

11 Dating faces

The facial space of belonging in online (dating) communities¹

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1. Introduction

Social networking services (SNS) have emerged since the early 2000s as the primary platforms for the exhibition and representation of digital faces. Facebook, commonly referred to as “the book of faces”, has significantly established a new visual paradigm for presenting, circulating, evaluating, and modifying faces in the digital realm. The rise of digital photography, coupled with editing filters and applications, has enabled the infinite replication and alteration of digital faces. Consequently, the role of selfies, especially with the introduction of forward-facing smartphone cameras, has been extensively explored at the intersection of visual studies, media studies, and semiotics. The act of posting self-portraits on social media, often associated with narcissism, has been reframed by drawing on Foucault’s concept of the culture of self and McLuhan’s (McLuhan, 1964) media theories. Self-portraiture and its distribution through social media have become catalysts for understanding the relationship between the self and physical space. Notably, the *Selficity* project led by Lev Manovich and his team at CUNY (Tifentale and Manovich, 2015) has provided insights into this dynamic, such as producing rankings of the most smiling cities based on selfie visualizations. Social media platforms serve as vast archives of faces, subjected to various haptic operations like scrolling, exploring, swiping, saving, and deleting digital facial avatars.

The expansion of such digital face space has been further accelerated by the global COVID-19 pandemic, which forced people into isolation and transformed social and private spaces of interaction. Traditional social gathering places were temporarily or permanently closed, leading to a surge in digital remediation. Screens became the medium through which static digital profile avatars or dynamic fragments of the body captured by cameras on platforms facilitated interactions during periods of global confinement. Notably, screenshots of video calls on platforms like Zoom have emerged as digital traces of facial interactions, forming new mosaic compositions that garner attention on social media. Such phenomena have

sparked researchers' interest in exploring the aesthetics of the digital face as exposed by different social and digital communities.

While social media like Facebook and Instagram have been extensively studied as sites for identity representation and new aesthetic regimes, online dating platforms have not received comparable attention. Although research has examined self-presentation in online dating environments (Fiore *et al.* 2008; Ranzini and Lutz 2017; Degen and Kleeberg-Niepage 2023), impression management related to profile pictures (Gibbs *et al.* 2006), and users' motivations for using such platforms (Hobbs *et al.* 2016; Blake *et al.* 2022), a specific investigation into the facial space produced by dating sites could contribute to a broader understanding of visual digital culture transformations. In such a vein, this study aims to explore the processes of digital image storage, production, and manipulation within dating sites and applications. Specifically, it will examine dating site interfaces as spaces that facilitate the remediation and recreation of face-to-face encounters. On the basis of such premises, the work aims at approaching a wider facialization of the users' "life" operated by the ecosystem of commercial marketplace; in such regard the case of the most popular short-term rental platform, Airbnb, will be embraced under the notion of home facialization.

This research builds upon the author's previous examinations of online dating platforms (Soro 2021; Soro *et al.* 2021; Soro 2019) where she examined how tourism discourse shapes different modes of self-presentation in online intimacy. This time, the focus is how the architecture of popular dating sites invites users to browse through streams of facial images in search of attractive mates, thus commodifying the digital face. The analysis does not concentrate on a specific sample of apps but aims to understand online intimacy as a community discourse shaped within the polyphonic landscape of various dating sites and platforms. Through different forms of self-exposition, platform interfaces generate distinct processes of "reading the face" (or looking beyond the face). In line with Umberto Eco's concept of *intentio operis*, this research aims to uncover the visual patterns of meaning created by different platforms using the archive of users' uploaded and stored digital faces.

To achieve these objectives, this work will be structured as follows: The following section will provide an overview of algorithm-driven online platforms as "platforms of the face", which involve processes of facialization beyond Facebook. Then, the example of Airbnb, which combines stylized face symbols with place symbols in its logo (Bélo), will be briefly discussed to illustrate the creation of a facial space. The popular short-term rental platform will be interpreted as a "Facebook" of homes and domestic environments displayed in photo albums and subject to a reputational system.

The second part of the text will examine online dating discourse as a marketplace, incorporating the dual connotation of market and place.

The commercial nature of dating platforms as intermediaries facilitating asset exchanges will be explored, along with the necessity of an intermediary space for such exchanges to occur. The core of the study will involve reinterpreting the dating site interface, a topic extensively addressed by semiotic approaches. By delving into the etymological connotation of “interface” as being between faces, this notion will be analyzed as a temporal waiting mechanism and a spatial distance machinery that facilitates the production of online intimacy. The dater’s narrative programs (semiotic versions of user experience), ranging from selecting profile pictures to engaging in swipe-and-match mechanisms, will be scrutinized. Lastly the piece will critically examine the curious resemblance between the Elo (the alleged profile score algorithm used by the popular dating app Tinder to group daters based on desirability) and the Airbnb Bélo logo.

2. Face-platforms: Airbnb and the facialization of home

The face as a meaningful dispositive and its controversial relationship with the notion of individuality has been the object of inquiry from different disciplines, from psychology to art theory, from neurophysiology to physiognomy, throughout history. In the present, the advent of the algorithmic face recognition technologies has revamped reflection on the politics of face (Gates 2011; Edkins 2015), often nurtured upon the notion of faciality introduced by Deleuze and Guattari (1980a).² In such a vein, one of the main controversial issues regards the alleged objectivity of face recognition systems that according to a critical reading³ of this technology responds to existing power and class structures in the new surveillance systems.

At the same time, in the context of the platform society (Van Dijck *et al.* 2018), marked by so-called platform capitalism (Srnicsek 2016), algorithms have regulated subjectivity processes, performances, and representations through reputational mechanisms, rating, and data surveillance, and self-quantifying practices (Lupton 2015). In such a vein, platform studies have excavated the setting, the interface mechanisms, and the correspondent discourse, engaging with uncovering strategies of self-commodification (e.g., Fisher and Fuchs 2015; Fuchs 2014; Langley and Leyshon 2017). The boundaries that a platform provides and its algorithm-based function determine the user agency within it and its behavior models. Furthermore, besides the intrinsic nature of the assets at stake and their potential monetization, platforms enable space for storage and circulation of images crowdsourced by the users. Arguably those images constitute a new series of digital archives consumed under different scopic regimes enabled by the different platforms. In such a vein, it is not coincidental that Facebook, both metaphorically and literally, acquired Instagram in 2012. Through this acquisition the company initially owned by Mark Zuckerberg centralizes

the bonds and the interpersonal relationships and interactions under a unique social media aesthetic that regulates a sort of *facialization* of the self by driving the transformation of the user life in a chapter of a *facebook*.

Beyond the aforementioned social networks whose initial core model has been centered around the profiling of users, a process of “facialization” arguably interests a wider range of digital platforms that are based on a totally different business model. In such a vein, Airbnb constitutes an illustrative example of the aforementioned process. The Bélo, the Airbnb logo introduced in 2014, is graphically a geometric combination of a face that stands for the people, a location icon to represent place, a heart for love, and then an A for Airbnb. According to Airbnb rhetoric, the community of belonging, visually illustrated by the Bélo, is inhabited in the platform by the figure of the host who interacts with the guest, through their facial avatars, by showing them their most intimate spaces, the home. Airbnb marketing proposition can be interpreted as a *facebook* of rooms and domestic ambiances “nicely” exposed in the user profile photo albums and subjected to a reputational system. Under its narrative of authenticity and diversity – as an alternative to the standardization of hotels – the brand arguably fosters a sort of mirror effect among the actors, both human and nonhuman, who inhabit the platform.

Such reflexive logic embedded in the platform interface induces a visual homologation aimed at provoking in the members of the community a “generic global familiarity”: host and the guest can easily recognize each other through the common aesthetics of their profiles and their assets. Not only the furniture and the style must be adequate to a certain comfortably exotic common culture but also the micronarratives epitomized by the platform fosters a sort of “cultural homologation”, as shown by existing research on the racial biases promoted by the platform (Edelman *et al.* 2017; Kakar *et al.* 2016, 2018; Leong and Belzer 2016). Findings from research done by two researchers at Harvard University (Edelman and Luca 2014) show a widespread segregator usage among Airbnb hosts who were found to discriminate against potential “Black-sounding” renters.

Lastly, such mirror effects can be extended beyond the domestic walls to the neighborhood and the cities where the properties advertised through Airbnb are located. In the 1990s, the urban sociologist Sharon Zukin (1995) crafted the notion of “domestication by cappuccino” to refer to a scenario in which urban public space is designed to be consumed through events and entertainment and by so doing rendered a space of surveillance and control against any form of urban conflict and resistances. With the disruption of platform capitalism, since the first decade of the 2000s, under the guise of its alleged reaction to tourism standardization, the Airbnb model progressively occupied housing units in contemporary tourist cities

encouraging gentrification and segregation processes (Guttentag 2013; Ball *et al.* 2014).

Within the fancy Airbnb aesthetics, people and spaces (at different scales, from houses to cities) “mirror” themselves within the border of a “trustworthy community”. The motto of the face-to-face encounter with the locals, as epitomized by the creative tourism discourse, produces a comfort vision field that excludes undesirable landscapes, homes, and faces. Seemingly, the online dating discourse, embedded in the site’s visual figures, themes, and architecture, produces tensions between inclusion and exclusion logics.

In the following section, the face-to-face intimacy remediation enabled by dating apps and sites will be explored.

3. Phenomenology of a date

Grammatically speaking “dating” is the present participle of the verb to date and, according to the *Cambridge Dictionary*, means “regularly spending time with someone you have a romantic relationship with”. Such a non-complex definition highlights yet at least two important aspects of the dating phenomenology: the act of meeting with someone for a certain time for a not better specifically “romantic” purpose. According to the different adjectives attributed to dating (for instance, casual) “dating” semantically moves closer towards the relationship domain of which dating represents the weak and uncommitted version. Dating then, in turn, represents a more “romantic” version of other intimate practices such as hanging out and hooking up.

Despite the phenomenology of the different practices included in the vast domain of intimacy across cultures, the majority of them entail an encounter between two or more actors in a given space. In turn, narratively speaking, the encounter implies a previous phase that consists in the “search”.⁴ Such a quest, in turn, implies an intermediation agent, which logically precedes the supposed immediacy of the actual intimate encounter. Throughout history and across cultures such an intermediation role has been discursively performed by different actors, from the family, passing through wedding agencies, to the Internet, and finally artificial intelligence.

In such a vein, the different studies on modern and contemporary courtship (Adair 1996; Hirsch and Wardlow 2006) have stressed the substitution of the familyhood intermediacy with other agencies and actors, both human and nonhuman, who are responsible for supervising mating processes. The commercial nature of such intermediacy has been increasing, given the professionalization of mating activities and the advent of wedding agencies. Love and sex as consumption activities and the role of the market in shaping love, sexuality, and intimacy within the neoliberal paradigm have been

at the center of several critical analyses (Duggan 2002; Illouz 2007). Such interpretations implicitly or explicitly evoke the Foucault (1976) theory on sexuality as the pivotal factor in the proliferation of mechanisms of discipline and normalization and the gender disciplining of sex frequently theorized by Judith Butler (2004). Furthermore, the advent of the Internet gave birth to “old” neologisms, such as cybersex (Blair 1998), paving the way for new online articulations of mediated intimacy till the appearance of such “new” neologisms as sexting. These increasing virtualization processes of sexuality have provoked different reactions among scholars, just to mention a few, from the enthusiastic Giddens (1992) who advocated for its decentralization, freed of reproductive needs, to the pessimistic theories of Bauman’s liquid love (2003) that entails a dissolution of traditional bonds.

4. The facial marketplace of dating

Within this debate, the irruption of online dating practices stemming from Web Personals, the first online dating site invented by Andrew Conru in 1994, has represented a milestone for pushing further the analogy between dating and marketplace. The emphasis on the commercial exchange of goods has nurtured the main strand of literature on digital intimacy. In such a vein, studies on online dating (Heino *et al.* 2010) explored the ways in which the marketplace themes and figures resonate with online dating practices and how the market influences how users assess themselves and the others. The same dating apps and sites reinforce such an interpretation, playing with commerce metaphors: in such a vein the French site Adopte-UnMec logo represents a woman pushing a shopping trolley that contains a man; the parody of Amazon Dating pretends to offer “Hot Single Near You” for selling within the same e-commerce Amazon frame.

“Marketplace” is a composed noun that implies the presence of a spatial dimension for the commercial exchange of goods. In this regard, leisure studies in turn have put the emphasis on the “place” part of the expression by stressing the role of spatial dimension as pivotal in understanding the progressive commodification of intimacy within the digital sphere. By considering sex as a core aspect of leisure (Hardwick 2008; Devall’s 1979) and accounting for its pleasure-seeking dimension, leisure studies have initially explored the intermediacy role played by spaces of leisure such as bars and nightclubs, labeled as sexy spaces (Caudwell and Browne 2011), and how leisure practices produce space and inform the construction of place and community (Johnson 2008). Within this view, the role of the Internet has been referred to mainly within the transformation of place production.

In such a vein, since the Internet has become a common tool used to seek friends and romantic and sexual partners, concerns have been raised about

the desertification of “real” places traditionally devoted to hook-up culture in favor of cyberspace accessed from desktop machines. Authors, especially in gay and queer communities (Mcglotten 2014), report a sense of loss for the replacement of public spaces for sex that “afforded rare opportunities for interclass contact and communication conducted in a mode of good will” (Delany 1999) with the advent of the Internet. Then, the advent of location-aware apps and the transformation of online dating to mobile dating marked a disconnection from a static computer and a return to allegedly physical spaces (de Souza e Silva 2013) to enable a new configuration of the intimacy marketplace.

The marketing discourse of the different dating apps emphasizes the possibility that a potential partner is nearby or has just crossed paths and consequently turns the current location of the user into a potential courtship or hooking-up space (accordingly to the scope of the usage). In opposition to the dating desk activity, the location-aware devices would enable an alleged reappropriation of physical space, augmented by the presence of potential digital partners. The marketplace can also be interpreted as the setting for the production and exposure of self-presentation. In that regard, academic literature on social media (Chambers 2013; Bullingham and Vasconcelos 2013) extensively analyzed the process of production and presentation of the self-online, evoking Goffman’s self-presentation theoretical framework: one of the main interrogations has been whether the Internet has reinvented the social norms that guide us in everyday life. Against such a background, as Kalinowski and Matei (2014) noticed, “online dating websites are qualitatively different from many other online settings because of the anticipated face-to-face interaction” (p. 7). Such an assertion suggests an important shift in the intermediation agency. In contrast to social networks and social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok, in dating apps, the online “operations” are prompted to lead to a face-to-face encounter.

In this sense, Tinder’s former slogan “Match. Chat. Date”, clearly indicated a narrative path from the online (“match” and “chat” phase) to the offline (“date” phase) which was supposed to be the venue of the final *performance*, whereas the online space was considered as the space for the *competence* construction. The expected passage from the marketplace (online) to the face-to-face (offline), sponsored by the dating app discourse, foresees the role of an *interface*.

5. Interfaces

Commercial researches on social media interfaces have been extensively analyzing the composition of the page to promote the engagement of users (user interface), while the notion of UX (user experience) refers to

the feeling a user gets while navigating the page. Recently the human-computer interaction (HCI) has also caught the attention of the qualitative approaches aimed at focusing on the interpretation process entailed by such interaction. In particular under a semiotics lens, the study of interface “should also focus on interface sense production system and interpretation processes” (Scolari 2009: 4). Scolari, in his interrogation of the meaning production process in reference to a blog, has singled out different levels of analysis (plastic, figurative, communicative, and meta-communicative) and stresses the importance of the identification of the author (“the designer”) “‘footprints,’ marks, and instructions (affordances) inside the interface”.

Following the theoretical tradition of visual semiotics, Reyes-García (2017) has studied interfaces as images by focusing on “the visual meaning behind the construction of any authoring and exploring environment” (2017: 11). With the complexification of the WIMP paradigm (Windows Icons Menus Pointers) and the introduction of different types of media, the interface would transform the user into a media producer who interacts with other users through enunciative acts. In the interactive space of a social networking site, the semiotics approach to the study of the interface should aim at examining the way in which interfaces organize, enhance, or constrain the interactions not only between human users and computer-based systems but also between the users themselves.

Thanks to the pivotal role of its visual patterns, the platform interface can be considered a text provided by a semiotics agency that shapes subjectivity and affective bodily and more importantly facial experience. Relying on such literature, in this chapter the online dating interface(s) are referred to as a time and machine machinery for the production of online interactions, aimed at producing an intimate encounter. In order to do so, we refer back to the etymology of interface. The noun “interface”, composed of “inter-” + “face”, was coined by McLuhan and defined as “place of interaction between two systems” (1962). According to the Cambridge Dictionary, it refers to a connection between two pieces of electronic equipment or between a person and a computer.

The prefix “inter” by meaning “between” thus implies the presence of a space between (a third) two actors, two sides. Synchronically the space in between makes user interaction happen by connecting the two parts within the platform space; diachronically such a gap can be interpreted as a lapse of time to spend inter (digital) faces within the platform border while waiting to leave the digital space and perform the “actual” encounter outside the platform. Such a time-and-space gap stages the presence of an outside as the ultimate scope of the platform service. In the next section, such spatial and temporal betweenness, embedded in the platform, will be analyzed, following the narrative path marked by a dating app site.

6. The user narrative journey interfaces

6.1. *Choosing the best face*

By drawing on the Greimassian narrativity terms (1966, 1970, 1974) and interpreting within such a framework the user experience in “standard” online dating sites, the dater narrative programs experience starts with a competence construction phase that consists in the login operation, the identity verification, and, most importantly, the registration process with the uploading of photos and the filling in of question forms in order to enrich the self-presentation details and allegedly increase the probability of finding affinities among users. According to the most common dating sites’ instructions and the interface visual patterns, in order to complete the profile, it is inescapable to choose a face. In the case of some famous dating apps, such a request is visually enabled by an empty face silhouette to be filled in with a digital portrait.

On the topic of pictures used for one’s dating profile the Internet contains lots of buzz: from a rough scanning of the first blog entries within the search “Picture for self-portrait dating app”, all of them agree on a point that can be summed up as follows: the profile picture should “really be like you”. The importance of authenticity in the commercial online dating discourse partly arises from the attempt of contrasting deceitful practices such as the catfishing, which in mere visual terms entails the stealing of someone’s portrait. Beyond the fake profiles, users can freely and originally reinterpret the space devoted to self-portraits. Empirical observations from a digital netnography on Tinder (Soro 2019) showed that a significant number of profiles browsed post a variety of alternative images to the face, such as food, pets, famous characters, or other objects with which to identify their identity. Such images are thus subjected to a process of *facialization* by performing the same functions that a self-profile does.

6.2. *Swiping faces*

Following the narrative program of the dater, once the “best” face (or its surrogate) has been chosen and the profile operations have been completed, the user is able to actually kick off the matchmaking procedures. In such a vein, each popular dating app arguably presents its own “semiotics of passion” (Greimas and Fontanille 1991) with which the site manages the face-to-face remediation and the relative emotions involved. The interactions during the matchmaking are therefore regulated by specific aspectuality strategies that emphasize in turn either the duration of the path toward an allegedly offline face-to-face meeting or the terminative point where an interaction stops. Profile swiping, the key navigation gesture popularized

by the dating site Tinder and also present in other dating apps (Bumble, Hppnen, HER, and so on), represents the iterative action that determines the potential beginning or ending of an interaction between users. While a swipe right (according to Tinder function) and a consequent match open to an indefinite time of waiting before an allegedly face-to-face meeting (that can be either undermined or punctual or constantly delayed), the swipe left marks the termination point of a potential interaction and consequently the exclusion of a given user profile from the vision field of the swiper.

In particular, according to Tinder grammar, the swiping gesture is embedded in an environment similar to playing cards. As a result of the swiping, some “cards” containing users’ faces are stored in the list of matches; others are excluded and (at least in theory) never seen again. The serendipity of running again into a face in the offline world is thus avoided by the cancellation of the less desirable profiles (according to a given dater vision) and thus reduces the database of the selected pictures to the crush-at-first-sight ones. Following the performative stage of the narrative program, after the match between two faces (or their surrogates) has occurred, the daters are allowed to text each other in a chat box or in certain cases exchange supplementary pictures or videos or enable video calls. It is noteworthy that the range of possibilities has recently been expanded by some dating companies in order to cope with social distancing rules.

6.3. *Out of the interface comfort zone*

It is common to encounter in the digital sphere (i.e., in social media and in dedicated blogs) users’ stories about the disappointment caused by first offline meetings after chatting and flirting online for a certain time. Surely this chapter is not focused on the dater’s behavior (*intentio lectoris*) or on the intentions of the dating site designers (*intentio autoris*). The focus is rather on the meaning effects enabled by the text and how the text architecture shapes and induces certain usages and interpretations (*intentio operis*). However, regarding the aforementioned disillusionment effect it can be inferred that the platform and its interface tend to create a comfort zone provided with its own borders, its own rules, and its meaning-making processes.

The practice of sexting represents, in such a vein, the magnification of online dating as a leisure activity per se. Etymologically a portmanteau of sex and text, the practice became popular during the COVID pandemic, as shown by the data provided by some dating apps that registered an increase in new subscribers. At the same time, some popular applications such as Bumble and Hinge provided users with new features for publicly sharing their COVID-related dating preferences, and not surprisingly, including indirect references to sexting among the possibilities. Beyond the

contingencies due to the pandemic that forces both offer and demand to design new creative practices in the field of intimacy, “sexting” embraces a complex semiotics. It semantically combines two impossibles *lexema*, at least in their literal meaning, since the action of text necessarily requires a medium and, on the contrary, the sex denies such intermediacy. In such terms sexting represents the ultimate figure of facial leisure, the interaction interface.

Furthermore, following the reasoning mentioned earlier, sexting would finalize the narrative program performed by the dater within the dating system interface. This way, such practice stresses the paradox of the user retention encrusted in the domain of online intimacy, a service allegedly purposed for letting go of their users to the offline world but, in doing so, at the same time, leading them to lose their customers.

6.4. *The gaze of the Elo*

Lastly, the interface is responsible for enabling a certain gaze upon the other by embedding a certain scopic regime that determines the visual aesthetic components of the interactions. It is noteworthy that the agency of a platform system in influencing user behavior and his or her “way” of seeing rests on an algorithm. In the earlier years of Tinder, the Elo, in a surprising assonance with the aforementioned Airbnb logo Belo, has been known as an algorithm responsible for scoring and rating the daters on the basis of their desirability. According to speculations, since Tinder has not publicly disclosed the specific details of their algorithms, a dater profile attractiveness is based on how many people swiped right on him or her; the more right swipes that person had, the higher his or her assigned score went up. According to the alleged Elo logic, a dating system serves and matches users with similar scores, creating a sort of internal communities clustered by their higher or lower desirability.

Just as the Belo watches over the Airbnb community of belonging composed of trusted hosts and guests, with similar interior design tastes and lifestyles, the Elo seemingly guards the daters, grouping them in comfort zone communities, each of these characterized by a similar level of facial desirability. Following such an interpretation, the *facialization* of the intimacy as designed by the platform architecture structures of meaning provokes a reflection effect among the dater faces: arguably they looked back at themselves as in a collective selfie.

7. Conclusions

In its attempt to contribute to the comprehension of the extension of the digital face space within the realm of digital intimacy, this chapter acknowledges several limitations. Firstly, it lacks user data, relying instead on

references to previous research conducted by the author that involved interviews and netnography. The focus of the current study is on the meaning-making processes facilitated by the architectural design of dating sites rather than on user experiences. Secondly, the analysis does not concentrate on a specific platform or a set of platforms in contrast to the prevalent literature on online dating that often examines a single app or site. Instead, the research considers online dating as a discourse shaped by the collective presence of various commercial sites. Thirdly, the piece does not differentiate between mobile and desktop platforms, despite the significance of the spatial dimension in semiotics. The study does not directly address the differences in usability between portable and fixed devices.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the article takes a broader approach in delimiting the scope of the study, aiming to construct a discourse on the production of online communities rather than focusing solely on specific business models or services offered by individual platforms. While platforms like Airbnb and Tinder, mentioned in the piece, exhibit clear differences in terms of services offered, communication methods, user demographics, and more, a comparative analysis of different platform models would yield a better understanding of the strategies of inclusion and exclusion facilitated by these platforms.

Future research should aim to address these limitations by incorporating a systematic collection of data. Additionally, a comparative analysis of different platform models is necessary to comprehend how the digital face undergoes tension and re-symbolization within the online sphere. The concept of digital intimacy should be further explored as a field of negotiation between cultural and social narratives, encompassing not only courtship and sexuality but also broader discussions about the body and gender. Ultimately, it will be crucial to examine digital intimacy as an observation point for the emergence of new biopolitical aesthetics shaped by practices such as artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Notes

- 1 This chapter results from a project that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (Grant Agreement No 819649-FACETS; PI: Massimo LEONE).
- 2 Visagété [Faceness] is a section of *Thousand Plateaus*, where the French authors juxtapose the head and the face impossible.
- 3 Kelly Gates in *Our Biometric Future* claims that the pursuit of facial recognition technology, ruled by the priorities of law enforcement and state security agencies, has destructive social consequences.
- 4 In the actantial model, within Greimas theory of narrativity (1966, 1970), the actant subject aspires to join to an object.