

## Celebrity Headjobs: Or, Oozing Squid Sex with a framed-up leaky {Schar-JØ}

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### Abstract

Scarlett Johansson has described fighting against a swell of deepfake porn images featuring herself as futile—especially because they can be produced by almost anyone with free algorithmic software available online and with access to one or more image of her face. However, in this short essay we maintain that within contemporary technocratic culture the mediated star image of ‘ScarJo’ always already reveals the complex convergence of both bios (life as qualified or narrated, qua bio- graphical life) and zoë (bare life, or the life of the cellular organism) with technos (technological life and/or life skills). This convergence of Scarlett Johansson as celebrity (bios), as human being (zoë) and as technological entity (technos) is consciously explored in, and thus can be amplified via, these deepfake videos, especially the way in which their efforts of ‘(con)trolling’ (a con image that is also a form of trolling) celebrities, they express patriarchy’s attempts to frame a threatening and oozing femininity, while also masking deeper issues of race.

*the female body has been constructed... as a leaking, uncontrollable, seeping liquid; as formless flow; as viscosity, entrapping, secreting; as lacking not so much or simply the phallus but self-containment—not a cracked or porous vessel, like a leaking ship, but a formlessness that engulfs all form, a disorder that threatens all order*

(Grosz 1994, p. 203).

### {Schar-JØ}

Scarlett Johansson is regularly referred to as ScarJo. Although she reportedly does not like this appellation (Herzog 2016), the term allows us to identify the distinction between the human entity (Scarlett Johansson) and her star image (ScarJo). What is more, whenever we see Scarlett Johansson in a film, she typically plays a character, which we shall refer to as a CharJo. All films that feature Scarlett Johansson thus offer to us a combination of person, star image and character.

What is of particular interest with Johansson is that her film roles often are conscious explorations of these combinations. For example, as Jordan Two Delta in *The Island* (Michael Bay, USA, 2005), Johansson is a human who has been bred as a clone to provide organs for celebrity Sarah Jordan (also played by Johansson). The film in particular sees Jordan Two Delta looking at images of Sarah Jordan, such that she recognises her own construction as a body working in the service of images, or semiocapitalism. Similarly, Johansson plays Natasha Romanoff, or the Black Widow, in a series of films from the Marvel Cinematic

Universe, and in which Romanoff adopts numerous disguises. This is taken a step further in *Ghost in the Shell* (Rupert Sanders, USA/India/Hong Kong/China/UK, 2017), where Johansson plays a memory-less agent who notably wears a skinsuit that allows her to become invisible, and who eventually discovers her previous identity as a non-white dissident. Finally, in *Under the Skin*, Johansson plays an alien that comes to Earth to stalk men and which at the film's culmination becomes a black body that looks at its Johansson-mask as its Johansson-skinsuit is peeled away.

In other words, Johansson's films regularly play with seepages between Johansson, ScarJo and CharJo, such that they become difficult to tell apart: they are neither ScarJos nor CharJos, but ScharJos. Furthermore, since the technological construction of each ScharJo is reflexively explored, such that we regularly see Johansson looking at images of herself, or Johansson as a self-conscious movie star, there is a sense in which we both see and do not see Scarlett Johansson, such that we have a CharJoScarJo, or a character that both is and is not also ScarJo as star image. Since many roles blend these different entities together, we use braces in order to demonstrate that what we are seeing is a set: {ScharJo}. Finally, given that many {ScharJos} are often revealed to be fake, or which at least trouble the distinction between real and fake, as per the above films, and given that this distinction is often troubled as a result of digital technology, we change the o of ScharJo to an Ø. The result is {Schar-JØ}, admittedly a weird term that nonetheless conveys how the marriage story of Johansson with cinema becomes an unholy admixture of *bios*, *zoë* and *technos*, such that all three leak and ooze into each other.

### **Digital ooze**

The digital era is defined by leaks, as the website WikiLeaks and celebrity leakers such as Chelsea Manning and Edward Snowden have made clear. Not only do those who leak become celebrities, but celebrities are themselves also leaked, as per scandals like the Paradise papers leak in 2017, and the so-called 'CelebGate' scandal in 2014 (for more on the link between leakages and 'slut-shaming,' see Chun and Friedland 2015). CelebGate in particular involved hundreds of images of mainly white female celebrities, often nude, being placed on 4chan and sorted and analysed on Reddit after phishing attacks on the celebrities. CelebGate is often referred to as the 'fappening' – a portmanteau word combining 'happening' with 'fap,' which is an informal online term for male masturbation.

Perhaps it is not surprising that images of Scarlett Johansson were leaked during the 'fappening,' which fellow victim Jennifer Lawrence described as 'a sex crime. It is a sexual violation... It's disgusting' (Marwick 2017, p. 178). Indeed, such leaks are defined by Nicola Henry and Anastasia Powell (2015) as 'technology-facilitated sexual violence,' which result in new forms of 'nonconsensual pornography' (see also Cole and Maiberg 2019). In this way, the leaking woman that Elizabeth Grosz identifies in our epigraph is mirrored by the leaky culture of the digital age, and compounded in turn by pharmaco-surgical technologies that permit fluid transitions in sex and gender identity (as per Chelsea Manning, who previously was known as Bradley Manning). These leaks equally threaten order. Or, put differently, the por- in pornography echoes the por- in porosity, such that leaked pornography comes to stand for a threatening porosity, even as that pornography primarily reinforces an exploitative cis-

gendered and heterosexual male gaze. That is, the fapping constitutes not so much a threat to order as a deliberate and desired release from order, which in turn reinforces patriarchal order itself—much as ejaculation comes to represent a masculine leak that otherwise reinforces masculine solidity and impenetrability ('boner' culture).

### **Deepfake**

Linked to the leaking of celebrity nude images is the emergence of so-called deepfake digital images. Deepfake is a term derived from a combination of 'deep learning' (as carried out by AI) and 'fake images,' whereby the heads of celebrities are pasted on to the bodies of other performers in a more or less (often less) 'seamless' fashion. Even as many deepfake images are clearly fake, the phenomenon has nonetheless led of late to something of a drip-fed, stage-managed and hyper-mediated moral panic. Indeed, within the broader context of a 'post truth' era defined by 'fake news' and 'misinformation,' a wealth of more or less (often less) sophisticated fake digital images—for example, of President Barack Obama seeming to deliver a speech actually performed by Jordan Peele (see Vincent 2018)—have begun to circulate and catalyze discussion.

To make such images, a computer user would use free AI software to layer over and match the head and face of one person (the target typically being a well-known celebrity, here Obama) with the performance and actions of a lesser known actor or performer (here, Peele). This layering is an inbuilt affordance of the technology that verges upon a form of agential power, linked to what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as a *desiring-machine*, and which plugs itself into existing subjective and social machines. That is, the technological affordances and the properties of deepfake technologies serve to operationalize users (subjective machines who also are part of a social machine) at the same time as they transform extant image banks into a new form of standing reserve (which thus are desiring-machines, or machines that produce desire). What is more, when Deleuze and Guattari write, in relation to desiring-machines, that 'the self and the non-self, outside and inside, no longer have any meaning whatsoever,' then they demonstrate how desiring-machines already were leaky and porous—with digital culture seeming to intensify this process (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, p. 2). Except, at least insofar as deepfake imagery is concerned, there can often be a re-inscription of boundaries, rather than a running free of desire. For, in all manner of users armed with deepfake technologies can create a panoply of new images, and thus help to create new forms of desire, it is surprising (and disappointing) that so many then action and control images in a circumscribed and deterministic, or predictable manner. In this sense, as is well known, deepfake is most often used for pornographic purposes—with Johansson herself regularly being pasted over relatively unknown porn performers. As a result, Johansson appears to carry out sexual acts on camera, as per *SCARLETT JOHANSSON HANDJOB LEAKED*, a 19-second video posted by sum2rgunen2gu, and which can still be found on *PornHub*, even though the company reportedly does not allow deepfake porn videos to be posted (see Image 1).

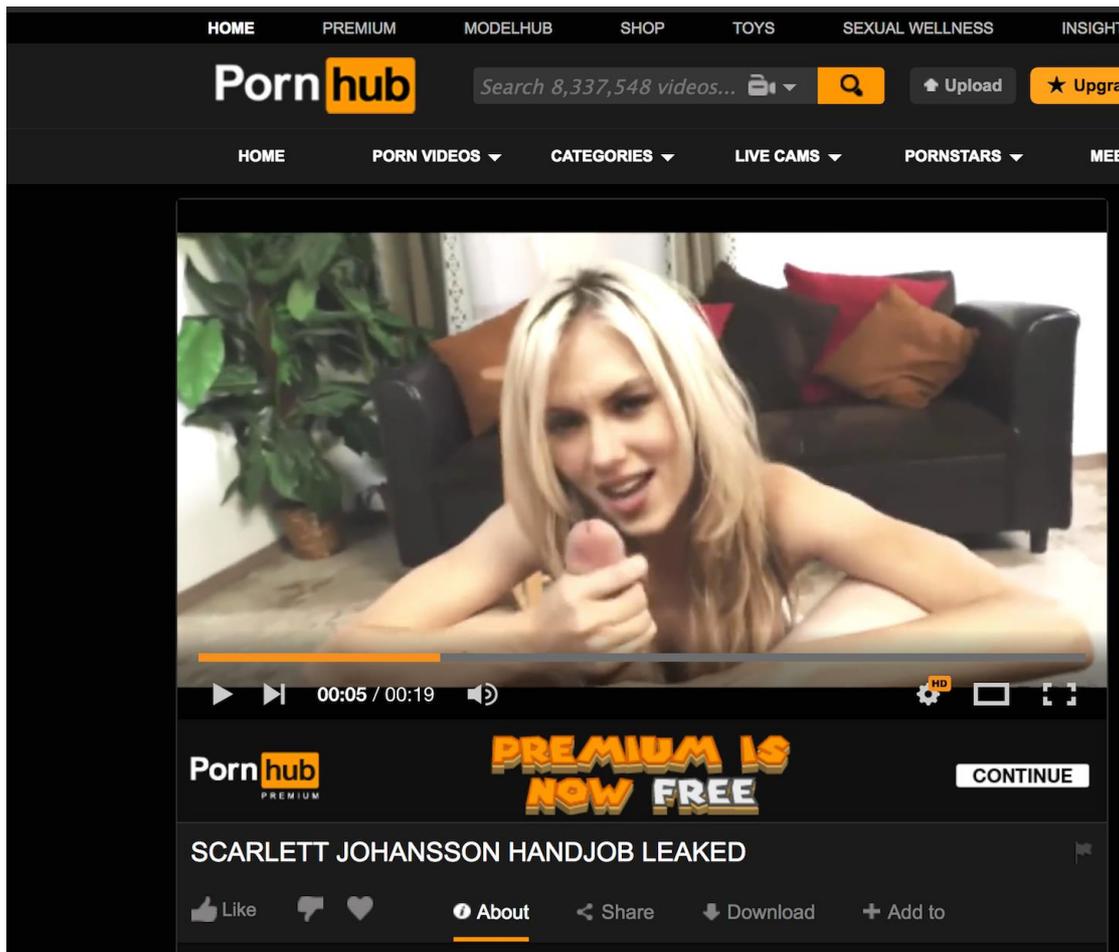


Image 1: *SCARLETT JOHANSSON HANDJOB LEAKED*

What is of particular interest for our present argument is that the video is labelled as a leak when it is in fact a fake. However, it is not that the leak functions as an index of authenticity, even as the term 'leak' would seem to promise an authentic image of Johansson caught on, or performing for, the camera. For, while the video may in some senses be misleadingly called a leak, in other senses it suggests the commonality (the leakage) between (if not the equivalence of) leaks and fakes, in that both are equally aspects of the digital era. What is more, as the viewer of *SCARLETT JOHANSSON HANDJOB LEAKED* quickly realises from small glitches, this is signally not Johansson in the video—meaning that they also realise that the leak is precisely a fake, and that this {Schar-JØ} is an AI.<sup>1</sup> Again, it is not that all leaks are fake. Nor is it that the term deepfake signals our inability to tell fake from real. Rather the 'deep' aspect of deepfake is the permeation of the fake into society, such that it becomes 'the new real,' or, in the language of Adam Curtis, such that it becomes 'hypernormal.' As per the re-inscription of boundaries mentioned above, it is, if you will, a 'hardening' of the soft and threatening formlessness shared both by (conceptual) woman and by the digital, and which otherwise threatens patriarchal order (the major social machine). It is the promise, we shall playfully suggest, that if you deepfake it enough, you will eventually deepmake it.

### **You've been framed**

Our aim here is to draw out the political implications of deepfake. For, if we suggest that the aim of deepfake is to render the fake hypernormal, or the new real, such that it becomes the new order, then we wish to make clear that this new order is, unsurprisingly, far from new. We are not particularly concerned with a history of faked photographs, nor indeed with the possibility that deepfake eventually loses its glitches such that we cannot tell a 'genuine' image of Scarlett Johansson performing sex acts from a computer generated one—even as that history and that possible future bear much importance on the topic. For what is of greater concern to us is that within molar society, deepfake digitally renders woman once again as a pornographic image, who herself is porous and other to an otherwise fixed patriarchal order (with that order indeed 'fixing' woman in her otherwise porous womanhood/her womanly porosity).

If this is indeed nothing new, then it allows us all the same to suggest that the perceived crisis of truth that surrounds deepfake imagery is itself, much like the perceived crisis of truth in the contemporary political sphere, a technology put in place not to reimpose a particular truth on to the world, but to reinforce the concept of truth as a whole. That is, what is important about the deepfake debate is not whether this or that particular image is 'truly' leaked or 'truly' faked, but that there is such a thing as truth at all. In this sense, deepfake becomes a tool for reinscribing the singular, priapic and ossified ('boner') logic of patriarchy on to a world that may otherwise be soft, plural, leaky and formless.

Linking this back to the {Schar-JØ}, we see in deepfake images of Johansson a logic all too similar to that of Johansson as a film star. For if {Schar-JØ} demonstrates leakages between Scarlett Johansson, ScarJo and CharJo, then this threatening ooze is regularly nullified by its death or by its co-optation into order by becoming a government-backed killing machine (as per *Ghost in the Shell*, the Marvel adaptations, and various other films). Likewise, if deepfake really has the potential to present to us an oozing and formless vision (the oozing formlessness of monstrous artificial intelligence), then it is telling that there is in *SCARLETT JOHANSSON HANDJOB LEAKED* an erect penis centre-frame, with the film being shot from the POV of the person being jerked off. For, the fake Johansson kneeling before the acephalous, white priapic pillar does not emerge here as anything other than what she is in various of those mainstream blockbusters: a male fantasy that is as visibly fake as the CharJos that we see on screen. In this sense, deepfake images of Johansson are not exceptions to, but in some senses a realization of {Schar-JØ} as a controlled and/or controllable commodity. What is more, we might suggest that she is *con-trolled*, in the sense that the 'con' of deepfake trickery is also a form of 'trolling,' which in the parlance of online communities is a deliberate act designed to innervate emotional and inflammatory responses (primarily 'humor' for the trolls, and negative emotions for the target).

Being con-trolled, it is perhaps unsurprising that Amy Herzog (2016) invokes Walter Benjamin's notion of the whore, as the commodity become human, to suggest that Johansson (or, more accurately, the {Schar-JØ}) functions as a cinematic commodity-whore when she looks herself in the face in *Under the Skin*, where the Johansson disguise is used to lure men to their deaths under the promise of sex—a role imposed upon the CharJo by its alien bosses, and which the CharJo in turn tries to reject. When thinking about deepfake, however, we might push this analogy further by suggesting that the deepfake {Schar-JØ} is

even more of a sex slave (even more 'con-trolled'), as she is subjugated and manipulated without the possibility of rejecting any of the (predominantly pornographic) roles that are assigned to her, and which are under whatever desired direction the 'con-trolling' user wishes as they manipulate an imag(in)ed Johansson for their own exploitative purposes (fapping).

On the web, Johansson's celebrity/her semicapitalist properties charge the {Schar-JØ} with a form of agency, with deepfake technologies in particular inculcating a form of 'difference and repetition machine' that becomes virally operationalized by users (who are themselves articulated to various desiring and social machines). For example, the Hollywood star is most often (con)trolled and/or punished for having a global celebrity-commodity (or semicapitalist) status by tech savvy harbingers of 'geek masculinity' (read economic and celebrity 'have-nots')—with these latter 'have-nots' rendering and framing Johansson's 'have' image as an unwilling posthuman whore (they 'have' her). In this way, woman is fixed on the outside of humanity as far as patriarchy is concerned; for, if it is in prostitution alone that the commodity-woman can become human (Benjamin says that the commodity 'celebrates its becoming human in the whore'; see Herzog 2016), then clearly woman as not-yet-commodity is not (yet) human.

Now, it may be that the (con)trolled/deepfake {Schar-JØ} nonetheless borrows a form of machinic agency from the distributed techno-culture assemblage, not least in the sense that Deleuze and Guattari's original French term for 'assemblage' is *agencement*, which retains an inbuilt sense of agency. However, these (con)trolling arrangements still paradoxically mark Johansson-as-woman as being outside of humanity as far as patriarchy is concerned—with the paradox being that Johansson-as-woman = Johansson-as-alien, since woman is not human. Under patriarchy, women can only be human when they have been (con)trolled, or framed. Or, put differently, patriarchy fixes woman outside of 'humanity,' rendering her alien even as she is framed/controlled as a woman—thereby making her, impossibly, both human and non-human/alien at the same time.

Here, the frame of the camera becomes telling, in that the camera/POV shot functions as a way of framing and controlling woman, much as the leaked pornographic image reflects a history of incriminating home videos that in the UK feature in the popular show, *You've Been Framed*, and which in the era of deepfake imagery might well see humans framed, in the sense of falsely accused, of various deeds for the purposes of subjugating them to the law and/or blackmail. Again, the evidence does not have to be particularly convincing (the image does not have to be devoid of glitches). For, patriarchal society knows already that the evidence is fake; it just needs evidence, be it fake or genuine, in order to justify the ongoing subjugation of women. Deepfake thus functions not as an exception to patriarchal society; deepfake makes patriarchal society real, giving it the very 'depth' that it needs in order to be made real.

### **Deepfake it til you deepmake it**

However, if we see Johansson and other women as being framed through the practice of deepfake, much as they have been framed through cinema and other media for nearly two centuries, then Johansson nonetheless is a relatively empowered celebrity. As much can be seen in how she utilized the FBI in 2011 to

track down the male perpetrators of a pre-fapping nude image hack (see Pelisek 2011; Knee & Fleming 2014). And in 2013, she successfully sued Real Person Fiction (RPF) author Grégoire Delacourt for fraudulently exploiting her star image (Anonymous 2014). Thus, even if in 2019 a weary Johansson described fighting against a swell of deepfake porn images featuring herself as utterly futile, she still wields a strong amount of power.

This marks a stark difference from the unknown pornographic performers over whose bodies Johansson's face is pasted over in deepfake videos. While Johansson is deepfaked, this at least demonstrates that she has a face. Those pornographic performers who might otherwise receive credit for their work by virtue of being recognizable/recognized are here erased and reduced simply to bodies without a face (or name). In this sense, it is perhaps less Johansson and more these anonymous women who are victims of a sex crime/violation; deepfake seems only to matter when there is a known, or 'deep,' face.<sup>2</sup>

And yet, even this occultation of others is in keeping with the {Schar-JØ}. For, Johansson regularly seems to mask over an earlier crime, which often is raced in nature. This is not simply a matter of Johansson participating in the perceived whitewashing of a story like *Ghost in the Shell* (for more, see Brown and Fleming 2019). Rather, it is related to how Johansson's whiteness masks another blackness, as made clear by the culminating moments of *Under the Skin* (see Image 2). If the film star is indeed a kind of sex slave/symbol, who *à la* Benjamin becomes human by becoming a whore/commodity, then the history of blackness in the west sees the commodity-slave as not even human, and, indeed, as faceless and formless—the body on to which the face is pasted, and not the face that is pasted on to an otherwise fungible body. Faceless, blackness does not so much possess a body as simply flesh, or what Alexander G. Weheliye (2014) would term *habeas viscus*. That is, the faceless black body is, even more than the (white?) woman that Grosz identifies, viscous, formless and threatening to order. As Herzog also notes, both Johansson and the black body become, after Weheliye and Hortense J. Spillers, 'pornotropes'—except that black and other non-white bodies are often invisible/covered over in Johansson's films. Indeed, Johansson gets a mention in *Habeas Viscus* during an analysis of British-Sri Lankan musician M.I.A., since the latter's Twitter page features an image of the singer wearing 'a niqab adorned with Scarlett Johansson's face' (Weheliye 2014, p. 66). In other words, M.I.A. would seem implicitly to use Johansson as a tool for covering over the faces of non-white women, who as a result become 'missing in action.'



Image 2: *Under the Skin*

If Johansson regularly plays a cyborg character, then it is notable that LeiLani Nishime has also identified how the cyborg correlates with mixed-race bodies, especially ones that ‘pass’ as white, or as human, since, as Nishime identifies, human problematically equals White European (Nishime 2005, p. 35). But in the case of Johansson deepfakes, the cyborg does not necessarily allow the non-human to pass for human, but the white European adopts non-human technology for the purposes of reinscribing patriarchal desire. That is, Johansson may well be a victim in the case of deepfake pornography, but for the controversy to focus on white celebrities like Johansson, the white woman (as opposed to the non-white woman, or even the white pornographic performer/prostitute) becomes the ‘stake’ over which patriarchy must then performatively struggle, and which struggle allows for those faceless others to continue in turn to be exploited.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps it is no coincidence, then, that ‘faking it’ is a term borrowed from jazz culture, where performers, in particular performers of color, would often improvise based on habit/muscle memory rather than read music (see Gushee 2009, p. 266). If the political satire of the Obama/Peele deepfake continues a trend of using black fakery to subvert power, pornographic deepfake would seem to consolidate white power, something that Johansson in particular helps to make clear, because the {Schar-JØ} often consciously explores precisely these issues.<sup>4</sup>

### **Deepfake as chthulumedialia**

Even as Johansson and pornographic deepfake suggest the ongoing power of patriarchy, we should nonetheless like to end on a more positive, if weird note. If the viscous, formless body is, after Weheliye, pure flesh, then in some senses it is a body without bones, and thus it cannot ossify. Being soft, it is akin to a mollusc, perhaps especially those molluscs that, like audiovisual media, change color—namely cuttlefish, octopuses and squids. If pornographic deepfakes are celebrity headjobs, then as cuttlefish, octopuses and squids are cephalopods, so might we also trace the emergence of a new cephalo/‘head’-creature, a new monstrous

cyborg, without bones, purely flesh, perhaps with eyes but without a face. As Donna J. Haraway defines the era beyond the human/beyond the Anthropos, and thus beyond the Anthropocene, as the chthulucene (see Haraway 2016), then so might the media that also signal the end of patriarchy be defined as chthulumedia. These are (artificially) intelligent media that, like cephalopods, have chromatophoric, slimy skin screens and morphogenetic shape-shifting/oozing bodies, which they use for the purposes of disguise, deceit and communication within their marine (deep, immersive) ecologies. As per Vilém Flusser's take on the vampire squid from hell, these chthulumedia pursue the art of 'rape and hatred'—emerging from the depths to replace patriarchy with a new, viscous reality (see Flusser and Bec 2012, p. 65). In order to see these chthulumedia in deepfake pornography, we have perhaps to look beyond Johansson and at the {Schar-JØ} itself, which emerges as having precisely an alien *agencement*/agency, as we suggested earlier. For while the {Schar-JØ} might bear a resemblance to Scarlett Johansson, it is in fact other to its human appearance, carrying instead a history of those figured historically as outside of humanity—in particular as excluded genders, races, sexualities and abilities intersect. Johansson may have been subjugated and controlled by pornographic deepfake technology; but the {Schar-JØ} as always already deepfake perhaps signals the end of man and the dawn of a weird new world (for more on this, see Brown and Fleming 2020).<sup>5</sup>

## Notes

1. The AI-ness of *SCARLETT JOHANSSON HANDJOB LEAKED* recalls the {Schar-JØ} in *Her* (Spike Jonze, USA, 2013), where Johansson provides the voice for Samantha, an AI operating system. Notably, the voice of the actress in *HANDJOB LEAKED* is not modified and does not sound like Johansson, while in *Her* Johansson famously recorded Samantha's voice after the original performer, Samantha Morton, was ditched by director Jonze for not sounding sexy enough, even though Morton had performed Samantha's voice on set from inside a box during the film's entire shoot. Both point to the artificial nature of Johansson, and both involve Johansson occulting other women's labor, including women working in far from ideal circumstances (sex work, being confined to a box).
2. Notably, the masthead of the pornographic *Mr Deep Fakes* website features a caricature of Donald Trump holding up a mask. Of course, this is not the first time that pornography and politics have been linked through the concept of depth, with the early 1970s seeing the release of porno classic *Deep Throat* (Jerry Gerard, USA, 1971), before the name then was co-opted to describe the telephonic leaks of sensitive information around the Watergate scandal by FBI agent Mark Felt. Both arguably point to the same process: the normalization (the 'making deep') of sexual and political exploitation.
3. Even though this might not be considered an example of deepfake pornography, the issue of occulting the labor of sex workers also plays out in Lars von Trier's *Nymphomaniac* (Denmark/Germany/Belgium/UK/France/Sweden/USA, 2013), where the faces of celebrity actors were also pasted on to the faces of pornographic performers during that film's sex scenes. While in this instance the celebrity actors were consenting, the resulting invisibility of the sex worker remains, with those sex workers being described as existing within 'another world' or 'totally different industry' and rarely being named in

interview (see e.g. Cripps 2013). Certainly, media coverage of the film repeatedly fails to give names to those defaced ‘porn doubles’ (as might be the case with a stunt double), while the ‘difficulty’ of performing sex acts is a repeated topic for the celebrity performers involved in the film (Brooks 2013; Sullivan 2014).

4. Johansson appears regularly on American comedy show *Saturday Night Live*, and in December 2019, she appeared in ‘Office Apology,’ a sketch in which she plays a senior manager apologising to office co-workers for getting drunk and sexually harassing them at the office Christmas party. As she does this, so does elderly black receptionist Charlie (Kenan Thompson) make similar apologies. However, where Johansson is reviled for her behavior, Charlie is universally pardoned by his white and Asian American colleagues since his behavior is perceived as cute and charming. The sketch speaks to various interlinked issues, including class, gender, age and race. But in particular the sketch would seem to express a perverse racism—in that the same standards are not applied to black bodies, even in cases of sexual harassment, and even as there surely lingers a fear in white American culture of the black body as hyper-sexualized and thus of possessing an uncontrollable sense of desire that culminates in a fear of rape (it is notable that Charlie is elderly and caricatured, since his caricatured ‘blackness’ is what helps Charlie, who is a recurring character on *SNL*, to mask his lechery, while his age also supposedly renders him ‘harmless’ in the eyes of his colleagues). From the perspective of the {Schar-JØ}, we still see white Johansson in some senses embodying, but also covering over, the threat of blackness—even as the sketch also clearly lampoons/expresses the condemnation of the empowered, sexually active white woman.

5. The relationship between women and molluscs is not without clear historical precedent—beyond such misogynist practices as calling a vagina a ‘bearded clam.’ For, Sandro Botticelli’s *Nascere de Venere/Birth of Venus* (c1484-1486), with its image of the goddess emerging from water in a scallop shell, clearly equates woman with mollusc, which term itself signifies softness (from the Latin *mollis*, meaning soft). As per the equally soft oyster, patriarchy aims to harden that which is soft and to have it become a valuable jewel, namely a pearl. Of course, most pearl divers are historically non-white and often women; therein we see the exploitation of white patriarchy’s others for the purposes of reinforcing the hard, phallic/‘boner’ values of its system. While woman-as-mollusc suggests a history of woman as subjugated non-human, it nonetheless also can be spun positively to signal the advent of a post-human world—post-human not simply in the sense that the human is expanded to include ever more groups (women, non-whites, queer groups, the disabled and so on), but more importantly in the sense that the human as exclusive is discarded altogether, and instead we think not in terms of different species, but in terms of trans-special kinships, including kinships with those things that we do not currently even consider to be alive, from aspects of the ‘natural’ world through to our technologies. (Perhaps COVID-19 will change humanity.)

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