

Vassar College

Digital Window @ Vassar

Senior Capstone Projects

2021

The Black Cyborg: The Weaponization of a Human Body

Camryn Casey

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalwindow.vassar.edu/senior_capstone

Recommended Citation

Casey, Camryn, "The Black Cyborg: The Weaponization of a Human Body" (2021). *Senior Capstone Projects*. 1061.

https://digitalwindow.vassar.edu/senior_capstone/1061

This Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Window @ Vassar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of Digital Window @ Vassar. For more information, please contact library_thesis@vassar.edu.

**The Black Cyborg:
The Weaponization of a Human Body**

Camryn Casey

Vassar College
Media Studies Department

Introduction

I will discuss the racial elements that construct the gaze by looking at surveillance and media theory. I aim to contextualize how the mediated image of the Black Cyborg has racialized surveillance, so that spectators may comprehend how today's capitalist society negatively impacts the essential nature of the Black body. I explore these topics through close readings on art, race, and surveillance. The information I present will accompany an experimental film that serves as a visual representation of my synthesis.

Black Cyborg

In the essay, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism In The Late Twentieth Century,” Donna Haraway defines a Cyborg as “a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction.”¹ Haraway defines the Cyborg as “matter of fiction and lived experience” in relation to the “women’s experience.”² Haraway speaks of the Cyborg in this essay as a metaphor, claiming the term so it can move beyond its Western interpretation as a bionic war species³. The Cyborg blurs the line between organism and machine. The machine is man-made, synthetic, and replicable.

James Joy cites Frantz Fanon’s first chapter in *The Wretched of the Earth*, “Concerning Violence” in order to delineate the Black cyborg. Joy draws upon Fanon’s definition of the native intellectual, who is a native who adopts the principles and values of the colonial world, consequently leaving behind native culture to hopefully be accepted as an individual in the colonial world. Ultimately, the hybridization arises when the native intellectual becomes aware

¹ Donna Haraway. “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late 20th Century”. In , p. 5.

² Haraway. “A Cyborg Manifesto”, p. 6

³Haraway. “A Cyborg Manifesto” p. 6.

that “the uncommon [the native intellectual] and the common natives are the same, share one corporeal blackness fabricated as a commodity or disposable waste, plague, or evil designated for eradication”.⁴ It is in this new awareness that the native intellectual utilizes their understanding of the oppressive colonial world to enact a battle for freedom; here the individual native intellectual becomes the rebel intellectual bound to the collective by the joint desire for freedom and “internalization of the other”.⁵ In Joy’s interpretation, the transition of the native intellectual to the rebel intellectual is when the Black Cyborg is born.

In Steve Shaviro’s somewhat different understanding of the Cyborg, he states that “becoming-cyborg is something that we suffer, or endure, rather than something we can freely choose (or not) to perform.”⁶ Shaviro contextualizes the Black Cyborg strictly in relation to black female rappers. The text illuminates how rappers like Lil’ Kim may fit into the objective image of what a female rapper looks like, in terms of the hyper sexualization of female rappers but, their race aids as a pushback against typical femininity. In other words, their dark skin conflicts with American standards of beauty that are usually amplified within the music industry. Thus, the conventional whiteness of beauty standards and the masculinity of Hip-Hop come together to contradistinguish Black female rappers from the common pop-culture icons. Black female rappers are othered from the mainstream pool of sexualized females in the music industry. Likewise, Black female rappers’ femininity or lack thereof others them from the broader scope of male rappers in the Hip-Hop industry. The othering of the body produces the inhuman qualities that create the Cyborg. However, Black female rappers like Missy Elliot and Lil’ Kim unapologetically perform roles that challenge what is conventional in the music industry.⁷ Their

⁴ Joy James; “Concerning Violence”: Frantz Fanon’s Rebel Intellectual in Search of a Black Cyborg. *South Atlantic Quarterly* 1 January 2013; 112 (1) p. 59

⁵ James; “Concerning Violence p. 61

⁶ Steven Shaviro (2005) *Supa Dupa Fly: Black Women As Cyborgs in Hip-hop Videos*, Quarterly Review of Film and Video, p.171

⁷ Shaviro (2005) *Supa Dupa Fly* p. 176

road to black female empowerment in the music industry embraces the cyborg-becoming; in the text they embody a radical and feminine Black Cyborg .⁸

The Black Cyborg in my thesis endures the transformation of becoming a cyborg, due to the mechanization of Western scrutiny being subjected onto the Black human. In a process that moves in tandem with racialization, humans have already become cyborgs. In Haraway's words:

“Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert.”⁹

I argue that these late twentieth century machines that make the natural and artificial indistinguishable from each other are the products of a process of not just technological capitalism, but racialized technological capitalism, and thus spawn the up to now very undertheorized being of the Black Cyborg are the reason the Black Cyborg exists. It is thus important to note that the ambiguity between humans and machines must be seen as stemming from the dichotomy of the individual and colonial subjective idea of Blackness, and not the reverse.

Franz Fanon provides a colonial context to classify the othering that occurs. Under the framework, Fanon speaks to how the governing race sets the president of what is civil and valued. In the text *The Wretched of the Earth*, the governing race is the settler, who comes from the colonies to impose what is right and wrong through colonization.¹⁰ In the text, it is stated that an aspect of the colonial problem invalidates the native's way of life to keep the colonial world intact. Fanon states:

⁸ Shaviro (2005) *Supa Dupa Fly* p. 180

⁹ Haraway. *A Cyborg Manifesto*, p. 11

¹⁰ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (S.I.: Grove, 2021). p 40

“The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense he is the absolute evil.”¹¹

Fanon does not explicitly utter the term Black cyborg, but he elaborates on the dehumanization of the native, specifically that the culmination of colonization and Manicheism will turn the native into an animal.¹² The distortion and manufacturing of the native into an untamed animal is the essence of the cyborg, as I see it. This form of cyborg-becoming is not a radical liberatory becoming at its core. Here the inorganic components of the cyborg are an oppressive mechanism.

Considering the anthology of African countries, Gabriel d’Arbousier critiques J.-P. Sartre:

“This anthology, which puts Antilleans, Guianana, Senegalese, and Malagasies on the same footing, creates a deplorable confusion. In this way it states the cultural problem of the overseas countries by detaching it from the historical and social reality of each of them, from the national characteristics and the varying conditions imposed on each of them by imperialist exploitation and oppression”¹³

The historical and social reality of systemic racism cannot be separated from the Black race, as it informs the cultural problem. The conceptualization of the native is a racially informed viewpoint that is utilized to other an entire community and validate the role of imperialist exploitation and oppression.

In Fanon’s book, *Black Skin, White Masks*, he analyzes how the exterior perception of the Black body manifests as “a racial epidermal schema” for the Black individual.¹⁴ In the chapter “The Fact of Blackness,” Fanon diagnoses this schema to culminate into an awareness of the body as a triple person: the individual Black body, the Black race, and their ancestors.¹⁵ It is the awareness of not only the self but the stereotypes placed on the individual as a member of the Black race that causes the Black individual to be confronted with their cyborg-becoming.

¹¹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 41

¹² Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 42

¹³ “Une dangereuse mystification: la theorie de la negritude,” *La Nouvelle Reuve Critique*, June 1949.

¹⁴ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Penguin Classics, 2020). p. 112

¹⁵ Fanon *Black Skin White Masks* p. 112

The “becoming” of the Black Cyborg is mediated by stereotypes. Stereotypes embody the machine; they are an image that becomes reproduced over and over again in media. The stereotype of “the savage” has trademarked the Black citizen for decades. Dating back to American Slavery, Black humans were scientifically categorized as savages for the following reasons:

"(a) The abnormal length of the arm...; (b) weight of brain... [Negro's] 35 ounces, gorilla 20 ounces, average European 45 ounces; (c) short flat snub nose; (d) thick protruding lips; (e) exceedingly thick cranium; (f) short, black hair, eccentricity elliptical or almost flat in sections, and distinctly woolly; and (g) thick epidermis"¹⁶

The savage is a creature of European fiction composed to other the Black human, as well as to validate the inhuman act of slavery. The Western, male, patriarchal and capitalist mechanization of the cyborg is utilized to dehumanize the cyborg the same way the “the savage” stereotype dehumanizes the Black citizen. This terminology has been utilized to discuss the most traditional image of the cyborg, of a species that is both a man and machine. The cyborg becomes the condensed image derived from the spectator’s mediated imagination and material reality.

The Black body becomes an image that challenges those who hold power. Thus, to keep the political order in line, a criminalized image of what the Black body does is produced. D.W Griffith’s 1915 film, *Birth of A Nation* showcases a narrative where Black men commit actions characterized as unlawful and unrefined. In one scene, a Black man, Gus, expresses interest in marrying the white woman, Flora Cameron. Flora, afraid for her life, runs into the forest, and is chased by Gus. Flora becomes so afraid she jumps off a cliff, out of fear of Gus coming close to her. The character is considered a murderer, and the Ku Klux Klan comes to the rescue, taking it upon themselves to hold a trial, followed by a lynching.¹⁷ The singular

¹⁶ S Plous and Tyrone Williams(1995). *Racial stereotypes from the days of American slavery: a continuing legacy. Journal of Applied Social Psychology.* 25,p. 796.

¹⁷ *The Birth Of A Nation* (D.W. Griffith Corp., 1915).

representation of this Black human is played by a white person in blackface. The choice to have a white actor portray this character further emphasizes the political fabrication of the character. The character exists to set a precedent, one that states the Black body is violent, dangerous, and most importantly, criminal. The black character in the film is not meant to be an outlier or an individual character, but a figure that illustrates the characteristic of every Black citizen. Consequently, creating the mentality that every Black citizen's actions must be cautiously assessed. The film's form of Black representation is an example of colonial psychology. In the text *Beyond the Masks: Race, Gender, and Subjectivity*, the author states: "colonial psychology did not concern itself so much with differentiating between normal and deviant Africans as with pontificating on the specific characteristics of Africans in general."¹⁸ It is through this generalization that the Black cyborg is created and ostracized. The dramatization and imitation of the Black cyborg are produced over and over again in cinema. Ultimately a Western narrative is created: to be safe is to not be in contact with the Black Cyborg.

My understanding of the Black Cyborg is entrenched in Fanon's racial theory. The Black body may assimilate to colonial society but, the body is still Black. The Black body is still generalized to be in Fanon's words "Negores" and to the European "the Negro is a savage."¹⁹

Surveillance

Throughout the paper, surveillance is referred to in its most traditional sense, as a method to monitor people. Surveillance will be discussed by the ways it visually observes people as the subject, specifically by CCTV cameras and systems.

The Gaze

¹⁸ Amina Mama *Beyond the Masks: Race, Gender, and Subjectivity* p. 29

¹⁹ Fanon *Black Skin White Masks* p.69

Defined by Jacques Lacan's "The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis," the gaze stems from the self-awareness that one can be seen and observed.²⁰ When discussing the surveillance camera in the text "The Gaze Without Eyes," Hille Koskela asserts that "the camera itself has no eyes,"²¹ and with that there is no public knowledge on where the person behind the camera is looking or who exactly the person behind the camera is. The unawareness of what the surveying eyes for or what they are looking at is a powerful quality of the gaze. The gaze is thus meant to feel omnipresent to the public, as a method of regulation.

Hyper Surveillance

Hyper Surveillance is a state of being. There is a public interest in assisting surveillance. The mantra "See something say something" itself is a mentality that motivates the gaze, resulting in a common perspective where people in any given environment are always watching. The awareness of the gaze, as well as the public desire to assist surveillance, creates a social space that demands extreme surveillance, and this social space creates the hyper surveillance state.

The Gaze and the Cyborg

What informs the gaze completely depend on each subject, as distinct qualities define their identity and subjectivity. Hille Koskela expresses how surveillance affects the subject's emotional space, to produce feelings of safety and control.²² Surveillance creates convoluted emotional dynamics with the subject, which I aim to further explore, as racial identity highly informs this complex relationship.

²⁰ Jacques Lacan. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. 1st American ed. New York: Norton (1978), p. 73.

²¹Hille Koskela, 'The Gaze without Eyes': *Video-Surveillance and the Changing Nature of Urban Space*. *Progress in Human Geography* 24, no. 2 (2016;2000;) p. 249.

²² Koskela, 'The Gaze without Eyes' p. 257

In discussing the types of environments surveillance creates, Koskela highlights power-space as one of these environments.²³ Michel Foucault defines power space through his theory of the Panopticon, and how panopticon-like features of surveillance exercise a disciplinary power onto the subjects. In Foucault's words, "Being constantly aware of being controlled by invisible overseers leads to the internalization of control. While the panopticon ostensibly keeps the body entrapped, it is in fact targeted at the psyche: in this mechanism "the soul is the prison of the body."²⁴ Now, Koskela presents emotional space as a separate topic from power space, only brushing over how power and emotions are akin.²⁵ However, since power relations strongly influence racial identity, it's imperative that my thesis focus on emotional space's interconnection to power space when discussing the Black body. Wendy Hui Kyong Chun brushes on these topics in *Control and Freedom*, stating:

"By positing racism as "naturally" arising from physical differences, this assertion condemns physical space as irrevocably inequitable and refuses to register the ways that difference affects one's representation (in both senses of the verb to represent)."²⁶

Foucault's presents the Panopticon in the setting of a prison but panopticism can be applied to social spaces of consumerism. Foucault states that these generalizable mechanisms of 'panopticism' can infiltrate all social spaces, thus bringing "the effects of power to the most minute and distant elements."²⁷ The presence of a punitive gaze is meant to be weaponized. Physical structures like the prison, malls, grocery stores, and other spaces that exercise capitalism are normalized to be under surveillance. Within this mode of surveillance, there is an "infinitesimal distribution of the power relations."²⁸ Panopticism is not only architecturally present, but it is mentally present as well. Panopticism aims to force the people in the space to be

²³ Koskela, 'The Gaze without Eyes', p. 256

²⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. 1st American ed. New York: Pantheon Books, (1977) p. 30.

²⁵ Koskela, 'The Gaze without Eyes' p. 257

²⁶ Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, (2006).p. 248.

²⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, p. 216.

²⁸ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, p. 216.

constantly aware of the repercussions of their possible actions; ultimately, the goal is for the spectator to internalize the penal gaze. It can be argued that the replication of these power relations intermingle with the racial power relations stereotypes help maintain. Foucault pinpoints how the spread of panoptic techniques has “attained a level which the formation of knowledge and the increase of power regularly reinforce one another in a circular process.”²⁹ The formation of knowledge can therefore be racialized.

The setting of the gas station convenience store takes on many qualities of panopticism, but the incorporation of the CCTV cameras transgress the setting of the gas station to function under what Gilles Deleuze calls “the control society” in his essay “Postscript on the Societies of Control”. Deleuze states:

“The factory constituted individuals as a single body to the double advantage of the boss who surveyed each element within the mass and the unions who mobilized a mass resistance; but the corporation constantly presents the brashest rivalry as a healthy form of emulation, an excellent motivational force that opposes individuals against one another and runs through each, dividing each within.”³⁰

The perceptual and economic division of individuals under a capitalist model of individualism helps control spaces of consumerism as well. Deleuze goes on to state “we are in a generalized crisis in relation to all the environments of enclosure—prison, hospital, factory, school, family.”³¹ The society of control is a contemporary mutation of Foucault's disciplinary societies. Under the control society “individuals have become “*dividuals*,” and masses, samples, data, markets, or “*banks*.”³² The dividual of the Black Cyborg is considered less profitable, and sometimes even a danger to profits. Every person is thus defined by their ability to provide profit under this capitalist model. The individualist capitalist perception is evident within these spaces

²⁹ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, p. 224.

³⁰ Gilles Deleuze "Postscript on the Societies of Control." October 59, (1992): p. 4-5.

³¹ Deleuze "Postscript on the Societies of Control."p. 5

³² Deleuze "Postscript on the Societies of Control."p. 5

of consumerism, where the surveillance camera upholds the control society and the awareness of being watched keeps the masses from putting profits in danger. Thinking of this technology, Chun states “high-level software miss what is fundamentally different about so-called computer-mediated communication: the fact that they are arguably human-mediated communications.”³³ It is naive to think surveillance cameras are objective technological observers. The visual technology that composes the surveillance camera is thus prone to take on racially mediated categorizations to draw attention to Blackness. In Catherine Zimmer’s book, *Surveillance Cinema*, she states that: “[surveillance] is thus, at its origins, designed to produce identity along racial lines, while at the same time disavowing identity in order to maintain the racialized subject as object.”³⁴ Along these lines, one can argue that the surveillance camera assists in subjecting the Black Cyborg onto the Black human that enters any surveillance space of consumerism. Deleuze states how this technological era is a mutation of capitalism and in this setting “the capitalist being the owner of the means of production but also, progressively, the owner of other spaces conceived through analogy.”³⁵ By the capitalist being the owner of other spaces, anything that threatens profit is considered the enemy of capitalism. The stereotype of the “savage” is a threat to capitalism; this figure would steal, loot, and drive away other customers. Ultimately, the Black bodies’ awareness of the representation they carry can confine the body to a desire to assimilate, in the hope to no longer be othered. Fanon recognizes this reaction to be logical, “since the Negro is appraised in terms of the extent of his assimilation.”³⁶ The mechanized imagery of this threatening collective is superimposed onto the Black customer, and in turn, the Black Cyborg is born as an enemy to capitalist profit.

³³ Chun. *Control and Freedom*, p. 249.

³⁴ Catherine Zimmer, *Surveillance Cinema* (New York: NYU Press, 2015). p. 13

³⁵ Deleuze "Postscript on the Societies of Control."p. 6

³⁶ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* p36`

The Film

The beginning of my surveillance film introduces a Black citizen walking into a gas station convenience store. The setting of the Gas Station surveillance store is significant to the tone of the film. The gas station convenience store presents a space of consumerism that is also inherently tied to security, theft, danger, and instability. It is also associated with being a pitstop for crime; even criminals must stop for gas. The gas station convenience store is equipped with bullet-resistant fixtures and windows for safety. In line with that, video surveillance has also been deemed a necessity for the gas station convenience store to protect employees, customers, and revenue. However, who the cameras aim to protect (the shop owner's employees, customers, and revenue) is determined by those who have the power to inform the public of the idea of a threat.

The capitalist colonial tactics of othering produce the superficial plastic image of the Black body as a threat. Consequently, the Westernized control society instills new forms of mediation that others Blackness. This exoteric perception of the Black community is a replicable mechanism. Drawing from Donna Haraway's "A Cyborg Manifesto," the tight coupling of the human and the machine is what creates the cyborg.³⁷ The othering of Black skin as a threat to capitalism is artificial. The individual Black human is natural and organic, but the perceptions placed onto this individual are artificial and machine-like. Thus the marrying of the natural to the artificial is what creates the Black Cyborg within a Control society. The Black Cyborg is a detectable figure for the camera, as the Black Cyborg is considered a threat to capitalism.

The control society has mutated today's social spaces. The social space I refer to is created by the entanglement of emotional space and power space. By exploring control of

³⁷ Haraway. *A Cyborg Manifesto*, p. 5

society's promotion of the Black Cyborg, there will be a recognition that this mode of perception has prescribed capitalist notions that are damaging to the natural Black human. The perception of the Black Cyborg can be utilized to navigate why surveillance has such an impact on the Black humans' emotional space. As Chun states in *Control and Freedom*, "Technologically speaking, paranoia is a valid information-processing technique" when discussing surveillance.³⁸ The close-ups of the Black citizen's eyes are not only a recognition of the gas station clerk's gaze but also a recognition of the omnipresent penal gaze surveillance implements. The omnipotent being that is the surveillant is always present in a video surveillance space, it is panopticism in effect. Thus, without knowing who this entity may be or what they are capable of, paranoia instills.

The connection between the clerk and citizen is not organic but is informed by a racialized idea of what is inhuman, it is informed by panopticism and influences everyone in the space to participate in a racialized control society. The deep racial mechanization disrupts the human connection. The gas station encounter visualizes Fanon's words: "and there one lies body to body with one's blackness or one's whiteness, in full narcissistic cry, each sealed into his peculiarity".³⁹ It is within their own racialized subjective thought, that both the clerk and the Black customer cannot truly see each other.

The clerk experiences the mediated presentation of the Black body. He sees a body, but this body is also a symbol of violence; a threat to capitalism, and consequently a threat to space of consumerism, such as the gas station establishment. Under the umbrella of "the savage" archetype, we see clips of the hyper-violent Black male stereotype. There are incidents of a Black male robbing the gas station at gunpoint. It is not the Black citizen in the gas station, but the instances of news coverage on gas station robbers are linked to the Black citizen through skin

³⁸ Chun. *Control and Freedom*, p. 257.

³⁹ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* p 45

tone alone. The non-diegetic insert symbolizes how fragmented the present moment is. The gas station clerk and the Black citizen are currently the only two people in the store. However, the consumption of outside media villainizes the Black citizen at this moment. The exposure to news clips, violent cinema, crime reports, racist caricatures, etc. mediates the clerk's relationship with the customer.

The Black subject's sensitivity and intuition make the character aware of his relationship to the clerk, in Fanon's words, he is not "a Negro but the Negro".⁴⁰ It is an interpellation of the colonial idea of Blackness, an idea that characterizes the corporeal as the epitome of evil. The biological essence of the Black body is seen as inhuman in this idea. To internalize the colonial idea of Blackness is to internalize the stereotype of the savage; it is an idea that has been mechanized.

The short animated clips within the video contribute to the narrative of the Black Body as a mechanized body. Some of the cartoons embody an animated version of Black-faced minstrels; while, other clips characterize the Black human as a literal savage. In some cartoon clips, the overblown lips derived from the minstrel are combined with the imagery of a caveman to illustrate a cartoon version of a Black savage. The Black body is a trope, a singular stereotype personified by multiple animated characters. The cartoons are all a very one-dimensional characterization of Blackness. They are showcased to be inferior, mocked and laughed at, and made out as a less civilized human. The animations feed into the same mechanized mediation that aims to name the Black body as the other. It is once again a colonial idea that mocks the biological essence of the Black body.

⁴⁰ Fanon Black Skin White Masks p. 127

The Black subject in the gas station convenience store is a prime example of what it means and feels like to interpellate the inhumane idea of Blackness. In Fanon's confrontation with mechanized Blackness, he states, "I took myself far off from my presence, far indeed, and made myself an object".⁴¹ The Black subject in the film does the same, as by objectifying his body as a Black body in a surveilled space, he not only is paranoid by his understanding of Blackness in a capitalist control society but is disempowered, angered, disconnected by his lack of affinity to the savage role he feels forcibly tied to.

The utilization of claymation expresses the Black Cyborg's subjugation onto the Black human. Specifically, the subjection of the Black Cyborg onto the Black human induces feelings of paranoia and dissociation from the synthetic stereotype. Hence, the Black person perceiving their hand as something made out of clay in the film illustrates the person perceiving their non-consensual cyborg-becoming. The utilization of more tactile materials is integral to the setting transition from the physical container of the gas station to the psyche of the Black body. The use of both my paintings and the claymation in the film as well as their placement in the shot sequence further emphasizes the disruption surveillance has on the emotional space. Specifically, it visualizes the objectification of the Black body, by presenting the Black subject as an object that is perceived by a surveillant subject

The film is meant to be ambiguous. The close-up shots of the clerk and the Black human's eyes may suggest the perception of both Black citizen and the clerk. However, in my attempt to deal with the matter on the Black inner psyche concerning both the gaze and being in a surveilled space, one can argue that the images presented are all from the perspective of the Black citizen. For instance, the footage that follows the close-up shot of the clerk's eyes may be the clerk's stereotypical connotations to Blackness. However, the footage may not be the clerk's

⁴¹ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks* p 112

mediated gaze at all, but rather the Black human internalizing the mechanization of his Blackness. Frantz Fanon speaks of this experience in “The Fact Of Blackness,” in which he subjected himself “to an objective examination.”⁴² By confronting how external Blackness may be perceived, the Black subject finds themselves dislocated from the human self and fixated on a man-made formulation of Blackness as inhuman. In Fanon’s phenomenon, affective erethism, “the Negro enslaved by his superiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation.”⁴³ The mental connection between Blackness and inhumanity influences the Black subject, especially in a panopticon. Because here, the power space and emotional space created by surveillance and consumerism allow empirical capitalism to degrade the Black community. This complete state of paranoia is the internalization of the inhumanity that panopticism forces the Black citizen to internalize, it is a complete oppressive state of the cyborg-becoming.

Haraway states that “Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other.”⁴⁴ To recognize colonization as having a clear beginning and end discounts the continuation of racist colonial ideologies that continue to shape our civilization today. It is easy to believe that capitalism today is an autonomous system only intermingling with the love and desire for freedom, independence, and everything that can be gained from the American dream. But by focusing on Control society’s omnipotent existence, which is ultimately married to capitalism, we can highlight how the Panopticon stems from racist colonial ideologies. With Haraway in mind, I think Cyborg writing confronts the entanglement in a way that can “mark the

⁴² Fanon *Black Skin White Masks* p. 112

⁴³ Fanon *Black Skin White Masks* p. 60

⁴⁴ Haraway. *A Cyborg Manifesto*, p. 55.

world⁴⁵ to put a name to a society in which racialized control marks the Black human as other is to confront the issue and address what must be deprogrammed.

The mechanized othering has created the Black Cyborg that allows the norm to be a complete dehumanization of the Black body. The film sheds light on the physiological toll surveillance takes on the human body. This film illustrates the emotional response to this cyborg-becoming, entering into the anxiety-inducing experience of this young customer's recognition of the surveilled gaze in a convenience store. The confrontation of the Black human's inner psyche puts humanity back into the conversation. The dehumanization of the Black Cyborg has allowed the emotional response of the Black body to be disregarded. However, it is important within this Cyborg writing to recognize that the human is still human. To value Black humanity is to reject the normalized racist colonial surveillance state.

⁴⁵ Haraway. *A Cyborg Manifesto*, p. 55

Bibliography

- Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Postscript on the Societies of Control*. October 59, (1992): 3-7.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Penguin Classics, 2020.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. S.I.: Grove, 2021. Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. 1st American ed. New York: Pantheon Books, 1977.
- Green, Laura. *Negative Racial Stereotypes and Their Effect on Attitudes Toward African-Americans*. Accessed December 14, 2020.
<https://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/links/essays/vcu.htm>.
- Griffith, D. W., and Frank E. Woods. *The Birth Of A Nation*. Place of publication not identified: D.W. Griffith Corp., 1915.
- Haraway, Donna. *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late 20th Century*. In , 117-158. Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Jafa, Arthur, director. *Love Is The Message, The Message Is Death*. 30 June 2020,
americanart.si.edu/videos/arthur-jafa-love-message-message-death-2016-clip-4-161407.
- James, Joy; “Concerning Violence”: Frantz Fanon’s Rebel Intellectual in Search of a Black Cyborg. *South Atlantic Quarterly* 1 January 2013; 112 (1): 57–70
- Koskela, Hille. ‘*The Gaze without Eyes*’: *Video-Surveillance and the Changing Nature of Urban Space*. *Progress in Human Geography* 24, no. 2 (2016;2000;): 243-265.

Lacan, Jacques. *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*. 1st American ed. New York: Norton, 1978.

Shaviro, Steven (2005) *Supa Dupa Fly: Black Women As Cyborgs in Hiphop Videos*, *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 22:2, 169-179

Plous, S. and Williams, T. (1995). *Racial stereotypes from the days of American slavery: a continuing legacy*. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*. 25, 795-817.

Zimmer, Catherine. *Surveillance Cinema*. New York: NYU, 2015. Print.