

INTRODUCTION



The Uncanny Aesthetics of Repairing, Reshaping, and Replacing Human Bodies

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A portrait from the photography series “Beauty Warriors,” by the Latvian artist Evija Laivina, graces the cover of this book. In the photograph, a woman is wearing a “face slimmer,” a pink plastic mouthpiece shaped like oversized lips, available for five dollars on Amazon and advertised as a “simple solution to the timeless problem of how to give sagging facial skin and muscles that much-needed daily lift.” The mouthpiece forces the mouth open, and the person wearing it is supposed to sound out the five vowels over and over again, for three minutes every day, in order to strengthen her facial muscles and gain both youth and a slimmer face. We know the mouthpiece is gendered female due to its pink color, and although a picture of a white woman is used to advertise the product on Amazon, the makers claim that the product is very popular in Japan, evoking some transnational appeal. What is fascinating about the image created by Evija Laivina, however, is the way the model wearing the “face slimmer” stares off into space, while the oversized plastic lips frame her open mouth in a grotesque manner. We cannot but help wonder what is in her mind as she wears this uncomfortable contraption and why consumers of this item go through the pain of wearing it. Without context, we are unaware of how the plastic mouthpiece works and whether it has become a permanent part of the model’s body. The portrait is meant to denaturalize our global pursuit of better and more beautiful bodies, hinting at more invasive procedures like plastic surgery, and thus render uncanny the process by which we produce human beauty.

We would like to propose the concept of “uncanny aesthetics” to think through the ways in which we are remaking the human in the contemporary moment. The “uncanny valley” is a popular concept in robotics and graphic animation, which describes the feeling of unease caused by robots or digital creations that resemble humans too closely, startling us when they reveal their nonhuman nature to us. Masahiro Mori (2012), an authority within the field of robotics, posits that this feeling of eeriness is probably instinctual, developing from our need to fear unhealthy humans and corpses, of which nonliving robots remind us. Jennifer Rhee critiques Mori for this assumption and points out the unstable nature of the human in the first place, against which nonhuman others are supposed to be measured. The uncanny valley, Rhee (2013) argues, is the product of a long history that orients us toward specific definitions and demarcations of the human, and thus the discomfort that we feel toward the almost human reveals not our instincts but rather our entanglement with what lies beyond the human. Our emphasis in this volume on uncanny aesthetics is a call to deploy our productive unease as scholars regarding the permeable limits of the human. In a similar way to how Evija Laivina’s art denaturalizes the bodily modification products available online, our work seeks to render the familiar strange and the strange familiar and analyze the power dynamics behind our global rush to repair bodies, reshape bodies, and replace body parts.

Allow us to unpack the notion of uncanny aesthetics a bit further. First, why the focus on aesthetics? All of the essays in this volume are concerned with bodily aesthetics or with the impulse to normalize bodies in one way or another, which in some ways presumes an aesthetic or physical ideal against which non-normative bodies are measured. When the objectively “healthy” or “beautiful” body is uncritically assumed to exist, a wide array of bodies are immediately labeled as wanting or as lacking in comparison—disabled bodies, queer bodies, racialized bodies, (de)sexualized bodies, unfit bodies, aging bodies, and/or poor bodies become the mirror opposite of what is desirable. Very frequently, there is a biopolitical impulse behind the labeling of bodies as beautiful and desirable, insofar as these bodily norms become linked to what Lauren Berlant (1997) calls the “National Symbolic”—the body of the nation is equated with the body of the ideal citizen. Biopolitics—the politics of fostering life—defines the healthy and normative body as necessary for the nation to prosper (Foucault 1990), and we would add that this body also has to be aesthetically appealing, engendering a “biopolitics of beauty” (Jarrín 2017). Medical, racial, and political discourses have long reinforced this biopolitical norm, violently excluding those deemed outside the norm or at the very least devaluing their existence (Garland 2009). Globalization, however, allows these biopolitical

norms to transcend national borders, as transnational brands and global media transmit these messages about beauty across the globe. As Marcia Ochoa (2014) argues, national bodily ideals have become transnationalized through mediatized events like beauty pageants, where nations compete against one another for recognition within a global beauty economy. Even the work of empire, Mimi Thi Nguyen (2011, 2016) reminds us, can benefit from the “biopower of beauty,” as beautification regimes in Afghanistan and Cambodia get deployed by Americans as symbols of renewed female agency and the supposed benevolence of US militarism.

As the contributions to this volume demonstrate, the body is increasingly understood as something to be consumed, enhanced, and perfected under neoliberal capitalism. The global beauty economy provides the tools and technologies for beautification, but it does not necessarily impose a singular and hegemonic beauty standard, as Claudia Liebelt (2018) points out. Instead, aesthetic norms circulate in ways that produce unexpected, uncanny effects on the populations they encounter. Global notions of beauty intersect with local aesthetic hierarchies, producing new norms (Jafar and Casanova 2013). Those who possess non-normative bodies sometimes submit their bodies to these biopolitical norms, avidly consuming the plastic surgeries, hormones, pharmaceuticals, prosthetics, skin-lightening creams, or other bodily enhancements that promise them social inclusion, upward mobility, citizenship, and well-being. At other times, however, people resist those biopolitical norms and craft their own aesthetic, affective, and/or political responses that denaturalize, queer, or hack bodily ideals and the very idea of a model citizen. Frequently, it is difficult to distinguish compliance from resistance, because both structure and agency are folded into one another, like a moebius strip. As Begonya Enguix Grau argues in this volume, “bodies are a battleground and a playground.” The personal is always already political as we all strive to remake the human through the myriad technologies at our disposal.

It is important to resist the impulse to romanticize unaltered bodies, as if we could return to a time when our biology was not irrevocably intertwined with technology. As Lenore Manderson points out, our science fiction narratives demonstrate that we are simultaneously eager and fearful of what our cyborg future will bring, yet we miss the fact that cyborgs are already here. It is almost impossible nowadays to grow old without submitting one’s body to any number of medical interventions that insert technology into our body: countless numbers of people live their daily lives thanks to pacemakers, hip and knee replacements, intraocular lenses, heart stents, prosthetics, and dental implants (Manderson 2011). Most women know intimately how technology helps regulate their reproduction, and almost everyone with the means or the insurance coverage will make use of com-

mon medical technologies like X-rays, MRIs, blood tests, echocardiograms, and other diagnostic technologies. To quote Katherine Hayles (1999), we “became posthuman” without even noticing it, and the everyday ubiquity of technologies that remake the human is what renders them so commonplace, normalized, and desirable. We are less interested, therefore, in hypothetical discussions about “designer babies” (Green 2007), “human enhancement” (Agar 2004), “the singularity” (Kurzweil 1999), or other cyborg technologies that only exist in theory at the moment and want to focus instead on practices that are already widely available, but which potently reshape our relationship to our gendered, racialized, sexualized, classed, differently abled, and aging bodies. Insights regarding what is already in place should shape bioethical discussions of what will or should occur in the future.

We believe ethnography is particularly well positioned as a methodology to examine these ubiquitous technologies, because it gives insight into the intimate and visceral ways that people imagine their subjectivities in relation to technologies that repair, reshape, and replace their bodies. Technologies are not embraced or rejected according to abstract ethical standards—they are lived in ambivalent ways by people within particular sociocultural, economic, and political contexts that give meaning to those technologies. We propose uncanny aesthetics as a concept that helps preserve the complexity revealed by the field, because to reside in the uncanny valley is to question what is human in the first place, before deciding how the human is being remade. Some practices like skin lightening are often exoticized as something that only “other” cultures engage in, while other practices like laser hair removal are so normalized that we do not critically examine why they are desirable. There is a productive unease that arises from sitting with the uncanny feeling one gets when strange practices become familiar and beckon to us or when a familiar practice is rendered strange by the context it occurs in—an insight long familiar to anthropologists, but which becomes even more crucial when the question is how the human is being remade. As Donna Haraway argues, the “ubiquity and invisibility of cyborgs” is why we need to sit with the discomfort of not knowing what the human is in today’s world, and part of the progressive political work we can do in our scholarship is to remain attentive to the “transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities” emerging from these new ways of being human (Haraway 2016: 13–14).

Human Malleability and Its Limits

What are the limits of the human, today, if any? Futurists like Ray Kurzweil (1999) predict the onset of an era where the human body is utterly

transformed or made irrelevant—our organic bodies constantly repaired by nanobots or replaced by prostheses, and our minds uploaded into cybernetic networks. Ian Wilmut, the creator of the first cloned sheep, promised an “age of biological control” that would transform not only our reproductive future, but all of life’s processes (Wilmut, Campbell, and Tudge 2000). These grand predictions not only play into the speculative forms of capital that seek to create surplus value from life itself (Cooper 2008), but they seem to forget the very materiality of the body and imagine our biology as infinitely “plastic, flexible, and partible” despite evidence to the contrary (Franklin 2007: 33). As Katherine Hayles (1999) has argued, these disembodied versions of the post-human are problematic because they reaffirm the liberal humanist subject—self-contained, masterful, rational—rather than recognize our finitude, our vulnerability, and our embeddedness within complex material worlds that contain other beings aside from ourselves.

Nonetheless, it is undeniable that humanity is malleable in ways that undermine any notion of a universal and undeviating human nature. Many authors share the idea that the only sensible thing to say about human nature is that it exceeds the natural through sociocultural means and that it is “in” that nature for humanity to continuously reconstruct itself and its own history. The Italian cultural anthropologist Francesco Remotti (2006, 2013) proposed the term *anthropo-poiesis*—from the classic Greek *poiein*—to identify the specific human capacity to “making,” “creating,” or “shaping” particular, culturally specific, and socially negotiated forms of humanness. In Remotti’s terms, “humanity is not given . . . but has to be constructed and molded” (1999: 111). We are constantly engaged in processes of “human making,” and this “making” (*poiein*) is first and foremost a “shaping” (*plassein*) (2013: 40) on the basis of specific ideals, values, models, or “forms of humanity” (Remotti 1999)—which can be hegemonic, non-hegemonic, or counter-hegemonic.

The theory of humanity as demiurge, “*homo faber sui*,” “*homo creator*,” or “*homo technicus*” (Ihde and Malafouris 2019) is based on a long tradition of thought that includes philosophers such as Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Michel de Montaigne, Blaise Pascal, Giambattista Vico, Johann Gottfried Herder, Friedrich Nietzsche, Arnold Gehlen, Jean-Paul Sartre, the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, the evolutionary geneticist Richard Lewontin, the neurobiologist Steven Rose, and the psychologist Leon Kamin, among others. According to all these authors, the human condition is defined by indeterminateness, incompleteness, and indefiniteness and consequently by the unlimited possibility of being and of building ourselves. If human nature is “not in our genes” (Lewontin, Rose, and Kamin 1984) and not even in the hands of some god, human beings are “poetic” (Leach 1976: 5): they possess the “divine capacity” (Leach 1969: 90) to create, reshape, transform,

and replace themselves and their physical, social, and cultural environment (Leach 1969: 26). Human beings are left to their own devices, without pre-defined models or archetypes, and therefore condemned, as Jean-Paul Sartre (1965: 543) has argued, to construct the reference models from which they themselves will be built.

Anthropo-poiesis and *anthropo-plassein* have always been our deepest nature: not a “post”-human, but an ever-present condition, which defines us as human beings. Human beings are—using Pico della Mirandola’s expression—“*plastes et factor* [shapers]” (Picco della Mirandola [1486] 1998: 5) of themselves, and this shaping intervention is an artistic, cosmetic (from the Greek root *kosmein*, “to create an order, to organize, to produce, to design”), and technical (from the Greek root word *techne*, “art,” linked to the idea of *poiesis*) activity. *Techne*—the material (objects, tools, artifacts) techniques and the cultural and discursive technologies of the self—and *soma*—our phenomenological corporeality—have always been intimately integrated and inextricably connected. According to Ihde and Malafouris, “We are *Homo faber* not just because we make things but also because we are made by them” (2019: 209). This relational human-technology ontology, in which people and things are inseparably intertwined and co-constituted, is an embodied and processual relation. This essential and foundational interconnection implies also that there is no “core” or “essential” humanity (biological or otherwise) that pre-exists our subjectivation, but only a process of continuous becoming in which humanity is incessantly remade, reshaped, altered, enhanced, or extended by technological interventions.

An implication of this “becoming” dimension is that “technological change is not always progressive, linear or in any sense controlled and pre-planned” (Ihde and Malafouris 2019: 204). Humans may believe they control their destiny through technology, but technology always co-constitutes humanity in return, in ways that are unpredictable and bely our mastery over our own bodies and subjectivities. Additionally, pre-existing power dynamics inevitably shape how new technologies are implemented in different contexts. Elizabeth Roberts (2012), for example, provides compelling evidence of how Ecuador’s racial hierarchies shaped the ways in which in vitro fertilization was implemented in that country, employing it as a technology that could whiten the nation by favoring lighter-skinned egg and sperm donors. Thus, while some authors like Nikolas Rose (2006) see the potential for “active biological citizens” who take ownership of biopower and transform it into an individualized project of self-improvement, others are more skeptical and warn us of the ways in which neoliberal forms of biopower can produce a “flexible eugenics” that pressures individuals into eliminating certain human characteristics, like disability, from the general population (Taussig, Rapp and Heath 2003). This volume provides both optimistic

and pessimistic viewpoints into the effects of technology on pre-existing inequalities around the world.

Structural inequalities and new forms of governmentality also shape how technologies are differentially deployed onto some populations and not others, creating different forms of risk. Emilia Sanabria (2016), for example, notes how low-income patients in Brazilian public hospitals are disciplined by state actors to submit their bodies to hormonal medical treatments, in contrast to the choices provided to consumer-citizens within private medical practices. The authors of this introduction have seen similar issues within our own research, either in the ways that low-income Brazilians are asked to assume the risks of experimental plastic surgeries, before these procedures are marketed more widely for profit (Jarrín 2017), or in the ways that skin lighteners remain unregulated by Portuguese medical authorities, because most of those who consume those products are immigrants from former Portuguese colonies (Pussetti, chapter 5 in this volume). In both these cases, the risks of unproven technologies are externalized onto more vulnerable populations (most of them women), either purposely or due to neglect, and those populations suffer the grave consequences of botched plastic surgeries and exposure to toxic chemicals like mercury and hydroquinone. The huge profits of the plastic surgery industry and of the transnational corporations that produce skin lighteners demonstrates that “biocapital” (Cooper 2008; Sunder Rajan 2006) is still dependent on a biopolitical hierarchy where some bodies matter more than others. The human body may be conceived as infinitely malleable by futurists and trans-humanists, but the truth is that there are biological limits to the bodily transformations we subject the body to, and these limits, not surprisingly, traverse old fault lines of race, class, gender, and colonial power.

Outline of the Book

In the age of the explosion and spread of “wish-fulfilling” biotechnologies destined to repair, reshape, and replace human characteristics and functions, the human being has been radically reconceptualized. Moreover, these procedures are booming and becoming increasingly common, more affordable, and minimally invasive. We sought contributions to the volume that addressed the complex imbrications between humans and widely available technologies and sought to cover a wide variety of topics and geographic areas within the region of the world that Paul Gilroy calls “the Black Atlantic” (1993). Although not every author in the collection tackles race, we found that notions of beauty, health, and bodily improvement traverse familiar circuits between Europe, Africa, Latin America, and North

America—borrowing from one another and influenced by a common history of the transatlantic slave trade. As Sharon Patricia Holland argues, “The transatlantic slave trade altered the very shape of sexuality” for everyone in the Black Atlantic, not only for those of African descent, because it inaugurated racialized and gendered hierarchies, tied to specific forms of erotic desire, that exist until today (2012: 56). We want to push the argument even further and argue that how people desire to remake themselves and others today is also shaped by these violent histories and the biopolitical trends they inaugurated.

We also sought contributions that were very thoughtful about the intersections between race, class, gender, sexuality, age, disability, and nationality. As useful as the concept of “intersectionality” has been to any type of scholarship that tackles human embodiment (Crenshaw 1990), intersectional analysis can sometimes fall short when it is simply additive, doing analysis of a single category and then complementing it with a few details about how other categories factor within that master narrative. Intersectionality, in that instance, is treated like a traffic intersection in a road, barely slowing down the chosen path, and it can produce two-dimensional characterizations of complex forms of embodiment. The authors included in this collection take seriously how categories of embodiment are coproduced, emerging simultaneously during any process of subjectivation. As Jasbir Puar (2007) points out, embodiment is a multifaceted, messy, and fluid affair that feels less like intersecting identities and more like an ongoing assemblage, perpetually in motion. The human cyborgs that come into being in the interface between the human, the animal, and the technological are not only blurring the boundaries between nature and culture, but they also make evident the gendered aspects of race, the class dimensions of gender performances, the racialization of sexuality and age, the national and transnational concerns tied to sexuality and disability, and a myriad other human assemblages.

We organized this collection into three distinct sections, focused on the subjects of repairing, reshaping, and replacing the human. Each of these themes overlaps with one another, but they do indicate different developments within the rush to remake the human. Repair implies a return to some original, restoring the body to a former or ideal version of itself. Repair can be experienced as a form of self-care, but it can also impose aesthetic ideals of youth, normative gender, or normative appearance on bodies that would otherwise be considered ordinary but have been deemed abnormal in view of the existing norms. Reshaping goes a step further and implies a transformation of the human into something new. Reshaping the body can mean intervening on human biology, through surgery and pharmaceuticals, to comply with existing norms, but it can also mean that people celebrate

the malleability of their bodies and pursue unique ways of being human. Finally, replacement understands the body as a machine made of interchangeable parts and claims that a certain bodily part or bodily function can be replaced with a specific technology. The promise of replacement is that the body can exceed its biological limits, but the peril of replacement is that an enhanced body becomes more desirable than a differently abled body, thus endangering disability rights. Repairing, reshaping, and replacing the human body are not necessarily normalizing procedures, because there are opportunities to redefine the human as we transform the body, but the norm always lurks in the background, as an example to follow or as a pattern that people seek to disrupt.

In the first section on repair, the authors reflect on how the ideologies and practices of repair are implicated in bodily transformations. Emily Wentzell and Raffaella Ferrero Camoletto investigate the treatment of erectile dysfunction, and the initiative to “repair” masculinity, in three different countries: Mexico, the United States, and Italy. Wentzell demonstrates that aging working-class men in Mexico reject erectile dysfunction drugs and resist the medical discourses that seek to medicalize their biology, focusing instead on repairing problematic forms of masculinity like machismo. Within the United States, Wentzell shows that the reception of erectile dysfunction marketing is more varied, with some practitioners embracing the focus on “men’s health,” while others were critical of biological essentialism and sought to undermine the gender and racial stereotypes that might shape the care men receive. Camoletto sees a similar diversity in the approaches of Italian practitioners, who either avoid the topic of sexual dysfunction with their patients or embrace the management of “healthy sexual aging” through drugs like Viagra. Masculinity, given the evidence provided by Wentzell and Camoletto, seems somewhat resistant to medicalization depending on the context, but men’s gendered bodies are still interpellated by erectile dysfunction drugs in ways that require the active rejection of these drugs or embracing them as a way to delay an effect of aging.

In their chapters, Marcelle Schmitt and Eva Carpigo tackle efforts to beautify low-income individuals in Brazil and Mexico; they offer contrasting examples of repair, either as a way to improve the nation or as a conduit for self-care and the creation of community. Schmitt argues that corrective plastic surgeries for protruding ears in Brazilian children are labeled as “reparative,” even though they do not repair any biological function, because they are perceived by plastic surgeons as producing social normalcy. These medical discourses by surgeons are eerily similar to older eugenic discourses, which tied the individual repair of young bodies to the collective improvement of the nation, demonstrating continuities between eugenic aims and contemporary plastic surgery. Carpigo provides a more

optimistic view of repair in her analysis of the Beauty Brigade in Mexico City, a bottom-up initiative of mutual aid that provides beauty makeovers free of charge to those in need and allows for real human connections to flourish. In the space generated by the Beauty Brigades, the vulnerability of those giving and receiving beauty makeovers is acknowledged, and human dignity and diversity are valued rather than undermined. Schmitt's and Carpigo's chapters show that beauty can be a normalizing force or an affirming force for those involved in beautifying practices.

The next section of the book, focusing on reshaping the human, also begins with two chapters on beauty: Chiara Pussetti describes the use of skin-lightening products in Portugal; Alejandro Arango-Londoño examines men's plastic surgeries in Colombia. The chapter by Pussetti analyzes how Afro-Portuguese women and immigrants to Portugal who use skin lighteners emphasize that the use of these creams is simply an aesthetic choice, yet they also understand that skin-lightening products can provide upward mobility by bringing their bodies closer to a European bodily ideal. Whiteness, Pussetti argues, becomes an aesthetic marker of Europeaness that dates back to the colonial era and that also associates white women with a classic, refined femininity, in contrast to the more animalistic and sensual femininity associated with women of color. Arango-Londoño similarly emphasizes gendered beauty as men's plastic surgeries gain popularity and reshape the masculinities available for consumption in neoliberal Colombia. The plastic surgeries and aesthetic procedures that are acceptable among men, however, are those that reinforce the gender binary and produce an athletic, hyper-virile, and cosmopolitan masculinity, generating a new economic niche that markets specialized procedures intended to increase a men's value and biocapital. Both Pussetti and Arango-Londoño consider that beautification technologies are deeply entangled with class and racial markers, in ways that become very alluring for consumers.

In contrast, Begonya Enguix Grau and by Christine Beaudoin provide more hopeful instances of body reshaping in Catalunya, Canada, and Australia. Enguix Grau offers two case studies of collectives in Catalunya that "hack" normative gender relations—the "bear" subculture of gay men that revalues fat and hairy bodies, and the feminist independence activists who subvert gender norms by adopting outfits and attitudes that reject traditional femininity. Enguix Grau makes the case that these two groups demonstrate that bodies can become political weapons in the struggle to change relationships between nations and its subjects, producing new, non-normative assemblages. Beaudoin describes how biohackers and bioartists from Australia and Canada create tissue cultures and other artworks from mammals or from their own bodies, thus blurring the boundaries between our bodies and others, between humans and machines, even be-

tween species. This blurriness, Beaudoin argues, is particularly relevant in our effort to rethink the human during the Anthropocene, because it allows us to think how our post-human futures can provide new ways of confronting our global environmental crisis. Enguix Grau and Beaudoin, therefore, state that “hacking” the human is a way to positively transform it and open it up for new possibilities.

The final section, on replacement, begins with two chapters on disability. David Howe and Carla Filomena Silva address the image of the cyborg athlete within the Paralympics, and Svetlana Borodina focuses on retinal implants in Russia. Howe and Silva assert that the media attention given to prosthetic technologies in the Paralympics has led to the celebration of “supercrips”—athletes are recognized according to the extent of their “cyborgization.” This leads to the marginalization of athletes who make less use of technologies, either because they come from developing countries and cannot afford this technology or because they do not require prosthetics, due to conditions such as cerebral palsy and other neurological disabilities. Borodina argues that additional technology does not necessarily translate into additional agency or equality for those with disabilities. Her vision-impaired interlocutors perceive retinal implants as devaluing their unique sensory modes and as failing to solve the social and political exclusion they experience. Medical and state discourses are deeply invested in “fixing” blindness and promise fantastical futures, thus reinforcing the marginalization that blind Russians experience today. The disability movement has as much to lose as to gain from new technological developments that remake the human.

In the final two chapters, Daniela Tonelli Manica, Marina Fisher Nucci, and Gabriela Cabral Paletta focus on how Brazilian women use apps during pregnancy and menstruation to monitor their own bodies, and Fabíola Rohden describes how women make use of hormonal replacement therapies. Manica and colleagues argue that the use of digital apps during pregnancy helps women gather useful information about their bodily transformations but that this generates a “cyborg baby” that seems to remain alive digitally even after a woman suffers a miscarriage, thus causing further pain. Similarly, the ability to monitor one’s own fertility cycles through apps allows women to replace other contraceptives with a digital version that allows them to circumvent Catholic disapproval. Fabíola Rohden discusses the use of testosterone to improve the loss of libido in Brazilian women, which is problematic not only because of the medical risks involved, but because it seems to frequently stem from complaints offered by the women’s husbands rather than concerns of their own. Ultimately, the medical discourses espoused by doctors reinforce the idea that sexual desire is a masculine trait that women lose with age and needs to be replaced. The

last two chapters, therefore, demonstrate that technology (digital software and hormones) can replace gendered experiences and thus reinforce and reshape gender norms.

Repairing, reshaping, and replacing the human with technology cannot be reduced to a positive or negative development in human history. The complexities of particular situations are hugely important to determine if remaking the human has opened opportunities or closed possibilities for those involved and whether the promises of a given technology outweigh the perils or risks it entails. To better understand these questions, it is very important to continue having these discussions and to draw on ethnographic data to understand how people's motivations, aspirations, and practices regarding particular technologies are entangled with larger negotiations over class, race, gender, age, and nationality. Abstract bioethical discussions that are not grounded in local realities miss how these new technologies are lived in practice and what we can expect when new technologies are implemented in different contexts.

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