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How We Became Human: Race, Robots, and the Asian American Body

by

Margaret Ji Rhee

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Ethnic Studies

and the Designated Emphasis

in

New Media Studies

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Co-chair

Professor Charis Thompson, Co-chair

Professor Keith Feldman

Professor Daniel O'Neil

Professor Ken Goldberg

Fall 2014

Abstract

How We Became Human: Race, Robots, and the Asian American Body

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Margaret Ji Rhee

Doctor of Philosophy in Ethnic Studies

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Professor Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Co-Chair

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How We Became Human: Race, Robots, and the Asian American Body is a theoretical, cultural, and sociological study of race, robots, and the Asian American body in the context of the United States. In this dissertation, I relate major instances of the robot as racialized and the Asian American body as mechanized, in order to explain the intersections of race and/as emerging technology. Specifically, my dissertation addresses a key concern of our digital age—the human/machine analytic—through the lens of race, gender, and sexuality. It investigates discourses of mechanization and racialization, focusing on how technology and racialization intertwine, and examines the representational processes of making and unmaking human, machine, and animal demarcations within the context of U.S. empire. The contemporary moment, in its transformation of culture through technology, demands a transformation of our analysis of race through the lens of technology. Specifically, I examine the Asian American body, and I show how industry and race have intersected in their development, and informed one another to shape what I call the Asian and/as Automaton discourse--the racialization of Asian Americans as robot.

Prompted by comparative questions surrounding race and the demarcations between human/machine/animal, I focus on the particularities of Asian American racialization and the human/machine analytic. In particular, the Asian American body offers a story in which objecthood and racial denigration can be understood through the key concerns of labor, aesthetics, and exclusion. I investigate discourses of mechanization and Asian American racialization during three periods of technological transformation: the mid-nineteenth century, the 1960s, and the contemporary moment, focusing on how technology and racialization intertwine. These three periods demarcate convergences of technological innovation and Asian migration to the United States. One of the

interventions of this dissertation is to place the two "emerging technologies," race and information/industrial technology, in analytic conversation with one another. I argue that although our understanding of the automaton is largely without personhood, the automaton has in fact, historically, been deeply racialized. Specifically, while the affordances of posthumanity may be available to particular bodies, racialization has rendered Asian American bodies as falling within the analytic of "machine." I demonstrate that the robot in particular is a primary locus of racialization for Asian Americans, and I trace how technology figures in the Asian American story—a narrative that is transnational and historical in its genealogy.

This dissertation's inquiry into the intersections of the Asian American and the automaton begins with the industrial period of early Asian migration. In Chapter One, I analyze nineteenth-century industrialization and early Chinese labor to show how industry and race have intersected in their development and informed one another to shape what I call the Asian and/as Automaton discourse. While the steam engine can be considered an industrial emerging technology, social formations such as race and gender have not been placed within the analytic. Through a sociohistorical analysis of nineteenth-century editorial cartoons and literature, I argue that we can understand race not only as a social construction but also as an emerging technology. I illuminate how the racialization of Chinese laborers in the nineteenth century was contingent upon what I call technological tropes that mechanized the Chinese as "machine" through repetitive stories. These technological tropes reshaped and naturalized the boundaries of the human/machine analytic.

In Chapter Two, I further examine the Asian and/as Automaton discourse through Nam June Paik's robotic art of the 1960s. Celebrated as the first video artist, Paik used technology in an innovative way that transcends binary opposition and embraces hybridity. Based on an analysis of primary sources from the Paik archive at the Smithsonian, I argue that while Asian Americans are denigrated as "robotic," Paik and other Asian new media artists and writers have engaged in racial recalibration—a racial formation that occurs through aesthetic tinkering, hacking, and recreating with emergent technologies. Paik offers a peculiarly interesting case study, as his robotic art has historically not been positioned as racial resistance within art history or Asian American studies. Yet, through an analysis of Paik's writings and visual culture, we learn that the robot is not only central to his racialization as "it," but that he utilizes the robot as resistance. In this chapter, I also highlight the importance of labor; with an attempt to understand how labor connects to the ways Asian and/as Automata discourse has been constructed.

Finally, in Chapter Three, I examine the politics of contemporary Asian American cultural representation through digital theory. Specifically, I theorize the digital as drag by tracing the politics of "the real" and "the fake" in Asian American literature, digital documentary, and queer theory. This chapter rereads computer scientist Alan Turing's test for artificial intelligence and questions of the virtual through the lens of gender, race, and sexuality. Specifically, I theorize the digital as drag by tracing the politics of "the real" and "the fake" through the figure of the digitized Asian American drag king. I argue

that our notions of inauthenticity have changed and that they must do so in a time of technological transformation.

The cultural intersections of the Asian American and the robot shed light on the concept of belonging in our national imaginary, insofar as the robot has been utilized as a trope for the "second class citizen," and it is with the question, how (did) we became (become) human and posthuman, that I hope to further our investigation of humans, machines, and animals. I demonstrate that Asian American ethnoracialization became and becomes dialectically entwined with the machine and robot. By doing so, analysis of the Asian American as robot helps us to become more specific about racializations and intersectionality, and it tells us how the robot, machine, and the digital is all at once, also always imbued with categories of difference.

Dedication

For my family, and the immigrants from the future

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My late father and his untimely death haunted me often in my dreams; he gave me the courage to write, he held my hand, and said, let's go even when I didn't want to.

Race, Robots, and the Inhuman: An Introduction

This earth asks for so little from us human beings.
—Joy Harjo, *How We Became Human, New and Selected Poems, 1975–2002*

In other words, the human being truly becomes a subject—that is, separated from the animal—in the struggle and the work through which he or she confronts death (understood as the violence of negativity).
—Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics"

Who is machine, who is creature, what is human?
—Glen A Mazis, *Humans, Animals, Machines: Blurring Boundaries*

*

In *How We Became Human: New and Selected Poems,* Native poet Joy Harjo of the Muscogee tribe, shifts denigrating demarcations between the human and animal using an indigenous epistemological paradigm.[1] Historically, the boundary between human and animal was maintained to justify the denigration of nonwhites as inferior during the European colonial expansion of the United States. As philosopher Kelly Oliver argues, the "exploitation and denigration of people traditionally involves viewing them as animals, treating them like animals, and justifying their inferior status on the basis of their supposed animality or proximity to animals."[2] The racist and colonial oppressions experienced by Indigenous peoples were thus justified using the "Western" logic of denigrating animals and equating "inferior" Indigenous peoples with "animals," where the term "Western" encompasses both European intellectual ideas and U.S. discourses. Philosopher Nelson Maldonado-Torres offers how the Western embodies a "master morality of domination and control at the heart of racial policies, imperial projects, and wars of invasion."[3] Theorizations about animals can be found in the philosophy of such European thinkers as Rene Descartes and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose writings parallel ideologies that are evident in historical and the contemporary settler colonialism, which was largely opposite to Indigenous logics. Harjo's work deconstructs the violent equations that denigrated Indigenous peoples and African slaves by the fiction of their "supposed animality."

Rather than reinforcing the colonial logic distinguishing humans and animals, Harjo reestablishes an indigenous nonbinaristic epistemology of the human. Harjo writes that "there is no separation between poetry, the stories and events that link them, or the music that holds all together; just as there is no separation between human, animal, plant, sky, and earth."[4] Harjo's likening of the genres of poetry, stories, and music to natural phenomena such as plant, sky, and earth parallels the connections between humans and animals. Harjo points out that according to an Iroquois legend, "The Woman Who Fell From the Sky," the world began with the kinship between an animal and a woman. In the legend, the woman fell from the sky and, with the assistance of other animals such as birds, safely landed on a great sea turtle, on which she then gave birth and human existence on earth began. This legend provides an alternative worldview that rejects denigrating hierarchies between humans and animals. Harjo responds to racism's brutal ramifications for Native American people's bodies, such as the untimely deaths of Native American activists, with a resistance centered around the idea that animals should not be

conquered—as, for example, horses are "a kind of love."[5] Harjo's collection *How We Became Human* does not reify the human but instead delves deeply into the logics of racism through a strategy of racial resistance that deconstructs the boundaries that separate animal and human.

The human/animal distinction has been central to Euro-American modernity's conceptualization of race, and a third term, less analyzed within racial theory, has also played a central role: the machine. As a mechanism, race is inherently imbricated in the shifting demarcations between human, animal, and machine. Race has been utilized, as fiction and technique, to maintain differences and to justify denigration and subjugation. Although Harjo does not include the machine in her analysis, Western demarcations of the human in fact oscillate between the machine and the animal, both discursively and materially. In his reading of Derrida, posthumanist theorist Cary Wolfe argues that we must consider not only "the relationship of the human and animal, but also between the organism and the mechanical or technological."[6] In demarcating the boundaries of the human, the machine—like the animal—prompts a comparative racial analysis. While the animal functioned as a mechanism for justifying slavery and objecthood for Indigenous and Black people, the machine has largely been utilized in the service of Asian racialization and subjugation.

How We Became Human: Race, Robots, and the Asian American Body pays homage to Harjo's title and to her questions, politics, and poetics on the human/animal analytic. At the same time, it plays on the title of N. Kate Hayles's scholarly monograph *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, which investigates the human/machine analytic by way of the posthuman.[7] Hayles's title refers to the succession from the human to the posthuman, and her formative book outlined ways in which the lineage was not yet complete but was rather a shifting process with technical and political complexities. The words "we" and "became" convey what Hayles describes as the "shock" that her readers will experience as they realize that the future is already here. Through the ironies of her title, Hayles qualifies the gleeful technotopian movement away from embodiment, a move that she critiques throughout her monograph. However, like many theorists working in posthumanist theory, she does not include the politics of race in her analysis of the human/machine/animal analytic. The title of this dissertation indicates my attempt to situate an understanding of racialized humans at the intersection of the concerns Harjo and Hayles raise about the human. The tie between Harjo and Hayles also signals a connection between two seemingly disparate disciplines: ethnic studies, and new media and science and technology studies. Later in this introduction, I hope to show that the technologies of theory and interdisciplinary analysis between the fields are crucial. In particular, exemplary theorists in these fields such as Charis Thompson, Jenny Reardon, and Michael Omi have provided intersectional analyses of race, science, and technology.[8] Thus, the "human" in Harjo's work and the "posthuman" in Hayles's study must coexist: they must meet and say "hello."

How We Became Human: Race, Robots, and the Asian American Body is a theoretical, cultural, and sociological study of race, robots, and the Asian American body in the context of the United States. I will relate major instances of the robot as racialized and of the Asian American body as mechanized, in order to explain the intersections of race and/as emerging technology. Specifically, my dissertation addresses a key concern of our digital age—the human/machine analytic—through the lens of race, gender, and sexuality. It investigates discourses of mechanization and racialization, focusing on how technology and racialization intertwine, and examines the representational processes of making and unmaking human, machine, and animal demarcations within the context of U.S. empire. The human/machine

analytic is a narrative that is transnational and historical in genealogy. The contemporary moment, in its transformation of culture through technology, demands a transformation of our analysis of race through the lens of technology. Specifically, I examine the Asian American body, and I show how industry and race have intersected in their development and informed one another to shape what I call the Asian and/as Automaton discourse--the racialization of Asian American as machine.

When utilizing the term Asian American, I refer to what sociologist Yen Le Espiritu has termed as panethnicity," the generalization of solidarity among ethnic subgroups."[9] Le Espiritu points out how hegemonic racial grouping lends itself to protective group formation such as the racial term Asian American. However, when analyzing the intersections of technology and the Asian and/as Automaton discourse, I refer in the first and second chapters specifically to an Asian American racialization which is East Asian: Japanese, Chinese, and Korea. Shaped by historical relationships with the U.S., the term techno-orientalism refers to a discourse from the 1960s and onward that promoted stereotypes about Japan and other East Asian countries such as the Republic of Korea, Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, and Singapore as highly technologized societies.[10]

While ethnic groups are seen as homologous and for group interests, the term Asian American is also fraught. As Viet Thanh Nguyen writes,

> Asian America (is) a hegemonic construction built in response to the dynamics of racial formation and complicit in reproducing racial formation's management of power through an inadequate representative categorization that ignores issues of domination, rivalry, antagonism, and inequality.[11]

A part of this "conception" includes the differences within the category of Asian American such as Southeast Asian racialization, which oftentimes but not always is differently racialized from East Asian racialization. Materially, Nguyen points out the issues of inequality within a category. For example, Southeast Asians have statistically smaller rates of educational attainment.[12] In different contexts such as Hawai'i, Asian ethnicity may be considered racial formations."[13] Filipino scholars have argued that being considered Pacific Islander may be a more apt designation than Asian Americans.[14] While I utilize the term Asian American throughout the dissertation, I do so noting that the first half of the study refers to a primarily East Asian racial formation. In the third chapter, I examine Filipino, Vietnamese, and Thai subjects, which prompts questions on the changing utilization of technology by Asian American subject.

Prompted by comparative questions surrounding race and the demarcations between human/machine/animal, I focus on the particularities of Asian American racialization and the human/machine analytic. In particular, the Asian American body offers a story in which objecthood and racial denigration can be understood through the key concerns of labor, aesthetics, and exclusion. I investigate discourses of mechanization and Asian American racialization during three periods of technological transformation: the mid-nineteenth century, the 1960s, and the contemporary moment, focusing on how technology and racialization intertwine. These three periods demarcate convergences of technological innovation and Asian migration to the United States. One of the interventions of this dissertation is to place the two "emerging technologies," race and information/industrial technology, in analytic conversation with one another. I argue that although our understanding of the automaton is largely without

personhood, the automaton has in fact, historically, been deeply racialized. Specifically, while the affordances of posthumanity may be available to particular bodies, racialization has rendered Asian American bodies as falling within the analytic of "machine." I demonstrate that the robot in particular is a primary locus of racialization for Asian Americans, and I trace how technology figures in the Asian American story—a narrative that is transnational and historical in its genealogy.

"Immigrants From the Future"—*The Economist*

In March 2014, a special issue of *The Economist*—"Rise of the Robots"—published a report on robots entitled "Immigrants From the Future."[15] The report itself was nothing new, as special issues on robots have been published before. For example, *Time Magazine* released a special issue in 2012 that (ironically) was identically entitled "Rise of the Robots," and both publications illuminate the ever-growing fascination with and trepidation about the role of artificial beings in society.[16] Yet *The Economist*'s special report is particularly interesting because of the title, with its emphasis on immigrants and the future. While race is not mentioned, the trope of the robot and immigration is evoked through mention of the Russian-born American science fiction writer Isaac Asimov: "His robot stories, and those of his successors, were immigrant stories. Except that the robots are immigrants not from abroad but from the future."[17] As noted in *The Economist*'s report, Asimov's stories are characterized as "immigrant" stories that explored issues of difference. While immigrants are not central characters in Asimov's work, robots are largely featured as second-class laborers. As Jasia Reichardt writes in *Robots: Fact, Fiction, and Prediction*,

> Indeed, in literature the robot has become a metaphor for a second-class citizen. Because the robot is made from metal, because it has been manufactured rather than grown, because it thinks with transistors rather than with protoplasm, it is almost always treated with condescension, even though it may demonstrate superhuman abilities, loyalty and talents.[18]

Like Asian Americans, robots have been characterized as immigrants, "second-class citizens," and laborers, and Reichardt's characterization of robots as having a second-class status bears an uncanny resemblance to stereotypes of Asian Americans. *The Economist*'s report focuses on how the number of robots will increase, as will their capacities, prompting further questions about the position of immigrants from the future. Moreover, the inclusion of immigrants from "overseas" often troubles the definition of the citizen and the human, the issue of belonging, and the distinction between human and machine.

The Robot: The Locus of Asian American Racial Formation

In *Immigrant Acts*, Lisa Lowe argues that U.S. interests recruited labor and capital from Asia through immigration as a "crucial locus," and that Asian Americans' immigration to the United States has provided a " locus of meanings" through various realms such as the "legal, political, economic, cultural, and aesthetic."[19] She provides a compelling and formative Asian American studies argument about the ways the U.S. nation-state has significantly determined Asian American racialization through what she characterizes as "the apparatus of immigration

laws and policies"—with citizenship "defined over and against the Asian immigrant."[20] Thus, she claims, "immigration … can be understood as the most important historical and discursive site of Asian American formation through which the national and global economic, the cultural and the legal spheres are modulated."[21]

In arguing that immigration is a locus of legal and political restrictions on Asians as other, Lowe touches upon the characterization of Asian immigration through discourses of the robotic.[22] She explains that the Asian immigrant served as a "screen" and "phantasmic site" that surfaced as a series of threats to the U.S. national body, including "the automaton whose inhuman efficiency will supersede American ingenuity."[23] While Asian American stereotypes certainly include gendered tropes such as the "seductress" and the "treacherous domestic," characterization of the Asian American as an "automaton" (an early term for the robot) may bear deeper and more pervasive implications for Asian American racialization. Because she focuses on immigration as the only and "central" locus of this racialization, Lowe only inadvertently notes the role of the figure of the automaton in shaping Asian immigration, racialization, and resistance.

With the increasing influence of technology, it is crucial to rethink racialization within the machine/human analytic. Asian American racialization is distinctive because of its deep imbrication with the machine, specifically, the robot. The automaton or robot is much more than merely one of a "series" of characterizations of the Asian threat; it is rather a key locus of Asian American racialization that is intersectional with immigration and labor. It is important to qualify classed differences within Asian immigration, particularly in regards to labor. As feminist and ethnic studies sociologist Evelyn Nakano Glenn writes, "both race and gender have been incorporated as fundamental organizing axes of the labor system in the United States, and in turn the labor system has been organized in ways that create and re-create race-gender categories and relationships."[24] Anthropologist Aiwa Ong also points out how Asian immigrants in the "global economy" include upper class business workers who complicate our understandings of "transnational flows" and the immigrant.[25] The robot, however, is a figure that cuts across class lines and is intersectional with the Asian American immigrant. As in genetics, the locus is a central point and fixture that shapes and codes, and an understanding of the locus of Asian American racial formation must include not only immigration, but also the enduring conceptual power of the "machine." We also need to consider the intersections of science and technology, because this will help us understand Asian American racialization in the present, as robots, and their labor, as "immigrants from the future."

Asian as Machine-Like: Race Formation and/as Technology

In her essay "Race and/as Technology or How To Do Things To Race," new media theorist Wendy Chun argues that the Asian American is configured as robotic:

> The human is constantly created through the jettisoning of the Asian/Asian American other as robotic, as machine-like and not quite human, as not quite lived. And also I would add, the African American other as primitive, as too human.[26]

Chun's argument highlights how the human is created at the expense of the "machine-like and not quite human" Asian/Asian American. Whites are positioned as "human," while Asians/Asian Americans are racialized as "robotic" and African Americans are racialized as "too human" (here Chun highlights how African Americans have been historically stereotyped as primitive and too

human rather than as machine-like). Although she provides critical interventions, Chun's characterization of Asian Americans as "robotic" and "machine-like" suggests the relationship between the two is of similitude. While the Asian robot may be a stereotype, trope, or controlling image, I hope to demonstrate the racialization of Asian/Asian Americans and the robot are dialectically connected. This connection between the Asian American and the robot is co-constitutive within the U.S. imaginary, and tracing these the convergences reveals configurations of race and resistance. Chun's formulation, by suggesting similitude, does not demonstrate these contours of dialectical connection between the Asian American and the robot.

Additionally, Chun does not proceed to unpack why Asians are racialized as "machine-like" while African Americans are characterized as "too human." Black diaspora studies scholars such as Saidiya Hartman and Fred Moten have crucially charted how the characterization of African Americans as "objects" and "unhuman" was used to legitimize slavery and other state-sanctioned forms of violence.[27] But where did the stereotype of the Asian as robotic or as an automaton come from? Exploring historical antecedents as powerful incarnations of the dialectic contributes to our understanding of the Asian as machine.

In her essay, Chun builds upon racial formation theory through a new media studies lens, and she argues for a formulation that broadens our definitions of "technology":

> Could "race" be not simply an object of representation and portrayal, of knowledge or truth, but also a technique that one uses, even as one is used by it— a carefully crafted, historically inflected system of tools, of mediation, or of "enframing" that builds history and identity?[28]

Chun asks whether race can be considered "carefully crafted" as a "technique," like the design of a new Apple iPod, genome sequencing for lung tissue, or nineteenth-century railroad tracks. Reconsidering race not simply as representation but as a system of tools may help us understand the intersectional dynamics of technology and race during the nineteenth century as well as in the present. Chun's argument offers an understanding of the relations between human, machine, and animal that encompasses race, which has not always been given a central role.

Chun builds on previous paradigms of race and racism that have largely been articulated through theories based on ethnicity, class, nation, and racial formation. In 1986, the sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant developed a theory of race and racism in *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960's to the 1990's*. They argued for the centrality of race, rather than paradigms of class, nation, or ethnicity, as the organizing factor of difference: "Racial formation is the socio-historical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed."[29] Chun's theoretical and political intervention of "race and/as technology" prompts an intersectional reading of racial formation theory and "race and/as technology."

Chun provides a wide-ranging and succinct overview of developments in racial theory by focusing on debates concerning the cultural vs. the biological, from eighteenth-century racial science to the present day. Chun submits that "focusing on race as a technology, as mediation thus allows us to see the continuing function of race, regardless of its 'essence.' It also highlights that race has never been biological or cultural but rather a means by which both are established and negotiated."[30] While Chun cited the social, political, and theoretical conversations in which racial formation theory intervened as "influential," she did not contextualize them. Given our current antibiological racial paradigm, in which conservatives cite "social constructionism" to

support racist policies (as Omi writes in "'Slippin' Into Darkness: The (Re)Biologization of Race") it seems crucial to provide a mapping, as improper as we can make it, and outline these particular histories and theoretical movements. How should race and/as technology be conceptualized as *formation*? I submit that conceptualizing race as not only technology but as *emerging* technology may help locate important trajectories, nuances, and processes of racialization.

Robots

If the robot is a central locus of racialization for Asian Americans, imbricated with immigration and labor, how do we further understand the role of robots and humans in Western society? Robots are not only contemporary figures of fascination, as the special reports in *Time* and *The Economist* may suggest; they have been a source of awe, intrigue, and trepidation for several centuries. Scholarly monographs and art books about robots are for the most part fairly recent and include *Human Robots in Myth and Science* by John Cohen (1966) and *Robots* by Jasia Reichardt (1978). Both of these works explore the historical figure of the robot. While Reichardt's *Robots* focuses mainly on their literary and cinematic representations, Cohen's work is more psychological, scholarly, and is largely regarded as a key text in the history of the robot. Other theorists have also written influentially about the robot, such as the roboticist Masahiro Mori. Although Mori is Japanese, his ideas about the "uncanny valley"—that people's feelings of rapport with machines increase as machines become more lifelike and then plateau when they become "too" lifelike—have been formative with respect to U.S. robotics, cultural theory, and science fiction.[31] Roboticists and new media artists Ken Goldberg and Eduardo Kac have respectively formatively produced films and articles about the robot and robotic art.[32] Despina Kakoudaki and Jenny Rhee have examined literary representations of the robot in recent scholarship.[33] In addition, work on cyborgs and artificial intelligence sheds light on the man/machine divide, and the robot in particular.

In *Sublime Dreams of Living Machines: The Automaton in the European Imagination,* historian Minsoo Kang offers the first comprehensive historical and theoretical study of the automaton that provides specific contexts for the robot's role in society. Kang's study examines intellectual and literary texts to explore what the European imagination thought about the self-propelled, life-imitating machine. As Kang writes, "For thousands of years, Westerners have been constructing, thinking about, and telling stories of automata, as many provocative examples of them, real and imaginary, can be found from ancient times to ours."[34] Kang argues that the concept of the automaton has played a significant role in the world of ideas, with the notion of the artificial entity appearing in some of the most important intellectual works in European history.[35] However, Kang writes, "Ultimately the real importance of the automaton idea lies in the crucial role it has played as a conceptual tool with which Western culture has pondered the very nature and boundaries of humanity."[36] As a conceptual tool, the automaton troubles the boundaries of the human and the machine and has also been utilized to uphold them.

Kang provides a rich comprehensive study of the historical contexts for shifts and changes in European representations of the automata. Kang writes that before the thirteenth century, there were no reports of actual automata. Yet between 1637 and 1748, during the Enlightenment, there were figures like Jacques de Vaucanson, who created a mechanical duck that was discussed in many theoretical works, while—as mentioned previously— Descartes discussed automata in his *Discourse on Method.* These characterizations of automata were

mostly positive, unlike those that would come from the late Enlightenment, between 1748 and 1793, when the understanding of the automaton was more negative. For example, Kang cites Rousseau as saying that automata are "just mere machines that do not think, and are made to think with springs."[37] Such negative characterizations were ubiquitous in literary and philosophical works, and the automaton came to be known as a figure devoid of freedom. Thus, there was a critique of the mechanistic, and the machine-man was stereotyped as someone with something missing, or, as Kang writes, as "simple, stupid, bumbling, cruel, callous."[38]

Kang argues that the Romantic and Industrial periods differed in their conceptions of the robot. In the Romantic period, the automaton took on a magical appearance, with a return of the fantastic, mysterious, and uncanny automaton of the ancient period. The conception of reason formed by Enlightenment notions of the mathematical and logical was rejected by the Romantics. Literature in the Romantic period emerged with fantastical elements. For example, in Mary Shelley's famous 1818 novel *Frankenstein*, which is cited as the first science fiction novel, Frankenstein, who is a dangerous creation, is also considered to be a monstrous automaton.[39] While philosophers a century earlier such as Descartes had thought of the human body as an elegant machine, the Romantics considered the automaton magical and dangerous. In the Industrial period, nineteenth-century technology once again shifted ideas about the automaton. Charles Babbage created the first mechanical calculating machine during this period, and because of the invention of steam, the automaton came to be considered a steam-driven device. Of this period, Kang writes:

> The notion of human beings as parts and extensions of machinery and of machines as animate creatures, forming a symbiotic whole, was often portrayed in a celebratory manner as the description of the smooth and productive functioning of the industrial system. But such imagery was also deployed for negative purposes. Those critical of unfettered industrialization used it to express their concerns, some of them imagining the machines as powerful monsters representing the inexorable and destructive force of modernity itself and others seeing the mechanized worker as the representation of dehumanization in the industrial environment.[40]

This discourse also included notions of the automaton and bodies as machines in terms of labor. Kang notes that literary and visual work during this period often included a "hybridization of humanity with machinery."[41]

Kang called his chapter covering the period 1914–1935 "The Revolt of the Robots," and he outlined how WWI prompted interwar anxieties about automata as destructive and dehumanizing aspects of modernity and technology. According to Kang, tropes of robots revolting were prominent during this period. Representative works include the Czech play *RUR* written by Karel Čapek, which marks the first use of the word "robot," and in the context of robot revolt.[42] Humans were killed by machine guns for the first time during this period, and the appearances of tanks and airplanes gave the impression of autonomous machines. Although concerns about technology prior to the war had centered on industrial dehumanization and its impact on nature/social worlds, the period 1914–1918 ushered in real experiences of terrifying machines and soldiers as mindless machines, shaping fears of the robot. In his conclusion, Kang indicates that future work on the robot should include the periods following the 1920s and should be extended to the U.S. context to engage with the impact of major technologies such as the atom bomb and the digital computer. More recent developments such as cybernetics, cyborg theory,

and artificial intelligence have also shaped conceptions of the robot. While each period is different, Kang's study reveals similar conceptions of the robot as uncanny, magical, and terrifying.

Today, the robot serves as a cultural juxtaposition to the human. As Kang points out, "referring to someone as a machine can be an expression of admiration, for the demonstration of great productivity at a task, unerring accuracy, and grace in its execution"[43] Yet he also notes that "when a person is called an automaton or a robot, it is usually a derogatory comment denoting someone who is stiff and awkward in speech or movement; one who lacks imagination, emotion, and spontaneity or a sense of humor; a fantastical follower of rules."[44] Similarly, *The Economist*'s title "Immigrants from the Future" speaks to the ways Asian Americans have been racialized in similar tropes, as humans with "great productivity" yet missing something by virtue of lacking "creativity" and "emotions." The cultural intersections of the Asian American and the robot shed light on the concept of belonging in our national imaginary, insofar as the robot has been utilized as a trope for the "second class citizen," and it is with the question, how (did) we became (become) human and posthuman, that I hope to further our investigation of humans, machines, and animals.

Humans, Machines, Animals

The human/machine/animal analytic is a formulation that has been theorized within Western philosophy, largely without consideration of racial formation. European philosophers such as Descartes, Rousseau, and Derrida theorized the differences and similarities between humans, machines, and animals. Cartesian philosophy is largely known and critiqued for its split between the mind and the body, but Descartes's dualism can also be understood through his analysis of automata and the ways he believed human cognition to differ from the workings of machines. As contemporary historian David Bates argues, "Descartes ... was interested in mapping systematically the unusual machinery of the body," and "the human body was a robotic information machine that was capable of interrupting itself."[45] While Bates provides an important tracing of the Cartesian blurring of the boundaries between human and machine, his and other contemporary scholars building upon Cartesian philosophy may inadvertently also elide how racialization, gender, and other differences of identity shapes and reshapes the demarcations of the human.

In this section, I demonstrate the inadequate engagement with racialization, and critique of the liberal human subject in contemporary philosophical engagement with human, animal, and machine boundaries. The liberal human subject emerges from Cartesian theorization and relies on the idea of a stable human and self. The lack of critical engagement of the liberal human subject often underlies the absence of a racial critique, although it is not mutually exclusive. This section traces the interventions contemporary philosophy has made on the binary between humans and machines and seeks to spot out how identity markers, such as race, has not been largely included within the analysis.

While "machines and humans are often taken to be in opposition," philosopher Glen A. Mazis writes in *Humans Animals Machines: Blurring Boundaries*:

> These three realms, I would contend, can only be thought through together. The boundaries of the human, animal, and machine overlap, dance within each other, and separate, or maybe they should separate at certain key moments, but these lines or

> arabesques have been barely drawn or even traced out for the intricacy and beauty of their movements.[46]

The connections between the human, animal, and the machine that "separate" but also "overlap" with one another at "key moments" prove to make the idea of the human both stable and unstable. Mazis also notes: "Yet, what seems most striking is that we have not really thought through globally the characteristics of the machine, whether machines are evolving in their characteristics, and what exactly their relationship is to the human being."[47] While Mazis's question about the machine prompts vital insights into the "global" characteristics of the machine and the evolution of its "relationship to the human being," his critique fails to question the category of human. Unlike Chun's articulation, Mazis's critique rests on the assumption of a stable and non-racialized human category.

The lack of a racial critique in Mazis's analysis can be found in other studies on the human, animal, and machine divide, and speaks to the larger elision of difference. In *Boundaries of Humanity: Humans, Animals, Machines*, editors James J. Sheehan and Morton Sosna compiled essays on the animal and the machine.[48] Yet, similarly to Mazis's articulation, the compilation contains neither mention of a critique of the liberal human subject nor an analysis of race. Although both books, which explicitly take on the question of the human/animal/machine, engage with Descartes and other philosophers, they do not critique either the construction of the human or racial issues their philosophy.

The Inhuman

This section will examine how within the scholarship of the 1990s, the critique of the liberal human subject was a central move. Spurred by technological advancements and informed by posthumanist theory, philosophers and theorists such as Jean-Francois Lyotard critiques the liberal human subject through the figure of the inhuman. Prompted by technological shifts in society, Lyotard is largely known for his book *The Postmodern Condition* where he develops critiques of humanism and technology, and he continues this critique in *The Inhuman*. In particular, in the essay "Can Thought Go On Without a Body?" Lyotard extends his critique of the liberal human subject though an examination of life, and he is critical of the move towards the technological. For Lyotard, the "inhuman" comprises technology and artificial intelligence's breakdown of boundaries between human and machine. Writing in 1991 and influenced by the prevalence of the computer, Lyotard asks the following questions about humankind:

> The suspicion they [technology and the inhuman] betray (in both senses of the word) is simple, although double: what if human beings, in humanism's sense, were in the process of, constrained into, becoming inhuman (that's the first part)? And (the second part), what if what is "proper" to humankind were to be inhabited by the inhuman?[49]

Lyotard is concerned with critiquing humanism's conception of the human but is also critical of the convergence of technology and the human, which he describes as inhuman. The essay is broken down into two parts, as a dialogue between He and She that points out the differences between humans and computers. "He" asks whether thought can go on without the body and is concerned that technology will make humans irrelevant. Through "She," Lyotard provides a critique of He, but with a She who asks that the body not be divorced from consciousness and that desire and pain be central, as well as gender.

While Lyotard does not mention race, Juliana Chang's analysis of Asian American literature portrays the inhuman through figures such as "the living dead, the animal, the antifetish, the death drive,"[50] "a cyborg-vagina-television, an aroused animated house,"[51] and the "Merciless." Chang troubles the boundaries of the human by cherishing the "inhuman," the "alien at the core of the nation, and indeed at the core of the human."[52] Rather than disavow the Asian American "inhuman," Chang instead reclaims it as a pleasurable and generative site for inquiry and the "core" of what it means to be human. By embracing the "inhuman" as a "powerful trope and force of counter hegemony," Chang's study questions the boundaries of the human by focusing on racialization. Chang argues that, "in contrast to the hegemonic belief that racial subjects should counter racist dehumanization by assimilating into normative humanity, the second-generation protagonists of these Asian American novels assume the role of the racial inhuman."[53] Rather than upholding the figure of the human, the suffering, the "void," Chang outlines inhuman characters who provide counter-resistance through rejection and destruction of "normative humanity." Chang demonstrates that "liberal subjecthood" and "citizenship" are not always an option for marginalized subjects such as Asian Americans. By focusing on the "inhuman" and characters that embrace it, Chang demonstrates that "liberal subjecthood constitutes, in fact, an oppressive and dissimulating fantasy."[54]

Both Chang and Lyotard trouble the idea of the inhuman yet their definitions differ from conceptualization of the inhuman within human rights discourse, in which the inhuman refers to "cruel" and "torture."[55] In larger popular knowledge, the inhuman typically refers to the opposite of human and specifically "lacking human qualities such as compassion or mercy."[56] Yet, Lyotard utilizes the inhuman as a figure of technology, while Chang defines the inhuman as an alien figure that eschews liberal and normative subjecthood as a mode of resistance. Both refer to the inhuman as non-human figures. Although Chang and Lyotard define the inhuman in ways that are generative, rethinking the ways the inhuman refers to a non-human figure who lacks compassion and humanity helps shape our understandings of characterizations of robots and racialization. While both Chang and Lyotard offer refreshing departures from the term inhuman, interrogating the space, definitions, and formations between and of the inhuman and human remains important. It is to a theorization of race and coloniality to which we shall now turn.

The Human

As an intervention to the scholarship on humans, machines, and animals, Sylvia Wynter submits that the human was congealed through inhuman racial conquest and denigration. While Mazis outlines Cartesian understandings of the human/machine analytic, Wynter's argument centers on the colonial encounter as a way for the West to configure the "descriptive statement of the human."[57] Wynter's writing is central for understanding how the human was not simply a conception of the liberal subjecthood but was utilized and shaped by colonial encounters of racial denigration and power. Indeed, without coloniality, there is not liberal subjecthood. In her essay "Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument," Wynter revises the conception of the human and Man by outlining three movements in which religion failed to justify the Western as human and Man.

In particular, Wynter shows how the human was not only a racialized subject utilized to separate Africans and Native Americans from Europeans and Euro-Americans and thereby justify the colonial conquest, but that it also began to be "overrepresented" as "Man." Wynter argues that Western imperialism

> thereby [came] to invent, label, and institutionalize the indigenous peoples of the Americas as well as the transported enslaved Black Africans as the physical referent of the projected irrational/subrational Human Other to its civic-humanist, rational self-conception. The West would therefore remain unable, from then on, to conceive of an Other to what it calls human—an Other, therefore, to its correlated postulates of power, truth, freedom. All other modes of being human would instead have to be seen not as the alternative modes of being human that they are "out there," but adaptively, as the lack of the West's ontologically absolute self-description.[58]

As Wynter describes, the Western human was a project that separated Black Africans from Human Others. As a consequence, the Other—which was not human—could not fit the description. The process of inventing and institutionalizing indigenous and enslaved Black Africans was a process that had to maintain a certain logic of the "human."

The Other, however, was also rendered within hierarchical terms, and Wynter points out that Indians and African slaves were portrayed comparatively based on the conception of the human and the animal. Wynter writes,

> While Indians were portrayed as the very acme of the savage, irrational Other, the "Negroes" were assimilated to the former's category, represented as its most extreme form and as the ostensible missing link between rational humans and irrational animals. However, in the wake of the West's second wave of imperial expansion with its reinvention of Man in now purely biologized terms, it was to be the people of Black African descent who would be constructed as the ultimate referent of the "racially inferior" Human Other, with the range of other colonized dark-skinned peoples, all classified as "natives," now assimilated to its category—all of these as the ostensible embodiment of the non-evolved backward Others—if to varying degrees and, as such, the negation of the generic "normal humanness," ostensibly expressed by and embodied in the peoples of the West.[59]

As Wynter argues, the "Indian" was portrayed as the "savage" while "Negroes" were represented as the link between "rational humans and irrational animals." However, she points out that people of Black African descent would then be considered as inferior Human Others with a range of "dark skinned" people within the category. Later in her essay, Wynter points out the varying degrees of humanness, which include mestizos and mulattos. Moreover, the shift from the "human" as a theocentric conception to being a humanist conception also institutionalized racial difference in the understanding of the human. Through her historical and theoretical analysis of the colonial period, Wynter outlines how the human shifted to the overrepresentation of "Man" that was utilized to justify Western conquest and racial denigration. Wynter provides a crucial intervention by building not only on the Cartesian analysis of the human, but also on the conception of the human that was shaped by colonial powers.

However, despite all her interventions, Wynter does not build on the human/animal analytic or the relation of the human to machines. In Part II of her article, Wynter cites Gregory Bateson, a key figure in the theory of cybernetics, but does not mention cybernetics itself.[60] And while she mentions artificial intelligence once, she does not further elaborate on the term and the force of its theorization of consciousness. Moreover, although she mentions "Asian subjugation," she does not further elaborate on that concept either. Nevertheless, Wynter's scholarship

reshapes and repairs theories of the human and the machine/human/animal analytic by focusing on the conception of the human during the colonial encounter. Unlike Wynter, posthumanism, as we will soon see, largely omits race in its theorization and prompts questions about the relations between technology, race, and the human.

The Posthuman

> At present, posthumanism may appear variously as a dubious neologism, the latest slogan, or simply another image of man's recurrent self-hate. Yet posthumanism may also hint at the potential in our culture, hint at a tendency struggling to become more than a trend....Humanism may be coming to an end as humanism transforms itself into something one must helplessly call posthumanism.
>
> —Ihab Hassan, "Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture?"

> You are not human until you're posthuman. You were never human.
>
> —Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, "Posthuman Bodies"

*

If Wynter's explication of colonialism's role in the creation of the liberal human subject as Man was a critical intervention in the philosophical discourses of human, machine, animal, the emergence of the posthuman, the fusing of human and machine, prompts further questions on issues of race, gender, and difference. Theoretical discourses of the posthuman emerged in the 1990's with monographs and scholarly essays written by science and technology studies scholars, such as Haraway, Hayles, and Wolfe, who have made significant contributions to the literature.[61] In his book *What is Posthumanism*, Wolfe traces how the term "posthumanism" worked itself into the humanities and social sciences during the mid-1990s, although the term actually goes back to Michel Foucault's articulation of the human.[62]

Unlike previous philosophical work on the relations between human and machine as discrete entities, posthumanism's many varieties have in common a large concern with the transgression between the human and machine. Hayles writes, "although the posthuman differs in its articulations, a common theme is the union of the human with the intelligent machine," and "the posthuman view configures human beings so that it can be seamlessly articulated with intelligent machines. In the posthuman, there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organisms, robot teleology and human goals."[63] As Hayles writes, the posthuman has no demarcations between bodily human existence and the human being. Haraway formatively centered a feminist critique of the human/machine analytic based on the cyborg. Haraway writes, "The cyborg appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed"—it is a "theorized and fabricated [hybrid] of machine and organism; in short we are cyborgs."[64]

In the move to the posthuman, theorists critique the notion of the liberal human subject through analysis of gender (although some varieties, such as transhumanism, may uphold the liberal human subject and elide gender). For example, Haraway's cyborg manifesto formatively centered a feminist critique in her theorization of the cyborg, and Hayles theorizes gender and sexuality of the Turing Test in her introduction to the posthuman. While Haraway, in particular, figures in women of color analysis in her cyborg manifesto, further theorization involving

racialization and the cyborg should be added to this scholarship to build on the insightful attention that Haraway, Hayles, and other scholars have paid to the politics of the human/machine analytic. The large absence of theorization of race (and along with it gendered racializations) speaks to the Eurocentric dominance within the critique of the liberal human subject.

Returning to the slippage between Harjo and Hayles and the absence of gendered racialization within posthumanism, queer and feminist theorist Jaspir Puar's response to the debates between intersectionality and assemblages provides vital insights and provocations. Puar argues in her essay, "I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess: Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory," that assemblage theory (informed by Gilles Deleuze and Feliz Guattari) and intersectional theory (informed by Kimberly Crenshaw) should not be oppositional theoretical paradigms, but "frictional." While Puar contends the usefulness and necessity of intersectionality, she points out in her critiques that intersectionality oftentimes elides other axes of difference such as sexuality with a focus on race. Intersectionality can also, according to Puar and other theorists, perpetuate the reification of women of color as perpetual subjects of difference. For Puar, posthumanist feminist scholars offers differing accounts of the subject as the "liminality of bodily matter cannot be captured by intersectional subject positioning." Puar positions science and technology scholars such as Haraway and Karen Barad, as posthumanist and theorists of assemblages in the juxtaposition of intersectionality and assemblages. She writes,

> To return to the title of this piece, and the juxtaposition that Haraway (unfortunately, but presciently) renders, would I really rather be a cyborg than a goddess? The former hails the future in a teleological technological determinism—culture—that seems not only over determined, but also exceptionalizes our current technologies. The latter-nature-is embedded in the racialized matriarchal mythos of feminist reclamation narratives.[65]

Puar opts to chose a cyborg-godess, and she asks if a cyborg-goddess is possible. For posthumanist scholars, the body is not examined for racial differences and the marks of stratification, these are questions that would be prioritized by racial theorists. For the posthumanist scholar, what is of concern is when information loses its body and the stakes of embodiment in the posthuman body.[66] Is a cyborg-goddess possible?

To add to Puar's important theorization, this dissertation examines the possibility and necessity of the cyborg-goddess, especially in the context of racialization, which is always gendered, sexualized, technologized, and classed. Indeed, Puar offers a provocative theoretical development in the study of racialization, and also highlights the gapping differences between posthumanist scholars and scholars of representation. The study then of race as representation leaves us at theoretical limits, and instead, could we understand race as an emerging technology?

Understanding the possibility of a cyborg-goddess must include a "frictional" engagement of post humanist and racial theory. Yet, for the most part, posthumanist theorizations elide issues of difference, (gender emerges more commonly than race), and while the critique of the liberal human subject is constant. When humans merge with machines, is posthumanism simply an extension or transformation of humanism, or is it what Wolfe describes, as a response to humanism? In his introduction to posthumanism, Neil Badminton writes that the human was articulated by Descartes and illuminates a core humanity in terms of

which "human beings can be defined and understood."[67]Along with Hayles and others, Badminton critiques humanism; and their shifts to posthumanism attempt to remedy the negative effects of humanism, although race is not considered within this critique.

It is important to note that the posthuman was developed prior to the 1990's theoretical and historical tracing of the movement, and Wolfe, along with Hayles and other scholars, mark the influence of the Macy Conferences on cybernetics between 1946 and 1953 on posthumanism. The Macy Conferences on cybernectics removed the human from any "privileged position in relation to matters of meaning, information, and cognition."[68] The Macy Conferences were frequented by key figures in computing and artificial intelligence such as Nobert Weiner, John Von Neumann, and Margaret Mead, and acknowledged the importance of environment and systems. The Macy Conferences on Cybernetics between 1943 and 1954 forged a new paradigm of the human/machine/animal. As Hayles describes, the paradigm was formulated less "to show that man was a machine than to demonstrate that a machine could function like a man."[69]Moreover, Wolfe points out that posthumanism occurs both before and after humanism, but that, in particular,

> it comes after in the sense that posthumanism names a historical moment in which the decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatic, and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore, a historical development that points toward the necessity of new theoretical paradigms (but also thrusts them on us), a new mode of thought that comes after the cultural repressions and fantasies, the philosophical protocols and evasions, of humanism as a historically specific phenomenon.[70]

Hayles points out that the liberal human subject and the posthumanist share an emphasis on the loss of embodiment in which the body was a possession.[71] Hayles does not want to resuscitate the liberal human subject rather, her intention is to critique it.

Due to their investments in queer theory and anti-racism, Halberstam and Livingston, however, critique the liberal human subject as follows:

> The posthuman marks a solidarity between disenchanted liberal subjects and those who were always-already disenchanted, those who seek to betray identities that legitimize or de-legitimize them at too high a cost. No one comes naturally to this conjecture; rather it must be continually forged within and among people and discourses.[72]

Halberstam and Livingston wonder whether posthumanism "cannibalizes" the human or is rather an extension of it. Their articulation of posthumanism aligns with Wolfe's characterization of the term, yet they also speak to the issue of identities that are elided within much of posthumanism theory. As Halberstram and Livingston observe,

> The posthuman does not necessitate the obsolescence of the human; it does not represent an evolution or devolution of the human. Rather it participates in re-distributions of difference and identity. The human function to domesticate and hierarchize difference within the human (whether according to race, class, gender) and to absolutize difference between the human and the nonhuman.[73]

Halberstam and Livingston's engagement with the posthuman seems to offer what Puar asks of intersectionality's and assemblage theory's "friction:" they critique the liberal human subject while acknowledging the ways the human has been marked by differences such as race, class, and gender.

What Hayles cites as disembodiment may, according to Wolfe in his support of the posthuman term, be better understood as transhumanism. Transhumanism is the "enhancement of the body" with technology and often the disavowal of body parts. The use of the term "posthuman" here differs from Wolfe' and other scholars' articulations but is rather as defined by philosopher Nick Bostrom. This sense of posthumanism or transhumanism derives from humanism during the Renaissance and Enlightenment.[74] Wolfe writes, "In this respect, my sense of posthumanism is the opposite of transhumanism, and in this light, transhumanism should be an intensification of humanism."[75]

The Digital Race Body

> Bodies may still be the most significant determinants in fixing the social optics of "race," but black bodies are now being seen—figured and imaged—differently.
> —Paul Gilroy, *Between Camps*

While the posthuman theory of the 1990's didn't include the critique of racialization, in the early 2000's the advent of the Internet prompted studies of race and representation in the digital realm. These studies critiqued and the seemingly plasticity of the posthuman body and seemingly limitless possibilities for identities—gender, race, size, and even species-- that changed with a few clicks of a mouse within the vast cyberspace. These studies offered that we are far from believing the initial Internet dream as "utopia." While digital bodies constitute an important ingredient for defining the self, online and off, the Internet is most definitely not a world of freedom for racialized and gendered bodies. Early works in digital studies grappled with gender through limitations on access to technology and, more influentially, the digital divide. However, these studies focused on the lack of users of color, or gendered users, of technology. Although constructionist education scholars have provided vital modes of creativity through access to technology, they have not explicitly grappled with race, gender, and sexuality. While they are not explicitly focused on the pedagogical, scholars of racial digital studies have retheorized the "digital divide" to include the ways in which race is interwoven with technology within digital spheres, primarily through digital embodiment and inequality. These scholars theorize race within an Internet that is a "discursive and rhetorical space," however they largely do not explicitly critique the liberal human subject.[76] While formative in their theoretical interventions, the studies of digitality, while informed by posthuman scholarship, largely focused their critique on the racial representation on the interface, in usage, and on the screen.

Several anthologies have paved the initial approaches to how race is transformed in the context of the Internet. *Race in Cyberspace* (2000), edited by Beth E. Kolko, Lisa Nakamura, and Gilbert B. Rodman, was the first book to provide such a framework for the online presence of race. *Race in Cyberspace* dismantled the myth of the race-less Internet; as the editors write, "we believe that race matters no less in cyberspace than IRL (in real life)."[77] Published just one year later, *Technicolor: Race, Technology and Everyday Life* (2001), edited by Alondra Nelson and Thuy Linh H. Tu with Alicia Headlam Hines, argues that it is not only the digital divide that talks about race, but also the "many interfaces where race and technology intersect."[78] The editors indicate that people of color are not technologically inept, and they intend their collection

"to affirm our [people of color's] roles as producers and innovators, as members of various technological communities, and as participants in the creation of a wired world."[79]

While both of these anthologies have provided critical interventions within new media studies, the former does not address Asian American particularity with respect to cyberculture/labor, and the latter does not address the social constructionist understanding of race that underlies material inequalities. In their 2003 anthology *AsianAmerican.Net: Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Cyberspace*, editors Rachel Lee and Sau-ling Wong argue that

> On a whole, scholars in the field of race and cyberspace remain critically hesitant to emphasize Asian Americans' differences from other racial groups in terms of their cyberpractices, in part due to legitimate worries over the way such claims to distinction can play into old divide-and-conquer tactics that set minorities against (model) minorities.[80]

In response, *AsianAmerican.Net* provides crucial interventions within racial digital studies. The editors' astute analysis reflects the complexity of digital racial studies, one that is tethered to the discourse of "lack of race" within new media studies. They emphasize the specificity of technology and Asian Americans and the importance of considering an ethnic comparative analysis. Moreover, Wong and Lee do not examine how the Asian American is explicitly tied to the figure of the robot as cyborgian. If we return to Haraway's "The Cyborg Manifesto" we can understand the Asian woman as explicitly the cyborgian figure.[81] Through the intersections of posthuman and digital racial studies, we can understand how the two need to meet through the figure of the robot and explication of the body.

The Body

The body—"bones, skulls, hair, lips, noses, eyes, feet, genitals…"—is the historical site where constructions of difference have been and continue to be lodged.[82] As Donna Haraway writes, "bodies are maps of power and identity."[83] Specifically, Black Diaspora scholar Paul Gilroy cautions that race has been transformed by

> the idea that the body is nothing more than an incidental moment in the transmission of code and information, by its openness to the new imaging technologies, and by the loss of mortality as a horizon against which life is to be lived.[84]

Indeed, technological transformations within the medical, biological, and communication regimes provoke a necessary grappling of Otherness such as "race," "gender," and "class" through "our bodies, ourselves…."

Historically, as well as in the present, our bodies are central for understanding axes of difference. Editors Lisa Jean More and Mary Kosut explain in *The Body Reader* (2010) that "the body is the medium or raw material through which we navigate the world, but it is also an entity that is invested with meanings."[85] As a consequence of the essentialism utilized by hegemonic ideologies, the biological body has often been overlooked in antiracist scholarly fields such as ethnic studies. However, the body proves to be crucial, particularly when considering ramifications of "race" and "gender."

> Scholar Thuy Linh Nguyen Tu writes of Asian Americans and Internet pornography: On pornographic sites, the body, as real as it can be, is in fact what is being offered; its gender and race are not only legible, but the main draw. What it sells is not just flesh—digital or "real"—but more precisely the underlying histories and myths that such bodies invoke.[86]

As Tu and other scholars illuminate, meanings of the body are implicated in today's technological transformations. Moreover, as Haraway writes, we should consider that the "'body' is an agent, not a resource" for feminist scholarly and activist practices for liberation. The technological transformation of the Internet and biotechnologies from what they were in the late 80s to what they became in the mid-90s presents a crucial time for feminist cyborgs: "Communications technologies and biotechnologies are the critical tools re-crafting our bodies. These tools embody and enforce new social relations for women world-wide." Using these tools, Haraway provides strategies for feminists to resist through technology and bodies that are racialized, gendered, and more. Although *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* was published in 1990, Haraway, like the feminist science fiction she analyzes, foresaw possible tools for liberation and the importance of communication technologies.

As a result of Eurocentric assumptions that inadvertently underwrite posthuman theorization, there are absences around race and gender. Nevertheless, posthuman scholarship are useful and formative to draw upon, and like Puar, I ask for a "frictional" relationship with racial theory and posthuman theorization. Although theorizations of the human and race by Wynter and Chun provide vital interventions, there remains further study and elaboration particularly on the issues of cybernetics and the dialectical relationship of the Asian and/as Automaton. Thus, this study hopes to offer an important intervention to consider the historical and materiality of gendered racializaiton of Asian Americans and/as the cyborg. My approach to the Asian as/and Automaton figure offers an important corrective insofar as it considers the historical materiality of gendered racialization that are crucial to its articulation and re-articulation.

The Chapters That Follow

This dissertation's inquiry into the intersections of the Asian American and the automaton begins with the industrial period of early Asian migration. In Chapter One, I analyze nineteenth-century industrialization and early Chinese labor to show how industry and race have intersected in their development and informed one another to shape what I call the *Asian and/as Automaton* discourse. While the steam engine can be considered an industrial emerging technology, social formations such as race and gender have not been placed within the analytic. Through a sociohistorical analysis of nineteenth-century editorial cartoons and literature, I argue that we can understand race not only as a social construction but also as an emerging technology. I illuminate how the racialization of Chinese laborers in the nineteenth century was contingent upon what I call *technological tropes* that mechanized the Chinese as "machine" through repetitive stories. These technological tropes reshaped and naturalized the boundaries of the human/machine analytic.

In Chapter Two, I further examine the Asian and/as Automaton discourse through Nam June Paik's robotic art of the 1960s. Celebrated as the first video artist, Paik used technology in an innovative way that transcends binary opposition and embraces hybridity. Based on an analysis of primary sources from the Paik archive at the Smithsonian, I argue that while Asian

Americans are denigrated as "robotic," Paik and other Asian new media artists and writers have engaged in *racial recalibration*—a racial formation that occurs through aesthetic tinkering, hacking, and recreating with emergent technologies. Paik offers a peculiarly interesting case study, as his robotic art has historically not been positioned as racial resistance within art history or Asian American studies. Yet, through an analysis of Paik's writings and visual culture, we learn that the robot is not only central to his racialization as "it," but that he utilizes the robot as resistance. In this chapter, I also highlight the importance of labor; with an attempt to understand how labor connects to the ways Asian and/as Automata discourse has been constructed.

Finally, in Chapter Three, I examine the politics of contemporary Asian American cultural representation through digital theory. Specifically, I theorize *the digital as drag* by tracing the politics of "the real" and "the fake" in Asian American literature, digital documentary, and queer theory. This chapter rereads computer scientist Alan Turing's test for artificial intelligence and questions of the virtual through the lens of gender, race, and sexuality. Specifically, I theorize *the digital as drag* by tracing the politics of "the real" and "the fake" through the figure of the digitized Asian American drag king. I argue that our notions of inauthenticity have changed and that they must do so in a time of technological transformation.

Theory as Technology

> We have a situation that is much more complicated, yet far from disheartening.
> —Lisa Nakamura, *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet*

In discussing science and technology studies (STS), Charis Thompson points out that fields like queer, race, and ethnic studies came to STS much later than fields such as the study of scientific knowledge (SSK, 1970s) and actor network theory (ANT, 1980s), "but they interact vigorously with them, while adding new areas of focus and new analytic resources."[87] Understanding how, as Thompson writes, race, and gender, and sexuality, and disability, and various other axes meet at the posthuman body is my concern and my hope for this dissertation. Scholarly writing can often alienate people of color, women, and queers, and the study of technology often excludes minority participation. As race may be understood technologically, disciplines and theory can also be understood in a similar way and add "new areas of focus."[88] Like Thompson, Haraway rereads the late African American feminist scholar Barbara Christian and says of disciplinarily concerns for participation that Christian "asserts the technology of literary theory was made deliberately mystifying and dense to exclude minority participation."[89] Citing theory as technology, Haraway's reading of Christian recognizes that scholarship is also technological and can be utilized for resistance. In *Cybertypes,* Lisa Nakamura writes about how critical theory works as "a technology or a machine that produces a particular kind of discourse."[90] If theory and academic writing are a "machine" or a "technology," I hope for more technologies for the social good. As Nakamura writes, while the Internet may provide disheartening circumstances for racial and gender liberation, she remains hopeful. In *How We Became Human*, it is my hope that the human that Harjo writes about and the posthuman that Hayles analyzes may, as Thompson proposes, "interact vigorously" with one another for a world that is "far from disheartening."[91]

Chapter One

Asian and/as Automaton

Nineteenth-Century Industrialization, Chinese Labor, and *More than Machine*

It seems to make no difference to a Chinese
how long he remains in one position.
He will write all day like an automaton.
—Alfred Smith, *Chinese Characteristics* (1894)

In the National Hotel on a summer evening in 1826, a large crowd of New Yorkers experienced a new kind of mechanization: speaking dolls, trumpeters, a panharmonicon, rope dancers, miniature songbirds, and the "Automaton Chess Player." Exhibited by German showman Johann Maelzel, the smorgasbord of mechanical devices enthralled American viewers throughout the United States in the Antebellum Period. The "Automaton Chess Player" held the leading role and drew large crowds as "the greatest puzzle ever seen."[92] Also known as "The Turk," the Automaton Chess Player was a chess-playing machine that fascinated American viewers with its miraculous ability to play against and beat human players.[93] A Turkish "magician" dressed in "Turkish" attire, the Automaton Chess Player was a life-size model of a head and torso that resided on top of a cabinet, displaying a chessboard. The Turk's left hand held a Turkish smoking pipe while his right hand was a "pure machine" that played chess with human accuracy and acumen. As historian Stephen P. Rice describes it, The Turk was "a mechanical device that seemed almost magical in its operations, … like the new steam and water powered machines that were endlessly discussed by men and women in the first decades of the nineteenth century."[94] Moreover, the Turk signaled the closing gap between artificial machines and human beings, to which they were supposedly antithetical. While the automaton is largely understood as being without personhood, the Turk is an example of how the history of the automaton has, in fact, been deeply racialized.

The Turk's elaborate inception and hoax as a chess-playing automaton worked through its allure as racial machinery in Europe and in Antebellum United States.[95] While viewers of The Turk marveled at his ability to beat human players, the Turk's performance relied on an elaborate hoax, with a human hidden inside the "machine."[96] The Turk's secret remained undiscovered until Maelzel passed away in 1838 and was finally revealed in an article by Silas Mitchell for *The Chess Monthly*.[97] The Turk was constructed in 1769 by Austro-Hungarian court inventor Baron Wolfgang von Kempelen.[98] Created as a mechanical amusement for the Hapsburg Empress Maria Theresa and her court, The Turk symbolized the enemy Ottoman Empire. As cultural theorist Kira Reilly writes, the Hapsburgs had been at war with the Ottoman Empire since the sixteenth century, and their "desires, fears, and wishes" were projected onto the "exoticized Turkish male" as the "ultimate opponent for the Hapsburg Empress."[99]

Removed from the Hapsburg context, The Turk illuminated a different set of racial and technical anxieties within an industrializing nation of "emerging" machines and Chinese laborers. When The Turk arrived in the United States, the Oriental "Others" in the country were not Turkish but newly arriving Chinese immigrant laborers.[100] Although for Europeans, Turks evoked Orientalism, the Chinese were also Orientals that prompt a new racialization within the U.S. context. In particular, for white working-class laborers, U.S. industrialization and the changing racial composition were conflated. As the boundaries between human and machine became increasingly fraught—materially and discursively—the Chinese laborer became a key figure in the negotiation of the human-machine binary in the factory, the newspapers, and the home.

One of the interventions of this chapter is to place two sets of nineteenth-century "emerging technologies" in analytic conversation with one another: industrial technology and the Chinese laborer. The former includes emerging industrial technologies such as the steam engine, the telegraph, the railroad, the typewriter, and the printer, all of which helped transform the United States from a largely agrarian society into a world power. I

build upon Stephen Rice's definition of industrialization: "the creation and spread of mechanized and closely labor divided forms of production."[101] This production included a second emerging technology not commonly regarded as such: early Chinese immigrants and the process of their racial formation.

Race is not commonly understood as "technology," and it is debatable whether it fits into the definitions of "technology" and "emerging" used in the history of science and technology. However, conceptualizing racialization as an emerging technology is analytically necessary. Within the history of technology, emerging technologies include what are largely considered advances and innovations that have arisen in various fields. The concept of emerging technologies helps us understand the trajectory from "emergence" to the acclimation of a particular technology. The Antebellum Period was privy to advancements that transformed the way Americans labored, learned, and lived. While nineteenth-century industrial technologies such as the steam engine are commonly considered to be industrial emerging technologies, social formations such as race and gender largely have not been placed within the analytic.

Analyzing Asian/American racialization as an emerging technology illuminates how racial characterizations have been and are imbued with technological tropes. Key to my argument is highlighting how the racialization of nineteenth-century Chinese laborers was contingent upon *technological tropes* that racially mechanized the Chinese as not just "machine-like" but as machine, and in some excessive instances, *more than machine.* During a critical period of migration, industrialization, and racial formation, the Chinese were racialized in ways that legitimate their exclusion as citizens, immigrants, and human beings. Yet not only were the Chinese racialized as inhuman, alien, or noncitizen; their racialization was also saturated with technological tropes: they were automata who threatened, and at the same time upheld, the human-machine boundary.

In the nineteenth century, both technologies—Chinese racialization and industrial—were "emerging." Ironically, Chinese migrated into a setting of economic exploitation in which their "cheap labor" made industrializing technologies possible while their very status as "cheap labor" was, simultaneously, materially and discursively denigrating. This chapter examines how industry and race intersected in their development and informed one another to shape what I call the *Asian and/as Automata* discourse. The Asian and/as Automaton discourse is a formulation that endures up to the contemporary moment and functions as a primary locus of racialization for Asian Americans in particular. To understand this discourse, I return to the late nineteenth-century racialization, as it illuminates the stakes of human-or-machine boundary making: the shifting negotiations of profit, citizenship, and race that determined who would be included in the U.S. nation-state and who would be excluded.

A second intervention of this chapter rereads the human-machine analytic through racial theory and centers the Asian American body and labor. As argued in the introduction, within new media and science and technology studies, scholars such as Harraway, Hayles, and Ronald Kline have made significant contributions to the literature on the cyborg and the posthuman.[102] Although Harraway, Hayles, and Kline have paid sharp attention to the politics of the human-machine analytic in terms of cybernetics, gender, and embodiment, further theorization involving racialization should build on this scholarship. This chapter attempts to extend their critical theorizations with a special focus on the nineteenth century and the Chinese laborer.

Moreover, as framed in the introduction, Chun's essay "Race and/as Technology or How To Do Things To Race" argues for a formulation that broadens our definitions of "technology." Chun asks in her article, if race could not be "simply an object of representation," but "also a technique that one uses..."[103] Reconsidering race not simply as representation or portrayal but as a system of tools may help us understand the intersectional dynamics of technology and race during the nineteenth century as well as in the present. In particular, Chun argues that the Asian/Asian American is "machine-like."[104] Yet, the Asian American has been more than "machine-like" within the U.S. imaginary. Although she provides critical interventions, Chun does not go on to unpack why then Asians are racialized as machine-like. Re-examining historical antecedents as powerful incarnations of the Asian and/as Automaton trope contributes to our understanding of the Asian as machine.

Scholars such as Colleen Lye and Robert E. Lee have focused on the cultural representation of Asian Americans as the "yellow peril" and "alien" within the nineteenth century. Lye argues how, "America's Asia reflected an antinomian character" and of anthropomorphism.[105] As Lye argues in her study of naturalism and the Asiatic racial form:

> To the extent that American universality depends upon the possibility of assimilation, there is always also the danger of discovering aliens in our midst, or the wholesale possibility of American takeover by aliens. The undecidable relationship between linked opposites in naturalism--whether human and animal or animal and machine--mirrors the oscillations in the logic of America's Asia between the radically split alternatives of total identity and total conflict. The possibility of a yellow peril takeover is a variant of naturalism's degenerationist imagination, in which hierarchies are always reversible.[106]

Lye points out how naturalism "mirrors" the "oscillations in the logic of America's Asia." Like The Economist's "The Rice of the Robots," Lye points out that Asian racial form paraells the possibility of "takeover." These hierarchies of the Asian and the white laborer are "always reversible" which signals the threat to the American imaginary. Moreover as Lye argues, "The mode of incorporation of Asian migrant labor into the United States forces us to grapple with the fully industrial modernity of race."[107] While Lye does not focus fully on the incorporation of Chinese laborers and technology or the Asian and/as Automaton, her insights along with Glenn's, Takaki's, and others shed light on the importance of the historical Antebellum period for Asian American racialization and the politics of labor. By recentering the Asian and/as Automata, this chapter theorizes how late nineteenth-century Chinese laborers were racialized as machines and how race is an emerging technology.

While race and/as technology can be utilized as a tool of resistance, the story of the nineteenth-century Chinese laborer illuminates how race (intersectional with sexuality and gender) was utilized as an emerging tool for denigration and exclusion. The human-machine analytic was harnessed as a pendulum in which competing groups asserted their "human" status and demarcated differences. The example of the changing human-

machine analytic in the nineteenth century demonstrates that racial categories were "emerging technologies." From this perspective, I propose that the ramifications of "matured" racial technologies may result in policies based on race such as the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. Specifically, I argue that the nineteenth-century human-machine binary was reinforced at the expense of "robotic" Chinese laborers. Key to this movement were the organizing efforts of white working class men confronted with emerging industrial technologies and Chinese laborers, both of which were considered a threat to their resources and social positioning. Through sociohistorical analysis, I demonstrate that white working class men defined themselves as racially white, male, and human by racializing the Chinese as Oriental, feminine, and machine.

While not centrally theorized in this chapter, gender and sexuality were and are also key underlying forces in the characterization of Asian and/as Automaton. As sociologist Yen Le Espiritu argues, the Industrial Period was a time of intense exclusion of Asian women that left immigrating Asian men to be characterized as "lonely bachelors or absentee husbands."[108] While the small numbers of Chinese American women (laboring as prostitutes) were characterized as "immoral" and "depraved," Chinese American men were ironically stereotyped as "heathen" and "feminine" because of their lack of conjugal relations and their forced labor within the domestic sphere.[109] Thus the Asian and/as Automaton trope illuminates not only racialization but also a process that is imbued and intersectional with gender and sexuality. I attempt to highlight the ways Asian American masculinity was shaped through technological tropes. As Le Espiritu notes, "ideological representation of gender and sexuality are central in the exercise of racial domination."[110] Moreover, theorists of technology have analyzed how gender and emerging technologies have been conflated. For example, in his study of nineteenth-century communication inventions, Friedrich Kittler points out that "industrialization simultaneously nullified handwriting and hand-based work," shifting typewriting into work for women.[111] Similarly, I demonstrate that the intersections of the human-machine analytic and Asian American labor are epistemological quagmires that highlight how emerging technologies shape and are reshaped by axes of difference.

Historically, within the Western binary of human and machine, the automata, or—to use the contemporary term—the robot, has occupied a position of cultural denigration.[112] As written in the introduction, the cultural position of artificial beings as "laborers" emerged from the history of the word *robot*; it comes from the Czech word *robota*, which means "obligatory work or servitude."[113] Czech playwright Karel Čapek's 1920 science fiction play *R.U.R. or Rossum's Universal Robots* marks the first use of the term. As Reichardt writes, "In *R.U.R.,* a robot is defined as an artificial humanoid machine turned out in a factory in great numbers and sold as cheap labor." [114] The connotation of an artificial being as cheap labor was evoked in the human-machine analytic during the Industrial Period as well. As Rice demonstrates, the cheap human laborer was often perceived as inhuman, as subhuman, and as an automaton.

Emerging Industrial Technologies and Labor

Through a reorganization of labor, emerging technologies in the mid-nineteenth century transformed the largely agrarian United States into an industrial world power. In her sociohistorical study of the Antebellum United States, Glenn writes, "capitalist

industrialization reorganized production and reproduction and drew men into the labor force to work for wages."[115] These changes from an agrarian to an industrial society meant that men did not have to depend on horses, slaves, or bodies. Instead, as ethnic studies historian Ronald Takaki argues, slave masters who "no longer had to rely on black labor from toil" could "make steam do their bidding, and enslave the rivers."[116] Takaki observes "the new technology was viewed as a way for men to use machines and steam power to replace their bodies as sources of labor, and as a way to keep men busy and controlled in a market society."[117]

Moreover, these shifts in labor and technology reformulated the human-machine analytic through hierarchies of class. As Rice argues,

> Humans and machines entered into a material relation on the shop floor, where workers joined powerful machines to regulate their motions. Both workers and members of the middle class recognized this combination of the powerful machine and the mindful machine tender as a site of productivity.[118]

Machines were "joined" by workers, which blurred the binary between human and machine and was considered productive. Yet, as humans and machines drew together, the relations became complex and fraught. As Rice explains, for workers, the relationship to technology was operative and shaped their constructions of class.[119] Thus, a hierarchy between human and machine was further solidified with the machine taking the denigrated position. As to those who had to operate a machine, some observed that the machine operator was more like a machine in the regularity of motion and production.[120] Moreover, the human-machine relation remained hierarchical, with "machine-tending" (operation of machines) resulting in "the mental degradation of the operative who was reduced to virtual servitude, a 'mere machine'."[121] The class positions of workers were tethered to and formulated through their relation to machines, so that workers who tended machines were often considered to be "mere machines" and "slaves."

During the Antebellum Period, changes in mechanization and the labor market infused the human-machine analytic with racial connotations. When industries began to develop, Takaki notes, new orders required new factory workers to serve as "automatons."[122] In California, the prohibition against slavery, along with small pockets of free African American, Indian, and Mexican populations and a largely self-employed white labor force, made labor a scarce commodity.[123] Initially, the "automatons" were largely the working white labor class, but then industrialists turned to the newly immigrated Chinese, who filled the demand for a cheaper labor source for constructing the railroad, mining, and other industries.

The emerging Chinese laborer within the U.S. Industrial Revolution highlights the technological, racial, and gender transformation and subsequent solidification of the human-machine binary. As Glenn argues concerning the U.S. industrial transformation between 1870 and 1930:

> Ideologies and conceptions of race and sex difference also changed, as biological classification and evolutionary theory were harnessed to explain human variation and to rank groups

> hierarchically. Humankind was categorized into inferior and superior races, inferior and superior genders.[124]

As Glenn argues, along with drastic mechanistic changes came important changes of "difference." Sociologist Tomas Almaguer argues the late nineteenth century was a tumultuous period as westward expansion into Native and Mexican land, the end of slavery, and "new" Chinese immigrant laborers created new racial faultlines.[125] Glenn, Takaki, Almaguer, and other scholars have outlined the ways race and gender transformed during this period.

Within this milieu of racial and gender transformation, Asian American racial, sexual, and gender characteristics were positioned as "inferior" and mechanized. Literary theorist Stephen Sohn argues that in this period, "inhuman qualities [were] projected onto Asian bodies."[126] Takaki argues that the introduction of machinery rendered black labor obsolete as migrating Chinese were called upon to perform the work of labor-saving machines.[127] With these shifts in labor, according to Takaki, "whites would be the mind and the Chinese would be the body," both ideologically and materially.[128] The denigration of Chinese bodies shaped discourses as the Chinese were racialized as machine-like. The Chinese were not only "cheap labor" but were, in the face of rapid industrialization, called upon and/as Automaton as well. The Chinese worked with machines and were also racialized as machine-like. Takaki, Sohn, and Glenn show that the history and context of Asian/American racialization complicate the human-machine analytic.

The Chinese

Chinese immigration to the United States occurred as early as the sixteenth century as a "trickle of seamen, students, merchants, and domestics," but it was the mid-nineteenth century that ushered in a large influx of Chinese laborers.[129] Prior to the nineteenth century, the Chinese were largely considered "curiosities from a far away land."[130] Searching for better economic opportunities, the first large-scale group of Chinese immigrant laborers arrived from the Guangdong Province in Southeast China.[131] At the same time, the United States turned to China for alternative labor. Large-scale migration occurred during the Gold Rush in 1848, and despite nativistic sentiment and brutality from white miners, the Chinese were a sizable population of the miners.[132] In addition to mining, Chinese labor was most prevalent in the physical and menial work of the developing West's emerging industrial technologies, such as the railroad and factory production.

In particular, Chinese labor was considered readily available and ideal for the railroad industry because "they could be employed for a short period and then conveniently sent back to China."[133] Moreover, the Chinese were a source of cheap labor for the industry. Historian Alexander Saxton estimates the Central Pacific Railroad hired unskilled Chinese laborers at two-thirds the cost of unskilled white laborers.[134] As Saxton notes, "Chinese were found in occupations which required little or no skill, in occupations stigmatized as menial."[135] However, the inclusion of Chinese in the labor force also provoked racial animosity. Scholars of the nineteenth-century anti-Chinese

movement have documented animosity coming from the white working class in the railroad industry as well as in the mining and manufacturing industries.

Newly arrived Chinese laborers in the nineteenth century were initially characterized with stereotypes reserved for Black people. Almaguer reports, "European Americans found Chinese immigrants distasteful" in physical appearance, language, and dress, and considered them "heathen."[136] Almaguer writes that white laborers' initial perceptions of the Chinese were similar to the derisive stereotypes of Black people: "Both groups were seen as being docile, humble, irresponsible, lying, thieving, and lazy."[137] Yet the Chinese were also characterized in other ways. Takaki writes, "The most noxious representation of the Chinese portrayed them as a cross between a bloodsucking vampire, with slanted eyes and a pigtail, and a 'nagur' with dark skin and thick lips."[138] The characterization of Chinese as "vampires" comes from the labor market, where they were seen as competition for the white working class.

The nineteenth century anti-Chinese movement was a response to a changing class structure led by exploited white laborers who positioned themselves above Chinese immigrant laborers. Anti-Chinese sentiment among the white population brought together various white ethnic groups in a common cause, helping to bridge even the most diverse cultural, religious, and linguistic differences among white immigrants.[139] As Almaguer writes, "The urban anti-Chinese movement of the late 1860s was, from the very beginning, dominated by skilled crafts workers who rallied against both the Chinese and the capitalists who employed them."[140] Saxton outlines the crucial role that white working men played in the anti-Chinese movement. In the face of transformed labor structures and responsibilities, white working men found their labor exploited by industrial capitalists.[141] As Saxton writes,

> They have been both exploited and exploiters. On the one hand, thrown into competition with nonwhites as enslaved or "cheap" labor, they suffered economically; on the other hand, being white, they benefitted by that very exploitation which was compelling the nonwhites to work for low wages or for nothing.[142]

The animosity and the labor movement's anti-Chinese agenda derived from a changing class structure during the Industrial Period that was shaped by race. While the laborers and economic theorists of the Industrial Period relied on anti-industrial rhetoric, they also utilized race as a tool to exclude Chinese laborers. Industrialists utilized racial hierarchies to promote the hiring of Chinese labor. For example, Charles Crocker of the Central Pacific Rail positioned Chinese laborers below white laborers, thereby elevating the white worker. In a speech given to trade unionists, Crocker argued:

> I believe that the effect of Chinese labor upon the white labor has an elevating instead of degrading tendency.… I believe today if the Chinese labor was driven out of this State … there are 75,000 white laborers who would have to come down from the elevated classes of laborers they are now engaged in and take the place of these Chinamen, and therefore it would degrade white labor instead of elevating it.[143]

Thus, in an intense debate between the exploited white laborers and exploited Chinese, industrialists attempted to "elevate" white workers through a binary between the Chinese and white laborer. The Chinese were in a "degraded" position, and if they left, the white labor would have to "come down" from their currently elevated positions above the Chinese. The words *elevate* and *degrade* reflect how race and class were stratified through hierarchical positioning. The Chinese laborers' very humanity is not addressed here. Like the machines that were changing labor structures, the Chinese provoked debates among industrialists who relied on anti-Chinese rhetoric to make the case for hiring Chinese laborers.

Contrary to industrialists' arguments, labor leaders such as Dennis Kearney of California's Workingmen's Party and H. L. Knight described the Chinese in an 1878 address as "cheap working slaves." Their party's slogan was "The Chinese must go!" Rallying against the industrialist as the "moneyed man" and angered by the "misgovernment" of capitalism, they argued for the creation of a workingmen's party to put "honest toil in power." Kearney and Knight wrote of industrialism:

> It rakes the slums of Asia to find the meanest slave on earth—the Chinese coolie—and imports him here to meet the free American in the Labor market, and still further widen the breach between the rich and the poor, still further to degrade white Labor. These cheap slaves fill every place. Their dress is scant and cheap.... They have no wives, children or dependents.[144]

Kearney and Knight appealed to workingmen's sentiment by arguing that the "Chinese coolie" presence "degrades" white labor. The binary between Chinese and white was demarcated as the Chinese were characterized as cheap slaves with dress that is scant and cheap, and described as abject, mean, contemptible, and obedient. Moreover, they added, "We know how false, how inhuman, our adversaries are."[145] The Chinese are characterized as different, from the food they eat and the dress they wear to how they "hedge." Kearney and Knight characterized the Chinese, without "wives, children, or dependents," as foreign, "inhuman," and "adversaries."[146]

While capitalists like Crocker attempted to dissuade anti-Asian organizing, laborers like Kearney and Knight utilized racial distinctions as central to the formation of the labor movement. The widespread animosity of the white working class toward the Chinese during the second half of the nineteenth century served a number of purposes. In addition to helping form and solidify the labor movement, the anti-Chinese movement solidified European ethnic groups in opposition to the Chinese. European ethnic groups became racialized as white, while the Chinese were racialized through the trope of the machine. As industrialists attempted to capitalize on Chinese cheap labor and white working men insisted on an anti-Chinese movement, the Chinese laborers were racialized as *machine* and/as Automaton.

Moreover, historians have articulated that although both Chinese and Black people were racialized and gendered as "animal" and characterized as "docile, humble, irresponsible, lying, thieving," the mechanical racialization of the Chinese as "machine-like" distinguished them from Black labor.[147] Like The Turk, the Chinese were viewed as an "enemy," yet "intelligent" and not "brutish," and they were believed to have more mechanical ability than Black people. As Takaki writes, the introduction of machinery

rendered black labor obsolete; it was claimed that what was required in an industrial mode of production was "a much higher standard of intelligence."[148] When placed in charge of "labor-saving machines," the Chinese were stereotyped as quick learners and competent operators**.** However, the qualities that were thought to distinguish the Chinese from Black people served as a basis for racial and class domination: they justified the use of Chinese as servants.[149] As Takaki writes, "Thus Chinese would work the machines and whites would be the directors of both Asiatic muscle and American machinery."[150]

Technological Tropes: *More than Machine*, *Asian and/as Automaton*

Unlike industrialists, however, white workingmen were not "directors" of "Asiatic muscle" and "American machinery." Instead, white working class men found themselves increasingly in competition with both the machine and the Chinese laborer. These structural and ideological characterizations of Asians as "machines" were reinforced through technological tropes. In the remainder of this chapter, I analyze five popular, cultural, and political primary sources from the nineteenth-century media that depict the Asian and/as Automaton discourse to clarify my point about technological tropes. These technological tropes racialized the Chinese as *machine*, which justified not only the perception of their difference from Black labor but also both their difference from whites and their similarity to machines in the political movement of Chinese exclusion. The ways that Chinese laborers were characterized as automata demonstrate that their denigration worked to reestablish the boundary between human and machine, White and Chinese.

Recurring and technological, these tropes characterized the Chinese as inhuman, cheap labor, and automata. The mainstream publications of the time, such as *Harper's Weekly*, portrayed popular opinion in editorial cartoons that depict the Chinese through the strategic devices of the anti-Chinese movement, which was increasingly pro- white labor. Writings by missionaries and political workers provide another source for gleaning opinions about the Chinese. While missionary writers did not have an overt political agenda, both groups of writers referred to popular descriptions of the Chinese as automata. Technological tropes worked as a constellation of visual and literary imagery, illuminating white workingmen's confrontation with changing industrialization and the Chinese and/as Automata.

Trope One: *Cheap labor*

On the East Coast, machine, race, and labor confronted one another in the shoe factory industry. During the 1860s, the industrialization of the shoe industry represented skilled mechanics' first large-scale encounter with machine competition. Skilled shoemakers fought for their changing status and roles by organizing. In 1867, shoe factory workers organized the Secret Order of Knights of St. Crispin.[151] The union was named after a Catholic Saint who was a shoemaker. St. Crispin became the patron saint for shoemakers in the midst of changing labor conditions.[152] The machinery that changed their labor conditions included "heeling machines" that "reduced workers into low-paid unskilled laborers."[153] These new heeling machines trimmed and heeled boots and shoes. In 1870, the white laborers went on strike to protest low wages and machinery. [154] To

break the strike, the company brought in 75 Chinese laborers, a practice that was followed by other industrialists. The St. Crispin strike set a precedent for capitalists utilizing Chinese laborers strategically not only as cheap labor but also to dismantle the white union organizing that resulted from machines lowering white working men's wages and devaluing their skill. [155] Consequently, the Chinese were ideologically mechanized as "cheap labor."

The characterization of the Chinese as cheap labor and the St. Crispin strike were depicted in editorial cartoons, political writing, and literary texts. In particular, editorial cartoons were frequently published in weekly magazines and influenced public opinion with their satire. Cartoons by Thomas Nast published in *Harper's Weekly* frequently took up the Chinese question and were cited as pro-Chinese and directed against Irish laborers. Born to German immigrant parents in 1840, Nast was known as the "father of the American cartoon." He drew for *Harper's Weekly* from 1859 to 1886, and his drawings were known to have great political influence. Nast's "Chinese Question" cartoons are exemplary of technological tropes of Asian and/as Automaton. In the two technological tropes that follow, "The Martyrdom of St. Crispin" and "The Comet of Chinese Labor," Chinese laborers are depicted as automata and machine.[156]



Figure 1. "The Martyrdom of St. Crispin."

"The Martyrdom of St. Crispin" depicts the fraught relations between the Chinese and white laborers in the shoe industry. The image depicts the white laborer as St. Crispin

with a halo, unsuspecting and diligent, along with two Chinese figures carrying large swords with the inscribed words “CHEAP LABOR.” Instead of being labeled as Chinese, these words reduce the Chinese laborer to being simply “cheap labor,” without a name and/as automaton.

With swords raised, the Chinese laborers are not mere human beings but are characterized as “devils” or “nagurs” that threaten white labor with martyrdom. In the lower right corner of the cartoon, St. Crispin sits dutifully at his working table and represents the hard-working shoemaker. St. Crispin is depicted as productive, with shoes splayed everywhere on the floor and no need for machines or swords. In contrast to the menacing expressions of the Chinese laborers, St. Crispin has a halo above his head that underscores the stark difference between devil and angel. St. Crispin appears to be an unsuspecting and innocent worker, dutifully working while the two “cheap labor” creatures stand behind him, swords raised and ready to kill. Both figures of "Cheap Labor" look mechanized, rigid in their stances, and ready to kill.

As Nast indicates in the upper right-hand corner of the cartoon, “THE CHINESE-AMERICAN QUESTION” is a “NEW ISSUE.” The newness of the Chinese seems to perpetually place them in the future. The Chinese are not depicted as humane or human; rather they are characterized as barbaric and without empathy, foreign with their queues and swinging swords, devilish and inhuman.

Trope Two: ***The comet of Chinese labor***



Figure 2. "The Comet of Chinese Labor." (1870)

Nast also takes up the St. Crispin "Chinese question" in "The Comet of Chinese Labor." As the union's protest of low wages and labor-eliminating machines was broken by Chinese laborers imported from San Francisco, Nast's cartoon depicted how industrialists brought in a "new weapon": the Chinese. However, in this cartoon, Nast portrays the Chinese laborer as a speeding comet or an all-powerful rocket that blazes across the sky. The comet has no legs, arms, or body but only a face and a trailing path of fire that bears the words "CHEAP LABOR." The face is portrayed with slanted eyes and a wide grin. As in "The Martyrdom of St. Crispin," Nast portrays the Chinese as inhuman and inhumane through the comet's gleeful and powerful path to destruction. Beneath the comet, hostile workers and capitalists aim their cannons, which seem to be no match for the far-into-the-future technology of Chinese "cheap labor." Although cheap Chinese labor were useful for capitalists, at the same time, the images depicts how the Chinese may overtake capitalists as well. Moreover, the Chinese comet hails from the sky, again depicted in the frame of the future and alien-like. As Takaki writes, "The Boston Commonwealth exclaimed, 'They are with us! the Celestials—with almond eyes, pigtails, rare industry, quick adaptation, high morality, and all...'."[157] While the Chinese were called "Celestials" in reference to China as the Celestial kingdom, the term also racialized the Chinese through their seeming otherworldliness. In both of Nast's cartoon examples, the Chinese are depicted as "more than machine" against the unsuspecting defeated white working men. What is significant about both images is that as the Chinese filled in to break strikes, they took the place *of* white men and subsequently were conflated *with* technology.

Trope Three: ***He will write all day like an automaton***

While Nast's anti-Chinese cartoons did not overtly stereotype the Chinese and/as Automaton, the literary writing by missionary Arthur Smith demonstrates how Chinese racial characteristics were considered as such. The anti-Chinese movements occurred

against the backdrop of knowledge about Asia accumulated through missionary writings. Published in 1890, *Chinese Characteristics* attested to the specific characterization of Chinese as automata. Smith provides a witness's account of the Chinese in support of an anti-Chinese stance. Specifically, Smith points to labor as a key source of evidence for the Chinese and/as Automaton:

> It seems to make no difference to a Chinese how long he remains in one position. He will write all day like an automaton. If he is a handicraftsman, he will stand in one place from dewy morn till dusky eve, working away at his weaving, his gold-beating, or whatever it may be, and do it everyday without any variation in the monotony, and apparently with no special consciousness that there is no monotony to be varied. Making no haste and no pause, impassive to the curious gaze of the onlooker, his horizon apparently bounded by the space of the bench before him, stunted in figure, and with the dull and animalized visage peculiar to his race....[158]

In the passage, Smith describes how the Chinese is "like an automaton" through his labor. Unlike humans, the Chinese are able to stay in one position and stand in one place as they work away, and their ability to withstand monotony disproves their personhood. Additionally, later in the passage, Smith describes the Chinese automaton as without variation, impassive, and stunted, and his visage, "peculiar to his race," as dull and animalized. The Chinese do not enjoy high humanity like other races but are instead praised for their industry, skill, and patience. Thus, ironically, while denigrated as automata, the Chinese are praised for their ability to work as mechanical machines.

Trope Four: ***As if directed by the regular stroke of steam***

Like Smith, political writer and lawyer James Amaziah Whitney focused on labor in his argument for Chinese exclusion:

> I shall never forget my first sight, years ago in San Francisco, of a Chinese artisan at his work. It was only the making of cigars, but the tawny fingers moved as if directed by the regular stroke of steam, and with an accuracy that no mechanism could have surpassed.[159]

Written in 1888, in *The Chinese and the Chinese Question*, Whitney's description of a Chinese artisan in San Francisco who worked "as if directed by the regular stroke of steam" conflates the Chinese laborer with the technology of steam power that emerged during the late nineteenth century. Whitney points out that the Chinese artisan at work was *more than machine* in his accuracy: an industrial "mechanism" such as steam could not surpass him. Similar to Smith's characterization, Whitney describes the Chinese laborer as an automaton, more "perfect" than humans and without emotions.

Trope Five: ***What shall we do with our boys?***

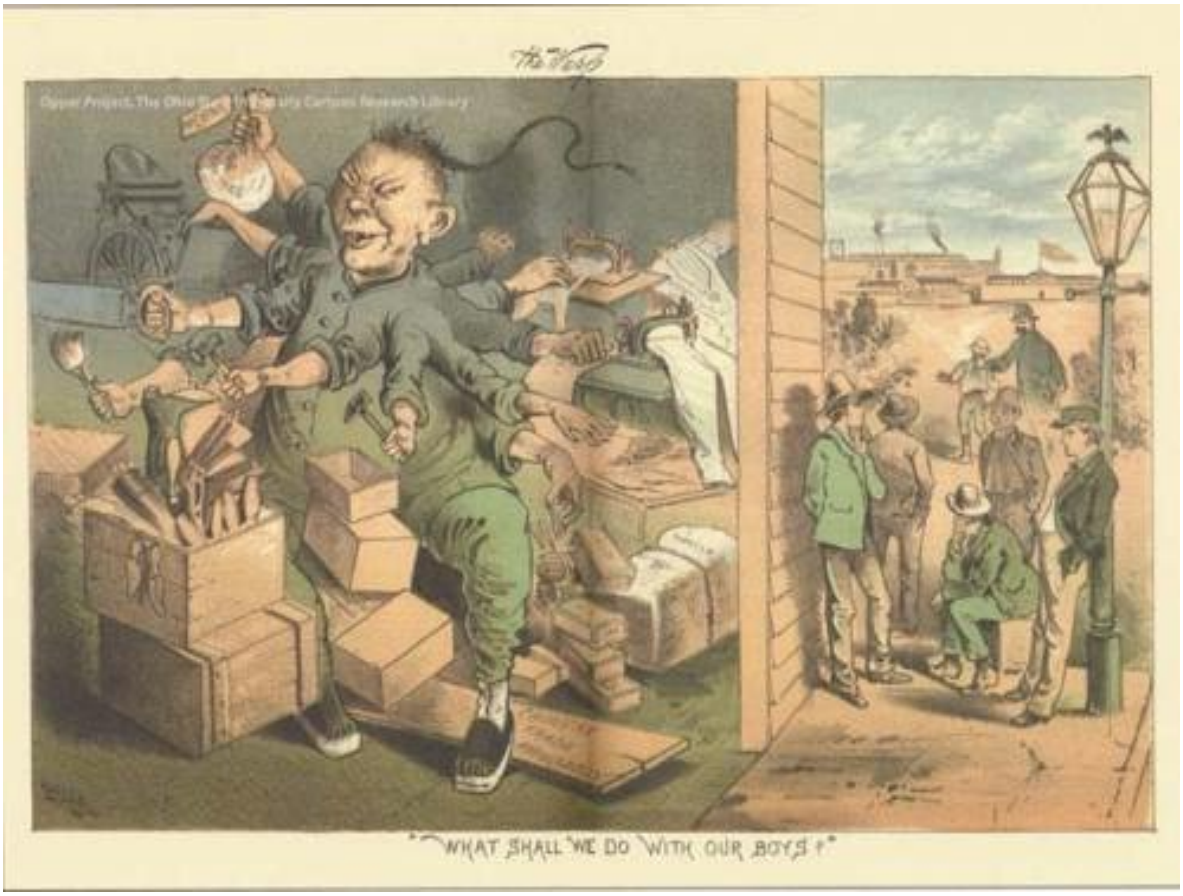


Figure 3. "What shall we do with our boys?" (1882)

Designed by George Frederick Keller in 1882 for the California publication *The Wasp*, this last image depicts a multiarmed Chinese laborer frantically working and managing several tasks, juxtaposed with a scene of white men who are out of work.[160] Depicted as nonhuman, the Chinese resembles a machine-like entity that can do multiple tasks. Behind the Chinese laborer are a sewing machine and iron tendered by the Chinese laborer's many hands while the laborer rapidly works in a wide variety of industries. From hammering, painting, and sawing to laundering and sewing, the Chinese laborer here is not just machine-like or as machine, but is *more than machine*. Moreover, the Chinese automaton is illustrated as a squinting, near-sightless entity that shows no expression or emotion as he works. His queue is swinging, a further indication of an inhuman, feminine, and foreign status. Outside, young white laborers have been turned away and left without work. Dressed elegantly with hats and gathered in a crowd, the young white men appear to be loitering, with their fate left to the railroad or a prison in the distance. The visual illustrates that the multiarmed machine-like Chinese laborers were taking white laborers' positions, and like the caption, the United States must ask: "What shall we do with our boys?"

Collectively, these tropes demonstrate how Chinese racial characteristics were mechanized. In the images, the Chinese are depicted as cheap labor and inhuman, and rather than being seen as human, they are simultaneously denigrated and ironically praised as "automata." Indeed, the similarities between the "robot" as initially conceived and the history of the Chinese laborer may seem uncanny. As the character Domain in the play *RUR* explains, "My dear Miss Glory, the Robots are not people. Mechanically they are more perfect than we are, they have an enormously developed intelligence, but they have no soul."[161]

Asian and/as Automaton

> *Domain*: What sort of worker do you think is the best from a practical point of view?
>
> *Helena*: Perhaps the one who is most honest and hardworking.
>
> *Domain*: No; the one that is the cheapest. The one whose requirements are the smallest. Young Rossum invented a worker with the minimum amount of requirements....
>
> —Karel Čapek, *Rossum Universal Robots (RUR)*

Karel Čapek coined the term *robot* in his Czech play, describing a world made of cheap working artificial beings. Discussing the role of the robot in the passage above, the character Domain explains that the best robot is the "cheap" laborer. Moreover, the robot has "no soul." Čapek's 1922 play converges with the racialized characterization of "cheap" Chinese laborers in the nineteenth century as automata. The stereotypes of Asian Americans as being "more perfect" and "intelligent" but with "no soul," also relate to how the present-day model minority stereotypes function. A reconsideration of history provides us with more insight into the ways the Asian/American has been racialized through a constellation of technological tropes.

These technological tropes upheld the logics of the anti-Chinese movement that successfully passed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882.[162] As a product of the anti-Chinese labor movement on the West Coast, labor leaders such as Kearny and Knight triumphed in their organizing efforts, culminating with this policy that excluded the Chinese based on race. As historian Erika Lee reminds us, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 "barred all Chinese laborers from entering the country for ten years and prohibited Chinese immigrants from becoming naturalized citizens."[163] The act is notable because it was the first time the United States barred a racial immigrant group, and was responsible for the "first large-scale deportation of an immigrant group."[164] Until its repeal in 1943, the Chinese Exclusion act was a permanent fixture in U.S. immigration policy. As Lye argues that the "yellow peril" is a long-running racial form which demonstrates "the alien's first sighting."[165] Moreover, Lye points out by way of Saxton that the discourse of the anti-Chinese movement was part of the process of U.S. nation-formation, which made unionism synonymous with Americanism.[166] Knight and Kearney's final statement in 1878 includes a call for help by rallying against the Chinese, foreshadowing the 1882 Exclusion Act: "California must be all American or all Chinese. We are resolved that it

shall be American, and are prepared to make it so. May we not rely upon your sympathy and assistance?"[167]

If we return to Chun's formulation of "race and/as technology," we may further understand that race was utilized by white working men as a tool and organizing strategy that secured their racial, class, and human status in an increasingly industrialized society. The relation between human and machine, as Rice points out, was drastically transforming, and the reification of the analytic was deeply connected to racial hierarchies. For white working class men, economists, and writers, the analytic of human and machine secured the category of human as "white." Exclusion of the Chinese from a human or American status was utilized to secure human and citizenship status for various ethnic groups within the category white. With the emergence of the machine, hierarchical racial demarcations became increasingly important to uphold. Thus, Chinese laborers were not only "machine-like," as characterized by Chun, they were machine, and *more than machine*. Anti-Chinese organizing and the labor movement were intertwined as the working class fought the *emerging* technologies of industry and race to solidify the human and machine divide. The Exclusion Act of 1882 is one example of the success of the *emerged* and *matured* technology, the Chinese, who were interpolated into a racial category for economic exploitation and were imbued with stereotypes that were used to justify policies that excluded them for over 61 years.

In this chapter, I revisited the nineteenth century to investigate the human-machine analytic through the lens of the Chinese laborer. With the critical lens of race, gender, and technology, I hoped to understand how white workingmen's confrontation with industrial technologies led to Asian racialization. Revisiting Chun's analysis of "race and/as technology," I reread and build upon previous literature that demonstrates how the nineteenth century holds vital antecedents to the formulation of the Asian as machine-like and/as Automata. By outlining technological tropes, I demonstrate that Asians were not only "machine-like," but were in fact racialized as machine, and *more than machine*. In any era, emerging technologies shape, transform, and reify the human and machine analytic by way of racial categories. During the Industrial Period, the analytic of human and machine was drastically changed in the labor sector and within race relations.

It is important to note that the triangulation of white working men, Chinese, and automata does not point to a linear connection to present-day characterizations of the Asian as machine-like. However, the story of the nineteenth-century Asian and/as Automaton demonstrates the foundational intersections of Asian labor, immigration, and machines. This historicization illustrates how the human-machine (and animal) analytic has deeply racialized connotations and relations, and how the analytic is buttressed through racial and technological tropes. The machine is a central locus around which Asian/American racialization has been configured. Conceptualizing race not only as a technology but as an emerging technology may then provide analytical space for the nuances of process and possibilities of resistance.

To conclude, I return to The Turk. While the chess-playing "machine" was not Chinese, it ended up being donated to the Chinese Museum of Philadelphia in 1840. As Rice tells us, "it was destroyed by fire when the museum burned to the ground in the summer of 1854."[168] The coincidence of the Turkish automaton residing and perishing in the Chinese museum illuminates the uncanny intersections of Orientalism and the human-

machine analytic. While emerging technologies may mature, automata be destroyed, and histories be forgotten, emerging technologies such as the Chinese “cheap laborer” offer us a critical story of racialization and mechanization that must necessarily be remembered.

Chapter Two

Racial Recalibration: Nam June Paik's *K-456* and Humanizing Technology

The real implied issue in "Art and Technology" is not to make another scientific toy, but how to humanize the technology and the electronic medium, which is progressing rapidly—too rapidly.

—Nam June Paik

"Can the abject, the Orientalized, the robot-like data-like Asian/Asian American other be a place from which something like insubordination or creativity can arise?"

—Wendy Chun, "Race and/as Technology"

What's a Paik?

—Charlotte Moorman (Stern)

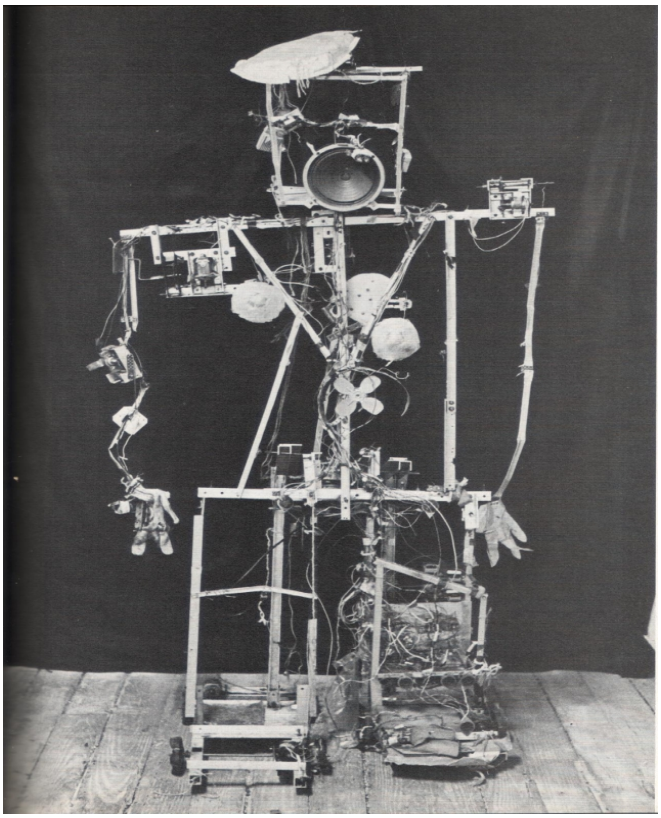


Figure 4. "K-456" by Nam June Paik. (1964)

In the previous chapter, I outlined the story of the nineteenth-century Asian and/as Automaton discourse, a formulation that endures to the contemporary moment as the automaton functions as a primary locus of racialization for Asian Americans in particular. Chinese laborer racialization as automata in the Antebellum period was shaped by technological tropes in popular American periodicals, literature, and cartoons. During this period, the Asian and/as Automata discourse racially mechanized the Chinese as machines and shaped racial policies such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. As I have shown in the previous chapter, the machine is a central locus of Asian American racialization. While Asian American racialization is intricately tied to the human/machine analytic, the labor and aesthetics of new media art may reveal contours of racial resistance through the robot.

This chapter aims to further the investigation of the Asian and/as Automata discourse by examining the 1960s robotic art and writings of Nam June Paik, long celebrated as the first video artist. Paik's artwork provokes questions of Asian American labor, visual art, and the Asian and/as Automata discourse. Through an analysis of Paik's work and racialization, I argue that at the same time as Asian Americans are denigrated as "robotic," Paik and other Asian American artists and writers have engaged in racial recalibration—a racial formation that occurs through aesthetic tinkering, hacking, and recreating with emergent technologies. In particular, I argue that Paik resisted racialization as "inhuman" through the figure of the robot as rhetoric. Asian American artists utilize the robot as persuasion, and following late nineteenth-century Asian American artists, Paik pioneered a long lineage of Asian American visual artists who have utilized technological aesthetics to resist racism in the United States. To answer Chun's questions on Asians, creativity, and the robot, I examine Paik's exhibition catalogues, reviews, media, articles, artistic ephemera, robotic art, and new media art to illuminate racial recalibration.

While much of the Asian and/as Automata discourse shaped anti-Chinese and anti-Asian sentiment in the nineteenth-century United States, Chinese American and Japanese American migrants during this same period were able to secure acceptance within the visual arts. As Asian American studies scholar Elaine H. Kim writes,

> Though Asian immigration and labor in Pacific Coast fields and factories were bitterly opposed by white American workers from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, it seems that Asian immigrations could find a degree of acceptance not only in domestic service and ethnic enterprises, such as restaurant and laundry work, but also in the arts.[169]

As Kim notes, the acceptance of Japanese and Chinese labor within the visual arts occurred in the context of bitter opposition by "white American workers." Citing an 1877 *San Francisco Chronicle* article, Kim reports that the Chinese photographer and painter Lai Yong had an art studio in San Francisco in the mid-1860s, and she notes that many early Chinese and Japanese American artists also extended American art practices and technologies in photography.[170]

Unlike other industries, the visual arts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries constitute a labor sector that accepted Asian Americans in a way that other professions did not. As art historian Karin Higa writes,

> In San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Seattle, Asian Americans were involved in important roles as leaders, organizers, and teachers of art. The participation of artists of Asian ancestry in such roles on the West Coast suggests an alternative picture to the one painted on the legislative front.[171]

While the period was fraught with anti-Chinese sentiment, as Higa notes, Asian artists participated in "such roles," providing an "alternative picture" to the legislative front. But Asian American participation in the arts sector was still limited. There were very few Asian American artists, and as long as they stayed within the genre of "Oriental" art, as Kim suggests, they were not considered a threat to white labor. Nevertheless, while their number was small, their participation provided a significant contrast to the prevailing images and realities of Asian American labor in the late nineteenth century. Asian American visual artists of this period offered a deep contrast to the technological tropes of "cheap" Chinese labor during the Industrial period. Moreover, the active participation of the Asian American artists in the arts industry prompt questions about Asian American labor, the visual arts, and the Asian and/as Automaton discourse.

Paik's direct engagement with the robot and emerging technologies in the 1960s sheds light on the ways the Asian American and the automaton are imbricated. Both are figures tied to the construction of the human in the United States. This imbrication of the automaton and the Asian American is tightly intertwined through the convergence of technological transformation and Asian migration. However, each period provides it's own context for this imbrication. For example, the 1960s provide a different story of the Asian and/as Automaton discourse from that of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In particular, the 1960s story offers a tale of rhetoric and resistance.

Paik's robotic art illuminates how utilization of the robot, a locus of Asian racialization, can transcend binary opposition and humanize racialized subjects. As Lowe writes of Asian American visual artists, "These artists visualize and imagine other humanities within the received tradition of the human."[172] Similarly, Paik was an artist who imagined other "humanities" by way of the robot. Not only did Paik critique the "tradition of the human" through his technological aesthetics; he importantly extended the boundaries of the human and utilized race as a tool. Paik's resistance was not overtly racial or political, but it illuminates how the robot is imbued with human characteristics such as race, which is political. However, Paik's own writing on his racialization has largely been overlooked within the field of Asian American Studies and art history. Particularly in his writing on K'456, Asian imperialism, and his last name, Paik grappled with racialization explicitly. Although Paik's cybernetic art may have seemed devoid of racial resistance, a closer examination of "K-456" and Paik's writings sheds light on his consciousness of his Asian "inhumanity." It is to the 1960s that we must therefore turn to investigate how we became human.



Figure 5. TV Brassiere for Living Sculpture (1969)

"Humanizing Technology"

In 1969, New York Fluxxus artist Charlotte Moorman sat naked on stage with a large cello held between her shapely legs and two small television sets cradling her breasts. The performance was entitled *TV Brassiere for Living Sculpture* and was one of Moorman's numerous avant-garde collaborations with new media artist Nam June Paik. *TV Brassiere for Living Sculpture* exemplifies Paik's insistence that "the real implied issue in 'Art and Technology' is not to make another scientific toy, but to humanize the technology and the electronic medium."[173] *TV Brassiere for Living Sculpture* illuminates the human use of technology through cybernetics—a system interacted with and produced from within, which troubles the binary between human and machine.

Deeply informed by media and scientific communications theory such as Norbert Weiner's work on cybernetics, Paik's robotic and video performance art troubled the human/machine divide through the use of feedback loops. Considered the originator of cybernectics, Weiner was a mathematician and philosopher and the author of the 1948 book *Cybernetics: Or the Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine. Cybernetics* deeply influenced anthropologists such as Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, along with artists such as Paik.[174] Weiner's theory of cybernectics opened up the idea that communications is not simply a one-way interaction but a loop of information. Weiner was also a participant in the Macy's Conferences, which promoted cybernectics in a series of annual gatherings from 1942 - 1945.[175] By the 1960's, Paik's work utilized and extended cybernectics and the relationship between human and machine. In an essay

published in 1967, "Norbert Wiener and Marshall McLuhan: Communication Revolution," Paik cites Wiener's theory of cybernectics, and in particular, the idea of "mix-media." Science and literary theorist N. Katherine Hayles demonstrates that the emergence of cybernetics in the 1940s marked a conceptual shift of "the boundaries of the human subject [to] constructed rather than given."[176] Like Paik's provocation, cybernetics provided a new science, theory, and recognition of human bodies as interconnected with machines, tools, and information. Oftentimes, technologies were not only interconnected with but often supplanted the body, a formulation Hayles and other theorists have critiqued.

In *TV Brassiere for Living Sculpture*, Paik interrupts the static nature of the television with human interaction with the body. Connected to Moorman's cello, wires transmitted live images to the television "bra," which would change according to the music produced by Moorman's hands and the wooden cello bow. The feedback loop between cello, transistor, and body exemplify the cybernetics of Paik's art. Paik reimagines the television—typically utilized as a stationary electronic medium—into a dynamic, humanized, and intimate art piece. Simultaneously, he technologizes the cello, brassiere, and Moorman.

As *TV Brassiere for Living Sculpture* demonstrates, Paik's new media art profoundly impacted the transformation of the television and video as artistic media. Television and its dissemination illustrated Paik's warning that technology was "progressing rapidly—too rapidly." By 1969, the television had become ubiquitous in every home.[177] Along with the development of television, Paik was critical of the interaction with audience viewers. Curator John G. Hanhardt observes, "As Paik saw it, before the rise of video as an art form, TV technology had been developed to make passive consumers of its audience."[178] Paik's investment in cybernetic loops was not simply a technotopian dream, but instead a strategy to deconstruct the relationship of audiences as "passive consumers" of art.

Paik, who is recognized as the first video artist, cemented his position as an innovator in the field with his 1967 utilization of the Sony Porta-Pak and made the first video as art. Paik's early piece *Zen TV* (1963) transformed the television into an artistic and Buddhist-inspired medium. As art historian Edith Decker-Philips notes, the origins of the piece come from an early installation of television sets in which one of the sets was defective with "the picture … reduced to a horizontal line" yet, this defect inspired Paik to turn the television set "180 degrees" and call it *Zen for TV*.[179] The piece illuminates why Paik is largely recognized as the "father of video art" and as a pioneer within new media and cybernetic art. As Whitney Museum Director Tom Armstrong wrote in 1982, "Much of the credit for the growth of video art belongs to Nam June Paik, who was the first to perceive its aesthetic potential."[180] Paik's work influenced a new generation of artists such as Bill Viola and others who utilized video in its "aesthetic potential." Moreover, Paik's "...career is a series of landmarks in the history of the transformation of television and the appropriation of the new technologies of video into contemporary art making."[181] Paik's work shaped the aesthetic possibilities of technology through the 1960's and 1970's. As noted in *Video Art*, "Thus Nam June Paik, one of the 'electric pioneers' understood video as a model of life."[182]

Paik's influential body of work speaks to his formal and aesthetic interventions with technology. Among his long history as an artist, works include *TV Buddha* (1984),

Electronic Superhighway (1995), and *Global Groove* (1973). *TV Buddha* was a closed circuit loop in which a Buddha figurine sat opposite a television with a camera above the figurine, so that the Buddha gazed at himself. *Electronic Superhighway* was one of Paik's many "supermatrix" installations in which as many as one hundred television sets were used to create a visual sculpture. The installation, which is currently featured at the Smithsonian Art Museum, depicts a map of the United States through the television sets. *Global Groove* was a video that featured Paik's earlier performance work such as *TV Cello* edited with footage of diverse individuals. *TV Buddha*, *Electronic Superhighway*, and *Global Groove* demonstrate the diverse technological interventions of Paik's work.

Moreover, the aesthetics of new media art's convergence with gender, racial, and queer imaginaries, sheds light on Paik's work, which rupture limited boundaries of identity politics. Technology in new media art is utilized for aesthetic and political strategies. While material consequences for subjectivity on the margins illuminate the seriousness of the issues at hand, new media artists engage with "difference" through diverse interventions. Ranging from the playful to prankish, delving into the whimsical while provoking and inciting, confusing interactivity and objectivity, new media art paves myriad avenues for freedom. As cyberfeminist artist Corneilia Sollfrank elaborates in the book, *New Media Art* edited by Mark Tribe and Reena Jana, cyberfeminism is characterized by its use of irony to join humor and seriousness as political and artistic strategy.[183] The hybrid joining of seemingly disparate effects, strategies, and regimes illustrate the vital contribution of artists delving into gender, racial, and queer new media spaces through subversive aesthetic acts.

Paik's explicitly deconstructed binary divides of science/art, human/machine, and Asian/American. Art historian Caroline Jones and science studies scholar Peter Gailison argue that art and science are often posited as a "binary economy" through their methods and the "boundaries drawn between them."[184] They write:

> Like all binaries, art and science needed to be yoked together (yet held apart) in order to accrue the strengths of their polar positions: soft versus hard, intuitive versus analytical, inductive versus deductive, visual versus logical, random versus systematic, autonomous versus collaborative, and, like all binaries, at some level, female versus male.[185]

In obscuring the connections between art and science to "accrue the strength of polar positions," these logics uphold a binary economy that permeates all binaries, including human/machine and gender (male or female) as well. While strengthening their respective realms, these demarcations offer illusions of naturalized borders. That is, separations such as those between art and science, male and female, and Korean and American are not natural partitions. As Jones and Galison illustrate, the logic of the binary can be traced across disciplines and phenomena. Yet in theory, the intersection of science, society, nature, culture, and art lends itself to nonbinaristic possibilities that it is critical to examine in the study of race and/as technology.

In the same way, Paik's work exemplified 1960's developments of technology and art, which intertwined in parallel conceptions of cybernetic systems, automation, and the self. Technology scholar Fred Turner writes, "To many historians of information technology, computers themselves seem to be the prime movers behind this configuration

of self and machine in the workplace. Yet, as the history of art in this period suggests, that configuration came into being not because of computers, but alongside them."[186] Specifically, Turner points to the avant-garde "happenings," performed by artists such as John Cage and the Black Mountain poets, which illuminate parallel discourses with the automation debates during the period. In particular, Turner points out, "And, to date, scholars have in fact analyzed Happenings and the automation debates within two very separate fields: the history of art and the history of technology, respectively. Yet, in this case, the history of artistic practice and the history of the integration of computing into everyday life need to be seen as entwined."[187] Turner argues that the changing conceptions of self were happening within art and technological development. Both artists and technologists were simultaneously embracing and rewriting the human-machine analytic. While Turner makes critical theoretical links between art and automation, one wonders why Paik, who is an artist exemplary of this configuration, is not cited within the article, especially as Cage was a close mentor and collaborator to Paik. While Paik is largely upheld within art history for his innovative technological work, the conspicuous absence of Paik within Turner's article sheds light on the unique positioning of Paik within the fields of art history, new media, and Asian American art history.

In particular, Paik complicates the definition of an Asian American artist because of his utilization of technology and participation within the avant-garde movements. Asian American visual artists are diverse and utilize a variety of mediums such as graphics, painting, photography, installations, and mixed media.[188] However, technological art largely does not grapple with "Asian American" themes. In particular, groundbreaking Asian American art anthology *Fresh Talk/Daring Gazes* co-edited by Margo Machida, Elaine H. Kim, and Sharon Mizota includes a body of artists with a diversity of themes and mediums. Yet, the artists largely deal with themes of Asian American identity such as migration and racialization. While Paik is noted in the anthology's introduction as a key avant-garde artist in New York, alongside Japanese born Fluxxus artists Yoko Ono and Shigeko Kubota, it is noted that their participation was within a "still decidedly Western, Fluxxus movement."[189] Although Paik's position as a formative artist has been secured within art history, he is rarely included within Asian American art anthologies aside from mentions in introductions. Additionally, no significant study on his work exists within the field of Asian American Studies. As Mizota, Kim, and Machida write, it may be because Paik, along with Ono, and Kubuta, were working within a decidedly "Western" tradition. While Paik's influences were European, his medium of technology may have shaped his elision from being identified as an Asian American artist. Paik's technological medium--televisions, robots, and synthesizers--do not commonly or neatly fit commonly into what may be identified as Asian American art, a term that still is centered on questioning its very identity.

While Paik was working within the 1960's technological revolution, the other revolution was heightened action and social movement on racial, gender, and sexual identity, which had a large impact on the definition of Asian American art. As Machida cites, during the early years of the movement, "there prevailed a highly politicized approach to cultural development that was strongly influenced by writings such as Mao, and the ways that Asian American art emerged from community and the working class."[190] Along with civil rights movements, university students galvanized for identity

based curriculum such as ethnic studies programs. The arts movement of Asian Americans was formulated with grassroots organizations such as Kearney Street Workshop, Japantown Art and Media Workshop, and the Basement Workshop in New York. Unlike Asian American art collectives such as the 1970's Basement in New York City that utilized the questions of Asian America within art practice, or the 1960s cultural nationalist movements within the West Coast, the Fluxxus movement largely did not centralize race. For this reason, it may be why Paik has been largely obscured from more attention within the field of Asian American Studies, even given his prestige as an artist.

The conundrum of identifying Paik as an Asian American artist sheds light on the problematics of positionality. Theorists of Asian American art have grappled with complications of positionality. Art historian Chang asks, "The term 'Asian American art' invites more questions than answers. To the question "What is Asian American art?" there is no simple answer in style or content.[191] Chang points out questions of origin such as Asian or U.S. born, to artists that are influenced by Asian art, all complicate the definitions of identification. Machida points out, "One perennial question about whether the term Asian American art refers to the background of the maker (that is, any art made by someone of Asian descent living in the United States can be called Asian American art) or instead refers to a particular subject matter (that is, work that directly addresses some aspect of Asian American experience or has specific social and political content.)"[192] As Machida and Chang articulate, the field of Asian American art history has the question of identity central to the discipline.

These questions about identity, Asian American art, and artists are central when examining why Paik's racialization has not been analyzed within discourses of Asian American art history, or video art. Paik's positionality prompts critical insights to the boundaries of art making and the minority artist. Chicana feminist scholar, Laura Perez's insight about Chicana artists and spirituality can be applied when thinking about the relationship of art to minority artists:

> "Aesthetic" here refers not to culturally and historically specific elitist European and European American values in narrowly defined notions of taste or beauty but, more generally, to the conceptual and formal systems governing the material expressions of the activity within societies that we now refer to as art making. The definitions of "art" and "artist" are understood to be problematic, nonuniversal terms, insofar as their European-language variations evolved within Western cultural histories, in was not fully translatable to describe similar practices among popular classes, let alone among non-Western culture.[193]

Just as the definitions of "art" and "artist" often exclude the practices of popular and minority artists, artists such as Paik utilizing technology as a primary medium circumvent and problematize the definitions of art and artist, as well as race.

While Paik's work was not overtly about race, analyzing Paik sheds light on what Machida insists on the need for "new means to interpret and to contextualize."[194] Machida suggests that analysis of Asian American visual arts inspires new lens of interpretation and contextualization. Asian American new media artists' aesthetic experimentations with technology, like Paik's, shed light on binaristic formulations that demarcate difference. Paik rearticulated "aesthetic," "art," and "artist" problematically.

Paik's robotic and technological art offers considerations of resistance that is not overt, but subtle. While Paik is oftentimes written as "Korean born," Paik has yet to be significantly studied within the fields of art history and Asian American art history in terms of racialization and racial formation. Paik's robotic art transcends the logics of binary, and specifically the divides between art/technology, human/machine, and Asian/American. Paik's technological work can be also understood within the politics of identity. His is a racial recalibration that occurs through the robot.

As mentioned, Paik is an artist who directly engaged and influenced new media art of the 1960s, a period largely known for the space race, the television, and the emergence of ethnic specific movements. Although Paik's new media artwork did not take on race as an overt subject matter, his 1960s collaborations with Charlotte Moorman and his early robotic art piece *K-456* invite us to rethink oral and visual persuasion and to deliberate about questions of race, the robot, and the human. Paik's robotic artwork and his experiences of racialization in particular, point to a strategy of resistance by way of the robot. In particular, they take on the very figure of dehumanization (such as a the robot) to humanize. How does a racialized subject resist the legal, ideological, and spiritual demands of racism, contingent of non-assumed humanity?

In the 1960s, Paik's collaboration with Moorman was an even more unlikely pairing than that of a television and a bra. Because of legal and ideological restrictions on race, the collaboration between an immigrant Korean man and a native New Yorker woman with Texan origins was groundbreaking in its transgression of racial boundaries. Interracial marriages between whites and Asians were restricted and speak to the ways "unions" between Asians and whites were illegal. Moreover, Asians, much less Korean immigrants, were a rarity within the avant-garde art scene of New York City. Upon meeting Paik for the first time, Charlotte Moorman offers an account that speaks to Paik's racialization.

What's a Paik?

In a 1980 interview with Fred Stern entitled "Charlotte Moorman and the New York Avant Garde," Moorman recounts the first time she heard of Paik. The German composer Karlheinz Stockhausen was visiting New York City, in 1964, and Moorman approached him with her desire to reenact his theatre piece *The Originale*. Stockhausen protested the idea of re-performing the work in New York, since he had created *The Originale* for specific artists in Germany. Moorman responded by naming several New York City artists—such as poet Allen Ginsberg and director Allan Capra—who could perform the roles, to which Stockhausen replied, "You have to have Paik." Moorman recalls her puzzlement: "And I said what's a Paik? And it turns out it's a human being. Nam June Paik."[195] Her failure to recognize Paik's last name shows how unfamiliar Korean last names were. Yet her response "What's a Paik?" also ironically pointed to the ideological struggle of Asian diasporic subjects like Paik to be recognized as human: "It's a human being. Nam June Paik." Although Moorman had not recognized that Paik's name referred to a "human being," no less an artist, Stockhausen had stated that *The Originale* could only be performed on the provision that Paik be invited from Germany to the United States: "No one else can play Paik." [196]

Paik serendipitously arrived in New York City on the same day Moorman spoke with Stockhausen, and Moorman's recollection of her visit with Paik further underscores his racial and gendered position as an "Oriental man." While they were sitting together in the Madison Café, Paik proposed an artistic partnership:

> "I want to make piece for you. We become partners." I'm looking at him, and wondering why would I need him as a partner?... He was telling me about a striptease piece he always wanted to do. He always wanted a beautiful girl to striptease, he wanted me to play cello and take my clothes off. *I can't believe that I'm sitting here talking to this this this Oriental man about these things.* [emph. mine] And um … but something about him, but he was so serious and so strong that I listened. And we became partners and everything in the world has happened to us as a result.[197]

When recounting the meeting, Moorman affectionately imitates Paik's accented English with a rolling of the R's. Inflection, however, does not serve simply to demarcate the racial or ethnic difference between Paik and Moorman. Moorman's astonishment at "sitting here talking to this this this Oriental man" about such things as striptease, playing the cello, and taking her clothes off reflects the racial, gender, and sexual hierarchies of America in the 1960s. It points to Paik's racial position as an Oriental man who should not suggest artistic partnership or imagine naked performance art or talk about "these things" with a "beautiful girl." After all, he was a "Paik" who had to be recognized as a human being, as well an Oriental man who shouldn't say these things, no less do them.

Moorman is recognized for her visionary leadership of the New York avant-garde movement and her artistic partnership with Paik.[198] However, although Moorman's account of Paik in the YouTube video is gentle, comical, and tender, her early recollection also reflects her racialization of Paik and prompts questions about his power of persuasion. How did Paik transform from "What's a Paik?" to the Paik that was so serious and so strong and to whom Moorman had to listen? How did Paik persuade Moorman? How did he persuade us? I offer that Paik was able to persuade by virtue of being "so strong" not only verbally, but also visually and conceptually through racial recalibration.

Recalibration
n. A second, subsequent or corrected calibration

New media artist and roboticist Ken Goldberg argues in *The Robot in the Garden* that "each new invention for communication or measurement forces us to recalibrate our definition of knowledge."[199] For Goldberg, new inventions do not operate in a void. Instead, new inventions—such as the television, the video camera, and the computer—force us to rethink, re-question, and recalibrate our definitions of knowledge. While Goldberg does not focus specifically on race, I draw on his idea of recalibration to rethink how the force of new inventions affects racial knowledge.

Paik's work and Asian and Asian American new media art place pressure on this formulation, given the fraught racialization of Asian and Asian Americans as robotic and machine-like. The transformation from "What's a Paik?" to the Paik who was serious and

strong and had to be listened to can be understood through a concept of racial recalibration. We can understand the particularity and peculiarity of Asian and Asian diasporic utilization of techno-Orientalism as a resistance strategy. Paik's focus on the human/machine binary sheds light on the very loophole in the racialization of the "noncreative" Asian American. As a peculiar and "queer" move, racial recalibration deconstructs binary logics, embraces creativity, and transforms race by and through technology. Racial recalibration occurs through utilization of the denigrating figure in which one is racialized. Paik provides an example of racial recalibration through his recognition of racialization (such as the instances of his last name as inhuman), subverting binary logics through cybernectics and technology, and acts of replacement and displacement with objects such as the robot. While "Asian as robotic" is inextricably tied to techno-Orientalism, the interview with Moorman and the invention of *TV Brassiere for Living Sculpture* demonstrate how the technological is racial persuasion, and racial recalibration points us to an oppositional strategy in a world that asks "What's a Paik?" while not yet realizing that "Paik" is a human being.

Coming from a Korean diasporic subject racialized as machine by the larger U.S. hegemonic ideology, Paik's posthuman art provokes insights about using the "robotic" Asian/Asian American and techno-Orientalism as resistance. New media theorist Greta Niu describes techno-Orientalism as the "practice of ascribing, erasing, and/or disavowing relationships between technology and Asian peoples and subjects."[200] Building on how Asian Americans have been configured as "machine" and "robotic," my inquiry focuses crucial attention on how Asian/Asian American cultural producers such as Paik resist through the very "practice of ascribing relationships between technology and Asians."

In 1969, Korean diasporic subjects like Paik were, unlike the television, not common in the United States, owing to a long history of racial exclusion. Paik arrived in the United States against the background of an entrenched historical and ideological understanding of Asian Americans as excluded from the state. While early Korean immigration occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century, exclusionary quotas such as the 1917 Asiatic Barred Zone Act Cessation and the Immigration Act of 1924 had halted Korean immigration until the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act was passed. As queer theorist Lauren Berlant notes, "between 1882 and 1952 virtually all Asian immigrants were excluded from citizenship."[201]

Thus, Paik's arrival in the United States was entangled with a long historical and ideological understanding of Asian Americans as automatons. While the U.S. exclusion acts on Asian immigration provide a historical view of racism in the United States, the testimony of Paik's longtime collaborator Charlotte Moorman evinces the ideological view of the excluded "inhuman" Asian American. The two YouTube videos, of *TV Brassiere for Living Sculpture* and Moorman's recollections, serve as binaristic frames that must be held together in tension. For while the video of *TV Brassiere for Living Sculpture* documents Paik's partnership with Moorman, her initial meeting with Paik illustrates the profound racialization of Asian and Asian American men in the 1960s. Why did Moorman peg Paik as an "Oriental man" and "inhuman?" Why and are Asians, as Chun writes, machine-like? What narratives render the Asian as automaton? Did Paik identify as a robot? Was he positioned as a human being?

What's A Paik?

To elaborate on rereading Paik's work through a lens of racial recalibration, I examine instances of Paik's own conscious knowledge of racialization that is dehumanizing, such as the initial response by Moorman to his last name, "What's a Paik?" In 1986, in an uncanny similarity to Moorman's recollection of her response to Stockhausen, Paik recounted his travels with Moorman on a 1966 tour in Germany, where he was again rendered as "What's a Paik?" After a performance at Frankfurt University, Moorman and Paik spent the night at an inn near the Frankfurt train station. Paik recalls that they had seven large pieces of baggage that contained their concert props, and he told Moorman to go ahead without him, saying that he would join her later after placing the luggage in the train. However, Paik mistakenly took a train to Hamburg while Moorman, unsure of her geography, asked for directions and took the correct train to Dusseldorf. Paik wrote:

> As indicated, she boarded on the Ostende-bound train and inspected each coach in search of me, but in vain. She was frightened, but she is also a courageous Texan. She pulled up an emergency brake, thus bringing the train to a full stop. The German conductor began to upbraid her. She complained that she couldn't find Paik. The conductor shot back "what was Paik?" Not who was Paik.[202]

Here, Paik indicates that he was rendered inhuman through his last name. While seemingly only a small aside, Paik's comment signals his recognition of his racial standing, rendered as an inhuman "what" rather than a human "who." Paik continues with the story that also illuminates various instances of racialization:

> She turned on the outraged German conductor with the full weight of a World War II victorious power on her back. She produced her nude picture carried in Der Spiegel magazine, and showing this she somehow managed to persuade the German conductor. The train went back to Frankfurt, and through intertrain and railroad station radio they looked for me, who was on the train bound for Hamburg, unaware of this commotion. The conductor picked up any Asian on the train and brought him up to Charlotte and said, "Isn't he Paik?" This trembling Asian, who knew only too well the reputation of the tough German Polizie, was brought to Charlotte who said he was not Paik and insisted on finding him. At this juncture, a clever man said that another train left for Hamburg at the same hour as this train. Perhaps Paik might be on that train. It was a thriller like Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*.[203]

Here, Moorman was able to "persuade" the German conductor with her "nude picture" and "the full weight of a World War II victorious power" which alludes to the Moorman's nationality, body, and while not explicit, her whiteness and humanness. While Paik's last name and human status was conferred by Moorman's insistence, the narrative continues to shed light on racism. The German conductor "picked up any Asian on the train," and showed him to Charlotte for identification. Instead of unique individuality, the racialization here implies that Asians "all look alike," and in which

Charlotte had to identify the “any Asian,” as not Paik. She then had to take another train to find him. While Paik ends the passage humorously, commenting that it was like an "Agatha Christie" thriller (ironically, the 'Oriental Express,' the event illuminates an experience of racialization. Paik comments how "Asians" were "any" and "trembling" indicating his awareness and critique of the ways Asians were racialized during the 1960's.

"Paik, Poke, or Piak"

The narrative of Paik's last name as unidentifiable and inhuman continues in a eulogy Paik wrote for the late art critic Gregory Battcock published in the student art journal *Artery: The National Forum for College Art* (1981). In his characteristic slapstick humor and perhaps playing upon Battcock’s well known flamboyant style, Paik wrote a short play for his eulogy that begins with a telephone call:

> Nam June Paik calling telephone....
> ‘Operator can you connect me 212 666 9955?’
> Operator: ‘Phone number has changed...new number is Paradise No. 5 Star No. 344675, isle de Sapho, State of Ultra-Galazy 34#6753&--72390.’
> Paik: ‘How much does it cost’
> Operator: ‘You can call collect.’
> ring ring ring
> Operator: ‘Mr. Battcock...do you accept a call from Mr. Paik, or Poke, or Piak, whose English is un-understandable?’
> Gregory: "Of course, that must be Charlotte Moorman's sidekick..."[204]

In this short excerpt, Paik again plays upon the non-recognition of his last name, which the operator refers to as “Paik, or Poke, or Piak.” Similar to his narrative in *Beuys-Vox* and Moorman’s testimony, his last name functions as a demarcation of inhumanness, but this time, his human status is conferred while his foreignness is highlighted. Similar to how the German conductor picked up “any Asian,” the inability to pronounce Paik’s last name speaks to how he is received in U.S. society. Moreover, the operator says, Paik’s English is “un-understandable,” citing a foreigner status. While the initial interaction seemingly goes smoothly within the text, the operator refers to Paik as "Paik, or Poke, or Piak" and not understandable. Battcock affirms the operator's racialization by referring to Paik as “Charlotte Moorman’s sidekick.”

The eulogy continues into a conversation that revolves around a dinner that further illuminates Paik's racialization as a foreigner. Paik responds to Battcock: “Of course, I remember also our last supper in Milano, where you said to me that I and Charlotte collaborate so well, because we cannot understand at all each other... You *are* a really great critic....sorry....you were....”[205] This passage speaks to the "last supper" between the three includes Battcock's comments on Charlotte's and Nam June's collaboration happens "so well" because they "cannot understand at all each other..."

Battcock criticizes Charlotte and Nam June's collaboration through Nam June's foreignness. The excerpt speaks to how Paik was conscious of the ways he was racialized, as opposed to the ways Moorman was humanized. Moreover, the excerpt sheds light on the power dynamics of their collaboration in which Paik was seen not as a collaborator but as a "sidekick." However, Paik ends the passage with a humorous and sarcastic remark to Battcock's role as an art critic. Paik condescendingly and ironically effuses how Battcock is a great art critic and then refers to "were" since Battcock passed away. In doing so, Paik's comments are biting, suggesting Battcock was in actuality, "not" a good art critic and in this way, Paik "was certainly not a "sidekick."

As signified with Paik's writings on Battcock and his trip to Germany with Moorman, the collaboration between the two prompts racializing sentiments on Paik's last name, his foreignness, his position as a "sidekick." However, Paik's consciousness of his own racialization sheds light on his resistance. Paik was fully aware of the racializing ways he was viewed. His writings comment on this aspect, and in addition, respond by biting humor such as his remarks in Battcock's eulogy. However in addition, to responding to the racialization, Paik's technological art illuminates how he utilized technology to enact a strategy of racial recalibration. In particular, Paik's writing and "K-456" illuminates how the robot was utilized in his racial recalibration. It is to "K-456" to which we shall now turn.

K-456



Figure 6. Nam June Paik and Charlotte Moorman perform Robot Opera with *K-456*. Photograph: Peter Moore

In 1964, Paik debuted *K-456*, the first artist-robot, a 20-channel radio-controlled anthropomorphic robot, in New York City. Circuits notwithstanding, *K-456* played audio speeches by John F. Kennedy, defecated beans from its backside, and interacted with art gallery visitors and on the street, marking a new precedent in robotic art. Created by Paik in collaboration with Japanese roboticist Shuya Abe, *K-456* was the first piece beginning of Paik's numerous new media artworks in the U.S. and Paik and Moorman's first performance piece. Paik and Moorman performed with *K-456* in a gallery performance entitled *Robot Opera* and publicly on the street. *K-456* was an androgynous "queer" robot and exemplifies Paik's transgressions of gender through technology and humor. Paik's close kinship with technology suggests an embracement of the cyborg as theorized by Haraway: "a hybrid creature, composed of organism and machine."[206]

So too, as Glenn, Takaki, and Sohn have illuminated, the racial formation of Chinese laboring bodies during the Industrial Revolution strengthened the binary of human and machine. The ideological denigration of "robots" as "second-class citizens" is

connected with the characterization of Asian and/as automata that has endured into our contemporary digital age. As Chun and Sohn argue, the Asian/Asian American subject has been and is racialized as technological, robotic, and nonhuman. Thus, the human/machine analytic can be further complicated by a critical discussion of Paik's racialization and resistance. Moreover, while in the previous chapter we revisited the conception of the laborer and the robot from the play *RUR*, it is also significant that the word emerged from a work of literary art and not from technology or science. The term robot from *RUR* transgressed the pages of the play, and the boundaries of the wooden stage, and helped create the prevalence of the terms robot. By "humanizing" technology through art, Paik questioned, rewired, and recalibrated his own "robot-like" racialization.

Specifically, Paik's resistance strategies may be understood through a crucial explication of his aesthetic utilization of the robot. Following a lineage of artificial beings, *K-456* marked a precedent in robotic art, which emerged in the 1960s and has since matured into an innovative artform.[207] Roboticist Eduardo Kac argues that *K-456* was significant for its introduction of new aesthetic issues and as a "humorous and politically-charged piece."[208] He notes that robotic artists like Paik "introduce robotics as a new medium at the same time that they challenge our understanding of robots."[209] In particular, robotic artists often transcend and trouble the human/machine binary and the denigrated cultural position of artificial beings.

Paik's *K-456* hybridizes the human/machine analytic as does the work of contemporary robotics artists like Stelarc and Goldberg. Like *K-456*, Stelarc's and Goldberg's artworks transform the binary of art/technology and human/machine through deconstruction, experimentation, and imagination.[210] Like Goldberg's and Stelarc's work, *K-456* and Paik's later robotic artworks such as *Family* (2009) and *Gertrude Stein* (2010) take on the robotic centrally and can be understood as embodying a strategy of hybridization, deconstruction, and transcendence. Moreover, robotic and new media artists' transgressions of the human/machine and art/technology divides illuminate larger interconnections in a world organized by logics of dichotomy. Deconstructing binaries—as Goldberg's, Stelarc's, and Paik's robotic art do, for example—may lead us to a more nuanced understanding of a complicated world that is constructed, interconnected, and transcultural.

Robot Opera

Conscious of his racialization, Paik's utilization of technology and the figure of the robot speak to a strategy that may not be fully recognized as such, but works as racial resistance. As an art piece, "K-456" does not overtly express themes on racialization and diaspora visually, however Paik's writing on *K-456* illuminates a strategy of racial recalibration and a hybridization of dichotomous logics. Paik wrote specifically about the role of race and Asia in the *Robot Opera* brochure for the Avant-Garde Festival in New York. The brochure's prose, written with a sharpie and a typewriter, embodied avant-garde through its unconventionality. The brochure features a photograph of *K-456* along with photographed newspaper clippings and "manufactured" clippings that blur the line between reality and fiction. The clippings are typed and positioned in a disorderly fashion—some are horizontal and others vertical—so that they are altogether scattered.

The clippings disorder, and instead of linearity, the brochure parallels the hybridization and transgression of dichotomies in robotic art.[211]

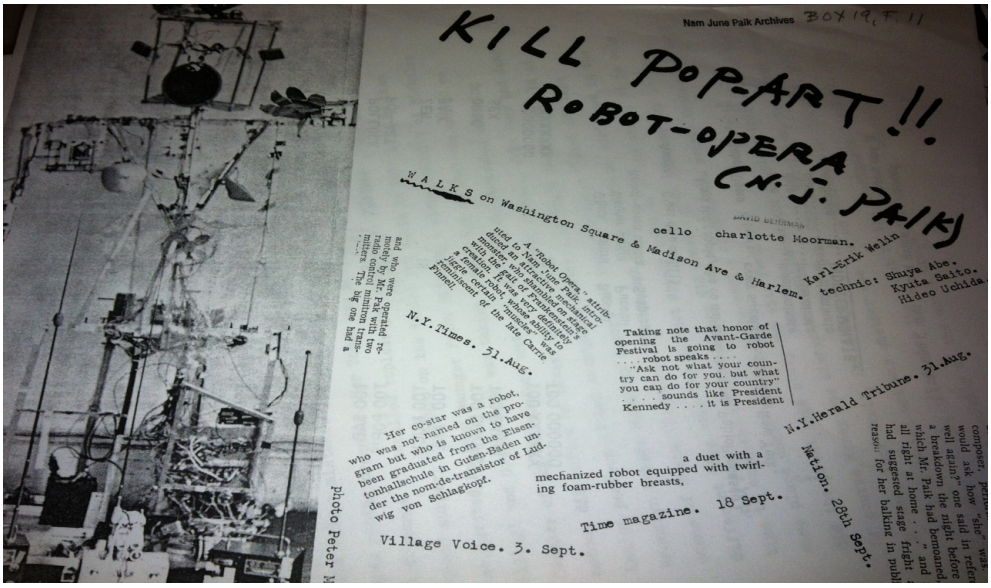


Figure 7. "Robot-Opera Program" by Nam June Paik. (1964)

The content of the clippings ranges from newspaper quotations to directions and information about the *Robot Opera*. One clipping proclaims, "a duet with a mechanized robot equipped with twirling foam-rubber breasts," and "Her co-star was a robot."[212] Another clipping states: "Taking note that honor of opening the Avant-Garde Festival is going to robot ... robot speaks ... 'Ask not what your country can do for you, but what can you do for your country' ... sounds like President Kennedy ... it is President."[213] In this particular clipping, Paik writes about how the Avant-Garde Festival "goes" to the "robot" that turns the robotic into the aesthetic. This robot, however, is not a slave laborer but rather, as Paik asserts, President Kennedy. *K-456* not only defecated beans but also emitted audio recordings of President Kennedy, which points to the political nature of Paik's avant-garde work. This work seems to ask, "Could President Kennedy be a robot? Is a robot President Kennedy?" By usurping the conventional cultural understandings of the robot, Paik's work subverts the dichotomy between human and machine.

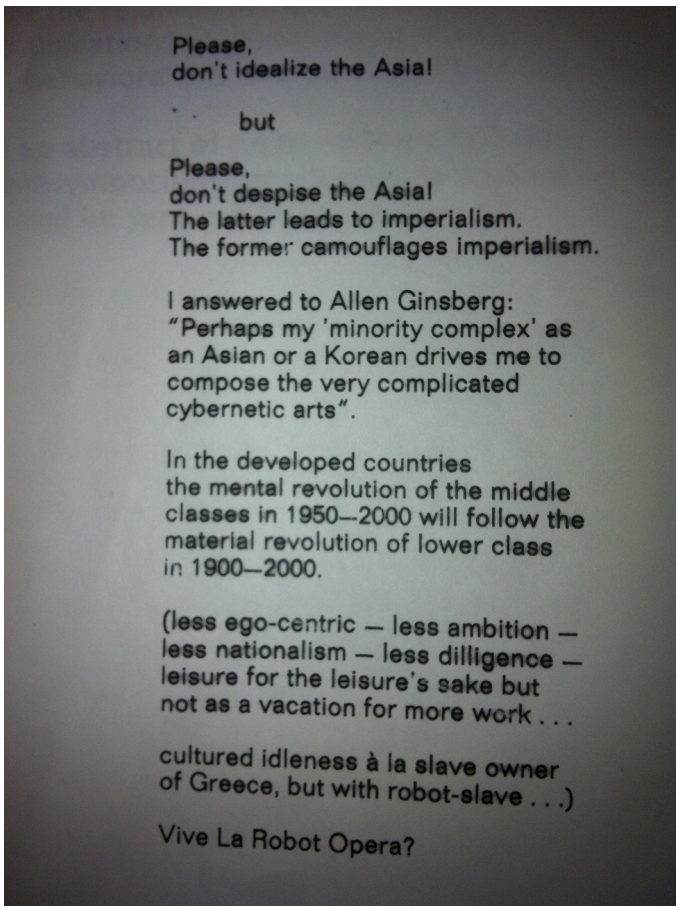


Figure 8. "Robot-Opera Program" by Nam June Paik. (1964)

In particular, the *Robot Opera* program includes a poem entitled "Pensée" that specifically points to Asia, minority status, and the deconstruction of binaries in Paik's work. In the poem, Paik writes: "There are two worlds in this world./not 'Coloured'and 'UN-coloured.' not 'communistic' and 'free economic....'/but/'developed' and 'undeveloped.' We want to have at least as much technic that we can hate the technic."[214] Here, Paik refers to the logics of dichotomy, the two worlds. "Coloured" and "UN-coloured" represent the racial anxieties of the United States, yet Paik insists these are neither separations nor "communistic" or "free economic," evoking the country's anxieties about transnational economic differences in the 1960s as well. Although Paik may not have been considered "coloured" as in African-American, he certainly was not "uncoloured"—as Moorman's testimony attests. Paik highlights the ways things are separated and yet resists these ideological logics of the binary, arguing that instead of racial or economic systemic differences, the only binary that exists is "developed and underdeveloped." Paik refers to development in terms of "technic," alluding to the ways technology transcends hierarchical differences of race and economic systems. Paik tells us that technic is desired so we can "hate the technic."

Aware of the underdevelopment (lack of technology) in his home country of Korea, Paik's reference complicates the ways technological access transgresses the space between "two worlds." Paik writes about Asia in particular:

Please
Don't idealize the Asia!
but
Please don't despise the Asia!
The latter leads to imperialism.
The former camouflages imperialism.
I answered to Allen Ginsberg:
"Perhaps my 'minority complex' as
an Asian or a Korean drives me to
compose the very complicated
cybernetic arts."[215]

In this poem, Paik characterizes the dichotomy of the Asian as idealized or despised. He pleads, "please don't idealize" but "please don't despise," which indicates an awareness of the racially denigrating act of exoticizing or despising. Both, Paik argues playfully, lead to imperialism. Paik's stanza alludes to the political context of war and racial/transnational differences within imperial powers. Coming from an artist born in an era of Korean colonial/imperial relations with the United States and Japan, Paik's insights reflect the imperialization of Asia. In the poem, Paik points explicitly to the "cybernectic arts" as a resistance strategy to the "minority complex" as an "Asian or a Korean." Paik's reference to imperialism points out the connection between new media technologies and war. Paik's poem illustrates that his new media artworks were not only instigated by a technological method but also served as resistance to imperial relations. While seemingly only aesthetically radical, Paik's new media art was deeply attuned to imperialism through technological interventions.

Moreover, it was Paik's "minority" status as an Asian that shaped his tactical utilization of technology. The poem moves on to American poet Allan Ginsberg asking why Paik focuses on technology as his artistic medium. Paik writes, "Perhaps my minority complex is the impetus for composing the "complicated cybernetic arts."[216] In this similar way, the racial denigration Paik experiences as an Asian or Korean is simplistic, while the cybernetic arts are hybrid. By transgressing binary divides, cybernetic arts usurp the power of racial denigration. By utilizing the "complicated cybernetic arts," Paik produced a racial recalibration that transgressed imperialistic "despise" and "idealize." In doing so, Paik recalibrated his minority complex as a robot by creating a robot that wasn't just a cheap laborer but was in fact the President.

Displacement/Replacement

In a 1965 performance, *Human Cello*, Paik would hold a cello string behind his back and Moorman would play cello on the human body. Just as diaspora is largely understood as displacement, Paik's methods of racial recalibration may be understood as replacement. Paik replaced the cello, the inanimate object with his body, and in doing so humanized and blurred the boundaries of the human and object. Franz Fanon argues that racial abjection includes becoming "an object in the midst of other objects."[217] Asian American literary critic Joseph Jeon argues that racialization is a "metaphoric kind of containment."[218] African American theorist Fred Moten argues on the "resistance of the

object" in which the "object produces itself as a subject" through "talking back" and antagonism.[219] Paik was no longer just a "Paik," but resisted "objecthood" through a technique of replacement and displacement.



Figure 9. "Human Cello" by Nam June Paik. (1965)

We can further understand Paik's strategies of racial recalibration by way of the object and a process of displacement and replacement. Paik's strategy with "Human Cello" asks us to view not only the object, but the human being in a new way. If Asian Americans were racialized as "Paik, Poke, Piak," or a "what," than Paik's methods of displacement and replacement signifies how he used objects and technology to reconfigure and recalibrate racial perceptions as well. As Handardt writes, "Metaphor here signifies what Kenneth Burke called ' a device for seeing something in terms of something else. It brings out the thisness of a that, or the thatness of a this."[220] The "thatness" or "humanness" is brought out when Paik removes the cello from the customary setting, and replaces his own body in it's place. In doing so, the move questions the "thisness" that Burke points out, as "seeing something in terms of something else." If Asians were racialized as object, we might understand that Paik's heavy reliance of objects and his body offers a unique and unexpected strategy of racial recalibration, and how we became human.



Figure 10. “Robot Opera” with Charlotte Moorman and Nam June Paik (1964)

If we return back to this image of *Robot Opera*, Moorman sits with the cello in a dress, while Paik sits below her on her right. K’456, the multi-channel robots is situated in between the two, in the middle. The robot’s hands are on Paik’s head and Paik holds the controller. The strategic utilization of a robot as a robot-artist offers how Paik's labor as an artist was questioned and how he may have utilized the robot to resist those perceptions. Paik holds the controller in his hands, which demonstrates the object was technological, and that he had the means to manually control. In this process of racial recalibration, Paik does not replace himself as an object, thereby pointing out his humanity, and instead, includes the robot to recalibrate understandings of Asians as the robot. How much more human does Paik look like with an actual robot next to him? How much more of an artist does the robot look next to Moorman and Paik? In doing so, the robotic art replaced the displacement. In addition to the methods of collage, humor, and shock, we can understand Paik’s work of racial recalibration as a method of replacement and displacement. The robot, as an object, manipulates and mimics a living animate being. If Paik was racialized as a robot, *Robot Opera* sheds light on how race can be recalibrated through technology and the boundaries between human and machine, Asian and artist.

Moreover, Handardt writes on Paik,

> In this way Paik's television, as a sculptural and expanded medium, was similar in its intensions to his 1964 Robot K-456. Fashioned out of an array of spare parts and found objects, the Robot took the shape of a person who, with Shuya Abe's remote-control system, was guided through the streets by Paik. Just as Paik fashioned a human shaped out of inanimate bits and pieces of

> metal and wire, so he took television apart and created visual metaphors out of its materials.[221]

Handardt's analysis of Paik's K-456 offers us further insights to how Paik "fashioned a human" out of "bits" and in doing so, racially recalibrated the understandings of an artist, robot, and an Asian American. In the same way, Handardt points out that Paik's television sculptures was a process of utilizing technological materiality and in doing so, created visual metaphors. While Handardt does not discuss Paik's racialization further on this point, it also speaks to how Paik may have utilized his technology and robot, to make a "human" by way of the "bits" and resisted racialization. “Vive la *Robot Opera*?”

***Robot Story* 2.0**

> In Paik’s art, such things as art versus non-art, the East vs. the West, humans vs. non-humans are not diametrical categories.…He drew on his art to “humanize technology” in which men and machine are combined in a single ensemble.
>
> —Kyunghwa Ahn, Chief Curator at the Nam June Paik Center[222]

Paik’s first visit to the United States in 1964 was predated by an earlier migration journey shaped by the Korean diaspora. Born in colonial Korea, Paik’s entire family moved to Hong Kong and then to Japan in 1949. In 1956, Paik migrated to Germany for further schooling and to nurture his interests in composition. As Korean diaspora scholar John Lie and Nancy Abelmann writes “…all Koreans are mired in dislocation as the North-South division engulfs them in a diaspora of sorts, displaced from families, homeland, and landmarks.”[223] As the “etchings” of the colonial period are “disparate,” diasporic artists like Paik, reincorporate and “echo” these “etchings” in their creative works. Paik's position as an Asian American artist is further complicated by his Korean diasporic positionality. During the period, "to be called 'Korea' was the ultimate epithet from the colonial period well into the postwar period."[224] Although, what Koreans experienced in Japan was complicated as Lie writes, "ethnic Koreans did not face a uniformly racist society but a mixture of 'discrimination and sympathy.'[225]

Paik's positionality as Korean also provokes questions on national and diasporic belonging, and how Asian diasporic aesthetics is influenced by European culture. For example, Lie points out the "curious manifestation" of diasporic nationalism as the South Korean government named Paik as one of ten cultural treasures. As Lie argues, "Paik's diasporic existence is not something that can be reduced to his Koreanness or even his diasporic Koreanness."[226] The critique of Paik as a Republic of Korea national treasure is questionable, Lie observes, " Paik was born in colonial Korea (to a notoriously collaborationist merchant family) but was educated in Japan, where he was influenced above all by Marx and Schoenberg and actively aligned himself with North Korea."[227] Similarly, Japanese literary and aesthetics theorist Daniel Cuong O'Neil sheds light on how diasporic Asian artists, such as novelist Natsume So ̄seki, have experimented with aesthetic strategies informed by science within the context of Western imperialism.[228] The questions of Paik’s “koreanness” and influence shed light on the diasporic journey of Asian artists. Japanese modernism, European avant-garde art, and Korean avant-garde

writing influenced Paik's artwork and identity. Moreover, his positionality as a Korean artist is also complex. Lie's critique of Korean nationalism sheds light on how Paik is positioned as Korean within Korean nationalism and the larger art world as "Korean born" which omits the intricacies of Paik's journey shaped by the Korean diaspora.



Figure 11. Yellow Peril! Sketch from a letter written to George Maciunas. Source: medienkunstnetz

By the time Paik arrived in the United States in 1964, he was not only racially and ethnically uncommon. Larger hegemonic culture rendered him as nonhuman, an Oriental, the "Yellow Peril." Paik's shift from a largely performance-based focus to technology also demonstrates the implications of racial recalibration. Before immigrating to the United States from Germany, Paik had primarily worked as an experimental performance artist and composer, utilizing his body as a central medium. He had moved to Germany in 1956 to take graduate seminars, but, to the disappointment of his family, he left soon after to pursue a musical career. He then left the university and Munich to study music at the Academy of Music in Freiburg with the composer Wolfgang Fortner. Decker-Philips writes that Paik's interests lay outside of traditional music and involved experiments in sound and noise.[229] Dubbed a "cultural terrorist," Paik produced artwork in Germany that overtly expressed his racialization: "I am the Yellow Peril," he wrote.[230] Drawing from the "Yellow Peril," a term that evokes the characterization of early Asian laborers, Paik took on racialization. He troubled the racial term through his body and slapstick performance art. For example, in *The Originale*, Paik was the only character without a "title" such as actor, poet, or painter. Instead, Paik's role was "action," and he was the only character who could determine his own role:

> Paik came onto the stage in silence and shocked most of the audience by his action as quick as lightning. (For example, he threw beans against the ceiling, which was above the audience, and into the audience.) He then hid his face behind a roll of paper, which he unrolled infinitely slowly in breathless silence. Then, sobbing softly, he pressed the paper every now and then against his

> eyes so it became wet with tears. He screamed as he suddenly threw the roll of paper into the audience, and at the same moment he switched on two tape recorders.[231]

Paik's work in the United States did not conform to the overt ethnic nationalistic methods that were common in the 1960s racial movements in the United States. Instead, Paik's new media art troubled traditional "identity politics" and the idea of an essential "racial" core. As stated prior, Paik, along with Ono and Paik's wife, artist Kubota, were and are largely recognized for their Fluxxus experimental work as avant-garde artists and are not widely cited within Asian American Studies. Yet both Paik's artwork such as *K-456* and *TV Brassiere for Living Sculpture* and his writing illuminate a particular approach to aesthetic and political strategies of racial resistance. In the United States, Paik was not only "action," or "What's a Paik?" but "Who is a Paik." While Paik did not stop performing through his shock methods, his largely technological oeuvre suggests a method that resisted the particularities of racial resistance within the empire.

Moreover, Paik's writings about imperialism and race in "Global Groove and Video Common Market" shed light on his racial consciousness.

> How can we teach about peace while blocking out one of the few existing examples from the screen? Most Asian faces we encounter on the American TV screen are either miserable refugees, wretched prisoners or hated dictators. But most middle-class Asians are seeing essentially the same kind of clean-cut entertainment shows on their home screens as most American Nielsen families. Did this vast information gap contribute to the slightest degree by the All-American TV screen of the Mid-West before landing in Saigon, which necessarily has all of the miseries of a war-torn country? If yes, those accused GI's are also victims of monistic TV networks to a certain extent.[232]

As written, the images of the miserable faces of Asians who are "prisoners" or "dictators" speak to the binary of racial characterization. Paik posits that American GIs are "also victims of monistic TV." His writing on the Vietnam War shows how he recognized and addressed racialization within the technology of television. While he may not have addressed race overtly in his work, the intervention he made through television illustrates a powerful recalibration of technology and of racialization.

By confronting each new "invention" as an artistic medium, Paik recalibrates knowledge not only through utilization of technology but also race. It is through his authorship and utilization of the machine that Paik recalibrates his position as an "Oriental man," going from "What's a Paik?" to Nam June Paik, "a human being." As Goldberg argues, we are forced by new media to "recalibrate" knowledge. As a technical and theoretical term, racial recalibration points us to the continuing force of technology that revises, rewires, and reimagines racial subjectivity through (as Niu formulates it) techno-Orientalism. Paik's "humanizing technology" and *K-456* are interventions as new media arts converge with gender, racial, and queer imaginaries. The technological convergence ruptures the limiting boundaries of identity politics for aesthetic and

political strategies. As a formation, racial recalibration occurs through the very apparatus of denigration, the robot Asian American, which serves as a loophole to move through, to play with, and to resist. Yet by taking technology on as a tool and refiguring the "machine," Paik transforms the racialization of the Asian American subject. With his creation of a robot, Paik troubles the connection between robot and human and thereby humanizes the robot Asian American. He demonstrates how robots can serve as rhetoric. By doing so through new media art, Paik not only humanized electronics, but also humanized the robotic Asian. Not only was he action; by utilizing technology, he was more importantly able to render a racial recalibration that did not overtly utilize the language of race, but instead, the language of technology.

On the Moon

In a 1978 press release, Paik's work is described in terms of the "space race" and technology: "Does Paik's video work (combined with his other activities) constitute this 'antidote,' or is his art merely the finger pointing at the moon? Well, as Paik has said, 'the moon is after all the first TV."[233]Paik wanted to "humanize technology" and his "finger" as a body part was not only pointing at "the moon" as a technological tool, but speaks to how Asians racialized as aliens could be seen within space. If the moon, as the press release states, was "the first TV," then Paik was "pointing" at the moon or technology--a racial recalibration.

To conclude, I will return to the eulogy play for Battcock. In this passage, Battcock says to Paik: "You motherfucker...then when can I see you again?" To which Paik answers, characteristically with technology, "Well...I will hijack a space shuttle with Charlotte Moorman in the year 2001 to see you there."[234]

Chapter Three

the digital as drag



Figure 12. The Rice Kings. (2008)

Three pairs of legs move hesitantly, off beat, but collectively in a type of queer unison. Filipino pop music permeates along with verbal incantations of "1 - 2 - 3," and laughter punctuates each step. All three pairs of legs move uniquely in their improvisational performance as dancing figures pixelated on screen. As we watch the moving digital image, the camera pans up to reveal the laughing faces of genderbending performers in the deep of their drag king dreams: The Rice Kings. Non-normative Asian American queer bodies who dance and sing through the boundaries of gender, ethnicity, and sexuality. The troupe starred Big Daddy, Dang Kinki, and Tito Ray Ray Pansit on my Face, respectively performed by Jai Arun Ravine, Cat Dinh and Rachel Ebora. The Rice Kings disrupts social categories such as woman or man, transgender, genderqueer, Asian American, Thai, Filipino, and Vietnamese, through luminous performance. Moreover, the Rice Kings are performers "…who consciously makes a performance out of masculinity" as photographer Del LaGrace Volcano writes in the *The Drag King Book,* co-authored by queer studies scholar Jack Halberstam.[235] As the first Asian American drag king troupe in the Bay Area and pioneered Asian American drag performance. Moreover, The Rice Kings illuminate how queer and racial bodies utilize performance as politics. In doing so, The Rice Kings explode identity categories in the age of the digital.

Within the digital age, the Asian and/as Automata discourse prompts questions on reality and fiction informed by artificial intelligence and identity. This chapter rearticulates "the fake" as a space of play that oscillates between the dichotomies of "The Real" and "The Fake." Through the lens of drag, I argue, "the fake" is deeply imbricated with questions of gender, sexuality, and the digital, a connection largely dismissed within the history and theory of computing, and omitted within Asian American feminist discourses. "the digital as drag" then works as a formulation of feminist and queer possibilities. I first reread the politics of gender in Alan Turing's test for artificial intelligence. Firmly grounded within the history of digital computing, this chapter pulls through the politics of the real and the fake by analyzing Turing and Asian American drag kings. Then I reread the politics of drag within Asian American feminist critique of Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* and specifically the story of Mulan. I place this conversation with a section on auto-ethnography of Asian American drag kings. I then place Joan Scott's theorization of "the evidence of experience" with the politics of the digital, and I demonstrate how we live in an age of queer feminist praxis.

Through drag performance, The Rice Kings dismantle binary logics of gender such as man or woman, but also conceptions of "The Real" and "The Fake." As Halberstam writes on drag king performance: "It seems important to try to mark where the theatre ends and where reality begins. But realness becomes a difficult category to pin down in this arena of luscious impersonations, creative interpretation, and theatrical masculinities."[236] As Halberstam writes, the drag king, through their performance, dismantles the idea of reality. The "realness" that Halberstam proposes is a category that is difficult to "pin down" in the arena of the drag king. Through their gender and racial performances, drag kings blur the logics of "the real" and "the fake." The drag king then, like the robot, is a conceptual figure who recodes binary categories through performance.

If the robot is a conceptual figure that breaks down categorical differences, Asian American drag kings similarly deconstructs binaries of difference. As outlined in the introduction of *Sublime Dreams of Living Machines*, historian Minsoo Kang writes on the robot: "The binary categories of living/dead, animate/inanimate, creature/object all break

down in its wake, and it moves from one to the other, mesmerizing and terrorizing its beholds by turns."[237] As Kang argues, the robot prompts a "break down" of binary categories, and in particular, binaristic categories such as the "living/dead" and "creature/object" as the robot "mesmerizes" and "terrorizes" human beings through the uncanny. When confronted with a robot, Kang outlines how historically, human beings are confronted not only with questions of machines or metal, but demarcations of the human. Indeed, the categories of "living" and "object" are destabilized through the moving, talking, and dancing inanimate figure of the robot. And like the robot, drag kings destabilize static gender identities and the conceptions of "the real" and "the fake."

In particular, our contemporary digital age prompts questions on the "the fake," and these questions also deeply intersect with human social differences such as racial identity. Avatars in video games, for example, work as a means for players to take on "fake" racial and gender identities online. The digital age and along with it, the virtual and artificial asks us to rearticulate these questions around "the real" and "the fake." This chapter reanimates questions of "the real" and "the fake" by tracing the concept through discourses of three interrelated but often seemingly disparate disciplines: Asian American Studies, queer studies, and new media studies. Moreover, the concept is tied to the lens of drag, which shapes our compass and accordingly, our queer political and dance movements. Conceptually, ideas around "reality" and "fiction" speak to the political possibilities of the digital. Does the digital perform drag? And if so, does the digital perform drag as feminist strategy and intervention? Does the digital *work*? What does the digital *do* as *drag*?

Considering the Computer

If new media artist Nam June Paik utilized the television in the 1960's to ask questions on the human and machine analytic, the modern day personal computer prompts questions on the human and machine analytic as well as the boundaries of reality. As noted prior in the example of video game avatars, the ubiquity of the digital in our communication practices have changed what we understand as "reality." Moreover, these questions are increasingly pressing as technological innovations of the digital have drastically transformed how we live in this contemporary age. Scholars of digital education, such as Cathy N. Davidson, have pointed out the contemporary moment of technological transformation is similar to the drastic transformation of the nineteenth century industrial revolution. [238] Questions on reality, and fiction are pressing in an age of "virtual reality," video games, SIRI, and other technological transformations.

In addition to changing our everyday, technology has reshaped our conceptions of the human, or posthuman. As argued earlier in the dissertation, scholars on the posthuman, cyborg, and inhuman have theorized that the breach between the human and machine has been starkly made with the technological transformations of and with the body. As Thompson articulates on the politics of artificial reproductive technologies, Haraway on the cyborg, and Hayles on the posthuman, indeed, we are all posthuman now.[239] As Halyes writes, "As you gaze at the flickering signifiers scrolling down the computer screens, no matter what identifications you assign to the embodied identities that you cannot see, you have already become posthuman."[240] The ubiquity of the computer in every home has transformed every person, as Hayles argues, as embodied

and posthuman. As scholars argue, our cybernectic connections have shifted our understanding of the human as posthuman in the digital age. Additionally, as conceptions of the human has shifted into the posthuman, conceptions of the robot within the computer age have shifted as well. Although robots and automatons have been understood as simulating humans or animals, the contemporary robot includes software and digital devices such as SIRI or an OS as in the 2014 film *Her*, a voice with which one can possibly fall in love.[241]

Artificial Intelligence and Alan Turing

Questions of reality, fiction, and technology connect to the development of artificial intelligence, which made the invention of the digital computer possible, and in this move, a turn to computer scientist Alan Turing is necessary. Turing is most known for his work helping to break the German Enigma codes during World War II and his formative theorization of the contemporary digital computer. Specifically, his influential and provocative 1950 essay "Computing Machinery and Intelligence," posits artificial intelligence and universal machine, and was published in the journal *Mind.*[242] As computer historian George Dyson and others attribute, Turing's vision of the universal computer and artificial intelligence in "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" made the modern day computer possible. In his article, Turing outlines the template of the modern day computer with a game and a question. "Can machines think," Turing asks, and to figure out if they can, he proposes the "problem" can be "described in terms of a game, which we call the imitation game."[243] Turing proposes the game is played with three people, which includes "a man (A), a woman (B), and an interrogator (C) who may be of either sex."[244] For Turing, the object of the game is for the interrogator to determine which is a man or a woman and later on, to figure out if a computer or a human being. If so, then the computer is artificially intelligent.

While gender frames and introduces Turing's test, gender is largely obscured in the history of computing and artificial intelligence. Yet, as Turing proposes, the questions of gender and specifically, who is a man or a woman, parallels questions of artificial intelligence: "Can Machines Think?" After the introduction of gender, the differences between humans and machines are questioned and explored within Turing's article. Moreover, Turing imagined computers as organic. Dyson writes in *Turing's Cathedral*, "The fragments accumulate and at a certain point, as Turing put it in 1948, 'the machine would have 'grown up.'"[245]

The Turing Test does not identify if the computer is organic, or can think, but it tests whether the human "interrogator" can determine whether one is a computer or not. Similarly, in the Turing test on gender, the question pivots whether the human can or cannot distinguish gender. If the human interrogator cannot determine human or machine, then the machine can think. Thus, artificial intelligence and gender are intricately tied together, as Turing proposes, by way of "the real" and "the fake." Can the interrogator determine between who is real and who is fake? Like the work of drag kings, "The Imitation Game" relies on the politics of performance and whether one can figure out authenticity. Similarly, like drag king performance, when we cannot determine the performer's gender of man or woman, like machine or human, the agency of non-normative performers is solidified.

The Turing Test's emphasis on performance parallels theorization of the socially constructed nature of gender as performative and technological. As theorist Judith Butler argues, “gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts.”[246] Butler articulates that gender is not "stable," nor static, and instead, gender is a performance of "stylized repetition of acts." Butler's theorization intersects with Halberstam's rereading of Turing: "By using the sexual guessing game as simply a control model, however, Turing does not stress the obvious connection between gender and computer intelligence: both are in fact imitative systems, and the boundaries between female and male, I argue, are as unclear and as unstable as the boundary between human and machine intelligence."[247] As Halberstam points out, gender itself is a performance, and gender is "imitative;" as Turing stresses. As Butler and Halberstam theorize, gender is not "static" and unstable as an identity. Like the Turing Test, gender is performed and imitative, however, there are additional significant queer considerations of artificial intelligence's imbricated ties to gender and sexuality.

Turing's Sexuality

Turing's personal life and desires prompt reconsideration of the history of digital computing as a queer history. As queer scholars and biographers such as Halberstam, Jacob Gaboury, Andrew Hodges, and others have outlined, Turing was homosexual and he lived his life as an openly gay man.[248] Two years after the publication of "Computer Machinery and Intelligence," Turing was convicted of Gross Indecency by the British government and made to undergo hormone treatment, believed to "solve" homosexuality. Turing's body during treatment changed as Halberstam outlines, "Turing was rendered impotent, and he began to grow breasts."[249] While the hormones may have biologically altered Turing's body, the injections of hormones that could transform a body from male to female, for a "correct" gender identification, "but desire remains as interference running across a binary technologic."[250] Halberstam points out that the estrogen did not resolve Turing's sexual preferences. Instead, desire crossed the binary of what was considered "naturally" a man's sexual predilection. Unfortunately, while the hormone treatments did not stop Turing's desire for men, it reshaped Turing's life. In 1954, Turing committed suicide from eating "an apple dipped in cyanide."[251] Turing's untimely death is thought to be a ramification of the deeply homophobic treatments Turing endured. It was not only until 2013 that Turing was posthumously pardoned for his sexuality.[252] Yet, as Halberstam writes, the apple Turing ate and his suicide, "bizarrely prefigures the Apple computer logo."[253] Turing's untimely death, is a story of homophobia. However, Turing's theorization of artificial intelligence prompted Johnny Von Neumann and other computer scientists in the 1950's, to make possible our modern day digital computer. Yet, as Turing's life offers, the theory and history of the digital cannot be divorced from questions of difference.

Queer Realism

There has been renewed philosophical interest in realism in our digital environment, and theorists of digital theory and queer technologies have contributed vital critiques and formulations on the changing shape of "reality." New media artist and theorist Micha Cárdenas writes in her theorization of the transreal, which "cross the boundaries of realities created by a fragmentation of reality that occurred as a result of postmodern theory and emerging technologies."[254] For Cárdenas, "The transreal slips. Existing in multiple realities, transreal gestures tumble, shift, and fall through different locations and meanings without moving."[255] Unlike the naturalized ideals of "the real," the "transreal," evokes a site of multiplicity. Moreover, Cárdenas shares, her articulations of the transreal comes from the oppressive experience of being told as a queer transgender women, that her "gender was not real, my sexuality was not real and even my body was not real."[256] Cárdenas further articulates how her personal identity and experience shapes her theorization of the transreal:

> The transreal is the embracing of an identity that is a combination of my 'real' body that I was born with and my personal history with another identity that I have written in flesh, in words, in pixels, in 3-dimensional models and across multiple strata of communication technologies. To say I am transreal is a strategy for embracing a gender that exceeds daily reality on Planet Earth and that says back to all people who have tried to make me choose between man or woman that I have chosen to be a shape-shifter, a dragon and a light wave." [257]

Here, Cardenas troubles the idea of a 'real' body through a trans lens. As a transgender woman, Cardenas' identity was demarcated as male. However as she writes, her "personal history" is another identity. It is one she has "written in flesh, in words, in pixel, in 3-dimensional models and across multiple strata of communication technologies." Through her body, and her forays as a new media artist and digital provocateur, Cárdenas dismantles the idea of the 'real' and expresses her 'real' gender as a transgender woman, a 'dragon,' and a 'light wave.' As Halberstam writes on Turing and gender, Cárdenas ' gender, too, is technological. Through technology, Cárdenas is able to recalibrate her gender identity and in particular, trouble this idea of 'real,' which oppresses and suppresses non-normative identities. Cárdenas opts to invest in the transreal, an oppositional identity and reality that 'exceeds' the 'real.' It is a reality that is of imagination, of dreams, and of play. She is a "shape shifter" utilizing performance to expand her realities to better represent her "real" identities in a homophobic, patriarchical, and racist world. Realism, as new media artist Zach Blas writes, encompasses the tendency to dismiss "class, gender, and race," yet, as Blas writes and Cárdenas' transreal demonstrates, "realities are always already culturally parsed through" social differences."[258]

Nature Versus Culture: The Feminist Real

The idea of "nature versus culture," parallels the debates over "reality," and feminist STS scholars have aptly critiqued this binary in terms of gender. Feminist STS scholars such as Charis Thompson and Anne Fausto-Sterling ungraft the "naturalness" of hierarchical understanding of gender, through deconstructing science. Fausto-Sterling's training as a scientist influences the feminist interventions in her book, *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories About Women and Men. Myths of Gender* demonstrates a deep engagement with the "interdependence of nature and society" through astute critiques of scientific studies on gender.[259] Fausto-Sterling provides the vital intervention in the "myths of gender," particularly when applied to "women" as she points out analyzing male/female differences" occur when scientists peer through culture, which shape their questions, design, and interpretation. What women can or cannot do resides within this framework of "nature versus nurture," urges reconsideration of issues around gender and the idea of a "deep genetic structure." This divide of culture and nature is crucial, particularly, for example, as Fausto-Sterling points out, women stereotyped as "naturally" bad at math, science, not able to be geniuses, while "cultural" factors that shape persistent gender inequalities and fuel hierarchies, are ignored.[260]

As Fausto-Sterling provides a vital critique to the "nature versus culture" debate through gender, Thompson additionally interrogates the binary, but intersectionally, with issues of race as well. Thompson's rich ethnography of Artificial Reproductive Technology (ART) clinics, in *Making Parents: The Ontological Choreography of Reproductive Technologies*, demonstrates how "racial, ethno national, familial, and individual desires and biologies are all promulgated."[261] Through ethnographic study of ART clinics, Thompson illustrates there is "ontological choreography" a "dynamic coordination of technical, scientific, kinship, gender, emotional, legal, political, and financial aspects of ART clinics."[262] Through "ontological choreography," Thompson argues the binary between "nature and culture" "interact in a more complicated way," a "looping" interaction. Thompson thereby complicates the divide between "nature and culture" within the ART clinic setting.

Specifically, Thompson's ethnography demonstrates how reproductive binaries and hierarchies are enacted and enforced, through cultural, racial, and gendered norms in the clinic setting. Within the ART clinic setting, "…the dividing line between what is natural and what not is constantly moving."[263] Thompson discusses not only the complicated ways gender is "performed," "reinscribed," and "created," at the clinic setting, but includes a vital analysis of how race and ethnicity is deployed within science. In a case study of "Giovanna" an Italian woman, for example, Thompson provides how the "nature" and "culture" do not march in binaristic "lock step." Thompson argues genes themselves, have social categories embedded into them, as "a chain of transactions between the natural and the cultural grounds the cultural in the natural and give the natural its explanatory power by its links to culturally relevant categories."[264]

Here the messy line between genes "science" and traits of Italian "culture" are blurred in a "chain of transactions," and not a simplistic binary between "natural" and "cultural." The participant in Thompson's ethnography, Giovanna, provided her Italian friend with enough genetic material. Thompson writes:

> Likewise the ethnic category is not just a category that performs a transitional function between nature and culture. It is a category of elision that collects disparate elements and links them without any assumption that every one of the sociolocultural aspects of having an Italian American mother, for example needs to map back unto biology.[265]

Thus, Thompson furthers and deters from the argument of a "lock step" of nature/culture through structuralist or deconstruction methods. Thompson demonstrates—structuralist and post structuralist analysis can simultaneously inform each other—binaries of "nature versus culture" or otherwise, should not be utilized as feminist solutions. Thompson provides through her ethnography and theorization of ontological choreography, the difficulty of maintaining the strident binary between "nature and culture." The construction of gender cannot be understood without its intersection with culture, science, and technology.

White Male Masculinity

As Fausto-Sterling and Thompson argue, the line between "nature versus culture" has been crucial to the changing conceptions of female gender, and it also shapes the construction of masculinity. Halberstam argues in *Female Masculinity* hegemonic white male masculinity confers an enormous amount of power from "assuming and confirming the non-performative nature of masculinity…if masculinity adheres "naturally" and inevitably to men, then masculinity cannot be impersonated."[266] Halberstam outlines how white male masculinity confers power from the idea of the "natural" and the inability to be impersonated. How can one perform gender if it's natural and "real?" Along with Fausto-Sterling and Thompson, Halberstam deconstructs the idea that there is a naturalized or real idea of gender. Butler argues gender is a series of stylized acts, and she writes, "The effect of gender is produced…in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self."[267] As Butler theorizes, gender is not a natural act, and the movements and gestures and styles produce the illusion of gendered characterizations. Drag performance takes on masculinity in interpretive performance and denaturalizes the idea of "the real." When examining drag king performance, Halberstam observes, "The drag king performs a masculinity and makes the exposure of the theatrics of masculinity into the mainstay of her act."[268]

Asian American Gender and Sexuality

Stereotypes of racialized gender and sexuality has been particularly positioned as "natural," and Asian American gender and sexuality has been racialized in denigrating characterizations.[269] Historically, Asian American and racialized gender have been oppressed and racialized as hyperfeminine and hypersexual according to sex.[270] Sociologist Yen Le Espiritu traces the historical characterizations of Asian American gender, through historical, legal, and ideological research, which demonstrate how Asian American men have been racialized as feminized as opposed to white male masculinity, while Asian American women have been racialized as hypersexual. Cultural theorists

such as Elaine H. Kim have crucially examined gendered stereotypes in her documentary work *Slaying the Dragon* while Thuy Linh Tu have outlined how the Asian American female body is sexualized within cyberspace.[271] Gay Asian American men have also been rendered within the hypersexualized trope, and scholars such as Eric Wat and Richard Fung have outlined this dynamic as well.[272]

While critiques of these gendered and racialized constructions are crucial, one must be careful of the ways responses may inadvertently uphold normative hegemonic ideals of gender. Queer theorist David Eng has written on this issue within Asian American Studies in particular, "We must be careful not only to critique vigorously the patriarchal complicities of the Asian American cultural nationalist project but also to consider how this disciplining of the domestic is a formation in need of queering."[273] Without a queer critique, as Eng argues, the critique of cultural nationalist project's masculinities would also need to centralize a queering as well. Queering would trouble a binaristic logic of gender that is separated between the idea of "real" men or "real" women. Cultural nationalism of the 1960's has been vital to the issues surrounding ethnic and racial empowerment. However, along with cultural nationalist projects for racial equality, many women and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) identified people have often been sidelined in the quest to reclaim masculinity of color against U.S. white racism.[274] In other words, to fight against U.S. racist notions of Asian American masculinity and femininity as "real," cultural nationalist and feminist resistance work may inadvertently uphold these logics in their opposition. As Eng argues, when critiquing and resisting hegemonic racism then, it is important to also queer these formations and binaries. Otherwise, Asian American feminists are left to choose between Feminism and Heroism, "The Woman Warrior" or "The Chinamen Pacific," and between "The Real" and "The Fake."

"The Real" and "The Fake:" Asian American Studies and Discourses

In addition to the debates within artificial intelligence and gender, theoretical questions of "the real," and "the fake" have been articulated at the inception of Asian American literary critique. In particular, activist and author Frank Chin alongside his co-editors Shawn Wong, Paul Jeffrey Chan, and Lawson Inada of the first 1974 Asian American literary anthology *Aiiieeeee!* published the sequel in 1991 entitled *The Big Aiiieeeee!* in which an essay, "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake," was included. In "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake," Chin characterizes authors David Henry Hwang, Amy Tan, and Maxine Hong Kingston as "fake" authors.[275] Chin is largely known as a leader of the Asian American cultural nationalist movement in his work as a playwright, editor, and activist. Perhaps infamous for his bombastic and stylized performances and diatribes, he is a central subject of a documentary on his life titled *What's Wrong With Frank Chin* based on his bold and influential notions of Asian American identity and culture.[276] Chin's argument in "Come All Ye Asian American Writers of the Real and the Fake," centralizes a critique of Kingston's memoir *The Woman Warrior* as fake in what Chin calls a "false" adaptation of the Chinese fairy tale Fu Mulan.[277] Chin also cites Kingston's characterizations of Chinese and Chinese American culture, and Chinese men as fake.

This debate between "the real" and "the fake" within the essay sprawled out of the pages of the anthology, and into larger discourses within Asian American Studies. The debate between Chin and Kingston is largely identified as an early key site of representational quandary within the field of Asian American Studies. Literary scholar Mark Chiang writes about this debate in particular as it shaped the development of Asian American Studies.[278] As Chiang writes on the debates, "The conflicts over authenticity and assimilation revolved around the legitimate definition of Asian American literature..."[279]

Within the debate, Asian American feminist scholars such as Elaine Kim, King-Kok Cheung, and Sau-ling Wong responded to Chin's critique of Kingston as debatable and largely gendered. Kim argued that while Kingston's work is "never anti-male" her critics such as Frank Chin, may have an "anti-female" bias.[280] King-Kok Cheung writes, "Kingston is accused of falsifying culture and of reinforcing stereotype in the name of feminism."[281] Sau-ling Wong argued "According to Kingston's critics, the most pernicious of the stereotypes which might be supported by *The Woman Warrior* is that of Chinese American men as sexist, and yet some Chinese American women, "Think highly of *The Woman Warrior* because it confirms their personal experiences with sexism."[282] Kim, Cheung, and Wong provide insightful and needed critiques on the debates of authenticity around Asian American identity and *The Woman Warrior* by centralizing the politics of gender. As Asian American feminist scholars, they provide apt critiques of issues of sexism that may be present in cultural nationalist critiques. For Chin, *The Woman Warrior* and Maxine Hong Kingston are not "real" Asian American literature or an author. For Kim, Cheung, and Wong, their critiques largely pivot on critiquing Chin as "The Fake," and Kingston as "Real" by way of addressing sexism and the personal experiences by woman.

Specifically, in the article, "The Woman Warrior versus the Chinaman Pacific," Cheung outlines "The Real" and "The Fake" debates between Chin and Kingston. Cheung argues that Chin's accusation on *The Woman Warrior* as fiction and not memoir may be addressed through understanding Kingston's methods as a feminist methodology.[283] Cheung argues: 'Discrediting her (Kingston) for taking poetic license is reminiscent of those white reviewers who reduce works of art by ethnic authors to sociohistorical documentary."[284] Again, Cheung and other feminist scholars argue against the accusation of "the fake" by articulating how Kingston took "poetic license" as feminist methodology. In other words, Kingston's The Woman Warrior is not "fake" but "real."

What may be most insightful for this reading of "reality," includes Cheung's insightful argument on the politics of autobiography and imagination in *The Woman Warrior*: "Perhaps precisely because this author is female, writing amid discouraging realities, she can only forge a viable and expansive identity by refashioning patriarchal myths and invoking imaginative possibilities."[285] It is because the "reality" is discouraging, and oppressive, as Cheung writes, that Kingston and other feminist authors must "refashion." In doing so, feminists must invoke "imaginative possibilities." Akin to the transreal as Cárdenas embraces as a resistance reality, Cheung's point acknowledges how Kingston as a female must dismantle "reality" in order to reimagine. These "imaginative possibilities," as Cheung argues, are feminist strategies that exist in Kingston's work and extend our boundaries of gender.

If we could continue to center these imaginative possibilities in response to the Real and The Fake debates, could we also reimagine The Fake not as a marker of inauthenticity, and not as a formulation to argue against in opposition to The Real, but The Fake as feminist possibility? Could we reexamine The Real and The Fake through a queer digital lens?

I am less interested in arguing Kingston's work is not fake, but interested in how it is "fake" and in building upon what Cheung articulates are imaginative possibilities. For example, Chin does not centralize the fakery of Fu Mulan's dressing like a "man" to fight battle for her father and leading a massive army as a possible transgressive reading and celebration of Asian American masculinity. Nor have Asian American feminist scholars such as Cheung and Wong read the poetic license taken with the genderbending tale of Fu Mulan in *The Woman Warrior* as a transgressive depiction of Asian American womanhood. If we recenter contemporary Asian American drag kings, can we remap the debates between Chin's "The Real and The Fake" by embracing Kingston's Fu Mulan as a performance and a feminist act that denaturalizes the boundaries between man and woman? In other words, could we look back to The *Woman Warrior* for moments of drag performance and queer feminist dreams of possibility?

The Woman Warrior

The Woman Warrior is a mixed genre work that traces the autobiographical story of Maxine Hong Kingston growing up in Chinatown, Stockton. The story is of a girlhood coming of age amidst the cultural negotiation of intergenerational Chinese immigrant and American culture. As a literary work that has been recognized by the larger American literary establishment, *The Woman Warrior* is cited as a foremost Asian American text.[286] Published in the 1960's, *The Woman Warrior* has been canonized within Asian American, women's, and English courses, and a reader of the book has been published by the Modern Languages Association.[287] The story of *The Woman Warrior* includes the Chinese fairytale of Fu Mulan. And it is here we can see how drag and "imaginative possibilities" trouble the binary of "the real" and "the fake" that the text, and Asian American gender, found itself within the discourse of Asian American Studies.

Fu Mulan is a Chinese fairy tale about a young woman in China, who, in order to save her aging father from serving in war, she dresses like a man to fight battle, and in doing so, I argue, performs in drag. In the memoir, Kingston takes on the role as Fu Mulan interchangeably. As Fu Mulan, Kingston describes her process of gender transformation: "I put on my men's clothes and armor and tied my hair in a man's fashion. 'How beautiful you look," the people said. "How beautiful she looks."[288] In this passage, cross-dressing offers possibilities of beauty to Fu Mulan. Her "men's cloths and armor," her hair in a "man's fashion" were all male clothing and styles. By doing so, Fu Mulan is not considered unattractive or a man, instead, she is called "beautiful" by the people, and still recognized as "she," further blurs the boundaries between man and woman.

In addition to fashion, Kingston was not only able to be beautiful, but she defeats her first opponent through her female masculinity and her dress in drag. By being able to dress in men's fashion, Kingston, delves deep in performances of violence and power that is typically reserved for men, but utilizes it for "good." As she writes, "First I cut off his

leg with one sword swipe…when the giant stumped towards me I cut off his head…The giant's spell now broken, his soldiers seeing that they had been led by a snake, pledged their loyalty to me."[289] As a woman warrior, her drag made it possible to fight against the giant. In her drag performance, Fu Mulan, "first" "cut off his leg with one sword swipe." Fu Mulan's actions are described in steps and in deliberation. As a woman warrior, as a female in drag, Fu Mulan is powerful, and skilled in her ability to defend and conquer. When the giant attempted to go after Fu Mulan, she "cut off his head." In doing so, she broke the spell of the giant, a fake illusion and the soldiers then recognized that Fu Mulan was worth of leadership. They "pledged their loyalty," to Fu Mulan and it is in her drag that the men were able to follow her through. Her "fake" was in actuality what led to not only her power, but an opposition to the fake that was oppressive, the fake that was a snake.

Moreover, what is particular about the story of Fu Mulan, is the alternative epistemology and resistance strategy that is incorporated because of drag. As a warrior, Kingston's Fu Mulan did not desire to dominate like the giant, but instead she liberated through feminist means. Kingston writes as Fu Mulan, "My army did not rape, only taking food where there was an abundance. We brought order wherever we went."[290] Instead of utilizing masculine dominant tactics such as rape and pillaging, Fu Mulan was a women warrior who took and gave "order wherever we went." The resistance strategies of the drag and the fake, point then to a pervasive power of feminist intervention. The ability to go drag, for Fu Mulan, was an important intervention for her ability to implement feminist strategies.

Instead of arguing against Frank Chin's accusations of "The Fake," embracing Fu Mulan's fakery may offer feminist strategies through drag performance. It is through impersonating masculinity, by embracing "The Fake," or as Cheung writes "imaginative possibilities," Kingston was able to defeat and liberate herself and others as the Woman Warrior. As a female figure in drag, Kingston's rendering of Fu Mulan offers a feminist figure who brought "order" "everywhere." As the woman warrior, Kingston was able to defeat her male opponents and liberate herself and others. Blurring the line between the real and the fake, offers us possibilities of reimagining our incredibly heterosexist and patriarchal world. The act of drag then intervenes in the idea that gender and reality is a natural category, and offers the opportunity of play and performance. As Kingston writes, "I couldn't tell where the stories left off and the dreams began."[291] Here the stories lend herself into dreams, and these dreams deconstruct the boundaries of gender, sexuality, and racial identity in an increasingly binary coded world. Thus, the idea of "the fake" then is not in opposition to "the real," but how "the fake" is more like a space, as Paul Gilroy writes, that is in between camps. "The Fake" or my formulation of "the digital as drag," dismantles the power of the authentic. While a work of literary fiction, rereading *The Woman Warrior* through the lens of drag extends the possibilities of feminist critique and strategies to not only respond to patriarchal oppressions but to transform them. Fu Mulan is an example of how the "The Digital as Drag" works. I build upon queer and feminist theorists like Cheung of "imaginative possibilities." and Cárdenas' transreal, which articulates a formulation that speaks to the importance of lived concept and the theory as praxis based. By extending the lens and resistance practices of drag to Asian American femininity, we are able to foreground the space between the binary of "the real," and "the fake." "The Real," an oppression conception of what should be considered

"natural," while "the fake" in all the apparent and initial denigrating articulations, actually points us to more possibilities of transformation.

the digital as drag: An Auto-ethnography

As introduced in the beginning of this chapter, The Rice Kings provoke not only sexy, kitschy queer interventions but also salient possibilities of liberation from the “real” or “fake. Like Kingston's Fu Mulan, The Rice Kings dismantle ideologies of race, gender, and sexuality in transformative ways. Yet, like the debates between "the real" and "the fake" and issues of cultural nationalism and gender, transgressive gender performance oftentimes prompts rigid policing of "The Real." Transgression of "The Real" is an act of violence in a binary world. As Cárdenas articulates in her need to re-identify her reality in a world that insisted she chose her "natural" gender," the transreal is an incredibly important formulation of resistance. The Rice King's gender bending performances are no exception. Cultural productions that subvert gender and sexual hegemonic ideologies are critical to the work of "the digital as drag," but also the politics of the digital within the computer age.

As a maker of media, I have been increasingly moved by the importance of praxis in theory, and this chapter further explores The Rice King performances as drag kings as digital figures through auto-ethnography. In this final section of the chapter, I share an auto-ethnographic mapping of the politics of creation, distribution, and reception of my first 2007 short digital documentary film, *All of Me*, which featured the formation of The Rice Kings. My work with The Rice Kings as their documentary filmmaker shaped my understandings of drag and Asian American feminism that is tied to the politics of the digital.

I forayed into digital filmmaking in 2007 at a time of a transformation of access to digital technologies that made video making available to many marginalized communities. Initially, I was fascinated and impassioned by my friend Cat Dinh's attempt to create an all Asian American drag king troupe, which was inspired by her work as a drag king in largely white queer performance spaces in the Bay Area. As an Asian American drag king Cat faced several challenges and desired to create an all Asian American troupe. At the time I was learning filmmaking with the Queer Women of Color Media Arts Project program, which held a workshop specifically for queer Asian American women. I decided to make a short documentary and focus the film on Cat's journey. With the aid of the film project as impetus, we were able to build a community gathering around the organizing of Asian American drag king and gender performance, and ultimately because of our efforts, The Rice Kings were created.

At the time, I had never made a film, or worked with a video-editing program. I was intimidated. The first time I was to edit on an apple computer, I worked with my girlfriend at the time, A., who was a visual artist and had some experience with filmmaking. She helped me not to be so afraid of the computer. She prompted my fingers to move the cursor across the screen, as I copied after her movements. The small movements of the cursor, which cut and expanded video images was a huge move for someone who felt largely marginalized by computer technologies. The feelings of inadequacy engulfed me at the time, and it was a large part of the process, because I falsely believed women like me, should not be using technology, holding a camera, much

less make a film. With A.'s help that year, and with the guidance of my instructor and classmates, and the Rice Kings, I was able to finish the film. I was able to move through the challenging hurdle of making a short film and address my feelings of inadequacy with technology.

Yet, what I was not ready for was the politics of distribution. Like the boundaries of "The Real" and "The Fake" that surrounded issues of authorship around *The Woman Warrior*, I too, experienced these politics and observed The Rice Kings also experienced issues of gender oppression within the binaries. Although the short film and drag king expression subvert rigid gender and racial boundaries, confrontation with the logics of "real," and the "fake," occurred at the inception and throughout the distribution of the film *All of Me*.

Ironically, the first incident of the logics of "The Real," and "The Fake," began at the Identity Film Festival. In 2008, the film was accepted into the Identity Film Festival, a small but vibrant film festival in Los Angeles. Prior to the Identity Film Festival, *All of Me*, screened at the Queer Women of Color Film Festival in San Francisco and the Berkeley Community Media Film Festival without any debates on gender. Yet, the issue around gender began early on with the Identity Film Festival. The film's synopsis in the program described the film narrative as "a group of women friends in the Bay Area who try to create an Asian American "drag king troupe."' Problematically, the programmers took rigid gender notions of male or female, as not all the drag kings identify as female. In an email, The Rice Kings replied, "First of all, we don't all identify as "women" and second, we all didn't necessarily know each other before the filming of the documentary." The program assumed all the kings identified as authentic women in order to parody authentic men. While the production of the documentary was an impetus for the troupe, the need to describe the troupe as three women friends, also may discount the seriousness of drag performance as an artform and labor.

The issue around the program foreshadowed more policing. When I arrived at the film festival, I was excited because the festival director was an admired queer Asian filmmaker and I still admire him greatly. However, at the film festival, I was greeted by the comment, "I thought a butch bull dyke with short hair made this film, and then you showed up." The comment stayed with me, because it identified when identity and authorship is policed, the power of the authentic upheld.

Inauthentic. The Fake. Imposter. Leveled at both outsiders and insiders of sub-national "communities," as Tina Chen writes on 20th century Asian American texts, imposture suggests the power of the real. Asian American literary texts subvert through impersonation and imitation, "They have, rejected the logic of imposture—a logic based on binary notions of 'real' and 'fake'—in favor of enacting a politics of impersonation. Thus agency reveals the interrelated nature of the 'real' and 'fake' that surround the boundaries of identity."[292]

After seeing what I looked like, I was accused of being an impostor. I didn't have the evidence of experience to make such a film. My hair was too long. I was too feminine. As feminist Joan Scott writes on the problem of assuming knowledge through experience: "Experience is…not the origin of our explanation, but that which we want to explain."[293] The film festival director assumed one had to look a certain way to make a film about drag kings, he also wrongly assumed that a woman with long hair or feminine in appearance, could not perform drag. Later that year, The Rice Kings were unable to

perform at the 2009 Dyke March because their members identify as transgender and genderqueer. Again, the binary logics of the evidence of experience and The Real were policed in queer contexts. There are ramifications against "The Fake," which does not adhere to logics of "The Real" and "The Fake," and instead we must turn to question queer and feminist praxis.

The Evidence of Experience

In Scott's essay, "The Evidence of Experience," notions of evidence, knowledge, and reality are problematized. Scott writes: "When the evidence offered is the evidence of "experience" the claim for referentiality is further buttressed—what could be truer, after all, than a subject's own account of what he or she has lived through?"[294] When excavating the stories of the Other who are oftentimes marginalized in U.S. history, experience and testimony is offered as evidence, The Real. Yet, as Scott argues this type of credibility may obscure the very practices and logics that create and sustain difference in the first place.

In particular, Scott takes on gay science fiction writer Samuel Delany's magnificent experimental memoir *The Motion of Light in Water* as an initial example. In the beginning of the essay, Scott argues that Delaney's recounting of his first visit to a gay bathhouse in 1960's New York demonstrated that "knowledge is gained through vision." Scott does so by recounting the passage from *The Motion of Light in Water* as author Samuel Delaney "remembers standing on the threshold of a 'gym sized room' dimly lit by blue bulbs," and sees for the first time "massed bodies" which give him a sense of political power.

While Delany provides a vital account of pre-Stonewall homosexual practices, Scott argues this type of communication that privileges the "seeing" as the "evidence," while rightfully highlighting and making visible the experiences of those silenced, can be problematic. Scott writes "The evidence of experience then becomes evidence for the fact of difference, rather than a way of exploring how difference is established, how it operates, how and in what ways it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world."[295]

When accused of not being authentic enough to direct the short film, I was accused of not having the evidence of experience. When The Rice Kings were unable to perform at the 2009 Dyke March because their members identify as transgender and genderqueer, the binary logics of the evidence of experience and The Real are being policed.

Digital and Analog

Reconsidering the blue lights central to Scott's reading of Samuel Delany's text through the lens of new media and drag may be helpful to understand "the digital as drag." By tracing drag performance by way of the blue lights, we can reconsider The Real and The Fake in our digital age.

As I was taught when working with tangible computing, digital input and output (I/O) are easier to circuit than analog I/O because computers use a binary system. It's interesting to think in designing a Tangible User Interface if you use the words "whether

or not" "either" "on/off" you need digital and if you are using words, "How much" "stronger" "faster" "brighter" you need analog.

Digital output can turn a light on or off.

Analog can turn it brighter or dimmer.

However, blue digital lights can also perform drag. For example, when circuiting a light to blink, to dim, not simply a binary of on or off, one can simulate analog within the computing processing program of arudino, to make the light blink continuously for the illusion of analog, multiple states of being, Thus you would not know what the analog or digital, the "real" or the "fake" is.

They are "luscious impersonations."

I want to end by returning to Scott's conclusion of "The Evidence of Experience" when she revises her initial reading of Samuel Delany's *The Motion of Light and Water*. Scott initially analyzes Delany's description of the bathhouse's "dim blue lights" as evidence of experience. Yet Scott returns to Delany's memoir at her conclusion to acknowledge her own misreading of the passage and the blue lights. Scott cites literary critic Kristen Swann's point that the dim blue lights in Delany's memoir suggest not evidence of the visible but instead: …"the properties of the medium through which the visible appears—here the dim blue light, whose distorting qualities produce a wavering of the visible…"[296]

Sometimes this queer and feminist vision comes at the risk of faking it, or failing miserably. Upon making my first ardruino light for a tangible computer, I mistakenly placed the LED in the wrong socket, almost short circuiting it. And at my fake, my queer failure, the digital actually radiated a brilliant dimming blue.

Scott explains, "the wavering light permits a vision beyond the visible, a vision that contains the fantastic projections that are the basis for political identification."[297] It is the "waving blue light" that we need to envision beyond the visible, into as Halberstam has written on queer studies' "imagining, not some fantasy of an elsewhere, but existing alternatives to hegemonic systems."[298]

Through the Fake, Asian American feminists can be reminded of wavering blue lights projected beyond the visible. The Fake is how the Rice Kings created their drag king troupe. The Fake is how the Woman Warrior was lulled in dream: "her voice, the voice of the heroines in my sleep."[299]

Conclusion

Three Robots Stories

"Do asian people remind you of robots?"

If you google Asians and robots, the top entry is a 2010 yahoo answers page entitled, "Do asian people remind you of robots?" Anonymous answers range from expressions of indignation to agreement. "Yes!! They look like they have no emotions," answers one entry. While another entry resists the racialization:

> Definitely NOT.
> Asian people are just like everyone else.
> They are nothing like robots, many people say they don't display emotions but they do their facial features are just different so they're response is different.
> And the stereotype going around that they're smart is not true. It is merely a stereotype, they work just as hard as we do.
> You shouldn't be saying things like this on the net.
> Its not nice.[300]

As the comments espouse, Asians may be seen as "robotic" based on stereotypical characteristics such as emotionless and "being smart." Both robots and Asian Americans are characterized as "dumb," "uncreative," and "emotionless." These characterizations of Asians as robots are depicted within popular culture, but in the digital sphere, racist stereotypes are archived and commented upon.

The digital age provokes new and pressing questions on the robot and Asian American. While this dissertation traced historical examples of the Asian and/as Automata discourse and a present day case study of digital drag kings, the contemporary digital moment prompted my initial dissertation questions on Asian American representation.

Prior to graduate school, I worked as a web editor and journalist during the start of the digital revolution in 2005. The digital revolution transformed the organization of print, and in many ways, made print obsolete. As a young journalist, I was not fully conscious of the technological changes that were taking place and that would eventually transform Asian American representations in particular. When I left journalism for graduate study at San Francisco State University, and entered UC Berkeley as a doctoral student, the digital revolution transformed representations of Asian Americans drastically. Social media and new entertainment genres such as Youtube.com, myspace.com, and reality television offered new representations of Asian Americans in exciting and complicated ways. Why were these new representations happening? Do Asian Americans on social media now have more representational power? Can we understand Asian Americans as cyborgs?

Trained in new media studies, I understand that new media doesn't occur only in the contemporary, but in the past as well. I want to make connections with labor, the

robot, and Asian American racialization. The google search illustrates how the racialization of Asian American as automaton robot is pressing, alive, and searchable.

Super Awesome: Giant Robot

In another contemporary example of the Asian and/as Automaton discourse, upon a visit to the Oakland Museum, the special exhibit "Super Awesome" runs as a homage to Asian American pop culture magazine and store Giant Robot. Based on the popular magazine, "Giant Robot" founded by cultural workers Eric Nakamura, who is Japanese American, and Martin Wong, who is Chinese American, the exhibit displayed all that is Asian American through "hip" quirky creativity, provocative visual art, and yes, figurines of robots. Yet, on another level of the museum, the "Ape Guardian," an aluminum and chrome robot greets you upon entrance into the collection of "California Art." Crafted from discarded metal parts, artist Clayton Bailey created a robot that stood at six feet tall, with silver dryer duct arms and a massive vacuum system chest. The signage refers to the "Chinese" and further evoking questions of race and the human/machine.

The two "robots," Bailey's "Chinese" "Ape Guardian," and "Giant Robot" shed light on the dissertation's concerns, the way the Asian and/as Automaton figure is of denigration, such as the racialization of Chinese laborers of the Antebellum period, to the resistance strategies of racial recalibration, such as Nam June Paik's robot art.

Prompted by our contemporary digital age and characterizations of Asians as robots as depicted in the Yahoo forum, my dissertation project investigated the discourses of mechanization and Asian racialization during three periods of technology. These three periods include the mid-19th century, the 1960s, and the contemporary moment, focusing on how technology and racialization intertwine. I demonstrate how the three time periods demarcate convergences of technological innovation and Asian migration to the United States. In the dissertation, I hoped to show how industry and race intersected in their development and informed one another. Understanding how race is an emerging technology, a racial formation that is privy to shifts and changes help us understand that race like technology, is not stratic but a dynamic process of formation. Technological tropes help sediment racial meanings through repetitive stories that emerge in the mass media, legal cases, and popular culture. In particular, these technological tropes reshape and naturalize the changing boundaries of the human/machine analytic.

A key part of my larger analysis is to examine how labor is tied to Asian American formations and conceptions of the robot. Labor, I hoped to show, shaped Asian American racialization and denigration not only within the material and legislative fields but in the ideological realm of the Asian and/as Automaton discourse. My first chapter, Asian and/as Automaton demonstrated how labor shapes Asian racialization and is a key trope of the robot. Examining the laboring of Chinese migrant workers illuminates how robots and Asians are interconnected.

Although Asians and Asian Americans are racialized as robotic, resistance has been utilized by way of the technological. Like Paik's work, Asian Americans and other racial minorities engage in racial recalibration—a racial formation that occurs through aesthetic tinkering, hacking, and recreating with technology. A key component of racial recalibration is to utilize the very trope of denigration, the robot or the animal, in order to

recalibrate and humanize racially denigrated subjects. In the process of deplacement, and replacement, Asian Americans and other subjects of color, utilize this apparatus to resist objecthood, by way of the object. Unlike more overt racially motivated protests, racial recalibration may not always overtly take on the language of race as a mode of resistance.

Finally, in my last chapter, I examine the politics of contemporary Asian American cultural representation through digital theory, and illustrate how the drag king like the robot, is a figure that breaks down categories of the real, the fake, and gender. This work also attempts to reread Asian American cultural critique through the lens of the queer and technological. Moreover, the Asian and/as Automaton discourse takes on the politics of artifical intelligence by illuminating how the virtual troubles the boundaries of difference.

"siri, do you love me?"

I will end with a short robot love story.

Earlier on in the dissertation writing process, I joined a dinner celebration of Asian American students from the University of California, Davis at the nearby Berkeley restaurant Jupiter's. My longtime friend and mentor, performance artist Alex Luu was teaching at Davis, and his students traveled to the Berkeley area to watch Alex's one man show *Three Lives*, a poignant story about refugees, masculinity, and immigration after the Vietnam War. After the show, I joined the group at Jupiter's for their pizza and beer, popular menu items that typically make the establishment bustling after every sports game in Berkeley.

The performance workshop that Alex teaches at UC Davis is entitled My Own Story (MOS) and it focuses on a premise and practice that Asian American stories are largely obscured and ignored. Thus, in the MOS workshops, Asian American students claim, write, and perform their own stories. These stories are often of deep pain, joy, and love. The opposite of what we might think of "robot stories." I completed the MOS program as an undergraduate at the University of Southern California, and meeting with the UC Davis Asian American students a decade later was very inspiring. Like me, they also went through the MOS process, and our kinship was immediate. Indeed, Alex often alluded to the participants of MOS as fam, as in family. I enjoyed meeting the students, especially as many of them were at the cusp of graduating. I loved hearing about their plans to apply to graduate school, start working as local activists, and their dreams of becoming Asian American cultural workers.

One of the students from UC Davis asked me about my dissertation, and I answered that the project was on Asian Americans and technology. At the time, my ideas about robots and technology were still formulating, and it was challenging to share about the project, an act I imagine doesn't always get that much easier, even if further along. I suppose, I didn't have a "pitch" down, and yet, it was also interesting in my stopping and hesitation at "Asian Americans and technology," to give space to hear what the student had to say in response.

The particular student who asked me about my dissertation had just begun work as a programmer, and he brightened up when I told him my short answer.

"Oh wow! Do you know Siri?"

"No," I answered puzzled, not sure whether Siri was a person.

"Siri?"
"Yeah, Siri."

I looked back at him confused. At that point, he scavenged through his pockets and pulled out his black smart phone.

"It's a computer program. You ask questions like this, watch: siri do you love me? What should I eat?"

The young man proceeded to tell me about Siri and computing which I was madly trying to follow like humanists do when technologists get on a geek expressway, always a fun ride. After the introduction to Siri, we began talking about the Turing Test and AI, concepts I was familiar with while the student had less know-how. I stopped and asked him, "I'm sorry I forgot, what did Siri answer back to your question?"

He looked at me, with some hesitation, and said, "Siri loves me, too."

Even now, I'm not quite sure if I believe the young man. I don't remember Siri answering yes. And like all good contemporary bots, Siri is fickle. The answers are random, you can never predict with Siri. However, even if I did accept and believe the testimony that Sir's answer was yes, what was poignant for me was his question, *do you love me?*

The racialized characterizations of Asian Americans as robots, as the Yahoo forum demonstrates, suggests Asian Americans are an inhuman group that do not care about "emotions," and yet, how poignant and surprising the young Asian American man asked the robot about love?

And how poignant it was that after his first introduction of Siri, I was puzzled and mistakenly thought Siri was a human being.

Like the early 1960's, we are still contending with robots seeming human.

We are still contending with humans seeming as "a Paik."

In our contemporary moment, we still grapple with these dichotomies by way of the robot.

At heart, being human is about love. The robotic Asian asks the question, even if the answer isn't what we hope it will be.

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