| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Social Media Filters and the Vestiges of the Psyche

Maryam El-kssiri[1] ✉ **and Youssouf Amine Elalamy[2]**
[1]Doctoral Student, Faculty of Languages, Letters, and Arts, English Department, Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco
[2]University Professor, Faculty of Languages, Letters, and Arts, English Department, Ibn Tofail University, Kenitra, Morocco
Corresponding Author: Maryam El-kssiri, **E-mail**: maryam.elkssiri@uit.ac.ma

| ABSTRACT

Over the past decade, social media filters have become a pervasive visual phenomenon. Filtered selfies with conspicuous animal features or flawless makeup have flooded social media platforms. In this study, it is argued that the massive popularity of these social media filters is not ungrounded. Instead, these viral filters have their origins in ancient or even pre-historic times. Approaching this phenomenon from an anthropological perspective, social media animal filters are traced as far back as classical mythology and folklore tales of human-animal hybrids. Makeup filters are similarly linked back to ancient cosmetic practices. In this attempt to demonstrate the persistence of both human-animal imagery and the use of makeup, this study also explores their deep psychological implications. The central argument is that both makeup and human-animal hybrid imagery, re-invented in a digital form, have reached extreme popularity because they strike deep chords of recognition in the human psyche, appealing to primordial desires and instincts. This article also draws attention to how social media platforms make use of archaic imagery and motifs to serve marketing purposes, capitalizing on human's deepest and oldest instincts and desires.

1. Introduction

In the current visual media-saturated world, the use of social media filters has become a pervasive cultural phenomenon that marks contemporary social media practices. Despite their ubiquity, social media filters and filtered images remain, to a large extent, scholarly underexplored. The emerging literature on the issue –albeit scarce– predominantly focuses on the negative effects of beauty filters on young users' self-perception and body image. However, research on social media filters has yet to address various facets of this complex subject, including the fundamental issue of how this visual digital phenomenon evolved. In an attempt to fill in this gap, this article explores the development of today's viral social media filters from within the broader historical context of "pre-digital" filtering practices. In other words, the premise of this study is that visual "filters" have a long history, and the popularity of their current digital form is certainly not ungrounded. This study particularly focuses on "animal filters" and "beauty filters." These filters have enjoyed extreme popularity and kick started this whole current phenomenon of social media filtered images. In this article, it is argued that "animal filters" and "beauty filters" are by no means entirely the invention of social media platforms. Ancient mythology, folklore tales, and fables have all fused animal and human features centuries before Snapchat or any other social media application provided such possibility. Similarly, throughout recorded history in various cultures, people have been making up their faces, enhancing or concealing certain features. Thus, this study investigates the persistent use of both makeup and human-animal imagery and explores their deep psychological implications.

2. Literature Review

Few studies have so far examined the prevalent phenomenon of social media filters. In the contemporary visual media-saturated world, the use of digital tools, such as social media filters, to alter and enhance images has become extremely popular. Rosalind Gill (2021) states that 90% of her research population uses social media filters or other photo editing software to esthetically enhance their images before sharing them on social media. These visual re-constructions include evening out skin tone, reshaping one's jaw or nose, shaving off some weight, and whitening teeth. Participants in Gill's study find posting filtered images on social media enjoyable yet anxiety-provoking. Gill's findings indicate that as beauty filters and photo editing applications become more popular, young people feel constantly scrutinized and pressured to look perfect and to showcase an idealized life on social media platforms. Increased societal expectations of perfection amplify pressures and anxieties associated with representing oneself online. Christine Lavrence and Carolina Cambre (2020) similarly argue that the widespread popularity of filters has resulted in what they term "the digital-forensic gaze." This notion refers to a nuanced form of scrutiny applied to online images, particularly selfies. The "digital-forensic gaze" describes both the gaze of the filter users at themselves and the gaze of others at them in a process of objectification.

Jill Rettberg's *Seeing Ourselves Through Technology* (2014) is one of the earliest works to draw attention to social media filters. Rettberg describes social media filters, precisely Instagram filters, as digital tools that allow users to make selfies and other photos "look brighter, more muted, more grungy, or more retro than real life" (21). However, Rettberg does not focus on social media image filters per se. She mostly uses the term "filter" as a metaphor to highlight the ubiquity of technological and cultural filtration processes in the contemporary digital age. Rettberg examines how "the metaphor of filtering" helps us understand the influence of technology and culture on our perceptions, suggesting that filters shape not only what we see but also how we interpret and interact with information in the digital age. She argues, for instance, that through exposure to cultural filters (e.g., social norms, expectations, and conventions), individuals tend to produce images that conform to societal expectations in their photographic practices. In her study, Rettberg also elaborates on the different meanings assigned to the word "filter," emphasizing that the word filter persistently entails the removal or "filtering out" of certain aspects. Although Instagram filters often seem to be adding new elements, such as brighter colors or vintage effects, they generally serve to remove unwanted elements or hide imperfections. While Rettberg elaborates on the polysemy of the word "filter," she does not explore the evolution of social media filters.

In a recent paper on the issue of beauty filters, Clara Isakowitsch (2023) has explored the effect of social media augmented reality beauty filters (ARB filters) on people's perceptions of themselves. In particular, the study contrasts the effect of ARB beautification filters, which adapt to movements in real time, with the effect of static selfie enhancement. To reach this end, Isakowitsch employs Extended Mind Theory and Enactivism as research frameworks. It is noteworthy that here the focus is on the fact that ARB filters involve motion and more radical changes to the user's face in real time. Isakowitsch notes that most participants in her study reported that moving with the filter had a greater impact on them compared to viewing the static enhanced selfie. Isakowitsch also acknowledges that it is uncertain whether this effect is due to the fact that people tend to spend more time moving with the filter than they do looking at the enhanced selfie. However, it should be noted that the scope of Isakowitsch's research does not extend beyond beauty filters nor does it address how the concept or practice of visually filtering images evolved.

In an attempt to examine the reasons behind the popularity of augmented reality filters, specifically Instagram filters, Javornik et al. (2022) identify various "motivations," including ideal and transformed self-presentation, affiliation, enjoyment, convenience, social interaction, and creative content curation. Based on surveys and interviews, Javornik et al. found that while silliness and true self-presentation were considered relevant motivations, they did not significantly impact filter users' behavior. Javornik et al. also explore how these "motivations" affect user well-being. For them, using AR filters to portray an idealized self can demolish self-acceptance, whereas using them to explore or express the true self—regardless of what is deemed socially acceptable or ideal— can improve self-acceptance and mood. Overall, their findings suggest that while AR filters can positively influence mood and social interactions, idealized self-representations might have negative effects on self-perception and well-being. However, while this study relies on surveys and interviews, it does not investigate these motivations within the broader historical context of "pre-digital" filtering practices.

In a recent study, El-kssiri and Elalamy (2024) trace pre-digital filtering practices back to medieval carnivals, exploring the subversive and critical potential of unconventional social media filtered images. Building on Mikhail Bakhtin's conception of the carnivalesque, they assert that, given social media's pervasive influence, filtered images that may initially appear as trivial self-expression or mere silliness can significantly impact public discourse and contribute to the re-conceptualization of identity and societal norms. While El-kssiri and Elalamy draw a parallelism between social media filtered images and carnival masquerades, the current study goes back even further in history.

3. Methodology

This qualitative study employs a combined anthropological and psychological approach to investigate the contemporary visual phenomenon of social media filters. By integrating these disciplines, this research study traces the evolution of today's popular filters, namely "animal filters" and "makeup" or "beauty filters," investigating the deep psychological implications behind their massive popularity. To capture the complexity of this currently thriving visual phenomenon, this study goes as far back as ancient human-animal hybrid mythological representations and early cosmetic practices. This study builds on influential theoretical insights from Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Fenja Gunn, Lisa Eldridge, and Nancy Etcoff to examine the persistent archaic motifs and imagery that are constantly re-invented through "animal filters" and "beauty filters."

4. Results and Discussion

Among seemingly endless options of digital filters, "animal filters" and "beauty" or "makeup" filters have enjoyed the most popularity among social media users. Though the "invention" of these filters, in their current digital form, is fairly recent, they bear traces of ancient imagery and practices, striking deep chords of recognition in the human psyche.

In recent years, seeing selfies fused with animal features, such as dog ears and tongue, cat whiskers, bunny ears and nose, leopard skin, or foxy eyes has become commonplace on social media platforms. "Pre-digital" antecedents of such human-animal representations have a long history. For as long as humans have been telling stories, there have been representations of half-human half-animal creatures. Although the exact origin of these hybrid representations remains undetermined, they certainly appear across a wide range of cultures and geographic regions.

According to surviving records, early traces of such mythical hybrids date back to ancient times. In Greek mythology, epic tales and poems by Hesiod (*Theogony*), Ovid (*Metamorphoses*), and Homer (*The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*) are known for their myriad tales of hybrid mythical beings. Some of the most popular human-animal hybrids in Western mythology include the Centaurs, Gorgon sisters, Minotaur, and Sphinx. Non-Western mythologies also provide a wealth of hybrid representations, including Aïcha Qandisha, Ganesha, and Kitsune. Indeed, the Sphinx straddles both Eastern and Western mythologies, albeit displaying different physical attributes and characteristics in each region.

The myth of the human-horse Centaurs is said to have its origin in classical Greek and later Roman mythology. With the exception of the wise and non-violent Chiron (James Hall, 1994), Centaurs are often described as drunken, lecherous, and potentially violent (Jane Garry and Hasan El-Shamy, 2005). As James Hall states, in Greek mythology and art, Centaurs usually symbolize wildlife and barbarism, while in Renaissance humanist allegory, they are the personification of man's lower bestial nature, and in Christian art, the symbol of adultery and heresy.

The three Gorgon sisters, Stheno, Euryale, and Medusa, are also popular human-animal Greek mythical hybrids. According to Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant (1996), the Gorgon sisters are mythicized as terrifying winged creatures with serpent hair, boar's tusks, brass hands, and golden wings, turning anyone who gazes upon them to stone. Medusa, the most frequently depicted of the Gorgons, appears in various art forms from ancient to contemporary. Recent references to this mythical hybrid creature include the original *Clash of the Titans* movie and the video game franchise *God of War*.

The Minotaur, the man with the head and tail of a bull, is another prominent Greek myth (Garry & El-Shamy, 2005). Born from Pasiphae, Minos's wife, and a bull sent by Poseidon, the Minotaur was the result of Minos's failure to sacrifice the bull as promised. As punishment, Poseidon caused Pasiphae to fall in love with the bull. Their offspring, the Minotaur, was imprisoned in Daedalus's labyrinth and eventually killed by Theseus (Edith Hamilton, 1953). The Minotaur appears in a wide range of Western artistic genres and cultural references. For instance, it famously inspired numerous Surrealist artworks. In the 1930s, Albert Skira published an avant-garde Surrealist literary magazine named *Minotaure*. Its covers featured Minotaur-themed art by influential modern artists, including Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dalí, René Magritte, Max Ernst, and Diego Rivera (Judith Bernstock, 1993).

Another famous mythical representational fusion of animal and human features is the Sphinx. Although prominently featured in ancient Greek mythology, the Sphinx originated in Egyptian culture, with its earliest representations dating back to the 3rd millennium BC (James Hall, 1994). The Egyptian Sphinx has the head of a bearded man and the body of a lion. James Hall explains that it represents the pharaoh and his immense power. While the head represents the human side, the body of a crouching lion symbolizes superpower. Desmond Stewart (1979) similarly describes Egyptian Sphinxes as both benevolent and immensely powerful. One of the most famous surviving Sphinx monuments is the Great Sphinx of Giza. Unlike the Egyptian Sphinx, the Greek Sphinx is a malevolent woman-headed lion with the wings of an eagle and a serpent-headed tail. She is best known for asking riddles and bringing destruction (Edith Hamilton, 1953). James Hall indicates that a representation of the Greek Sphinx's interrogation of Oedipus, which eventually led to the Sphinx killing herself, is first seen on vase painting, fifth century BC.

In Morocco, Aïcha Qandisha [1] is a famous woman-animal mythological figure. While descriptions of her vary across regions of Morocco, Aïcha Qandisha is typically described as a beautiful young woman with the legs of a hoofed animal such as a goat or a cow. She is often depicted as dwelling near a body of water. The beautiful Aïcha Qandisha is said to seduce men and madden them or possess them. According to some accounts, she eventually kills them. In his book *Jinn Eviction as a Discourse of Power*, Mohammed Maarouf (2007) refers to Aïcha Qandisha as a feared and revered female jinni. Maarouf also points out that, according to some accounts, Aïcha was a real historical figure who fought against the Portuguese invaders. She lured soldiers and led them to remote places where they were killed by Moroccan fighters. Aïcha Qandisha is a prominent character in Moroccan popular culture. She is often portrayed in folk tales and Gnawa songs such as *Lalla Aïcha*. Some books and films also revolve around this myth, including the French mystery film *Kandisha* directed by Jérôme Cohen-Olivar (2008).

In Hindu mythology, Ganesha, also known as Ganeśa, is one of the most famous hybrid deities (George Williams, 2003). Ganesha is often described as a fat-bellied man with the head of an elephant. He is typically depicted in vibrant colors and lavishly jeweled. Ganesha is known as the God of good fortune and for his ability to remove obstacles. According to George Williams, this mythical creature is so famous that it is common for Hindu families to display his images in their shops or family shrines. Other popular hybrid mythical creatures include the revered and widely represented human-fox shapeshifting Kitsune of the Japanese tradition (Michael Ashkenazi, 2003). Chinese mythology is also known for the diversity of human-animal figures. Fuxi, Zhurong, and Goumang are only some examples.[2] Human-animal hybrids have saturated world mythology. The work of prominent thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, and Carl Jung provides substantial insights into human nature and help understand the reoccurrence of human-animal hybrid imagery.

In analyzing human nature, Friedrich Nietzsche was drawn back to pre-civilization when the human species were primarily driven by their instincts and depended on them for survival. To Nietzsche (1989), before civilization, humans were half animals well-adapted to the wilderness. The advent of civilization brought about profound changes, yet certain predispositions remained. According to his theorization, although humans have now largely moved beyond their pre-civilized history and often consider themselves superior to all other creatures, they inherited primitive traits and dispositions that continue to sculpt and shape the present-day human psyche. For Nietzsche, similar to the human body that contains vestiges of earlier developmental stages, the psyche contains, within its depths, primitive drives that hark back to pre-history.

In his account, Nietzsche argues that civilization made mankind restricted, accountable, and less beast-like by means of social laws and sanctions. In his words, the rise of civilization meant "the reduction of the beast of prey 'man' to a tame and civilized animal, a domestic animal" (42). "With the aid of the morality of mores and the social straitjacket, man was actually made calculable" (59). For Nietzsche, fear of law and punishment are means of domestication that weaken humans' connection to their animal instincts for aggression and cruelty. They render human behavior more predictable, safe, and herd-like. Thus, such taming constitutes the foundation of civilization.

The idea that civilization came at the cost of humans severing ties with their wild animal instincts and earthly nature was echoed in Sigmund Freud's seminal work *Civilization and its Discontents* (1961). Freud elaborates extensively on how human instinctual urges and drives have been tamed in the name of community and collective progress. Without such restraints on humans' instinctual life, Freud contends that humans remain beast-like.

Both Freud and Nietzsche assert that the domestication of humans by virtue of civilization and social constraints did not make them better or happier. Rather, as Nietzsche declares, it ushered regression. In his words:

> thus began the gravest and uncanniest illness, from which humanity has not yet recovered, man's suffering of man, of himself—the result of a forcible sundering from his animal past, as it were a leap and plunge into new surroundings and conditions of existence, a declaration of war against the old instincts upon which his strength, joy, and terribleness had rested hitherto. (85)

The new social standards conditioned humans into a more civilized existence, but they also weakened them and intensified their suffering. For in being suppressed and forced underground, the animal instincts did not disappear.

Nietzsche and psychologists following his line of thought argue that primordial relics persist in the human psyche and always seek expression. As Nietzsche warns: "The old instincts had not suddenly ceased to make their usual demands. Only it was hardly or rarely possible to humor them: as a rule they had to seek new and, as it were, subterranean gratifications" (84). Hence, Nietzsche is adamant about the necessity of reconnecting with the animal instincts as one can never rid oneself of these primordial elements

---

[1] This mythical creature is also referred to as Kandicha or Qandiša.
[2] For a detailed description of these mythical hybrids as well as many others, see (Yang & An, 2005)

of their being. Humans, no matter how civilized and developed on the surface, are still semi-animals, archaic beings within the depths of their psyche. In the uncivilized layers of the human psyche resides what Zarathustra calls "the inner beast" – potentially destructive inclinations, such as the drive to aggression and unbridled sexual lust (Friedrich Nietzsche, 2006, p. 246). Rather than seconding the societal repression of "the beast within," Nietzsche advocates for the acknowledgment and exploration of the potentially destructive vestiges of the ancient past.

In the light of the above-discussed insights about the human psyche, representations that fuse human-animal attributes, whether digital or otherwise, may be seen as a creative means through which the untamed human side is articulated. In this respect, Ken Dowden (1992) perceptively comments on mythological creatures. Since they lack a tangible manifestation in reality, their existence in the imagination "reveal[s] more about what is inside man than what is outside" (133). Analogously, hybrid representations, including filtered self-representations, can be seen in the same light, betraying aspects that are repressed by means of social and cultural norms.

In concert with the above-mentioned theories, Carl Jung stresses the psychological significance of recurrent symbols and motifs, such as human-animal representations. Jung attributes the cross-cultural reoccurrence of mythical themes, symbols, and motifs to what he terms the "collective unconscious" (1981). This Jungian concept implies that, in addition to the "personal unconscious," which is primarily composed of elements derived from the individual's life experiences, there is a deeper and more fundamental realm composed of archaic inherited elements. Put differently, for Carl Jung, collective unconsciousness is the totality of the inherited structure of the psyche constituted over the course of the evolution of pre-human and human ancestors. It consists of traces of frequently repeated experiences in the form of structural components or what Jung termed "archetypes."

Carl Jung contends that the influence of these archetypes on human thought, emotion, and behavior results in similarities observed in various myths, religious themes, symbols, and motifs across different civilizations and historical periods. Jung's theory of the collective unconscious and its constitutive archetypes was a result of extensive analysis of the unconscious material of his own and of his patients' dreams and fantasies, as well as his study of comparative religion and mythology. Jung states that:

> From the unconscious there emanate determining influences which, independently of tradition, guarantee in every single individual a similarity and even a sameness of experience, and also of the way it is represented imaginatively. One of the main proofs of this is the almost universal parallelism between mythological motifs, which, on account of their quality as primordial images, I have called archetypes. (Carl Jung, 1981, p. 58).

Echoing some of Nietzsche's previously discussed ideas, Carl Jung maintains that despite the human quest towards civilization, the inherited wild instincts and primal forces did not cease to exist. Hence, in his *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* (1953) as well as subsequent works, Jung identifies the potent "shadow" archetype. For Jung, the "shadow" represents an unconscious part of the personality, and it contains repressed primitive instincts and unbridled desires. It is considered to be the darker side of the psyche, encompassing everything that a person refuses to acknowledge about themselves.

The shadow is composed of traits that are socially or personally unacceptable and are thus hidden from conscious awareness. However, as Jung maintains, "the shadow is a living part of the personality and therefore wants to live with it in some form" (1981, p 20). Hence, the existence of archetypes is generally expressed by the arrangements they produce in consciousness, manifested through symbolic imagery. In his body of work, Jung points out that the shadow archetype has saturated mythology even across isolated and independent cultures, a manifestation that can be observed in the mythological examples discussed earlier in this article. Although Carl Jung's archetypal psychology is often criticized for its universalism and overambitious attempt to classify images for all people in all civilizations (O'Sullivan, Hartley, Saunders, Montgomery & Fiske, 1983), his theorization of "the collective unconscious" remains valuable in accounting for the persistence of relics of the past in the human psyche.

Influential modern artists also perceived ancient myths in more or less the same light. As Judith Bernstock explains, many twentieth-century artists who used mythical imagery and motifs in their art did not merely reiterate previously narrated stories. Instead, they employed them "as metaphors for the primordial grief, fear, and violence of mankind" (156). Prominent twentieth-century artists who used images of human-animal mythical hybrids include Pablo Picasso and Francis Picabia. Indeed, the Minotaur frequently appeared in Picasso's art from the 1920s to his later years in the 1950s (Rosie Lesso, 2022) to the extent that this mythical beast is often referred to as Picasso's alter ego. Judith Bernstock adds that twentieth-century artists resort to mythological imagery as part of their search for a common ground accessible to all, to symbolically show a need to connect recent history with age-old human urges, drives, and motivations. In Bernstock words, "Myths …revolve around figures whose thought and feelings strike deep chords of recognition in us" (156). Ancient myths have indeed provided subject matter for much of twentieth-century art, yet modern artists have interpreted these myths through their own experiences and perspectives.

To gather this up for a moment, the key argument here is that primordial instinctual urges and drives are remarkably potent, persisting even in the contemporary digital world. In the light of the above-discussed insights into the human psyche, social media hybrid filtered self-representations can be seen to function as a means through which the "wild" archaic side and counter-normative inclinations are articulated. These filters can be analyzed as a form of resistance against the taming social institutions. More precisely, they can be construed as visual symbolic statements against the conventional, socially prescribed ways of being. However, unlike individual artistic creations, social media filters are readily available in a standardized manner for all social media users. This sheds light on social media platforms and their marketing strategies, a point we will come back to again at the end of this section.

In another vein, it is necessary to accentuate that most digital filters function as a means of perpetuating conventional and mostly unattainable ways of being. To a large extent, they are visual means through which individuals seek validation and perpetuate existing social norms defining human identity. Makeup or beauty filters are a good example in this respect as they largely promote idealized beauty standards. Filters that enhance appearance are by far the most ubiquitous type of social media filters. Even animal filters typically add beautifying effects. They usually make the user's skin lighter and smooth and render their eyes bigger and brighter. The ubiquity of beauty filters builds on the long history of cosmetics and deeply entrenched symbolism.

Early makeup and cosmetic practices show a deep-seated human inclination toward self-decoration that predates modern civilizations. According to Fenja Gunn (1973), anthropological evidence suggests that as early as 100,000 BC, Neanderthals engaged in body painting and early forms of tattooing, marking the beginning of what could be considered cosmetic practices. Early cosmetic use was not merely aesthetic. To survive in the wilderness, pre-historic humans utilized tools and developed strategies to adapt and survive, including camouflage through face and body adornment. As Gunn explains, early instances of face and body paint served multiple purposes including: blending with surroundings during hunts, appearing fearsome through painting characteristic markings of the most dangerous animals on the skin, and fulfilling spiritual or social functions within communities. These early practices of altering visual identity went beyond mere aesthetics. They were essential for survival.

In *Face Paint: The Story of Makeup*, Eldridge meticulously chronicles the evolution of makeup and cosmetics, tracing their journey from face painting practices in antiquity to their current status as a multibillion-dollar industry. Eldridge states that archeological excavations and anthropological studies indicate that "pre-historic cosmetics" may have started as "a form of protection from the elements or used as camouflage or as part of a ritual." Over time, "decorative face painting became associated with beautification, social status, and preserving youthfulness, and from the eighteenth century onward, more closely linked to fashion" (2015, p 19). Eldridge documents the evolution of makeup and beauty practices as well as the fluctuating social perception of makeup throughout different historical periods.

Both Gunn and Eldridge elaborate on the primeval human need to exert control over how they look and how they are perceived. This urge is so strong that in different cultures around the globe, even harmful substances were not spared to achieve the desired cosmetic effects. Poisonous substances such as lead, cinnabar, and mercuric sulfide were applied to the skin to achieve white skin, rosy lips and cheeks, and a desired flaming flush (Eldridge). Nancy Etcoff also elaborates on the extreme lengths to which people have gone in pursuit of beauty. In addition to the poisonous lead and mercury, women also "attached leeches to themselves and swallowed arsenic wafers" (158). Over time, as the dangers of these harmful substances and organisms became better known, their use dwindled.

A great deal of cosmetic effects is about color. Lisa Eldridge devotes the largest part of her book to discussing the persistent color trinity in cosmetic palettes: red, black, and white. Alongside Etcoff and Gunn, Eldridge describes how red has been the longest-used color in makeup palettes throughout history in various cultures. "Rouge is the longest-standing makeup item in existence and the most multipurposed, having been used to color lips and cheeks for thousands of years" (Eldridge, p. 25). The reason that has driven women around the world for generations to color their lips a shade of red and their cheeks with rosy hues stems from the wealth of associations the color itself brings forth. Although the meanings assigned to the color red vary from one culture to another, "red is invariably associated with desirability, love, passion, youth, and health" (26). In Eastern cultures, red symbolizes happiness as evident in the traditional choice of color for bridal wedding dresses in China, India, and Vietnam. Moreover, red holds significance in theatrical contexts, prominently featured in the makeup of Chinese opera and Japanese Kabuki. Red also carries diverse connotations, signifying blood, danger, and revolution. From a cosmetic perspective, Eldridge explains, rouge serves to impart a natural flush to the skin. In this regard, evolutionary psychologist Nancy Etcoff highlights a biological allure to red: "Blush on the cheeks and red on the lips are sexual signals mimicking youth, nulliparity [not having given birth] . . . and the vigor of health" (101). Etcoff succinctly explains that red, symbolizing blood, blushes, arousal, and fertility, is visually striking and emotionally stimulating.

Alongside red, black was and continues to be an important color in cosmetic palettes. At least, since the invention of kohl by ancient Egyptians, people have been accentuating their eyes and eyebrows with black linings and shades. Eldridge maintains that although what is considered attractive varies over time and from one culture to another, the importance of the eyes—"the windows to the soul"—remains a constant. Eldridge also draws on the complex associations of the black color, ranging from death, power, secrecy, and mystery to drama. Building on previous studies and ancient medical texts, Eldridge presents two theories on why ancient Egyptians used eye makeup. The first theory, supported by the Ebers Papyrus — an ancient Egyptian medical papyrus of herbal knowledge — and a 2010 study by Philippe Walter and Christian Amatore, suggests makeup like kohl had medicinal purposes, protecting eyes from infections and strong sunlight. Lead-based substances in eye makeup boosted nitric oxide production, aiding in disease prevention. The second theory posits that kohl was a status symbol with spiritual and ritualistic significance, associated with the god Horus and goddess Hathor. The latter theory proposes that the ancient use of eye makeup served as a symbol of spiritual protection and connection to the divinities (Eldridge). While black eye makeup was used by both men and women in ancient Egypt, in some cultures black and red are used as gendered codes. According to Gunn, in ritual ceremonies, the Mount Hagen people of New Guinea use dyes to visually differentiate between male and female attributes. While black paint visually represents male aggression and strength, red visually defines female characteristics, signifying magic, friendliness, material wealth, and fertility.

Another equally prominent color in cosmetic practices is white. According to Eldridge, for centuries throughout Europe and the Far East, the prevailing trend was pale skin. To lighten and even out the appearance, people used a variety of ointments, creams, and cosmetics. Skin whitening methods were not only popular but also hazardous, including the use of the lead-based *psimuthion*, bloodletting, and Venetian Ceruse. These methods are harmful to both the skin and overall health. As Eldridge explains, it is striking that ancient Greece and China—cultures with no knowledge of each other—both used lead-based ingredients in skin-lightening cosmetics and shared a similar desire to attain white skin. Eldridge also draws attention to the similarities between contemporary and historical skin whitening methods in their underlying goals. As she puts it, today's cosmetics market offers an overwhelming number of products, continuously promising a lighter or an even complexion, often regardless of skin tones and ethnicities. Eldridge emphasizes that the long-standing and cross-cultural tradition of lightening one's skin is driven by attempts to fit into a beauty-based cultural or social ideal. Moreover, she explains that skin color is strongly associated with race, but skin tone is also closely connected to gender and age. Women generally have lighter skin than men, regardless of their ethnicity, due to having less hemoglobin (the red pigment in blood) and melanin (the brown pigment in skin and hair). Relegating these cross-cultural cosmetic similarities and the common desire to evolutionary psychology, Etcoff elaborates on how skin tone can signal youth and fertility. Etcoff explains that the difference in skin tone between boys and girls becomes noticeable at puberty, with women being lighter during ovulation compared to the infertile phases of their cycle. Also, women's skin permanently darkens after pregnancy. Hence, historically, lighter skin has been prized as a symbol of a youthful, childless state. Moreover, in Western societies, lighter skin is historically associated with wealth and venerated social status. Based on classical literature and archeological excavations, Eldridge points out that pale skin with no signs of exposure to the sun indicated high social status, particularly for women, due to its association with indoor, sheltered lifestyles. In Greek classical literature, for instance, Homer describes the goddess Hera as "white-armed." Theophrastus also described Greek women's use of lead carbonate, to lighten their skin. Supporting these classical references, archaeological excavations have uncovered pyxides containing traces of white lead in the graves of wealthy Greek women.

It is important to note that makeup trends have continuously been changing, especially from the 19th century onward with the surge of women's fashion and beauty magazines. Nonetheless, certain elements and colors remain constant, appearing consistently throughout history. The rosy cheeks and lips, dark eyes, and white skin, sought after since the earliest times in different geographic regions, are still integral to most beauty filters.

As has been discussed, the persistence of these beauty pursuits as well as the reoccurrence of human-animal hybrid representations show deep psychological links to ancient desires and primal forces. However, drawing parallelism between mythological representations of the human wild side and animal filters as well as between ancient cosmetic practices and beauty filters sheds light on a significant issue. As indicated earlier, social media filters, including animal filters and makeup filters, are already available for all users in a standardized fashion. That is, digital filters are produced, or at least regulated and disseminated, by social media platforms and applications for users. This points to the use of psychologically potent motifs and imagery as a marketing strategy, triggering humans' deepest and oldest drives and desires.

5. Conclusion
In this article, building on "pre-digital" filtering practices and seminal insights from evolutionary psychology, we have explored the long history of today's popular social media "animal filters" and "makeup" or beauty filters." The central argument has been that

these currently ubiquitous digital filters not only have a well-established history but also tap into archaic vestiges in the human psyche.

Filtered human-animal selfies are strikingly reminiscent of ancient mythical hybrid figures such as the Centaurs, Medusa, Minotaur, Sphinx, Kitsune, Fuxi and Aïcha Kandicha. Indeed, the strength of this archetype can be seen in the persistence of modern-day tales of vampires, movies of werewolves, countless cartoon characters, and in today's popular social media filters. In this article, building on the cumulative influences of Nietzsche, Freud, and Jung, it has been argued that these hybrid representations are articulations of primordial relics and vestiges from pre-civilization.

Analogously, the work of Fenja Gunn and Lisa Eldridge has helped trace the evolution of makeup and cosmetic practices from the early use of substances such as ochre, kohl, and lead to digital pixels. Through evolutionary psychology, Lisa Eldridge and Nancy Etcoff have also helped understand why certain beauty trends and aspirations, such as attaining a lighter complexion, rosy lips and cheeks, and accentuated dark eyes, have existed across various cultures in different historical periods. They have attributed the persistence of ancient cosmetic practices and the continuous use of certain colors to fundamental instincts such as reproduction and survival. In this article, we have extended these insights to encompass modern time social media beauty filters.

In this study, we have also drawn attention to the use of archaic motifs and imagery in social media platforms as a marketing strategy, appealing to deeply ingrained psychological triggers. Social media "animal filters" and beauty filters" build on age-old motifs and symbolic imagery, tapping into the basic human desire for acceptance and the primal instincts for survival and reproduction.

ORCID iD: https://orcid.org/ 0009-0001-0664-4363

References

[1] Ashkenazi, M. (2003). *Handbook of Japanese Mythology*. ABC-CLIO.

[2] Bernstock, J. (1993). Classical Mythology in Twentieth-Century Art: An Overview of a Humanistic Approach. *Artibus et Historiae*, 14(27), 153-183. *JSTOR*, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1483450.

[3] Chevalier, J., & Gheerbrant, A. (1996). *Dictionary of Symbols*. (J. Buchanan-Brown, Trans.). Penguin Books.

[4] Dowden, K. (1992). *The Uses of Greek Mythology*. Routledge.

[5] Eldridge, L. (2015). *Face Paint: The Story of Makeup.* Abrams.

[6] El-kssiri, M., & Elalamy, Y. A. (2024). Social media filtered images as carnivalesque resistance. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 7 (4), 66-70. https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2024.7.4.8.

[7] Etcoff, N. (2000). Survival of the Prettiest: The Science of Beauty. Anchor Books.

[8] Fenja, G. (1973). The Artificial Face: A History of Cosmetics. Newton Abbot: David & Charles.

[9] Freud, S. (1961). *Civilization and its Discontents.* W W Norton & Co.

[10] Garry, J., & Hasan M. E. (Eds.). (2005). A*rchetypes And Motifs in Folklore and Literature: A Handbook.* M.E. Sharpe.

[11] Gill, R. (2021). Changing the perfect picture: Smartphones, social media and appearance pressures. *City, University of London*. Retrieved from: https://www.city.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/597209/Parliament-Report-web.

[12] Hall, J. (1994). *Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols is Eastern and Western Art*. ConEditions.

[13] Hamilton, E. (1953). *Mythology*. Vidyodaya Library Pvt Ltd.

[14] Javornik, A., Marder, B., Barhorst, J. B., McLean, G., Rogers, Y., Marshall, P., & Warlop, L. (2022). "What lies behind the filter?" Uncovering the motivations for using augmented reality (AR) face filters on social media and their effect on well-being. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 128. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.107126.

[15] Jung, C. G. (1953). *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*. (Vol. 7). R. F. C. Hull, Trans.; S. H. Read et al. eds.). Princeton University Press.

[16] Jung, C. G. (1964). *Man and His Symbols*. Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group.

[17] Jung, C. G. (1981). *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. (Vol. 9). (R. F. C. Hull, Trans.; S. H. Read et al. eds.). Princeton University Press.

[18] Lavrence, C., & Cambre, C. (2020). "Do I look like my selfie?": Filters and the digital-forensic gaze. *Social Media + Society*, 1–13. Sage. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120955182.

[19] Lesso, R. (2022, September 27). Picasso and the Minotaur: Why Was He So Obsessed? *The Collector*. Retrieved January 7, 2023, from https://www.thecollector.com/picasso-and-the-minotaur-obsessed/.

[20] Maarouf, M. (2007). *Jinn Eviction as a Discourse of Power: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Modern Moroccan Magical Beliefs and Practices*. (Vol. 8). J. Hunwick et al. (Eds.). Brill.

[21] Nietzsche, F. (1989). *On the Genealogy of Morals*. (W. Kaufmann & R. J. Hollingdale, Trans.). Vintage Books.

[22] Nietzsche. F, (2006). *Thus Spoke Zarathustra.* (A. D. Caro, Trans.; A. D. Caro & R. B. Pippin, Eds.). Cambridge University Press.

[23] O'Sullivan, T., Hartley, J., Saunders, D., Montgomery, M., & Fiske, F. (1983). *Key Concepts in Communication* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

[24] Rettberg, J. W. (2014). *Seeing Ourselves Through Technology: How we Use Selfies, Blogs and Wearable Devices to See and Shape Ourselves*. Palgrave Macmillan.

[25] Stewart, D. (1979). *Pyramids and the Sphinx*. Newsweek.

[26] Williams, G. (2003). *Handbook of Hindu Mythology*. ABC-CLIO.

[27] Yang, L. & An, D. (2005). *Handbook of Chinese Mythology.* by J. A. Turner (Ed). ABC-CLIO.