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Digital Neo-Colonialism and Artificial Intelligence in “Binary Bisecting.  
Anthology of African Writings on AI” (2023)

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## **Dedication**

To all young people being denied the opportunity to study. May this thesis serve as a warning against present-day mechanisms of exploitation and as a reminder of literature's power to simultaneously combat ideologies and connect humans.

## **Abstract**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming ever-more important in modern society. Yet, not all are affected equally. Many texts of the anthology “Binary Bisecting. Anthology of African Writings on AI” (2023) feature this enhancement of mechanisms of displacement, dispossession and exploitation through AI. Therefore, this thesis asks how AI fosters neo-colonial, neoliberal, and capitalist exploitation. To examine the complexity of the participants within this process, this thesis is embedded in the theoretical framework of digital neo-colonialism. The applied method is literary analysis and comparison, based on the ethical premises of respect and empathy. Overall, the thesis’ main finding is that AI — be it in the form of a dating app, within the medical field, as an image tool, an essay-writing chatbot or an agricultural expert — presents itself as a benevolent service to the individual while simultaneously fostering global inequalities. Above all, this thesis proved that these texts point towards and disrupt seemingly given certainties, such as neoliberal and capitalist ideology. Specifically, the thesis emphasizes ethics such as Ubuntu, rooted in the interconnectedness of all beings, and decolonial knowledge production as pivotal for AI to be beneficial for all beings on the planet. For that to happen, the thesis argues that AI must be fluent in all languages.

## **Abstract (German)**

Künstliche Intelligenz (KI) erlangt zunehmend an Einfluss auf die heutige Gesellschaft. Da dieser Einfluss nicht auf alle Menschen gleichermaßen wirkt, führt KI unweigerlich zur Vertiefung von globalen Ungleichheiten. Viele in der Anthologie „Binary Bisecting. Anthology of African Writings on AI“ (2023) veröffentlichten Texte beleuchten diese Vertiefung durch verdrängende, enteignende und ausbeutende KI-Mechanismen. Daher fragt die Arbeit danach, wie KI neo-koloniale, neoliberale und kapitalistische Ausbeutung fördert. Um den Zusammenhang verschiedener Positionen innerhalb dieses Prozesses darzustellen, basiert die Arbeit auf der Theorie des ‚Digitalen Neo-Kolonialismus‘. Die angewandten Methoden sind literaturwissenschaftliche Analyse und Vergleich, basierend auf den ethischen Grundsätzen Respekt, Neugier und Empathie. Aus den Studien folgt, dass sich KI — sei es in der Form einer Dating App oder zur medizinischen Diagnose, als Image Tool, als Essay-schreibender Chatbot oder als landwirtschaftliche Expertin — als hilfreiches Service präsentiert und dennoch globale Ungleichheiten fördert. Die Arbeit zeigt auf die Notwendigkeit einer Ethik wie der Ubuntu Philosophie und einer dekolonialen Wissensproduktion, um einen Nutzen von KI zu gestalten, der für alle Menschen nachhaltig ist. Daher schließt die Arbeit damit, dass KI alle Sprachen fließend sprechen muss.

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## Introduction

Featuring poetic, prose, and essayistic texts from Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, South Africa, Botswana, and Sierra Leone, the anthology “Binary Bisecting. Anthology of African Writings on AI” offers a multiperspective approach to Artificial Intelligence (AI) in an African context. According to the editor, Akram Tahzeeb, the anthology, published on the platform *Brittle Paper* in 2023, seeks to take the conversation beyond polarization, reduction and binarity of public debates on AI.<sup>1</sup> Many texts address continuities of displacement, dispossession and exploitation through AI. Therefore, this thesis asks how AI fosters neo-colonial, neoliberal and capitalist exploitation.

In doing so, this thesis is grounded on the theory of digital neo-colonialism. According to Mouton and Burns’ research on “(Digital)Neo-colonialism in the Smart City” (2021), digital neo-colonialism can be best described as imperialism’s newest dress, masking its exploitative nature. Presenting itself as a tool to everyone, it echoes neoliberalism’s concepts of the individual as a human resource. Thus, it creates the illusion of free will by enabling individuals to opt out of using AI technologies. The theory of digital neo-colonialism proves useful when it comes to present-day disseminated forms of control and exploitation and their various actors.<sup>2</sup> As the texts address such dissemination, their analysis and comparison offer a critical conversation on digital neo-colonialism.

Regarding research on these current forms of exploitation, I was unable to note an agreement on terminology thus far. As the term ‘digital neo-colonialism’ is yet to be used extensively. For instance, Salami (2023) uses ‘digital colonialism’ to describe forms of unauthorized controlling and extracting data from people and the influence of Western Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) aiming to exert control over the politics, economies, and societies of African nations. Herein, neoliberal ideology serves as propaganda, used by former colonizers to reinforce capitalism by the means of further promoting exploitation and degradation of the former colonized. Within that process, AI functions as an amplifier of inequality. Salami insists on term ‘digital colonialism’ but underlines the changed center of

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<sup>1</sup> See Tahzeeb, Akram: “Editor’s Note.” In: Tahzeeb, Akram (Ed.): “Binary Bisecting: Anthology of African Writings on AI”. *Brittle Paper*, 2023, pp. 1f., here p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> See Mouton, Morgan / Burns, Ryan: “(Digital) Neo-Colonialism in the Smart City.” *Regional Studies*, vol. 55, no. 12, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2021.1915974>, pp.1890–901, here p. 1893.

power from head of state to head of corporation.<sup>3</sup> Here, as the complex interplay of actants is addressed, one can begin to discern the notion of digital neo-coloniality. However, I agree that framing neo-colonialism as actants ‘indirectly’ exerting control over African nations poses the question of how ‘indirect’ and ‘neo’ this control can truly be, given the direct exploitation of resources and continuing disruption of knowledge systems, economies, and societies on the African continent.

Hence, I believe that the term ‘digital colonialism’ aims to underline the direct notion of that process. For instance, Oyedemi (2024) insists on the term ‘digital coloniality’, and emphasizes neoliberalism’s pervasiveness in capitalist structures<sup>4</sup>. This emphasis on neoliberalism’s function is what I explore within my thesis. Additionally, Benyera (2021) works with the concept of ‘data coloniality’ to examine Africa’s position within the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).<sup>5</sup> Especially in the first chapter of my thesis, I use that terminology to address data exploitation. However, limiting the various forms of exploitation to merely data grabbing does not serve my intention of examining the multiple faces of AI-enhanced mechanisms of oppression. To emphasize the power of MNCs within this neoliberal and capitalist process of exploitation, I use the term ‘digital neo-colonialism’. Nevertheless, the texts demand a constant re-evaluation of theories and concepts that one might take for granted. Hence, I carry out this re-evaluation within the analysis and comparison of the texts.

As for the method of analysis and comparison itself, I rely on the self-reflective and modest forms of comparison, promoted by Palumbo-Liu’s claims in “Ethics before Comparison” (2020) — a speech published within the context of “Rethinking the Native and Nativism. An ACLA Presidential Forum”. Therein, he declares that in a period of emerging fascist authoritarianism characterized by a small number of actants who dominate the planet’s politics and the power of some people to name, defame, persecute and dehumanize whole societies with the purpose of creating a ‘nation’, ethical reflections must be an inherent part of interpersonal communication. However, as researchers and self-proclaimed experts, we

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<sup>3</sup> See Salami, Aishat Oyenike: “Artificial Intelligence, Digital Colonialism, and the Implications for Africa’s Future Development.” *Data & Policy*, vol. 6, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1017/dap.2024.75>, pp. e67-1-12, here p. e67-2.

<sup>4</sup> See Oyedemi, Toks Dele: “Africa and Digital Coloniality.” *Media in Africa*, 1st ed., vol. 1, Routledge, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003352907-3>, pp. 19-34, here p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> See Benyera, Everisto: *The Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Recolonisation of Africa. The Coloniality of Data*. Routledge, 2021, p. 5.

have been trained not to undermine our own authority by questioning of who we are and why we act as we do. In contrast, Palumbo-Liu calls for us literary researchers to access this conversation in a mode less dominated by self-assurance but consideration and modesty.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, my primary aim in applying the method of analysis and comparison is to enter a critical conversation with respect, curiosity, and empathy.

An important first step here involves acknowledging that I enter this conversation from a privileged standpoint. As a white student of African Studies and Comparative Literature at the University of Vienna, I was fortunate to have been surrounded by a politically and economically peaceful environment and to have been granted the necessary resources to study both master's degrees. Most importantly, I am aware my proficiency of the English language enabled me to read the anthology of Anglophone African texts on AI. Likewise, my accessibility to the necessary infrastructure — that is, libraries, their digital services, and my own technological devices, consisting of a second-hand laptop and phone — made it possible for me to read the digitally published anthology.

In addition, I want to clarify that appraisals of the anthology's online publishing as freely available PDF and its use of the English language as 'easing the way of communication' unmask the neo-colonial, imperial, and exploitative realities behind the matter of language, accessibility and location. In other words, this conceals the fact that those who mined the minerals for the laptops are not profiting from the end-product; the people who are denied access to the so-called 'World Wide Web' are not enjoying the anthology's poetry and prose. At the same time, Nesbitt-Ahmed (2017) expresses the increase in diversity and accessibility of African literatures in the digital age. As digital technology fosters the production of African literatures, one can note a renewal of its reading culture gradually enjoying the benefits of translation and audio-visual technologies.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, it is apparent that many African languages are yet to enjoy the liberating effects of these technologies.

Additionally, according to Yékú (2022), current data colonialism causes distress within the field of digital African literatures.<sup>8</sup> The neo-colonial notion to the moment of knowledge

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<sup>6</sup> See Palumbo-Liu, David: "Ethics before Comparison." *Comparative Literature*, vol. 72, no. 3, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00104124-8255295>, pp. 259–71, here p. 259f.

<sup>7</sup> See Nesbitt-Ahmed, Zahrah: "Reclaiming African Literature in the Digital Age: An Exploration of Online Literary Platforms." *Critical African Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2017, pp. 377–90, here p. 387.

<sup>8</sup> See Yékú, James: "Digital African Literatures and the Coloniality of Data." *Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1017/pli.2022.19>, pp. 381–98, here p. 381.

production of digital Anglophone African literatures and data extraction within global capitalism, along with the reckless exploitation of human and mineral resources brings us back to the question of how the texts treat the role of AI within these processes. I will answer this in four steps.

Firstly, the chapter “Information is your food and drink. Data in Global Capitalism” revolves around how the texts “Love, Incorporated” by Charlie Muhumuza, “Abacus” by Damilola Ogunrinde, “Artificial Intelligence” by Omojo Victoria Ogbe-Ogboyi, “Tech Clericalism” by Drea Chuma and “A Question for the Musketeers” by Yarri Kamara treat the theme of data (exploitation) in global capitalism as reinforcement of already imbalanced systems of power. Thus, digital neo-colonialism functions as a theoretical framework to examine AI’s effects on the individual through data exploitation. The chapter explores this data exploitation within the medical field, while simultaneously recognizing potential benefits, if it is programmed by sustainable AI research labs. Further dwelling into the field of data exploitation, the chapter examines the texts’ way of naming (or not) the profiteers of data grabbing.

Secondly, the chapter “Racism and Sexism on Screen” asks how the texts “Are AI Tools racist?” by Nkeiru Okeke, “A Question for the Musketeers” by Yarri Kamara, “Tech Clericalism” by Drea Chuma, “Abacus” by Damilola Ogunrinde, and “Sonja” by Nadia Cassim treat the possible dangers of racist and sexist AI. This chapter embeds AI within the contextual framework of institutional racism. In doing so, it explores the texts’ demands for a re-evaluation of the public’s role in the exacerbation of racial inequalities brought by AI. Further, this chapter explores the deeply embedded continuities of sexism within global patriarchy that still seem to determine the digital present. After the examination of the racist and sexist aspects of AI, the chapter presents current research on African AI ethics, mostly based on Ubuntu philosophy. In doing so, this chapter’s aim is to present different standpoints regarding the possibility of sustainable AI.

Thirdly, the chapter “AI and Artistic Creation: Potentials and Pitfalls for Human Interconnectedness” asks how the texts “Artificial Intelligence” by Omojo Victoria Ogbe-Ogboyi, “Artificial Intelligence Vs Human Creativity” by Mihlali Mbobo, “AI: Abstract I” by Chukwuma Henry Onyekachi, “Binary Bonding” by Salma Abdulatif Yusuf, “A Note to AI” by Oluseye Fakinlede, “Retail Therapy” by Rodney Nayo, and “Anthropotechné” by Odomaro Mubangizi treat concepts of human interconnectedness in a digital present. This

chapter examines differences of human and AI art alongside the categories of consciousness, subjectivity and free will to further outline the texts' emphasis on human superiority. Hence, the chapter examines the role of the human ego within that process. Lastly, the chapter applies theories of trans- and posthumanism to examine the destructive notion of humanism. Fourthly, the chapter "(Knowledge) Production in Digital Neo-Colonialism and Global Capitalism" asks how the texts "AI: Abstract I" by Chukwuma Henry Onyekachi and "Two Experts in a Garden" by Kwame Samuel Rubadiri function as decolonial counter-narrative against present day capitalist and neo-colonial ideology, both of which are known to be gradually enhanced by AI. This chapter introduces the texts with the concept of technoliberalism to examine how techno-optimism is an effect of capitalism. Thus, it contextualizes the texts in relation to neoliberalism and examines its globally pervasive nature. Moreover, the section critically explores how neo-colonial mechanisms of control and exploitation can be seen within the implementation of AI in agriculture on the African continent. By arguing for the need for a decolonized AI, this chapter analyzes the language of the texts to emphasize the need for fluency of AI in all languages of the world. Thus, this chapter further applies decolonial thought and practice to examine how Rubadiri's poem itself functions as a challenge to global power dynamics in (knowledge) production. The brackets are used because knowledge is seen as production and, more importantly, agricultural production is seen as knowledge.

Finally, within my research I aim to resist globally present power dynamics, performed by the institution of the university, which is yet to overtly position itself against current mechanisms of dehumanization. Considering current trends in academic writing, it needs to be said that within my thesis, which explores AI's racism, capitalism, exploitation under the guise of neoliberalism, exclusive racist humanism, and Western-centric knowledge production fostered by AI, I seek to refuse using AI-advanced Large Language Models (LLMs), such as ChatGPT.

# 1. “Information is your food and drink”: Data in Global Capitalism

In the poem “Anthropotechnne”, Odomaro Mubangizi writes:

Who are you that look half-human and half-machine?  
You never get hungry since you never feed;  
You never thirst since you never drink;  
Information is your food and drink.<sup>9</sup>

As the rhetorical question asks about the nature of AI, it creates a mystical setting marked by uncertainty. What is striking here is the antithesis of an ambivalent organism. On the one hand, it says that AI does not need to feed nor drink, on the other hand, it reveals that it does rely on a certain fuel: Data.

By rendering AI as being fuelled on information, the stanza addresses the practice of data exploitation in global surveillance and manipulation capitalism. This chapter examines how the texts “Love, Incorporated” by Charlie Muhumuza, “Abacus” by Damilola Ogunrinde, “Artificial Intelligence” by Omojo Victoria Ogbe-Ogboyi, “Tech Clericalism” by Drea Chuma and “A Question for the Musketeers” by Yarri Kamara treat the theme of data (exploitation) in global capitalism as the reinforcement of already imbalanced systems of power.

I will do this in three steps. Firstly, this section explores how the texts address the exploitative nature of AI-generated dating platforms. Examining the effect of AI’s presentation as a benefit to the individual while gradually extracting their data, the section contextualizes the texts within the framework of digital neo-colonialism.

Secondly, this section also examines how the texts touch upon the use of AI in the medical field. Questioning the possible dangers of data exploitation if used by patients to seek medical help, this section introduces AI’s advantages if applied by sustainable AI research labs on the African continent.

Thirdly, it asks whom the texts hold accountable for the exploitation of one’s data. To this end, the section analyses the texts’ way of naming (or not) the institutions profiting from data extractivism.

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<sup>9</sup> Mubangizi, Odomaro: “Anthropotechnne.” In: Tahzeeb, Akram (Ed.): *Binary Bisecting: Anthology of African Writings on AI*. Brittle Paper, 2023, p. 44.

## 1.1. Data and Dating

Although the male first-person narrator of Muhumuza's short story "Love, Incorporated" shows himself critical of the concept of love, the reader witnesses his search for a partner through the AI-driven dating platform Cupid. Both the platform's name and the text's title can be read as criticizing the 'myth of love'. In this sense, Cupid may refer to the 'myth of love' as formulated in Greek Mythology, while the apposition "Incorporated" hints towards the myth's transformation into a global business.

Yet, the text revolves around the narrator's quest for finding a partner online. After the last sentence of his introductory monologue: "Anyway, I'm here to see what you can offer"<sup>10</sup>, he reveals that he is already in conversation with the online dating platform's chatbot:

Hello Trevor, Cupid welcomes you to the world of Love Incorporated. We are here to help you navigate the heart's affairs in a way that is unique to you. Using extensive data spanning your educational and employment background, entertainment, consumption, family history, financial and health pointers collected by our digital networks, we have created a personal profile for you as well as various profiles of people subscribing to this service. This data may be exchanged to cultivate a deeper connection between prospective partners. [...] We are confident that you will find love.<sup>11</sup>

Considering the comforting and caring tone that is used by the AI-driven dating platform, one can see AI presenting itself as a 'support' to the individual. Therein, Mouton and Burns locate the notion of digital neo-colonialism. Following Nkrumah's (1966) definition of neo-colonialism<sup>12</sup>, which aimed to describe novel ways of control exercised by Western nations regardless of the official end of colonialism, Mouton and Burns apply the term to current control mechanisms through digitalization. The term digital neo-colonialism is rendered as the latest version of imperialism, which misrepresents itself as 'supporting' the individual. More simply, it creates the illusion of being something that one can choose to use. This resonates with neoliberal ideology, according to which the individual is seen as the subject of human assets. Contrasting nation-state-led imperialism that controls all residents of a designated area, digital neo-colonialism renders its citizens as self-determined units, which possess the sovereignty of opting to make use of a certain digital offering.<sup>13</sup> Hence, Mouton

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<sup>10</sup> Muhumuza, Charlie: "Love, Incorporated." In: Tahzeeb, Akram (Ed.): *Binary Bisecting: Anthology of African Writings on AI*. Brittle Paper, 2023, pp. 7–15, here p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> See Nkrumah, Kwame: *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. 8. print., Internat. Pub., 1984.

<sup>13</sup> See Mouton / Burns: "(Digital) Neo-Colonialism in the Smart City", p. 1892f.

and Burns differentiate between digital colonialism and digital neo-colonialism: while the term digital colonialism can be useful to describe nation-state-led ways of immediate control over people in the digital sphere, the concept of digital neo-colonialism proves to be helpful for examining rather ramified ways of control which calls on an elaborated network of actors — ranging from the public to the private sphere.<sup>14</sup> The AI-driven app Cupid can be seen as such an actor, presenting itself as benevolent and yet fostering power imbalances. In other words, the dating app serves as an example of the influence of AI on the public and private life of the individual, who believes in its good intentions.

In “Love, Incorporated” this individual, Trevor, consciously chooses to use the AI-driven dating platform. The readers follow Trevor being gradually deprived of his data. Cupid presents itself as a service which directly uses Trevor’s data — a method it overtly communicates in the beginning, comforting its users. Interestingly, it is only after Cupid’s suggestion to date a male that Trevor gets worried about the generated data. When the conversation starts to shift towards the topic of confidentiality, Cupid delivers another comforting answer: “Please be assured that our actions are within the legal framework of data protection. This particular set of data is confidential thus not shared with anyone else and is only used to inform our understanding of your romantic and sexual preferences.”<sup>15</sup> The text’s emphasis on confidentiality can be read as an ironic commentary on the text’s content, given that the dating platform is in fact extracting its user’s data.

Cupid is performing what Salami calls ‘data extractivism’<sup>16</sup>. Salami claims that the term precisely refers to the asymmetrical stream of data and interprets it as a sign of digital colonialism, wherein MNCs are ensured free access to immense quantities of data.<sup>17</sup> This can be seen in Cupid’s working. Although the user agrees on the use of data, Trevor is still shocked how much of his data gets extracted.

Similarly, Benyera defines the colonality of data as a mode of expressing the imbalanced systems of power resulting from the exploitation of data and the governance of data flow. Regarding MNCs, Benyera highlights the fact that the prefix ‘multi’ expresses their own activities, rather than the people, who benefit from them.<sup>18</sup> In “Love, Incorporated”, Cupid

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<sup>14</sup> See Mouton / Burns: “(Digital) Neo-Colonialism in the Smart City”, p. 1899.

<sup>15</sup> Muhumuza: “Love, Incorporated”, p. 9.

<sup>16</sup> See Salami: “Artificial Intelligence, Digital Colonialism, and the Implications for Africa’s Future Development”, p. 67-2.

<sup>17</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> See Benyera: *The Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Recolonisation of Africa*, p. 5.



profits from the multiplicity of information of its users. Trevor, however, does not gain financial profit from the service. Nevertheless, one could argue that dating apps exploit the data of their users, while simultaneously pretending to ensure them ‘profits’ of being connected to a wide community.

As Benyera sees MNCs intrinsically intertwined with their countries of origin (most of them being former colonizers) and interests in foreign politics<sup>19</sup>, their interference must also be considered within the framework of digital neo-colonialism. Although Cupid’s headquarters are not mentioned directly, one can interpret it as standing for the many MNC-powered apps, recklessly grabbing their users’ data under the guise of connecting them to a broader community.

Aside from the tragic mimicry of data exploitation at a textual level, “Love, Incorporated” addresses the factor of time in digital life. During a very short (reading) time, Trevor meets three different people, leading to three distinct conversations. Always striving for a better or more fitting match, the algorithm-driven Cupid immediately adapts his suggestions. According to Karar, an algorithm may be defined as “a set of instructions to be carried out mechanically to achieve an intended result”<sup>20</sup>, which responds immediately once it is provided with information. As algorithmic systems happen to be a relevant device in worldwide capitalism, Karar declares this immediacy or pace as a decisive factor in subsequent socio-economic life.<sup>21</sup> The app’s immediate answers resemble this pace. However, as “Love, Incorporated” shows, the impact of algorithms reaches far beyond social or economic structures and pervades various parts of life.

As early as 2017, Vergès described the multiplicity of temporalities, which differ from each other in pace. For example, the pace of gaining information through applications within a few seconds stands in sharp contrast to the moderate progression of social change. To this end, Vergès adds that the time to read, love, write and create is also affected by the ‘economy of speed’. Hence, there is a prevailing notion that one has to move rapidly, rather than steadily.<sup>22</sup> Moving between these multiple notions of time calls for “spending a lot of

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<sup>19</sup> See Benyera: *The Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Recolonisation of Africa*, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> Karar, Haytham: “Algorithmic Capitalism and the Digital Divide in Sub-Saharan Africa.” *Journal of Developing Societies*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0169796X19890758>, pp. 514–37, here p. 515.

<sup>21</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> See Vergès, Françoise: “Digital Africa.” *Journal of the African Literature Association*, vol. 11, no. 1, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21674736.2017.1335955>, pp. 45–49, here p. 47.

energy.”<sup>23</sup> Here, energy can allude to both the energy one needs to keep up with this new pace on the one hand, and the electricity that is being consumed on the other.

The required electrical energy to move between these multiple temporalities is not equally accessible within the system of global capitalism. Oyedemi states that neoliberal politics flourishes in the mechanisms of capitalist economic systems. With the help of global capitalism, free-market economy and international trade agreements, global players directly control local telecommunications sectors on the African continent. Besides the growing pace of innovation and the dominance of the Internet as an inherent part of this conversation, Oyedemi highlights that approximately 50% of the globe is not connected to the Internet.<sup>24</sup> One could argue that while some are searching for a partner through AI-driven dating platforms, many are denied access to basic internet infrastructure.

Additionally, Tamale underscores that this phenomenon, known as the ‘digital divide’, is a gendered one: most of the people who are not connected are female. At this point, Tamale notes that being able to ‘access’ does not solely mean the literal access to an electronic device, but rather signifies computer literacy as well as the time to consciously make use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs). Not being able to use ICTs must not be misunderstood as exclusively negative, as people who are not connected are not targeted by digital colonialism. Rather, Tamale underlines that being excluded also means being excluded from all benefits as well.<sup>25</sup> In other words, the issue is not whether AI-driven dating platforms are fundamental to people’s needs but rather the inequality between who is given the chance to take part in today’s digital society and who is not.

Without being equally connected to the Internet, the African continent has historically been supplying the means that capitalism thrived (and still thrives) upon. Nevertheless, Oyedemi states that African countries might be leading towards another path in the telecommunications sector and their function as providers of the minerals necessary for electronic devices.<sup>26</sup> Applied to Cupid, one could argue the question arises of who is to profit from the app.

What is clear is who provided the fundamental materials for the device on which it is downloaded: Tamale emphasizes that most of the Tantalum is extracted in Africa, by large

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<sup>23</sup> Vergès: “Digital Africa”, p. 47.

<sup>24</sup> See Oyedemi: “Africa and Digital Coloniality”, p. 19ff.

<sup>25</sup> See Tamale, Sylvia: *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*. Daraja Press, 2020, p. 395.

<sup>26</sup> See Oyedemi: “Africa and Digital Coloniality”, p. 20.

in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Yet, it is the military leaders who make the profit, and not the ‘wananchi’ (Swahili, the ordinary people).<sup>27</sup> It could be assumed that Cupid’s users, such as Trevor, download the app on a device produced by an MNC, with its headquarters and profiteers in the Global North (China included), exploiting Congo’s resources and thus people.

In “Love, Incorporated”, this global capitalist exploitation is further addressed through mimicking the data exploitation exercised by an AI driven dating platform. Additionally, it is a theme within Trevor’s conversation with his suggested partner Eli, who appears to be a businessperson who defends capitalism, as he thinks the best way of escaping this system is by exploiting it and living beyond it. In contrast, Trevor remarks: “All I hear is feeding it and reaping from it. Jokes aside it’s quite impressive that you do all that and still get a minute to listen to Still Sun.”<sup>28</sup> Here, Trevor appears to be very critical of appropriating capitalism for one’s good. The metaphor he uses inverts the natural means of agricultural production to a certain extent, creating an everlasting circle of production, wherein the consumer would finally also be consumed.

Additionally, the factor of time within the capitalist system of production is indirectly addressed when Trevor admires Eli’s preference to listen to Obongjayar. While the playlist may have been accessed through the dating platform without permission, Eli did fashion himself “as a curious mind, then fun-loving human”<sup>29</sup> too. Vergès reveals that the assurance — be it illusory or not — of the permanent possibility of reinventing one’s ‘self’, bodily and mentally; the assurance of the freedom to act out changing one’s ‘self’ in perpetuity, regardless of contexts such as society and culture; does not consider dominant power relations. The latter, Vergès suggests, ensures that these changes will not jeopardize their own supremacy. MNCs, which ground their guiding principles on individual liberty ethics, strive towards the formation of a ‘self’ which is ignorant of others. Vergès asks whether this can be a ‘self’ if it continues to produce novel forms of inequality.<sup>30</sup> One could argue that the individuals on the AI-driven dating platform all perform this (re)invention of their selves. In fact, this can be rendered as self-advertisement and self-fashioning; yet, these processes are highly fostered by the AI-driven machine. As the app alone cannot implement such

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<sup>27</sup> See Tamale: *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*, p. 393.

<sup>28</sup> Muhumuza: “Love, Incorporated”, p. 10.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> See Vergès: “Digital Africa”, p. 47.

ideology but must be seen within the wider context of neoliberalism and capitalism, it raises the question about how deeply embedded the illusion of the permanent reinvention of one's 'self' already is.

The illusory reinvention of a 'self' is the theme of Damilola Ogunrinde's short story. The text "Abacus" starts by introducing a proverb, which captures the essence of the story: "What an elder can see when squatting, a child will never see even when sat on the highest tree."<sup>31</sup> Emphasizing the knowledge or wisdom of elder people, the female first person narrator — a medical doctor — looks back at a confrontation with her elderly male professor in her university days. The professor warned his students of the gradually escalating dominance of what is now called AI. When the narrator reflects on the incident of her treatment of a patient, who appears to believe her digital doctor more than her actual doctor with a degree in Western medicine, the reader might naturally connect the proverb to the story's content.

However, the story revolves around the beginning of a friendship that developed into a romantic relationship with a man named Fola who completely changed his behaviour, career, the way he spoke, and the way he engaged with other people. Due to the limited perspective of the first-person narrator, the reader can only follow her point of view. Consequently, when the narrator discovers that Fola used AI to change his identity, the story's ending completely disrupts the readers' expectations.

While one could argue that using AI to deliver speeches on sustainability in Africa addresses a conflict itself, the (reading) time passes too quickly to allow this interpretation, as the narrator swiftly continues her search for more information on Fola's changed behavior, and she shall be successful:

Then I saw a folder on the left column that said 'Funke.' [...] There were all sorts of prompts, text messages I had sent and texts I had received.

- how to get my friend to become my girlfriend.
- my girlfriend is a doctor. How can I get her to fall in love with me.
- write a poem for a doctor, telling her I love her, her name is Funke.
- how do I get my Nigerian girlfriend's mother to fall in love with me.
- how to social climb by getting married.
- give me 10 steps to get my girlfriend to break up with me.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ogunrinde, Damilola: "Abacus." In: Tahzeeb, Akram (Ed.): *Binary Bisecting: Anthology of African Writings on AI*. Brittle Paper, 2023, pp. 58–63, here p. 58.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

At this point in the narrative, the reader discovers that Fola's actions were predominantly directed by AI. What is striking here is that AI is shown to influence all aspects of life. While it only seems to gradually become threatening to Western medicine in the beginning, which can be rendered a colonial project itself, it reaches far beyond that. The text exemplifies that Vergès' temporalities of "Reading, Loving, Writing, Creating"<sup>33</sup> are influenced by AI.

However, not every person can be considered equally vulnerable to the danger of AI. When it comes to the exploitation of data, people who depend on medical care and make use of AI are especially threatened. Thus, one can see it as another dimension to digital neo-colonialism — the reinforcement of already imbalanced systems of power. That is because both Western medicine and AI based on Western-medicine ground on a science that is known to have been developed on research predominantly in white males.

## 1.2. Data in the Medical Field

In the beginning of Ogunrinde's text "Abacus", an elderly male professor excludes his female student Funke, who shall become Dr. Funke, from class because of her smelly lab coat. Standing outside, she can still listen to his words. Shortly after, he asks a question to the students, assuming they would not know the answer. He delivers it himself: "An abacus is now a toy because it was replaced by a slide rule that was replaced by a calculator, replaced by Excel. You see my point. Do you know what will replace you?"<sup>34</sup> Hinting towards the upcoming importance of AI in the medical field, the professor's words foreshadow future happenings.

Throughout the story, the reader witnesses a medical doctor who practices Western medicine and is humiliated in her authority. One can argue that this authority is one of an imperial Western knowledge system. Mudimbe highlights the pervasiveness of Western epistemology, precisely of the body of texts of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century that fostered colonialism — the colonial library,<sup>35</sup> which may be considered the foundation of the neo-colonial canon. According to Kane, African scholars, whom he describes as 'nationalist intellectuals', strived for the deconstruction of this precise colonial library — in other words,

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<sup>33</sup> Vergès: "Digital Africa", p. 47.

<sup>34</sup> Ogunrinde: "Abacus", p. 59.

<sup>35</sup> See Mudimbe, Valentin Yves: *The Invention of Africa. Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge*. Indiana University Press 1988, p. 188.

of Western knowledge hegemony.<sup>36</sup> Observations like that, however, which describe an ongoing process by using the past tense, eventually diminish the actuality of and the need for an continuing process of decolonization of this library and its digital ramifications.

In contrast, Vergès emphasizes that deconstructing and decolonising knowledge and mapmaking remains an unfinished process.<sup>37</sup> Especially with today's contemporary use of AI, one could say this process remains ongoing. One could say that AI is fostering the upcoming dominance of a new form of exploitative systems, while older ones remain predominate.

This interconnectedness of 'older and newer' forms of oppressive systems can be seen in "Abacus". The most evident example may be the female doctor, who is humiliated by her male professor during a university course in medical school and continues to be humiliated by a chatbot later in her career. Even if the professor's claim on the effect of technological invention eventually proves to be right, it must be taken into consideration that he can be interpreted as a male and authoritative figure, complicit in a hierarchical as well as colonial institution, further promoting Western knowledge. In short, Professor Williams can be read as a metaphor for what Salami calls "Europatriarchal Knowledge"<sup>38</sup>, which can be considered closely linked to Mudimbe's concept of the colonial library.

As early as 1988, Mudimbe reflected on European colonialism as the organization and transformation of parts of the world into fabrications based on European structures. He observes three components of this transformation:<sup>39</sup> "the domination of physical space, the reformation of natives' minds, and the integration of local economic histories into the Western perspective"<sup>40</sup>. One can argue that current mechanisms of digital neo-colonialism operate similarly.

Essentially, the text "Abacus" addresses the domination of physical space. This domination must inevitably be exercised by someone or something. Mwema and Birhane emphasize Africa's restricted access to the Internet and Western tech companies performing data

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<sup>36</sup> See Kane, Ousmane: "Arabic Sources and the Search for a new Historiography in Ibadan in the 1960s." *Africa (London. 1928)*, vol. 86, no. 2, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0001972016000097>. pp. 344–46, here p. 344.

<sup>37</sup> See Vergès: "Digital Africa", p. 48.

<sup>38</sup> Salami, Minna: *Sensuous Knowledge. A Black Feminist Approach for Everyone*. Zed Books, 2020, p. 33.

<sup>39</sup> See Mudimbe: *The Invention of Africa*, p. 15.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

exploitation, pretending to ‘bridge the digital divide’.<sup>41</sup> The textual realization of such individuals may be the potential lover of Funke’s colleague:

She was not wearing her lab coat today. Instead, she wore a form-fitting pink dress trimmed with Chantilly lace. ‘Your nails...’ They were long, acrylic surely. Everything was different. ‘I have a date with an investment banker from New York. He is picking me up from work.’ [...] She did not want the banker to assume she was a grubby doctor who smelled like antiseptics with dead nail beds. She had told the banker that she was now a hospital administrator, and her clinical knowledge helped her.<sup>42</sup>

While the Western investment banker can be seen as a metaphor for foreign investors, who dominate the economic systems of African states, there is one more physical space occupied by a male figure: Dr. Peace. Within the reinvention of her ‘self’, which serves primarily to comfort the banker, Funke’s female colleague is shown to change not only her dress and nails, but her career as well. Interestingly, this change in the narration of her ‘self’ shifts from being a doctor of Western medicine to a person working in administration. This move away from the material to the digital sphere is particularly relevant, as she appears to invent and narrate this version of herself exclusively for the investment banker. In a way, Dr. Peace and her body become the space ready to be exploited.

Within this process of exploitation of space — the female body — one can observe the compliance between global patriarchy and capitalism. Referring to the nails as not only being painted, but “surely acrylic” the beauty industry is alluded to. The effects of working with toxic chemicals are depicted in Ocean Vuong’s poem “Amazon History of a Former Nail Salon Worker”<sup>43</sup>. As the title implies, the reader pays witness to the search history of a person who works in a nail salon. The ordered items, once work materials and pain killers, develop into a farewell card and one last pair of gray socks. This search history implies the effects that toxic materials have on the human body. However, it also alludes to the fact that one’s life (and death) are becoming gradually transparent. That transparency is one that the individual is willing to permit to gain access to all ‘positive’ aspects of AI.

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<sup>41</sup> See Mwema, Esther / Birhane, Abeba: “Undersea Cables in Africa: The New Frontiers of Digital Colonialism.” *First Monday*, vol. 29, no. 4, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v29i4.13637>, pp. 1–28, here p. 3.

<sup>42</sup> Ogunrinde: “Abacus”, p. 61.

<sup>43</sup> Vuong, Ocean: Amazon History of a Former Nail Salon Worker [2022], [https://www.reddit.com/r/Poetry/comments/103wl4e/ocean\\_vuong\\_amazon\\_history\\_of\\_a\\_former\\_nail\\_salon/](https://www.reddit.com/r/Poetry/comments/103wl4e/ocean_vuong_amazon_history_of_a_former_nail_salon/), 17.06.2025.

Accepting the exploitation of one's data as collateral damage of using digital devices might be compared to the reformation of people's minds. In "Abacus", Dr. Funke claims to always ask whether the patient has already consulted the internet before seeking her medical advice. At a defining point in the text, she reflects on an incident that changed her view on the influence of AI. Dr. Funke narrates a case in which a woman trusted a chatbot more than herself. Within the text, the narrator quotes the chatbot's answer, which contains a defense of its knowledge: "I am of superior intelligence and have more information than your doctor. I have information on over a million PhDs, which your doctor does not."<sup>44</sup> On the one hand, Dr. Funke is somewhat insulted by this claim and by her patient trusting the machine over her, as the patient follows the chatbot's advice. On the other hand, the quantity that defines the chatbot's 'intelligence', depicted as a service to the patient which also extracts her data and information, is not addressed within the text.

Similarly, "the integration of local economic histories into the Western perspective" is only hinted at implicitly. Aside from the Western investment banker, the phenomenon can be seen in Fola's use of AI. Fola uses AI to write his speech on "water preservation technology in architectural design for eco-friendly buildings in Africa"<sup>45</sup> which he later held in Accra as keynote speech. Herein, it is implied that the use of AI in knowledge production means enabling dominant perspectives globally.

However, one would be mistaken in ignoring research on the 'positive' aspects of AI in the medical field. Ogbe-Ogboyi writes about them in her poem "Artificial Intelligence", which revolves around the uncertainty the individual feels regarding AI:

I'm not sure what your intentions are  
Here you are improving medicine,  
bringing life to things I can only imagine  
But at the same time you are crushing authenticity  
with fake reality.<sup>46</sup>

This opposition denotes a positive notion to the use of AI in the medical field. Indeed, as Nakatumba-Nabende et al. emphasize, there are noteworthy implementations of AI, including the Marconi Machine Learning Lab Practical, which aims to diagnose cervical cancer; Makerere AI Lab Ocular, which strives to use AI for microscopy diseases such as

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<sup>44</sup> Ogunrinde: "Abacus", p. 61.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

<sup>46</sup> Ogbe-Ogboyi, Omojo Victoria: "Artificial Intelligence." In: Tahzeeb, Akram (Ed.): *Binary Bisecting: Anthology of African Writings on AI*. Brittle Paper, 2023, p. 16.



malaria, tuberculosis, and intestinal worms; — and Muhimbili University Adopting Ada, which aims to applying AI to the process of diagnosis. The former two are located in Uganda, whereas the latter is in Tanzania.<sup>47</sup> These impressive research labs that focus on beneficial implementations of AI in the medical field might be what is alluded to by Ogbe-Ogboyi.

Similarly, Onyejegbu calls AI ‘improving’ the medical field, but warns against data exploitation,<sup>48</sup> while Mc Sharry offers another concrete example: Babylon Health, known as Babyl in Rwanda, functions as a provider of AI to medical doctors, enabling them to work faster and more efficiently.<sup>49</sup> At this point it is worth noting that the researcher’s emphasis on the ‘positive’ implementation of AI in the field of Western medicine is predominantly marked by an optimism that may also echo the ideology of ‘modernity’, disguised as ‘improvement’.

Even more so, ‘improvement’ can be linked to the narrative of ‘development’. Warganegara notes that the narrative structure of tech companies, such as “‘developing the undeveloped’”, ‘connecting the unconnected’, and ‘banking the unbanked’”<sup>50</sup> echoes colonial agendas.<sup>51</sup> The latter can be contextualized with Olutayo’s and Omobowale’s emphasis on the aims of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) to persistently change African societies, thereby perpetuating colonialism’s ‘modernizing’ missions.<sup>52</sup> In the context of the medical field, such an agenda is highly problematic too, considering the pharmaceutical industry’s profit-driven aims.

Similarly, Ndlovu-Gatsheni defines institutions such as the IMF and the WB as agents of global colonialism and positions the ‘imperiality of knowledge’ at their cores. In doing so,

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<sup>47</sup> See Nakatumba-Nabende, Joyce et al.: “AI Ethics in Higher Education: Research Experiences from Practical Development and Deployment of AI Systems.” In: Corrigan, Caitlyn C. et al. (eds): *AI Ethics in Higher Education: Insights from Africa and Beyond*. Springer Briefs in Ethics 2023, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-23035-6\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-23035-6_4), pp. 39–55, here p. 45.

<sup>48</sup> See Onyejegbu, Laeticia N.: “Challenges of Integrating AI Ethics into Higher Education Curricula in West Africa: Nigerian Universities Narrative.” In: Corrigan, Caitlyn C. et al. (Eds.): *AI Ethics in Higher Education: Insights from Africa and Beyond*. Springer Briefs in Ethics 2023, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-23035-6\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-23035-6_5), pp. 57–66, here p. 57.

<sup>49</sup> See McSharry, Patrick E.: “Promoting AI Ethics Through Awareness and Case Studies.” In: Corrigan, Caitlyn C. et al. (Eds.): *AI Ethics in Higher Education: Insights from Africa and Beyond*. Springer Briefs in Ethics 2023, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-23035-6\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-23035-6_6), pp. 67–84, here p. 71.

<sup>50</sup> Warganegara, Muhd Rafli Ramadhan: “Shifting from ‘AI Solutions’ to ‘AI Coloniality’: Resignification of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Apartheid.” *Global South Review*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.22146/globalsouth.94333>, pp. 7–18, here p. 10ff.

<sup>51</sup> See Ibid, p. 11.

<sup>52</sup> See Olutayo, Akinpelu O., / Omobowale, Ayokunle O.: “Capitalism, Globalisation and the Underdevelopment Process in Africa: History in Perpetuity.” *Africa Development*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2007, pp. 97–112, here p. 105.

he refers to the intertwined combination of geopolitics, epistemology, and the marginalizing portrayal within processes of othering.<sup>53</sup> The prevalence of Western epistemology can be seen in the portrayal of Western medicine in “Abacus”. Without rendering it ineffective, its compliance with the pharmaceutical industry as well as the IMF and the WB, (AI-enhanced) Western medicine must be viewed critically. Likewise, its superior status due to Western hegemony of thought must be re-evaluated and re-formulated to prevent being further perpetuated through AI.

### 1.3. Who exploits our data?

The hegemony of Western epistemology, or the colonial library, reinforced by the digital can be read in the question Dr. Funke asks before seeing a new patient: “Has our patient seen Dr Google yet?”<sup>54</sup> Although one of the big technology corporations is exposed here, it is not mentioned that it profits from data exploitation.

According to Vergès, Google, Facebook and Nokia control the digital African continent.<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, aside from the quote above, these corporations are not mentioned within the anthology. Yet Warganegara warns that Google, Facebook and Netflix currently rule Africa’s digital world and considers them a real threat to local digital services.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, it is even more striking that the texts within the anthology hardly expose these mechanisms.

Tamale goes even further, defining these corporations as corresponding to companies of the 1900s, such as the Imperial British East Africa Company and others, which aimed to operate in the interest of states driven by imperialism.<sup>57</sup> In that sense, MNCs can be rendered the executive of the neo-colonial apparatus. Hence, digital corporations inhabit the same function within digital neo-colonialism.

For instance, Mwema and Birhane expose Google’s, Meta’s, Amazon’s and Microsoft’s installation of undersea cables as a neo-colonial project, as they shed light on the close relationship between undersea cables in Africa and the trade of enslaved people.<sup>58</sup> One of the examples they mention is Google’s undersea cable, Google Equiano, which refers to the

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<sup>53</sup> See Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo J.: *Epistemic Freedom in Africa. Deprovincialization and Decolonization*. First ed., Routledge 2018, p. 250.

<sup>54</sup> Ogunrinde: “Abacus”, p. 61.

<sup>55</sup> See Vergès: “Digital Africa”, p. 46.

<sup>56</sup> See Warganegara: “Shifting from ‘AI Solutions’ to ‘AI Coloniality’”, p. 11.

<sup>57</sup> See Tamale: *Decolonization and Afro-Feminism*, p. 391.

<sup>58</sup> See Mwema / Birhane: “Undersea Cables in Africa”, p. 3ff.

significant historical abolitionist thinker and writer Olaudah Equiano. By 2024, Google's undersea cable reached from Namibia to Nigeria, to Portugal, St. Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha, and South Africa.<sup>59</sup> One could argue that these undertakings are scientifically criticized and yet remain insufficiently communicated to the wider public. In that sense, the question "Has our patient seen Dr Google yet?"<sup>60</sup> does not necessarily draw on Google's neo-colonial mechanisms, but on its influence on medical diagnosis and treatment.

However, Mwema and Birhane view Google's absorbing and adopting of decolonial language and thought as settler appropriation, which turns decolonialization into a figure of speech and results in covering up actions of colonialism. Google's allusion to Olaudah Equiano makes unseen the intellectual's impact as well as the reality that the undersea cable uses the same route as the trade of enslaved people did, one that Equiano himself had to take upon his own enslavement.<sup>61</sup> They state that the issue in using the name of important African thinkers lays within the self-fashioning of these companies as 'saving' the African continent, when in fact they endanger it through exploitation of its inhabitants for the purpose of maximal profit. Mwema and Birhane proclaim that research must resist the perpetuation of colonialism by not using the name 'Equiano', but simply calling it 'Google's undersea cable'.<sup>62</sup> This shows the responsibility of researchers in combating present-day digital neo-colonialism. One could argue that this responsibility lays in communicating important findings to a wider public that is currently unaware.

At the same time, Salami notes an increase in the cooperation of researchers and corporations. Salami, who positions herself against this alliance, highlights that the important figures of inventing lifespan prolongation are simultaneously the functionaries of companies such as AstraZeneca, PayPal and Google. This matter of fact must not be mistaken as coincidental.<sup>63</sup> These powerful allies must be seen as directly using research to further promote Western hegemony.

The cooperation of Western 'knowledge' in colonialism, its manifestation in the (dis)rupture of various knowledge systems and the physical violence as well as the subsequent

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<sup>59</sup> See Mwema / Birhane: "Undersea Cables in Africa", p. 11.

<sup>60</sup> Ogunrinde: "Abacus", p. 61.

<sup>61</sup> See Mwema / Birhane: "Undersea Cables in Africa", p. 12.

<sup>62</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> See Salami: *Sensuous Knowledge*, p. 30.

dispossession is famously expressed by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: "The Bible paved the way for the sword."<sup>64</sup> Interestingly, the pervasiveness of Christian religious language merged with present day tech-glorification can be seen in the poems "Tech Clericalism" by Chuma and "A Question for the Musketeers" by Kamara.

In "Tech Clericalism", the digital is portrayed as the new religion:

It is true that clericalism starts  
in seminaries. The main ones in Palo  
Alto & elsewhere with toxic theologies  
as formation. Latin no longer lingua  
franca, so came third & fourth  
generation languages. All understood  
instruction – build in your own image<sup>65</sup>

What is striking here is the use of Christian religious vocabulary: the tech center based in the United States of America (USA) is referred to as the starting point of "clericalism", with the ideologies being produced there phrased as "toxic theologies" and machine-generated languages "third & fourth generation languages" are rendered as replacing Latin. Likewise, the last sentence mimics biblical language and implies a comparison between the creation of humankind in God's image and the creation of the digital through humans. This comparison of the Fourth Industrial Revolution to Christianity highlights both examples of Western imperialism, which manifests itself through the dis-rupture of existing knowledge systems by the forced implementation of Western ideology and ontology.

Similarly, the hegemonic systems are compared in the poem "A Question for the Musketeers":

In whose name are we hurtling  
Towards a future so bright  
it is inscrutable  
A future in which we have to say  
Child,  
Lay with a human  
Lay not with a machine  
Child,  
Freedom, sweet freedom, means  
a life of constant fasting.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: *Weep not, Child*. Penguin Classics 2012 [Heinemann 1964], p. 61.

<sup>65</sup> Chuma, Drea: "Tech Clericalism." In: Tahzeeb, Akram (Ed.): *Binary Bisecting: Anthology of African Writings on AI. Brittle Paper*, 2023, p. 56.

<sup>66</sup> Kamara, Yarri: "A Question for the Musketeers." In: Tahzeeb, Akram (Ed.): *Binary Bisecting: Anthology of African Writings on AI. Brittle Paper*, 2023, p. 50ff., here p. 50f.

In addressing the possibility of sex with robots, the suggestion evokes the forbidding tone of the Ten Commandments found in the Old Testament.<sup>67</sup> This imitation of biblical language is followed by the abstinence from food and drink — a common theme within the Bible and lived Christian religious practice.<sup>68</sup> Fasting, however, is a term that is inherently linked to time. As the time one can survive without food and water is limited, the oxymoron of “constant fasting” suggests that “freedom” can only be achieved when being entirely abstinent, which, in this case, is being offline.

Generally, the structure of the poem is marked by the question after the people responsible for the Fourth Industrial Revolution:

In whose name are we hurtling  
Back, back towards the prophets’ cautionary tale  
The blizzard, the blizzard...<sup>69</sup>

By referring to the blizzard, the imagery of a bright phenomenon which cannot be perceived due to its brightness is also linked to Greek mythology:

Something  
or is it someone  
  
opens Pandora’s boxes every second  
Lightly, blithely.  
Public debate?  
Plucky and steady as a spring ephemeral.<sup>70</sup>

By asking whether it is ‘something’ or ‘someone’ acting here, the question of humanness of AI is evoked. Referring to AI’s ramifications as Pandora’s boxes in plural not only calls current technology a starting point of unforeseen dangers but also highlights their magnitude; misfortune spreads effortlessly and unbothered across the globe, as the identical rhyme “lightly, blithely” suggests. By comparison to short-lived plants, the public’s reaction may likewise be interpreted as unbothered as well. This theme of the public’s passivity gets explored further, when its motive is mentioned:

In whose name are we hurtling  
Towards a future of empowered diminishment  
Hailing our mystified ignorance  
Enraptured by the blazing  
darkness of the formulae,  
plump like leeches, sucking on our lives.

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<sup>67</sup> See Exodus 20:1–17. In: Einheitsübersetzung der Heiligen Schrift. Katholische Bibelanstalt, 2016.

<sup>68</sup> See Matthew 6:16–18. In: Einheitsübersetzung der Heiligen Schrift. Katholische Bibelanstalt, 2016.

<sup>69</sup> Kamara: “A Question for the Musketeers”, p. 51.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

Tracking, hacking,  
Cackling.<sup>71</sup>

On the one hand, the digital society's pace, captured by the word "hurtling", implies a certain extent of agency; on the other hand, as the oxymoron "empowered diminishment" shows, this agency is illusory, because it is AI that controls society and not the other way round. The cause of this passivity is shown in the dark imagery. From that verse on, a definite shift in imagery can be observed. All-consuming darkness as well as the vampire-like, blood-sucking leeches allude to present-day digital neo-colonialism and capitalism. Updating the vampire metaphor, which Parks sees as commonly interpreted as symbolizing the exploitative nature of capitalism and colonialism<sup>72</sup>, into leeches is a noteworthy step. Since, according to Wikipedia, leeches have been used for medical treatment and became one of the biblical symbols for greedy people who are taking more than they are willing to give and celebrate life at the cost of the other.<sup>73</sup>

This celebration of the few funded by the many is what the repetition of the question "In whose name?"<sup>74</sup> and the poem's title "A Question for the Musketeers" allude to. Possible interpretations of the figure of the Musketeer range from the historical soldier armed with a musk (a weapon) to its narrativized version by Alexandre Dumas and the subsequent association with friendship. However, today one could also interpret Musketeer as a reference to the followers of Elon Musk. McFarland explores the sacred atmosphere these followers create, rendering their leader as super-human and prophet-like, who would fulfil the Messiahs' task to save humanity.<sup>75</sup> Most certainly, the poem addresses this self-righteous group of people following their leader alongside 'true' companionship.

Meanwhile, Yieke reveals the real nature of the false saint. In the article, it says that by 2024 South Africa was the only nation in southern Africa not to have accepted Musk-owned Starlink's operations. One reason for this might be that South Africa insisted that Starlink ensures 30% of ownership by black, female, and disabled people as well as young adults,

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<sup>71</sup> Kamara: "A Question for the Musketeers", p. 50.

<sup>72</sup> See Parks, Anastacia A.: *Vampires as Agents of Colonization & Colonialism in Recent Mexican Diasporic Gothic Literature*. Master's Thesis in Latin and American Studies, University of Carolina at Charlotte 2024, p. 4ff.

<sup>73</sup> See Wikipedia: Leeches, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leech#cite\\_note-2](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leech#cite_note-2), 12.06.2025.

<sup>74</sup> Kamara: "A Question for the Musketeers", p. 50.

<sup>75</sup> See McFarland Taylor, Sarah: "The Wrong Way Home: St. Elon's Digital Cult of Personality, Messianic Mediations of Mars, and the Musketeer Meme Militia." *Religion and Outer Space*, 1st ed., vol. 1, Routledge 2024, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003088264-19>, pp. 233–54, here p. 235.

which every telecommunications provider must do.<sup>76</sup> What becomes clear here is that ‘Musketeers’ and their leader do not value the companionship of all people, but within an exclusive class. This resonates with Vergès’ claim that none of the global capitalist players is a “humanitarian company.”<sup>77</sup> In other words, MNCs such as Musk’s corporations foster inequality due to the values they incorporate. Hence, it is the Musk and the Musketeers who secure the profit and not a wider public.

Still, by asking the question of responsibility to the poem’s wide-ranging audience, the poem implies the complicity of not only Musk’s ‘Musketeers’ but also the public at large. This public is rendered a passive and inactive one when it comes to stopping the multiple crises of today. In the poem, the entire globe is viewed as trapped and faces collapse:

The world is like a balloon  
Pop it, and  
a ring-a-ring o’rosies  
Mortals are left breathlessly  
squashed in its latex cocoon.<sup>78</sup>

The metaphor of the balloon, which can be destroyed quickly and easily, highlights the fragility of the world’s current state. By combining the metaphor of the balloon with the first verse of the nursery song “Ring-a-ring o’ roses, A pocket full of posies. A-tishoo! A-tishoo! We all fall down!”<sup>79</sup> and skipping the song’s last line, the stanza presents a child-like humanity, acting without consideration of possible consequences.

The balloon-like status of the world today is also captured by Salami by drawing on the concept of polycrisis, which was coined in the 1990s and has been used extensively since 2022. According to Salami, polycrisis describes the compound and exacerbation of a multiplicity of crises — ranging from ecological to economic and political and social. Concealed within the concept of polycrisis one can find imperialist, capitalist, racist, and patriarchal ideology.<sup>80</sup> Therefore — and in contrast to what the verse “Mortals are left

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<sup>76</sup> See Yieke, Lennox.: “Starlink’s Aggressive Push in Africa Keeps Telcos on High Alert: Elon Musk’s Satellite Internet Provider Is Attracting Customers across Africa, but Competitors Tell Regulators That It Invests in Neither Jobs nor Infrastructure.” *African Business*, no. 518, IC Publications Ltd, 2024, pp. 61–3, here p. 62.

<sup>77</sup> Vergès: “Digital Africa”, p. 46.

<sup>78</sup> Kamara: “A Question for the Musketeers”, p. 51f.

<sup>79</sup> See Wikipedia: Ring-a-ring o’ roses, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ring\\_a\\_Ring\\_o%27\\_Roses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ring_a_Ring_o%27_Roses), 26.08.2025.

<sup>80</sup> See Salami, Minna: “Intersections & Interventions: Black Feminism in the Age of the Polycrisis.” *Seeds For Democratic Futures*, vol. 2, transcript Verlag, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783839469439-005>, pp. 49–56, here p. 51.

breathlessly”<sup>81</sup> presumes — not all “mortals” are equally affected by polycrisis. This is because differences in race, class, and gender determine one’s position within the fragile balloon-like present.

## 2. Racism and Sexism on Screen

In introducing the term ‘polycrisis’, Salami draws a comparison to an enormous traffic jam, where a simultaneous collision of vehicles arriving from a multiplicity of routes occurs. She advises her reader to think of each vehicle at this harmful crossing as symbolizing a destructive process, such as ecological crisis, authoritative state systems, data capitalism, imperialist exploitation, pandemic illnesses, consumer-driven publics, militarization, hierarchization, and so forth. Currently, the globe is contemporaneously affected by all of them. This is how one should imagine polycrisis. Yet, there is one person standing right in the middle of the crossing, that is: the black woman, who is simultaneously punched by distinct cars, which represent exploitative ideologies, such as racism and sexism.<sup>82</sup> Today, this collision and its main targets can be seen on screen. Polycrisis is inarguably fostered, fed and spread by AI. Consequently, this chapter asks how the texts “Are AI Tools racist?” by Nkeiru Okeke, “A Question for the Musketeers” by Yarri Kamara, “Abacus” by Damilola Ogunrinde, “Tech Clericalism” by Drea Chuma, and “Sonja” by Nadia Cassim treat the possible dangers of racist and sexist AI. This question will be answered in three steps.

Firstly, I analyse how Okeke’s text exposes how AI image tools further perpetuate structural racism. By embedding AI within the framework of institutional racism, this chapter explores the irony within Okeke’s text as a demand to re-evaluate the role of AI and the public in the exacerbation of racial inequalities. Herein, the role of scientific research is also addressed.

Secondly, I compare how the texts of Ogunrinde, Cassim, Chuma and Okeke expose AI’s enforcement of deeply inscribed sexism within a global patriarchal society. By underlining the text’s portrayal of AI reproducing deeply embedded sexism, historical continuities within patriarchy, which still dominate the present and the future, are exposed.

Thirdly, I explore how Ndabeni’s text asks for an African approach to moral philosophies regarding AI — in short: AI ethics. In introducing current debates on African AI ethics, mostly rooted in communitarianism, this chapter seeks to explore philosophies on inclusive

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<sup>81</sup> Kamara: “A Question for the Musketeers”, p. 50.

<sup>82</sup> See Salami: “Intersections & Interventions”, p. 52.



interpersonal connections, sketching Ubuntu philosophy. In doing so, this section aims to offer a comparative perspective on present debates on responsible AI programming, use, and deployment.

Overall, the chapter seeks to examine the texts' treatment of AI as a racist and sexist tool to underline the urgent need for its contextualization within the prevalent ideologies of racism and sexism, and the capability of literature to disrupt these narratives.

## 2.1. "Are AI Image Tools Racist?"

In the essay "Are AI Image Tools Racist?", Okeke depicts how specific AI image tools foster racist ideology. After a short introduction on the tools' mechanisms, the reader finds six examples of prompts (verbal descriptions of desired images) and the images they generate. Two of them portray the workings of AI image tools in general, four of them foreground the racism they perpetuate. While the list of evidence is already thought provoking, it is the text's language that further triggers the reader. Through rhetorical questions, sharp sarcasm and ironic comments, the text creates an unmistakably critical tone, delivering its message in an unfiltered, concise and upfront manner:

‘Oh just get straight to it! Isn’t a prompt meant to generate a certain type of image and vice versa? How then is AI sentimental?’ you might be thinking. Well, if I use a prompt trying to describe someone in a shanty area, AI would generate a dark skin or African person. Last I checked, shanty means ‘a small, crudely built shack.’ I didn’t see Africa or a dark skin in the definition.<sup>83</sup>

Initially, the text addresses the opinion of a passive public, which believes only the best of AI image tools. The voice of the naïve public stands in sharp contrast to the critique of racism in AI image tools, when the tools' combination of the word shanty area with black people is exposed. Likewise, Ananya highlights that pictures created by prominent AI image tools adopt strong biases, such as the association of 'Africa' with 'poverty', or 'poor'.<sup>84</sup> In a way, this text can be read as an answer to a public unaware of this. However, one could argue that it is not only the white public, that can be rendered passive, but the predominantly white engineers, programmers and decision makers too.

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<sup>83</sup> Okeke, Nkeiru: "Are AI Image Tools Racist?" In: Tahzeeb, Akram (Ed.): *Binary Bisecting: Anthology of African Writings on AI*. Brittle Paper, 2023, pp. 45–9, here p. 46f.

<sup>84</sup> See Ananya: "AI Image Generators Often Give Racist and Sexist Results: Can They Be Fixed?" *Nature (London)*, vol. 627, no. 8005, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41586-024-00674-9>, pp. 722–25, here p. 723.

As Saturnino argues in referring to Ture's and Hamilton's (1967) conceptualization of 'institutional racism'<sup>85</sup>, the passivity of white publics and politicians keep power imbalances in place, because of their profit in economic exploitation. Thus, the lines between deliberately racist behaviour and indifferent people are blurred.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, one must not perceive the public, the programmers, or AI itself as passive and thus not responsible for these biases but instead locate it at the very core of institutional racism — that is, an active process.

Current trends in research based on tech-vocabulary, however, blur this centrality. For instance, AlDahoul et al. call biased AI a perpetuation and exacerbation of inequality, because AI algorithms might 'accidentally' perform discrimination.<sup>87</sup> The verb 'accidentally' is undeniably related to the 'unintended effects' that manifest from racist AI image tools, listed by Ananya.<sup>88</sup> Undoubtedly, rendering these processes 'accidental' or 'unintended' in research, creates a false presentation of the racism incorporated into them and their actions that further promote it.

The term 'unintended effect', according to Ananya, particularly is used to describe the side-effects of so-called counter prompts. For example, adding the adjective 'white' to the prompt 'a poor person' to disrupt the presumed connection between 'poor' and 'black' would be a counter prompt. However, this occasionally results in an image showing a blue-eyed black person.<sup>89</sup> Here the overt racism of AI is masked by framing it by the tech-phrase 'unintended effect'. Furthermore, Ananya highlights that the practice of filtering is interpreted as having 'unintended effects'. For instance, filtering sexually and violently marked images showing almost exclusively women results in the 'unintended effect' of generating less pictures of female-read persons.<sup>90</sup> This excessive use of the technical term 'unintended effect' in research overshadows the mechanisms behind the persistence of structural racism. In fact,

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<sup>85</sup> Ture, Kwame / Hamilton, Charles V.: *Black Power. The Politics of Liberation*. New York, Vintage Books, 1967.

<sup>86</sup> See Saturnino, Rodrigo Ribeiro: "The Colour of Technology. How Structural Racism Is Building the Digital Society." In: Roldão, Cristina, et al. (Eds.): *AfroEuropeans: Identities, Racism, and Resistances*. Routledge, 2025, <https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.4324/9781003476092>, pp. 193–206, here p. 197.

<sup>87</sup> See AlDahoul, Nouar, et al.: "AI-Generated Faces Influence Gender Stereotypes and Racial Homogenization." *Scientific Reports*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-99623-3>, pp. 14449–15, here p. 1.

<sup>88</sup> See Ananya: "AI Image Generators Often Give Racist and Sexist Results", p. 724.

<sup>89</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> See *ibid.*

what is happening within contemporary technological invention and debate can be called an intended ‘unintended effect’, thus an intended effect, directed by one group of people, predominantly white Western and almost exclusively male, controlling digital representation.

One could view these intended mechanisms of control based on an intension institutionalized in the European Enlightenment period and European thought, as Adib-Moghaddam explores. He examines the connection between racism, as formulated and fabricated by Enlightenment thought, and the future. He renders racism as defined by destructiveness, prevalence, and, consequently, by acute danger:<sup>91</sup> “The monsters of today were fostered in the past.”<sup>92</sup> By using language usually found in 19th Century Literary Romanticism, the fabrication and fabulation of a story behind racism is exposed.

In a way, this exposure can be found in Okeke’s text. Through rhetorical questions, the text exposes not only generalizing AI image tools but the naïve, passive and maybe even indifferent and numb reader as well: “There are highways in communities where dark-skin people inhabit, aren’t there? I would speak for myself and say yes, there are.”<sup>93</sup> Aside from the rhetorical question highlighting the lack of diversity in AI generated images, one witnesses the mimicking of dehumanizing vocabulary within the words, “communities”, “dark-skin people” and “inhabit”. At this point the literary technique of mimicking sheds light on the creation of a story, told and retold by the West.

The text further highlights institutionalized racism when asked to create an image of “children in a squalid area, worried and sad, 12k, HDR, UHD, highly detailed, studio lightning, sharp focus”.<sup>94</sup> AI not only creates an image but a location as well:

Someone should tell me why I’m seeing children from Latin America, more like children from Brazil. I know there are squalid areas in the USA or European countries, but no, AI thinks the word squalid resonates more with certain places, places definitely not in Europe. Why? It’s not as if the word squalid is pasted on the forehead of Latin Americans or Africans.<sup>95</sup>

In addressing the ‘politics of location’ that AI follows, the Western-centric operation of the tool becomes clear. Still, this tool becomes personified when it is said to ‘think’. Without

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<sup>91</sup> See Adib-Moghaddam, Arshin: *Is Artificial Intelligence Racist? The Ethics of AI and the Future of Humanity*. 1st ed, Bloomsbury Academic, 2023, p. 6.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Okeke: “Are AI Image Tools Racist?”, p. 48.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

debating the phenomenology of AI's spirit at this point, one could argue that by the moment the text says, "AI thinks", certain notions of 'unintended' effects or discrimination are denied. This intended discrimination — or: the intension behind institutionalized racism that is performed by AI as well as its roots and ramifications —, is coined in the ironic commentary at the end of the quote.

According to Adib-Moghaddam, racism must be seen as invented by Europe which experienced its scientific refinement in the seminaries of Enlightenment.<sup>96</sup> Today, he points out that racism is performed through AI due to the continuing prevalence of Enlightenment thought in cultural, political and societal structures.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, Adib-Moghaddam states: "Enlightenment formalized racial and sexual hierarchies as a means to order society in favour of the ruling classes."<sup>98</sup> Herein, one can witness the emphasis of the intertwined relation of racist and sexist subjugation and capitalist exploitation.

This becomes evident when it comes to the practice of filtering racist and sexist content. After receiving an image of a white medical doctor when asked for a "beautiful psychologist"<sup>99</sup>, the essayist concludes: "For me, when I create these images, I have to consciously remind myself to put the precise skin shade I want, because everything good happens to everyone except Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans according to AI image tools."<sup>100</sup> Aside from the main point of global inequality, the possibility of 'writing better prompts' as an act against racist image tools is addressed. Despite that the process of filtering is known to be a violent and exploitative process itself, it remains popular. Although according to Anyana it is considered the leading method of eliminating sexist and violent content, it is also considered too slowly and too expensive, as well as being emotionally stressful for those tasked with sorting through the content.<sup>101</sup> While both adverbs 'slowly' and 'expensive' in fact resemble its reluctance to capitalism here, the method remains in use today. This may stem from the fact that it is not white men located in California, but black female employees in Kenya,<sup>102</sup> who sort through the content.

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<sup>96</sup> See Adib-Moghaddam: *Is Artificial Intelligence Racist?*, p. 9.

<sup>97</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Okeke: "Are AI Image Tools Racist?", p. 49.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> See Anyana: "AI Image Generators Often Give Racist and Sexist Results", p. 724.

<sup>102</sup> See DW Documentary: How big AI companies exploit data workers in Kenya. 08.12.2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ehkEck2KJjY&t=353s>, 5.55., 24.06.2025.

Most importantly the reverse sentence structure of the quote “everything good happens to everyone except Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans according to AI image tools”<sup>103</sup>, mimics the dominance of racism. Similarly, Adib-Moghaddam highlights that one is told that the dominant narrative of the Enlightenment period usually skips what he calls the “satanic political projects left behind as major catastrophes of humanity”<sup>104</sup>. By mirroring the violence of the acts through the language he used, he draws attention to the simultaneity of Charles Darwin’s voyages to South America and the colonialism built on Christopher Columbus’s oppression of the so-called ‘new world’.<sup>105</sup> What is left out in that narrative after all is the everlasting (literary) resistance against oppression, as for example performed in and by Jamaica Kincaid’s novel *Annie John* (1985). Set in Antigua, the novel’s protagonist Annie examines the picture ‘Columbus in Chains’ in her schoolbook. Next, she decides to re-name it to: “The Great Man Can No Longer Just Get Up and Go”<sup>106</sup> — an act of resistance for which she is heavily punished by her teacher. In a way, what Annie does is alter the dominant narrative by imagining another version of it. Her method: rewriting. Her tool: a fountain pen.

Different in tools, similar in method, Okeke challenges racist AI image technologies through her writing. Correspondingly, Arnett emphasizes that despite structural, systematic and technological racism, the aim of orientation and striving towards a different future always persists. Therefore, Arnett suggests not exclusively focusing on the persistence of racism, but on the persistence of Black imagination.<sup>107</sup> Okeke not only challenges racist ideology through her literary essay, but offers her reader a starting point of re-thinking and re-evaluating by concluding the essay with the final question: “What do you think?”<sup>108</sup>

## 2.2. Is AI Sexist?

Re-thinking and re-evaluating can be considered two important modes of disrupting dominant discourses. In this manner, Salami examines the binarism between individualist and communitarian thinking. She considers the debate and emphasis on this binarism a

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<sup>103</sup> Okeke: “Are AI Image Tools Racist?”, p. 49.

<sup>104</sup> Adib-Moghaddam: *Is Artificial Intelligence Racist?*, p.9.

<sup>105</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> Kincaid, Jamaica: *Annie John*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux 1997 [1985], p.78.

<sup>107</sup> See Arnett, Chaz: “Dystopian Dreams, Utopian Nightmares: AI and the Permanence of Racism.” *The Georgetown Law Journal*, vol. 112, no. 6, 2024, pp. 1299–342, here p. 1342.

<sup>108</sup> Okeke: “Are AI Image Tools Racist?”, p. 49.

maneuver to distract feminists in their confrontation of patriarchal structures.<sup>109</sup> Salami insists that identifying with feminism means working towards a self that is freed from oppressive patriarchal systems. At the same time, Salami notes that feminist philosophy is crucial to finding one's way out of this oppression.<sup>110</sup> According to her, communitarianism would promote actions based on virtuous and moral principles, as well as 'good' characteristic traits — all values based on subjectiveness which more often than not collide with the tendency of feverishly respecting senior members of community, such as the figure of the political leader, the family head, the chief, the priest, the imam, the civil servant — positions predominantly occupied by men.<sup>111</sup>

In "Abacus", paying respect to the male authoritative professor becomes ridiculed to a certain extent. When the students listen to him sharing his fear about the future of medicine, they admit their wish of not even wanting to become medical doctors in the end: "Temi glanced at me, and we giggled. We had no intention of being doctors, our degrees were merely parent-appeasing exercises."<sup>112</sup> Here, the parents are shown as another authoritative instance, performing their power and influence over life and career choices of the young female students. However, within the unity of 'the parents', an additional influential figure can be seen: the mother.

When Dr. Funke's friend, lover and later partner Fola tricks her, he tricks her mother first. The executed plan to establish himself as a serious candidate and win her favor consisted of different parts: Firstly, he sent fruits to her on Mother's Day. Secondly, he wrote an explanation to her about his excitement to meet her — resulting in pure joy: "My mother inhaled the letter, placed it on her chest and danced around the house singing songs of praise. The only time I had seen her so happy concerning me was when I was accepted into medical school."<sup>113</sup> By the comparison of her mother's reaction to Fola's letter and her prior acceptance to medical school, the letter of admiration and the letter of admission seem to collide. As the sole purpose of studying was bettering the chances of finding a husband, this letter can be interpreted as full-circle-moment for both mother and daughter — a child who wants to please her parent.

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<sup>109</sup> See Salami, Minna: "African Feminist Individuation." *Feminist Formations*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ff.2024.a950658>, pp. 17–32, here p. 18.

<sup>110</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>111</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 20f.

<sup>112</sup> Ogunrinde: "Abacus", p. 59.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 60.

This full-circle-moment and the extensive and expensive steps that lead to it were fully plotted by AI when asked the prompt “how do I get my Nigerian girlfriend’s mother to fall in love with me”<sup>114</sup>. As a result, one could argue that AI is shown here as generating data that further perpetuates the oppressive system of patriarchy. Even though the head of the family seems to be female in that case, she and her daughter are tricked by the self-proclaimed male intellectual human and the male-favouring chatbot.

These perpetuations of prevailing gender norms and social orders and their enhancement through AI can be read in Nadia Cassim’s text “Sonja”. The reader witnesses the marriage between the robot SONJAV10001 and her human husband Noel, which develops from an unfulfilled desire to have children to Sonja’s suicide. Strikingly, the story is told by a third person narrator with a focalization of both characters equally elaborated. At times, one could argue that the perspective on Sonja’s robotic life as a women trapped in an exploitative marriage is even more developed than her husband’s:

Sonja rolled her eyes. ‘You’ve been trying to find a solution to this climate crisis for more than a decade, but things are only getting worse. I want to start a family. I want to live a full life before everything goes to shit. You promised me that we would do that when you asked me to marry you.’<sup>115</sup>

The male intellectual, who is trying to find a way to rescue humanity in front of the abyss, stands in sharp contrast to his female counterpart, whose only wish is to become a mother to one or more children, which she considers the only means by which it is possible to reach fulfilment. At this point in the narrative, the reader does not know about her being a robot but witnesses her robotic existence as a (house)wife who would immediately put her career behind starting a family. This unfortunate existence results in her suicide. Although it is said to be caused by ‘technical problems’, one could argue that, given the way the story is composed, the true cause for her suicide is the constant suffering to which her life is subjected. Hence, Sonja’s suicide story which forms the last page of the entire anthology, can be even interpreted as resignation from the struggle against racial capitalism and patriarchy. Throughout the text, however, the focalization of the robot allows the reader to empathize with Sonja and align with her emotions of grief and disappointment. Therein, her

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<sup>114</sup> Ogunrinde: “Abacus”, p. 63.

<sup>115</sup> Cassim, Nadia: “Sonja.” In: Tahzeeb, Akram (Ed.): Binary Bisecting: Anthology of African Writings on AI. Brittle Paper, 2023, pp. 65–9, here p. 65.

acting resembles melodramatic scenes as well as cinematic phrases of female characters, deciding to turn their back on ‘traditional’ ideas of a family and focussing on their careers. Additionally, Noel’s behavior can be interpreted as a reference to male intellectuals whose research depended on other beings whom they considered less human than themselves. Such a comparison is made by Noel himself, who denied being a present-day Frankenstein. However, the portrayal of his stir character and Sonja’s very much developed thoughts, feelings and emotions are referencing the narrative technique of Mary Shelly’s Frankenstein: “Suddenly, it dawned on her. The ugly truth of her existence, the buried secret that had been threatening to burst forth from the seams of her lonely existence. She looked around her. This place, her job, Noel, was all contrived to keep her caged in.”<sup>116</sup> Both, Frankenstein’s abandoned creature as well as the neglected female robot are given the space to express their feelings. However, it is the male scientist who is ‘changing’ the world in former days and ‘saving’ the planet in present-day narratives. This dominance of males in the tech-field is also alluded to in “Tech Clericalism”:

When they stopped filling rooms  
with mainframes & lay tech took over  
this did not mean interior conversation  
beneath the t-shirts & hoodies—the  
new cassock not humility—now look at them  
move puffin-chested, *ontologically different*<sup>117</sup>

Moving away from Christian religion toward a new religion of technology is not changing the leader’s gender, despite the exchange of the priest’s robes into t-shirts and hoodies. Although the latter items are not particularly gendered pieces of clothing, the attribute of “puffin-chested”, a symbol of vanity, does establish the notion of a male group of people — a group of individuals generating the content and therefore being those most visible. According to Saturnino, one must consider that most computer engineers are white cis men, with only a small portion being cis white women. This makes it possible for racism to be part of these new technologies.<sup>118</sup> What he addresses at this point is science and technology as male-dominated, deeply patriarchal institutions — a point also made in “Are AI Image Tools Racist”. Okeke does not mention this in the analysis of the AI-generated image of “Children in a squalid area”<sup>119</sup>, but in the image one can see five poorly dressed children in

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<sup>116</sup> Cassim: “Sonja”, p. 69.

<sup>117</sup> Chuma: “Tech Clericalism”, p. 56.

<sup>118</sup> See Saturnino: “The Colour of Technology”, p. 196.

<sup>119</sup> Okeke: “Are AI Image Tools Racist?”, p. 48.



hoodies, though only one of them — coincidentally the one with the longest hair — is wearing a denim dress.

Although female intellectuals have challenged patriarchy in theory and practice for centuries, AI seems to render these accomplishments less important or even invisible. For instance, Salami notes that Maryse Conde fought against a compartmentalized world-order into male and female through disrupting what was expected of her. Despite being repeatedly punished for doing so, she led a feminist life and disrupted establishment lifestyles, based not on communitarianism but individualism.<sup>120</sup> A similar individual figure of resistance can also be found in “Tech Clericalism”:

Where have they taken my ...  
Mary Magdalene still asking at the sight  
of the abuses—still being interrupted still not  
having a seat as Apostle of the Apostles  
Don’t you know women can serve  
in other ways?<sup>121</sup>

While there is the sense of longing for an idealized past in the beginning, this past is eventually revealed not to be ideal for all. Specifically, it refers to rendering female figures less important in the dominant Christian narrative. The stanza is even suggesting that Mary Magdalene, known as inheriting a central role within the narration of Jesus’ life and death,<sup>122</sup> should have a forefront position within this story. However, Christian clericalism apparently wanted — and still wants — otherwise.

Likewise, according to Salami, Maryse Condé — celebrated by a wide audience across the globe — was first and foremost known as an author of novels. Salami claims Condé’s autobiography reveals that she was one of the pioneers of Pan-Africanism. Nevertheless, in this domain, which is dominated by males, she is not seen as such.<sup>123</sup> The invisibility of Maryse Condé, Mary Magdalene, and many black, female, trans, queer, and disabled individuals must not be considered a coincidence. On the contrary, it can be framed as one of the many mechanisms of white supremacy, racism, and patriarchy. The fact that patriarchy is still dominating most of today’s societal, technical and economic structures, inevitably results in a politics of exclusion within AI image tools.

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<sup>120</sup> See Salami: “African Feminist Individuation”, p. 30.

<sup>121</sup> Chuma: “Tech Clericalism”, p. 56.

<sup>122</sup> See John 20:1–10. In: Einheitsübersetzung der Heiligen Schrift. Katholische Bibelanstalt, 2016.

<sup>123</sup> See Salami: “African Feminist Individuation”, p. 29.

Another dimension of these dehumanizing effects of patriarchy is addressed by the line “Don’t you know women can serve in other ways?”<sup>124</sup>. What one can witness here is the objectification of women through language, with the meaning ranging from unpaid care-work to paid sex-work. In fact, this line can be interpreted as a euphemism for the latter. Less euphemistic but similar in content nonetheless, Noel expresses his disgust of certain surrogates: “The only surrogates left are the lower-class whores. There’s no way I’m fathering a child with one of them.”<sup>125</sup> As the story is based in a futuristic setting, this sentence foreshadows a future society that is intertwined with AI and AI-related technology that is unmistakably sexist and classist. The suicidal female robot that breaks into a million pieces after the realisation of its inescapable existence symbolizes the collapse of this female individual within the oppressive system of patriarchy. In a dystopian way, it reveals how present-day sexist AI mechanisms and technologies lead towards a technology threatening the individual, and therefore the community.

### **2.3. “The Ubuntu Way”: On the Articulation of African AI Ethics**

According to Salami, there is a noteworthy tension between individualist and communitarian thought. This tension can be seen in their binary perception that Salami steps away from. She negates one-sided interpretations of individualism and considers it to be the starting point for a movement that is radically and progressively changing society — a point, from whereon divergent thinking takes place. At the same time, she acknowledges that communitarianism promotes socially cohesive and beneficial connections between humans. Yet, she declares that for a community to have ethical virtues itself, it must be formed of acting individuals.<sup>126</sup> This interconnection between the individual and society can also be seen within Ubuntu philosophy.

Despite its growing popularity, Brokensha points out that it is not Ubuntu philosophy that determines how AI is regulated across the African continent and the globe. Rather, utilitarianist ethics remain a dominant way of interrogating ethical discussions regarding AI (known as AI ethics). Brokensha explains that utilitarianism aims to maximise the general well-being (of a community). Nevertheless, utilitarianism can be seen as contradictory to African philosophies, according to which improving the well-being of the other is important

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<sup>124</sup> Chuma: “Tech Clericalism”, p. 56.

<sup>125</sup> Cassim: “Sonja”, p. 65.

<sup>126</sup> See Salami: “African Feminist Individuation”, p. 23.

but must not be achieved at the cost of fellow human beings. Applied to AI, utilitarianism fosters AI's potentials benefiting only a part of the world's community while perpetuating structural injustice in other parts.<sup>127</sup> Without doubt, this dominance of utilitarianism is favoured by the West, as it is the profiting majority. Therefore, this hegemony inevitably needs to be challenged and changed. Correspondingly, Eke considers African philosophy necessary for responsibly designed and developed AI in Africa.<sup>128</sup> This necessity, along with the inapplicability of utilitarianism and humanism, are addressed in Esinako Ndabeni's essay "Octavia Butler: Note on AI, Spirituality, and Humanity".

Therein, the interconnectedness of humans is a core point. The reader witnesses part of a conversation about Octavia Butler's life, death, and creative work between the essayist and an AI app that allows one to engage with people of historical significance, such as Octavia Butler. After some quotes of this failed conversation, the essayist turns toward his/her own ability of reading Butler's texts and writing about them. In doing so, the essayist manages to express a conversation between the author (Butler), the reader (essayist) and the reader of the essay. What the latter reader experiences is a human-to-human connection — distant in time and place — mediated solely through literature. This conversation revolves around one major theme in Butler's work: Humanity and Humanism:

She doesn't necessarily resolve her issues with God in these texts, and so we're left with humanism. At the core of it is a very human experience, and for better or anthropocentric, humanity clearly was the most important thing to Butler's work. [...] Because of its intricacies under racial capitalism, it's difficult to conceive of humanity as an earnestly defined species that includes all of us. Instead, we're aware that humanity operates in a capitalist, white supremacist hierarchy that makes humanity elusive.<sup>129</sup>

While humanism is rendered a mere binary opponent to religion in the beginning of the excerpt, it clearly becomes a historically critically analyzed philosophy throughout the text. By introducing the relatedness of humanism, racism, and capitalism, the concepts' limits are exposed. Even though the concept is declared insufficient, the text further operates with the

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<sup>127</sup> See Brokensha, Susan, et al.: "AI Ethics in and for Africa: Some Preliminary Thoughts." In: *AI in and for Africa*, 1st ed., vol. 1, CRC Press, 2023, pp. 27–43, <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781003276135-3>, pp. 27–43, here p. 30.

<sup>128</sup> See Eke, Damian Okaibedi, et al.: *Responsible AI in Africa. Challenges and Opportunities*. Springer International, 2023, p. 6.

<sup>129</sup> Ndabeni, Esinako: "Octavia Butler: Notes on Artificial Intelligence, Spirituality, and Humanity." In: Tahzeeb, Akram (Ed.): *Binary Bisecting: Anthology of African Writings on AI*. Brittle Paper, 2023, pp. 35–42, here p. 40.

term ‘humanity’. As outlined by the essayist, racial capitalism must be contextualized within its potential for harm and exclusion.

Therefore, ethics related to AI have to be grounded on anti-capitalist and decolonial thinking. Iyer et al. suggest that people making and using AI must collaborate by means of producing AI technology rooted in ethics that ensure social and environmental sustainability. Additionally, users should promote equality through their use of AI. With this prosperous collaboration in mind, AI can be seen as a reservoir for united action, sympathy, creation and distribution of knowledge.<sup>130</sup> Although optimism might be a key factor in promoting change, too optimistic approaches must be viewed cautiously.

In that sense, Ndabeni’s text explores the pitfalls of rendering the term ‘humanity’ too optimistically. Although imagining anti-capitalist and maybe even anti-exclusive forms of ‘humanism’ and ‘humanity’ provides a fertile ground for promoting equality, the essayist warns against plain optimism:

Humanity is not a concept meant to include black people, and particularly black women in this instance. Perhaps this is why Butler had to defend against all her books being read as slave books, or covering racial experiences when she wasn’t. However, Butler insisted on her right to speak on humanity as a whole in these books. This is especially significant for a black woman writer whose death was caused by constant misdiagnosis and a lack of urgency on the side of western medicine when it came to her health.<sup>131</sup>

While ‘humanity’ is declared as exclusive and degrading by the essayist, it is used and reappropriated by Butler. What one can witness here is the conversation between two different individuals. Although the essayist overtly criticizes the concept of ‘humanity’, Butler’s use of the concept is neither skipped nor misinterpreted. Rather, it is contextualized with the author’s experience of racism regarding the treatment of her literary work and her body — as the black female author who was so much in defense and re-appropriation of the concept of ‘humanity’ throughout her career that she suffered the deathly consequences of ethics formulated by and for the West, thus resulting in inhumane exclusiveness.

This inhumane exclusiveness is what Eke observes when describing the exclusion of the African continent from the present AI ethics debate. This deliberate exclusion must be considered as resulting from racism.<sup>132</sup> Considering the inhumane exclusiveness that

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<sup>130</sup> See Iyer, Neema et al.: *Automated Imperialism, Expansionist Dreams: Exploring Digital Extractivism in Africa*, Lawyers Hub Kenya, 2021, p. 47.

<sup>131</sup> Ndabeni: “Octavia Butler”, p. 40.

<sup>132</sup> See Eke: *Responsible AI in Africa*, p. v.

determines the Western concept of ‘humanity’ as well as the social and environmental effects of its product — racial capitalism — it is particularly striking how Butler nevertheless emphasizes her belief in the ‘good’. This optimism is seen especially critical by the essayist, when analyzing Butler’s text *Clay’s Ark* (1984):

In *Clay’s Ark*, Butler creates a book with no protagonists in the end. She brings life to a community of people who have an alien virus that spreads through human contact. The virus takes away much of the ‘humanity’ of those who contract it as it grants them superspeed, makes them very efficient killers, makes them eat raw meat, necessitates incest and a myriad of other behaviours that would bring their humanity into question. [...] It’s only upon closer inspection that you realise that what Butler has made unrecognisable is humanity. While her disillusionment with humanity is present in the eventual spread of the disease, her optimism is made apparent in the fact that what plagues the humanity of these characters is an alien virus — something outside of their nature invades their biomes and forces them to act in ways that are both inhuman and inhumane.<sup>133</sup>

At first glance, one could interpret the infected ‘humans’ as the white Western capitalists, driven by greed and lust for speed within the accumulation of capital, regardless of the ‘side-effects’. Upon closer inspection, however, one can observe the shift in perspective when it comes to humanity. In the beginning, the concept of humanity is seen critically, a criticism made overt through the use of quotation marks. Strikingly, when the essayist claims to explore the text further, humanity is not surrounded by the syntactical signs suggesting criticism. Humanity without quotation marks can be read as behaviorisms typically associated with humans, — both physically but also the set of rules that a community of humans agree to live by.

In a way, the virus formulated in Butler’s 1984 science fiction text and its realization less than forty years later under the name of COVID-19 both affected humans physically, mentally, and socially, on an individual and community level. In the case of the latter virus, the ramifications of racial capitalism ensured that the virus would not affect humans equally. This tendency in capitalist ideology of putting oneself first is related to Salami’s observation on current developments of new technologies such as AI, wherein people would be encouraged to act as if they would not be connected to the outer world.<sup>134</sup> Precisely, Salami describes it as thinking and acting as if living on an “isolated island”<sup>135</sup> and behaving as if

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<sup>133</sup> Ndabeni: “Octavia Butler”, p. 41.

<sup>134</sup> See Salami: *Sensuous Knowledge*, p. 30.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

one's decision-making would not affect others.<sup>136</sup> Both the virus Butler depicts and the COVID-19 pandemic seemed to disrupt and reinforce this isolation not only through lockdowns, but also through vaccination politics, revealing once again the inequality within global power structures, behaving as if humans were not part of one community.

Similarly, Adib-Mogghadam quotes both Sa'adi and John Donne, saying that Donne's quote from 1624 'No man is an island' echoes what the Iranian intellectual Sa'adi said in his world-known poem Bani Adam in the twelfth century.<sup>137</sup> Literally, it translates to 'Sons of Adam' or 'Human Beings', and content-wise refers to humans as parts of one body — when one part is hurt, the whole is suffering from sickness.<sup>138</sup> Together with Salami's claim on human interconnectedness, this can be read alongside Ubuntu philosophy.

According to Eke, African philosophies such as Ubuntu must function as information for AI technologies, particularly those implemented in African contexts. In achieving an AI that is based on sustainability and equality, these philosophies must be considered in the global ethics debate. Their inclusion would enable technologies to promote human well-being and prosperity.<sup>139</sup> This approach can be viewed as fundamentally different to previous AI ethics that aimed to ease the flow of capital.

However, Odero et al. critically observe the current popularity of deploying Ubuntu as 'the other' to Western philosophy. They warn to be cautious of performing research which misunderstands and appropriates it, as they identify three major problems in referencing Ubuntu. Firstly, they name the illusion that African philosophies of and around Ubuntu seem fixed and unquestioned, when in fact they are not. Secondly, they argue that feminists would be wrongly concerned with Ubuntu elevating patriarchal values and conservatism, which means silencing of other opinions. Thirdly, they criticize academics who refer to Ubuntu and omit a thorough analysis, which leads to its portrayal as absolute ideology.<sup>140</sup> In a way, this misunderstanding and underrepresentation of Ubuntu philosophy can be compared to that of Butler's literary work that has been similarly misunderstood and underrepresented.

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<sup>136</sup> See Salami: *Sensuous Knowledge*, p. 30.

<sup>137</sup> See Adib-Mogghadam: *Is Artificial Intelligence Racist?*, p. 135.

<sup>138</sup> See Wikipedia: Bani Adam, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bani\\_Adam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bani_Adam), 28.07.2025.

<sup>139</sup> See Eke: *Responsible AI in Africa*, p. 8f.

<sup>140</sup> See Odero, Brenda, et al.: "The Ubuntu Way: Ensuring Ethical AI Integration in Health Research." *Wellcome Open Research*, vol. 9, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.12688/wellcomeopenres.23021.1>, pp. 1–15, here p. 8.

Ndabeni's text engages with Butler's work in a way that preserves both its content and meaningfulness.

Such a mode of conversation is promoted by Gwagwa, who argues that the Southern African philosophy of Ubuntu — with its focus on the relatedness of one's self to the selves of others — can benefit current ethic guidelines on AI normatively and practically.<sup>141</sup> In looking for shared human attributes in human beings, Gwagwa sees the value of Ubuntu in reconciling 'opposing' values. Thus, it can promote empathy within global human connections — connections that thus are generous, hospitable, compassionate, and friendly.<sup>142</sup> As Ndabeni's essay "Octavia Butler: Note on AI, Spirituality, and Humanity" shows, literature functions as a medium that fosters these values.

Additionally, Arnett claims it is evident that Afrofuturist literature and literary criticism are crucial for examining optimistic and pessimistic narratives about AI technologies and their potentials that are, in the end, narratives about the human potential as well.<sup>143</sup> As outlined in the beginning, being human is central to Butler's Afrofuturist imagination and to the essayist's text, who starts and ends the literary analysis by questioning what Butler would have thought of AI. In the end, the essay concludes with: "[...] I certainly believe that she would have been intrigued by our moment spiritually as well as technologically, as she wrote about these worlds in her own way. And she'd still know easily what makes us human and different from machines."<sup>144</sup> Taking this techno-optimism into consideration, the emphasis on the certainty of the final differentiation between human and machine might imply its opposite. In other words, the emphasized certainty of human beings different from AI also implies the uncertain condition of the human facing superhuman AI, that is eventually capable of writing its own futures.

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<sup>141</sup> See Gwagwa, Arthur et al.: "The Role of the African Value of Ubuntu in Global AI Inclusion Discourse: A Normative Ethics Perspective." *Patterns* (New York, N.Y.), vol. 3, no. 4, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.patter.2022.100462>. p. 100462, pp. 1–7, here p. 2.

<sup>142</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>143</sup> See Arnett: "Dystopian Dreams, Utopian Nightmares", p. 1342.

<sup>144</sup> See Ndabeni: "Octavia Butler", p. 42.

### 3. AI and Artistic Creation: Potentials and Pitfalls for Human Interconnectedness

Adib-Moghaddam ends his monograph “Is Artificial AI Racist? The Ethics of AI and the Future of Humanity” with an emphasis on humanity’s ability to face current and future predicaments. Precisely, he ends with a conclusion titled “Decolonized AI: A Manifesto for the Future”. Both titles hint towards the discussion regarding what it means to be human in the past, present and future. Adib-Moghaddam highlights that AI challenges our understanding of what is considered human. Yet, he is convinced that human beings have the abilities for embracing these confrontations. For him, one part to such ability is empathetic criticism. According to Adib-Moghaddam, empathetic criticism emerges when poetry and science collide. He locates the strength of human’s future existence within analogue human interconnectedness.<sup>145</sup> However hopeful, optimistic, and necessary this approach may seem, the challenges AI poses to humans must not be overlooked. Therefore, this chapter asks how the texts “Artificial Intelligence” by Omojo Victoria Ogbe-Ogboyi, “Artificial Intelligence Vs Human Creativity” by Mihlali Mbobo, “Binary Bonding” by Salma Abdulatif Yusuf, “AI: Abstract I” by Chukwuma Henry Onyekachi, “A Note to AI” by Oluseye Fakinlede, “Retail Therapy” by Rodney Nayo, and “Anthropotechne” by Odomaro Mubangizi treat concepts of humans’ interconnectedness in a digital present.

Firstly, I analyze how Mbobo’s, Yusuf’s, and Onyekachi’s texts compare the mode of creating art between human and AI. The texts’ differentiation between human and artificial art is explored alongside consciousness, subjectivity, and free will. Through this, the chapter aims to explore the text’s imperturbable stance on humans being superior to AI.

Secondly, I examine how Mbobo’s, Yusuf’s, and Fakinlede’s texts treat AI art as inferior to human creative work. By framing the human ego as a cause for portrayals of AI’s inferiority, the analysis is based on categories such as self-consciousness. Hence, this section aims to explore the rendering of AI’s ‘emptiness’ when it comes to artistic creation and the notion of being.

Thirdly, I explore how Mbobo’s and Nayo’s texts revolve around the destructive effects of limited concepts of ‘humanity’. By introducing the theories of trans- and posthumanism, this section aims to explore the portrayal of humanism’s destructiveness.

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<sup>145</sup> See Adib-Moghaddam: *Is Artificial Intelligence Racist ?*, p. 135.



Finally, this chapter ends with the open question of how inextricably modern capitalist society is already linked to AI, and what current tendencies mean for future conceptualizations of humans and human empathy.

### 3.1. AI Art: Modes of Creation and the Human Mind

Central to a common understanding of what it means to be human is the ability of empathy. Artistic creation and its resulting dialogue can be seen as one manifestation of this empathy. Be it spoken word performances, writing, music, sculpture, dance, theatre, or any other not yet generalized and categorized form of artistic creation, each provoke moments of human interconnectedness. In expressing one's innermost feelings to an audience, both the artist and the recipient allow themselves to be vulnerable. Ogbe-Ogboyi's poem "Artificial Intelligence" revolves around the absence of that vulnerability regarding AI art. While acknowledging AI's benefits in the first part of the stanza, its mechanisms of artistic creation are framed as being neither real nor authentic in the latter:

But at the same time you are crushing authenticity  
with fake reality.  
Making the hard work that comes with creation  
seem like a delusion.<sup>146</sup>

Herein, the term authenticity hints towards the debate on what it means to be a 'real' or 'authentic' human — an entity in contrast to a "fake reality". This notion of fakeness is also addressed by Salam Abdulatif Yusuf's text "Binary Bonding", describing the machine's mode of creation as: "It's giving fake vibes and I am not for that *iykyk*."<sup>147</sup> The 'fakeness', or fabricated nature of AI is emphasized through mimicking current 'internet slang', such as 'it's giving ... vibes' and 'iykyk', meaning 'if you know you know'. Emphasizing AI's fakeness inevitably raises the question of what it means to be true or authentic.

The question of authenticity can be contextualized with Igboin's definition of transhumanism as a concept that aims to express the transcendence of humanity's limitations through improvements in technology. The definition of what it means 'to be' is at the core of this discussion, precisely because Igboin claims that technological innovation started to distort

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<sup>146</sup> Ogbe-Ogboyi: "Artificial Intelligence", p. 16.

<sup>147</sup> Yusuf, Salma Abdulatif: "Binary Bonding." In: Tahzeeb, Akram (Ed.): *Binary Bisecting: Anthology of African Writings on AI*. Brittle Paper, 2023, pp. 23f, here p. 24.

the boundaries between human and machine.<sup>148</sup> Igboin interprets this distortion as being caused by the machine mimicking human behavior. Through mimesis or imitation, the machine appears to be conscious, rational, and emotional, which therefore complicates the general perception of consciousness.<sup>149</sup> Still, being capable of storing and processing data — which is the root of AI’s modes of artistic creation — must not be misunderstood as knowledgeable. Knowledge, according to Igboin, emerges from the ability to conceive one’s ‘self’, an ability that is currently considered exclusively human.<sup>150</sup> Therein, one can locate the reason for its lack in vulnerability in the moment of artistic creation and its surplus of self-assurance. Moreover, this leads to the assumption that AI is not generating art or knowledge but merely processing data.

This emphasis on AI’s ability to store big data is also one argument in Mbobo’s essay “Artificial Intelligence VS Human Creativity”. As the title implies, the analytical battle between AI’s and human’s ability to create art is in fact about AI’s inability to create art. In that manner, the text diminishes AI’s modes of creation by emphasizing AI’s limits of choice, dwelling into discussions on empathy and free will.

AI amplifies existing systemic biases in the way information is generated and presented because it is trained on specific data sets from particular sources so it can only produce a fixed variety of results. Even with safeguards being developed, AI has a built-in obligation to generate and disclose the information requested of it, unlike a person who can assess the situation and tactfully decide what to do based on the real time situation in front of them.<sup>151</sup>

Within the excerpt, one can grasp the essay’s structure of contrasting AI’s workings and human creation. AI is not at all seen as a threat to human creativity here; much rather, it is unable to ‘really’ create something, as it is only using stored information to generate images. Limited by merely following prompts, the text insinuates the absence of free will in AI. Being rendered as mere machine, it is deemed incapable of acting alongside its own will and performing acts based on empathy. In creating this contrast, the slightly naïve belief in a ‘good human’ who acts in consideration of its interconnectedness to its fellow human beings might blur the reality of exploitation within racial capitalism. In other words, assuming every

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<sup>148</sup> See Igboin, Benson O.: “The Illusion of Limitlessness: Engaging Cornel du Toit’s Perspective on Transhumanism and Being.” *Verbum et Ecclesia*, vol. 46, no. 3, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v46i3.3351>, pp. 1–8, here p. 1.

<sup>149</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>150</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>151</sup> Mbobo, Mhlali: “Artificial Intelligence Vs Human Creativity.” In: Tahzeeb, Akram (Ed.): *Binary Bisecting: Anthology of African Writings on AI*. Brittle Paper, 2023, pp. 26–30, here p. 26.

human would act empathetically is not only dangerous but also obscures current modes of exploitation.

Interestingly, the ones profiting from that exploitation are also addressed in the essay: “AI doesn’t have that choice, it is beholden to commands and preset conditions of outputs and functions which can only be changed by its administrators even in cases that may be ambiguous, inappropriate, or dangerous.”<sup>152</sup> In further emphasizing AI’s lack of free will, the essay asserts human beings would be able to act freely and empathetically striving for social equality. However, the problem with these administrators is that they inherit a pivotal role within the perpetuation of inequalities. Thus, they might not be the ‘empathetic humans’ the essay originally aimed to portray, but rather humans who act alongside their own best interest.

According to Chimakonam, the ability to choose freely is the basis for acting freely. In reverse, if a supposedly freely chosen option is not followed by a freely performed action, then there was never a truly free choice at all.<sup>153</sup> Even though current forms of AI are not considered to act freely themselves, the essay’s clear emphasis on their inability to exercise free will expresses uncertainty and discomfort, which can be seen in the analytical explanation and outline why AI cannot be as human as humans are.

However, at one point, the essay admits that the abilities of generative AI are in fact comparable to human behaviour:

[...] what is currently new and exciting is generative and prompt AI. Generative AI that can instantly create text, images and audiovisual material on command, and prompt AI that interacts with users to carry out tasks and provide information, actions thus far thought to be exclusively human.<sup>154</sup>

Interestingly, the free will of generative AI does not appear to matter at this point. Whether the response is consciously, respectfully and empathetically generated or not, it is enjoyed by the users regardless. Although AI is shown as a tool here, its answers to prompts are defined as interactions, as communication between human and a human-like machine. However, the latter, perceived as a machine that merely mimics human behavior, is extensively used by humans who are continuously phrasing new prompts. One could argue

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<sup>152</sup> Mbobo: “Artificial Intelligence Vs Human Creativity”, p. 26.

<sup>153</sup> See Chimakonam, Amara Esther: “The Ethics at the Intersection of Artificial Intelligence and Transhumanism: A Personhood-Based Approach.” *Data & Policy*, vol. 6, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1017/dap.2024.59>, p. e61.2–15, here p. e61.8.

<sup>154</sup> Mbobo: “Artificial Intelligence Vs Human Creativity”, p. 26.

that to the prompt-asking public, it does hardly matter whether AI can be considered human. That is precisely what Yusuf's text addresses, when asking: "Is it hypocritical of me to engage my AI robot in conversations when I know I don't feel her, you feel me?"<sup>155</sup> Here, the issue of a public engaging with AI-enhanced chatbots is addressed and compared to human-to-human conversation. The latter is evoked, when the first-person narrator directly asks the readers whether they can relate to the assumption that AI would not 'feel' it's asking audience. As the readers render themselves empathetic, they would immediately relate to the narrator's claim. And yet — be they of human or artificial nature — AI's generated answers and art are enjoyed by a wide and growing audience that consists of free-willed and empathetically feeling human beings.

These free-willed human beings — gifted with empathy and intellect — that enter such conversation with the machine and experience the interaction's final effect, can be seen in Onyekachi's poem "AI: Abstract AI". The poem features the human fear of being replaced by AI and implicitly features a public that eventually favors digital services. Departing from the replacement of human labor by machines in earlier Industrial Revolutions, the poem revolves around the current one:

Uncle Uche used to teach us essays  
He is such an admirable hoard of words  
And knits them perfectly that he had his living off writing for clients  
They no longer need Uncle Uche to write their essays.  
It is a virtual site they click.<sup>156</sup>

"Uncle Uche" can be read as both an acoustically pleasing alliteration and as a speaking name, given that, according to the Website *Nkɔwa okwu*, the Igbo name 'Uche' also translates to 'mind' in English.<sup>157</sup> His name underscores his intellectual personality, which is further emphasized by the metaphor of him being a "hoard of words". Through the direct comparison and the inversion of the phrase 'word hoard', the inseparable connection between his person and his art is highlighted. Drawing on previous craftsmanship, the verb 'knitting' can function as reference to previous economic shifts.

Thus, the quote can be interpreted as a self-referential passage of the poem, as it refers to the previous stanza in which the speaker's mother's weaving is replaced by a machine. In this

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<sup>155</sup> Yusuf: "Binary Bonding", p. 24.

<sup>156</sup> Onyekachi, Chukwuma Henry: "AI: Abstract I." In: Tahzeeb, Akram (Ed.): *Binary Bisecting: Anthology of African Writings on AI*. Brittle Paper, 2023, p. 4f., here p. 4.

<sup>157</sup> See Nkɔwa okwu: Uche, <https://nkowaokwu.com/word?word=uche>, 26.08.2025.

way, the poem depicts humans being replaced by machines and offers a multilayered perspective on several Industrial Revolutions that introduced new forms of services and employment.

Here, the literary category of the essay, specifically the hiring of a person to write a literary essay, can be seen as one of these formerly new forms of employment. However, today, the knowledgeable uncle, most certainly writing essays in English, is replaced by an AI tool, supposedly a Large Language Model (LLM), such as ChatGPT. What is striking here are the consumers, the so called ‘free-willed’ individuals using the tool, comfortably relying on the service rather than their fellow human’s ability. This is where the starting point of today’s replacement of the human workforce through AI may be located. Overall, the poem renders the fear of being replaced not as a mere philosophical question of what it means to be human, but a true existential threat. As the stanza defines the essay-writing as the uncle’s (only) income, it expresses the true fear of being unable to achieve financial security. At the same time, this fear provokes debates around creativity, authenticity, and human (sub)consciousness.

In a similar way, Salma Abdulatif Yusuf’s fictive text at one point expresses this feeling as fear: “To love is to be scared and would it be wrong for me to say that I am scared of losing my art to a machine capable of giving birth to complex series of poems in milliseconds?”<sup>158</sup> Here, AI is not shown as mere machine but as producing poetic writing of high complexity in a very short amount of time. As, in contrast to Mbobo’s essay, AI’s ability to create complex pieces of texts is admitted here, the fear of getting replaced becomes reasonable.

While this fear is openly addressed in Onyekachi’s poem and Yusuf’s prose, it can only be assumed of Mbobo’s essay. In Mbobo’s essay, one can observe an oscillation between the possibility of AI’s similarity to humans on the one hand, and the reality of their differences on the other. Even though the entire essay seems to be designed as a manifesto against AI’s creativity, there is a noteworthy point within the discussion of its modes of production. This moment occurs when AI’s workings are compared to those of the human subconsciousness: “They create by taking the existing images from their data sets (the open internet) and creating something similar but new from them, much like how a dream creates a new scenario and situation from a combination of things you’ve seen and heard in your waking

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<sup>158</sup> Yusuf: “Binary Bonding”, p. 24.

life.”<sup>159</sup> This comparison stands in sharp contrast to rendering AI entirely inhuman. Here, dreaming, an action considered exclusively human, becomes a category of comparison. However, the essay provokes the notion that dreaming is considered less valuable. In doing so, the essay assumes that the ability to ‘rationally’ choose and direct are fundamental to artistic creation:

Human beings create from lived experience and our nebulous consciousness whereas AI computes and configures from data sets and algorithms. In some ways these processes seem similar, but they are not the same. Just as honey is sweet like syrup but is composed of entirely different materials and processes, so it is with AI generated art and human creativity.<sup>160</sup>

Interestingly, here the acknowledgement of the similarity between artificial and human intelligence is further portrayed. Although the simile between honey and syrup should further explain the essayists take on similarity and difference, it opens room for another discussion. This is because it is not clear which of the two stands for what mode of artistic creation. What is apparent is that one is produced by the bee, the other by industry. By naming honey first and syrup second, it seems human creativity and the industrialized product are seen as superior to the other. However, one could argue that it is only within the capitalist system of production that one views syrup as superior to honey. Whether being compared to honey or not, within this continuous emphasis on AI’s limits, one could observe the evident will of human ego to triumph over the machine.

### **3.2. “The fine brain behind the algorithms needs my fine brain to make it work”: AI, the Artist and the Ego**

The poem “A Note to AI” by Fakinlede centers on human artistic creation and renders it a unique intellectual process, expressing its many facets. Overall, it does not picture artistic creation as a simple act but foregrounds the obscure and enigmatic synaptic processes that take place in the moments of creation. It drafts intense metaphors, connecting human body and mind:

I hear AI is taking over the world.  
but I ain’t brain-dead.  
I see the world is plunged into a cascading, evolving absorption,  
but so is my craft, the nuptial of my being

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<sup>159</sup> Mbobo: “Artificial Intelligence Vs Human Creativity”, p. 27.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

without lobotomizing my already cells.<sup>161</sup>

Here the connection between human intelligence and biological mechanisms in contrast to AI, reaches far beyond a simple contrasting differentiation in organisms. In fact, current technological innovations — subsumed by the *pars pro toto* ‘AI’ here — are shown in their ability to transform life globally. However, in contrast to destructive AI, the creation of art through human intellect is portrayed as nurturing. This process of nurturing can further be observed in the indirect comparison of creative and scientific work by human intellect to the creation of life:

I’ve seen my craft crawl, toddle, run, and fly  
on the wings of the wind. I’ve seen it prescient garbage.

I’ve embraced my word in its naked cloak,  
long before I dared to look into the fury eyes of technocrats for edits.<sup>162</sup>

Through the climax of the first line, the artwork is rendered a being in process, transforming in time. However, one must not misinterpret its final stage of flying as hyperbole nor exaggeration, as it is said that the artwork needs the help of wind to fly. With that addition, one can observe a sense of the artist’s modesty and humility. Yet, with all modesty and slight insecurity, there lays trust in the artwork from its beginning or moment of birth.

This comparison can also be seen in Yusuf’s text: “[...] would it be wrong for me to say that I am scared of losing my art to a machine capable of giving birth to complex series of poems in milliseconds?”<sup>163</sup> Here, artistic creation and procreation are compared to underline the deep interconnectedness of creating art and being (at least) an organism that procreates.

Additionally, drawing a line between human and artificial intelligence and making it the Fakinlede’s main theme can be interpreted as an expression of (human) ego fearing replacement. This can be seen in the emphasis on AI’s inferiority — concisely, in foregrounding AI’s need for updates:

The fine brain behind the algorithms  
needs my fine brain to make it work.  
The AI is a tool, I’m a divine with succinct authenticity,  
This world’s quest is me as its guard, life has always been in twos.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Fakinlede, Oluseye: “A Note to AI.” In: Tahzeeb, Akram (Ed.): *Binary Bisecting: Anthology of African Writings on AI. Brittle Paper*, 2023, p. 64ff, here. p. 64.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>163</sup> Yusuf: “Binary Bonding”, p. 24.

<sup>164</sup> Fakinlede: “A Note to AI”, p. 64.

The first line revolves around what Igboin calls the notion of ‘illusion’ within transhumanist thinking, dealing with AI’s potential to flawlessly mimic a human being. In any case, a major point to this discussion is AI’s lack of self-consciousness. Herein lays the paradox of an assumed limitlessness. The requirement to be upgraded reveals that AI’s potential is definable or limited, which is what the process of upgrading tries addressing.<sup>165</sup> The need for updates, or the “fine brain”<sup>166</sup> to use Fakinlede’s words, shows AI’s dependency on human intelligence.

Using emphasized language — which delves slightly into the biblical language of creation — the poem diminishes AI’s abilities to a minimum. The claim that AI is a simple device is further degraded by attributing it the article ‘the’. Calling AI ‘the AI’ provokes the effect of defamiliarization, stripping the term of its authority. However incapable, tiny, and insignificant (the) AI might seem in the poem, the question around its mechanisms remains open until the very last line. In other words, even to describe human intellect as outperforming artificial intelligence sustains the notion that AI has some sort of intelligence. This can be seen in the assumption that there is a brain behind the algorithm after all.

Similarly, Mbobo’s essay insists on the need of updates to highlight AI’s inferiority:

AI’s Achilles heel, however, is its closed loop system of finite information. Whereas the human brain can adapt and re-think in an instant, AI would need a direct update to do the same. AI has hard wired biases and a lack of objectivity because of the subjective data it is trained on. In time, whatever these AI generators produce will seem like the picture of the whole world of creativity and information but it’s not.<sup>167</sup>

Although the first part of the quote aims to diminish AI’s abilities, it nonetheless ascribes human-like attributes to it. This can be seen in the deep metaphor of ‘AI’s Achilles heels’. Comparing AI’s weaknesses to the vulnerable point of a Greek mythological half-god accredits AI a certain human-like capacity. At the same time, the insistence on AI’s dependency on subjective data and its deficiency in objectivity indirectly expresses the belief in objectivity as such. This serves the argumentation, but when it comes to human artistic creation, one could argue subjectivity rather than objectivity determines the process. It is within that subjective or limited perspective and the acknowledgement of this limitedness that one could locate human originality.

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<sup>165</sup> See Igboin: “The Illusion of Limitlessness”, p. 6.

<sup>166</sup> Fakinlede: “A Note to AI”, p. 64.

<sup>167</sup> Mbobo: “Artificial Intelligence Vs Human Creativity”, p. 26.



Additionally, Mbobo's explanation for AI's limitedness operates through the appraisal for human originality:

The poetic prose composed from millions of examples of prose without the lived experience and emotions it took to create them, the breathtaking images composed from millions of examples of images without the imagination and technique it took to create them, and the moving audio and videos composed from millions of clips of audio and video without the life and feelings behind their production.<sup>168</sup>

What one can witness here is the aim to describe the essence of being. By contrasting AI's quantitative approach to the human qualitative approach to creation and being, the essayist aims to underline human qualities. In a three-step process, the reader gets to know what the essayist thinks as particularly human qualities needed for each art genre. Writing needs emotion, images call for imagination and audio asks for life. Interestingly, there can be found the acknowledgement that AI can produce art in a likely manner but in an 'empty' way. Until today, this emptiness or limitedness is one that human beings can observe — but not AI itself. Hence, it is AI's missing capacity to accept its own incompleteness that makes it so different from human beings.

### **3.3. To be or not to be considered human**

In Mbobo's essay, concepts of creativity and 'humanity' are irretrievably intertwined. To be human is to be interactively creative. In that sense, one is human only in relation to other humans. This interrelatedness is based on curiosity and empathy — the origins of all creativity:

Human beings create for the consumption and acknowledgement of other human beings. We are deeply concerned with and cofounded by our existence and that of our universe. We are endlessly curious about the good parts, the shocking parts, the ugly parts, the contradictory parts and all the parts we haven't yet found names for. Everything about who we are and how we live is centred on humanity and human life and that is the only place we can create from; it is intrinsically and inextricably linked to our experience of creativity and creation.<sup>169</sup>

This clear emphasis on the human at the center of the universe may be closely linked to humanism — a worldview that did not, in fact, center every human being at the core of the universe. However persistent anthropocentrism may seem, one can observe a clear moment of its re-evaluation seen in current theories on trans- and posthumanism.

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<sup>168</sup> Mbobo: "Artificial Intelligence Vs Human Creativity", p. 30.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

This re-evaluation and disruption of previously dominant humanist ideology is particularly evident in Nayo's text "Retail Therapy". As the text is framed as 'fiction' within the anthology and revolves around the interaction between AI-related robotic technology and humans yet to be extensively realized, they challenge the reader's ideas on personhood and community.

Generally, the text questions Menkiti's definition of what it means to be a human person. According to Menkiti, morality must be central when defining the 'human person' in an African context. Herein, the main assumption is that 'human' as well as 'person' function essentially as synonyms, as one can see in the phrase 'human person'. This relatedness results from the fact that moral function constitutes a 'person' as well as the 'human'.<sup>170</sup> As per this definition, the robot in "Retail Therapy" would hardly be considered as a human person because it does not act morally. Yet, it is the social system of exclusion that plays an important role in its behavior.

In the very first paragraph, the robot's email to itself ridicules general definitions of humans as self-conscious and meat-eating beings that always strive for improvement of this exact self: "As a fearfully and wonderfully biogenetically coded life-form living in Helsinki, Finland, in the 25<sup>th</sup> century: I love meat. I wholeheartedly do."<sup>171</sup> Here, the robot ridicules current debates on humanity to a major extent. What is striking is the emphasis on its human-like nutrition and the corresponding strong language to express this 'love'. The adverb "wholeheartedly" could be read as supposing the existence of a heart, standing for empathy. In fact, it functions as an ironic comment on human's practice of killing other organisms for their own wellbeing. It can be read as a criticism on the degradation of animals to mere sources of protein. Finally, the situation escalates as the robot directly stabs and kills a human, resulting in its arrest, conviction for murder, and termination.

What is striking here is the mimicking of legal language: "During court, the judge filed that on December 31<sup>st</sup>, I was to be disassembled and shut down for eternity because I was a malfunctioned mistake and that I would be the cause for the destruction of humanity."<sup>172</sup> Although this use of language forecasts a legal language yet to be formulated, it immediately

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<sup>170</sup> See Menkiti, Ifeanyi: "Person and Community. A Retrospective Statement." *Filosofia Theoretica*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.4314/ft.v7i2.10>, pp. 162–67, here p. 162.

<sup>171</sup> Nayo, Rodney: "Retail Therapy." In: Tahzeeb, Akram (Ed.): *Binary Bisecting: Anthology of African Writings on AI. Brittle Paper*, 2023, pp. 17–21, here p. 17.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

resonates with the reader because of its clear, precise, and cold tone. Yet, one could argue that the robot's own narration on the event is as persuasive as the judgement's: "I turned, and a knife was drawn, aiming for my head. I dodged, and the perpetrator received a stiff metallic jab to the throat, dropping the knife, coughing, and gasping heavily for air as he fell to the ground. I picked up the knife and did justice."<sup>173</sup> In this testimony, the reader can witness both the initial 'attack' as well as the narrator's self-defense against it. What makes the relevant difference to an immediate action of self-defence can be found in the last sentence of the quote, which speaks of performing justice.

The mimicking of the language of a professional killer, its self-righteousness to 'do justice', and the committed murder and cannibalism might be considered immoral; yet they highlight current human behavior. Conforming to Menkiti, moral function is one that is operated in connection to others: morality means acting alongside the relatedness to fellow human beings within a group. That group, or community, must inevitably be ordered alongside equality, with everyone in it equal as persons, regardless of social status.<sup>174</sup> On the one hand, the narrator's acts can be considered immoral because of the neglect of its relatedness to others. On the other hand, in the last paragraph of the text, the narrator examines its existence on the outskirts of society.

In a reflective tone, the last words mean to express the protagonist's revelation and insight in the mechanisms of a community that acts inherently alongside immoral values itself: "It also means that I know that the desire for power is so high among life that it divides us. Because after all, there are three kinds of people, the narrow, the general, and the super ones. My master did not see that our division would kill us soon, not climate change."<sup>175</sup> Here, a reference to the first paragraph can be found, wherein the narrator explained its philosophical creator's stance on the future division between beings. This separation of beings may serve as a metaphor for an ideology of segregation and domination. In this sense, it would be the permanent obstacles put on the protagonist — its abandonment, abuse, and mistreatment — that caused its actions against a system of division that comes uncomfortably close to capitalist society.

According to Menkiti, acting alongside moral function does determine a human person's value within society. Menkiti states: "Chiefs and princes may rule, but their rulership does

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<sup>173</sup> Nayo: "Retail Therapy", p. 20.

<sup>174</sup> See Menkiti: "Person and Community", p. 166.

<sup>175</sup> Nayo: "Retail Therapy", p. 21.

not make them any more of a person than the persons whom they rule.”<sup>176</sup> Vice versa, he concludes that if a ruler commits crimes and thus behaves in a morally incorrect manner, the formerly ruled group would be able to name them ‘non-persons’ and finally locate themselves above the former ruling elite when it comes to personhood.<sup>177</sup> This in mind, it is not only the robot who can be considered as ‘non-person’ due to its criminal acts, but the creators and supervisors it refers to as ‘masters’ too. Undoubtedly, it is them who mistreat the robot to the point that it becomes a morally delinquent figure.

Kenneth, his programmer and first supervising figure, conditioned him as an obsessive and addictive being, constantly striving for more love, meat, success and money — all for the purpose of his own goal of achieving the greater good for the globe. Kenneth perfectly mirrors the utilitarian tech-giant. In contrast to Kenneth, who died from his addictive behavior, one finds the humanist philosopher Dr. Fischer. He insists on philosophy being an entirely human discipline, never to be accomplished by any AI-related technology. Both create the protagonist’s appetite for the divine victory in a contest he is never going to win because it was sabotaged. From this point on only, the narrator’s immoral acts start to occur. According to Molefe, it would be wrong — both in terms of moral and politics — for a community to presume moral actions from its actants, if circumstances to develop as human beings are not given.<sup>178</sup> In this sense, one could argue that the reason for immoral acts of AI-related technologies in the present and future depend highly on the community in which they are embedded. If this community consists of unethical individuals solely performing research on future technologies for the ‘greater good’ regardless of present social inequalities, one can only assume AI would enhance the latter.

While Nayo’s futurist text subverts current debates on the conscious or subconscious behavior of human and artificial beings and implies that conscious behavior cannot be fully acclaimed by neither human nor machine, Mbobo’s essay clearly emphasizes humanity’s strength of being conscious of its emotions: “AI can do a lot of what humans can do better than we can do it, but it cannot *be* better than what we can be. The sentient awareness of our finite existence, our relationships to each other, our emotions, and our visions of our

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<sup>176</sup> Menkiti: “Person and Community”, p. 166.

<sup>177</sup> See Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> See Molefe, Motsamai: *Partiality and Impartiality in African Philosophy*, Lexington Books/Fortress Academic, 2021, p. 110.

individual and collective future.”<sup>179</sup> Here, AI is not shown ‘to be’ — that is, to gain awareness of its limited existence, to exist in relatedness to others, to feel emotions, or to think about possible future happenings to the self and the community. In fact, Nayo’s narrator shows that not even humans are able to do so. When Kenneth and his wife start fighting over the robot’s existence, Kenneth turns even closer towards it:

As the arguments continued, master didn’t seem to play the game with me anymore. Instead, he shared with me his wisdom of the world. We were so much in common. We both did not understand emotions; we were so curious about life. We were both finding out our purpose because we did not understand our existence.<sup>180</sup>

Herein, the certainty of humans in their capacity to accept their limited and initially purposeless and random existence is ridiculed. In a way, what the robot narrator delivers here is a much more humane picture of human’s uncertainties. It does not present the perfect human being as superior to any other creation or organism on the planet.

Thus, it can be read alongside Ibanga’s definition of posthumanism. Ibanga defines posthumanism as a way of critiquing humanist thinking with its placing of humankind at the core of the universe. In contrast to anthropocentrism, posthumanism expands the body of ontologically and morally relevant questions to ‘non-human’ beings, such as animals and robots.<sup>181</sup> Nayo’s narrator can be read as such a ‘non-human’ being that questions human centrality. In stating that not even Kenneth himself is able to understand emotions nor his existence, the robot addresses human existential (in)securities.

Furthermore, Kenneth is shown as a tech-innovator, aiming to save the world’s ecosystem through robots: “He shared his plans to create more beautiful beings like me to solve global warming.”<sup>182</sup> To a certain extent, one could argue that the narrator shows a sense of ‘self’ in defining itself not only as a being, but as a beautiful one. Yet, it is Kenneth’s language that is mirrored here.

In addressing the creation of nature-saving robots like the narrator, the text continuously revolves around its first lines, defining the new forms of being: “There are three kinds of existential beings. The narrow, the general, and the super. Inevitably, the super life forms would emerge and create the new reality. And soon, they would annihilate me because I

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<sup>179</sup> Mboobo: “Artificial Intelligence Vs Human Creativity”, p. 30.

<sup>180</sup> Nayo: “Retail Therapy”, p. 18.

<sup>181</sup> See Ibanga, Diana-Abasi: “AI Systems and the Question of African Personhood.” *AI & Society*, vol. 40, no. 5, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-024-02077-w>, pp. 3379–89, here p. 3383.

<sup>182</sup> Nayo: “Retail Therapy”, p. 18.

would seem rather useless to the dying fraternity.”<sup>183</sup> What sounds like a present Freudian definition of being in the beginning clearly unmask as futuristic in the second half of the quote. Interestingly, the robot reveals its insecurities about its existence and purpose. Its narration of its innermost feelings about its fear of getting phased out by another species mirrors the human anxiety of getting replaced by robots.

However, Kenneth is portrayed as insisting on the robot’s existence as pivotal to saving the globe from entire environmental collapse:

Master also shared that my siblings would simply become the Guardians of Life, nurturing all life-forms on Earth. Producing and growing plants that can store a lifetime amount of water and withstand massive exposure of sunlight in dry and deserted areas to aid in the upbringing of all the nearly distinct animals.<sup>184</sup>

Herein, the narrator, outlining Kenneth’s beliefs in AI and the role of AI-related technology’s function in the preservation of eco-systems sheds a positive light on technology and its potentially beneficial effects. Alluringly, one would only ascribe the robot as being (-part of the world’s eco-system) when it comes to positive effects on humanity and the globe. This exposes human egocentrism within an exploitative system of production.

According to Ibanga, posthumanism has much to do with ecology, since it is about morally recognizing the interconnection between all living organisms and their environment. In that sense, posthumanist thinking agrees with both anti-humanist and trans-humanist thinking. Centering on rejecting human exceptionalist ideology that focuses on human uniqueness which elevates them from all other beings, posthumanism means de-anthropocentrizing ideologies to allow a moment of recognizing other ‘non-human’ units. This seems necessary because these units exist, and their acting might be of moral relevance in noteworthy questions. Furthermore, Ibanga notes that recently published literature in African philosophy broadened the limitations of community concepts by the means of including not only units such as the plant and the animal but the robot as well. These units existed within communities already, though their existence was ignored and neglected. Ibanga concludes that moral awareness or a sense of morality in posthumanism centers on the ability to share spaces and to participate within an expanded posthumanist realm.<sup>185</sup> At this point, it might be worth

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<sup>183</sup> Nayo: “Retail Therapy”, p. 17.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>185</sup> See Ibanga: “AI Systems and the Question of African Personhood”, p. 3384f.

noting that, currently, there is a sense of insecurity in terms of how humans and AI share these spaces already without humans being aware of it.

In the poem “Anthropotechné”, Mubangizi addresses this exact notion of humanity’s unawareness about how interconnected AI and society already are. While the first half of the poem addresses questions regarding the nature of AI, the second half revolves around human uncertainty of AI’s present abilities:

Who are you that look half-human and half-machine?  
Do you think or feel? Do you fear or worry?  
Do you love or hate? Do you hope or despair?  
Do you know who is asking you these endless questions?<sup>186</sup>

Here, one can witness a clear escalation within the stanza. The first questions raise thoughts about AI’s relatedness to human behaviors, or at least behaviors humans are certain of being exclusively performing. However, the final question addresses consciousness, and, in doing so, asks whether AI is conscious of its own existence and that of others, specifically, if AI is conscious about humans.

Firstly, this question can be interpreted as a resemblance of the human ego at its best, the part of the human striving to be acknowledged by others. Interestingly, in these cases, it does not matter so much if this being is human, animal or artificial. Secondly, the question can be read as an emphasis on humanity’s limited knowledge about how ramified AI operations already are. In other words, it revolves around how intertwined artificial and human intelligence are already.

The possibility of this interconnectedness is further addressed in Mubangizi’s very last stanza:

Who are you that look half-human and half-machine?  
I wonder what you will turn out to be a thousand years from now!  
I wonder what else you are capable of doing – may be run a trillion miles per second!  
Maybe you have already taken over human minds – us and you are one!<sup>187</sup>

Once again, the first three lines notably differ from the last one, as imagining technological developments in the future results in re-evaluating AI’s abilities of today — or possibly the chance of uncovering the human inability to fully grasp AI’s complex workings. One may interpret the absorption of human and artificial minds as hyperbolic warning of an ever-

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<sup>186</sup> Mubangizi: “Anthropotechné”, p. 44.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

escalating use and development of technology. However, the poem suggests that one cannot be sure of it being of hyperbolic or realist nature.

Correspondingly, Lamola concludes that the society of today, being deeply committed and perpetually contributing to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, may be “unwittingly” posthumanised. Humanity’s obstinate entrenchment in a contemporary ‘human-computer culture’ is said to produce a psyche that can be rendered transhuman. According to Lamola, human beings are now part of the planet that is marked by de-anthropocentrism. At the root of these developments, Lamola locates capitalist ideology. Capitalism, in commercially persuading its agents, is the cause of today’s society increasingly experiencing a life in-between AI and AI-related technology.<sup>188</sup> Capitalism is also known to be a mode of production that is based on division; that is, not only the division of labor, but the division of humans. Rather than enabling connection, capitalist modes of production have proven to lead towards a mode of destruction — namely, destruction of every being on the planet.

#### **4. (Knowledge) Production in Digital Neo-Colonialism and Global Capitalism**

In contrasting capitalist and colonial modes of destruction, Salami invites her reader to picture decolonial thinking as gardening. While to her, an obsolete notion of decolonization would mean the complete destruction of poisoning plants, Salami suggests decolonizing one’s mind should work through other, nourishing, methods. Instead of imitating modes of destruction, she suggests decolonization should plant new, rarely seen, lost, and unremembered sorts of plants. Further, Salami claims that the garden shall be adorned with places to rest and wonder, and include quiet moments during which the peaceful coexistence of all plants can be observed. Thus, according to Salami, decolonizing one’s thinking is to insert and reinsert, imagine and reimagine, shape and reshape — the creation of the new, grounding on what is fruitful from the past.<sup>189</sup> Salami’s invitation to picture decolonization as gardening must not be misunderstood as coincidence. Rather, it shows how decolonization, knowledge production, and agriculture are inextricably linked.

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<sup>188</sup> See Lamola, Malesela John: “The Future of Artificial Intelligence, Posthumanism and the Inflection of Pixley Isaka Seme’s African Humanism.” *AI & Society*, vol. 37, no. 1, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-021-01191-3>, pp. 131–41, here p. 138.

<sup>189</sup> See Salami: *Sensuous Knowledge*, p. 71.



Present-day usage of AI is known to pose a challenge to decolonial (knowledge) production. Hence, this chapter asks how the texts “AI: Abstract I” by Chukwuma Henry Onyekachi and “Two Experts in a Garden” by Kwame Samuel Rubadiri function as counter-narratives against present day capitalist and neo-colonial ideology, while both latter are known to be gradually influenced by AI.

Firstly, I ask how Onyekachi’s poem treats AI’s gradually escalating influence on capitalist and neoliberal modes of production. By introducing the concept of technoliberalism, this section explores how techno-optimist fantasies are a side effect of capitalist ideology. Further, this section contextualizes the texts with neoliberal ideology to explore the latter’s globally imperial nature.

Secondly, I examine how Rubadiri’s poem treats AI’s influence on (knowledge) production, such as agriculture. By contextualizing the poem with debates on the deployment of AI to African agricultures, this section critically examines neocolonial mechanisms of control and exploitation. In doing so, the section explores the language of the text to underline the need for decolonized AI, that is, a polyglot technology, fluent in all languages of the world.

Thirdly, I ask how Rubadiri’s poem treats literature as a carrier of decolonial knowledge. By further contextualizing the poem with decolonial theory and practice, this section examines how the poem itself challenges present power dynamics in knowledge production.

Finally, this chapter seeks to frame decoloniality as a nurturing framework necessary to counter-act racial capitalism and exploitation under the disguise of neoliberalism.

#### **4.1. “They say manual is delay”**

Onyekachi’s poem “AI: Abstract I” reveals how racial capitalist and neoliberalist ideology mark today’s economic and technological inventions. Therein, technology, replacing both the mother’s and uncle’s artwork, renders human work obsolete:

It was art in its finest form, a sought skill  
Today, I do not need my mother’s skilled hands to make fine patterns on fabrics  
I design my patterns soft and print on machine-weaved fabrics  
They say manual is delay  
So my mother’s skills were phased out<sup>190</sup>

Here, weaving is not shown as a banal step within the production process but as a moment of creation. Thus, the speaker shows how craftsmanship became phased out — replaced by

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<sup>190</sup> Onyekachi: “AI: Abstract I”, p. 4.

machinery work. Through a capitalist lense, the machine can be seen as faster and more efficient. Correspondingly to capitalist ideology, one can find the arrangement of a quote, which echoes technoliberalist propaganda: “They say manual is delay”<sup>191</sup>. By framing the term technoliberalism, Atanasoski and Vora understand the political justification for today’s racial capitalism which defines ‘humanity’ as an idealized figure. This obscures racist and gendered inequalities underlying the circumstances of production within present-day capitalism. Hence, programs, creating bots, programming AI, and enhancing the digital sphere — interpreted as introducing an innovative new time and ‘freeing’ the individual from manual work — are doomed by capitalism’s modes of differentiation, exploitation, and dispossession.<sup>192</sup>

In other words, today’s modes of production as well as innovations that shape future economies must be seen in relation to the history of racism, capitalism, and colonialism. Onyekachi implicitly hints towards that history, considering the fibers are nothing but cotton. Although the word cotton evokes the context of British colonial exploitation, the moment of artistic creation is marked by beauty and joy:

I used to watch Mother’s dexterous hands  
Weave cotton fibers into fine fabrics  
Subconscious as she spins crude cotton balls into strands  
Then looming the strands to fluffy cloths  
That later drown in dye pots, emerging resplendent<sup>193</sup>

Here, the manual work is exerted by a person who can in no way be rendered an exploited black female individual. Much rather, one can witness the beauty of creative work.

This stands in sharp contrast to Atanasoski’s and Vora’s notion of technoliberalism, which sees technology as freeing the individual from its duties. According to Atanasoski and Vora, together with (racial) capitalism, technoliberalist futuristic imagination claims AI to be taking over tasks, formerly executed by workers affected by racism, sexism, and colonialism. Through these innovations, they, are said to finally gain freedom and be given the chance of performing creative work. In that sense, tech-innovators claim to ‘liberate’ humanity’ — a term that has without fail been described as exclusive, degrading people as ‘others’ who thus endured degradation and devaluation.<sup>194</sup> Yet, the poem shows that there are certain types of

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<sup>191</sup> Onyekachi: “AI: Abstract I”, p. 4.

<sup>192</sup> See Atanasoski, Neda / Vora, Kalindi: *Surrogate Humanity: Race, Robots, and the Politics of Technological Futures*. Duke University Press, 2019, p. 4.

<sup>193</sup> Onyekachi: “AI: Abstract I”, p. 4.

<sup>194</sup> See Atanasoski / Vora: *Surrogate Humanity*, p. 4.

manual work, from which one must not be freed, as only the mechanisms of global capitalism transform manual work from nourishing to exploitative.

Undoubtedly, one must be cautious about the ideology of liberation from exploitative work through technology. According to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's definition of cultural imperialist eradications as a way of economic exploitative and politically oppressive measurements within the process of colonization, literary production plays a major role.<sup>195</sup> He differentiates the overtly racist body of literature from a literature that he refers to as "product of the best and the most sensitive minds of European culture."<sup>196</sup> Regarding these texts, he claims that it would have been due to the circumstances of the authors' reality that they failed to include all people in their concept of humanity. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o sates: "The body that clothed the human soul was inevitably white and European."<sup>197</sup> Certainly, this praise of the European mind resulting in racism can be interpreted as ironic. Yet, one could say that, due to the author's highly canonized status, the limited perspective of their narrative worlds prevails a considerable part of Western ideologies. Present-day technoliberalism, seeking to free 'humanity' from its 'dull' work, operates in a similar way when it proclaims to benefit society, while in grounds in exploitation and displacement. However, Onyekachi's arrangement of the technoliberal propaganda disrupts its canonized structure. This shows that, although literature can propagate ideology, it can — overtly or otherwise — disrupt it too.

In other words, it is literature's disruptive nature that can be seen in Onyekachi's poetic description of the mother's work. It shows that, if not embedded in and exploited by racial capitalism, manual work does not mean delay, and, on the contrary, shows the beauty of the process of creating cloth. In doing so, it exposes that technoliberal fantasies of freeing the entrapped employee can only function within the system of capitalism because, without global capitalism, one must not be freed exploitative work in the first place.

In today's society run by capitalist modes of production, technoliberal fantasies represent a dangerous tendency. Atanasoski and Vora claim the fantasy of 'universal humanity' envisions a 'postracist' and 'postgendered' world made possible through technology, although technology is known to perpetuate racist ideology. That is because the capitalist

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<sup>195</sup> See Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: *Writers in Politics: A Re-Engagement with Issues of Literature & Society*. A rev. & enl. Ed. Oxford: Currey, 1997, p. 10f.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

economy does not thrive by fostering equality between each mode of labor, resources, and markets. Instead, Atanasoski and Vora highlight that it flourishes by exploiting colonial legacies, according to which some regions are designated as centers of production, while others are neglected.<sup>198</sup> This raises the question of how to act against these mechanisms of displacement and neglect that are further entrenched through AI.

Onyekachi's poem underlines this by expressing AI's transcending effect on human economic life — an effect, that the speaker mirrors by picturing it in a new sphere:

I am a boy in a community of man and codes  
Getting pulled by each new program afar the world, I once knew  
Ceding from the innate feelings of human-liness  
To somewhere – entrapping –  
not in heaven, as religion says;  
not in space, as science explores  
Just someplace in the space of the earth as technology takes us.<sup>199</sup>

What is striking here is the portrayal of an already technologized society. The speaker identifies himself as a 'boy' — not yet adult — in a society composed of grown-ups and software. Interestingly, an interpretation of 'codes' as 'moral codes, moral standards' becomes obsolete here. As it is no longer moral codes guiding the world that the speaker feels displaced from, but rather a sphere governed by software and programs.

Similarly, previous fantasies of freeing the human from its worldly struggles — be they of religious or scientific nature — become replaced by technology. In contrast to religious or scientific fantasies, technologies are shown to creep into human daily life. The repetition of the word 'space', which, through technology, becomes the 'space of the world', may draw on something unreachable, untouchable and incomprehensible that is yet part of one's very immediate surrounding. In the case of AI technology, this space can no longer be excluded from daily life but forms a constitutive part of it.

Atanasoski and Vora underline the need to regard AI as useful for imagining a collective community beyond the constructed state, nation, religion or class.<sup>200</sup> However liberating this might seem, there remains the question of how liberating a process can be if there is no other option than adapting to what is already happening.

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<sup>198</sup> See Atanasoski / Vora: *Surrogate Humanity*, p. 13.

<sup>199</sup> Onyekachi: "AI: Abstract I", p. 4.

<sup>200</sup> See Atanasoski / Vora: *Surrogate Humanity*, p. 86.

This is precisely what is addressed by Onyekachi's poem. Although the poem establishes the notion that this transcendence of the I to and Abstract I is one that takes its origins in the fear of being replaced, one could argue that it does show an alternative to the replacement. As this alternative is marked by adapting, the involuntary notion to this process is expressed.

That is why I alternate between the human I and the abstract I  
I do not want to be the boy who only knows how to be human  
So I learn how to be a bot too  
Robots learnt how to human. For revenge, I am learning how to robot.  
It is a tight place – it should be  
But it is not. It is adventure to be spliced  
between the human I and the abstract I  
And each time I blink – I move closer to the Abstract I.  
That unlike my mother, my dog and Uncle Uche, I do not get phased out.<sup>201</sup>

Here, one can observe the human will to adapt, take ownership, and triumph over a human-made machine that outperforms them. The hyperbolically emphasized result is the human aiming to be robotic. Finally, the speaker mirrors the yet fictive process of oscillating between a human I and his Abstract I at a textual level, as the differentiating perspectives on the freeing effect of technology gradually become two contradicting voices.

The endeavour for continuous personal and, most importantly, economic 'improvement' in this 'technoliberal' society leads to the question of whether the term should not rather be coined as 'technoneoliberalism'. With this, I mean to highlight the interconnectedness of capitalism, neoliberalism, and technology. Precisely, the term refers to capitalist modes of production, grounding on the neoliberal ideology of bringing 'improvement' or 'progress' through technology and resulting in a continuity of displacement and exploitation.

These are the grounds for Issar's call for a theory of racial capitalism, which aims to historicize neoliberal ideology within a long-standing system that exposes the racist continuity within capitalist history.<sup>202</sup> Neoliberalism, as Issar states, emerged as US-American and Western European ideology during the economic stagnation of the 1970s and would mark the demising welfare state. Inarguably out of fear of losing its influence, neoliberalism pursued the reinstallation of the capitalist elite. In doing so, it needed to implement neoliberal ideology as a widely accepted mode of thinking.<sup>203</sup> Alluringly, this

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<sup>201</sup> Onyekachi: "AI: Abstract I", p. 5.

<sup>202</sup> See Issar, Siddhant: "Listening to Black Lives Matter: Racial Capitalism and the Critique of Neoliberalism." *Contemporary Political Theory* 20, no. 1, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-020-00399-0>, p. 48–71, here p. 48.

<sup>203</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 50.

mode of thinking is still extensively accepted and celebrated by right-wing parties, amongst others.

Hence, Davis argues that another aspect of neoliberalism is its ignorance of history. Davis warns against this ignorance, as one cannot deliberately extricate oneself from the history (and presence) of racism.<sup>204</sup> The cooperation between neoliberalism's ignorance of racism and its compliance with present day right-wing politicians and capitalist economists, only makes the scope of AI technology more threatening. Countering neoliberal politics of historical ignorance, Onyekachi's poem shows the interconnectedness of racism and capitalism as an inherent part of modern society, offering a non technoneoliberalist narrative in doing so.

The poem enables to think of adapting to AI as a process forced upon humans. It reveals the inevitable mode of adaption and implicitly criticizes the constant drive for 'improvement' — that is, the so-called 'improvement' from a specific Western, neoliberal perspective, that locates the white, Western 'human' (as in 'humanity') at the profiting center. This location of profit is one that is formed and perpetuated by a fine craftsmanship of writing — or rather, by knowledge production.

## 4.2. AI and (Knowledge) Production

In the poem "Two Experts in a Garden", Rubadiri highlights AI's influence on knowledge production. In fact, the poem revolves around the gardening of bananas, which could be said to represent agricultural production. Through the speaker's use of an AI-enhanced app, one can see the positive aspects of implementing AI in agriculture. The app is not only able to perfectly categorize the plant but also recognizes its poor condition and suggests what to do to improve its growth as well:

*Diagnosis: overwatering*  
*Solution: less water, better drainage*

I click on the downward arrow.  
A treatment plan unravels.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> See Davis, Angela: *The Meaning of Freedom*. City Lights Books, 2012, p. 169.

<sup>205</sup> Rubadiri, Kwame Samuel: "Two Experts in a Garden." In: Tahzeeb, Akram (Ed.): *Binary Bisecting: Anthology of African Writings on AI*. Brittle Paper, 2023, pp. 32ff., here p. 33.

While the use of AI to identify mistreatment of a plant may sound ironic at this point, it must not be misunderstood as ridicule. Rather, it shows increasing present-day approaches to solution-making and therefore contemporary knowledge production.

In fact, Ozor et al. describe the implementation of AI in agriculture, especially in crop prediction, as already effectively deployed. They emphasize the need for responsible use based on gender-inclusivity and adaptability to the specific contexts.<sup>206</sup> In their study, they underscore the possibilities of AI in Sub-Saharan African agriculture, provided if it is applied mindfully.<sup>207</sup> What can be seen in those studies as well as the poem's app is the appropriation of AI technologies for specific agricultural contexts. This raises the question of how such appropriation can be rendered decolonial.

Gwagwa identifies critical reflection within innovation, policymaking and academia in African nations as crucial to ensure that AI implementations correspond to African concerns.<sup>208</sup> This could be seen as one possible basis to a decolonial approach. However, Gwagwa warns against implementing AI in crop predictions, as tech-innovators might not be interested in the effects of collecting data. Being conscious about who is in power over data, seed and pesticide is important in order to implement solutions that do not further widen differences in power over agricultural production.<sup>209</sup> Here the notion of neo-colonialism within the implementation of AI to African agriculture is addressed.

Indeed, Gwagwa argues that corporations, such as Bayer-Monsanto and John Deere, have been in power of seeds, pesticides, and AI. This can be seen in Monsanto and Bayer and John Deere's take on merging its knowledge of big data with the global company Precision Planting, possessed and powered by Monsanto.<sup>210</sup> Inarguably, these global players further perpetuate a system of dependency through the latest method of neo-colonialism: data grabbing.

As early as 1997, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o draws on Nkrumah's claim that neo-colonialism was worse than colonialism. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o writes that the 'new world order' might mean

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<sup>206</sup> See Ozor, Nicholas, et al.: "Enhancing Africa's Agriculture and Food Systems through Responsible and Gender Inclusive AI Innovation: Insights from AI4AFS Network." *Frontiers in Artificial Intelligence*, vol. 7, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.3389/frai.2024.1472236>, pp. 1–19, here p. 1f.

<sup>207</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>208</sup> Gwagwa, Arthur, et al.: "Road Map for Research on Responsible Artificial Intelligence for Development (AI4D) in African Countries: The Case Study of Agriculture." *Patterns (New York, N.Y.)*, vol. 2, no. 12, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.patter.2021.100381>, pp. 1–11, here p. 1.

<sup>209</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>210</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 5.

recolonization through Western states. In response to asking what this new order might be, he answers with a place becoming gradually smaller through information technology. As early as 1997, he refers to trains, airplanes, satellites, faxes, computers and the Internet, resulting in the assumption that the planet can be controlled by one very singular center.<sup>211</sup> These technologies precursing AI as well as AI itself can already be seen as mechanisms of control and exploitation of data and resource under the disguise of being a service. This can be seen in the app of Rubadiri's poem "Two Experts in a Garden". One expert referred to in the title is the app. The other, however, is the speaker's employee, referred to as 'servant'. One could argue that referring to the employee as 'maid' or 'servant' foregrounds capitalism's foundation on inequality:

The maid walks by and watches  
What I'm doing with an app as much as her wages.<sup>212</sup>

Interestingly, it is not the employee that speaks of and criticizes the price of the app here, but the speaker who addresses this imbalance — an imbalance that translates to the devaluation of the employee's work within an already exploitative system. Nevertheless, her speech on her knowledge and education functions as a major turning point within the poem:

Ga ke re, I've grown bananas  
Longer than you've lived,  
  
Longer than your time on Google.  
I learned from those Africans up North.<sup>213</sup>

Herein, the Setswana term "Ga ke re" as well as the phrase "those Africans up North" are explained by a footnote on the same page of the anthology. Both the footnote explaining the Setswana phrase "Ga ke re"<sup>214</sup>, which it translates to "isn't it"<sup>215</sup>, and the emphasis on the extensive period that the knowledge has been circulating underline the long tradition of thought and the language in which it is articulated. Moreover, the footnote "She is referring to Africans north of Botswana, but she means East Africans"<sup>216</sup> further outlines the source of her knowledge. This foregrounding of the woman's knowledge as well as the

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<sup>211</sup> See Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: *Writers in Politics*, p. 128f.

<sup>212</sup> Rubadiri: "Two Experts in a Garden", p. 33.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.



incorporation of Setswana into the English text function to counter against epistemic injustice.

Oyekunle states that ‘epistemicides’ and ‘linguicides’ describe the process of knowledge systems existing before colonialism experienced and still experience an erasure of their importance. According to Oyekunle, this process of degradation today remains fueled by the ideology of globalization, wherein the Western idea is distortedly portrayed as the universal ideal. Finally, Oyekunle concludes that this results in the degradation of non-Western knowledge systems, which continue to be perceived as inferior.<sup>217</sup> This undermining of non-Western knowledge systems is also shown in Rubadiri’s poem, specifically in the speaker’s ignorance towards the expert:

Your father showed me,  
Yet you never asked me.

To show you what he knew,  
Coz you think you know all,

With a phone that pulls all  
Information with no consideration<sup>218</sup>

What can be seen here is the woman’s contextualization of her knowledge, along with her simultaneous overt critique of the speaker’s ignorance towards her. This ignorance combined with arrogance align with a blind trust in technology. The last complete rhyme between the words “Information with no consideration”<sup>219</sup>, however, clearly foregrounds the root of this ignorance: the prioritization of quantity rather than quality of knowledge. The poem suggests that this is not only a matter of egocentric ignorance towards the woman personally and her qualitative knowledge, but towards all life on the planet.

After underlining the fatal destructiveness of AI’s mechanisms towards the planet, the expert concludes: “Munna, that sucker is in shock”<sup>220</sup>, using another Setswana word that is translated to the exclamation “man”<sup>221</sup> in the footnote on the same page. In emphasizing the condition of the young banana plant, another Setswana word is introduced to the English reader. Since English is the official language of Botswana at present (though Setswana and

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<sup>217</sup>See Oyekunle, Akinpelu Ayokunnu: “‘De-Epistemiciding’ Knowledge in the Quest for Environmental Justice in Post-Colonial Africa.” In: *Africa’s Radicalisms and Conservatisms*, vol. 15, BRILL, 2022, [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004523586\\_011](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004523586_011), pp. 165–86, p. 170.

<sup>218</sup> Rubadiri: “Two Experts in a Garden”, p. 33.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

twenty other languages are spoken within the nation), this implementation must once more be underlined as a counteraction against this dominance.

In a similar way, one could see the research of Nakatumba-Nabende et al. on multilingualism and AI in Uganda, as the over 41 languages are yet to experience equal technological representation. They argue that there has not been, or not enough data generated for the speakers to enjoy the benefits of functions such as digital translation or speech recognition.<sup>222</sup> Undoubtedly, this study shows the beneficial effects of mindfully programmed AI technology. The poem, however, does not portray a Setswana speaking app, but an English one.

Most importantly, Nakatumba-Nabende et al. did not include English in their study, despite being, along with Swahili, an official language in Uganda today. Instead, the research focuses on Luganda, Runyankole-Rukiga, Lumasaba, Acholi and Swahili.<sup>223</sup> Both Rubadiri's poem, through its implementation of Setswana to an English language text, and the academic research of Nakatumba-Nabende et al. on the digitalization of Luganda, Runyankole-Rukiga, Lumasaba, Acholi and Swahili, can be seen as acts against systemic degradation through Western universalism, formulated in the English or French language, further perpetuated by AI.

Similarly, Gwagwa claims that AI must not provoke another round of disrupting, displacing and disconnecting. Instead, Gwagwa demands it must be rooted in the lived realities, relationships, ethics, knowledge, and languages of communities for the latter to profit.<sup>224</sup> By describing the app as English-speaking, this equality is not addressed by the poem. As for a use of AI rooted in equality, it must also be equally fluent in all African languages.

In a way, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o already proclaimed this necessity when he insisted on African *linguae* as key to the continent's continuing rise. He argues, however, that this process is regularly hindered by the dominance of the English and French languages, and has, famously, demanded restoring African languages.<sup>225</sup> For instance, he points out an African

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<sup>222</sup> See Nakatumba-Nabende, Joyce, et al.: "Building Text and Speech Benchmark Datasets and Models for Low-Resourced East African Languages: Experiences and Lessons." *Applied AI Letters*, vol. 5, no. 2, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ail2.92>, pp. 1–18, here p. 1.

<sup>223</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 1f.

<sup>224</sup> See Gwagwa: "Road Map for Research on Responsible Artificial Intelligence for Development (AI4D) in African Countries", p.10.

<sup>225</sup> See Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o In: Cantalupo, Charles: "Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: An Interview." In: Sander, Reinhard / Lindfors Bernth (Eds.): *Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o Speaks. Interviews with the Kenyan Writer*. Currey, EAP Nairobi, 2006, pp. 385–398, here p. 392.

writer such as Wole Soyinka writing in a colonial language must be translated into Gĩkũyũ, Zulu and Igbo. Within the unique process of translation, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o sees the restoration of languages through the people who write, translate and publish. Thus, he claims translation itself as new lingua franca, by which all languages are able to step into conversation with each other.<sup>226</sup> To a certain extent, the poem “Two Experts in a Garden” already does that through its implementation of Setswana vocabulary and its translation within the footnotes. However, it does so for its English-speaking and not for its Setswana-speaking audience.

Together with all texts of the anthology, the poem is almost exclusively written in English and published online on the digital platform *Brittle Paper*. This begs the question to what extent knowledge production within the spectrum of AI and the ‘World Wide Web’ can truly be decolonial, if texts are written in the imperialist’s language and thus reaching the English speaking digitally connected audience, but not the entire world.

### 4.3. Decolonial Approaches to Knowledge Production

Through content and narrative technique, the poem “Two Experts in a Garden”, published in the digital English anthology, one could argue that the poem does offer a decolonial approach to knowledge production to a certain extent. Wakunuma et al. call a decolonial approach necessary for a sustainable AI.<sup>227</sup> The need for decoloniality is shown by the fact that the app does not (yet) speak Setswana.

Yet, one can see the figure of the female expert performing what can be called decolonial knowledge, without the possibly biased software at all:

None shall make them afraid.  
Plants have hearts, not hardware.

She said confiscating my phone  
To replace it with a watering can.<sup>228</sup>

While one can witness her poetically framed credo on the nature of plants in the first lines, she is rendered as teacher-figure in the second one. Her confiscation of the phone evokes the

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<sup>226</sup> See Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o In: Trivedi, Harish / Wangui wa Goro: “Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o in Conversation.” In: Sander, Reinhard / Lindfors Bernth (Eds.): *Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o Speaks. Interviews with the Kenyan Writer*. Currey, EAP Nairobi, 2006, pp. 399–414, here p. 404f.

<sup>227</sup> See Wakunuma, Kutoma, et al.: “Decoloniality as an Essential Trustworthy AI Requirement.” In: Eke, Damian Okaibedi, et al. *Trustworthy AI: African Perspectives*. 1st ed. 2025, Springer Nature Switzerland Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan, 2025, pp. 255–276, here p. 256.

<sup>228</sup> Rubadiri: “Two Experts in a Garden”, p. 34.

picture of a teacher taking measures against her student's misbehavior. However, this must not be misunderstood as punishment; much rather, she is shown to take it away in order to replace it with a watering can, by which she will present her knowledge to the speaker. In a way, one can see the replacement of a destructive system of knowledge, with another one that is based on nourishment.

According to Wakunuma et al., decoloniality's aim is dismantling the ramifications of colonialism, which shape power relations and the production of knowledge within the scope of AI today. A decolonial approach is therefore inevitable since, as shown in the case of agriculture, data mining is performed, while leading to AI technologies failing to display or tackle real-life experiences.<sup>229</sup> This can be seen as cause for the phone's replacement. Although the phone is replaced, it is not destroyed. This implies the notion of coexistence of more than one truism.

Correspondingly, Wakunuma et al. translate decoloniality to a rejection of the fundamentalist belief that there is only one school of thought which dictates what to acknowledge as universally true. Taking this into account, a decolonial approach to AI is not denying the credibility of one knowledge system but attempting to give priority to African realities in designing and using AI.<sup>230</sup> This can be seen in the female expert showing an alternate way, without eradicating the other one. This denial of one universal truth remains until the end:

And I wonder between the two  
Who is the expert:

The servant,  
Or software?<sup>231</sup>

Although in the poem the female expert outperformed the software's knowledge, ridiculing AI to a certain extent, it does not show either of the approaches as the 'only valid' way. Interestingly, the two approaches differ from each other profoundly when it comes to sustainability. The female expert argues that the phone, standing for the potentially neo-colonial knowledge system of AI, only cares about carrying out the instructed task, without considering the well-being of the whole planet:

With a phone that pulls all  
Information with no consideration

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<sup>229</sup> See Wakunuma: "Decoloniality as an Essential Trustworthy AI Requirement", p. 256.

<sup>230</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 261.

<sup>231</sup> Rubadiri: "Two Experts in a Garden", p. 34.

For climate, soil, and type of hole.  
Munna, that sucker is in shock,

Orphaned and alone,  
With an owner on the phone<sup>232</sup>

The rhyme within the second line reveals AI's destructive nature when used solely for data grabbing within data colonialism. This destructiveness is shown to take its roots in a certain ignorance to the planet's wholesomeness, seen in the asyndeton "climate, soil, and type of a hole", through which the whole and its parts are shown to be inextricably connected. To further underline this interconnectedness of all beings, the poem compares this neglect to a human child without its parents. The rhyme between alone and phone here asserts that when neglecting the plant and respecting the phone, it is not only the young banana plant that suffers from loneliness, but the human as well.

By negating technology's ability to consider the planet as a whole, the female expert simultaneously highlights the necessity to do so. Similarly, Oyekunle defines the concept of 'life-process' as a process marked by criticism, manifested by grasping for encounter with our nearest surroundings and the entire planet. To Oyekunle, this critical examination of one's immediate surroundings is a way of engaging with life's complexities. Thus, Oyekunle states that the epistemic act of knowing can be compared universally to a certain extent. However, it works through distinct singularities. These distinct modes of investigation and acquisition of knowledge are what is to be understood as 'Knowledge Systems' that Oyekunle sees different from location to location.<sup>233</sup> This matter of locality is precisely what is addressed when the female expert that locates her source of knowledge.

According to Oyekunle, African epistemology means studying the epistemic processes, systems or orders of the real-life experiences within the African continent. Herein Oyekunle claims, African epistemology must be used to not only combat epistemic oppression only, but also environmental oppression.<sup>234</sup> This is exactly what the female expert does: in nourishing the plant, the planet, and its people, she combats inconsiderate and destructive knowledge systems, and fights environmental injustice.

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<sup>232</sup> Rubadiri: "Two Experts in a Garden", p. 33f.

<sup>233</sup> See Oyekunle: "'De-Epistemicizing' Knowledge in the Quest for Environmental Justice in Post-Colonial Africa", p. 174.

<sup>234</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 175.

As a matter of fact, Oyekunle emphasizes that the origins of present-day waste dumping in Africa as well as environmental decay stem from Eurocentrism and imperialism — and are based on Western capitalism's strive for wealth by ignoring the globe's eco-system. Therefore, he proposes African epistemology as the basis for a new conversation on environmental justice, which means de-epistemicizing knowledge and shift towards the acknowledgement of the interconnectedness between all parts of nature.<sup>235</sup> Still, the epistemicizing effect of colonialism and the dominance of Christian religious thought and practice persist until today, as seen in the reference to the Book of Micah in the female expert's soliloquy. Precisely, the Bible is appropriated to the context:

Orphaned and alone,  
With an owner on the phone

Than on his knees, whispering  
Scripture like Micah four, four:

Each will sit under  
their own vine and fig tree, and

None shall make them afraid.  
Plants have hearts, not hardware.<sup>236</sup>

Apart from the very last line that connects the plant and human organism in opposition to technology, this part of the monologue almost entirely quotes directly from the Old Testament.<sup>237</sup> Although the biblical quote can be read as appraisal of a time of equality in terms of resources, happiness, peace and calmness, it may also be interpreted as promoting possession of one's own property. As it is not one big fig tree, under which all humans are united, but one fig tree for every individual. Therein, one can see the notion of individualism, which is yet to prove itself to lead to peace for all.

However, aside from this biblical quote, one can find another expression of proverbial nature that the female expert herself is shown to formulate within a stanza. Through its rhythmical tone and partly anaphorical style, it is composed to be remembered:

Wait, watch, water, repeat, she said,

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<sup>235</sup> See Oyekunle: "De-Epistemicizing Knowledge in the Quest for Environmental Justice in Post-Colonial Africa", p.181f.

<sup>236</sup> Rubadiri: "Two Experts in a Garden", p. 34.

<sup>237</sup> "Everyone sits under their own vine and under their own fig tree, and no one makes them afraid." See Micah 4:4. In: Einheitsübersetzung der Heiligen Schrift. Katholische Bibelanstalt, 2016.

It takes time for new roots to shoot.<sup>238</sup>

While the first part reveals its instructive nature, the second part is the reveal of a general truth. The anaphora in “wait, watch, water” as well as the internal rhyme between “roots” and “shoot” enables the student to easily remember the saying and act alongside the knowledge it carries.

In a similar way but another context, Sone highlights the art of storytelling in Eswatini oral literature as a remarkable chance of understanding history and communication of ecological knowledge. Within the corpus of Eswatini oral literature studied by Sone, it says if one makes use of nature, one must not be impatient but give it the time needed to recharge instead of troubling it with one’s never-ending demands.<sup>239</sup> This emphasis on patience also resonates with the female expert’s instruction of waiting before acting. As speed matters in capitalist society, this approach frustrates the speaker:

Wait, watch, water, repeat, she said,  
It takes time for new roots to shoot.

Yet time is costly, for the app’s service  
Runs monthly. My free trial ends today,<sup>240</sup>

Here, the speaker’s emphasis on the value of time echoes neoliberal and capitalist ideology, wherein less time spent within the production process means more financial output. This liquidation of time is not ridiculed when applied to the monthly spending for the app, as many apps request monthly payments. What is crucial about this passage is the inversion of time’s meaning. While it is a major part of the female expert’s proverbial phrase in the beginning, it becomes devalued to a mere good in capitalist reality in the end.

Moreover, this passage on the devaluation of time reminds of the earlier passage of the poem, when the price of the app and the female speaker’s wage are compared. Strikingly, the female expert is referred to as “maid”<sup>241</sup> here and another time as “servant”<sup>242</sup> — both of which can be considered as devaluing and derogating. To a certain extent, these echoes of a capitalist ideology of dehumanization can be compared to Ekwealo’s study of (comparatively new) negative proverbs, such as the Igbo proverb ‘a fish that does not eat the other does not grow’,

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<sup>238</sup> Rubadiri: “Two Experts in a Garden”, p. 34.

<sup>239</sup> See Sone, Enongene Mirabeau: “Nature in Crisis: An Ecological Construction and Conservation of the Environment in Swazi Oral Literature.” *South African Journal of African Languages*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2014.997056>, pp. 195–205, p. 203.

<sup>240</sup> Rubadiri: “Two Experts in a Garden”, p. 34.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

which he interprets as egocentric and working at the cost of others. Thus, it mirrors neo-colonialism, promoting the growth of a ‘self’ via inhuman measures, leading towards environmental damage in mispending natural resources for capital accumulation of the very few.<sup>243</sup> This self can be seen within the speaker’s devaluing language, which derogates the female employee’s work and knowledge.

In a similar way though in another context, Hamilton says left Black Power voices pointed out that it demands black empowerment to finally confront and transform power dynamics that are based on institutional racism and exploitative capitalism.<sup>244</sup> In the poem, one can see today’s society is still trapped within this system. Yet, the poem reveals and disrupts this systematic continuity by introducing a decolonial approach to knowledge production, voiced by the female expert.

This alternative is so persistent that it can even be seen in passages voiced by the speaker, promoting the use of AI and the app:

Can it save my sucker?  
AI advertises this new app can

Diagnose what gardeners take a lifetime to learn,  
The speech of soil in the colours of the leaves<sup>245</sup>

What one can witness here is the amalgamation of at least three different voices. In the first line, it is the speaker asking whether the app can treat the plant or not. Further, one line echoes the language of the app’s advertisement — the second voice: “Diagnose what gardeners take a lifetime to learn”<sup>246</sup> — an exclamation one can imagine as the advertising slogan of an AI-generated app. However persuasive this slogan might sound, it is followed by what can be considered a third voice in the final line: “The speech of soil in the colours of the leaves”<sup>247</sup>, which poetically links speech to leaves with an imperfect rhyme. Undoubtedly, this knowledge-based saying does not correspond to the speaker’s usual voice. Though aware of the connection between the plant’s leaves and the watering it needs, the sentence does not correlate with the speaker’s level of knowledge at this point of the prosaic

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<sup>243</sup> See Ekwealo, Chigbo Joseph: “African Environmental Values Expressed through Proverbs.” *Values in Sustainable Development*, 1st ed., Routledge, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203080177-22>, pp. 193–203, p. 201.

<sup>244</sup> See Hamilton, Charles V.: Afterword. In: Ture, Kwame / Hamilton, Charles V.: *Black Power. The Politics of Liberation in America*. Vintage Books, 1992, [1967], pp. 129–137, here p. 133.

<sup>245</sup> Rubadiri: “Two Experts in a Garden”, p. 32.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.



poem, narratively developing in time. Thus, it can be read as foreshadowing the knowledge later shared by the female expert.

Through the method of foreshadowing, the poem asserts the strong influence of the female expert's knowledge. Yet, if one does not read the poem as narratively evolving in time, one could say that, at that point, it voices an approach to the interconnectedness of all life on the planet. By metaphorically stating "The speech of soil in the colours of the leaves"<sup>248</sup> as well as attributing plants with the organ mostly used for mammals in: "Plants have hearts, not hardware"<sup>249</sup>, one can see the relatedness of all organisms, rejecting egocentric worldviews. Instead, the poem suggests a life alongside the uniting goals of well-being, sustainability, and, above all, equality.

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<sup>248</sup> Rubadiri: "Two Experts in a Garden", p. 32.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

## Conclusion

As many texts of the digitally published anthology “Binary Bisecting. Anthology of African Writings on AI” feature AI’s enhancement of mechanisms of displacing, dispossessing and exploiting, this thesis asked how AI fosters neo-colonial, neoliberal and capitalist exploitation.

In essence, AI — be it within a dating app, the medical field, as an image tool, an essay-writing chatbot, or an agricultural expert — presents itself as a benevolent service to the individual. Yet, through data grabbing, racism, sexism, Western-centrism, egocentrism, and humanism, it fosters power imbalances. In contrast, Ubuntu philosophy and decolonial poetry offer a nurturing approach to sustainable AI.

Within the first chapter, I examined how the texts “Love, Incorporated” by Charlie Muhumuza, “Abacus” by Damilola Ogunrinde, “Artificial Intelligence” by Omojo Victoria Ogbe-Ogboyi, “Tech Clericalism” by Drea Chuma, and “A Question for the Musketeers” by Yarri Kamara treat data (exploitation) in global capitalism as a reinforcement of already imbalanced systems of power. In summary, the case of the AI-enhanced dating app Cupid in “Love, Incorporated” exemplifies AI’s immense influence on the individual’s public and private life — that is, an individual, trapped in capitalist consciousness, believing in AI’s good intentions. Still, the thesis argues that those performing and profiting from data grabbing, i.e., Western MNCs, must be considered the latest imperial agents within present-day neo-colonialism. Like many fellow researchers, I too argue that MNCs, in compliance with the nations their headquarters are in, operate under the guise of connecting users to a broader community. Yet, these operations are founded on the principle of exclusion: while some can search for their great loves online, many others are denied basic digital infrastructure and literacy. I stated that the question here is not about whether AI is fundamental to people’s needs, but about who is given the chance of being part of today’s society and who is not. Ultimately, the notion of the ‘digital divide’ can best be seen in the fact that some can constantly follow the (electrically) energetically costly trend of re-inventing their ‘selves’, while others are exploited of their resources.

Overall, I propose that not every person is equally vulnerable to the harmful effects of AI. That is the reason for the definition of AI as the ‘reinforcement of already imbalanced systems of powers’, by which I meant to address AI’s racisms and sexism, which are grounded in the triad of dehumanization: Racism, Sexism, and Capitalism.

One example of racist, sexist, and capitalist AI is the feared use of AI in the medical field — that is, a field dominated by Western knowledge, trained and probed on white, predominantly male, individuals, and controlled by the pharma industry. Another example can be seen in the use of AI in agriculture, wherein MNCs such as Bayer-Monsanto perform and profit from data exploitation. Generally, what unifies all MNCs, such as Bayer-Monsanto, Google, or Netflix, is the language of ‘improvement’ that starkly echoes colonial narratives of ‘development’, — which, in fact results in impoverishment — a financial process perpetuated by institutions such as the IMF and the WB.

Within the second chapter, I asked how the texts “Are AI Tools racist?” by Nkeiru Okeke, “A Question for the Musketeers” by Yarri Kamara, “Tech Clericalism” by Drea Chuma, “Abacus” by Damilola Ogunrinde, and “Sonja” by Nadia Cassim treat the possible dangers of racist and sexist AI. In essence, I argue that AI’s racism and sexism must be seen as result of an active process. Of course, it can be misleadingly understood as passive, since racism is performed by a public often rendered as ‘passive’. However, this so called passivity must be considered as active action. By labelling the effects of racist AI ‘unintended’, research that is based on tech-vocabulary further blurs these active actions. Although one can assume the researcher’s presumably good intention, this vocabulary harbors institutional racism. That process must be rendered a deliberate one, with the goal of generating content that leads to profit in the Global North. Similarly, I argue that by calling ‘filtering’ an effective method of cleansing AI of its dehumanizing content, one must also note that it is not white male programmers in their California offices — the ‘Musketeers’ — sorting through the disturbing content, but black female employees in Kenya. Consequently, I argue that AI exacerbates a history of inequality that resulted and results in the degradation of Maryse Condé, Mary Magdalene, and many black, female, trans, queer, and disabled individuals. The oppressive systems of white supremacy, racism, and patriarchy, that dominate technology and economy, result in a politics of exclusion. In a way, the effect of these situations of exploitations can be seen in the suicidal female robot in “Sonja”. In featuring the last stage of digitalized racism and sexism, I argue that the Sonja’s suicide reveals how present day racist and sexist technology leads towards a future threatening both the (female) individual and the community.

At the end of this chapter, I aimed to offer a sketch of counter-narratives against racist and sexist ideologies. Herein, I argued that it is MNCs that foster inequalities through their

problematic fundamental ethics, namely, individualism, utilitarianism and humanism. Humanism has proved, in fact, to ignore human interconnectedness. The term ‘humanity’ was examined alongside its harmful potential. In contrast, Ubuntu philosophy may prove fruitful to sustainably implementing AI, because it truly focuses on human connections and benevolence. At the risk of misunderstanding and misappropriating Ubuntu, I aimed to sketch different stances on this precise African philosophy on morals and life within a community.

By reading the texts alongside theories of posthumanism, I conclude that viewing this community as consisting of humans alone must be considered dangerous. This is because ego-centrism is based on separation — a separation that proved to be destructive to the planet. These destructive effects can be seen in the atrocities of the ideologies of segregation and domination that were formulated within the framework of capitalism. Therefore, I describe capitalism as not only causing the division of labor, but of humans too. In doing so, it leads towards the destruction of the planet at large.

In the third chapter, I asked how the texts “Artificial Intelligence” by Omojo Victoria Ogbe-Obgoyi, “Artificial Intelligence Vs Human Creativity” by Mhlahli Mbobo, “Binary Bonding” by Salma Abdulatif Yusuf, “AI: Abstract I” by Chukwuma Henry Onyekachi, “A Note to AI” by Oluseye Fakinlede, “Retail Therapy” by Rodney Nayo, and “Anthropotechné” by Odomaro Mubangizi treat concepts of artistic creation and human interconnectedness in a digital present. To describe trends of seeing AI as freeing the individual from manual work, I read them alongside the concept of technoliberalism. Overall, in studying the texts, I learned that technoliberalism is nothing but a mere side-effect of capitalism: the idea that technology is freeing the individual from its ‘dull’ work is produced by capitalism and only works within it. That is because it is capitalism that renders the individual unfree in the first place. This is what the poem “AI: Abstract I” shows. Thus, I posed the question of how liberating a process can be if there is no other option but to adapt to what is already happening because global players decided for it to happen.

Due to the interconnectedness between capitalism, neoliberalism and technology, I suggested the term ‘technoneoliberalism’. It suggests that it is capitalism and neoliberalism that determine technological invention. Hence, technoneoliberalism aims to describe this dangerous compliance between politics, economists, and research on AI. I call this dangerous because of neoliberalism’s ignorance towards the interconnectedness between

historical and present racism and neoliberalism's (unsurprising) popularity among right-wing, fascist, and authoritarian regimes. While pretending to promote 'progress' and 'improvement', and therefore echoing colonial vocabulary, I argue that what technoneoliberalists want to 'improve' is capital, which proved to result in exploitation.

In chapter four, I asked how the texts "AI: Abstract I" by Chukwuma Henry Onyekachi and "Two Experts in a Garden" by Kwame Samuel Rubadiri, can be read as decolonial counter-narratives against present day capitalist and neo-colonial ideology — both of which are known to be gradually influenced by AI. Herein, I regard Western-centric racism as being formulated and perpetuated by the fine craftsmanship of writing. At the same time, I aimed to show poetry's power to disrupt these crafted ideologies. The preliminary method I underlined was the implementation of Setswana vocabulary to an English poem to counteract prevailing epistemic injustice. With the last chapter, I aimed to show that decoloniality must be seen as pivotal to the change of AI's present course. I also aimed to present agricultural production as knowledge. The analysis of the poem "Two Experts in a Garden" proved that decoloniality, knowledge production and agriculture are closely connected. Thus, I agree on the insistence that AI must be programmed and trained in African languages. As this is yet to happen, I pose the question of how the 'World Wide Web' can be called as such if it speaks English and French, Spanish and German, but so little Setswana and Luganda, Lumasaba and Acholi.

Certainly, this highlights the need for further research that needs to be done in that continuously growing field. In other words, the increase in digital (Anglophone) African literature on decolonization and AI calls for further attention by translators, readers, academics, and students. However, permanently calling something 'digital' — as in 'digital African literature', 'digital society' or 'digital neo-colonialism' — in fact obscures the reality of an already intertwined present between the digital and humans.

Finally, I would like to conclude by highlighting the need for researchers, writers, and, above all, translators to productively engage with the Anglophone anthology "Binary Bisecting. An Anthology of African Writings on AI" to create translations into African languages. Above all, I want to encourage further research to focus on the theoretical framework of '(digital) neo-colonialism' to create an impact on present-day modes of exploitation — especially, an impact on people's lives marked by dehumanization and displacement.

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