The Loop

Fall '24 - Issue 1

collected by

Circuits + Internet + Media + Software

The Loop is a short magazine pubished by CIMS (Circuits, Internet, Media, & Software), a club dedicated to exploring the intersections of media, technology, and culture. Our mission is to provide an inclusive platform for students to create, innovate, and share ideas at the crossroads of computer science, multi-media, and artistic expression.

This issue of The Loop showcases student projects, research, opinion pieces and creative works that dive deep into the synergy between technology and art. You'll find thought-provoking essays, striking visual art, and innovative projects—all curated to dignify student works and spark conversation.

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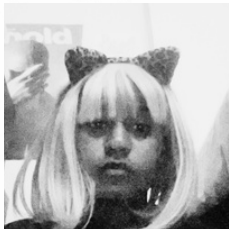- All authors are credited with chosen names
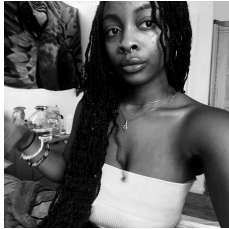
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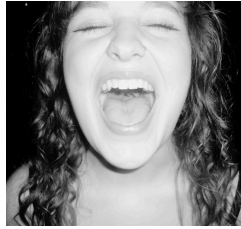"refuel ur mind :3"

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@The Creature (ze/zir)
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public policy analysis
"YIPEE!"

@sara berhe-abraha (she/her)
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"please come again!"

From the bottoms of our hearts, thank you to all contributors for allowing us to use your works to put this magazine together! We extend our gratitude to our readers, as well. Thank you for reading, and we hope you enjoy!

Short-Form Writing

Featuring 4 pieces of writing varying from poetry to short stories, our Short-Form Writing section displays a brief sample of the literary talent within CIMS and the broader 5C Community. Don't get too comfy here, each piece hovers around 500 words. The page design for each piece varies in this section more than others, as to offer visual variety.

Titles:

Digital Dark Age

slip listening

Super Mario 64

the (s)ick

Contributing Authors:

Luke Brown

Jazzmin Duncan

Digital Dark Age
Luke Brown

I have thrown away my typewriter and only have a SHIFT key to show for my recklessness. Any time I open my phone I go rapidly to Instagram and other poisons I endorse jovially. Where the SHIFT key even is, I have no clue, but hereby, I weep, missing the day or two the novelty of my misbegotten typewriter introduced some analog rigor into my life. Thus I lament, as my sleep has wracked with ruin, and at night fall I tumble out of bed, to berate my bright glass mirror:

What is the commotion!

What is the matter!

Who do you serve!

What do you want!

& for many hours I have argued this as cultural malignment:

In America I do not think there is anyone who can read in between the lines, nor is there a reason for anybody in obtaining their letters, their papers, their stamps of approval; there is nothing evenly measured and space between words is a matter of proportionality in rage and relations hips begging for a commotion that doesn't vary except with voices pleading to end the matter at hand and watch television--none of it makes any sense to me, why nobody would n't want to read or listen to everything amongst itself a ll in harmony. It feels like everything has been reductions to rubble and nobody gets the complete picture, why all this must come to an end sometime, the rabidness & rageful afternoons, the hurt necks at computer screens, the tawdry stares back and forth at blue light emergency devices, and

while the future has been bemoaned for eons our conscious ness has strayed further and further down the line, supposing nothing is intentional and all is just careenings to ward off our elementary savageries. And that one in a million might rewild to apathetic indifference is impertinent & miniscule. This is so distressing the question is begged:

What is the commotion!

What is the matter!

Who do you serve!

What do you want!

In archaic monotype I try at solutions, spacious & measured but pointless and insubstantial to the questions I asked, a while-wasting because so much of my time has been wasted of volitions I rarely ever subscribe to. My wits are like handing a monkey a typewriter: the clangings sound the same in the dead of night when my eyes frost over a one thousand or around-that-expensive rock, grasping for any straws to know:

What is the commotion!

What is the matter!

Who do you serve!

What do you want!

Because I ask these questions and nobody else does I am so much-better-than-they-are. This is why I get so politically evangelizing when I am dissatisfied with myself. I am sati sfied knowing that if you asked the average voter these ?'s they wouldn't even know what to do with themselves. I amn't stupid and they are, and they don't even understand the hi story, haven't read the journalism that spends days recoun ting that somehow, somewhere, our problems are what came of the sleek answers computed 20 years ago, and that one score

 before that, everyone was literate & used typewriteringlied brawny imagination muscles on blank canvas scrap fax paper.

What is the commotion!

– I asked myself this and could not come up with an answer.

What is the matter!

– I asked myself this and my ads proliferate until nauseum.

Who do you serve!

– I asked myself this & realized it will always be margins.

What do you want!

– I cried to this; America consoled me with a Macintosh OS.

slip listening
Jazzmin Duncan

why dont you listen to me when i speak?
i may ramble
but what did i do to deserve ignorance?
i never knew how much it hurts to be unheard
usually i wouldn't care
but now i'm bitter and old
aged by anger and jealousy
and i care about being listened to
like an old woman.
you will respect me and you will listen to what i say
this response,
what have i given birth to?
allowed?
This green monster
Who cannot be sated
But for a single ear
born of an anxious mother and a jealous father
Slime slides down the valleys of its backside
and begrudgingly marries the floor
their affair, tacky
Heard in the delicate ***RRIIIPPP*** sound
As the slime makes a covenant
With the bottom of a passerby's shoe
doting on myself to the point of tears
View and voice
blocked by every movement
made by these husbandly feet
Wiped away more
with each step
RRIIIPPP
I scream,
Watching slimy remnants
grow smaller
As im carried away
please listen to me
i don't want to become her

8

Super Mario 64
Luke Brown

2004 graphics lasting psilocybic epic-
makings in the dark recesses of 150

supernovas. one moat, castle, a strange
nose-bubble dinosaur popping snot on
start screens; & do not forget minigames

amongst two repackaged secret hells-
scapes. all part of three turtle games;

acid-soaked basement floodings etching
lava-lime mirages only after the door
has unlocked from solar star powers.
Hero, first to embark carpeted trickeries
for four characters, donning stolen hats
from cloud-demons and jackal vultures.
Haunted courtyard filled in by shy ghosts
caged-in not-beyond brick portal tossing
machination hells---5 silver stars there;
stomp, bash, wall-kick, scream, gamble,
paint, all there; all dusted off and spat,
brainbrick bytes nearly demolished in
the frenzy of dives at tree roots to fly.

the (s)ick
Jazzmin Duncan

i am sloppy.
icky, even
puke on my chin and blood on my cuticles.
all in a good nights fun.
Stay mad.
eyes bore into my head as it hangs into the trash can.
sorry you had to see that.
some girls just can't hold their liquor.
I guess, not.
i've been sloppy.
Loose leaf paper flys free in my bag
rolling out of my hands
Like the meal rolling out of my throat
My calendar overflows
Anxiety bubbles up
Emotional indigestion
Bleeds into this trash can
I am sloppy, but lighter.
let go and just vibe.
that's what my stomach did.
be more like her.
or you'll stay sick 🤒

This section is the shortest, yet remains in competition for the sweetest! Featuring visual creations from our members, we celebrate the artists, their work, and the spectrum of visual mediums.

Visual Art

Titles:

Macroinvertebrates hard at work

Gender Neutral B214

Contributing Artists:

Anja Flannery

Luke Brown

Macroinvertebrates
Anja Flannery

"I dedicated about 10 hours to this and drew intricate macroinvertebrate life within a body of water."

hard at work
Luke Brown

Original Orientation

"My friend's dildo was very colorful.
Something had to be done with it."

Gender Neutral B214

Luke Brown

"Inspired by the works of Thomas Demand, who re-enacts photographs of what once was through paper. This capsule was inspired by a photograph of a bathroom shelf. What is real? What are the essentials? How can we understand the world through inanimate proxy

– that is, our subsequent reevaluation of the fleeting, in fleeting paper & "eternal" photo. I have been to that bathroom a thousand's thousand times. Yet when reconstructing it, it was a singular moment of not only being there, but also being in everything between. It is, and was, to be relieved and yet-to-relieve, in and outside an infinite blink. In other words, to flush from afar while drowning in the moment. Performed for ART-028 Photography, instructor Lisa Auerbach. "

Digital Projects

You made it to the Digital Projects section! Here, contributors share their findings, experiences, and creations from projects completed in a digital format. Get your camera ready to scan QR Codes to view key content.

Titles:

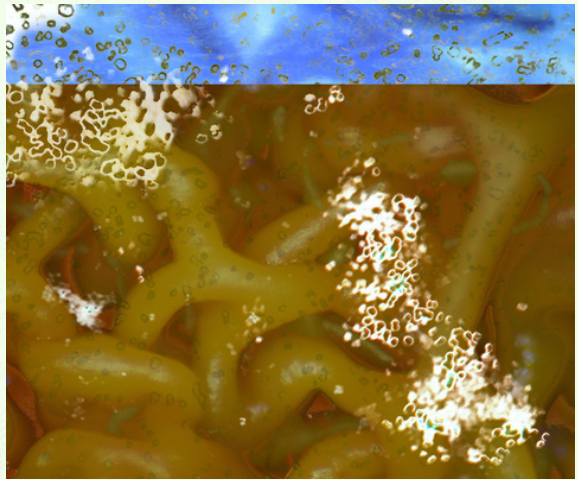Actinobacteria

Contributors:

Raffi

Actinobacteria
Raffi

"For my final project in my Microbes and Art class, I wanted to explore microbial textures with digital art using TouchDesigner and Photoshop. I first examined different types of bacteria to see which had the most interesting patterns and colors.

I then looked at the bacteria under a microscope to see what shapes they arranged and how they moved around. I ultimately landed on Actinobacteria, as it had the most interesting features at different microscopic levels. Throughout this class, I was continuously inspired by the textures and movements of microbes at different levels of magnification. These pieces were created using videos and photos of one bacteria. Based on the shape, color, and texture of the colony it is likely Actinobacteria.

I took photos of the yellow colony using a dissecting microscope, and the black and white videos were taken using a compound microscope. After capturing these images and videos, I used

Photoshop and TouchDesigner to overlay them in different ways. Using these softwares allowed me to explore Actinobacteria's textures even more, as I was able to isolate different features from the pictures and videos and combine them in engaging ways. One thing which caught my eye was how even at 400x magnification, you can still change the focus and catch different bacteria at different levels. This is shown in the piece as the black and white video. I chose to showcase the stark contrast between still images and complex videos, as it shows how on the surface microbes seem very simple, but if you look on a deeper level, they are complicated and confusing organisms."

'Actinobacteria' (video)
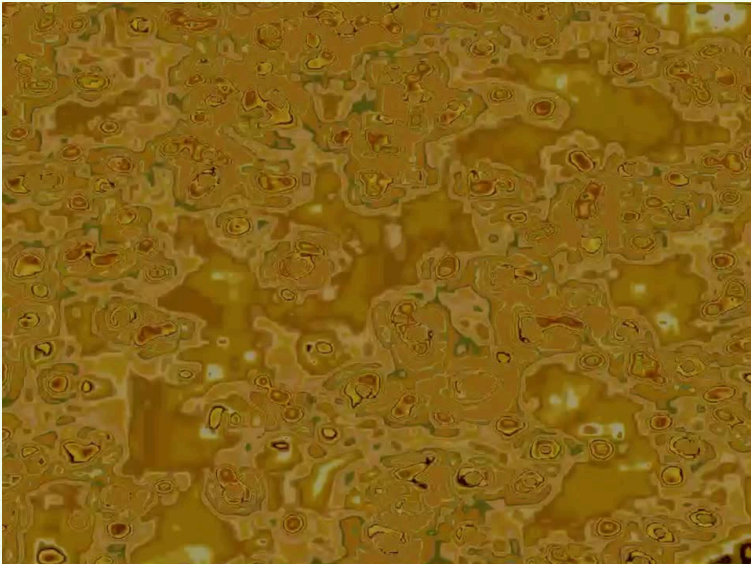
Long-Form Writing

This section contains essays and an opinion piece, written by students of varying disciplines. Some pieces are classwork, some freelance; but all relate to themes central to CIMS (see acronym). Pieces over 1000 words are excerpted in print and continued digitally; have a camera ready to scan QR codes and continue reading!

Titles:

Administration's Lost Opportunities to Build Digital Infrastructures of Care

Prejudicial Posthumanism: A Racialized Reframing of Artificial Life Film Narratives

Swampland Speculation: Intersections of Race, Nature, and Capital in 'Swamp City'

Contributing Authors:

Claudio Castillo

Jazzmin Duncan

Gianna Hutton-Gonzalez

Administration's Lost Opportunities to Build Digital Infrastructures of Care

Claudio Castillo

How is Wi-Fi connectivity being used as evidence? —

To identify otherwise masked/blocked individuals who were present during the takeover of Carnegie, the College employed data reporting the unique device connections to wireless access points installed on all floors of Carnegie Hall (ground floor, first floor and second floor). The timeframe of the data ranges between 11:30 a.m. and 4 p.m. on October 7, 2024. Individuals identified via WiFi were connected to hubs inside the building for at least two time periods. The minimum connection duration was 50 minutes. WiFi connections were validated by unique individual login credentials. This information was collected in accordance with the Privacy Policy set forth in the ITS Policy section of the Student Handbook.

image screenshot from "Carnegie Hall Incidents FAQ" page via the Pomona website.

This issue of 'The Loop' is published at the tail-end of an incredibly difficult semester marked with fear, anger, grief, and hopelessness.

On October 7th, 2024, student organizers for Pomona's Divestment from Israel, associated with Pomona Divest from Apartheid (PDFA) and Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) among other student-led organizations, occupied Carnegie Hall for a number of hours.

On October 15th, the administration responded by notifying 10 Pomona students of interim suspensions, which on October 23rd were extended through the end of the academic year. Additionally, more than 30 5C students were banned from campus. Throughout, digital communications were essential to the administration's

exertion of power, compounding the lack of top-down interpersonal connection on campus and the disposability of dissenting student bodies.

While Pomona College is a small, residential, liberal arts college, it is rare that the entire student body is ever together in one place. And, in a 'post-COVID' lockdown era, our campus community's lives are more digitally mediated than ever. As events unfolded throughout the second part of the semester, students nearly only ever received information via online or digital platforms. Students affected by sanctions received generalized emails from the administration informing them of their new status as a suspended or banned student.

The wider campus body read articles published by Undercurrents and TSL and others, most often in the form of a caption on their respective Instagram pages. The wider Pomona College student body received irregular communication from administrators, which included letters from President Starr, Everbridge Campus Security notifications, letters from other Deans, and attachments to legal documents. Pomona College posted an FAQ page to their site, which also explained how the administration used WiFi signals to identify students at the demonstration. Nearly all information regarding this incident was sent via mass communication.

However, it is what digital communications have not been used for, even beyond the Carnegie Hall 'Incidents' that is so disturbing. Although the campus community generally holds an unfavorable opinion about the administration and administrators' intentions, this does not bar administrators from taking steps to build an infrastructure and community of care otherwise, especially on digital platforms. Every student banned or suspended received almost no messages which were not sent to at least one other student. Campus-wide messages sometimes explained why certain decisions were

made, rarely mentioned available campus resources, and never explained how those administrators were themselves there to support and serve students.

Maybe these situations are not the most obvious place for a Dean or President of the College to insert their support for students, especially those facing disciplinary consequences. But, there is almost no other situation where these administrators do choose to extend a symbol of care and support, even on digital platforms.

Pomona College produces hundreds of campus leaders, global scholars, and humanitarians. At any point when students earn an accomplishment, i.e. at the end of the year of service as an RA, TA, ASPC senator/staffer, affinity group leader, or receiving a competitive scholarship, or organizing a unifying/intellectual event, an administrator who cares could easily send a short, personal email, if they wanted to.

These could be opportunities to ask, "What else are you up to?", "Is there anything else you're excited about?", and "Who/what made this possible?". It is probably true that these administrators are busy, but it is sad to say that it would be impossible for these individuals who have incredible staff in their offices to even forward a short message a secretary, associate dean, or colleague could write for them.

Over my last 5 semesters on campus, I have seen administrators completely waste opportunities to connect with students on campus. The lack of 'kind' emails is not significant, but the fact that it is an emblem of how these individuals choose to administrate a small, residential, liberal arts college is.

Even the easiest and most accessible means for communicating with

students – one that does not require real-time attention or physical presence – are completely devoid of actions that show care. For students in their best and worst moments at the college, administrators almost never extend themselves from a place of understanding, kindness, and presence. Rather than using available tools to leverage the personal nature of a liberal arts college, students expect to operate within a digital infrastructure of neglect and aversion, not care.

Swampland Speculation: Intersections of Race, Nature, and Capital in 'Swamp City'

Gianna Hutton González

In August, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection unveiled plans to develop disc golf courses, hotels, golf courses, and pickleball courts in 26 state parks under the "Great Outdoors Initiative," but overwhelming public backlash quickly led to the proposal's withdrawal (Sutton and Lopez 2024). This plan exemplifies the ongoing capitalist logic of production, paralleling the destructive development that has drastically reduced the Florida Everglades—a subtropical wetland that once covered all of South Florida—to a mere third of its original size ("Everglades Restoration Timeline", n.d.).

Alice Bucknell's 2021 30-minute video art installation Swamp City envisions a speculative future in which Florida's swamplands are transformed into a luxury eco-tourist real estate opportunity for the ultra-wealthy, who seek retreat into "pure" nature due to severe climate disruption. The proposal for the Great Outdoors Initiative feels like it could blend seamlessly into Bucknell's speculative fiction, where capitalist development masquerades as environmentalism, blurring the lines between current events and imagined futures.

Swamp City critiques the myth of linear progress, showing how it leads to today's interwoven crises. Its non-linear narrative examines the racialized impacts of capitalist 'development' on the natural world, revealing the tension between human and more-than-human knowledge systems that facilitate nature's commodification. By calling for the breakdown of these rigid binaries and the embrace of partiality, Bucknell's work opens new possibilities for ecofeminist politics.

Bucknell's video game modality immerses the viewer in a disaster

capitalism scenario shaped by colonial ideas of "wilderness," which are challenged through more-than-human intelligence systems. In the video, a company called Swamp City partners with the Evergreen Realty Group to offer the wealthy an escape from natural disasters through a luxury eco-tourism experience, marketed as an "enhanced relationship with nature" (Bucknell 2023). This venture is framed as both a conservation effort and a benefit to the ecosystem, with half of the park reserved for scientists to "restore" it, while the other half remains accessible to guests, drawing inspiration from the controversial Half-Earth Theory proposed by biologist E.O. Wilson in 2016 (Hance 2016).

In Swamp City, architecture functions as a business selling an idealized vision of the future, yet it operates within the same frameworks of accumulation and privatized development that contributed to the crisis in the first place.

In Pollution is Colonialism, Max Liboiron critiques projects like Swamp City, which assume access to Indigenous land, arguing that they produce harm despite their environmental intentions. As Liboiron states, "Land as a resource...can mean imagining a clean, healthy, and pollution-free future while conducting beach cleanups on Indigenous land without permission or consent. It means envisioning land in ways that align with colonial and settler goals, even when those goals are well-intentioned" (Liboiron 2021, 10). This critique aligns with the dominant logic of domination and extraction from nature, complicating narratives around binaries of intelligence by calling for the valuation of more-than-human forms of knowledge.

Swamp City centers around three main characters: a celebrity architect reminiscent of the heavily criticized Thomas Heatherwick, a speaking alligator, and a 3,500-year-old Bald Cypress Tree

resurrected through AI. The alligator, who refuses to be displaced by the development, constantly challenges the architect's intentions, representing nature's intellect and acting as a figurative devil on the architect's shoulder as he navigates consultations with more-than-human intelligence. In one exchange, the alligator questions, "What about Swamp City's target audience—the LA film stars and Manhattan bankers who arrive on their private jets for a weekend on the swamp?" ("Alice Bucknell" 2021). The architect, however, continues to center anthropogenic pleasure, stating, "My intentions are quite simple, really. I want to bring people into a world of pure nature as an unfiltered encounter with one of the Earth's last surviving ecologies. I want them to experience the natural splendor of our planet before it's too late…" (Bucknell 2023).

These interactions prompt the viewer to deconstruct the architect's well-intentioned narrative and consider the deeper implications of such developments. By juxtaposing the alligator's voice of dissent with the architect's vision, the narrative exposes the inherent contradictions in eco-tourism initiatives that prioritize profit over genuine ecological stewardship. Ultimately, this dynamic invites critical questions about the ethics of development, the commodification of nature, and the need for inclusive narratives that honor more-than-human perspectives in discussions about alternative futures.

The intentional feminization of the third character, a 3,500-year-old Bald Cypress tree resurrected through AI, serves as a powerful embodiment of hybrid identity, transcending traditional categories of woman, nature, and technology. This character disrupts established notions of difference and opens new possibilities for ecofeminist politics, echoing Donna Haraway's argument in "A Cyborg Manifesto," where she challenges rigid binary classifications and advocates for a feminist perspective that embraces technological advancements, accepts permanently partial identities, and recognizes the

interconnectedness of all beings (Haraway 1990). Throughout the video, the Cypress tree experiences nightmare tremors recalling the trauma of her burning at the hands of a park visitor smoking, which conflicts with her role as a control board for the park, overseeing its carbon footprint and cleaning the air. The explicit lack of agency she feels speaks to the devaluation of more-than-human forms of intelligence embedded in the Swamp City development encapsulated by her poignant statement: "Can you begin to imagine this feeling? Brought back into a world like this with no agency. I can't escape the muscle memory of my past lives—even as my neural network glimmers" ("Alice Bucknell" 2021).

Not only are more-than-human forms devalued and repressed in Swamp City, but the very premise of the development is built on a conservation concern that prioritizes access to nature for the privileged 1%, all while exploiting dispossessed lands within a racialized context. This exclusive retreat for the elite offers a "24/7 luxury lifestyle" that coexists with "a new hypernature" amid the burning of Los Angeles and the loss of New York City to sea-level rise ("Alice Bucknell" 2021). This return to nature reflects the historical creation of national parks as spaces for white, middle-class, and upper-class individuals to escape into preserved wilderness.

Charles Mann's concept of the pristine myth asserts a dichotomy between humanity and nature, depicting the Pre-Columbian Americas as an ecological paradise untouched by human intervention (Bacon 2002). This perspective characterizes Indigenous peoples as benevolent and passive, further erasing their sustainable practices and co-existence with the land.

Additionally, the pristine myth elevates the land to an almost Edenic state, reminiscent of William Cronon's depiction of nature as Eden, which positions preservationists as morally obligated to restore nature to its supposedly untouched state (Cronon 1995). This craving for a purified nature is exemplified in the celebrity architect's desire for

guests to experience a "pure nature" in an "unfiltered encounter" (HOXTON 253 2022). This purification of nature "systematically erases indigenous agency and governance" (Cattelino 2009, 7), justifying dispossession.

The narrative within Swamp City critically engages with the deep-rooted issues of the conservation movement and the social construction of "wilderness," drawing on Progressive Era logics from environmentalists like Teddy Roosevelt, who sought to balance preservation with "efficient" extractive use, much like the development in Swamp City itself.

Recognizing the Everglades and swamplands as historical places of reprieve and survival for Indigenous communities and people of color is critical to understanding their significance. Once a refuge for the Miccosukee tribe, who fled their ancestral homeland in Alabama and Georgia during the Seminole Wars to avoid deportation to the West, these areas are now appropriated in Swamp City as ecological havens for the wealthiest members of society ("Everglades Restoration Timeline", n.d.).

While the video project refrains from directly depicting Indigenous characters or Miccosukee members, it includes two symbols that facilitate discussions about the racialized terrain of the project. The use of "bio-fuel powered" airboats, deeply tied to eco-tourism initiatives historically linked to structural racism against Indigenous communities in South Florida, exemplifies this appropriation.

Former Florida Governor Coe's comment—"What could be more tempting than a trip... through one of these jungle waterways sitting in. the bow of a dugout canoe guided by a Seminole, who fits so perfectly into the picture?" (Blythe 2017, 468)—illustrates how he collapses the Miccosukee into the landscape, disregarding their status as sovereign people. In this narrative, Miccosukee leaders are no longer guiding

airboat tours and in control of their cultural and physical narratives; instead, their ability to control access to their stewarded lands has been stolen and commercialized. Additionally, the inclusion of the Seminole-owned Hard Rock Casino Hotel Building in this world highlights the extent of capitalist encroachment on the Seminole tribe, forcing Indigenous communities to operate within this new settler capitalist system.

By constructing a casino that fits the parameters of an urbanized, developed world, they strive to maintain some economic and cultural autonomy despite the ongoing seizure of their ancestral lands. Yet, despite these significant elements, the narrative of the video project remains devoid of direct representation from the Seminole and Miccosukee tribes, speaking to how this project is colonial in its approach to land as an exploitable resource.

Alice Bucknell's Swamp City offers a potent critique of capitalist development disguised as environmentalism, challenging the commodification of nature and exposing colonial ideologies in conservation efforts. By blending current events with speculative fiction, the work prompts critical examination of power structures shaping human-nature relationships. Its use of hybrid characters challenges traditional binaries, aligning with ecofeminist perspectives and Donna Haraway's ideas on partial identities. Swamp City advocates for a nuanced understanding of environmental stewardship that values diverse knowledge forms, including more-than-human intelligence. In confronting the intersections of capitalism, colonialism, and environmental exploitation, the work compels viewers to address the racial and class disparities embedded in approaches to nature.

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Prejudicial Posthumanism: A Racialized Reframing of Artficial Life Film Narratives

Jazzmin Duncan

Pilfering through past and present mainstream understandings of artificial life, from ancient Golem myths to modern blockbusters like *Ex Machina*, it is apparent that narratives surrounding artificial life present persistent, prescient, and fundamental questions to understanding humanity's relationship with the non-human.

As AI's development continues to rapidly accelerate, pushing androids and humanoids from fantasy or science fiction into the realm of potential reality, urgent questions arise about the social implications of these technologies, both direct and indirect. Will AI help resolve persisting injustices and inequities, or merely replace and magnify human prejudice in novelly insidious forms? Examining how post-humanist narratives in films and literature have shaped humanity's mainstream understanding of AI reveals unsettling patterns deeply rooted in, upheld, and perpetuated by Western cultural biases.

Posthumanism signals a transition from human to posthuman, a journey lined with "both pleasure and terror" that allows us to "[get] out of some of the old boxes and [open] up new ways of thinking about what human means." As such, narratives that follow this structure both reflect on past understandings and project a vision of humanity in relation to the non-human, the long-awaited 'next step' in evolution.

Posthumanist narratives depicted in science fiction films have defined and will continue to define, our understanding of AI and, therefore, our subsequent actions. Further, traditions of servitude, referring to chattel slavery in particular, inform our understanding of AI's relationship to humanity. Moreover, depictions of and projected futures with AI tend to envision an extension of existing prejudice, communicated by

subjugative posthumanist narratives. Through the past, present, and future of AI development, posthumanist narratives have shaped our understanding of artificial and organic life, as they implicitly reframe, implant, and project existing biases into a non-existent world. In doing this, they present a reflection of the past onto the future. Enabled by present action, these aspects of posthumanist narratives reflect, reinforce, and redefine societal prejudices.

Throughout the turn of the century, Science Fiction naturally "mirrored and engaged with political tension, fears, and cultural anxieties that shaped everyday life, " defining how we "[view] and [understand] historical events." When put into conversation with the concept of the illustrious posthuman, science fiction must then reveal an implicit or explicit fear or anxiety inherent to its narrative. Films covering artificial life engage with the fear and tension that the genre guarantees, as well as the concept of the posthuman, calling for myriad conversations about the fundamental nature of humanity, sovereignty, and agency.

Specifically, Posthuman narratives reflect fears and anxieties that have been sewn into our minds by prejudice. However, the genre gives viewers tools to pick a problem apart by inverting, reframing, and questioning bigoted thinking, enabled by radically different worlds, characters, and relationships.

However, with AI specifically, as it continues to materialize itself into the physical world, sci-fi films act as a looking glass into a future with technology. By engaging with these metaphorical narratives, we gain insight into foundational beliefs about human nature, identity, and the human struggle for sovereignty over our own creations. Posthuman narratives specifically manifest the latent prejudices and dehumanizing assumptions sewn into dominant cultural consciousness. When putting these together, films implicitly force us to see ourselves in a

fear-filled future and how we fit into it, especially morally.

As mentioned, contemporary films, literature, and general media regarding AI are inseparably rooted and conceptually based in culture. "Judeo-Christian monotheistic tradition"; "[Platonian principles] and Gnosticism" lay the foundations for mainstream Western understandings of posthumanism and artificial life. They imply that "the biological body must be transcended," which "can also mean surpassing the human condition." Further, the idea of end times, apocalypses, and doomsdays is directly traced back to the Abrahamic faiths and teachings.

The way that we, as Westerners, understand AI is deeply rooted in religious and cultural traditions that place humanity at the center of the narrative and everything else in competition with it. Outside Western culture, " [machines are portrayed] as helpers, we find a friendlier attitude toward robots and AI." Coeckelbergh uses the Japanese Shinto religion and technological culture to display the fundamental differences in approaching and understanding AI.

Considering the cultural context, AI narratives draw on and reflect, yet perpetuate prejudicial fears deeply embedded in Western tradition and culture. Similar to the Christian tradition, racism and bigotry find their way implicitly weaved into post-humanist narratives.

Terminator 2: Judgment Day presents an interesting reflection of the West's cultural relationship with servitude, inherently understood as subjugative—referring to chattel slavery in particular—which has led to visions of technologically advanced AI 'slaves' that protect, serve, and cater to our needs. Our conception of AI is inherently tainted by this legacy.

Present action for and against AI, largely rooted in fear or greedy

optimism, is directly influenced by similar ideas surrounding servitude. Currently, the US Government views AI's development primarily through a carceral, militaristic lens. The goals of furthering "global superiority" and "surveillance" silently communicate intent to extend and further enforce white supremacy and oppressive carceral systems. Racism and bigotry, in this way, are likely to be amplified rather than mitigated by unchecked AI proliferation.

The past shapes this reality and is actively shaping contemporary media narratives. Terminator 2 directly influenced legislation surrounding autonomous weapons in war. Depictions of AI become inseparable from the actual policies and systems developed, as seen in 2001: A Space Odyssey's portrayal of unchecked technological hubris. RoboCop vividly captures the irreconcilable struggles between man and machine, reflecting a social inability to resolve AI's awkward potential for either disrupting or maintaining existing power structures.

Blade Runner imagines an oppressive hierarchy where replicants lack agency and freedom, mirroring real-world racial oppression through a "passing slave narrative." The film touches on fears of replacement by artificial beings, framing humanity as a privileged status rather than inherent - precisely how constructions of race have operated. Humanity becomes a status, not a state of being; humanity as a concept could devolve into racialization, and the way we understand the concept of race could define our relationship to technology as we move forward. Replicants are hunted, policed, and enslaved in a manner that, stripped of context, mirrors the dominant society's brutalization of marginalized groups throughout history.

Policing android becomes an enforcement of perceived inferiority and lack of humanity, similar to contemporary and historical state violence. Policing androids is an enforcement of power and an assertion of the perceived inferiority of the non-human race.

Policing people of color is an assertion of their inferiority in the same way. State-sanctioned violence and carceral attitudes are integral in race relations, much like human-tech relations.

Further, Deckard, as a policeman and questionably an android, demonstrates the backwardness of carrying out state violence as an officer; officers assert violence because of a perceived inferiority or violations, although they are also inferior at the end of the day. This emphasizes the problem of policing and visualizes a not-so-distant digi-carceral future. This dehumanizing view enabled the AI abuse visualized in The Creator, where androids are treated as animals by militaristic, imperialist forces.

Ex Machina, HER, and Alex + Ada contemplate more intimate existential terrors, the fear and prejudices informing society's taboo response to romantic human-AI relationships, drawing clear parallels to historical bans on interracial intimacy. These narratives all reflect the potential for AI to become the latest instrument for dehumanization and oppression if prejudices go unexamined.

Films like Mission Impossible: Dead Reckoning reiterate this point, reminding audiences that responsible, ethical AI development centered on public good can chart a more hopeful future. AI's malign potential is not set in stone, but rather, it is a rather harsh mirror forcing society to confront its darkest impulses before they calcify into a self-fulfilling, dystopian reality.

In visualizing this future, nostalgic, unrealistic, technophilic optimism conflicts with nearly dystopian present realities. Nostalgia is the feeling we always chase but will never achieve. Our nostalgic vision for the future (humanity and tech living harmoniously) will interact with current cultural visions/expectations.

Unrealistic visions for the future will mingle with unsavory cultural

traditions of prejudice, judgment, and fear, creating an amalgamated, awkwardly oppressed, yet ideally futuristic position for androids to occupy. Awkward shuffling between imagination and reality confuses the vision for AI. In chasing nostalgia, influenced by our cultural vision for the future, we inject not-so-dream-like qualities from our own reality that we perceive as desirable, only realizing too late (i.e., RoboCop). Prejudicial nostalgic views of American life, particularly, are likely to show up implicitly in our relationship with technology.

Analyzing posthumanist narratives across various media reveals an unsettling thread of unconscious social bias consistently sewing the philosophical parameters of humanity's relationship to AI. From ancient creation myths to contemporary media, Western cultures have been immersed in cautionary tales about soulless, subjugated artificial beings that must be controlled or destroyed to preserve human supremacy.

These deep-seated fears over usurpation manifest as oppressive visions of AI servants, soldiers, and subordinates permanently entrenching existing power structures. However, the unprecedented existential crisis posed by AI's forever-growing capabilities offers a rare opportunity to evolve beyond such prejudices. In critically examining the cultural lenses through which we conceptualize artificial life, we can reframe the discourse surrounding AI towards ethical, equitable frameworks; failure to do so risks enshrining old injustices into a new, technologically augmented reality beyond human control.

As AI continues to blur the line between science and fiction, the narratives we tell will shape the paths we travel. If allowed to perpetuate ugly dynamics of subjugation, oppression, and the fear of the 'other,' the post-human AI relationship will replicate the dehumanizing prejudices plaguing humanity throughout history. However, by envisioning radically new dynamics of coexistence,

symbiosis, and mutual growth, humanity can embrace AI as an opportunity for metamorphosis rather than obsolescence.

As society grapples with the ethical implications of artificial intelligence, it becomes increasingly evident that our narratives surrounding AI are not just reflections of our fears and biases but also instruments for shaping our collective future. The stories we tell about AI serve as cautionary tales, moral parables, and blueprints for the societal structures we wish to build. Therefore, it is imperative that we critically examine these narratives and consider how they might perpetuate or challenge existing power dynamics and social inequalities.

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Crossword

(see answers on next page)

ACROSS

2 Dated term for a woman; passport needed

4 Inclusive group proper noun for Equestrians

7 Governing phonetic twin of Kai

9 "____ Lee Miller"

10 Wattpad, Ao3, Tumblr

11 Multiple Dirt Particles; Elon

DOWN

1 CIMS' phonetic twin

3 PewDiePie Punches Camera

5 The Maknae

6 What to do to our next issue

8 Early 10's music duo; relatives to Michael Jackson

9 Original sin; modern, Jobs
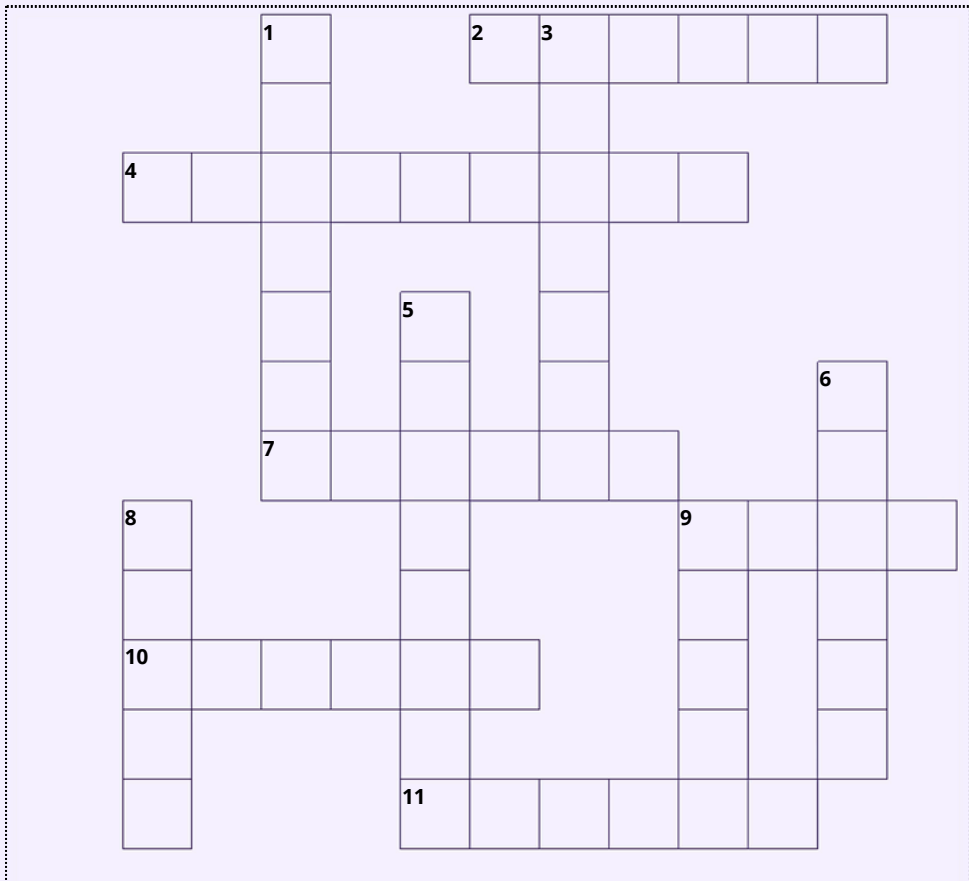
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Crossword Key

Across: **2** Abroad **4** Everypony **7** Senate **9** Abby **10** Fanfic **11** Grimes

Down: **1** TheSims **3** BroFist **5** NingNing **6** Submit , **8** LMFAO **9** Apple.