Of Monsters and Cisgenders: Trans Data Poisoning Against Algorithmic Surveillance

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LITERATURE REVIEW: CRITIQUE OF TRANS AI SCHOLARSHIP

- Trans scholarship in AI has highlighted: trans people are consistently rendered unrecognisable/misgendered/excluded by facial recognition (Keyes 2018; Scheuerman et.al 2021), rejected and blocked by digitalised welfare state systems (Andersen 2024; Hristova 2023; Rao & Nair 2019; Panigrahi 2021), visibly targeted as deviant threats at borders (Wilcox 2017), subjugated to invasive surveillance practices (Beauchamp 2019) and exposed to automatic loops of hate speech on social media (DeVito 2021; Thach et.al 2024).
- Sating the presence of harm and framing trans experiences of algorithms in binary terms around invisibility/visibility, inclusion/exclusion, recognition/failure and Western/non-Western binaries
- Moving beyond binary notions of transness in/as visibility and ex/inclusion.

METHODS

- Radical lens of illegibility instead of a neoliberal lens of exclusion
- What kind of strategies emerge if we theorise the trans body—in its illegibility and inherent construction as monstrous, hideous, and freaky—as an embodied site of data poisoning to resist?
- Methodologically, marrying Trans Studies & AI/ML Ethics – disciplines that are often seen as disparate,
- Decentering the 'capital-T' white/Western/brahminical stronghold within Trans Studies –indebted to the lifeworlds and brilliance of Black trans women, Indigenous gender-deviant peoples, and caste-oppressed Hijra and Thirunangai communities.
- **What would a politics of collective resistance to algorithmic surveillance be, if it was led by those to whom we owe the world?**

FRANKENSTEIN-ESQUE TRANS BODIES

- "[I] am too often perceived as less than fully human due to the means of my embodiment; like the monster's as well, my exclusion from human community fuels a deep and abiding rage in me (Stryker 1994, 238).
- *"dear trans women: the only way to live as a being cast as irrevocably monstrous is to embrace a monster's power / never forget that a lineage of monstresses stands behind you, and stands proud... / dear trans women: blessed are the hideous. blessed are the horrifying. blessed are the cursed"* (Thom 2023).
- "if you were born a male, and you want to be a female, or look like a female, you're a sick, demented, twisted loser" (Major 2023)
- "No one can recall their birth, but every transgender person must endure the memory of that pain" (U. 2023)

THE PROBLEM WITH BETTER DATASETS

- More inclusive datasets often proposed as a solution to AI algorithmic harm (Scheuerman et.al 2019)
- Abolitionist interventions on Gender Shades (2018) have been made by various scholars (Benjamin 2019; Abdurahman 2019; Hampton 2021; Hassein 2017; McInerney 2023) → "*Inclusion in this context is more akin to possession*" (Benjamin 2019)
- **Which systems do we attempt to include people in? Are these systems we want or even need to be included into when proven to exacerbate gendered, racialised and ableist harms against our communities?**

TRANS DATA POISONING

- Theorizing non-human monstrosity inherent to the trans body as a 'poison' that can be operationalised as a strategy to disrupt, inject and resist the surveillant gaze of algorithmic technologies
- Promoting an embodied disruptive state of being to the binary ideas of how trans people live in, move between and are affected by algorithmic codes beyond oppression and erasure.
- Implicit trans data poisoning (happenstance data inconsistencies) & explicit trans data poisoning (coordinated attacks of intentional obfuscation)