revealing the impossibility of knowing the “real” John Kwang, for there is no “original”

Kwang—only the version. Similarly, Cambodian-Chinese-Australian author Alice Pung recalls, in her 2006 memoir *Unpolished Gem*, waking up one morning after applying for college with "a false skin on [her] face"—a "rubber death mask" that she could not remove (177). Like Kwang, Pung does not have a "true" face under the pre-fabricated mask of the model minority. For her, the success and the mask are intertwined: "If I fail, everything my whole life was meant to lead up to will be gone … I was blank just like the walls with the posters removed. How easily they came off – they were only stuck on with blue-tack, like my personality" (189).

Gotanda's play grapples with the facelessness, the interchangeability, Asian Americans are assigned when they are not "seen" by white society and the interchangeability they are nonetheless given even when they don the mask of recognition. Throughout most of the play, Bradley accuses Vincent of being a "Chinese Stepinfetchit"[15] who sold out by taking roles as a ninja assassin and as a mutant monster in order to make it in the entertainment industry. Vincent takes on so-called Asian roles that have mainstream appeal to white audiences who take pleasure in laughing at him. Thus, Vincent's so-called authenticity is suspect in this play, as Bradley asks in his first encounter with the older actor whether the rumours are true that he has had surgery done on his nose multiple times, conforming to what was popular at the time. This tension around the fake and the "real" that exists between the Asian American actors is deliberately placed within a conversation about the unstable meanings of "Asian

[15] This term tracks a parallel between Asian American and African American histories of representation that implicate "good" and "bad" racialized subjects.

American":

> VINCENT: You seem to assume 'Asian Americans' always existed. That there were always roles for you. You didn't exist back then, Buster. (1. 5. 40)

Vincent's response to an attack on his so-called authenticity is to expose Bradley's Asian Americanness as an artifice, pointing out that the young Japanese American man "didn't exist back then" before the term "Asian American" was used. In this way, the play resurrects a history of racialized immigration legislation that reified Asian America while disavowing it, gesturing to the "strategic essentialism" of an Asian American panethnicity that is neither "natural" nor static, but used to challenge discourses that exclude Asian Americans (Lowe *Immigrant Acts* 82; Spivak 281).[16] After all, Vincent eventually reveals to Bradley that his real name is Shigeo Nakada and that he changed it after the Second World War, revealing how he "impersonated" a Chinese American man because of interethnic tension and the racism he, as a Japanese American, faced from broader American society.

In the second act, Vincent coaches Bradley through *Macbeth*, despite being told by the younger actor partway through their recitations that he is auditioning for a production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Bradley and Vincent repeat lines *from Macbeth* to each other, back and forth, with the older actor correcting the younger actor's thespian speech and body language until Bradley tells Vincent that he "just can't" (2.2.58). Bradley is brought to the limit of his performance of colonial British subjectivity until he "just

[16] Yen Le Espiritu notes that the first use of the term "Asian American" can be traced to college activists in the late 1960s who were organizing political and student movements, including civil rights actions and anti-War in Vietnam movements (34).

can't," until his performance breaks. Yet, his attempt to properly recite Shakespeare is demonstrated not just by his reading of *Macbeth* but by his mirroring of Vincent reciting Macbeth. The act of impersonation is thus doubly veiled: the Asian American men's failure to be white is related to their inability to successfully copy each other. Considering Chuh's argument that the term "Asian American" is in "*difference from itself*—at once making a claim of achieved subjectivity and referring to the impossibility of that achievement," and that the term is "itself a deconstruction" (8), Vincent and Bradley's misrecognition of one another through performing Shakespeare constitutes a deconstruction of the affinity that is at once assigned to and embodied by the two men. The Asian American men's inability or refusal to replicate each other's performances of Shakespeare marks a failure to replicate a hegemonic British standard of whiteness. By denying Asian American interchangeability, the men deny a trope that authenticates the white body as the standard for the individual, original human subject.

Bradley's rupture of the Shakespeare recital indexes the Asian American actor's inability to authenticate his identity either through pan-Asian affiliation or by individuation. While at the heart of the tension between the two actors is the knowledge that there can only be one Asian who gets the part,[17] this break of character is not so much a glimmer of the "real" Bradley in the authentic sense, but a misrecognition that also constitutes a failure to be recognized. As Mimi Thi Nguyen contends, while misrecognition turns the person into object, to thing, the subjectivity that comes with

[17] This is a reality of the entertainment industry that comedian Aziz Ansari depicts in the episode "Indians on TV" on his Netflix show *Master of None.*

recognition also requires subjection, disciplining the individual into performing certain measures of value, such as higher education or heteronormativity (813). This slipperiness is accentuated by Vincent, a Japanese American man passing as a Chinese American actor who acts in a role of a Japanese soldier, who embraces the stage in order to plea: "Why can't you see me as I really am?" without revealing who that is.

While James Moy criticizes Gotanda's play for creating the opportunity for a new Asian stage presence only to have the actors "self-destruct at the very moment of their representation, leaving behind only newly disfigured traces" (55), the "trace" of Vincent at the end of *Yankee Dawg You Die* is a refusal to step off the stage. As Chen purports, Asian Americans are constituted and constitute themselves *on stage* as "speaking and acting subjects" through strategic performances that demonstrate the limits of subjectivity even in as they strive for subjecthood (xvii). Counter to Moy's suggestion that Gotanda's characters "float as exotic Oriental fetishes articulating Anglo-American desire" (55), Because Bradley and Vincent are imperfect versions of each other and impossible versions of the racist characters written for them on stage, they resist white consumption in their multiplicity, in their performative excess. Here, excess as the marker of the inorganic suggests the constitutive and producing power of being inorganically re/producible. As I examined in my previous chapter, whereas the individual has traditionally been figured as an expressive subject whose emotions are visible on the body, mainly the face, the replicable or mass-produced product (android) is not quite human because of an absence of expression or affect—an inorganic characteristic of that which exists in a mass, as multiple. And yet, the "disfigurement" (a connotation of

disability that is associated with subjective fragmentation) of inauthenticity that Moy suggests is a core failure of Gotanda's play actually opens up for us a way of interrogating the slippage that Mimi Nguyen identifies between subject and object, between recognition and misrecognition.

Trolling Misrecognition: Chinese Guy, Anti-Blackness and the "Bad" Immigrant

In the inaugural years of YouTube, which launched in 2005, Asian North Americans almost immediately got a handle on how to successfully use the platform to attract subscribers around the world, prompting some to observe that the video-sharing website was doing for Asians what Hollywood never did. The content of popular Asian American YouTubers was for the most part quite safe and benign, with many channels taking on the common topics of Asian stereotypes, heteronormative romance and beauty. One of the most notable exceptions was Davin Tong, who made a social media career out of his online persona "Chinese Guy" by putting on a Cantonese accent, only appearing on the Internet disguised by dark sunglasses, and vlogging or producing music videos and comedic sketches that are couched in typical stereotypes about Asians. For several years, his online presence alone was a collection of aliases: he is Chinese Guy, known best as Peter Chao; his channel name is pyrobooby; and his "real" name is Davin Tong. Chao,[18] a second-generation Chinese Canadian born in New Brunswick, consistently performed as and was often confused with his online character, who was raised in Hong Kong and is an

[18] Even though his official name is Davin Tong, I will refer to the comedian as Peter Chao in this chapter, because Chao is the name he is known by and the name he uses publicly.

obnoxious immigrant in Canada. Unlike most of his American counterparts on YouTube, his videos were known for being profane, sexist (he often refers to women as "muddabitches'), and performing stereotypes around Asian foreignness and incompetence in following social norms. In one of Chao's viral earlier videos, "CHINESE GUY EATS SOOO LOUD," for example, the vlogger slurps noodles and eats fish balls with an open mouth while he talks on his cell phone. In another video watched more than a million times, "How Asians Drive," Chao cusses out other drivers, dozes off, takes his hands off the steering wheel to dance and eats sushi with chopsticks while driving.

His "bad" persona on the Internet came to a head in 2009 when Chao's YouTube account was suspended after he uploaded a video of himself in blackface. In "Chinese Guy and Black Man Eat Fried Chicken," Chao, who has brown paint on his face and is wearing a wig of dreadlocks, eats fried chicken and watermelon and drinks "grape drink." YouTube suspended his channel for two weeks, but Chao defiantly re-uploaded the controversial video once the suspension was over. The resurrected video was watched more than two million times, suggesting not only that Chao's "political incorrectness" and racist humour has popular commercial appeal, but that the YouTuber, by re-uploading his banned blackface video, recognizes this. In this sketch, Chao states that his mother might be racist against black people, but he is not because his best friend Jamal Jenkins, played by Chao in blackface, is black. Jamal sits across the table from Chao and speaks in the same Cantonese accent, prompting Chao to ask him several times whether he is sure he is "really black." Chao-as-Jamal replies, "Look at my face; it's black. Look at my skin; it's black," and pulls up his sleeve to reveal his unpainted, lighter-skinned

arm. To further prove his blackness, Jamal eats a plate of fried chicken, and shares the meat with Chao, who partakes using chopsticks. As Jamal leaves, Chao reminds his "best friend" to wash his car for him and turns to face the camera smirking, "So, as you see, I am not racist. Peter Chao is not racist. No way. Ok. Maybe a little bit."

Chao compiles a number of offensive stereotypes about black people in the short production—from Jamal slurping a watermelon to tempting Chao with marijuana—and unapologetically rehearses a history of anti-black performance that conjures images of nineteenth-century racist minstrelsy. The Chinese Canadian online personality, whose mandate on his YouTube channel is to speak up for "timid Asians all around the globe," embodies an offensive, potty-mouthed Asian character whose intentional inability to be white is articulated by his failure to be white *because* of his performance in blackface. I highlight the importance of reading Chinese Guy in blackface within Chao's Canadian context because his enactment of bad Asian Canadian subjectivity or "bad immigrant" identity is informed by the country's legislated policies of multiculturalism. Sunera Thobani argues that Canada's multiculturalism policy emerges out of the anxieties of a white identity crisis, and that the discourse of multiculturalism allowed for the "projection of the destabilizing effects of the crises of white identity onto a small minority of recalcitrant whites who refused or were unable to mask their racisms" (154). Thobani points out that multiculturalism also projects the anxieties of racist whiteness onto immigrants and their misogyny and violence: "With whiteness coming to signify tolerance, a willingness to change and a cosmopolitan sensibility, people of colour could be tied all the more readily to cultural parochialism, authoritarianism, essentialism, and

intolerance" (155). Hence, Chao's intolerance and his blatant racism can be understood as his immigrant narrow-mindedness, for his heightened foreignness, as marked by his accented English, is synonymous with his inability to embody a cosmopolitan, culturally "tolerant" whiteness. Chinese Guy is not white and not Canadian because his Chineseness is a form of backwardness, a synonym for intolerance. Chinese Guy in blackface could be seen as particularly "unCanadian" because the optics of this performance is particularly associated with a kind of American racism, which is oversimplified as more overt and anti-black than Canadian sensibilities.[19] His use of blackface functions as a *shorthand* for irreverent foreignness, for instant signification of racism that is at once symptomatic of the unCanadian bad immigrant and synonymous with American anti-blackness.

In "Chinese Guy and Black Man Eat Fried Chicken," Asian Canadian anti-blackness is used to mark the impossibility of being white or black—two poles on the imagined racial scale. By problematically marking his generically Chinese body as black while exposing how *not* black he is—his Cantonese accent remains intact, he struggles to pronounce "marijuana", and his arm is obviously unpainted—Chao faces a copy of himself that simultaneously defies the model minority subject and exposes the impossibility of his embodiment of the "bad subject." The YouTuber performs his failure, his inability to perform black masculinity, in order to further emphasize his bad subjectivity as an alien. His move toward blackness is thus paradoxically a move *away* from blackness: a warped embrace of the disrespectful figure that refutes multicultural

[19] While blackface is typically understood as an American form of anti-black racism, Canada has a relatively unknown history of blackface minstrelsy. In fact, the composer of the Canadian national anthem, Calixa Lavallée, was a member of a blackface troupe (MacLellan).

recognition while not acknowledging how anti-black racism is complicit in producing the social standards of whiteness, which has distinct consequences for black bodies. Viet Thanh Nguyen points out that the "good" Asian North American subject is pitted against the "bad" Asian North American subject in both the model minority discourse and the discourse of the bad subject, which is understood as a rejection of dominant ideology and the "opposite" of model minority discourse (144). Nguyen argues that the discourse of the bad subject, which is the main form of Asian American politics in the imagination of Asian American intellectuals, reductively positions "resistant" minorities over apparently complicit ones without recognizing how late capitalism has engendered "ideologically contradictory Asian Americans" (144, 150). Chao's portrayal of Chinese Guy in blackface, which interestingly somewhat distances his "real" self (arguably, Davin Tong) from the *character* he plays who in turn plays another character in blackface, is unapologetically resistant to model minority recognition, but does not resist white supremacy; rather, this performance is complicit in it.[20]

Chinese Guy in blackface is not only an invocation of "unCanadian" behaviour,[21] it insists upon a particular Chineseness that does not necessarily identify with the broader catergory "Asian Canadian." Donald Goellnicht notes that there was not a parallel movement to the Asian American Movement in the 1960s and 1970s in Canada, and that

[20] Chao's anti-blackness seems to index the challenges of cross-racial coalition under white supremacy, which has historically set up (complicit) "model minorities" in contrast to "bad" black subjects. Perhaps Chao's "bad" subjectivity is not so much "bad" as it is the model minority figure brought to its unsettling limit.

[21] In a sense, considering the history of Jamaican diaspora in Canada, particularly in Toronto, Chao's anti-blackness is a Canadian form of anti-black racism, as he specifically invokes stereotypes about Jamaicans.

Asian Canadians remained in localized groups or focused on issues of a single ethnic group (Chinese Canadians, Japanese Canadians, etc.) instead of mobilizing a mass, panethnic social movement (9). He argues that the policy of multiculturalism, "together with its myth of Canada as a 'cultural mosaic' that is less assimilationist than U.S. society, has been remarkably successful in containing ethnic minority groups, keeping each isolated and focused on its own cultural 'heritage'" (Ibid). Chinese Guy is ethnically specific while emphasizing Asian anonymity by wearing sunglasses in every video he produces or appears in. He performs a nondescript "Chinese Guy" persona who loves fried rice, who cannot drive well, who cannot speak English fluently, is sexist, and loves bubble tea. His anonymity as a Chinese Guy visualizes the generalization of the category East Asian under the sign "Chinese," which in this case even subsumes "Chinese Canadian."

Tong was born and raised in New Brunswick by a single mother, who immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong, before moving to Vancouver, British Columbia (Usinger). His online persona of Chao, however, is a socially inept, misogynist and obtuse middle-class immigrant from Hong Kong. The distinction between Tong and Chao is a blurry one, as the YouTuber stays in character and goes by the name Peter Chao in interviews—leading some online articles to report that he is "from" Hong Kong—even after he "unveiled" his "real" identity in one vlog in 2015, a moment that I will examine more thoroughly later in this chapter. As Chao's performance indicates, the bad Asian immigrant is bad precisely because his social ineptness is yoked to the economic threat he poses. (At the end of Chao's blackface sketch, he tells his black friend/himself in

blackface to wash his car—an obnoxious display of entitlement). Importantly, this fiscal threat—an attribute of what Fan Yang calls *fiscal Orientalism*—is and has traditionally been informed by the notion that the Asian subject's close relationship with technology and her proximity in nature to machine technology predict an Asian future. Yang argues that fiscal Orientalism has come to complement techno-Orientalism in representing a Chinese future by presenting China as a "rising" creditor in contrast to a "declining" American debtor ("Fiscal Orientalism" 379). Anxieties about the rise of a foreign economic power form the background for the alien threat who emerges as alien in his nonconformity to national "values."

An example of such fiscal orientalism is found in a 2012 video called "Chinese Guy Gets iPhone 5," in which Chao wanders around a street and mall, asking Apple staff and other shoppers whether he can cut in line. He shouts loudly into a crowd, "Where can I get an iPhone 5?" At one point in the video, which has been watched more than a million times, he gives some change to a panhandler who is lying on a sidewalk, makes small talk with him and then says, "I thought you were in line for the iPhone 5." In other instances, Chao tells an older white man with a worn-out backpack who appears to slur his words that he cannot understand what the man is saying, then asks if the older man is on drugs. The moments with both these men are obviously filmed from a distance, and suggest that the interviewees may not have been aware that they were on camera. These cringe-worthy comments and exploitative conversations signal Chao's entitlement and his lack of Western middle-class modesty—a cultural sign of self-awareness and education—and equates his defiance of cultural codes with his foreignness. Simultaneously

performing as if he cannot understand the rules of the British-inherited queue (a perceived disregard for first-come-first-served orderliness that tends to annoy Western tourists when they travel in Asia) and as if he cannot recognize class signifiers, Chinese Guy's search for the latest iPhone is presented as an intrusive and uncivilized act. Chao pretends to have purchased an iPhone at the end of the video, and runs out of a store with a white plastic bag gloating, "I just got the iPhone 5 . . . That's right! Yes!"

For most of Chao's YouTube career, the appeal of Chinese Guy for hundreds of thousands of viewers is that he is a troll, an online persona whose emphatic lack of "political correctness" at once renders him racist, sexist, classist and homophobic, and a figure seen by some as pushing the boundaries of comedy. His self-described embrace of stereotypes also creates space for viewers who are not only laughing with him, but laughing *at* him. Neither a "Chinese Step-n-fetch-it" nor a "resistant" minority, Chinese Guy towed an uncomfortable line between defying white normative subjectivity and reinforcing its centrality in his performances of immigrant sexism, racism and classism. For several years, Chao refused to submit to the Asian North American ideals of either model minority or subversive subject. His sunglasses-veiled face indicated his refusal to be "really" himself, and perhaps affirmed that his Asian body *cannot* be legibly organic, neutral or authentic. In September 2015, however, Chao uploaded a video titled "Peter Chao's Real Eyes and Real Voice," in which he took off his sunglasses and dropped his accent on camera for the first time since he started posting videos on YouTube in 2009. In the section below, I consider how Chao's shift from the sunglasses-wearing Chinese Guy to an "unveiled" Chao appears to perform a postviral shift to "safe" modes of

transmission and self-circulation. By examining Chao's apparent conversion to recognition, I query how "transparency chic" in surveillance society produces subjects who "voluntarily" self-discipline by "performing-not-performing" (Dubrofsky 185). However, Chao's dramatic "reveal," I argue, does not actually unveil the "real" Asian Canadian man, but reconfigures and reimagines new strategies of subjective multiplicity in the transparency chic era of a self-aware Information Age.

Peter Chao's Performance of Transparency: Unveiling in the Social Media Age

Chao posted his revelatory video in tandem with a serious music video tribute he collaborated with others to make for his aging and sick grandmother in Hong Kong. His vlog "Peter Chao's Real Eyes and Real Voice" begins with his all-too-familiar, accented "Harro," as Chao's head is down and out of sight. When he raises his head, however, we see that he is wearing his "normal" glasses instead of his trademark dark shades and Chao begins speaking in his "natural," unaccented voice. Explaining that he was prompted by the realization that he had limited time with his grandmother and wanted to film something special for her, Chao says that it was time to "drop the character" because "we're very much in the reality era of YouTube anyway." Encouraging his viewers to continue supporting him as he makes the transition into "mainstream" acting and comedy, Chao notes that the character of Peter Chao will not completely go away. He states:

> This is a way for me to liberate myself from being trapped in a corner as a character that maybe at times I don't want to portray. Some of you may be disappointed that Peter Chao was a character all along, but I think that, for lack of a better term, if you thought it was a real person, *I think you're a stupid motherfucker*!

His voice "slips back" into the Chinese Guy accent as he gleefully says the last phrase, hinting that he will keep his promise of reviving Chinese Guy occasionally.

The "reality era of YouTube" to which Chao refers in his self-unveiling vlog is theorized by Hall as a post-9/11 aesthetics of transparency that operates by relying on citizens' "voluntary" transparency and "demonstration-for-inspection" (129). I invoke Hall's analysis of post-9/11 surveillance cultures to draw together overt structures of state surveillance, such as airport security checks, and social media production to situate seemingly different forms of disciplined self-presentations within transparency chic culture. The #AskMeAnything trend of social media platforms, the practices of self-tracking like geotagging on Snapchat and Instagram and "checking in" to locations on Facebook, as well as movements like #livetweetyourperiod on Twitter, which encourages women to discuss their menstruation publicly, are all forms of transparency culture that conflate surveillance and performance in ways that are not merely subjugating nor empowering. And yet, the authenticity that is performed or expected from individuals in surveillance society is not divorced from state surveillance's requirement that people turn themselves over for scrutiny and inspection. Performances of "authenticity" are successful neoliberal performances that are rewarded for their truthfulness—a display of transparency that, as Dubrofsky points out, is expected to be visible on the body (185). After all, according to one *BuzzFeed* editor, the #nomakeupselfie hashtag, was successful as a fundraising campaign for Cancer Research UK and expanded into a viral trend precisely because it was not advertised as such: "There is nothing more tragic than a publisher or marketer self-consciously trying to go viral. #nomakeupselfie was all about

authenticity, removing layers of artifice . . . It was a rare example of pure, not manufactured, virality" (Lewis).

When Chao acknowledges that his revelation of his "true" face comes at a time when the Internet has already entered a transparency era, he anticipates the lack of surprise or fanfare that his video will receive; his unmasking falls in line with marketing norms of social media. Contemporary social media are what Payne would describe as post-viral, when sharing—even *oversharing*—is no longer seen as promiscuous or excessive but a marker for the good, successful online subject. Payne argues that within the postviral era, "The sharing subject is one who, like the viral content and the viruses themselves that they mimic, can embody the neoliberal values of flexibility and adaptability, even so as to rebrand cultural threat as market leadership or popularity" (35). In a sense, Chao's "revelation" of his eyes and non-accented voice was a move to rebrand his performance as more authentic, more transparent and, importantly, *safer*. Presenting his rebranding as an *organic* move that comes out of wanting to be real about his love for his grandmother in Hong Kong, Chao's apparent unmaking is presented as authentic on the grounds of familial, cultural and transnational bonds—ties that are supposedly linear and natural. At the same time, he hints that it is time to drop the accent and sunglasses because playing up stereotypes is no longer how the self is produced and circulated on social media platforms. Asking his subscribers to follow him out of the years of sardonic, sexist and "non-PC" performances into his neoliberal venture to be successful in the "mainstream" entertainment industry, Chao's distancing between an inner self and Chinese Guy functions to usher his social media brand into broader (white) recognition.

It is telling, however, that Chao's viewership on the video-sharing platform significantly declined after this 2015 reveal, with the "big reveal" vlog being watched around only 400,000 times, significantly fewer views compared to his earlier videos with view counts of over a million. The YouTuber's videos had been less and less viewed in the year leading up to his big reveal, suggesting that perhaps the comedian had hoped a rebranding to "performing-not-performing" would revamp his online following. Following the "Peter Chao Reveals Real Eyes and Real Voice" vlog, though, the Asian Canadian performer's subsequent productions depicting him as "himself" failed to come close to the 100,000-views mark. I would suggest that Chinese Guy's conversion to recognition did not secure "successful" transmission and (post)virality because the Asian face on stage *already* reads as a mask. A large part of what "worked" with Chinese Guy was that he embodied not the "truth" of Asianness, but the *expected* or already assumed artifice of Asianness. As Hall notes, the culture of transparency chic privileges whiteness, which is a marker of "the capacity to risk and to have one's risky ventures securitized" (132). Dubrofsky similarly makes this observation about the culture of surveillance: "If there is nothing to hide, then the body can be freely put on display. Safe bodies are racialized: bodies that have nothing to hide are most often white bodies, and unsafe, opaque bodies are generally brown and black ones" (185). Hence, the "look" of transparency, which is racialized as white, is not worn evenly by Chao's face and body, nor do his online self-presentation and productions read as authentic in circulation. Rather, the mask of performativity, inscrutability and stereotype is what reads as Chinese Guy's most fitting and believable face.

If post-viral movements like #nomakeupselfie are safely viral because they require the apparent removal of artifice, Peter Chao's unmasking was unsuccessful as a postviral transmission not only because it was not a moment of "true" transparency, but because the dominant notion of a stable, authentic self relies upon, emerges out of, the otherness of racialized bodies and their facades. Dubrofsky argues that the "authentic self" is a "stable, core identity most naturally enacted by white bodies" whose performance of otherness affirms this inner, real self (185). Chao's rebranding of the "real" him does not engender a stable, core identity but is instead a self-fragmentation that formally destabilizes his identity even more: now, Chao is at times Chinese Guy, at times "himself"/Peter Chao, and at times ambivalent, rendering his performance perhaps even more opaque than his consistent embrace of Asian tropes as Chinese Guy prior to the removal of his sunglasses. In his "big reveal" vlog in 2015, Chao notes that the character would not disappear, even hinting at this by slipping in and out of the Cantonese accent and higher pitched voice at moments in his address to viewers. He also advises that his "off-character" persona (the "real" him) will tend to come out over particular social media platforms—Snapchat and Instagram—and encourages people to follow his other accounts. His Twitter account, @pyrobooby, reads like "himself" as well, with Chao using the account promotionally to tweet links to his latest projects. His use of the platform is self-reflexive, bringing to the fore his performance as multiple online personas by posting links to his other social media accounts and videos, tweeting cute photos of his pets and nephew, and commenting on current affairs.

In one sense, Chao is a "good" social media user who demonstrates his knowledge

and grasp of how to manage and produce the self across multiple online platforms, designating some performances of Asian otherness to YouTube and revealing "personal" glimpses of his life on Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter. If the sunglasses-wearing Chinese Guy engendered a risky virality—with his YouTube account suspended for its bad transmissions and offensive content—the self-reflexive Peter Chao seems to circulate through safer, "good" multiplicity. Peter Chao's use of the accent and sunglasses are now emphatically and overtly self-aware performances of the "FOB" character that figures the fashionable, second-generation Chinese Canadian comedian within a mode of "performing-not-performing," which Dubrofsky argues is an appearance of not performing that signals one's authenticity (185). And yet, like Vincent's revised monologue in *Yankee Dawg You Die,* Chao's performance of performing-not-performing does not quite authenticate a stable subject. Instead, by "unmasking," Chao creates another Peter Chao character who never really discloses a "real" Davin Tong even as he asks his viewers to give the "real" him a chance. While he speaks about Peter Chao in the third person, he does not call himself by any other name in the revelatory vlog. He comments, "Peter Chao wasn't just a character; he was an extension of myself represented in comedic form. Again, Peter Chao isn't going away."

Resurrecting the loud-mouthed character of Chinese Guy for a video about the critically acclaimed and popular 2016 film *La La Land* in February 2017, an accent- and sunglasses-donning Chao calls the movie racist for depicting white people's struggles in show business and for having a title that Chinese people cannot pronounce: "Is it not enough that you fabricated a highly unlikely plot about two white people struggling to

make it in the limelight of show business? But no! You had to call this movie Ra Ra Rand . . . You know that Chinese people can't say the L?" *La La Land,* Chinese Guy hyperbolically suggests, might even be more racist than *Breakfast at Tiffany's* with Mickey Rooney's yellowface depiction of I. Y. Yunioshi. Throughout the skit, which is in the format of a vlog, Chinese Guy struggles with the title *La La Land*, butchering not just the pronunciation of the film's name, but of other words, including "prank." Pronouncing the word as "plank," the video cuts to Chinese Guy in the kitchen, planking on the kitchen counter and asking himself/the vlogging Chinese Guy: "Like this?" Chinese Guy tells viewers that he was once talking to a friend and used the expression "Take the L" (slang for "take the loss"), but his friend could not understand what he was saying. The skit then cuts to a scene with Chinese Guy, in sunglasses and with an accent, sitting beside the other Peter Chao, a second-generation, non-accented English speaker, on a couch in an undetectable split screen that creates a doubling effect. As Chinese Guy says "Take the L" repeatedly, the Westernized Peter Chao cannot understand him/self and chides, "Sounds like you're trying to start a car," prompting Chinese Guy to punch him in the face.

The accentless Peter Chao is not the narrator of the vlog, a position that is typically held by the authentic or voluntarily transparent online subject. Instead, as a *character* in Chinese Guy's vlog, the second-generation Peter Chao, who does not wear sunglasses but shows his "real" face, becomes another version who is not a copy. Chao's failure to understand his own/Chinese Guy's thick accent perhaps marks a contrast between a "natural" self and a performed self, but also draws a relationship between the

two versions that highlights multi-directional, yet smooth and therefore more ambivalent, performativity. Unlike the clunkinness of Chinese Guy in blackface, which revealed his inability or failure to be black by recirculating anti-black racist stereotypes, the invisible split screen that doubles Chao within the frame brings the two versions into closer proximity formally and racially. The scene sets up the contrasting characters as doubles, as re/productions that are not perfect copies. That Peter Chao cannot understand Chinese Guy's/his own thick accent, yet can seamlessly act as both "FOB" and "CBC" (Canadian-born Chinese) in the same frame is part of the comedic point. The doubling effect functions to highlight the humour of being unlike one's double. Framed adjacent to one another on the same couch, the "work" of self-re/production in this vlog is not on the surface as it is in the blackface video because the editing in post-filming is less obvious, and confounds the notion of an identifiable, fixed organic core. (It is, after all, Chinese Guy who adopts the position as vlogger). As the two struggle to communicate and Chinese Guy ends up punching himself/Chao in the face, the viewer is perhaps humoured by this rupture of interchangeability or because of the entertaining absurdity of an Asian man hitting his "looksame."

This is why it is particularly telling that at the end of the video, Chinese Guy admits that he actually liked *La La Land* because it made him want to sing and dance, and he then appeals to Hollywood to give him a mainstream acting role. It is not clear here if it is Chinese Guy who wants an acting job in Hollywood or the "accentless," Canadian-born Peter Chao. Perhaps, though, this is the point: the skit is fraught with a critique of racism in the entertainment industry as well as the Asian Canadian petition to be included

as a character or caricature.[22] As Viet Nguyen reminds us, the good-bad binary that often disciplines the minority into either being complicit or resistant fails to acknowledge the nuances, the complexities and the *contradictions* that are part of the production of Asian North Americanness within late capitalism. Chao's self-commodification involves a repackaging and containment of Chinese Guy as well as the production of an "authentic" Peter Chao who does not necessarily affirm the artifice of Chinese Guy, but renders his online production and performance at once ambivalent and direct as a capitalist endeavour of a YouTuber trying to "make it" in show business. (After all, Davin Tong remains unrevealed). Perhaps, more than anything, the split screen humour in this *La La Land* vlog demonstrates that the neoliberal inclusion of Asian Canadians into white (American) culture and society still requires that we wear masks—whether it is the alien mask that affirms the humanness of the white face, or the mask of performing-not-performing that authenticates the naturalness of whiteness.

While Chao's use of the split screen in this example is invisible or seamless, the second example of online Asian versions to which I now turn is not edited to include invisible split screens, but involves the social media producer filming himself in different positions around his bedroom. Like Chao, Ryan Higa performs a self-deprecating, accented FOB character and a "black" version of himself that rehearses tropes about aggressive black masculinity in his "Skitzo" video series. I further investigate the possibilities and limits of failing copies in Higa's series by analyzing not only how

[22] In the "About" section of Chao's YouTube account he states, "I'm the only Asian YouTuber who doesn't have at least 1 MILLION SUBSCRIBERS, so please help me out and click the subscribe button."

racialized lateness is performed discursively by his versions, but how the *form* of Higa's online productions enacts delay. Shooting each episode as a series of interruptions or tangents, and employing the filming technique of jarring cuts around the room instead of the split-screen, Higa's YouTube show foregrounds the embodied temporality of virtual Asianness and demonstrates the delay of gendered and racialized copies. As I study Higa's performances, I query the relationships between his postviral success and the viral, disjunctive temporalities that his "late" versions circulate despite their commodification.

The Hawaiian-born Japanese American YouTube celebrity launched "Skitzo" in 2009. The series, which continued to attract millions of views up until its latest installment in 2016—a long lifespan for a YouTube series—depicts Higa as multiple characters speaking to himself/one another in Higa's bedroom. Using minimal video editing, he portrays the characters of Ryan, Hanate, Regina and R-Dizzle. While Higa uses split-screen technology to create versions of himself in other productions on his successful YouTube channel, his Skitzo series is composed of many camera cuts, as Higa, playing each character, films himself sitting at different points of a circle in his bedroom. Higa wears baggier, dark clothing as R-Dizzle and speaks in the tropes that have come to signify black hip hop identity in mainstream media; he appears as an Asian American woman named Regina by tying up his shirt and wearing a black wig; he squints his eyes, sticks out his front teeth and dons an accent when he is the Japanese immigrant Hanate; and is his "default" YouTuber persona as Ryan. In the following analysis of Higa's performances, I discuss the relationships between Asian American success and failure, and the formal temporalities, performances of gender, and vernacular of mental illness

and disability in these digital productions. I discuss Higa's "skitzos," their mischief and their neoliberal functions by drawing together the online trickster and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of the "schizo" as capitalism's limit and surplus product—a figure who "scrambles all the codes and is the transmitter of the decoded flows of desire" (35). I suggest that Higa, the first YouTuber to reach two million subscribers in 2010, brings to the fore the mischievous and self-reflexive strategies, as well as the ableist and neoliberal projects, of commodifying fragmented, multiple and unstable Asian Americanness.

"That asian on YouTube:" Excess, Mischief and the Pathology of Inorganic Copies

Higa's various social media accounts reflect a playful refusal to unmask, as his Twitter handle is @TheRealRyanHiga, his Instagram moniker is @notryanhiga, and his Twitter profile description reads: "That asian on YouTube." I read Higa's self-branding as "that" anonymous asian on YouTube as the enactment of Asianness as a virtual icon, which flattens differences between ethnic groups lumped under the category "Asian" and drops the "American" in "Asian American" for YouTube, in order to align with "asian" as a virtual identifier. The lower-case "asian" becomes a shorthand—a linguistic icon—for an *online*, perhaps transnational, pan-ethnic Asianness. This, after all, would register with many of his millions of subscribers who are Asians living in Asian countries. Higa translates "Asian" to "asian" on the Internet, probing its meanings, destabilizing it as a determined or determining category, and opening up the term to interpretation, bastardization and possibly stereotype. The shorthand is a form of "lulz"—the online typed and spoken expression for laughing out loud ("lol")—that E. Gabriella Coleman

describes as the "motivating emotional force *and* consequence of an act of trolling" (111). She argues that "lulz" is a "linguistic spectacle" meant to shock and offend, and that Internet trolls make a "mockery of the idea that language, much like everything virtual, is anything that should be taken seriously" (Ibid). Higa's signature is a mischievous, taunting "teehee" that concludes each of his digital productions on his main YouTube channel. The tag at the end of his HigaTV "daily-life" vlogs is an audio clip of Higa saying "HigaTV" with the "TV" inflected so that it also sounds like his well-known "teehee," which almost always marks the end of his videos.

Moreover, Higa's emphasis on pan-Asian interchangeability and the *fraudulence* of his identity demonstrates the constructedness of the racial category by implementing it as a tool to be activated and interacted with. His online followers click on his YouTube channel, and are led to his @TheRealRyanHiga Twitter profile, which also encourages them to click on @notryanhiga. Both the "real" and the "not" Ryan Higa circulate into one another, preventing the fixity of a single Ryan Higa. This circulation exhibits a resistance to linear progress of character revelation and instead erases the notion of the "inner kernel" through multiple, cyclical performances. Chen argues that since, according to Bhabha, the fixity of stereotype is hinged on ceaseless repetition, possibilities for resistance are produced by stereotype's "very nature . . . which demands continual imitation" (65). Vincent's "stepinfetchit" monologue is reviewed and interrogated each time it is repeated on the stage to the point where the speech is edited "live" in performance by the end of the play – a performance by a mimicking colonial subject of "a difference that is almost the same but not quite" (Bhabha 86). The cyclical circulations of

Higa's social media accounts potentially perform a similar act of review, reiteration and non-linearity.

I consider Higa's embodiment of the lower-case "asian" and his performance of "teehee" as constituting mischief or trickster strategies that demonstrate both the tragedy and comedy of Asian interchangeability and misrecognition. Coleman posits that in traditional folklore, "[t]ricksters are much like trolls: provocateurs and saboteurs . . . The mythical notion of the trickster does seem to embody many of the attributes of the phreaker, hacker, and especially the contemporary Internet troll" (115). One linguistically mischievous trickster figure is the Signifying Monkey of African American folklore descended from the Yoruba trickster figure Esu-Elegbara, whom Henry Louis Gates Jr. describes as the "double-voiced" translator and messenger of the gods (7). Gates points out that "monkey" and "riddle" in Yoruba are homonyms (16), and contends that the Monkey is the "indigenous black metaphor for the literary critic" (9). In Chinese mythology, and in Asian American fictional literature such as Timothy Mo's *The Monkey King* (1978), Patricia Chao's *Monkey King* (1998), Maxine Hong Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey* (1989) and Gene Yang's *American Born Chinese* (2006), the Monkey King is a trickster figure who embodies identity contradiction and hybridity. Monkey King, according to the Chinese legend, wreaks havoc in Heaven, is consequently trapped under Buddha's cosmic palm, and is released many years later to serve the monk Xuan-zang in his journey to the West (India) to find Buddhist scriptures. Monkey King is a shape-shifter who can transform into different beings, and whose individual hairs can be used to clone the trickster.

Part of Higa's trolling, his "teehee" mode of performing "asian" on social media, is his performance of his clones or versions that are like him and not like him. These versions are based on racist, sexist and ableist tropes, as indicated in his series title. In the first "Skitzo" video, "Intro," Ryan becomes frustrated in his attempts to get the others to introduce themselves, as R-Dizzle is inexplicably aggressive, Regina goes on a tangent about puppies with wet noses, and Hanate's mispronunciation of "Bob" leads R-Dizzle and Regina to think that his name is "boob." Like Peter Chao's inability to understand Chinese Guy's accent, the short clip is predominantly about the four characters' inability to understand each other, even after Ryan explains that he called the meeting because he is launching the "Skitzo" series and wants a little bit of "gangster" from R-Dizzle, a little bit of "ninja" from Hanate, and some "stupid" from Regina. In particular, Ryan often tries to skip Hanate's turn to speak not because of Hanate's inability to understand the rest of the group, but because he "trolls" their conversation.

In the "Morning Routine" episode, Ryan warns Hanate not to "troll" him again like he did in the 2009 "The Halloween Story" episode. In that previous sketch, everyone but Hanate has an opportunity to tell the group how they spent Halloween. It is not until the last five seconds of the video, after Hanate complains that he never got to tell his Halloween story, that Ryan finally asks him how his Halloween went only to have Hanate quickly blurt, "I stay home cook rice." On one hand, Hanate is meant to be laughed at for his accent, for his poor grammar, and for fitting the stereotype of a rice-loving Asian. On the other hand, Hanate is the one doing the laughing, as the viewer and the other skitzos have waited all video-long to hear his Halloween story only to hear a one-liner about rice.

Hanate, who sometimes speaks with an American Southern drawl and calls it his "Canadian accent," mocks the authority of the English language, and of the state-enforced barriers between citizen and foreigner. The running joke of Hanate's bewildering Canadian roots—in one episode he tells a story about competing with the Canadian Olympic curling team—also figures Canada, and more specifically the Asian Canadian subject, as a foreign Other of the Asian American subject. Hanate is a troll who displaces the so-called foreigner, making the figure of the foreigner difficult to locate. His trolling exposes the absurdity of Ryan's attempts to bring cohesiveness into the "Skitzo" group—his efforts to bring all the versions into a single subject—and gestures to the instability of an even broader Asian North American subject. It is the Asian "foreigner," the version who is most incomprehensible to Ryan, who trolls the series by disrupting any easy commodification of Asian American identity or Asianness. Hanate and Higa (who I differentiate here from his role as Ryan in "Skitzo") as *asians* signal the discourses that produce the figure of the alien Asian, and in signalling these discourses playfully mock these narratives in ways that re/produce disjointed Asian American versions. Thus, "asian" is multiple and self-deconstructing.

This deconstruction is at times considered a risk to the health, the wholeness, of the subject and the body. "Skitzo" mischief presents itself as a subjective excess, portrayed in this series and more broadly in the Western discourse about minority identities divided between cultural traditions and Western modernity, as something like schizophrenia. My engagement with the term "schizophrenia" is prompted by, and builds upon, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of the "schizo" as marking the limit of

capitalism by "plung[ing] further and further into the realm of deterritorialization" (35). I am also informed by the work of David S. Roh, Betsy Huang, and Greta Niu on the contemporary context, as they argue that the Asian subject is perceived to be, simultaneously, producer (cheapened labour), designer, and fluent consumer of new media, and this consequently "has the effect of schizophrenic significations of the techno-Orientalized subject in the realm of new media" (14).

Deleuze and Guattari argue that capitalism, through the process of production, yields a "schizophrenic accumulation of energy" that resists itself but nevertheless acts as capitalism's limit (34). The "schizo," according to Deleuze and Guattari, seeks out the very limit of capitalism and "is its inherent tendency brought to fulfillment, its surplus product, its proletariat, and its exterminating angel. He scrambles all the codes and is the transmitter of the decoded flows of desire" (35). In similar ways, Higa's "Skitzo" digital productions demonstrate a deterritorialization of the self in the Information Age that renders the self both product and producer of subjectivity under neoliberal capitalism. His excess of a racialized self—the "surplus" of "production as process" (Deleuze and Guattari 5)—is a performance that deconstructs and reconstructs "Asian American" in its relationship to labour. New media's format has the effect of rendering Higa producer, production, and consumer in what Roh et al. describe as "schizophrenic" ways. Higa's split personalities in the "Skitzo" videos demonstrate the fragmentation and excess of Asian America, and illustrate a subjectlessness that, as Chuh argues, prioritizes difference in order to recognize the "discursive constructedness" of subjectivity (9). Ryan, R-Dizzle, Regina and Hanate visualize how gender, sexuality, class and immigration disrupt the

idea of a singular Asian American subject. As Lowe points out, "the subject that emerges out of Asian American cultural formation is one in excess of and in contradiction with the subjectivities proposed by national modern and postmodern modes of aesthetic representation" (*Immigrant* 32). Higa's multiplicity, in embodying caricatures of popular cultural representations and state representations of Asians, displays the excessive and contradictory experiences that constitute the category "Asian American."

At the same time, this vernacular of pathology cannot be detached from the language of illness used to describe racialized North Americans who inhabit the margins of state definitions of identity, as well as from the inter-generational tensions of growing up in a country where they continue to be seen as foreign. Popular narratives about immigrant or second-generation Asian North American young people who are "caught" between "tradition" and contemporary Western life figure them as "split," "confused," and even temporally divided between the so-called oppressive past and the progressive present. This apparent state of being "caught" in between or confused has become a story for explaining criminal or mentally "unstable" behaviour in Asian North Americans—infamously exemplified in the Canadian example of Jennifer Pan, who hired gunmen to stage a robbery and kill her Chinese Vietnamese immigrant parents in their Markham, Ontario, home in 2010 because, according to media coverage, she wanted to be free of her parents' strict authority. Jeremy Grimaldi, who published a book about Pan called *A Daughter's Revenge*, writes that Jennifer told police "how little time there was for anything other than school, competitive skating and piano lessons." In one police interrogation, Pan tells the detective that she forged her high school report cards to mask

her average grades, turning them into "exceptional ones," and lied about attending university (Grimaldi). The fraudulent Asian Canadian woman, whose successes were deceptions, is depicted in news coverage as suffering from mental instability that arises from being both Asian and Canadian—of having to succeed academically when she just wanted to date a man of whom her parents did not approve (Hasham).

Higa's "skitzo," while meant to be a comedic performance, is informed by the longheld association between pathologized subjective excess and Asian American identity. In his reading of Ridley Scott's classic 1982 film *Blade Runner*, David Palumbo-Liu argues that the android "replicants" that the protagonist Decker hunts down demonstrate a "multicultural anxiety" (333) in which the white-Other distinction is put at risk—a paranoid condition of whiteness in a postmodernity in which the boundaries between white and Other are insecure and where whites "can no longer tell who is human and who is not" (332). Palumbo-Liu critiques the use of "schizophrenia" to describe the "dual personalities" of hyphenated Asian Americans, and argues that this pathology can be turned back on the "pristine notion" of whiteness (298) and examined as a global case of schizophrenia in transnational postmodernity, as the "fissuring" of the nation-state in late modernity (12). He suggests that "[r]ather than marking ethnic and racial minorities alone, 'schizophrenia' might be an even better descriptor for a postmodern white malaise" (Ibid). If racial schizophrenia in the age of multiculturalism and postmodernity is a paranoid crisis of whiteness, Higa's multiplication of his body in his "Skitzo" videos aggravates such a condition by invoking both gendered and racialized "bad subjects" at the same time as a good subject is formed. The schizophrenia here, I suggest, is mobilized

not by a failure to become white, as colonial mimicry and the model minority discourse generally articulate, but by other incompletions that destabilize Asianness: the failure to be black, to be Asian American, or to properly pass in drag. Higa's failing versions of femininity, blackness and Asian Americanness shift away from a centre of pristine whiteness, and imagine other sets of success-failure relationships.

Thus, while metaphors using schizophrenia in critique like Palumbo-Liu's often disengage the term "schizophrenia" from people with schizophrenia, I suggest that "Skitzo" brings to the fore the ways in which Asian American neoliberal success and failure are not only racialized, but understood within disjunctive temporalities of ability and disability, articulated along the lines of sexuality, class and gender. Robert McRuer argues that able-bodiedness, "even more than heterosexuality, still largely masquerades as a non-identity, as the natural order of things," and that "compulsory able-bodiedness" is contingent on compulsory heterosexuality and vice versa (1-2). By situating the invisibility of heterosexuality, which is allowed to be organic, within systems of compulsory able-bodiedness, McRuer demonstrates how disability has been and continues to be pathologized as queer. In "Skitzo," the gendered, queer and foreign characters of Regina, R-Dizzle and Hanate are outside the normative and linear timeline of Ryan, as the "natural" or default subject. This belatedness, a marker of Regina's "stupidity," Hanate's inability to grasp American speech and culture, and R-Dizzle's classed and racialized masculinity, functions to interrupt and frustrate the meetings that Ryan calls for the purposes of discussing their careers. In this sense, Ryan's multiple

versions disrupt and slow down his efforts to achieve linear, capitalistic successful production, while simultaneously functioning as the strategy for attracting more viewers.

Dragging Time: The Belatedness of "Skitzo" Re/Production

Higa's self-cloning has murky origins, obscuring the notions of the authentic original subject. Regina, R-Dizzle, and Hanate demand clarity when Ryan tells his versions in the "Nose Scar" episode that he "created" them. R-Dizzle asks whether they are cooler "versions" of Ryan, or if they are clones of the YouTuber, while Regina lashes out at Ryan, exclaiming that Ryan is neither a god nor her mother. A flustered Ryan can only reply, "I don't know what you guys are, okay? I don't even know what I am in all this." Ryan, who is neither God nor mother to his versions, cannot explain his versions' beginnings, for he cannot explain his self-re/production with a linear, teleological or generational logic. Lowe cautions against seeing Asian America exclusively through the lens of generational or filial relations because this framework obscures the important differences between gender, class and national diversities (*Immigrant* 63). Her critique of understanding the Asian American experience exclusively through "vertical" generational conflicts and filial relations stresses the heterogeneity of Asian American culture as "horizontal" relationships between communities that recognize gender, class and national diversities and do not essentialize Asian American culture (*Immigrant* 67). Higa's "Skitzo" series format—with its clunky panning around the bedroom through harsh cuts in between each frame—enacts at once a kind of horizontal staging and a distance between the characters. This horizontality is one that Deleuze and Guattari's conception

of the schizophrenic as a code-scrambler speaks to, for they argue that the schizophrenic is one who "passes from one code to the other" and "scrambles all the codes … never giving the same explanation from one day to the next, never invoking the same genealogy, never recording the same event in the same way" (15).

The "Skitzo" series is namely about the frustration of progress, as Ryan struggles in every video to bring the meeting to order and the episodes are premised on seemingly random conversation and tangential anecdotes. After all, when Ryan attempts to begin a discussion on how to market his "Skitzo" series with the other three versions of him in his introductory episode, they cannot move past their miscommunication to successfully come up with a business plan. From the first episode, the premise established for "Skitzo" is self-aware in its commercial endeavour: the various versions of Higa exist on social media as a postviral reproduction in which Asian versions will appeal to a wider subscription base. Given the fact that the "Skitzo" series is "actually" quite successful in attracting millions of views and establishing Higa's "real-life" acting career, the character of Ryan has intentions within the skits that overlap or reflect the "real" YouTuber Ryan Higa's business plans. However, within the temporalities of "Skitzo," those plans are never made but are constantly foiled, interrupted or sidestepped; rather, the *inefficient tangents* created by Ryan's other versions comprise the series. Whereas the Asian mass, Asian machines or Asian clones are typically figures of industrial and technological efficiency in centuries of Western representations of the Asian labourer, Higa's "Skitzo" versions are inefficient *low* technologies that delay progress.

In fact, some of Higa's most-viewed videos are his parodies of infomercials that depict low-tech, overly human versions of new technologies. In a 2007 video called "The iPod human," for example, Higa is an "iPod human" who follows the customer (his friend Sean Fujiyoshi) around and is obviously more of a nuisance than an entertainment system, singing off-key while Sean is in on the toilet, while he is doing homework, and while he tries to sleep. In a 2013 "Google Glass Human" sketch, Higa sits on the shoulders of his friend Sean and covers his eyes with his palms as the "human Google Glass," intercepting and sabotaging Sean's calls, and "zooming" in with binoculars to take unsuccessful photos. All the while, Higa, also playing the commercial's host, sells the product as "cutting edge" technology for the future, emphasizing the contrast between the romantically racialized notions of technological development with the embodied work of his performance. Higa's equation of technology with his body is one that positions his work within the techno-Orientalist narrative that figures Asian bodies as devoid of human emotion, yet he flips the discourse on its head with the blatant *inefficiency* of the Asian body as technology.

In the "Skitzo" series, the low technologies of his black, female and FOB versions enact temporal tangents. Ryan attempts to explain in the "Nose Scar" episode why they all have a nose scar—as in *Yankee Dawg You Die,* the nose is a marker of Asian versions—but Regina, R-Dizzle and Hanate do not let him proceed with the meeting and instead take over the video with their fantasies about how they got the scar. The episode is in effect all interruption, as the implausible accounts of how the three Higa versions got the nose scar supersede Ryan's intentions for calling the Skitzo meeting. The temporal

illogic of this production, and other "Skitzo" videos, is key to this aesthetic of disruption, for the sense of stalling not only prevents a future facilitated by the Asian copy, it situates the Asian copies within a "present." Regina begins her account by saying "So there I was," and cues Hanate to hold up a small screen of a cartoony bedroom. The clip zooms into this screen and the viewer watches as Regina narrates her version of the incident, which is presented to the viewer as a pre-recorded video. The screen within a screen depicts Regina being struck on the nose in a comedic curling-iron-light-sabre fight with a dog-human hybrid. R-Dizzle starts his story in the same way: "So there I was," and brings the viewer to a scene in which he is lifting weights and is interrupted when Ryan, wearing the same outfit he is seen in at the beginning of the meeting, bursts into the room, picks a fight, and throws a curling iron—a weight used to do curls—at R-Dizzle's face. The repeated "there I was" indicates a kind of "past," but Ryan's intrusion into R-Dizzle's workout is a temporal illogic that brings the present into R-Dizzle's unreliable memory. Similarly, Hanate's video-memory is a "live" broadcast of his winning moment at the 2010 Olympics, in which he took home gold for the Canadian curling team. In this "live" memory, Hanate invokes versions of himself by performing a *jutsu* from the anime series *Naruto* in order to produce two teammates. These non/memories within the "Nose Scar" episode, are interruptions in the presentness and linear development of the narrative of the episode. Near the end of the video, the illogic of these unruly memories invade the "present," as Hanata is suddenly wearing his Canadian Olympic uniform and the computer-generated effects of Regina's curling-iron light sabre and R-Dizzle's hypermuscular arms also appear. In the last second of the episode, a watermelon comes

flying out from off-screen and knocks Ryan over, gesturing to his own uncontainable memory of being injured while filming a "Fruit Ninja" video.

The inconsistent temporal logic of the "Skitzo" series may dis-orient,[23] but the sketches make particular turns away from Asian Americanness that are in effect turns toward Asian America. The impersonations of blackness, femininity, and of the Asian "FOB" concurrently mark the instability of Asian American subjectivity and the re/production of such an identity. In the 2009 "The Halloween Story" episode of the Skitzo series, Regina is late for the Skitzo meeting because she does not know how to unlock her car door and ends up "stuck" in her car. Ryan has to instruct her on how to unlock her car door, for Regina is "late" in the temporal sense and in her inability to operate basic, low technology. In the 2015 installment of the series titled "My Morning Routine," the group has to wait for Regina, who is once again late for their meeting. When she arrives, Regina explains that she is late because of her complex morning routine, which involves beautification processes akin to the videos that "those makeup gurus" post online. This is a reference to the many Asian North American beauty vloggers who have YouTube channels consisting of makeup tutorials. (I will analyze makeup tutorials by Asian American beauty vlogger Michelle Phan in the following chapter). Here, Higa as Regina parodies and acknowledges a particular figure of the online Asian North American woman that has emerged in social media as an object of the

[23] Sara Ahmed traces the word "orientation" to "the Orient," noting that the East is the "horizon" over which the sun rises (*Queer* 113). Ahmed writes that Orientalism renders the Orient the object, "as well as the instrument, that allows the Occident to take shape, to become a subject" so that the "Occident would be what we are orientated around" (*Queer* 116).

virtual gaze and the subject of virtual production. However, Regina is emphatically a performance of *bad drag*, as the only alteration to Higa's regular look, the black wig, hangs awkwardly on Regina's head, sometimes revealing Higa's hair underneath. In the flashback to Regina's morning, the viewer sees her comically failing to accomplish the polished look that a YouTube makeup guru would demonstrate in a makeup tutorial, and instead watches as she smudges charcoal, flour, and crayon on her face. On one hand, Regina as bad drag articulates the mischief of being Asian American, of "out-posing the poses of stereotype" (Chen 76). Regina cites the persistent archetype of effeminate Asian men—a stereotype that has its roots in nineteenth-century Chinese "bachelor societies" in the US and Canada and in the history of Chinese laundrymen in North America being affiliated with a "feminine" sphere of labour—while dismantling this stereotype through the absurdity of bad drag. On the other hand, Regina as the "slow," "stupid," and often late version reinforces the authority of the citation it makes and the authority of a "real" male Higa.

Judith Butler argues that performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate act, but "as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (2). Looking at gender, race, and sexuality, Butler contends that not all drag is subversive, as there are areas in which heterosexuality "can concede its lack of originality and naturalness but still hold on to its power" (126). She writes that citing the dominant norm does not displace the norm; "rather, it becomes the means by which that dominant norm is most painfully reiterated as the very desire and the performance of those subjects" (133). Higa as Regina could therefore emphasize how

Asian America is fractured along lines of gender and sexuality, but this performance of drag also marks his desire, and his inability, to be masculine or feminine. Regina runs the risk of disavowing Asian American queerness, of reinforcing the "realness" of Asian American masculinity in the face of the threat of Asian effeminacy. Hence, while the narrative temporality of the YouTube series is one that is insolently illogical, there remain discursive remnants of a heteronormative logic in which the feminized body is late, slow, and unable to catch up. The nonlinear temporality of the series cannot be simplistically read as only resistant, as the gendered and racialized time of the videos makes Higa's skitzo performance a dissident act, but an act that reveals its own limits.

The bad drag displayed by Regina is compounded by her and the other versions' belatedness as "bad" copies—a characteristic that is particularly embodied by R-Dizzle.[24] In the 2011 "Reunited" episode, R-Dizzle hands Ryan a CD-ROM containing a video that he, Regina, and Hanate produced in order to prove that they are just as competent as Ryan in producing social media. The video, which is an "offline" clip recorded to a disc and not posted to YouTube like Ryan's videos, constitutes what Alexandra Juhasz would call a "bad video" because of its use of low-end technology and everyday settings. It depicts R-Dizzle parodying Ryan's most-watched video "Nice Guys," which is itself a parody of the hip hop music video genre and which has been viewed online more than 59 million times. Riffing off the YouTuber's running joke of featuring talking lamps in his videos, R-Dizzle raps over the "Nice Guys" beat in the CD-ROM version: "You can turn me on all

[24] Higa's YouTube user name "nigahiga," reflects this simultaneous cross-racial identification and appropriation of blackness.

night girl and I'll never behave / And if your bulbs be burning out, I'll never inspect ya / Cause I'll be plugging in your outlet with no surge protector." While the polished and more professional-looking "Nice Guys" music video depicts Higa and Asian American YouTuber KevJumba (Kevin Wu) learning that the way to woo women is not to be "bad boys" but to be "nice guys," R-Dizzle's rap is self-reflexively misogynist and defiantly "bad" both in content and in the video's out-of-date formal qualities when compared to the Higa music video. Moreover, while Higa's "Nice Guys" music video was shot on multiple sets and involved a film crew, R-Dizzle's version appears to have been self-shot and to have required minimal editing. Like Chinese Guy, R-Dizzle's performance as a "bad subject" who resists the wired model minority version of himself, is aligned with his proximity to blackness and therefore associated with a technological lateness.

Ryan's attempts to explain in a straightforward way how he/they got their nose scars in "Nose Scar" are foiled by his "slower" versions' invocations of illogical pasts, including Hanate's absurd story about winning an Olympic medal as a member of a Canadian curling team that is comprised of all Higas. While it may seem odd that the immigrant or "fobby" character in the series suddenly adopts a southern-sounding drawl (likely a parody of Americans' ignorance about Canada) and is linked to Canada, I read this timeline in the story as visualizing a paradoxically late *and* early Asian Canadian Other. While R-Dizzle's remix of "Nice Guys" is bad in its formal qualities, Hanate's memory of a Canadian curling team entirely made up Higas is created by split screen technology—an editing tool that is not even used in the "main" timeline of "Skitzo." Although Hanate's otherness as a Japanese immigrant who is unfamiliar with American

culture is compounded by the strangeness of his mysterious Canadian origins, his Canadianness also invokes liberal progress. Conjuring the image of the "good" Canadian immigrant by contrasting the bad "black" subject and invoking an image of Asian immigrants representing Canada on the international stage, Hanate symbolizes the possibilities of liberal multiculturalism and the foreignness of such a possibility. Ultimately, as a Japanese American immigrant who is especially linguistically and culturally belated because of his confusing "origins," his Canadian history renders him a late Other when put beside Asian Americanness. After all, Hanate at one point in the series asks the others why he is the only one with a "Canadian accent."

Casting the (Canadian) "FOB," female and "thug" skitzos as belated copies in multiple senses of the word, Higa's series brings to the fore the compulsory able-bodiedness of neoliberal heteronormativity and postviral success. If, as Payne argues, part of the logic of postvirality is that content should operate in the *manner* of a virus but not be a virus—that is, not be a risk of contagion—successful transmission in social media privileges the "active user-subject" over "other positions and pleasures" (21). Reading into the straight, masculine language of active user-subject that contrasts with what may be seen as more passive and therefore more feminine, I understand Ryan as the active user-subject whose savvy use of the YouTube platform yields capitalist success, while his "dumber," more feminine, more queer or more primitive versions are the clunky barriers to this progress. At the same time, the virality of these versions is precisely what allows for their commodified sexism, racism, queerphobia and ableism. The active user-subject

is thus a *healthy* and *able* figure whose formation relies on the flattening or neutralizing of risky viral or defective transmissions.

After all, imitation or mimicry was an attribute of the "Mongolian type of idiocy," according to John Langdon Down, after whom what would be known as Down Syndrome was named. Writing his "observations" of patients who were not "real" Mongols, but resembled Mongols because of their disability, Down's report suggests that their "power of imitation" is amplified by their inability to speak properly:

> They have considerable power of imitation, even bordering on being mimics. They are humorous, and a lively sense of the ridiculous often colours their mimicry. This faculty of imitation may be cultivated to a very great extent, and a practical direction given to the results obtained. They are usually able to speak; the speech is thick and indistinct, but may be improved very greatly by a well-directed scheme of tongue gymnastics. (260)

Down assigns copying or imitative behaviour, a characteristic assigned to Asians and the Asiatic mode of production, to the class of "Mongolian idiots" who, despite not being racially Asian, are Orientalized by disability. By drawing a connection between his patients' "lively sense of the ridiculous" that colours their mimicry and the belated "thickness" of their speech, *which may be improved* by a regimen of speech exercises, Down's observations from 1866 perhaps reveal the relationship between absurd humour, failed copying and the temporality of disability that underlies "Skitzo." According to Down, the racial and disabled belatedness of so-called Mongolian idiots and, implicitly, "real Mongols," is to be *worked* on and corrected in order for these not-quite-verbal bodies to move "forward" into society.

This is, in fact, the narrative that Higa's account of his "life story" on YouTube tells: a linear progress from being unable—from possibly suffering from depression and

self-harming tendencies—to neoliberal competency.[25] At the request of many of his viewers commenting on his videos for a "Draw My Life" video, which involves YouTubers using hand-drawn illustrations to tell their life story, Higa draws his experiences with a black erasable marker and in a voiceover narrates his autobiography. This performance of transparency, produced in response to his online followers' demand, is a commodified authenticity that is complexly about cultivating a brand and attempting to trace the virtual to the material lives of social media performers and producers. In his "Draw My Life" video, Higa describes being born in Hilo, Hawai'i to loving parents and an older brother with whom he was competitive from a young age. He describes being placed in a class with older students in junior high at a charter school and being bullied by the older students. At this point in the video, Higa's hand, which is sped up, is shown drawing bullies pushing him to the ground while they yell "Go back to China!" "Nerd!" and "Loser!" Higa, drawing a hangman stickman and spaces for a seven-letter word, reveals that he started having "darker thoughts." However, instead of writing the word "suicide" in the letter spaces beside the hanging stickman, Higa writes another seven-letter word: puberty. He comments, "Perhaps it was just puberty messing with me, I don't know." The YouTuber tells his followers that he realized he could end the bullying on "[his] own terms" by making fun of himself "more than they could." Realizing that he could make people laugh, Higa started making short films with his family's camcorder. He describes leaving Hawai'i for the first time in his life to study nuclear medicine at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, but dropping out to pursue a YouTube career that

[25] Higa reportedly makes more than $150,000 a year from his YouTube productions (O'Neill).

proved to be successful. He tells his viewers, “Life will be better if you choose to make it better” and advises, “Choose to be happy. Choose to better your life. Because only you can make that decision.”

This illustration of the American Dream, which suggests that anyone can become anything through self-determination and hard work, is hinged on the promise of American progress. The conflict between Higa’s “success story” narrated in the “Draw My Life” video and the mischief of his virtual Asianness not only raises the question of the Asian American producer’s intention, but also probes the often-assumed differentiation between the “real” and the performed/performer, and therefore ruptures the line between producer and product. This apparent tension requires us to attend to intention, to ask whether it is possible to—or whether we must—read the “real” Higa somewhere in the midst of his versions. In the “Draw My Life” video, Higa does not provide many details in his verbal voiceover about why bullies might have tormented him, yet the hand-drawn images displayed as he narrates the story reveal that his marginalization was race-based. Through animated speech bubbles, the viewer can see stick-figure high school bullies telling the animated Higa to “Go back to China!” The section of the story in which Higa discusses his strategy of making fun of himself is illustrated with a stick-figure standing on a stage, with three speech bubbles reading: “I am a nerd,” “I am a bitch,” and “Ching chong ling long ting tong yao ming.” The rift between the disembodied voice-over narration and Higa’s sped-up illustrating hand (which exists in this sense along another timeline) creates a temporal inconsistency even in the teleological portrayal of neoliberal ascension to “success.” While Higa’s voice tells the viewer that life got “better” because in his

"real-life story" he found success by working hard and choosing to make life better, his drawings tell a tale similar to that of Gotanda's Vincent Chang in which an Asian American man "out-poses" the poses of stereotype on stage by calling himself a "bitch," a "nerd," and by singing "ching chong ling long" in order to perform into existence his identity as an Asian American.[26]

Higa's performed self-sufficiency and self-improvement as an able-bodied, heterosexual Asian American man (part of his "Draw My Life" story emphasized how he was rejected by a childhood crush but then started dating a woman in high school when he gained more confidence) downplays his possible mental health challenges, dismissing them as growing pains that can be overcome by turning negativity—in this case, homophobic and racist bullying—into something marketable and commodifiable. This gives us insight into Higa's use of the Asian stereotypes and caricatures in many of his popular videos, such as his recurring performances as a wall-climbing ninja, as possibly being pre-emptions in the sense that they anticipate what might be funny for a broad audience and predict the kind of racism Higa expects to face as an Asian American man performing in public. While the risk is that, as noted already in my earlier analysis of Chao, the stereotype reinforcing white supremacy and authenticity remains in place, the self-deprecations of "bitch," "nerd" or "ching chong ling long" manifest in Higa's performance of psychic or subjective excess, fragmentation and instability. These "skitzos" reveal, like Guattari and Deleuze's "schizo," the limits of capitalist circulation

[26] Like Chang's "disguise" of Chineseness to navigate a post-WWII society, Higa's self-deprecating humour emulates "Chinese" as a strategy of self-defence against anti-Chinese-as-Asian racism in Hawai'i.

as the surplus products that haunt Higa's neoliberal subjectivity. They probe, or at least intrude into, the logic of able-bodied, heterosexual production by circulating as failed or bad copies who are simultaneously "slowing down" Ryan's entrepreneurial endeavours and functioning as key factors to his online popularity.

The spectres of these "skitzo" versions are silent in Higa's "Draw My Life," for they emerge as performances of Higa's rejected excesses—the bitch, the nerd, the "ching chong ling long"—in the hand-drawn illustrations, but not in his verbalized narration of his story. The gaps between the verbalized and visualized narratives in Higa's life story are temporal ones that are subsequently unevenly weighted in terms of authorial authority. Mel Y. Chen contends that contemporary concepts of civic engagement and political resistance are often ableist notions in which silence is figured as protest's "ostensible opposite—a non-language, the lack of 'voice'" (101). Chen writes:

> The invocation of an ableist silence-to-speech narrative in the public domain renders those immigrants not recognizably speaking in the public domain—and whose labor in this U.S. capitalist economy is precisely about being bodied-but-not-speaking-labor—to another time, one in which a speaking future might fiercely or optimistically be engaged, but not yet. (101)

Chen's analysis of the belatedness of perceived linguistic disability that emerges in contrast to the ability to speak out and be "silent no more"—to *fully* engage as recognizable citizen-subject—prompts me to consider how the accented performances of Chinese Guy and "Skitzo" wrestle with the ableist silence-to-speech demand that not only pits "good" citizens against the "bad," uncultured foreigner, but also the resistant, "woke"[27] Asian against the complicit, silent or stereotype-enforcing minority. Chinese

[27] The term "woke" has emerged out of black communities to connote awareness of injustice and racism, particularly in the wake of Black Lives Matter.

Guy and Hanate's *inability* to speak thus marks a kind of "not yet" that places them behind their other versions. According to the silence-to-speech logic of political personhood, if only these versions make apparent their satirical strategy, if only these bad copies resist in their "badness"—then do they move from complicity to protest. Yet these gendered, racialized and classed failed copies remain in a temporal silence of "not yet," never quite revealing or unmasking to clarify their acceptable intentions; they remain incomplete.

The incompleteness, or virtuality to recall Bhabha, of these failed copies conjures at once a lateness and the perceived "not-quite" of disability that figures certain people as not fully able, not fully human, not possessing a full body. Higa's "Skitzo" and Chao's Chinese Guy performances are virtual in that they neither properly unveil the inscrutable Asian to place him within the purview of state or civic recognition, nor implode the Asian North American subject so that he is "completely" subversive of neoliberal progress. Their failures to be not-quite black, masculine, citizen, or white circulate strategically as part of their entrepreneurial endeavours, at the same time as they are disruptive of the model-minority successes demanded of Asian North Americans in white society and its manifestations online. Importantly, in the case of Higa's "Skitzo" series in particular, the virtual nature of his performance as on online producer and as a body that depicts non/interchangeability within "himself" articulates how Asian North American mental illness is attributed in popular discourse to the success-failure binary that seems to fall particularly hard on Asians. Invoking the pathologized language around schizophrenia, the "skitzos" are a comical "fail" (online lingo for failure that is amusing) because they

are late, "stupid," and socially inept. Perhaps what makes them particularly failed and therefore particularly funny to some viewers, is their multiplicity and incoherence—their racialized, gendered and linguistic disabilities.

As Chao and Higa perform the slowness of their versions and the belatedness of the accent, classed slang or indistinct speech, they bring to the fore the interconnectedness between dis/ability and the virality or postvirality of online circulation. Their versions reveal how the schema of success-failure not only produces modes of being and performing Asian North American, but how the Asian version is an integral producer-product of the move away from contagious (sick) racialized transmission to safe, healthy social media "sharing." However, the remnant of excess, of never fully "resolving" into a singular, trackable subject in both Chinese Guy and Higa's cases, haunts linear, progressive postvirality with the "pastness" and the interruption of viral, racial contact.

Being Well, Being Virtual

Contemporary conversations around wellness and mental health figure the Asian North American body, particularly the Asian student, as particularly vulnerable to mental illness because of her unhealthy attachment to the success-failure binary. In 2012, the National Center for Health released a report indicating that suicide rates among Asian American women rose 96.3 per cent between 2000 and 2009 (Le). According to a 2009 study and another National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS) conducted in 2002 and 2003, U.S.-born Asian Americans, in particular women, were more likely to attempt suicide than those born outside the country (Duldulao, Takeuchi and Hong;

Meyers 44). Another widely cited study released by the American Psychological Association stated that Asian American college students had more suicidal thoughts than their white counterparts ("Suicide"). Reports like these and articles about Asian North American experiences with mental unwellness often suggest that the confusion or stress of being caught in between familial, cultural expectations and American mainstream culture can have detrimental effects on one's mental wellbeing. The other prevalent narrative is that Asian immigrant families often do not have a *language* for depression and other mental health conditions, and therefore Asians often do not seek help because of the stigma of mental illness or have trouble finding treatment that is a good cultural fit for them. This lack of language is not only apparent in the media coverage of Jennifer Pan's plot to murder her parents, but in features like Jessica Gimeno's *Huffington Post* piece from 2016 in which she says that her campus psychiatrist's diagnosis of her illness as bipolar 2 "relieved" her because she "no longer had to fight a nameless, faceless enemy," but also scared her because she was worried her parents would think that she was weak.

Underlying these narratives, of course, is the spectre of success—an ideal that is particularly associated with Asian subjectivity in Western discourse and understood as the main source of mental health issues for many second-generation Asian North Americans. This apparent belatedness of Asian North America when it comes to wellness tends to figure their progression into academic and capitalist success as a risky, possibly regressive, move. While experiences like Gimeno's are integral for understanding and addressing the very pertinent issues of undoing model-minority discourses that make

Asians in North America unwell in very visceral and embodied ways, they tend to emphasize the familial instead of the effects of imperialism, systemic racism and sexism in matters of Asian North American wellness. The temporal rift set up between "Asian" and "American" or "Asian" and "Canadian" seems to situate those who are seeking professional, institutional help as becoming "more American" and less Asian—also a temporal move from the not-yet to the future. Within this understanding of Asian North American mental wellness, the immigrant family that cannot name or fully understand mental health diagnoses remains still in the past of the Asian North American whose journey to recovery involves the move to being "more Western."

What would it mean, then, to consider wellness within the virtuality of the "not yet," to conceive of wellness not necessarily as possessing subjective wholeness in order to participate in the ableist civic future, but as unstable modes of the "not quite"? What would it mean to conceive of Asian North American wellness as not only being "seen," diagnosed and recognized institutionally—which, of course, are necessary modes of support and healing for many of us who struggle with being unwell—but *also* as the pleasures and liberatory possibilities of being misrecognized, virtual and not exactly "moving on"? By turning to Higa's "Skitzo" series and the revelation of a re-masked Chinese Guy in this chapter, I have attempted to theorize a relationship between the "not yet" of those bodies rendered belated through class, race, ability or gender, and the "not quiteness" of Asian North American versions that fail to properly reproduce across those lines. These failures, which are at times tragic, and at times calculated, index possibilities beyond correcting misrecognition to restore the fragment or fragmented body/part to the

whole—to recall Rachel Lee. Instead, they present points of departure for building new approaches to theorizing and practicing Asian North American wellness in the excesses—the surplus—of virtual production and performance.

Chapter 3 | Mediated Wellbeing and the Half-Lives of Asian Rest

> "[P]erhaps, rather than expending our energy struggling to stay in the Moment, we should simply be grateful our brains allow us to be elsewhere."
>
> - Ruth Whippman, "Actually, Let's Not Be in the Moment"

> "My lengthy Korean skincare ritual gives the present back to me twice a day, every day."
>
> Jude Chao, "How My Elaborate Korean Skincare Routine Helps Me Fight Depression"

In a video posted on YouTube and the sub-reddit[28] "Sleepy Asians" in May 2016, a teaching assistant at the University of Washington is partway through his lecture about record-high storms when civil engineering student Trong Huynh, who is "sleeping" partially hidden on a table behind the large screen at the front of the lecture hall, suddenly falls from his perch, is startled awake by his tumble, then nonchalantly picks up his backpack and walks out of the room without a word (DiGuilio). The students begin to cautiously laugh and the stunned lecturer quips seconds later, "No comment." When the YouTube video made its wide rounds soon after, Huynh identified himself on Facebook and re-posted the video with the comment: "So a lot of my friends have asked me what I've been doing in college... so incase anyone else is curious..This is a recent prank I did at the University of Washington and I had no idea it was being recorded, but just today someone sent me this clip and I thought it was great:) [sic]."

[28] Sub-reddits are forums about specific topics on the community website Reddit.

Huynh's prank plays off of, or perhaps responds to, the social media trend of documenting Asians sleeping in public—an apparent enigma to the West that is documented by photo blogs, Facebook pages, sub-reddits, Snapchat photos, and even a book dedicated to capturing, without their knowledge, Asian/North Americans sleeping on buses, in Ikea, in school libraries or other public areas. One popular example of this online phenomenon is the *Asians Sleeping on Public Transit* Tumblr, which was created in March 2015 and crowdsources contributors' photos of Asians sleeping on buses or BART (Bay Area Rapid Transit) trains in California (See Figure 8). The Tumblr photo blog's tagline suggests: "Genetic Predisposition to Narcolepsy?" The photos sent to the blog appear to be taken without the sleeping Asian subjects' knowledge, and are accompanied by captions that are mocking or comical in tone, including one photo posted in November 2012 featuring an Asian man dozing off on the train with his head leaned back and his hands folded in his lap, paired with the caption: "BART: Bay Asians Rapidly Tired." This Tumblr blog's content is similar to the sub-Reddit thread "Sleepy Asians," in which one of the posts in 2016 is a Snapchat photo of a young Asian man sleeping across three seats in an airport, with one hand in his pocket and another hand gripping his backpack. The original photographer had used the Snapchat app to superimpose text on top of the photo, saying: "This is why I have to stand while waiting for my plane."

German photographer Bernd Hagemann's website *Sleeping Chinese* features a wide selection of images from his 700 photos of people in China who, "at every corner," are sleeping in the "strangest positions and situations, or are even snoring, while in a deep

sleep." Hagemann, who also published a book of his photos in 2010, describes these sleeping bodies as embodying a "calmness," "flexibility" and "adaptability." His website is an interactive photo archive where viewers are able to click on photos under the categories "New," "Hardsleepers," "Softsleepers" and "Western Groupsleepers," and vote for their favourites. Hagemann captures people in China sleeping in what audiences see as absurd or "seemingly impossible" positions (Fong), including several photos of people sleeping under large trucks, sleeping on the sidewalk, sleeping while resting their heads on bricks and while sitting in chairs or on shopping carts (see Figure 9).

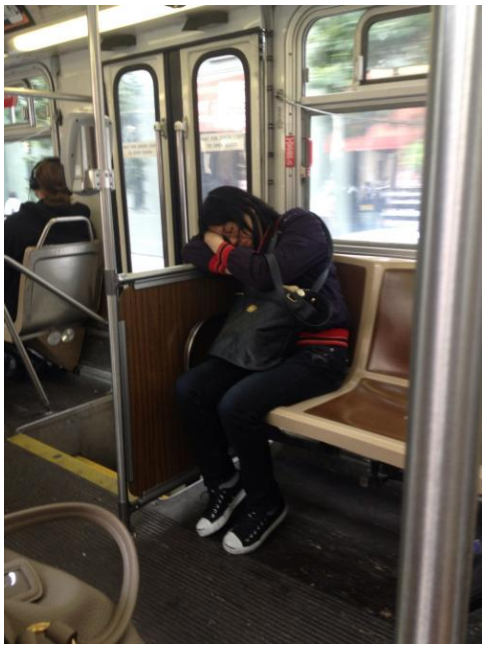

Figure 8. A photo from the *Asians Sleeping on Public Transit* Tumblr.

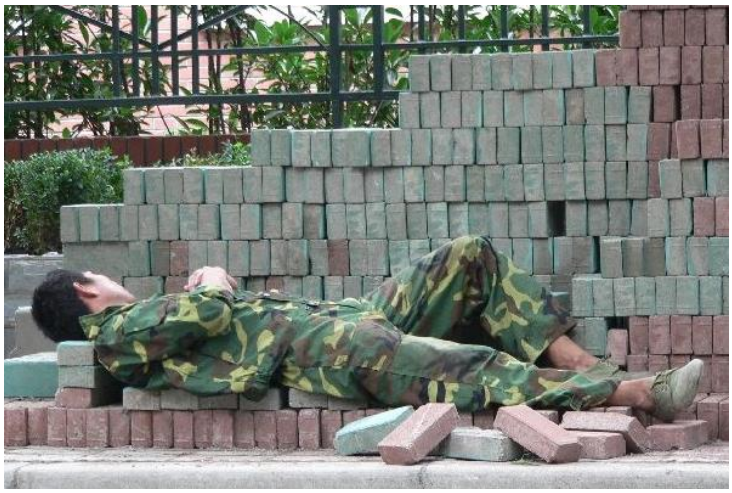

Figure 9. An image of a "hardsleeper" from Hagemann's *SleepingChinese.com* website.

In this chapter, I argue that the sleeping Asian meme visualizes the limits of wellbeing narratives that set "healthy" parameters around the spheres of work and rest, and subsequently produce subjects who are expected to autonomously rest well in order to work well. By visualizing the excesses of this self-care discourse, the sleeping Asian discursively and materially figures as an ambivalent or not quite resistant disruption of productive neoliberal progress. The sleeping-but-not-comfortable body that is sometimes akin to a corpse, a victim of violence or a machine in "sleep mode" brings neoliberal logics of healthy work-play balance to their limit by uncomfortably breaching labour-leisure, private-public boundaries. At the same time, the sleeping Asian who improperly rests, and in doing so upsets social, class-based norms around work and leisure, offers us a temporal and performative mode for considering other notions of wellbeing that are not necessarily predicated on the liberal subject's ability to properly maintain, or *control*, their participation in the market.

Thus, the sleeping Asian sets up a way of thinking about what is deemed legitimate or "real" labour and leisure, and prompts me to consider the possibilities of resting and dwelling in "not-yet" temporalities and bodies—a mode of inorganic wellbeing that I will theorize as virtual and mediated. By looking at the Asian sleeper meme alongside recent debates about the politics of K-beauty practices, I suggest that, counter to the current self-care vernacular of bodily "groundedness," being well in the digital age entails not "unplugging" or going offline, but *working out* survival in not-yet temporalities of mediation that are both within and disruptive of neoliberal, productive progress. In my reading of Jennifer Phang's indie film *Advantageous,* I theorize the ambivalence of the Asian/American sleeper as a "half-life" that emerges and *loiters* between productive activity and proper leisure. I further develop this concept of loitering in my turn to the gendered Asian inter/face of K-beauty and Asian beauty facework, which involves the multi-step daily regimens, administrative labour, research, performances, and digital production of this skincare practice. I suggest that, like the Asian sleeper, this inter/face, which is the racialized and gendered screen of the skincare vlog, blog, and the carefully constructed, edited and presented Asian face itself, is a *mediated meditation.* It is both a commodifiable, circulated site of self-improvement that can be worked on and a medium that visualizes epidermal memories, hauntings and a present in ways that put pressure on the progress of liberal colourblind futures.

I examine facework as abstracting, "not quite" labour that renders organic skin—and the healing possibilities of feeling "your own" skin—an inorganic process of mediation that involves editing, online presentation, performing self-care and narration.

Rather than confirming the liberal multicultural success story of the Asian "creative worker" (Minh-Ha Pham), the inorganic process of the inter/face, which I will analyze as a designable and shifting medium for racial contact, reveals the disjunctive temporalities and labour of racialized and racializing epidermis. Instead of simply abstracting Asianness into a white-as-postracial progress narrative, the abstracting labour of facework exposes the gendered Asian inter/face as both a commodity of liberal self-improvement and a mediated meditation that delays such a neoliberal progress. Therefore, as I turn to the half-lives of sleeping Asians and the loitering temporalities of Asian skincare as performance, I query the possibilities for being well within, as opposed to outside of, the so-called disembodied turn of the Information Age. I ask in this chapter: what does it mean to be well in the digital age? What are the stakes of self-care as a disruption or embrace of the Information Age's abstracting and commodifying pulls of liberal progress? Consequently, what are the possibilities and implications of surviving *im*materially—inorganically—particularly as Asian North Americans are depicted in techno-Orientalist narratives as enduring beyond the ends of humanity because of their perceived machine-like qualities?

Asian Sleep in the Excesses of Wellbeing

The sleeping Asian is a pathological and machine-like figure precisely because

she[29] sleeps at the ends of human rest. As the suggestion that Asians are "genetically predisposed to narcolepsy" and the incredulity over Asians' "impossible" and uncomfortable postures of sleep indicate, the sleeping Asian/American indexes how the category of the human/organic is yoked to the proper boundaries between labour and leisure. Hagemann and others' fascination with sleeping Asian/Americans pivots around the persistent idea that Asians are able to endure discomfort and pain beyond what is humanly possible. (They can sleep on hard, uneven surfaces, standing up on moving trains, and all the while guarding their bags!) Their amazement at these apparently impossible postures of slumber reveals a long-held belief in the relationship between Asian immunity to physical pain and the disavowal of Asian freedom and pleasure. Eric Hayot observes that the nineteenth-century American view of the Chinese body figured it as "enduring, impervious to physical pain, and mechanical or slavish in its relationship to freedom, pleasure" (139). Thus, when Asians or Asian Americans sleep under the white Western gaze, the sleep is not legible as the comfort or relaxation of human rest, but more akin to the way in which a laptop or mobile phone can enter "sleep mode" regardless of the social setting. Described by Hagemann as proof of Asians' ability to adapt to whatever unsuitable environment in which they find themselves, and seen as a necessary function of efficient, machine-like performance, Asian/American sleep is neither rest nor relaxation but maintenance in the form of electronic or mechanical "recharging."

[29] I have used the female pronoun in this case to describe the figure of the sleeping Asian, even though online examples of sleeping Asians depict both men and women in "absurd" positions of sleep, because, as my analysis of *Advantageous*'s female sleepers will demonstrate, the spectacle of not-quite sleep indexes feminine and *feminized* concepts of "not-quite" labour and leisure.

The Western gaping at "strange" Asian postures of sleep is also a response to the Asian body's apparent disregard for the publicness of public space. In an article attempting to provide an explanation for why Asians "deftly sleep in public by day," Ralph Jennings cites Taiwanese studies of childhood sleeping habits to suggest that Asian children tend to have "shifty" nighttime sleep and daytime naps in schools. He also attributes the sleepy characteristics to the constant noise of densely populated Asian cities with little zoning enforcement "that might, say, require separation between family apartments and commercial discos." In other words, Jennings suggests that the *unhealthy proximity* between the familial and commercial spaces in densely populated Asian cities leads to Asians' inability to rest during proper resting times and work during workdays. Not surprisingly, then, the sight of Asians sleeping in public spaces reinforces the model minority myth, as they are not only believed to be socially inept at what is acceptable "in public"; they are imagined to sleep at school, in the library or on the bus because they work *too much* and outside of "regular" school and workplace hours. After all, as the Binghamton University student and self-described "handsome Jew" who created the now-defunct *Asians Sleeping in the Library* Tumblr photo blog states, Asians are "better at life and they get better grades than you for a reason" (qtd. in "Asians Sleeping in the Library").

Therefore, these postures of sleep are not quite restful because they are *excessive* not only in the sense that the student or commuter is sleeping outside of the public-health approved arenas of sleep, but also in the sense that, because these postures are seen as exceeding those of human sleep, the sleepers are not *feeling* the pleasures of rest and

therefore not really resting. By breaching not only the boundaries that define Western temporalities of work and leisure, and the work-play separation that is overlapped onto the divide between public and private spaces, these sleeping bodies evoke anxiety and intrigue because they take on inhuman, posthuman or posthumous postures. Steve Choe and Se Young Kim argue that the West's techno-Orientalist discourses about Asian gamer deaths in Internet cafés produce an image of the addicted gamer who games without stopping, or who "dies because of his immaturity and inability to moderate his own pleasures." This immature figure contrasts with the "properly autonomous" Western subject who can responsibly exercise his freedom and pleasures (114, 116). Choe and Kim posit that the Asian gamer's death takes "the logic of life in neoliberalism to its limit" by blurring the line between work and pleasure, and rupturing the fantasy of virtual escapism (114, 123). I read the sleeping Asian/American as a parallel to the Asian gamer corpse, particularly as the postures of slumber depicted on blogs not only resemble the poses of corpses—bodies in positions that do not seem "possible" for a conscious or alive human who feels discomfort or pain—but because they mark for the West the ends of both work and pleasure. The Asian/American who can sleep on bricks or standing on a moving train is not read as a body in pleasure or pain, but as one ambivalently blurring those notions. This ambivalence renders the sleeping Asian figure a figure of "not quiteness": she is not quite human, and not quite white, because she does not possess *proper* autonomy over her labour and leisure according to liberal humanist, patriarchal and neoliberal logics of the politically and socially legible individual.

Although the concept of wellbeing is part of a neoliberal discourse on balanced work and play, the traumatic and violent effects of the "logic of life in neoliberalism" fall particularly hard on women and people of colour, and reveal how being well is also a political act. Recently, many scholars and activists, particularly women and people of colour, have emphasized the importance of self-care as a mode of resistance. A number of these scholars of colour quote Audre Lorde's famous passage from the epilogue of *A Burst of Light*, "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" (131), including Sara Ahmed, who writes:

> When you are not supposed to live, as you are, where you are, with whom you are with, then survival is a radical action; a refusal not to exist until the very end; a refusal not to exist until you do not exist. We have to work out how to survive in a system that decides life for some requires the death or removal of others. ("Selfcare")

Contemporary discussions about self-care in—or in spite of—the Information Age have been widely circulated online in blogs, online magazines, and on Tumblr through the "selfcare" tag amongst both white and racialized activists and academics over the last couple years. In a 2016 *New York Times* piece, Jordan Kisner even suggested that self-care "rose as collective social practice" that year "alongside national stress levels." (Kisner's piece was published prior to Donald Trump's presidential win that year, but one can imagine how U.S. stress levels may have since increased). One example of a widely referenced online resource on the topic of self-care is Jace Harr's "You Feel Like Shit: An Interactive Self-Care Guide," which was a popular resource in online articles about self-care in the wake of the 2015 mass shooting at the gay club Pulse in Orlando. The guide is a website in the "choose-your-own-adventure" format that takes the user through

a series of questions, prompting the user to take care of her physical body as well as check on her mental state. Most of the questions in the online guide focus on the material body, asking whether the participant has eaten in the last four hours, whether she has taken all her required medication, if she has had enough sleep, and if her body is in any pain; the guide then suggests that she drink a glass of liquid. As the guide shifts to the participant's mental health, it asks: "Are you feeling disassociated, depersonalized, or derealized?"

Harr's emphasis on being "personalized" through the "real" body or through "realization" marks a popular self-care discourse that prioritizes *feeling the organic body* as a state of being well. In Kim Tran's "5 Self Care Tips for Activists," she notes that activists of colour or "woke folks" need more than nice dinners, breathing exercises or the basics that Harr's self-care tool prescribes because "*our* self-care requires us to make decisions that are healthy for both us *and* the movement without blame, shame, or getting rid of Netflix." Her five suggestions include "disengaging" from social media and the trolls, deleting news media apps, staying home from "conscious-raising group" parties where the main topic of conversation is oppression, and giving yourself permission to say "no." These tips emphasize a kind of disengagement from virtual and emotional forms of labour in favour of resting in visceral enjoyments like eating cookie dough and watching *Dirty Dancing* (Tran). Similarly, mental health advocate Jasmine Banks's blogpost on self-care for people of colour, which circulated widely after the Pulse nightclub shooting and again after the 2016 police killings of black men Arlon Sterling and Philando Castile, states that "[r]ace-based trauma literally leaves bruised spots on your brain. By continuing

to enter online conversations, as important as you warrant them to be, you are allowing the bruise to be pressed on over and over. You are harming yourself if you do not step away and heal." In addition to disengaging from triggering spaces and connecting with supportive community, Banks recommends "discharging" physical energy, eating, avoiding toxins, and taking deep breaths.

For many, the acts of taking deep breaths, stepping away from the computer, or going for a run, are necessary strategies for surviving a racial capitalist, neoliberal system precisely because of the very visceral, material effects of such a system. At the same time, while self-care has been named by academic women of colour as a mode for survival in their institutions, it has also been critiqued as a "neoliberal trap" that encourages the individual to take care of herself in order to be an efficient worker. Jo Chiang argues, for example, that neoliberalism "wants us to be able to produce as efficiently as possible, to be as well as possible in order to produce sustainable profit" ("Jo Chiang"). Similarly, Ruth Whippman points out in a 2016 *New York Times* op-ed titled "Actually, Let's Not Be in the Moment," that mindfulness—"[t]he idea that we should be constantly policing our thoughts away from the past, the future, the imagination or the abstract"—has been corporatized and even militarized to streamline productivity, with corporations and the U.S. military offering its employees mindfulness training. Her editorial reports that Americans spend an estimated $4 billion each year on "mindfulness products."

The spectacle of the inorganic Asian sleeper is a spectacular figure of both neoliberal logic and its excess because she disturbs a healthy work-play balance—itself a corporatized concept of the creative class. Many companies, particularly large American

tech companies, measure employees' physical and mental "wellbeing" as an indicator of their potential for workplace productivity and "creativity." For instance, Amazon is building a collection of high-tech greenhouses filled with thousands of plant species and an indoor creek in downtown Seattle that is slated to open in 2018. The greenhouses are meant to "inspire" Amazon employees to think more "creatively"—to "come up with a new idea they wouldn't have if they were just in their office" (Alberda qtd. in Wingfield). Apple is also embarking on a similar project, with reports in 2016 indicating that the tech company is growing more than 4,000 trees to create a thick forest-like landscape of trees mainly indigenous to the area at their Cupertino campus, which is also slated to have a corporate fitness centre (O'Brien).

Google earlier launched its "Project Aristotle" program in 2012 and mined statistics from employees, conducted interviews with team leaders, and consulted academic studies on worker mentality in order to find the top factors that lead to team productivity. It concluded in 2015 that, in addition to offering workers free lunches, massage rooms, free bikes and company space to grow vegetables, the most important factor in making successful teams was fostering high "psychological safety," or the ability to "take risks" without feeling insecure or embarrassed (Rozovsky). In other words, productive teams are teams that are able to be emotionally vulnerable because they are emotionally well. As one of Google's "people operations" analysts concludes in a 2015 Project Aristotle report, "Individuals on teams with higher psychological safety are less likely to leave Google, they're more likely to harness the power of diverse ideas from their teammates, they bring in more revenue, and they're rated as effective twice as often

by executives" (Ibid). These corporate programs demonstrate not only how the idea of psychological and physical "wellbeing" is caught up in the neoliberal demands of efficiency and productivity, but that creativity and healthy industriousness—the ability to bring in more revenue—is connected to the so-called natural realm.

While they are often understood as oppositional phenomena, both corporate wellbeing and the emphasis on embodiment in self-care discourses demonstrate how a "break" from the apparently virtual labour of code, of the screen or of being online—whether it is programming at Amazon or fighting racists on Twitter—tends to be envisioned as a move to the organic, *real* body. I examine notions of self-care and rest in this chapter because the shared discourse that privileges the material-as-organic body over the virtuality of online and affective labour reveals the material-virtual processes of racialization in what Ahmed and others call racial capitalism. In particular, my theorization of mediated or inorganic wellbeing engages with what Iyko Day argues is a historical association of the labouring Asian body with the "abstract dimensions of capitalism" that threaten the "concrete, qualitative sphere of white labor's social reproduction" (16). Drawing a connection between the contemporary perception of Asian North American model minorities' "economic efficiency" and the histories that conflated Chinese railroad laborers with quasi-mechanized efficient labour, Day argues that that the Asian subject in North America gives human shape to the "abstract circuits of capitalism" by personifying the abstract processes of a commodity's value formation through labour (8). Personifying the abstract quality of capitalism through its "perverse temporality" of quantitative work and social reproduction, Asian North American labour has historically

been understood as the antithesis to the romanticized "natural" word, which is the "qualitative sphere" of white labour (Day 16).

The Orientalized "abstract circuits" of capitalism, as Colleen Lye observes, were depicted in Frank Norris's 1908 novel *The Octopus: A Story of California* as the "circuit of supply and demand" of wheat that is kept in circulation because of insatiable Asian hunger (78). Lye argues that wheat in this story illustrates the dystopian narrative of the "chronic" Asiatic need that accompanies global expansion, for wheat "oscillates between the abstract and the concrete" to evoke both the fantasy of incessant creation and recreation (86). Just as the American Federation of Labor distinguished meat-eating American men from rice-eating, effeminate Asian "coolies" in its campaign for the renewal of the Chinese Exclusion Act (Lye 82), the continually hungry Asian worker whose diet fuels the capitalist circuits of globalization and consists of not-quite-tangible foods is more abstract and less substantial than the carnivorously more "bodied" white man.

Central to this depiction of Asian survival as capitalist, abstract and excessive is what Day calls romantic anticapitalism: a "fundamental misperception of capitalism as an opposition between a concrete natural world and a destructively abstract, value-driven one that is personified as Asian" (16). According to Marx, the process of abstraction removes the utility or use-value of a commodity as well as the "material constituents" that render it a use-value, abstracting it into a quantitative exchange-value (6). The result of this abstraction, he notes, is "that the various concrete forms of that labour disappear too; they can no longer be distinguished from one another; they are one and all reduced to an

identical kind of human labour, abstract human labour" (Ibid). The homogenizing (mass-produced) effects of abstract labour-time, which contrasts the concrete, qualitative forms of work, has historically been personified by the dehumanized Asian labourer or "coolie," while the white liberal subject has traditionally symbolized qualitative, *humanized* work. The idea that the concrete, "pure" sphere of the natural world is in opposition to the "ills" of abstract capital (Day 15) renders Asian North Americans discursively less organic, less material, than white subjects. To recall the android-coolie in *Ex Machina*, Kyoko, her inorganic parts and the robotic circulations of those parts demonstrate in one sense the concretization of her body as carbon fibre, metal, silicone, and plastic *at the same time* as these dismemberments display an abstraction: her Asian body is unfixed, transferrable, set by external programming, like exchange-value. The dispersals that I examined in the first chapter, of both her parts and Asian North American body parts over social media apps, thus enact the "abstract circuits of capitalism" and resist the whole consumption and surveillance entailed in the commodification of their fragments.

The sleeping Asian meme is at once a bodily spectacle and an abstract figure not only because of its online virality, but because of its paradoxical temporality—at once dwelling in a presentness by not moving (forward) in productivity and marking a kind of industrial, inorganic efficiency. Importantly, the main difference between concrete labour and the abstract labour racialized as Asian, is *temporal*: concrete labour is about quality, or how well a commodity was made, while abstract labour is the quantitative expression of value as "an unfixed social average of human labor time" (Day 12). To combat such labour abstraction, self-care practices like K-beauty regimens perhaps constitute a

romance of qualitative concreteness that is perceived in Western societies to be in contrast to the ills of excess that *abstracts*—working too hard and sleeping too deftly in public so that the quality of the labour or rest is compromised. However, rather than rescue the sleepy Asian from techno-Orientalist discourses that imagine this figure as a disturbing extremity, I argue that the excesses of labour and leisure that these postures perform carve out ways of thinking about mediated, virtual wellbeing.

By examining the precarious, half-life Asian sleeper in Phang's film *Advantageous,* as well as the inter/face of Asian online beauty productions, I examine performed proximities between resting-not-resting Asian bodies at both ends of the apparent "poles" of the *overly material* corpse and the *abstracting pulls* of the virtual screen. I suggest that these Asian performances at the "ends" of the imagined material-virtual binary engender possibilities for disrupting or re-occupying differently neoliberal frameworks that produce an autonomous subject of self-care who "works hard in order to play hard." These disruptions from within manifest in the form of discursive and embodied *loitering*—the cultivation of an ongoing present that "remembers" imperial histories—to work out survival in a system that decides life for some and death for others. I emphasize Ahmed's call for us to "work out" our survival because I want to suggest that wellbeing in the Information Age entails forms of virtual labour, or labour that is considered immaterial, abstract and therefore not quite work. In particular, the Asian/American sleeper who is at "half-life," who is neither fully active nor completely passive, exposes the impossibility of limitless success; she cannot "choose" (consent) to enter the postindustrial workforce by transcending the bodily baggage of race and gender.

And yet, as my reading of *Advantageous* suggests, she demonstrates the possibilities of working out survival in and as bio/technological mediation.

The Ambivalent "Half-Life" of Asian Sleep

Trong Huynh's performed nap interrupted and delayed the academic temporality of the University of Washington lecture hall—a space that requires students to sit and listen, to receive knowledge, in order to be productive citizens. His improperly timed and improperly located posture of rest "out-poses" the poses of the stereotypes (Chen 76) of the model minority who stays up *too* late in order to study *too* hard, and instead becomes a disorderly "glitch" in the university's temporality of productivity. As many critics of the neoliberal transformation of universities in North America have pointed out, the neoliberal university demands high productivity from faculty, staff and students in compressed time frames at the same time as public funding is low, programs are being cut, contingent labour continues to increase and classes become larger (Mountz et al. 2). Such criticisms are at times displaced onto what Ahmed calls the "problem student"—the consuming student, the over-sensitive student, the censoring student—who embodies the institution's failure to retain its ideals as a purely intellectual space and functions as the site of mourning for imagined academic ideals that have been "lost" ("Against Students").

Huynh's sleep prank, an interruption that actually reconsolidated and reaffirmed the authority of the lecture space and time, prompting students to laugh and the tutorial assistant to regroup his students by quipping, "No comment," demonstrates how the Asian/American student dually inhabits the positions of model and problem student. The

Asian American model-problem student does not know how to exist "properly" in Western academic institutions that simultaneously demand intellectual excellence and preach "work-life balance" (seen in the validation and encouragement of extracurricular activities). This is made evident by the Asian student sleeping in libraries—spaces in which dozing off is widely banned in public and university libraries across Canada, including my alma mater Ryerson University, where I, then an undergraduate, was once awakened by a security guard after falling asleep in one of the libraries on campus. In fact, Ryerson University has a policy that instructs security guards to wake up anyone found sleeping on campus and to conduct what they call a "well-being check." The school's rationale is that "deep sleepers" are more vulnerable to dangers such as assault, theft and fires, and that "[s]taying awake ensures you are always aware of your surroundings and those around you." ("Avoid Sleeping on Campus"). Moreover, according to the university, sleepers too closely resemble people who are unconscious due to a medical emergency. The university's statement on the policy advises students to ensure that they have eaten, are well hydrated, and well-rested when they arrive on campus for classes in order to "lessen your need for sleep throughout your time on campus" (Ibid). Employing the language of wellbeing in order to monitor and enforce through security personnel particular behaviours and forms of postures on campus, Ryerson, like other universities, codes anxieties about class,[30] culture and possibly race as *care* for students' success and wellbeing.

[30] Critics of public and private libraries with these kinds of anti-sleep policies point out that they target homeless or poor patrons. This is a particularly pointed criticism, as Ryerson's campus is located in the heart of downtown Toronto, where homelessness and poverty are especially visible.

However, the sleeping Asian/American figure disorients this discourse of care by showing the limits of the neoliberal university. The Asian student who is asleep but not perceived to be relaxed is alarming not only because she does not adhere to the categories of work and leisure, but also because she inhabits an alternative temporality. As I will demonstrate later in my analysis of beauty vlogger Michelle Phan's inter/face, these bodies expose the impossibilities of limitless success or of constant "development" and self-improvement, and instead perform a mode of slowness and delay—a "glitch" in the system in which they are supposed to excel. The social media phenomenon of covertly photographing and posting images of sleeping Asians reveals an attempt to repair this glitch by "catching" or "outing" Asians for behaving in public as one should in private. In this sense, despite the gaping that is involved in projects like Hagemann's *Sleeping Chinese* collection, Asians sleeping in public already visualize the logic of social media—or what Chun calls the "epistemology of outing" (*Habitual* 95)—before they are rendered memes. The "outing" of the socially immature Asian/American secures the boundaries between the white, self-controlled human and the overworking, computer-like Asian Other, yes, but also blurs the distinctions between private and public, labour and leisure—distinctions that have already been blurred by the dawn of social media's transparency culture, which I examined in Chapter 2.

The Asian sleeper meme reveals the impossibility of "true" privacy under Big Data, and exposes the limits of consent-based discourses around individual online privacy and autonomy. The meme exposes how one's "private" life is always public, surveillable and documented. Solon Barocas and Helen Nissenbaum challenge the popular belief that

"informed consent" is an "effective means of respecting individuals as autonomous decision makers with rights of self-determination" by pointing out that the act of consent alone does not actually protect individuals under Big Data, since people can be identified by the "pseudonyms" of properties and behaviours assigned to them (54, 56). They note that "simply because someone is anonymous or pseudonymous or has consented does not by itself legitimate the action in question," and instead argue that the ethical burden should be placed on the data collector and data user to explain why someone should consent (66-67). In this vein, the Asian sleeper who has not consented to her conversion into online meme does not attain agency by approving of her documentation. Instead, as a figure that probes the very idea of liberal autonomy, the Asian sleeper calls for other sets of approaches to caring for self and caring for others.

In Jennifer Phang's 2015 film *Advantageous*, the proximity between the Asian sleeper who has not consented to her circulation and the corpse or victim of violence—bodies understood as lacking agency—is depicted as a lingering half-life that invokes issues of class, race and gender. The film portrays a dystopically familiar future in which a middle-aged single mother Gwen Koh (Jacqueline Kim) struggles to find work because of her age. Desperate to enrol her daughter in a prestigious school, Gwen agrees to be the test subject for an experimental procedure that will transfer her brain into a younger, more "universal" looking body donor, played by Freya Adams, a mixed-race actor who is often read as white or "racially ambiguous." In this future, people are constantly "wired," wearing slim earpieces lodged around their ears and camera contact lenses so that they have 24-7 video and audio communication. When a temp agency called Dream No More

Outplacement Network tells Gwen that her only prospect is to donate her eggs without pay until after the eggs' are harvested, Gwen visits the Center for Advanced Health and Living headquarters and is told that, while people "connect" to her, "the question we have to answer is: in this current job market with shifting desirability targets, can they get ahead looking like you and at your age?" After this meeting, Gwen calls the temp agency and realizes that she may have been speaking to a robot this whole time. Unsettled, she asks, "Drake, are you a human being?" to which the voice on the phone responds, "That's a funny question. How do you define a human being?"

This question looms over the film as we see Gwen check into a dingy, motel-like facility where she hands over her contact lenses and earpiece so that she can lie down in silence. When the attendant asks her how long she will be staying, Gwen asks, "How much is it again?" The posture she assumes in this room does not visualize the pleasures, comforts or autonomy of rest or self-care, but rather resembles that of a corpse or a victim of a physical assault—her high-heels thrown off, her legs spread apart and her eyes open in muted, but apparent, distress (see Figure 10). The camera lingers on Gwen's worried face as she lies down, but does not sleep. This moment in *Advantageous* indexes, like the sleepy Asian meme, the concurrent and conflicting necessity and limits of self-care in a society in which self-maintenance and holistic wellbeing are an industry. As Gwen's young daughter Jules states the morning after Gwen's offline rest: "There's so much to do. I need to exercise more, study more. I need to do more volunteer work and art. I need to be smarter, nicer, prettier and classier. But what's the point?" In this familiar future, the model minority is hyped up to her extreme, as rest and recreation are corporatized and

assessed as marketable assets, so much so that the act of "unplugging" and taking a break is also for sale.

Figure 10. Gwen Koh spends a night "offline." A screenshot of Jennifer Phang's *Advantageous*.

Moreover, Gwen is a spokesperson for the Center for Advanced Health and Living, the corporation behind the experimental brain transfer. Her "reborn" version (now played by Freya Adams) eventually advertises the procedure as a safe alternative to invasive cosmetic surgery so that you can "become the you you were meant to be" without the apparent barriers of race, age or ability. Echoing popular mottos from the cosmetic and skincare industry, the "advanced health and living" company's brand of self-realization and improvement promises to reverse or slow down the effects of time in order to, ironically, progress into a postracial future. Yet, the image of the female Asian sleeper who cannot fully sleep haunts such a future, reminding us of the material lag of racial and gender precarity. Going offline does not mean that Gwen is able to rest; the

apparent groundedness of her body does not allow her to disengage from the invisible, perhaps virtual, work of care, fear, and anxiety.

The image of Gwen failing to find relief from the daunting pressures of ensuring her daughter's future survival haunts her ascension into a "universally" appealing "health" spokesmodel. We are not given relief through the promise of the material, organic body; instead, as Gwen struggles to rest her body and mind in this scene, the film transitions through a *slow dissolve* from her worried face to the film's opening scene: Gwen's daughter, dancing and leaping in slow motion with two other girls, one white and the other black, against the backdrop of a grey city. Through this filmic effect, Gwen's weary face overlaps with and fades into a scene of three differently racialized girls in suspended joy, visualizing a temporal and affectual *interruption and lag* within a society that demands postracial progress. This technologically mediated pleasure—or perhaps, rather, the pleasure of technological mediation—is an interruption *and* an overlap with the hyperproductivity of a future that does not stop (see Figure 11). The slow dissolve conveys the memory of the girls dancing in the film's beginning as dream-like, or as Gwen's waking dream. The dream-like effect created by the slow dissolve conveys a temporal and temporary interruption to the narrative of the film, finally slowing down Gwen's incessant anxieties about not having work, only to fade again as Gwen wakes up to face another day of unemployment. This slow-motion interruption, which foregrounds race and gender, manifests as a dream—as an irruption of the virtual—in a society that promises that people will "dream no more" when they achieve social and economic success by transgressing their bodies.

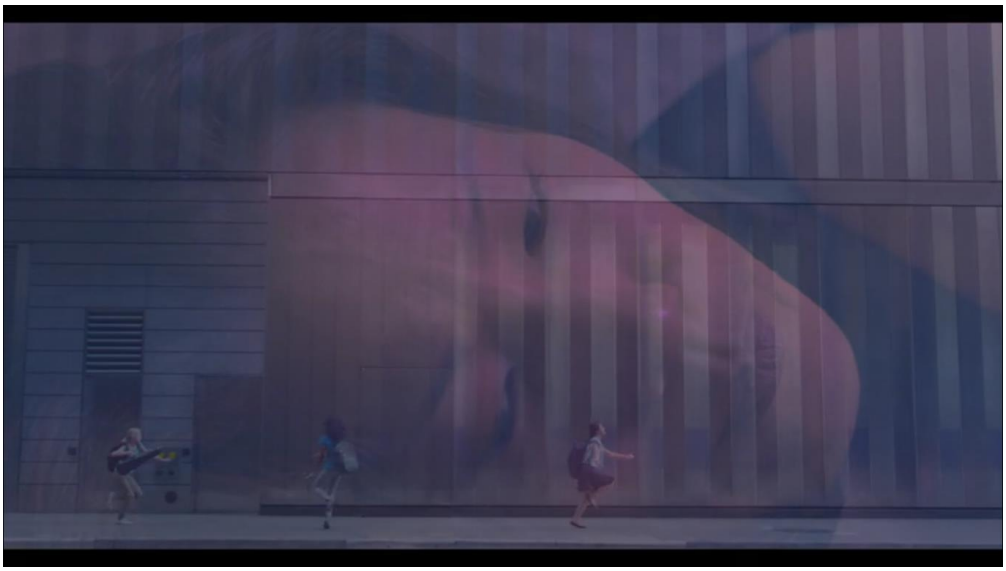

Figure 11. A slow dissolve from Gwen's face to her daughter dancing with friends. Screenshot of a scene from *Advantageous*.

I read this moment of slow dissolve as a moment that emphasizes the ambivalence of the sleeping Asian figure within such postracial promises. Gwen's furrowed brow haunts the unbridled joy of the dancing girls, just as the leaping girls appear as an apparition that interjects in Gwen's precarious situation. While current self-care discourse is at once celebrated by some for being radically resistant to capitalist time, and disavowed as inherently capitalist and neoliberal, the sleeping-not-resting Asian woman in *Advantageous* marks the ambivalence of Asian North American modes of self-care. This ambivalent mode of lingering or slowing down is both crucial to restoring productive bodies and a glitch in that productivity, and therefore offers us a way of thinking about the ambivalence of virtuality. The pleasures of digital effects and mediation in creating the slowed-down movements of the girls' leaps and twirls illustrate, I suggest, Tiziana Terranova's concept of "the virtual." In her analysis of information theory, Terranova posits that the relation between the real and probable evokes "the

virtual" as a "spectre of the improbable"—a cultural politics of information that resists confining social change to "predetermined alternatives; and deploys an active engagement with the transformative potential of the virtual" (20). Terranova theorizes virtualization as a process that goes beyond the possible and the real—a process in which the virtual appears not only as the site of the improbable, but as an "openness of biophysical (but also socio-cultural) processes to the irruption of the likely and the inventive." For Terranova, the virtual is not permanent but can only "irrupt and recede," leaving traces behind that can regenerate (27).

This slow dissolve, which creates the effect of a dream, carves out a virtuality in which spectres of the "transformative potential" of alternative temporalities appear, irrupt and recede, leaving behind traces. While I theorized, in the previous chapter, the virtual as being akin to Homi Bhabha's notion of colonial partiality in mimicry, virtuality also takes on a temporal transformative potential in this film. Like the ambivalence of the sleeping-not-resting Asian body, virtuality in Terranova's sense indexes possible alternatives to neoliberal progress at the same time as it is produces an integral "reserve force" for postindustrial societies (Terranova 83). Maurizio Lazzarato describes immaterial labour as the production of the immaterial element of a commodity: its informational content and its cultural content, the latter involving "a series of activities that are not normally recognized as 'work,'" including creating artistic and cultural standards, fashion, tastes, public opinion and consumer norms (133). Engaging with Lazzarato's definition, Terranova argues that immaterial labour is therefore a virtuality: an "undetermined capacity" that is part of postindustrial productive subjectivity. For the young or precarious

worker in particular, Terranova posits, this undetermined capacity is turned into a postindustrial reserve force by postmodern governments instead of being allowed to become "experimental, nomadic, and antiproductive" ways of life (83).

Advantageous depicts both the commodification and the dream-like possibility—the "spectre of the improbable"— of the virtual. The film explores how state and corporate institutions in a late capitalist, Information Age society mine immaterial *quality* for its commodifiable source of "potential" (capital). As Jules points out, activities presented as recreational hobbies or creative expressions—art and dance—are rendered profitable *skills* under the hyperproductive demand of a society in which there is "so much to do." Additionally, Gwen's employers at the Center for Advanced Health and Living identify a compelling quality about her personality and ability to communicate with people, but pressure her to undergo the brain transplant because her concrete body is not universally appealing enough. The procedure abstracts these apparently immaterial aspects of her work and displaces them into a more "universal" concrete body. We find out near the end of the film that Gwen died in the procedure, but that her brain was cloned—that she was mined for her immaterial labour, converted into an information reserve and uploaded to a more desirable ("whiter") body, itself a reserve for a late capitalist dystopic society. In this way, the film invokes the settler colonial discourses of romantic anticapitalism that assign white authority over the natural realm by depicting Asian labour as quantitative and, consequently, abstract, in its dystopic future. Gwen is at first overlooked by the health company because her body is incompatible with the

"holistic health"—the organic appeal—of its brand. The company shows interest, instead, in her apparently abstract qualities, which are eventually *quantified* as disembodied data.

LeiLani Nishime argues that *Advantageous* diverges from the ways in which Asian women are dehumanized in films like *Ex Machina* and *Cloud Atlas* because it depicts Gwen's "full emotional and social life" (41). Nishime observes that the "emotional tone of her rebirth is elegy rather than celebration, compelling the audience to re-examine both the stakes and the promised rewards of whitewashing" (42). While Gwen's social and emotional life indeed contrasts with the portrayal of silent, expressionless Asian android labour in *Ex Machina*, I suggest that Gwen's non-agential, *partial* sleep—her inability to rest or work—powerfully speaks about and *back at* the all-too-familiar neoliberal, whitewashed future. Gwen's unrestful sleep, which foreshadows Gwen 2.0's half-life state of being caught in a painful in-between of being awake and asleep, indicates the violence of a wellness industry that promises subjective and physical wholeness by fragmenting and disembodying racialized and gendered parts. In this state, Gwen 2.0 struggles to feel any attachment to Jules, prompting the young girl to scream at her in one scene, demanding to know where her mother went. However, Gwen's constantly lethargic, half-life body donor is, by the end of the film, also a figure of hope, if not solace.

In the final scene of Phang's film, Gwen 2.0, Jules and Jules's friend wait for Gwen's sister and her family, from whom Gwen and Jules had become estranged earlier in the film, to meet them in a park. Jules lies down on a blanket in the grass, but is nervous and sweaty, worried that her aunt will not come, so her friend suggests that they

practice the meditation technique that Jules learned at camp. The three of them slowly twirl in circles, eyes closed and with their arms spread out, meditating. Finally, the estranged relatives arrive. As the three bodies spin slowly on the grass, they mirror yet again the film's opening scene of three young girls spinning, leaping and dancing in slow motion. The final scene depicts the family reunited, sitting in various postures of half-dozing in the park—the children lying down on the blankets and the adults slumped into passive, perhaps peaceful, seated positions. No one speaks. Gwen 2.0, with her eyes half closed, finally smiles as she brushes Jules's hair out of her eyes.

Human connectedness in *Advantageous* is not situated within a romantic promise of the restored organic body, or even in the "fullness" of a social or emotional life, but in the ambivalent half-life between being fully awake and asleep. The Korean American family reconnects in silence, lying beside or on each other while appearing to daydream contentedly. Although *Advantageous* depicts the violent consequences of late capitalist institutions mining the potential of virtual or immaterial labour, the film also imagines the possibilities for slow-motion temporalities against and within neoliberal time as *waking dreams*. As the family daydreams, we are reminded of how Gwen's inability to sleep in the offline room resolves by slowly dissolving into what feels like a dream—a vision of carefree girls dancing in slowed-down time against the grey city. Gwen's restless, waking dream foreshadows the conclusion of the film, in which her family members and her body donor appear to begin recovering, to begin being well, within an ambivalent state between activity and rest.

The conclusion does not mark a radical abolishment or rejection of the future's neoliberal systems; instead, the film ends with a meditation—a cultivated, slow-down and loitering temporality that is shared communally among strangers becoming family. As Jules, her friend and Gwen 2.0 gently spin in circles to carve out—to summon—this meditative temporality, they remind us of the not-quite work required to rest and remain in a present. The Asian/American daydream emerging between consciousness and unconsciousness—between agential activity and passive rest—inhabits a muted, ambivalent resistance to the demand of productivity. The film indicates that being well in the digital age is not only about radical refusals of the systems in which we must survive, but about *loitering* in those systems.

The loitering figure is at once disruptive to commercial spaces that need people to move along in order to keep the lifeblood of capital flowing, and a passive figure that does not "actively" rebel. As a classist term used to deter "homeless" people from being too visible in public spaces, loitering connotes that someone is neither staying nor going—a stalled body who *cannot* be at rest. Prior to checking into a sleep facility, Gwen encounters a "homeless" young woman of colour sleeping in the bushes near her apartment who tells her to take whatever opportunities she's given. Gwen is reminded of her precarious situation in this moment, as she sees herself, or perhaps her daughter, in the figure of the public, racialized sleeper. This moment also foreshadows the half-life state in which Gwen 2.0 will live as another kind of public sleeper. By carrying Gwen's cognitive data inside the "shell" of her body, Gwen 2.0 is a form of mediated after-life and half-life who loiters in her existence, constantly feeling tired and unable to "fully"

feel emotions. Yet, at the end of the film, her mediated half-life signals what seems like hope, as she remains in her semi-awake state, but smiles and touches Jules affectionately as she sits with strangers who have become her family.

Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska argue that mediation engenders a "theory of life" because it articulates "our being in, and becoming with the technological world, our emergence and ways of interacting with it, as well as the acts and processes of temporarily stabilizing the world into media, agents, relations, and networks" (xv). According to this theorization of life as mediation, survival does not connote sustainability, which the scholars argue is about meeting the needs of society's present and future through the "long-term maintenance of environmental, social, and economic well-being," but a "form of becoming-with but also becoming-different-from our environment" (Kember and Zylinska 142). While this model of life, which seeks to move "beyond" sustained wellbeing, risks affirming a postracial promise of the future, Gwen's brain transfer—preceded by her victim-like posture of "sleep"—demonstrates that becoming-different from her "biological" body is not an agential or liberatory choice. Rather, the possible hope at the end of *Advantageous* is ambivalent: Gwen 2.0 and Jules work out a different kind of mother-daughter relationship between the body clone's reduced life and Jules's grief over her mother's death. Gwen 2.0's mediated life as a body housing the data of another does not demonstrate the progress of life as mediation, but instead reveals, as Alexander Weheliye's scholarship does, the violent realities of life as *always having been* a mediated process of assigning and making meaning out of shifting sociopolitical assemblages of data and flesh. The potential of "becoming with and

becoming different" in Phang's film is, therefore, not a promise of the future, but of a waking dream within the mediated present of meditation.

Terranova's concept of virtuality is somewhat similar to the Zen Buddhist approach to meditation. Shunryu Suzuki, a Japanese Zen master who moved to the United States in the late 1950s, advised students to have an empty or open mind that is "open to everything," because the end "goal" of meditation is not to attain some special or particular state of enlightenment. Instead, the "posture itself is the purpose of [the] practice" (2-3). In the Zen Buddhist practice of seated meditation or *zazen*, meditation is not relaxation but a state of being in between strain and rest. Staying in the full-lotus position, which requires the meditator to sit with a straight spine, with her legs crossed so that the left foot rests flat on the right thigh, the right foot is flat on the left thigh and the bottom slightly raised by a cushion or a *zafu*, may be uncomfortable for beginners and requires practice (Suzuki 2). *Zazen*'s lack of a "goal" mirrors the undetermined capacity of virtuality before it is harnessed as a workforce reserve. Meditation demonstrates how the work and practice of not working is virtual. At the same time, like the other forms of corporatized mindfulness that I referenced earlier, meditative traditions have been appropriated and commodified by mainstream self-care culture in North America, flattening the specific cultural and religious histories from which these practices emerged. Like virtuality, meditation presents a transformative potential that can be, and has been, co-opted into neoliberal systems.

In the second half of this chapter, I further interrogate the possibilities and limits of muted or non-resistant resistance by turning to the meditative, present-producing

practices of K-beauty. Specifically, I intervene in a recent debate between scholars and K-beauty bloggers, many of whom are Asian North American women, about whether or not K-beauty or Asian beauty practices engender "radical feminist self-care." As I analyze the facework involved in the practice of publically performing skincare—a form of mediated meditation—I examine how K-beauty practices demonstrate both the neoliberal narrative of self-improvement and the impossibility of such self-improvement. I suggest that the mediated meditations of skincare as routine and performance demonstrate the possibilities and limits of being well online by producing a commodified Asian inter/face and breaking down that inter/face into racialized, virtual temporalities.

"Sometimes a Toner is a Fucking Toner," or the Immaterial Labour of Facework

In a controversial 2016 *Slate* article about the increasing popularity of K-beauty skincare practices, Rebecca Schuman describes the ten-or-more-step regimen as a "radical act of feminist self-care." Her article prompted K-beauty bloggers and their followers to express their dismay on Reddit and Twitter, as some were troubled by the affiliation made between radical feminism and the K-beauty community. In the original version of Schuman's article, she writes that she did not realize until recently that K-beauty "is also popular with self-identified academics and scholars," specifically naming bloggers Tracy of *Fanserviced-b* and Cat Cactus of *Snow White and the Asian Pear*, who write about their experiences and experiments with Korean-imported makeup, lotions, creams, masks and beauty practices. Schuman also quotes Asian American K-beauty blogger Jude Chao's article about how the Asian beauty routine helped her fight

depression. The three K-beauty bloggers, however, were never contacted or interviewed by Schuman, and none of them wanted to be linked with radical feminism (Wischhover). Chao distanced herself from the assertions in the article, stating in her blog, *Fifty Shades of Snail*, that she does not support "any kind of politicized skincare" or any "attention-getting argument" used to bait purchases. She emphasizes, "Skincare is science not politics." When asked for comment for the website *Fashionista*, Cat Cactus, a Canadian living in the U.S., added that she believes skincare is a form of self-care, but that it is for "people who have skin, full stop … I suppose what's feminist about it is that [academics are] connecting feminism to doing K-beauty skin care, in their own minds. I'm not. Sometimes a toner is a fucking toner" (qtd. in Wischhover).

The controversy around the *Slate* article was not only about the journalistic standards and process behind the piece, but about a tension between the abstract and the material—a tension between academic thought and actual "fucking toner." And perhaps, what Cat's statement emphasizes is that sometimes a product is just about actual, "fucking money." Schuman's article was posted shortly after digital humanities scholar and K-beauty entrepreneur Adeline Koh published her blog post titled "Skincare as Feminist Selfcare" on her skincare-product website *Sabbatical Beauty*. Schuman quotes Koh and refers to her Sabbatical Beauty products in her article, noting that the scholar is moving from "research to praxis" by formulating and experimenting with something physical. In her own post, Koh states that she used to think, like many academics, that beauty products were only for "superficial people," but she changed her mind after reading feminist women of colour who helped her see beauty as a form of self-care.

Beauty, although often seen as frivolous, is not an "artificial, fake 'layer'" behind which we lie, Koh contends, but a way of self-presentation and interaction with others. She writes:

> For many women, especially women of color, we're often told that we are only useful, only valuable when we devote ourselves to others … Often we perform the invisible work of emotional labor for others … Caring for our own selves is, however, painted as excessive and self-indulgent. Because of this degree to which common wisdom sees women taking care of themselves as unimportant and shallow, I've come to realize that selfcare is actually a feminist act. ("Skincare")

In this blogpost, Koh goes on to introduce her beauty product company Sabbatical Beauty, which the Stockton University professor developed in her recovery from what she calls the "toxicity" of academia ("Academia"). In a piece written during her sabbatical entitled "Academia, You Don't Own Me Any Longer," Koh likens her experience in academia to an abusive relationship, stating that she has become disillusioned with the promises that academia has failed to fulfill. The scholar laments academia's institutionalism and conservatism, citing the university censorship of academics who have spoken out about structural racism and sexism in academic institutions (Ibid). By contrast, Koh describes her brand as a business venture with the "empowerment ethos" of intersectional feminism: "Sabbatical Beauty is about people who don't see skincare as a form of self-indulgence but about a radical care of the self … So next time you pick up a cream, a serum, a lotion, consider what you're doing as an act of self-restoration, rather than an act of superficial indulgence" ("Skincare").

Although Koh criticizes the academic tendency to trivialize that which is seen as "superficial" so that she can embrace the empowerment that comes from treating material skin, the K-beauty bloggers who were critical of the *Slate* article, ironically, felt that they

had been spoken for and violated by academic feminists who were abstracting lotions and serums for brand promotion. According to Chao, K-beauty is about the science of the biological body, not ideology.[31] This perceived rift between *practicing* K-beauty and *theorizing* it maps onto contemporary self-care discourses that set up the trauma of abstraction (affective labour, online racism) in contrast to the healing powers of the material, grounded body. Of course, as I discussed earlier in this chapter, this notion of returning to and restoring the organic body is imbricated within liberal and neoliberal progress. Hence, while some K-beauty practitioners are only interested in the perceived "neutrality" of science, and others are eager to celebrate Asian skincare trends as being radically feminist, I suggest that K-beauty's politics of wellbeing are unstable—not quite radical, and not completely commodifiable.

Rather than being radical feminist self-care or "just" science, K-beauty is *facework*, a term I use to name the rigorous routines, research, and performances involved in Asian/North American skincare and self-presentation.[32] I modify the term from Erving Goffman's notion of "face-saving," which is often associated with Asian cultures, or "poise," to not only highlight the constructed nature of health or beauty, but to consider strategies of inorganic wellbeing that do not prioritize the durability of the body as an organism. Instead, these strategies reimagine the virtual mediation of "incomplete" or partial bodies as sites of pleasure and wellbeing. Dorinne Kondo argues that "face,"

[31] As in the case of Western beauty products, the "science" of K-beauty is neither legitimated nor recognized by the mainstream scientific community in North America. Science, however, is especially part of K-beauty's brand as a skincare movement.
[32] The blogger behind *Snow White and the Asian Pear*, for example, has a multi-tabbed, colour-coded spreadsheet to organize all the products she tests and uses in her routine.

which signals the "socially constructed persona" of the fashion world, beauty, and cosmetics, can be a resistive tool, as those of us in the margins try to "write our faces" with the tools we are given—academic writing, political writing, design, theatre, cultural production (25). Responding to Cornel West's warning that the "pleasures" provided by the culture industries are tied to the forces of the market, Kondo expresses her suspicion of imagining a precapitalist, nonmarket-value domain and suggests that this "pastoral trope" misses the possible contestation that pleasure can engender and does not take into account how "joy" occurs within a commodity capitalist regime:

> Consequently, I seek to reclaim pleasure as a site of potential contestation that might engage, and at times be coextensive with, the critical impulse. How we dress, how we move, the music that accompanies our daily activities and that we create and refashion, our engagement with—and not simply the passive consumption of—media or commodities, do matter and can be included in a repertoire of oppositional strategies. (13)

The Asian/North American woman's face, with its prominence in the now rather mainstream genre of online beauty tutorials, is both a billboard for commercial beauty (Koh's *Sabbatical Beauty* website is both an academic's blog and an online shopping site where ads automatically "pop up" on the screen) and an inter/face that can be "written," designed, and edited as a site of potential contestation.

The Asian/North American inter/face—the K-beauty blog, the beauty vlogger's YouTube channel, and the face presented on those platforms as a screen to be encountered and edited—is a site of abstract(ed) labour. Minh-Ha Pham argues that fashion and style bloggers' seemingly individual "tastes do a great deal of work. Their taste practices are value-producing activities that generate a significant though highly uneven amount of cultural, social, and sometimes financial capital for the blogger and for

various entities in the fashion industry" (5). Asian beauty blogs and videos document predominantly women's experiments and experiences with different skincare products, making apparent the commodification of Asian women's faces even as self-care rhetoric emphasizes the feeling of being "realized" and human. These blogs, tutorials and vlogs involve the value- and profit-generating labour of what Pham calls "taste work"—work that produces the immaterial, cultural component of a commodity and is therefore, as Lazzarato notes, not typically recognized as work.

Another way of understanding facework as immaterial labour, despite the considerable amount of material labour that goes into improving "real" skin, is its association with gendered, domestic spaces of the "home." Blogs that are written from home, skincare product tests that are conducted in one's own bathroom, and skincare tutorials that are filmed in the bedroom exemplify what Richard Gordon has termed "homework economy"—a concept that, according to Donna Haraway, "indicates that factory, home and market are integrated on a new scale" (304-305). Haraway argues that the homework economy is a result of work being redefined as "literally" female and *feminized*, or made "extremely vulnerable; able to be disassembled, reassembled, exploited as a reserve labour force" (304). Like the Asian personal style blogger, Asian faceworkers emerge from the ongoing histories of fashion and beauty labourers who, unlike the image of the Asian North American social media producer, are characterized by hard, *hand* labour instead of "head" labour, which is associated with the mainstream concept of the Asian creative worker (Pham 7). Unlike the masked, Asian nail salon worker or massage parlour labourer, the online Asian North American cosmetician is

understood as a neoliberal success—an entrepreneur who, to borrow Pham's wording, "embodies . . . democratic and even liberatory properties of creative work" (8). In order to push against this liberal multicultural notion of meritocracy that flattens the varying social and class-based experiences of Asian style bloggers, Pham's scholarship emphasizes the roles of race, gender and class in Asian style blogging work, and stresses that these bloggers are "workers" rather than digital artisans or immaterial labourers (9-10).

My examination of the Asian North American faceworker also emphasizes the work of presenting, performing and caring for skin, but approaches Pham's argument from the "other side." I contend that seeing the work of caring for and presenting the face as virtual labour complicates the easy categorization of Asian North Americans as emblems of success in a colourblind world. Facework involves processes of virtualization that expose the feminized work of Asian racialization and conjure colonial memories through the individuation and manipulation of facial parts. In other words, immaterial labour in the case of the Asian skincare vlogger or blogger is abstracting labour that emphasizes the work of race and gender. As Day points out, the historical racialization of the abstract circuits of capitalism as Asian affirms a settler colonial logic that assigns white authority over the "natural" realm—that is, literal land. Day argues that Asians' primary relationship to settler colonizers in North America was based on labour, as they represented "an alien labour force that mixed with Indigenous land to transform it into white property and capital" (31). The concept of the Asian creative worker, whose abstract labour signals the abstract circuits of capital in the Information Age, reimagines the settler colonial discourse of romantic anticapitalism as liberal multicultural progress.

However, my analysis of facework as abstracting, dismembering and disembodying work considers the clunky, haunted circuits of racialization alongside the circuits of capital. In particular, as I analyze tutorials produced by one of the first celebrity beauty vloggers, Michelle Phan, alongside K-beauty blogs, I consider how the immaterial labour of virtually disassembling and reassembling Asian facial parts is exploited as a "reserve labour force," as well as how these *performed* dis/assemblages on the epidermal, "invisible" scale produce temporalities that loiter within, and in tension with, the progressive timeline of self-improvement.

Epidermal Temporalities and the Asian Inter/Face of Care

The face-as-screen is a recognizable form of self-presentation in YouTube makeup and beauty tutorials, as vloggers film tight close-up shots of their faces to demonstrate cosmetic products and techniques. Although there are many beauty and makeup vlogs on YouTube produced by Asian women, Boston-born Michelle Phan was the most subscribed-to Asian American woman on YouTube for several years and is known as an innovator of the digital makeup tutorial form. Phan, who began posting makeup vlogs on YouTube in 2007 and scored a contract as a spokesperson for the French beauty product company Lancôme three years later, has more than eight million subscribers. In 2013, Phan launched the makeup line *em by Michelle Phan* with L'Oréal. While Phan started out by posting DIY vlogs, her videos have become increasingly professionally produced and theatrical, with some posts being similar to short films. Over almost a decade, her face has transformed into Lady Gaga, Princess Jasmine, Sailor Moon

characters, K-pop stars, and the Mexican saint La Bella Muerte, to name a few. In addition to transformation tutorials, she also uploads video guides on her evening skincare routines, body hair removal techniques, and using beauty oils.

Despite the improvement in production quality and an expanding shooting budget for these videos over the years, her earlier tutorials tended to follow a consistent structure: the cosmetician's face during the instructional portion of the video remains composed and smiling, but does not speak. Instead, the sound of her disembodied voice guides her followers to look and follow her experiments with different looks. She begins tutorials with the final result, and then usually cuts to a close up of her face without any makeup. Listing beauty products one by one both through her voiceover and by holding up the cosmetics one at a time to the camera, Phan walks the viewer through her transformation process. This method of beauty vlogging is now a standard in the beauty YouTube tutorial genre, which Phan arguably created. While accused by some viewers of being deceptive because she uses eyelid tape and contact lenses that change the appearance of her eye colour and size—Phan's social media productions are forms of performative labour that "work out" what it means to see and embody "Asianness," when this racial category continues to be deemed an inauthentic and, therefore, assimilable one.

Phan plays with visual markers of race on what she calls the "clean canvas" of her face and transforms into different characters by working with her face, a surface that is supposed to (over)determine one's subjectivity ("The Beautiful Death"). Phan's online videos celebrate her face's inorganic malleability, embracing what I would call the *mask as the Asian face*—a site that is both informed by techno-Orientalist understandings of

Asian inscrutability and by contemporary Asian innovations in beauty products such as K-beauty sheet masks, which are paper, cotton or rice sheets of paper soaked in ingredients meant to repair, brighten, tighten, and rejuvenate the face. These masks are contoured over the user's face and serve different purposes depending on their ingredients—some are glittery and rubber-like, others are black charcoal masks, some are "cute" animal masks, and some are "carbonated" and bubble up on the face when applied. The notion that Phan's face is a "canvas" over which cross-racial identifications and desires can be visualized is one that renders her face a continual masquerade. Even as the blank canvas of her "natural" face is presented at the beginning of each makeup tutorial, Phan sets up her face as a an inter/face by framing it as almost the entire expanse of the video or, if the viewer is watching in full-screen mode, as the entire screen. Her inter/face is meant to be explored, navigated and interacted with, and yet, because of the visual medium in which she displays herself, it is *her own* interaction with her face that is highlighted. The camera's gaze pans around the surface of Phan's face and zooms in on particular parts while the beauty expert discusses them. Those watching Phan's videos are left to attempt to replicate her looks or beauty routines on their own faces, to comment on her videos, or to passively watch as Phan plays with her face. While she may seem to present her silent, smiling canvas as a commodity, as an inter/face to be used and consumed, it is Phan's production and navigation of her own inter/face that is foregrounded by these tutorials. After all, it is Phan's voice edited over shots of her silent and smiling face that gives instructions on how and *where* to look at her face, and how to create a copy of her face.

Phan is dismembered in these performances not only through the elimination of her body from the collar down, but in the disjointing of her face and her voice. Like *Ex Machina*'s Kyoko, this individuation between a non-verbal, silent face and Phan's voice engenders a face-to-face encounter that diverges from Emmanuel Levinas's notion of the face-to-face encounter with the Other: the Asian face is not meant to express, but to *display*. Phan demonstrates that the maintenance of the face-as-screen is labour—that the presentation of her face as a surface that she watches, manipulates, edits, and narrates constitutes facework. Goffman describes "face-work" as the actions one takes in order to be consistent with the face and to counteract symbolic threats to the face (12). Thus, a significant element of Goffman's notion of face-work is *poise* or face-saving, which he notes are habitual or standardized practices and traditions for every person, subculture or society (13). He argues that the "expressive order" that sustains the face is about ritual and, therefore, the face is a "sacred thing" (19).

However, Phan's poise yields a different outcome; her consistently smiling, silent composure does not preserve the sanctity of her face. Rather, this facework causes a disruption in the consistency between the perceived internal self and outward demeanour, rendering her face "profane"—that is, irreverent to the social and imperial demand on racialized women to present a ritualized, consistent inter/face with which to broach "authentic contact" (recall Palumbo-Liu's critique of post-Korean War plastic surgeries in Chapter 1). As Phan presents her poised face with a disembodied narration, the divergence between her voice and her face signals the Asian American face's agency apart from an Asian American voice or will, and obstructs the full consumption of Phan

as a whole, intact Asian American subject. The discrepancy between Phan's voice and Phan's face emphasizes how Asian American identity is heterogeneous and disjointed, particularly as Phan's role as both producer and product reveals the inorganic nature of subjectivity and highlights the labour that constitutes the subject. This facework is one that reveals the labour of race: Phan's narration of the processes by which small—even microscopic—parts of her face can be interrogated and altered in order to facilitate racial and ethnic transformations figures these facial features as technologies that are part biological and part inorganic.

By using Asian, particularly Korean, creams and cosmetic products as editing or design tools, Phan presents a future in which pan-Asianness articulates the virtual survival or longevity of the Asian/American woman. In her "Robot Chic" tutorial[33] posted in 2014, Phan poses in a metallic dress in front of an overturned Japanese police cruiser surrounded by debris and destroyed market stands as emergency vehicle lights flicker in the distance. The video alludes to techno-Orientalist tropes of Asian or Orientalized sites as spaces of futuristic decay—found in such films as *Blade Runner* and *Cloud Atlas*—and identifies this post-apocalyptic site as the Akihabara district in Tokyo, which is a commercial centre for electronic products that is famous for also being an anime and manga district ("Akihabara"). The tutorial begins with Phan applying anti-aging moisturizer, makeup cleanser and face primer to her makeup-less face. While the effects and changes of these skin care products are not detectable on her viewers' screens, Phan continues to narrate this process as part of her transformation. She then proceeds to

[33] This video was online for two years before being removed from Phan's YouTube channel.

use a number of cosmetic products to produce her "robot chic" look, including fake eyelashes and a nude lipliner pencil, but only specifically names two products: a Japanese product called "D.U.P. Wonder Eyelid Tape" and a Korean skin illuminator called "Tonymoly Luminous Goddess Aura Beam." Phan holds up the Japanese eyelid tape and explains that this double-sided tape has the ability to change one's eye shape (See Figure 12). Using a tight close-up on each eye, Phan inserts the tape above her eyelid creases and creates a higher fold above her eyes, "expanding" her eyes by increasing the eyelid folds. Later in the tutorial, Phan remarks that if the viewer wants "dewy" looking skin, the Korean skin illuminator will make the face look less flat. She massages a couple of drops of the gel-like substance into her cheekbones, smiles and angles her face as if to display the transformation, but the alteration of this skin illuminator is virtually undetectable by the viewer.

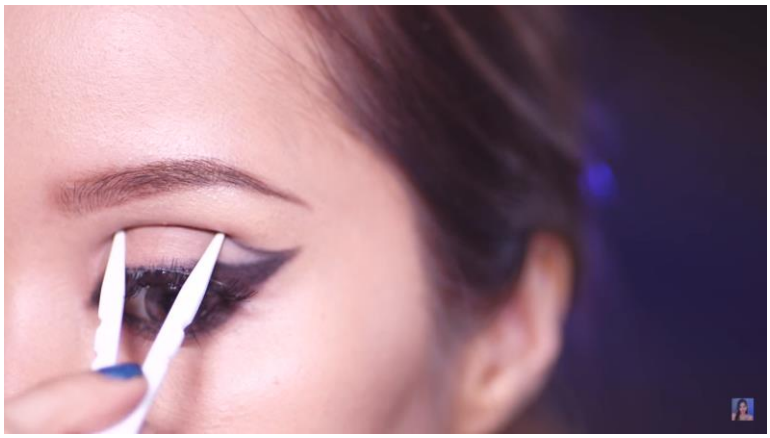

Figure 12. Michelle Phan applies Japanese eyelid tape technology in her "Robot Chic" tutorial. Screenshot of her YouTube video.

K-beauty, which was first introduced to the U.S. through the launch of BB cream in 2011 (Arthur), seems to straddle the line between the abstract and material realms, as

Western popular culture gawks over makeup and cosmetic surgical procedures on Asian women's faces, and continues to be fascinated with Asian photo-editing apps that alter selfies. For example, a widely watched 2014 *BuzzFeed* video in which seven American women—including three Asian American women—edit their selfies using a Chinese mobile app popular in Asia called BeautyPlus, concludes with one of the women, a black *BuzzFeed* producer, commenting, "It's not you at the end of the day. The picture is supposed to be you." The video highlights the tools featured in the app, including skin whitening, eye alteration and blemish removal, without mentioning that American media also make these edits to images of women. Viral videos of Asian women "transforming" their faces with makeup are yoked to the Western fascination with "before-after" photos of Korean women who undergo facial surgery. In 2013, Western media outlets and blogs pored over a circulated, viral image of Miss Korea beauty pageant contestants that suggested they all looked the same because of plastic surgery. *Jezebel* published an article about the widely shared image accompanied by the headline "Plastic Surgery Means Many Beauty Queens, But Only One Kind of Face." Presented in the West as a spectacle of unreliable Korean women's faces, the Miss Korea controversy perpetuates the idea that the Asian face and Asian face-saving are inorganic processes of ongoing figurative and physical enhancements.

My suggestion that the Asian face is rendered inorganic through K-beauty may seem counterintuitive. After all, the Asian skincare movement and its traction in Western contexts is largely due to the fact that it claims to use more "natural" ingredients than the perfume or alcohol-based products in the Western beauty industry. According to a *Fusion*

article's diagnosis, the K-beauty trend emerged as a response to the artificiality of the Kardashian-type of "exaggerated" facial contouring, as "American women are opting out of noticeable makeup and instead coveting dewy skin, bushy brows, and natural-looking flushed cheeks" (Hairston). In addition to toners, ampoules, serums, and sheet masks, a key element of the K-beauty routine is the use of "essence," a term that describes products used to treat wrinkles, lines, and uneven skin tones on a cellular level. One Korean skincare blog describes essence as an active ingredient that will optimize skin cell turnover rate and "revitalize your skin so that with continued use—you can look more youthful" (Cho "Skincare 101"). The popular Korean face masks are also described with the language of the natural and the essential, known as "biocellulose sheets" that brighten and firm up skin to create a more youthful appearance. Chao describes her nine-step morning routine and a six-step evening process in a guest article in online magazine *Fashionista* as "meditative" rituals that "ground" her in her skin, her body and the present. She holds on to these rituals because they help her combat depression, Chao says, explaining that the "patting" of ingredients onto her face "is calming, rhythmic, oddly satisfying. It grounds me in my skin, my body, and—not to get too New Age-y—the present. That's what depression snatches from me: the present … My lengthy Korean skincare ritual gives the present back to me twice a day, every day" ("How My Elaborate"). For Chao, the labour of working on her skin is also the relief of feeling her own body in the present. As she pats serums, toners and ampoules onto her face religiously, she fleshes out a presentness by touching and working with her skin.

At the same time, rituals of K-beauty skincare are caught up in a techno-Orientalist narrative. K-beauty is imagined by Western popular culture and media as a dual temporality—as "going back" to the basics of nature *and* as biotechnological innovation that signals a cosmetic and skincare future. For example, a 2016 *Wall Street Journal* feature on the trend describes it as having a "nature-meets-technology ethos" on the "cutting edge of beauty" (Wood). Another article in *Fusion* muses that K-beauty products can be "intimidating, because of their advanced technology and vastly unknown ingredients" (Hairston). As an exotic innovation, these skincare rituals are entrenched in the discourses that have historically figured Asia and the Asian body as inscrutable, mysteriously ancient, and at the same time displaced in the overly commodified future. I would suggest that this seemingly paradoxical fascination with K-beauty self-care is actually about abstracting labour—facework that conceals itself, render itself invisible code, by disguising itself as a "natural" process. The transformations are not to appear as transformations at all, lest they become too Kardashian, too obviously worked on; they operate at the *virtually invisible* scale of the skin cell and facial pores. Thus, the temporality of this facework is dual, as it concurrently characterizes the progressive linearity of neoliberal self-enhancement, as well as an atemporality aside from linear time that allows for the cellular activity of facial pores to accelerate and consequently slow down aging.

This dual temporality renders the Asian North American woman's face a kind of screen, a visualizing technology that makes visible, or performs, what is apparently invisible or virtual, whether it is the skin cell or time. Hers is an inter/face that draws

together the discourses of self-care and online transparency because of its association with masquerade. As I noted in Chapter 1, Clare Ching Jen argues that the "human-technology" figure of the masked Asian/American woman was a key configuration of the 2003 SARS outbreak. As a human-technology, the Asian North American face is a performative inter/face because, like the smartphone or laptop interface that visualizes systems, it makes "visible what is normally invisible to the naked eye" (112-114). Jen references an *MSNBC.com* print advertisement published in *Newsweek* during the SARS outbreak that depicts a masked Asian woman meeting the viewer's gaze as she holds a cell phone to her ear while standing in front of an out-of-focus crowd of other masked Asian women packed into a subway car. The ad reads: "Be the first to know when the next big story breaks. Go to MSNBC.com and sign up for breaking news alerts via MSN messenger, your email or mobile device" (qtd. in Jen 112). The Asian woman's connection to the cell phone is not only reflective of popular discourses of Asian technophilia, model minority excellence in math and science, and techno-Orientalist imaginations of machine-like Asians; this masked, cell phone-holding woman's face *is* the screen on which an outbreak spreading at the "invisible," molecular scale of viruses is narrated.

In her 2013 YouTube tutorial on becoming a K-pop star, Phan applies makeup to reduce the size of her lips and to create a dramatic winged eyeliner look, but also focuses on skincare products such as BB cream, moisturizers and primers, remarking that K-pop stars are "all about perfecting the skin, so it's important to create a flawless face" ("How to Look"). The perfection of a flawless face requires the work of hiding itself, of

constructing the organic. These regenerative Korean products do not yield immediate, visually detectable transformations on Phan's face in these videos, but the YouTuber's emphasis on their application as part of the process of becoming a Korean singer, or as the ingredients of pan-Asian robot skin, follows the format of a transformation or makeover. Thus, the "organic" nature of skincare is rendered inorganic through Phan's performance of a produced and edited face and, like the desired "flawless" face of the transnational imagination of the Korean woman, is an inorganic, virtual inter/face. Phan's videos not only highlight the cultural and theoretical association between Asian/North American women's faces and virtual screens, but render her face a virtual screen that can be programmed, disembodied and subsequently circulated as abstract commodity.

Phan's inter/face displays contradictory impulses as both a commercial display for beauty and skincare products that are to be purchased for self-improvement as well as a screen that "works out" the haunted posthuman future. In the case of the latter, her tutorials break up the Asian American face into small parts and in doing so engender a disjunctive temporality that does not necessarily facilitate mind-body "wholeness," a condition that is entrenched in the ableist notion of wellness and productivity. On the one hand, Phan's earlier beauty tutorials perform the temporality of abstract capital. The videos have a condensed timeline that displays the end "product" of the cosmetic transformation at the beginning of the video, and are edited so that hours, a day, or several days of filming are packaged for audiences as a few minutes. On the other hand, these YouTube productions disrupt the seamless progression of the posthuman or

postracial future by revealing how the Asian American epidermis is constructed, "repaired," and haunted by colonial and imperial histories.

Michelle Kendrick draws together the computer interface and white privilege, arguing that the "good" interface according to web design standards is one that parallels the systemic invisibility of white privilege. She contends that just as a good interface is one that is "easy" to navigate while a "bad" interface is one that makes itself too visible and "gets in the way" of navigation, whiteness "is invisible. It is the canvas upon which everything else is painted" (396). In these terms, Phan's face is a bad inter/face, as her facework of presenting each product involved in her transformation makes visible that which is meant to be naturalized/invisible: the histories of Empire, including the long history of French colonialism in South East Asian countries under "French Indochina," and, more recently, French cosmetics companies' projects to study racialized body parts in Asia and in North America. The inorganic nature of Phan's inter/face is particularly emphasized, ironically, in the YouTuber's 2010 "Natural Beauty" tutorial, in which Phan sets out to achieve a "Parisian natural look." The tutorial begins with an on-screen notice that the production is presented by Michelle Phan "for Lancôme Paris." Throughout the clip, the cosmetician applies a number of Lancôme beauty products, such as facial cleansers, masks, eye cream, and foundation, and identifies each one by holding it up to the camera and providing its French name in textual headings. Phan instructs her viewers to use white eyeliner to make their eyes "wider" and more "amplified," and notes that the Lancôme mascara she uses in the video not only makes her eyelashes "appear fuller," but its ingredients regenerate the condition of her lashes. Phan's voiceover at the end of the

video notes, “Even though you’re wearing makeup, you should feel like you’re not wearing any.” The goal of the five-minute tutorial is to produce a face whose cosmetic alteration goes undetected, just as Phan’s polished face is meant to hide the French technologies that produced it in this video.

Her focus on the benefits of her beauty products and brands, some of which she has shares in or is sponsored by, is the strategy of an entrepreneur who is in (perhaps large) part looking to use the popular format of social media for commercial gain. Her performance of a DIY routine exemplifies precisely how virtual labour works, according to Terranova: her seemingly fun and personal makeup video is appropriated by Lancôme and rendered a purchasable commodity; her YouTube production is rendered productive. After all, her YouTube tutorial, which was initially posted on Phan’s channel, was posted later on Lancôme USA’s corporate YouTube channel. Yet, Phan’s literal embodiment and absorption of cosmetics to become a brand is part of my argument; her labour is haunted by Empire and it exposes the neo-imperialism that constructs her face.

Lancôme’s parent company, L’Oréal, purchased Lancôme in 1964 and describes the acquisition on the “History” section of its website as the “first stepping stone on the road to becoming a luxury goods empire.” The French company’s colonial language and neo-imperial relationship with Asian and African American peoples are also reflected in its history of acquiring Asian products and its quest to “discover” and “decode” exotic skin and hair. Its website takes special note of 1963, when L’Oréal begins a line of foam bath products called Obao, named after the Japanese bath practices of ofuro, noting that “French women discover the secrets of Japanese bathing practices… A new approach that

caters for the newfound demand of toiletries that are more sophisticated than a bar of soap." In the period from 2001 and onward, L'Oréal's acquisitions and research projects marked a rapidly growing "scientific" interest in decoding so-called ethnic hair and skin in the name of global expansion. In the early 2000s, the company organized a series of "Decoding the Hair" exhibitions in several cities around the world that invited visitors to "marvel" at the "scientific complexity" of hair and its "various cultural aspects." In 2003, it opened the Research Institute for Ethnic Skin and Hair in Chicago to "develop knowledge about the skin and hair of individuals of African origin in order to design products that are adapted to their needs." This neo-colonial interest in "breaking down" race and racialized body parts in order to make scientific and capitalist advances is premised on the idea that Asian and black body fragments must be decoded and dissected, known, on the molecular level. According to this logic, racial difference is attributed to variances on the microscopic scale, and biotechnological developments, which are being made in the name of multiculturalism, can harness these differences for Western capitalist advancement.[34]

[34] Joan Fujimura, Troy Duster and Ramya Rajagopalan note that a resurgence of biomedical studies on genetic difference since the 1990s have been concerned again with racial difference, with its supporters arguing that there are important biological differences between racial groups when it comes to disease susceptibility and that this knowledge is "useful" for medical diagnosis and treatment (644). As critics of this resurgence have noted, however, race-based drugs are largely driven by market factors rather than biological differences, as race is a "crude" marker for "clinically relevant biological difference," but makes an attractive entry point for pharmaceuticals to get on the market (Bloche).

Sheila Jasanoff emphasizes how the colonial and imperial governing of bodies does not only involve "weeding" some out under the biopolitical imagination of the neoliberal state, whose purview extends to "sick and failing" plants as well as sick and failing people, but also entails the therapeutic processes of restoring the sick and "making whole" the previously ill (282). She writes, "The ordering state is most powerful when it is at the same time, demonstrably, a healing state, and such a state engages science for therapeutic, as well as diagnostic, ends" (283). The regenerative, healing powers of the Lancôme products that Phan applies to her face in the "Natural Beauty" tutorial promise such a therapy. The beauty vlogger emphasizes in the video that both the skincare products and cosmetics she employs "rejuvenate" and "regenerate" her facial components, combatting the passage of time. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, the narrative of repairing the Asian or Asian American face is loaded with histories of Western imperialism in war-ravaged Asian sites, including post-Korean War South Korea and Japan after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Phan's suggestion that these French products can make her face "natural" is entrenched in the idea that Western intervention or repair is needed in order to facilitate so-called authentic contact between the white and Asian face, and to ensure the heteronormative femininity—what Thy Phu describes as the "presentability, marriageability, and productivity" (87)—of the Asian woman's face. The demand for organic encounter positions the demander (the colonizer, multinational company or the computer programmer) as the organic human while rendering the one being asked to prove her realness an inorganic mimic. Phan presents her blank face at the beginning of the tutorial as *unnatural*, and moves toward becoming more human, more

"natural," by correcting it with French biotechnologies. This is an especially charged performance, given Phan's Vietnamese Americanness, as it potentially conjures histories of French colonialism in Vietnam.

However, Phan also uses and displays Korean skincare products in videos that focus on skincare, stressing that the "organic, natural" ingredients in Korean products are effective for treating and rejuvenating the skin. In fact, Phan's more recent video on her evening skincare routine, which is part of her "Basic Beauty" series and posted four years after "Natural Beauty," features mostly Korean products—none of which, the YouTuber makes a point of stating, sponsored the vlog. Among several Korean-brand toners, serums and vitamin derivatives, Phan recommends the Cremorlab "Cleansing Veil" makeup remover wipes that hydrate the skin instead of just "stripping" makeup off the face, a Caolion clay mask to "treat" the skin and remove impurities, and an ampoule mask by Innisfree, which is a brand that Phan learned about while travelling in Korea that "believe[s] in organic, natural products" ("BEAUTY BASIC"). In one of her final steps, Phan pats onto her face a Vitamin-A derivative called "Retinol Age Corrector" produced by the Korean brand Iope and tells the viewers that this helps "the cells turn over faster so that the skin rejuvenates much faster." As the international skincare and beauty industry shifts from French products toward Korean regimens, Phan's skincare routines and her tutorials reflect these changes and explore the possibilities for Korean biotechnologies to repair and rejuvenate the Asian American face.

The YouTuber's recent turn toward K-beauty products and routines, of course, is a strategic business move into a growing market. According to one report, Korea exported

more than $2.4 billion in cosmetics in 2016, with the US being one of its largest export markets for K-beauty products (Arthur). The "migration" of K-beauty to the West is largely attributed to the success of small companies run by young Korean Americans who quit more traditional jobs to create their own start-ups in the K-beauty industry, arguably "proving" the existence of an Asian creative class. In a sense, Phan's DIY testing, vlogging and modelling of beauty products during the first years of YouTube set a precedent for these K-beauty entrepreneurs, whose use of DIY aesthetics and formats developed what one *BBC* article describes as a "cult following" over the last several years (Arthur). Phan's emphasis on K-beauty in her later YouTube career marks the apparent "ascension" of Asian American entrepreneurs who find neoliberal success by using their creative skills and cultural knowledge to bridge the "beauty gap" between East and West (Ibid).

However, while her YouTube videos depicting K-beauty practices may affirm neoliberal promises of self-improvement on both the epidermal and economic level, they also highlight a new set of temporal relationships between her face and the products that emphasize the slow, disjunctive and embodied labour of facework. Her recent tutorials have shifted away from dubbing vocal instructions over her non-speaking, silent face as it is transformed and toward a format similar to a televised segment. In videos like the "Beauty Basic" tutorial for Phan's evening routine, Phan is framed in a medium close-up shot in front of a decorative shelving unit in what looks like, or is meant to look like, her home (see Figure 13). She looks directly at the camera and addresses her viewers, as if on a talk show. The tutorial is a combination of such shots as well as cuts to her well-known

close-ups, in which she demonstrates how to use each product and remains a non-speaking, grinning inter/face as her narrating voice continues.

Figure 13. Phan discusses her evening skin care routine in a "Beauty Basic" tutorial. Screenshot of Phan's YouTube video.

The timeline of these newer "Beauty Basic" vlogs engenders not so much a "before-and-after" transformation that concludes with a final result, but instead emphasizes a temporally disjunctive process. In the frames of Phan speaking directly to her viewers, she has makeup on her face. In the dubbed-over shots of her face displaying each step, she is either removing makeup or does not have makeup on her face, in order to emphasize the treatment of the skin (a process not immediately detectable) as opposed to the *design* of the face (a visible transformation). The K-popstar transformation video I analyzed earlier may include some products that do not leave any visible changes on Phan's face, but the "end result" of the video involves transformation using makeup and accessories. Although the steps in Phan's evening routine are narrated in a particular order, they do not cumulate in a final "look," but instead appear as distinct and nonlinear

moments, as the tutorial continues to be interrupted by a makeup-wearing Phan speaking directly to the camera in the style of a TV host.

While French cosmetics are applied to Phan's face to produce a *removable* "natural" look—a face that is achieved through the colouring and contouring effects of makeup—K-beauty skincare ingredients in the "Beauty Basic" tutorial are used to continue or preserve an ongoing present that cannot be immediately detected. Put in posthuman terms, while the "Natural Beauty" video reveals how the "natural face" is a prosthetic mask constructed by French biotechnologies, Phan's more recent evening skincare routine presents her inter/face as malleable and programmable, but not exactly prosthetic. Under K-beauty skincare, her face is not a postracial mask that can be removed or put on, but a posthuman medium that displays virtual, or "invisible," ethnic and racial experiments in epidermal slow motion. As Phan departs from her makeover-format videos and shifts toward a less cumulative or linear timeline in her vlogs, the temporalities of her inter/face become varied and demonstrate the dual time of K-beauty: the acceleration of cell reproduction that purportedly slows down the appearance of aging. Therefore, by displaying the feminized, abstracting labour and imperial processes of *becoming* organic performed both by the material body and in digital post-production, Phan's facework subscribes to a neoliberal narrative of self-improvement, while exposing the impossibility of the individual subject's transgression of race, gender and colonial histories in that narrative of progress.

A Concluding Meditation on Mediated Wellness

This chapter's examination of wellbeing in the Information Age responds to a query that I began in Chapter 2 regarding the question of Asian North America's mental health. Often portrayed in North American media and research as a particularly vulnerable population when it comes to mental illness, Asian North Americans are understood as a group that has fallen behind Western society's progress in addressing mental health issues. For example, a 2002 study published in the *Western Journal of Medicine* concludes that Asian Americans' mental health is influenced by traditions or "cultural factors," such as the hierarchy of the immigrant family, their level of "acculturation" to dominant culture and Western medical practices, and the need to "save face" (Kramer et al.). My theorization of mediated wellbeing does not bring Asian North Americans "up to do date"; rather, it probes the neoliberal temporalities of subjective intactness and individual healing underlying mental or public health narratives that situate Asians (and other racialized groups) "behind" white North America without accounting for the institutional effects of imperialism, colonization, racism, sexism and nationalism.

As I noted in the beginning of the chapter, similar critiques have been made about corporate social media campaigns that promote mental health "awareness" while using the language of care as a brand. Perhaps the most popular example is #BellLetsTalk, a social media campaign that designates January 25 "Bell Let's Talk Day" across Canada and donates five cents to health organizations every time the hashtag is used that day. In 2017, the telecommunications and media company reported raising $6.5 million for mental health funding after the hashtag was used more than 131 million times ("Bell Let's

Talk"). However, as some have pointed out, the campaign brands Bell as a philanthropic and socially conscious company without addressing issues of race and poverty, or examining their own polices around mental health leave for employees (Shafi). In her article for *NOW Toronto*, writer Kate Robertson suggests that Bell contributes to the problem of mental health illness instead of offering a solution because the company perpetuates media "addiction." In her open letter to Bell, she writes, "Maybe no one wants to talk about [mental illness] because you make it seem so normal—even though we are spending increasing amounts of time on screens instead of exercising or connecting to people, pets and the environment in real life." She goes on to lament the "irony" of tweeting the hashtag for "addicting dopamine rushes" instead of doing something more "tangible" by reducing screen time.

Assigning wellness to the materiality of the organic body and illness to the digital screen, Robertson's letter suggests that mental wellbeing increases when contact with screens is reduced—a narrative of restoration that finds resonances in studies about the "cultural factors" that lead to Asian Americans' belatedness in mental health conversations. The often-cited practice of Asian "face-saving," understood in this context as a barrier to seeking and receiving help, is a concept that figures the Asian face *as mediation*—a calculated, measured, adjustable interface of inorganic encounter that contrasts the face of white authenticity and transparency. The demand for us to "talk," to no longer be silent, is an ableist assumption that moving "out of" silence and forward into vocalized self-disclosure bestows agency upon the racialized individual. Mainstream public health narratives therefore require that Asian North Americans lose face, give up

their faces, in order to be unmediated or real. In this sense, the image of the Asian-"saved" face as a medium that blocks the Asian/North American subject from being well parallels Robertson's popular suggestion that the new media screen aggravates mental health issues.

Yet, the image of Chao fighting depression through the act of "patting" serum onto her face rhythmically, rigorously and according to set schedules suggests that being well in the digital era entails working out survival within and *as* mediation. It involves constructing and performing the Asian face. In *Advantageous*, after an extreme "cosmetic" surgery, the half-life body donor carrying the data of an Asian American woman cultivates wellbeing at half-life by practicing meditation, spinning slowly in circles in a park. Both these pictures of racialized women mediating data and flesh within a precarious present ask us to consider a model of wellbeing that goes beyond the autonomy of a subject who keeps healthy boundaries between work and rest, between performance and self. These scenes highlight how being well in the "present" of a neoliberal Information Age—a present that constantly demands our hyperproductivity—involves the virtuality of work that is not typically recognized as work, and rest that is not completely restful.

As Chao works on her face by patting her skin, and Jules and Gwen 2.0 turn around and around to relieve their stress and pain, their meditations foreground the mediated nature of their wellbeing in the digital era: the "organic" Asian face is worked on as an inter/face, and the body donor who seeks to be at peace with a brain that she embodies finds some hope in the waking dream of the virtual. By considering the

ambivalent resistance of mediated wellbeing, I suggest neither a "return" to the organic, restored body nor the hope of new technologies' future deliverance, but the daydream of a present that does not quite move forward, nor stay static. While contemporary neoliberal mindfulness culture requires us to block out both the precarious future and the baggage of the past, conceiving of wellbeing as *being mediated* and *being mediation* entails that we work out future survival by loitering in a present haunted by the past.

(In)Conclusion | Inorganic Solidarity After Representation

Since I began this project, several controversies about the casting of white actors in Asian roles have led to social media discussions and hashtag campaigns. These recent whitewashing examples include the decision to cast Tilda Swinton in the 2016 release of *Doctor Strange* as the Ancient One, who was originally a Tibetan monk in the comics; Emma Stone as a "part-Asian" Hawaiian woman named Allison Ng in the 2015 film *Aloha*; and perhaps most notoriously, Scarlett Johansson as Major Motoko Kusanagi in the 2017 remake of *Ghost in the Shell*. Asian North American criticism of Hollywood whitewashing is typically expressed as a concern about the underrepresentation of Asians in the mainstream entertainment industry. In fact, during Asian Pacific American Heritage Month in May 2016, a #WhiteWashedOut hashtag campaign prompted Asian American Twitter users, including comedian Margaret Cho, to tweet their criticisms of Hollywood's perpetuation of Asian stereotypes and its erasure of Asian bodies. More broadly, viral Asian North American hashtag movements like #WhiteWashedOut, #NotYourAsianSidekick and #StarringJohnCho in the last several years have mobilized a large-scale online awareness among Asian North Americans around Hollywood's "representation problem."

Yet, as my introductory reading of the Cio-Cio-San puppet demonstrates, the idea that we need to "solve" the problem of bad or absent representation not only assumes that there is an accurate Asian North American subject, but it anticipates a seamless, recuperative convergence of data (the role) and flesh (the actor's body), when the

processes of matching bodies to ideas, and of mapping knowledge onto skin, have historically been uneven and violent ones. As Anne Anlin Cheng argues in her analysis of Johannsson's role as the cybernetic figure of Major in the *Ghost in the Shell* remake:

> It is easy to mourn the loss of humanity in a figure like this or, conversely, to celebrate its triumphant posthumanism, but it is much harder — and, I would argue, much more urgent — to dwell with the discomfort of undeniable human alterity, a figure who does not let us forget that the human has always been embroiled with the inhuman well before the threat of the modern machine. ("The Ghost in the Ghost")

The prevalent critique of whitewashing in Hollywood as a problem of representation understands the actor as the representational sign who mediates a relationship between the information contained in the role and the audience's encounter with this information. It assumes that presenting the "right" representational sign facilitates audiences' reception of accurate and good information. However, as my project's theorization of Asianness as a virtuality suggests, the representational sign of Asianness does not rectify misrecognition or the absence of recognition. Instead of drawing direct equations between the body and information, Asianness as mediation engenders partial and surplus performances, and produces ruptures as well as uneven relationships between data and flesh.

This is why, for me, the crucial question is not so much about *who* represents Asian North America, or even about how cultural, economic and political roles for Asians are conceived within the North American popular imaginary, although these are very significant questions that have material consequences for Asians in these industries. The more pressing question for me is how Asianness itself as a representational sign can be used to rework its functions as a "not quite" figuration within the ongoing legacies of

nationalism, colonialism and capitalism—histories from which it emerged and continues to be forged. To ask this question is to examine virtual Asianness as a dynamic practice that is performed not only in relation to the white nation, but in relation to what Alexander Weheliye calls "different modalities of the human" that emerge apart from Man as master-subject. More specifically, as I conclude this dissertation, I want to briefly consider the possibilities of *inorganic solidarity*—a way of surviving well with others in the Information Age by fostering transformative connections that are not hinged on the liberal recognition of racialized subjectivities, but on the possibilities of misrecognition and subjective excess.

The Asian American hashtag campaigns around representation intertwine and are sometimes in tension with black Twitter's critique of the mainstream entertainment industry. In the months following the announcement of the 2016 Oscar nominees, Twitter users criticized the antiquated Academy for nominating only white actors for acting awards, and the film industry in general for predominantly casting and writing roles for white people. In particular, black Twitter users called Hollywood out for its racism, and recirculated the hashtag #OscarsSoWhite, which the managing editor of the website *Broadway Black,* April Reign, started in January 2015. The social media movement prompted several celebrities to publically boycott the awards night in February 2016 and was also acknowledged by awards host Chris Rock in an opening monologue that received mixed, but relatively positive, reviews. Halfway through the night, however, Rock incited Twitter anger from Asian Americans. In a pre-planned skit, the comedian announced that the accounting firm PricewaterhouseCoopers had tabulated the Academy

Awards results and noted, “They sent us their most dedicated, accurate and hard-working representatives.” When the host called for “Ming Zu, “Bao Ling,” and “David Moskowitz” to come on stage, three Asian American children dressed in business suits and holding brief cases emerged. Already anticipating the online backlash, Rock quipped, “If anybody’s upset about that joke, just tweet about it on your phone that was also made by these kids.”

For many Asian North American Twitter users, Rock’s joke, which drew on stereotypes about Asian model minority nerds and the image of Asia as the dehumanizing site of child labour, was indicative of the limitations of understanding racism as a black-white issue. Author Kathy Khang tweeted: “Rock’s use of ‘Asian’ names in his shtick is why assimilation, invisibility = a way to survive, right or wrong. #OscarsSoWhite #AlwaysOther.” Undocumented Filipino writer Jose Antonio Vargas tweeted: “When will @chrisrock bring up Latino, Asian, Middle Eastern, Native American actors and opportunity?” Vargas’s comments helped spark a counter hashtag, as writer Mikki Kendall tweeted #NotYourMule in response to what she understood as the expectation that black people “take all the risk” to advocate for representation in media (qtd. in Adams). Lauren Bouvier likewise commented, “When changes kick in, anti-black PoC who complained #onhere tonight will benefit from a black woman’s creation. #NotYourMule #OscarsSoWhite.” *Black Girl Dangerous* writer Chantelle Adams, in her article on the Twitter debate, sums up these sentiments:

> At this point, non-Black PoC, many of whom were originally against #OscarsSoWhite, noticed the attention it was getting and then began to blame Black people for not including non-Black PoC in the movement for representation. In addition to that misunderstanding, it became clear that people

> also expected that Black women do the labor for representation for all PoC. ("Not Your Mule")

Vargas clarified in a longer blog post that he was not asking black people to do the "heavy lifting" of advocating for other racialized people, nor was he intending to lecture black Americans about inclusion, "which would be insulting" given the long history of institutionalized anti-black racism that continues today ("Here's what I learned"). He stressed that he was instead calling for more "careful, nuanced" conversations across and within communities of colour beyond the perpetual "White-vs-*something*" narrative. April Reign, too, clarified on Twitter that Rock's comments during the Oscars event did not speak for #OscarsSoWhite, but that she did as its creator.

While these discussions occurred on online platforms, the language of the #NotYourMule hashtag reveals the burden of (over)embodiment that black women have historically carried and continue to carry as, in Ann DuCille's words, "other Others, a hyperstatic alterity" (82). The invocation of animal labour, in particular, recalls how settler colonial figurations of racialized labour designated black bodies as *overly* material, while rendering Asian bodies too *immaterial*. The hashtag thus reveals how virtual Asianness's ambivalent politics pose a challenge in building cross-racial solidarity. Khang's suggestion that Asian Americans assimilate into white society because mainstream culture renders them either invisible or tropes anyway implies that the Asian American turn to disembodiment is a way to survive. However, some black Twitter users in this case read Asian North Americans' use of viral hashtags as part of their ability to *not* bear the burden of representation work, perhaps because of the historical configuration of Asianness as inherently abstract, inorganic or inauthentic. Thus, the

debate brought to the surface the complexities and challenges of building cross-racial coalition under the promise of embodied representation and recognition. It demonstrated how the liberal multicultural hope of representational "diversity" falls apart when the uneven and differing ways racialized bodies have been assigned humanness, animality or inorganic qualities under white supremacy become apparent.

How, then, does inorganic survival and wellbeing for Asian North Americans translate into inorganic survival *with* others? What might inorganic solidarity in the wake of representation's failure look like? In these concluding thoughts, I suggest that it is precisely through and in the breakdown of racial representation that we can work out coalition and solidarity. By "after representation," I refer not only to the impossibility of "solving" racism through accurate representation and recognition, but also to the implosion of race as representational sign—a breakdown that produces indirect, asymmetrical relationships between body and data. In other words, I am suggesting that solidarities can be forged in moments of representation's failure, and that these solidarities after representation do not depend on the liberal recognition of intact racialized subjects. Instead, inorganic solidarity after representation makes space for generative misrecognitions and subjective incoherence as departure points for coalition building.

A recent example of the possibilities of inorganic solidarity is an anonymous #NoDAPL post that circulated on Facebook during the end of October 2016, calling for allies to "check in" to the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North and South Dakota from wherever they were. The post stated that the Morton County Sherriff's department

was monitoring Facebook check-ins to see who was protesting at Standing Rock, and encouraged "everyone" to check in to the reservation on Facebook to confuse police. The post stated, "This is concrete action that can protect people putting their bodies and well-beings on the line that we can do without leaving our homes" ("DAPL Radar"). Following this mysterious post, more than a million people "checked in" to Standing Rock to protest plans for the Dakota Access Pipeline, which would cut across the Missouri River, a waterway that supplies water to the Sioux reservation and poses a threat to sacred tribal sites. The Sacred Stone Camp said that the social media post was not written by their group, but that they appreciated this demonstration of solidarity. They added that there is "no solid line between 'organizers' and 'others'—this is a movement, not an organization. There are many camps and points of contact . . . We support the tactic, and think it is a great way to express solidarity" (qtd. in "DAPL").

Media coverage of the one million check-ins at Standing Rock, however, questioned how "concrete" an action this really was, with some articles noting that if police were monitoring protestors' social media activities, they could be using geolocation technologies that would make "false" Facebook check-ins moot. One Facebook user who remotely checked into Standing Rock told *The Guardian* that she was skeptical about how effective virtually checking in would be, but that it is a "gesture to show solidarity" and one that is "definitely better than just sticking your head in the sand. And it does often lead to 'real' activism when people who don't know anything about organizing or activism connect with people who do" (Jones qtd. in Levin and Woolf). Media coverage of the check-in movement mused about whether the event could be

labelled armchair activism or slacktivism, terms that imply that one is "substituting a click for a real act" (Thomson). When asked by the *CBC* for a comment on the Standing Rock check-ins, journalism professor Alfred Hermida described the phenomenon as a "way of virtually bringing people together to a geographical area . . . Social media collapses those geographical boundaries so you can say, 'I'm standing with you, at least virtually'" (qtd. in Thomson).

What does it mean, then, for us to "stand virtually" with others? As my project has demonstrated, we ought to move beyond a concrete-abstract binary that understands virtual labour as a kind of substitute for a "real act." This binary often engenders ableist narratives that romanticize the "truth" of the inorganic body without accounting for the embodied labour of social media production or the already-virtual nature of being in the flesh. As a "gesture" of standing virtually with Indigenous water protectors, the Standing Rock check-in movement gestures to the possibilities of inorganic alliance-making. The idea that a collective disembodiment can be enacted in order to help protect Indigenous land and Indigenous bodies envisions a settler-Indigenous solidarity that emphasizes the strategic incongruence between material bodies and performed bodies. To see land and the claim to land as virtual, of course, runs the risk of reinflicting the violence of dismissing Indigenous life and sovereignty. Settler colonial logic not only envisioned the violent assimilation of Indigenous peoples into whiteness and saw Indigenous land as unoccupied or disembodied, but understood Asian and black labourers as "alien" labour forces that could "mix with Indigenous land to transform it into white property and capital" (Day 31).

At the same time, central to the Standing Rock check-in movement was the acknowledgement that the settler colonial state disciplines people into legible and, consequently, surveillable converged material-informational subjects. The whole, intact subject whose data matches, or can be matched to, a body is a "good," transparent subject. Thus, forming a movement for Sioux sovereignty on Sioux land based on the *divergence* of the "grounded" body from its performed virtual location—and in this divergence affirming the *literality* of Indigenous bodies and land—potentially decries such a convergence. By performing disembodied location, non-Indigenous people of colour potentially reimagined the settler colonial project of using "alien" labour to transform Indigenous land into white property and capital. Put differently, non-Indigenous supporters of #NoDAPL deployed the tactic of disembodiment and abstraction—a historically violent method to colonize Indigenous land and turn it into white capital—in order to stand on Indigenous land *differently*, virtually. Thus, the widespread check-in at Standing Rock was perhaps not so much about substituting a click for a "real act," but about using the virtual to question the realness of corporate and state claims to, and non-Indigenous people's inhabitation of, Indigenous land. In a sense, it involved reimagining the settler colonial violence of disembodiment as an ethical mode of being "not quite" located on Indigenous land.

Therefore, in addition to calling for ethical embodied encounters between groups in the digital age, I suggest that we also ought to work out our connected survival and well-being from the fragmentations, circulations and assemblages that are made possible in the breakdown of representation. This mode of survival can emerge from the

reimagined and reworked relationships between our bodies and our data. Of course, inorganic solidarity is not without risk. Just as the potential of the virtual tends to be converted into neoliberal reserves for labour and capital, inorganic solidarity is often corporatized and appropriated by the nation-state as a reserve of liberal multicultural potential. Yet, as Jennifer Phang's concluding scene of *Advantageous* suggests, daydreams can arise out of our concurrent and connected mediation, abstraction, re-embodiment and dehumanization. Inorganic solidarity is a call for us to navigate our different and uneven dehumanization in order to work out a shared waking dream.

Works Cited

Adams, Chantelle. "Black Women Are #NotYourMules." *Black Girl Dangerous*. BGD Inc., 1 March 2016. Web. 15 March 2016.

Agamben, Giorgio. *State of Exception*. Translated by Kevin Attell. Chicago and London: The Chicago UP, 2005. Print.

Ahmed, Sara. "Against Students." *feministkilljoys*. feministkilljoys, 15 June 2015. Web. 15 June 2015.

---. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke UP, 2006. Print.

---. "Selfcare as Warfare." *feministkilljoys*. feministkilljoys, 15 Aug. 2014. Web. 20 Aug. 2014.

---. *Willful Subjects*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2014. Print.

Ajana, Btihaj. "Augmented borders: Big Data and the ethics of immigration control." *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society* 13.1 (2015): 58-78. Print.

"Akihabara." *Japan-guide.com*. Japan Guide, 15 May 2015. Web. 22 March 2016.

Anderson, Perry. *Lineages of the Absolutist State.* Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1974. Print.

Andrejevic, Mark. "Becoming Drones: Smartphone Probes and Distributed Sensing." *Locative Media*. Eds Rowan Wilken and Gerard Goggin. New York and London: Routledge, 2015. 193-207. Print.

Arthur, Golda. “The key ingredients of South Korea’s skincare success.” *BBC News*. BBC, 28 Jan. 2016. Web. 16 May 2017.

“Asians Sleeping in the Library.” *Angry Asian Man*. Angry Asian America, 22 Dec. 20105. Web. 1 Oct. 2016.

Asians Sleeping on Public Transit. Tumblr, March 2015. Web. 1 Oct. 2016.

“Avoid Sleeping on Campus.” *Ryerson University*. Ryerson University, 2016. Web. 1 Oct. 2016.

Banks, Jasmine. “Self Care for People of Color After Psychological Trauma.” *JustJasmineBlog*. JustJasmineBlog, July 2016. Web. 1 Aug. 2016.

Barker, Stacy. “Life after Death: An Activity to Investigate the Scientific, Legal, and Racial Issues of the Henriette Lacks Story.” *The American Biology Teacher* 73.6 (2011): 337-340. Print.

Barocas, Solon and Helen Nissenbaum. “Big Data’s End Run around Anonymity and Consent.” *Privacy, Big Data, and the Public Good: Frameworks for Engagement*. Eds. Julia Lane, Victoria Stodden, Stefan Bender and Helen Nissenbaum. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2014. 44-75. Print.

Bashford, Alison. *Imperial Hygiene: A Critical History of Colonialism, Nationalism, and Public Health*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Print.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994. Print.

“The Beautiful Death.” *YouTube,* uploaded by Michelle Phan, 11 Oct. 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5HE2hq41B94.

"Bell Let's Talk raises more than $6.5 million for mental health." *CTV News*. Bell Media, 25 Jan. 2017. Web. 15 May 2017.

Bloche, M. Gregg. "Race-Based Therapeutics." *The New England Journal of Medicine* 351 (2004): n.pag. Web. 18 May 2017.

Borthwick, Chris. "Racism, IQ and Down's Syndrome." *Disability & Society* 11.3 (1996): 403-410. Print.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the discursive limits of 'sex'*. London and New York: Routledge, 1993. Print.

Chao, Jude. "How My Elaborate Korean Skincare Routine Helps Me Fight Depression." *Fashionista*. Breaking Media Inc., 27 May 2015. Web. 1 Aug. 2015.

---. "Casual Thursday: That Time the Snail Unit did not Endorse 'Radical Feminist Skincare.'" *Fifty Shades of Snail*. WordPress.com, 7 Jan. 2016. Web. 7 Jan. 2016.

Chee, Alexander. "No Asians!" *Out.* Out Magazine, 11 Jan. 2012. Web. 1 Sept. 2015. 2003. Print.

Chen, Mel Y. "Asian American Speech, Civic Place, and Future Nondisabled Bodies." *Amerasia Journal* 39.1 (2013): 91-2015. Print.

Chen, Tina. *Double Agency: Acts of Impersonation in Asian American Literature and Culture*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005. Print.

Cheney, Peter. "The rise of Japan: How the car industry was won." *The Globe and Mail.* The Globe and Mail Inc., 5 Nov. 2015. Web. 18 May 2017.

Cheng, Anne Anlin. "The Ghost in the Ghost." *Los Angeles Review of Books.* Los Angeles Review of Books, 17 April 2017. Web. 15 May 2017.

Cheung, King-Kok, ed. *An Interethnic Companion to Asian American Literature*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1997. Print.

Chin, Frank. "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake." *The Big Aiiieeeee!: An Anthology of Chinese American and Japanese American Literature*. Eds. Jeffery Paul Chan, Frank Chin, Lawson Fusao Inada, and Shawn Wong. New York: Penguin Group, 1991.1-92. Print.

Cho, Charlotte. "Skin Care 101: Toner." *SOKOGLAM!* Soko Glam, 6 April 2015. Web. 6 April 2015.

Cho, Lily. "The Turn to Diaspora." *Topia* 17 (2007): 11-30. Print.

Choe, Steve and Se Young Kim. "'Never Stop Playing': StarCraft and Asian Gamer Death." *Techno-Orientalism: Imagining Asia in Speculative Fiction, History, and Media.* Eds. David S. Roh, Betsy Huang, and Greta A. Niu. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers UP, 2015. 112-124. Print.

Chuh, Kandice. *Imagine Otherwise: On Asian Americanist Critique.* Durham, NC: Duke UP. 2003. Print.

Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006. Print.

---. *Habitual New Media*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2016. Print.

---. "Introduction: Race and/as Technology; Or, How to Do Things to Race." *Camera Obscura* 24:1 (2009): 7-35. Print.

Coleman, E. Gabriella. "Phreaks, Hackers, and Trolls: The Politics of Transgression and Spectacle." *The Social Media Reader*. Ed. Michael Mandiberg. New York and London: New York UP, 2012. Print.

"DAPL Radar." *Snopes.* Snopes.com, 31 Oct. 2016. Web. 11 May 2017.

Day, Iyko. *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism.* Durham: Duke UP, 2016. Print.

Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* 1984. Reprint. London: The U of Minnesota P, 2004. Print.

DiGuilio, Sarah. "Fall Asleep in Class and this Could Happen to You!" *The Huffington Post.* TheHuffingtonPost.com, 1 June 2015, Web. 1 Oct. 2016.

Down, John Langdon H. "Observations on an Ethnic Classification of Idiots." *London Hospital Reports* 3:186 (1866): 259–62. Print.

Dubrofsky, Rachel E. "A Vernacular of Surveillance: Taylor Swift and Miley Cyrus Perform White Authenticity." *Surveillance and Society* 14.2 (2016): 184-196. Print.

DuCille, Ann. *Skin Trade*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1996. Print.

Duldulao, Aileen Alfonso, David T. Takeuchi and Seunghye Hong. "Correlates of Suicidal Behaviors Among Asian Americans." *Archives of Suicide Research* 13.3 (2009): 277-290 Print.

"Edward Snowden: Leaks that that exposed US spy programme." *BBC News*. BBC News Service, 17 Jan. 2014. Web. 22 March 2016.

Eng, David L. *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy.* Durham and London: Duke UP, 2010. Print.

Espiritu, Yen Le. *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities.* Philadelphia UP: 1992. Print.

Ex Machina. Dir. Alex Garland. Universal Studios, 2015. Film.

Findlay, Stephanie and Nicholas Kohler. "The enrollment controversy." *Maclean's.* Rogers Media, 10 Nov. 2010. Web. 10 Nov. 2010.

Fitzpatrick, Colin, Jeremy Birnholtz and Jed R. Brubaker. "Social and Personal Disclosure in a Location-Based Real Time Dating App." *Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* 48 (2015): 1983-1992. Print.

Fong, Mei. "The Big Sleep: China's Congress and a National Pastime*." The Wall Street Journal.* Dow Jones and Company, 5 March 2009. Web. 1 Oct. 2016.

Fornäs, Johan et al., eds. *Digital Borderlands: Cultural Studies of Identity and Interactivity on the Internet*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2002. Print.

Fujimura, Joan, Troy Duster and Ramya Rajagopalan. "Introduction: Race, Genetics and Disease: Questions of Evidence, Matters of Consequence." *Social Studies of Science* 38.5 (2008): 643-656. Print.

Garland, Alex. *Ex Machina*. Clean Shooting Script. 2013. A24. 1 Jan. 2016. n. pag. Web.

Gates Jr., Henry Louis. *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism.* New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1988. Print.

Gates, Kelly. *Our Biometric Future: Facial Recognition Technology and the Culture of Surveillance.* New York and London: New York UP, 2011. Print.

Gilman, Sander L. "Black Bodies, White Bodies: Toward an Iconography of Female Sexuality in Late Nineteenth-Century Art, Medicine, and Literature." *Critical Inquiry* 12.1 (1985): 204-242. Print.

Gimeno, Jessica. "Asian American Mental Health: Confusing Doing Well With Feeling Well." *The Huffington Post*. TheHuffingtonPost.com, 9 May 2016. Web. 5 March 2017.

Goellnicht, Donald C. "A Long Labour: The Protracted Birth of Asian Canadian Literature." *Essays on Canadian Writing* 72.1 (2000): 1-41. Print.

Goffman, Erving. *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior.* New York: Anchor Books. 1967. Print.

Goggin, Gerard. *Cell Phone Culture: Mobile technology in everyday life*. London and New York: Routledge, 2006, Print.

Gordon, Avery. *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. Minneapolis and London: U of Minnesota P, 2008, Print.

Gotanda, Philip Kan. *Yankee Dawg You Die*. Alexandria, VA: Alexander Street Press, 2004. Web. 1 Sept. 2014.

Griffiths, James. "New Zealand passport robot thinks this Asian man's eyes are closed." *CNN*. Cable News Network, 9 Dec. 2016. Web. 1 Feb. 2017.

Grimaldi, Jeremy. "The story behind the confession of Jennifer Pan." *Thestar.com*. Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd., 13 Nov. 2016. Web. 13 Nov. 2016.

Grosskopf, Nicholas A. et. al. "Use of the Internet and Mobile-Based 'Apps' for Sex-Seeking Among Men Who Have Sex With Men in New York City." *American Journal of Men's Health* 8.6 (2014): 510-520. Print.

Hagemann, Bernd. *Sleepingchinese.com*. sleepingchinese.com, 2016. Web. 1 Oct. 2016.

Haggerty, Kevin and Richard Ericson. "The surveillant assemblage." *The British Journal of Sociology* 51.4 (2000): 605-622. Print.

Hairston, Tahirah. "How Korean beauty trends are making an impact on your makeup routine." *Fusion*. Fusion Media Network, 28 March 2016. Web. 1 Aug. 2016.

Halberstam, Jack. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2011. Print.

Hall, Rachel. "Terror and the Female Grotesque: Introducing Full-Body Scanners to U.S. Airports." *Feminist Surveillance Studies*. Eds. Rachel E. Dubrofsky and Shoshana Amielle Magnet. Durham and London: Durham UP, 2015. 127-149. Print.

Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, technology and socialist-feminism in the late twentieth century." *The Cybercultures Reader*. Eds. David Bell and Barbara M. Kennedy. London and New York: Routledge, 2000. 291-324. Print.

Harr, Jace. "So You Feel Like Shit: An Interactive Self-Care Guide." *Philome.La*. Philome.la, n.d. Web. 1 Aug. 2016.

Harris, Meena. "Talking with Black Women Engineers about Diversity in Silicon Valley." *LENNY*. Hearst Communications Inc., 1 March 2016. Web. 1 March 2017.

Hasham, Alyshah. "Jennifer Pan found guilty of murdering her mother, attempting to murder her father." *Thestar.com*. Toronto Star Newspapers Ltd., 13 Dec. 2014. Web. 5 March 2017.

Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago and London: The Chicago UP, 1999. Print.

Hayot, Eric. *The Hypothetical Mandarin: Sympathy, Modernity, and Chinese Pain.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.

"HEALTH Releases New Data on Infectious Syphilis, Gonorrhea, and HIV." *RI.gov*. Rhode Island Government, n.d. Web. 15 Oct. 2015.

Higa, Ryan. "Draw My Life – Ryan Higa." *YouTube*, uploaded by nigahiga, 10 April 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPmoDYayoLE.

---. "Google Glass Human." *YouTube*, uploaded by nigahiga, 23 May 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxF4jqOevVg.

---. "The iPod Human." *YouTube*, uploaded by nigahiga, 10 Nov. 2007, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Phbe8mEDMe4.

---. "My Morning Routine (Skitzo)." *YouTube*, uploaded by nigahiga, 23 April 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vJazpys1z6E.

---. "Skitzo – Introductions." *YouTube*, uploaded by nigahiga, 22 Oct. 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUe6aOnSJBE&t=4s.

---. "Skitzo – Nose Scar." *YouTube*, uploaded by nigahiga. 21 Sept. 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LMcWJUUcuq8.

---. “Skitzo – The Halloween Story.” *YouTube*, uploaded by nigahiga, 2 Nov. 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDpUM2gkGzA.

“How to Look Like a K-pop Star.” *YouTube,* uploaded by Michelle Phan, 22 Oct. 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7kQx4JJfEk.

Huh, Jinny. “Racial Speculations: (Bio)technology, Battlestar Galatica, and a Mixed-Race Imagining.” *Techno-Orientalism: Imagining Asia in Speculative Fiction, History, and Media.* Eds. David S. Roh, Betsy Huang, and Greta A. Niu. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers UP, 2015. 101-112. Print.

“In SKorean ferry disaster, Fox News shows wrong Asian people.” *KoreAm*. KoreAm Magazine. 25 April, 2014. Web. 1 Sept. 2014.

Jasanoff, Sheila. “Biotechnology and Empire: The Global Power of Seeds and Science.” *Osiris* 21.1 (2006): 273-292. Print.

Jen, Clare Ching. “How to Survive Contagion, Disease, and Disaster: The ‘Masked Asian/American Woman’ as Low-Tech Specter of Emergency Preparedness.” *Feminist Formations* 25.2 (2013): 107-128. Print.

Jennings, Ralph. “Why Asians Sleep in Public: Two Answers from Taiwan.” *Forbes Asia.* Forbes, 27 Oct. 2015. Web. 1 Oct. 2016.

“Jo Chiang: The Neoliberal Trap of Self-Care.” *Self-Care with Writers*. WordPress.com, n.d., 1 Aug. 2016.

Johnson, Barbara. *Persons and Things*. Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard UP, 2008. Print.

Juhasz, Alexandra. “Learning the Five Lessons of YouTube: After Trying to Teach There, I Don’t Believe the Hype.” *Cinema Journal* 48.2 (2009): 145-150. Print.

Kapp, Matt. “Grindr: Welcome to the World’s Biggest, Scariest Gay Bar.” *Vanity Fair News*. Condé Nast, May 2011. Web. 1 Dec. 2015.

Kember, Sarah and Joanna Zylinska. *Life After New Media: Mediation as Vital Process*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2012. Print.

Kendrick, Michelle. “Invisibility, Race, and the Interface.” *Rhetoric Review* 24.2 (2005): 395-399. Print.

Koh, Adeline. “Skincare as Feminist Selfcare.” *Sabbatical Beauty*. Sabatical Beauty, 20 Dec. 2015. Web. 20 Dec. 2015.

---. “Academia, You Don’t Own Me Any Longer.” *The Professor Is In*. The Professor Is In, 19 Feb. 2016. Web. 19 Feb. 2016.

Kondo, Dorinne. *About Face: Performing Race in Fashion and Theater*. New York: Routledge, 1997. Print.

Kramer, Elizabeth J., et al. “Cultural factors influencing the mental health of Asian Americans.” *Western Journal of Medicine* 176.4 (2002): n.pag. Web. 10 May 2017.

Lai, Larissa. *Salt Fish Girl*. Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2002. Print.

Lazzarato, Maurizio. “Immaterial Labor.” Translated by Paul Colilli and Ed Emory. *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*. Eds. Paulo Virdo and Michael Hardt. Minneapolis and London: U of Minnesota P, 1996. 133-147. Print.

Le, Thomas. "No More Saving Face: Empowering Asian-American Women to Seek Mental Health Treatment." *Pulitzer Center*. Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting. 26 April 2016. Web. 6 March 2017.

Lee, Christopher. "The Lateness of Asian Canadian Studies." *Amerasia Journal* 33.2 (2007) 1-17. Print.

Lee, Rachel C. *The Exquisite Corpse of Asian America: Biopolitics, Biosociality, and Posthuman Ecologies.* New York: New York UP, 2014. Print.

Lewis, Luke. "#nomakeupselfie—why it worked." *The Guardian.* Guardian News and Media Limited. 25 March 2014. Web. 5 March 2017.

Levin, Sam and Nicky Woolf. "A million people 'check in' at Standing Rock on Facebook to support Dakota pipeline protestors." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media Limited, 1 Nov. 2016. Web. 11 May 2017.

Levinas, Emmanuel. *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 1969. Print.

Lorde, Audre. *A Burst of Light: Essays*. Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1988. Print.

Lowe, Lisa. *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1996. Print.

---. *The Intimacies of Four Continents.* Durham and London: Duke UP, 2015. Print.

Lye, Colleen. *America's Asia: Racial Form and American Literature, 1893-1945*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton UP, 2005. Print.

MacLellan, Ainslie. "Real Talk on Race: Blackface performances a hit in bygone Montreal." *CBC News*. CBC/Radio-Canada, 23 March 2016. Web. 17 May 2017.

"Madama Butterfly." *La Monnaie / De Munt*. La Monnaie / De Munt, n.d. Web. 10 May 2017.

Madrigal, Alexis C. "What Is Snapchat?" *The Atlantic*. The Atlantic, 15 Nov. 2013. Web. 1 Dec. 2016.

Mann, Helen. "Canadian women denied entry to U.S. after Muslim prayers found on her phone." *CBC Radio*. CBC-Radio Canada, 8 Feb. 2017, Web. 1 March 2017.

Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Chicago: C.H. Kerr & Company: 1906. Print.

Mergeay, Marie. "'Cio-Cio-San is a song, a melody.'" *The Opera Platform*. The Opera Platform, 31 Jan. 2017. Web. 10 May 2017.

McDonald, Soraya Nadia. "Internet hoaxers tricked the world into believing this random Sikh guy was a Paris terrorist." *The Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 16 Nov. 2015. Web. 16 Nov. 2015.

McRuer, Robert. *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*. New York: New York UP, 2006. Print.

Meyer, Robinson. "The Repeated Racism of Snapchat." *The Atlantic*. The Atlantic Monthly Group, 13 Aug. 2016. Web. 13 Aug. 2016.

Meyers, Laurie. "Asian-American mental health." *Monitor on Psychology* 37.2 (2006): 44. Print.

Miller, Brandon. "'Dude, Where's Your Face?' Self-Presentation, Self-Description, and Partner Preferences on a Social Networking Application for Men Who Have Sex

with Men: A Content Analysis." *Sexuality and Culture* 19.4 (2015): 637-658. Print.

Mountz, Alison, et al., "For Slow Scholarship: A Feminist Politics of Resistance through Collective Action in the Neoliberal University." *ACME* 14.4 (2015): n.pag. Web. 1 Sept. 2016.

Moy, James. "David Henry Hwang's 'M. Butterfly' and Philip Kan Gotanda's 'Yankee Dawg You Die': Repositioning Chinese American Marginality on the American Stage." *Theatre Journal* 42.1 (1990): 48-56. Print.

Nakamura, Lisa. *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet.* Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008. Print.

"Natural Beauty." *YouTube*, uploaded by Michelle Phan, 19 July 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Om_IO2g_FM.

Nishime, LeiLani. "Whitewashing Yellow Futures in Ex Machina, Cloud Atlas, and Advantageous: Gender, Labor, and Technology in Sci-fi Film." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 20:1 (2017): 29-49. Print.

Ng, Konrad. "#Linsanity." *Amerasia Journal* 38.3 (2012): 129-132. Print.

Nguyen, Hoang Tan. *A View From The Bottom: Asian American Masculinity and Sexual Representation.* Durham and London: Duke UP, 2014. Print.

Nguyen, Mimi Thi. "The Hoodie as Sign, Screen, Expectation, and Force." *Signs* 40.4 (2015): 791-815. Print.

Nguyen, Viet Thanh. *Race and Resistance: Literature and Politics in Asian America.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. Print.

Niu, Greta Aiyu. "Techno-Orientalism, Nanotechnology, Posthumans, and Post-Posthumans in Neal Stephenson's and Linda Nagata's Science Fiction." *MELUS* 33.4 (2008): 73-96. Print.

O'Brien, Chris. "A look at Apple's insanely ambitious tree-planting plans for its new spaceship campus." *VB*. Venture Beat, 4 June 2016. Web. 1 Sept. 2016.

O'Neill, Megan. "How much money do the top grossing YouTube partners make?" *Social Times.* SocialTimes. 26 Aug. 2010. Web. 1 Sept. 2014.

"Our Approach to Privacy." *Snap Inc.* Snap Inc. 2017. Web. 1 March 2017.

Palumbo-Liu, David. *Asian/American: Historical Crossings of a Racial Frontier*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999. Print.

Panela, Rhea. "Asian American YouTube stars sidestep Hollywood. *The Seattle Globalist*. The Seattle Globalist, 8 March 2016. Web. 17 May 2017.

Parikka, Jussi. "Digital Monsters, Binary Aliens – Computer Viruses, Capitalism and the Flow of Information." *Fibreculture Journal* 4 (2005): n. pag. Web. 2 Oct. 2015.

Parreñas, Rhacel Salazar. "Transgressing the Nation-State: The Partial Citizenship and 'Imagined (Global) Community' of Migrant Filipina Domestic Workers." *Signs* 26.4 (2001): 1129-1154. Print.

Payne, Robert. *The Promiscuity of Network Culture: Queer Theory and Digital Media*. New York: Routledge, 2015. Print.

Pham, Minh-Ha. *Asians Wear Clothes on the Internet: Race, Gender, and the Work of Personal Style Blogging*. Durham and London: Duke UP, 2015. Print.

Phu, Thy. *Picturing Model Citizens: Civility in Asian American Visual Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple UP, 2012. Print.

Puar, Jasbir K., and Amit S. Rai. "Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Making of Docile Patriots." *Social Text* 20.3 (2002): 117-148. Print.

---. "The Remaking of a Model Minority: Perverse Projectiles under the Specter of (Counter)Terrorism." *Social Text* 22.3 (2004): 75-104. Print.

Pung, Alice. *Unpolished Gem: My Mother, My Grandmother, and Me*. Melbourne: Black Inc., 2006. Print.

Richardson, Ingrid. "Faces, Interfaces, Screens: Relational Ontologies of Framing, Attention and Distraction." *Transformations* 18 (2010): n. pag. Web. 1 Jan. 2016.

"ROBOT CHIC." *YouTube*, uploaded by Michelle Phan, 25 April 2015.

Rodaway, Paul. *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense, and Place*. London: Routledge, 1994. Print.

Roh, David S., Betsy Huang, and Greta A. Niu, eds. *Techno-Orientalism: Imagining Asia in Speculative Fiction, History, and Media*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers UP, 2015. Print.

Rozovsky, Julia. "The five keys to a successful Google team." *The Water Cooler*. Google, 17 Nov. 2015. Web. 1 Sept. 2016.

Schuman, Rebecca. "Radical Self-Care." *Slate.* The Slate Group, 7, Jan. 2016. Web. 7 Jan. 2016.

Shaburova, Elena. "Method for real time video processing for changing proportions of an object in the video." US 20150221118 A1. 6 Aug. 2015. Web. 1 March 2017.

Shafi, Hana. "Let's Talk About The Corporatization of Mental Health." *Torontoist.* Ink Truck Media, 27 Jan. 2016. Web. 15 May 2017.

Sheldon, Rebekah. "Spectrum Orders: Digital Science Fiction and the Corrected Present." *Digital Science Fiction* 43.1 (2016): 35-50. Print.

Shimizu, Celine Parreñas. "Screening Shirtless AZN Men: The Full Frontal Power of Intimate Internet Industries." *positions: east asia cultures critique* 24.1 (2016): 231-252. Print.

Shipley, Jesse Weaver. "Selfie Love: Public Lives in an Era of Celebrity Pleasure, Violence, and Social Media" *American Anthropologist* 117.2 (2015): 403-413. Print.

Singh, Jasmeet. "Gotta be more careful of how I say things at airport security." *Vine,* uploaded by Jus Reign, 23 July 2015,

---. "need to be careful of how I say things around my school friends." *Vine,* uploaded by Jus Reign, 26 Sept. 2015.

---. "need to watch what I say around my friends (pt.3)." *Vine*, uploaded by Jus Reign. 18 Dec. 2015.

---. Untitled Snapchat story. *Snapchat,* uploaded by Jus Reign, 22 Feb. 2016.

---. Untitled Snapchat story. *Snapchat,* uploaded by Jus Reign, 8 Feb. 2017.

Sohn, Stephen Hong. "Introduction: Alien/Asian: Imagining the Racialized Future." *MELUS* 33.4 (2008): 5-22. Print.

Song, Min Hyoung. *Strange Future: Pessimism and the 1992 Los Angeles Riots.* Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2005. Print.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. London and New York: Routledge, 1998.

"Suicide Among Asian-Americans." *American Psychological Association*. American Psychological Association. n.d. Web. 5 March 2017.

Suzuki, Shunryu. *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. Boston and London: Shambala, 2006. Print.

Terranova, Tiziana. *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age*. Ann Arbor, MI: Pluto Press, 2004. Print.

Thobani, Sunera. *Exalted Subjects: Studies in the Making of Race and Nation in Canada.* Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2007. Print.

Thomson, Jimmy. "Facebook users check in at Standing Rock in North Dakota, hoping to confuse police." *CBC News*. CBC/Radio-Canada, 31 Oct. 2016. Web. 17 May 2017.

Tong, Davin. "Chinese Guy Gets iPhone 5." *YouTube*, uploaded by pyrobooby, 22 Sept. 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7yyE6hZNDo.

---. "CHINESE GUY THINKS LA LA LAND IS A RACIST MOVIE." *YouTube*, uploaded by pyrobooby. 3 Feb. 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DeqiUsYJXDo.

---. "Chinese Guy's Real Eyes and Real Voice." *YouTube*, uploaded by pyrobooby. 12 Sept. 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKJPC2N3omM.

---. "Chinese Man and Black Man Eat Fried Chicken." *YouTube*, uploaded by pyrobooby, 12 June 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhQk61zvQ2c.

Tran, Kim. "5 Self Care Tips for Activists – 'Cause Being Woke Shouldn't Mean your Spirit's Broke." *Everyday Feminism*. Everyday Feminism, 17 April, 2016. Web. 17 April.2016.

Turing, Alan M. "Computing Machinery and Intelligence." *Oxford Journals* 59.236 (1950): 433-460. Print.

Usinger, Mike. "Vancouver's YouTube sensation Peter Chao the offender of the realm." *Straight.com*. Vancouver Free Press. 4 Aug. 2010. Web. 1 Sept 2014.

Vargas, Jose Antonio. "Here's what I've learned about #NotYourMule." *Medium*. Medium Corporation, 1 May 2016. Web. 15 May 2016.

Villi, Mikko. "Visual Mobile Communication on the Internet: Patterns in Publishing and Messaging Camera Phone Photographs." *Mobile media practices, presence and politics: The challenge of being seamlessly mobile*. Eds. Kathleen M. Cumiskey and Larissa Hjorth. New York: Routledge, 2013. 214-227. Print.

Viola, Paul and Michael J. Jones. "Robust Real-Time Face Detection." *International Journal of Computer Vision* 57.2 (2004): 137-154. Print.

Vora, Kalindi. "The Transmission of Care: Affective Economies and Indian Call Centers." *Intimate Labors: Cultures, Technologies, and the Politics of Care*. Eds. Eileen Boris and Rhacel Salazar Parreñas. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2010. 33-48. Print.

Wald, Priscilla. *Contagious: Cultures, Carriers, and the Outbreak Narrative.* Durham and London: Duke UP, 2014. Print.

Weheliye, Alexander. *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human.* Durham: Duke UP, 2014. Print.

Wemple, Erik. "Fox News mixes up footage of grieving Asians." *The Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 5 May 2014. Web. 1 Sept. 2014.

Whippman, Ruth. "Actually, Let's Not Be in the Moment." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 26 Nov. 2016. Web. 1 Dec. 2016.

Wiener, Norbert. *The Human Use of Human Beings*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950. Print.

Wingfield, Nick. "Forget Beanbag Chairs. Amazon is Giving its Workers Treehouses." *The New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 10 July 2016. Web. 1 Sept. 2016.

Wischhover, Cheryl. "Is the Korean Beauty Regimen a Feminist Act? Depends Whom You Ask." *Fashionista.* Breaking Media Inc., 8 Jan. 2016. Web. 8 Jan., 2016.

Wood, Dana. "K-Beauty: The Exhausting Skin-Care Regimen that May Be Worth the Effort." *The Wall Street Journal*. Dow Jones and Company, 6 April 2016. Web. 1 Aug. 2016.

Yang, Fan. *Faked in China: Nation Branding, Counterfeit Culture, and Globalization*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2016. Print.

---. "Fiscal Orientalism: China Panic, the Indebted Citizen, and the Spectacle of National Debt." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 19.3 (2016): 375-396. Print.