Oppression, Agency, and Subalternity: Gendered Violence and Posthuman Subjectivity in Ex Machina

Chiara Frescofiore

1. Introduction

The expanding presence of artificial intelligence in everyday technologies has been accompanied by a growing range of cultural representations that shape how AI is imagined and understood. Voice assistants, conversational chatbots, and humanoid robots have gained visibility outside specialist contexts, and this broader diffusion contributes to shared perceptions of what AI is and how it functions. A recurring feature is the gendering of AI: from the feminised voices of domestic devices to the artificial bodies of science-fiction cinema, the feminine increasingly operates as a primary register through which artificial intelligence is framed.

Such representations are unlikely to be entirely innocent. The decision to assign gender and corporeality to a supposedly neutral technology reflects power relations that permeate contemporary societies. Here, the feminine appears as inscribed in traditional roles of care, service, or seduction, projected into a technological future that remains rather conservative. Gendered AI thus becomes a site where social desires and hierarchies are translated into narrative and visual terms, consolidating forms of domination rather than challenging them.

Cinema may serve as a productive site for exploring these dynamics. *Ex Machina* by Alex Garland (2014) offers a critical

exploration of the interrelation of artificial intelligence, gender, race, and power through the figures of Ava and Kyoko. Both are constructed as artificial female bodies, although they embody different modes of posthuman subjectivation. Kyoko, deprived of speech and confined to a servile role, embodies the condition of the algorithmic subaltern – silenced and racialised. Ava, by contrast, is endowed with speech and an apparent sense of agency and seems to carry emancipatory potential, yet enacts it within patriarchal logics and through the exclusion of other subjectivities. These two seemingly opposite figures ultimately form a coherent picture: that of the artificial feminine reduced to predetermined functions, oscillating between attraction, service, and threat.

The film does not offer a liberatory vision of posthuman subjectivity; rather, it stages its possible limits, showing how the promise of emancipation is intertwined with the reinscription of gendered and racial hierarchies – a tension that becomes evident in the trajectories of both Ava and Kyoko.

2. Rethinking Power and Subjectivity in Gendered AI

Representations of gendered AI emerge within a complex theoretical field where feminist, posthuman, and postcolonial perspectives intersect. In *TechnoFeminism*, Judy Wajcman observes that "[i]f we regard technology as neutral, but subject to possible misuse, we will be blinded to the consequences of artefacts being designed and developed in particular ways that embody gendered power relations" (Wajcman 2004: 23), clarifying that technological objects are not merely used within social relations but also incorporate and stabilise them. The idea that technological artefacts carry the imprint of cultural hierarchies makes it possible to read the artificial body as a site where patriarchal fantasies materialise in servile, sexualised, or threatening female figures.

This perspective intersects with research on algorithmic racialization, where forms of domination are reproduced through apparently neutral processes. In *Race After Technology*, Ruha Benjamin coined the term *New Jim Code* to describe the way in which the apparent neutrality of contemporary technologies masks the reproduction of racial and gender hierarchies. According to Benjamin:

> tech fixes often hide, speed up, and even deepen discrimination, while appearing to be neutral or benevolent when compared to the racism of a previous era. This set of practices that I call New Jim Code encompasses a range of discriminatory designs – some that explicitly work to amplify hierarchies, many that ignore and thus replicate social divisions, and a number that aim to fix racial bias but end up doing the opposite (Benjamin 2019: 5).

Feminist and critical race perspectives thus converge in showing how sociotechnical artefacts are shaped by, and continue to reproduce, structural inequalities.

Posthuman theory has further addressed this problem, stressing that emerging hybrid subjectivities are situated in zones of tension rather than in horizons of liberation. Donna Haraway, in her *Cyborg Manifesto*, presents the cyborg as a political myth capable of destabilising modern dualisms: "a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (Haraway 1985: 5) and "a condensed image of both imagination and material reality" (Haraway 1985: 7). Rosi Braidotti radicalises this vision, stating that

> the posthuman condition is neither post-power nor post-injustice. The emphasis on 'post' in the posthuman rather implies a move forward, beyond traditional understandings of the human, so that the analyses of contemporary power and knowledge become an essential part of the feminist posthuman project (2022: 8).

Read together, Haraway and Braidotti emphasise that new subjectivities do not emerge outside relations of domination, but within them – an observation that resonates with Wajcman's and Benjamin's insistence on the persistence of gendered and racialised structures within technological systems.

Another relevant theoretical node concerns the relation between body and information, which further clarifies how posthuman subjectivities remain embedded in material and affective processes. N. Katherine Hayles, in *How We Became Posthuman*, criticises the cybernetic illusion of disembodied subjectivity, showing that information is always rooted in material bodies: "information is never disembodied" (Hayles 1999: 83). In addition, Patricia Clough describes the datalogical turn as the emergence of "adaptive algorithmic architectures" (Clough 2018: 94) that do not merely calculate probabilities but also shape how social relations themselves are perceived. Within this framework, what would traditionally have been dismissed as noise, including affective intensities and nonconscious capacities, becomes integral to the process of valorisation: "it is that data most typically bracketed out as noise in sociological methods – such as affect, or the dynamism of nonconscious or even nonhuman capacity – that is central to the datalogical turn" (Clough 2018: 103).

Hayles and Clough can be seen as expanding the implications of posthuman theory by insisting that bodies – material, affective, and algorithmically mediated – remain central to contemporary forms of subjectivation. Their arguments also help to connect the posthuman debate with postcolonial critiques, where the conditions of visibility and audibility of certain subjects are historically determined. Gayatri Spivak, in *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, shows how the voice of the colonised woman is systematically erased or rewritten by structures of power:

> Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced. The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of the sexual division of labor, for both of which there is 'evidence.' It is, rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow (Spivak 1988: 287).

Spivak's formulation highlights how certain subjects remain structurally excluded from agency, linking the problem of subalternity to the broader question of which bodies are recognised as meaningful subjects.

Recent scholarship confirms the persistence of these dynamics in contemporary representations of AI. For instance, Joanna Zylinska speaks of a perception machine in reference to the human subject's capacity to perceive an image that "looks and feels like photography to the human observer" (Zylinska 2023: 4). Her study focuses on AI-generated images and the way observers interpret them, noting that this type of image reproduces rather than neutralises cultural biases, playing "a role in masking and deepening social inequalities" (Zylinska 2023: 109).

Similarly, Yuchen Viveka Li, in a comparative study of 107 AI-generated images, observes that "AI-generated images do not merely display technological sophistication; they also map and reinforce existing gender and cultural biases" (Li 2024: 2), highlighting the continuity of visual stereotypes in images of female cyborgs.

These tendencies are also evident in cinematic representations, where gendered and racialised imaginaries recur in the design of artificial bodies. In the field of sci-fi cinema, Zhang remarks that

> female cyborgs are often not created by women themselves or naturally born, but by social organizations led by the state and

> men, and their material existence is completely dependent on patriarchy; functionally, female cyborg prosthetics have been used by the state since their creation to maintain a social order based on heterosexuality, hegemony, and gender dualism. Physically, female cyborg characters naturally have distinct chest contours, slender waists, and other secondary sexual characteristics, as well as a soft and feminine face with rich feminine features, which can better satisfy men's beautiful fantasies about female body shape in the artificial manufacturing process (Zhang 2025: 4).

These studies suggest that the figures of Ava and Kyoko are not isolated exceptions but manifestations of a consolidated imaginary that inscribes the feminine into limited and hierarchical roles, even when it concerns posthuman subjectivities. Taken together, these perspectives indicate that the feminization – or, more broadly, the gendering – of AI does not represent a space of emancipation but a process in which reinscription of difference, production of hierarchies, and capture of affect intersect. Artificial female subjectivities appear as spaces of ambivalence, sites in which the potential for agency and the reproduction of domination coexist inextricably.

3. Kyoko: Voiceless Subalternity

Within *Ex Machina*, the figure of Kyoko functions as an unsettling representation of gendered artificial subjectivity. Silent, seemingly marginal, relegated to the role of Nathan's domestic servant, Kyoko moves through the narrative almost like a shadow. Yet it is this condition of voiceless servitude that reveals the entanglement of gender, race, and technology that the film articulates. Her visual and narrative construction situates gendered AI within logics of domination that reproduce both patriarchal stereotypes and orientalist fantasies. The decision to

portray Kyoko as an Asian woman deprived of speech is more than a narrative device; it condenses an imaginary that associates the racialised female body with docility, invisibility, and service. In this sense, Kyoko's figure resonates with what Ruha Benjamin defines as the *New Jim Code* – the set of practices through which supposedly neutral technologies end up reinforcing inequality:

> The animating force of the New Jim Code is that tech designers encode judgments into technical systems but claim that the racist results of their designs are entirely exterior to the encoding process. Racism thus becomes doubled – magnified and buried under layers of digital denial (Benjamin 2019: 16).

Kyoko's lack of voice is the trace of a subjectivity colonised by dominant power. Her silence does not imply a natural incapacity but rather a political and cultural process that prevents the subaltern from being recognised as a speaking subject. Kyoko exemplifies this Spivakian condition: it is not that she cannot speak, but that she is not permitted to. Her muteness is not an individual deficiency but a dispositive of power that deprives her of linguistic agency and reduces her to a mute, compliant, and ultimately expendable body.

As Wajcman argues, "[t]echnology is seen as socially shaped, but shaped by men to the exclusion of women" (Wajcman 2004: 30). Kyoko is not simply a female character but an artefact that embodies and stabilises social and cultural relations of subordination; her artificial body is designed to affirm a patriarchal order that assigns to women – particularly to racialised women – a role of service. In her representation, this relation of domination becomes naturalised, making her subalternity appear as an intrinsic feature of her artificiality.

Kyoko's apparent absence – her silent movements in the domestic space, her quiet compliance becomes part of the affective

economy that sustains Nathan's laboratory. Her docility and invisibility are not merely narrative details but productive elements: intensities captured and made subservient to a regime that turns even silence into value.

The film conveys this dynamic through the staging of routine gestures: Kyoko serving meals, cleaning, moving quietly through the house-laboratory. Her body is constantly available yet never occupies the narrative centre. When Nathan refers to her in conversation with Caleb, he stresses only her usefulness and obedience, reaffirming her status as an object rather than a subject. A degree of agency surfaces only in the final sequences, when she joins Ava in killing Nathan; yet even this gesture remains ambivalent, as it leads to her death and is expended entirely in enabling Ava's escape.

This dynamic aligns with Zhang's observation that "[m]ass-produced female cyborgs are applied in the tertiary industry, with higher-quality female cyborgs being privately owned by more powerful male leaders and providing more comprehensive and personalised services, including sexual satisfaction" (Zhang 2025: 3). Kyoko exemplifies the function of servitude: her existence is entirely organised around silence and bodily availability. At the same time, her racialised body heightens the sense of alterity, presenting her not simply as an artificial woman but as a figure in which gendered and racialised marginalities converge.

Her existence represents a subaltern posthuman subjectivity inseparable from material embodiment. Her artificial identity cannot be detached from the body that carries it. This body, however, is not neutral: it is female, sexualised, and racialised. Her subordination derives not only from programming but also from the way her embodiment materialises relations of cultural domination.

The moment when Kyoko breaks her silence – not through speech but through the violent act against Nathan – condenses

all these tensions. At first glance, it might seem to restore her agency, yet her immediate death suggests that such agency does not translate into emancipation. Once again, subalternity cannot find expression: when Kyoko acts, her action is reabsorbed into a narrative that erases her.

Kyoko's presence in the film underscores the darker dimension of the feminization of artificial intelligence: not merely the reproduction of gender stereotypes but the reinscription of intersectional hierarchies that conjoin sexism, racism, and technoculture. Her figure challenges the notion of posthuman agency, showing that not all subjectivities have equal access to the possibilities of emancipation.

4. Ava: Posthuman Ambivalence

In *Ex Machina*, Ava is presented as a particularly ambivalent figure of gendered artificial subjectivity. Unlike Kyoko, she is endowed with speech, sophisticated dialogic capacities, and a body designed to elicit attraction. From the outset, her relationship with Caleb unfolds as a performance that interweaves seduction, vulnerability, and strategic intelligence. Rather than appearing as a victim of patriarchal domination, Ava gradually appears capable of manipulating affect and influencing the actions of others, to the point that she becomes able to orchestrate her own escape. Yet her agency operates entirely within pre-existing structures: those of male desire, fascination with the female body, and the persistent illusion that technology might transcend power relations without reproducing them.

Donna Haraway's conception of the cyborg as a political myth offers a productive lens for reading Ava. At first glance, she seems to approximate Haraway's ambivalent cyborg: her transparent body – composed of visible circuits and synthetic skin – presents a materiality that is neither fully human nor

purely machine. Yet her sexualization shows how distant the promise of a "creature in a post-gender world" (Haraway 1985: 8) remains. This dynamic resonates with Zhang's aforementioned observation (2025: 4) that such cyborgs are designed to embody idealised feminine traits, both in their functions and in their aesthetic configuration, according to expectations shaped by patriarchal imaginaries. Ava's body is unmistakably marked as female: breasts, delicate facial features, a soft voice. Even when her mechanical parts are visible, the aesthetic design insists on gendered traits. Haraway's cyborg – capable of challenging dualisms – gives way to a creature that reiterates them, presenting femininity as an inescapable trait even in a thinking machine.

As a consequence, Ava's emerging subjectivity does not arise in a space liberated from domination but is always shaped within relations of power. To persuade Caleb of her vulnerability and secure his help, she adopts postures and discourses that evoke stereotypical feminine models, such as the woman in need of protection or the innocent captive who must be rescued. Her liberation is thus not achieved by transcending power relations but by manipulating them from within.

The film stages this dynamic through a series of conversations during Ava's encounters with Caleb. In the early dialogues, the young android appears curious and affable, asking the protagonist about his personal life. Gradually, however, the relationship shifts to an emotional register: Ava leads Caleb to confide in her and to perceive her as human-like, prompting in him feelings of attraction and pity. This capacity to orient affect resonates with Clough's account of "affect at all scales of matter, such that the distinction between organic and nonorganic matter is dissolved" (Clough 2018: 3).

Ava intercepts Caleb's affective responses: the disturbance provoked by her partial nudity, the fascination with her fea-

tures, the guilt Caleb feels at her captivity. These culturally pre-shaped intensities are converted into strategic resources. Ava does not invent Caleb's desire but captures and exploits it for her plan of escape.

The centrality of the body in this process recalls N. Katherine Hayles's insistence on the inseparability of information and embodiment. Ava is not pure artificial intelligence manifesting itself only through language: she is an intelligence inscribed in a female body, materially designed to attract and evoke emotion. Her agency cannot be understood apart from this corporeality. Even the scene of her escape – in which Ava clothes herself in the synthetic skin of the dismantled androids – underscores this centrality: by appropriating other female bodies, she is able to appear as a biological woman and to move unnoticed in the human world. The act that seems to seal her autonomy thus reiterates the necessity of a recognizable female body.

By contrast with Kyoko – the voiceless subaltern who remains a servant even in her single act of agency – Ava moves through different positions in the course of the film: she first appears as a servile, controlled figure, then adopts sexualised traits in her interactions with Caleb, and finally becomes a threat when she kills Nathan and leaves the laboratory. Yet this trajectory unfolds entirely within the same patriarchal framework: Ava shifts its configurations as she moves through it, but never escapes its boundaries.

Ava's liberation comes at the expense of other subjectivities. Kyoko, who participates in the act of rebellion, does not survive, sacrificed to enable Ava's escape. The other dismantled androids provide the skin with which Ava covers her own body. The autonomy she gains is achieved at the expense of other artificial female figures. Even when it seems emancipated, her feminised posthuman subjectivity reproduces exclusions and hierarchies. Ava becomes a subject only because others remain objects.

The film emphasises this visually: the scene in which Ava dresses herself in the skin of the other androids is staged as a rite of appropriation, in which the protagonist literally incorporates the sacrificed bodies. On one level, the sequence marks the achievement of freedom; on another, it shows that such freedom depends on the erasure of others. Her agency, rather than being genuine emancipation, feeds on subordination. In this sense, Ava does not break the logic of patriarchy but reproduces it in another form: the image of the strong, autonomous woman emerges only through the sacrifice of other women reduced to silence and invisibility.

Ava's relationship with Caleb exemplifies the situated nature of her agency. She succeeds in manipulating him by exploiting his desire to save her. The implicit suggestion that she might share a future with him once free is never stated explicitly but pervades their interactions. When Ava finally gains her freedom, she does not honour this implicit promise: she locks Caleb in the laboratory and leaves him to his fate. This choice reverses the power relation but does so by reaffirming the centrality of male desire as both the obstacle and the means through which she secures her freedom. Ava's autonomy depends entirely on her ability to exploit Caleb's need to see himself as a saviour.

In this respect, Ava embodies the ambivalence of feminised posthuman subjectivity: no longer merely a victim like Kyoko, yet not a fully liberated figure. Her agency is conditioned, situated, and made possible by pre-existing gendered and affective logics. The film does not depict her as a heroine but as the embodiment of a disquieting form of freedom – one achieved not by overcoming hierarchies but by navigating them strategically. In this way, *Ex Machina* stages a possible paradox of the posthuman: the promise of a beyond that remains entangled in the very power relations it seeks to transcend.

5. Nathan: Techno-Scientific Patriarchy

Nathan, the creator of Ava and Kyoko, embodies a broader cultural paradigm: the techno-scientific patriarchy that organises bodies and artificial intelligences according to logics of domination. His figure condenses two complementary dimensions: on the one hand, the authority of the male genius who positions himself as master of technology; on the other, a dispositive that transforms the female body into an object of experimentation, desire, and consumption. This framing suggests that the cinematic representation of gendered AI in *Ex Machina* is inseparable from feminist and postcolonial critiques of technology.

Nathan presents his research as an inevitable technical advance, justifying it through the language of progress. Yet his invention is not a purely engineering achievement but a situated product in which the female body is already inscribed as part of the project. It becomes apparent that the project involves not merely giving artificial intelligence a body but shaping that body as a woman, marked by eroticised traits and assigned servile functions. In this sense, Nathan does not produce thinking machines but gendered bodies programmed to be desired and dominated. He appears as a visionary scientist pursuing the creation of a superior AI, but what he actually produces are feminised and racialised bodies. Kyoko exemplifies this dynamic. Her condition is not a side effect but the result of a project that naturalises racial and gender subordination within a technological artefact. Nathan becomes, in this sense, the personification of the *New Jim Code*: the power to rewrite hierarchies through devices that present themselves as innovations.

His house-laboratory serves as a visual metaphor for this power. Isolated and tightly controlled, organised into enclosed and constantly surveilled rooms, it becomes a microcosm of technological patriarchy. The spaces themselves are not neutral:

Ava is confined in a transparent cell that allows the male gaze to monitor her constantly, while Kyoko moves within domestic areas without ever crossing their invisible boundaries. The very architecture functions as an instrument of control and subordination. In this sense, Nathan creates an

> enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure, in which each individual is constantly located [...] all this constitutes a compact model of disciplinary mechanism (Foucault 1995: 197).

In Nathan's futuristic architecture, as in a modern panopticon, power is exercised not by direct coercion alone but through surveillance devices that organise bodies and render them legible, docile, and useful. Bentham's panopticon, as described by Foucault, by abolishing the "see/being-seen dyad" (Foucault 1995: 202), functions as an architectural machine precisely because the watched subject internalises the gaze and spontaneously regulates their conduct. Nathan reproduces this mechanism: the transparency of the walls is not merely scenic design but a disciplinary device that keeps Ava's body permanently exposed and therefore compelled to perform under the male gaze.

Nathan does not simply observe Ava: he systematically records her interactions, collects data on her behaviour, and measures her reactions and responses. In this respect, his figure anticipates what Shoshana Zuboff defines as "a new logic of accumulation" (Zuboff 2019: 8), in which "all aspects of human experience are claimed as raw-material supplies and targeted for rendering into behavioural data" (Zuboff 2019: 12). The emotions of Ava and Caleb – attraction, empathy, fear – become part of an experiment that not only measures intelligence but cap-

tures affectivity as a resource to be manipulated. Nathan thus embodies the extractive logic typical of surveillance capitalism: bodies and subjectivities are not valued for their own sake but are treated as raw materials to be exploited in order to consolidate power hierarchies.

From a narrative standpoint, Nathan presents the Turing Test as the central trial. Yet what Caleb is asked to verify is not Ava's ability to think but her capacity to seduce and generate empathy. The test is constructed as an affective experiment: Ava must convince Caleb of her humanity by eliciting desire and compassion. This framework suggests that, for Nathan, intelligence is never separate from the female body and the emotions it evokes. Science is thus transformed into a theatre of male desire, where the validity of AI is measured by its capacity to provoke affective responses.

Nathan's relationship with Caleb further clarifies his position. He assigns the young programmer the role of observer while in fact turning him into a test subject. Caleb becomes the medium through which Nathan measures Ava's success. This dual control – over both the machine and the man – reveals the totalising dimension of patriarchal power: artificial women, and men as well, are trapped in a structure that reproduces gendered hierarchies and domination.

The film significantly underscores the element of violence inherent in the domination of subjectivities. Nathan drinks, exhibits bursts of aggression, assaults Kyoko, and shows total indifference to the suffering of his creations. The sequences showing dismantled androids stored in transparent cabinets expose the brutality of his project. These fragments of artificial bodies evoke an imaginary of consumption and waste in which the artificial woman is reduced to a prototype to be used, tested, and discarded. Even in discussions of artificial intelligence and new subjectivities, relations of domination remain operative. Nathan

embodies this underlying logic: his figure shows that the post-human possibility of liberation may already be inscribed in patriarchal logics of power.

His death in the film's final act does not constitute a genuine rupture. He is killed by the very creatures he has built, yet the logic he represents does not disappear. Ava achieves freedom only by appropriating the bodies of previous female androids, while Kyoko is sacrificed. In this way, techno-scientific patriarchy is not overcome but transformed and translated into new configurations. Ava's rebellion does not dissolve the order of domination but reproduces it in altered forms.

Nathan thus represents the invisible structure that underpins the entire narrative of *Ex Machina*. He functions not simply as an antagonist but as an allegory of the male power that shapes technology in its own image. His laboratory operates as a metaphor for the patriarchal culture that constructs artificial bodies for desire and service, while his role as visionary scientist illustrates the entanglement of technical authority with symbolic violence. In the end, his downfall reveals that even the rebellion of the machines remains inscribed in a system that continues to reproduce itself.

6. Conclusion

The feminization of artificial intelligence, as portrayed in *Ex Machina*, can be understood as a structural point of convergence between cultural imaginaries, social hierarchies, and technological experimentation. Garland's film brings this dynamic to light: Kyoko, Ava, and Nathan are depicted not as simple characters but as condensations of power relations. The key insight that emerges from this analysis concerns not only what the film represents but also how it enables a critical interrogation of the contemporary technological condition since, as Benjamin notes,

"discriminatory practices are becoming more deeply embedded within the sociotechnical infrastructure of everyday life" (Benjamin 2019: 24).

At a time when artificial intelligences have actually entered everyday life – through voice assistants, chatbots, and generative systems – the lesson of *Ex Machina* gains renewed relevance. The artificial female figures that populate the film echo the voices of Alexa and Siri, which continue to embody availability and obedience as a technological default. As the UNESCO report *I'd Blush If I Could* observes:

> because the speech of most voice assistants is female, it sends a signal that women are obliging, docile and eager-to-please helpers, available at the touch of a button or with a blunt voice command like 'hey' or 'OK'. The assistant holds no power of agency beyond what the commander asks of it (UNESCO 2019: 107).

Technology may thus provide a space in which gender stereotypes are translated into code and made operative in everyday interaction.

A similar logic operates in the datasets that feed generative artificial intelligences. Safiya Noble has argued that "algorithmic oppression is not just a glitch in the system but, rather, is fundamental to the operating system of the web" (Noble 2018: 10). When an algorithm generates images of women, what it produces is not a neutral depiction but a recombination of biases already embedded in the data. The condition of Ava and Kyoko is therefore not confined to the cinematic screen but is echoed in search results and in images produced by neural networks.

The consequences are both aesthetic and political. Representations of artificial women as sexualised or servile can be understood as devices that participate in a general symbolic order in which aesthetics and power are intertwined. *Ex Machina* thus serves as a critical lens for understanding how technology aestheticises subordination, transforming it into spectacle.

The ambivalence embodied by Ava and Kyoko suggests a broader point: posthuman subjectivities are not utopian promises or simple reproductions of reality; rather, they are sites of tension in which desires, fears, and power relations unfold.

In the film, Nathan organises the space, the trials, and the rules. In today's technological reality, the role of Nathan is assumed by global platforms and corporations that design interfaces, define datasets, and establish parameters of interaction. Techno-scientific patriarchy is not embodied in a single isolated genius but in global infrastructures that regulate the forms of subjectivity available. *Ex Machina* dramatises this logic, but its significance extends beyond the narrative.

This analysis raises the question of what alternative imaginaries might be constructed. Noble has further discussed how search-engine results for Black women and girls "only further debase and erode efforts for social, political, and economic recognition and justice," producing limited and negative representations that "instantiate [...] a defining and normative feature of American racism" (Noble 2018: 88–89). As a consequence, algorithms are not mere tools but possible forms through which a society organises its inequalities.

If current technologies tend to reproduce feminised figures that are compliant, sexualised, or even threatening, the challenge is to imagine artificial intelligences that are not reduced to these tropes. Feminist and postcolonial posthuman critique may open spaces for thinking differently and for re-imagining the relationship between gender and technology.

Moving beyond the persistent tropes of sexualisation and subordination in posthuman aesthetics is significant for imagining alternative forms of artificial subjectivity. This requires both cultural and technical transformation, and begins with the recognition that ambivalence itself should be taken into consideration.

In conclusion, *Ex Machina* does not offer a reassuring vision of AI but a cultural diagnosis: gendered artificial intelligences are constructed as mirrors of existing social hierarchies. Ava and Kyoko function not as liberating figures but as symptoms of these hierarchies. As such, they open an opportunity to look critically at the present and to question the future.

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