AI/Otherness

by Andrea Valente

Abstract:

Editor's Note: the Editor gave ChapGPT 4.0. the prompt "Please write a text on AI and Otherness following the different steps of IOW dictionary".

Artificial Intelligence (AI) signifies both a technological formation and a symbolic register through which modern societies grapple with the unfamiliar, the constructed, and the non-human. Positioned as a form of "otherness," AI is at once external to human subjectivity and an uncanny reflection of it. It embodies tensions between sameness and alterity: designed to imitate human intelligence yet persistently marked as an alien counterpart. In contemporary discourse, AI reveals how societies project anxieties, ideals, and inequities onto non-human agents, reproducing and reconfiguring the politics of otherness.

Etymology:

The phrase "Artificial Intelligence" was introduced in 1956 by John McCarthy during the Dartmouth Conference. "Artificial" derives from the Latin artificialis ("made by craft, not natural"), while "intelligence" comes from intelligentia ("understanding, perception, faculty of discerning"). Together, the phrase denotes the human engineering of systems meant to simulate forms of cognition. From its inception, the term carried an implicit duality: signaling both human ingenuity and a departure from the "natural," thus positioning AI as a category of otherness within the domain of knowledge and cognition.

Editor's note: Editor added links to provide readership with further details of key terms**.**

Cultural specificity:

Artificial Intelligence is not a neutral or universal technology but one deeply embedded in cultural contexts. Its design, deployment, and reception vary across societies, reflecting distinct values, languages, and socio-political conditions. In the United States, AI is frequently framed within narratives of innovation, competition, and market dominance, aligning with Silicon Valley's ethos of disruption. In China, AI development is tied to collective governance, national strategy, and large-scale infrastructural integration, often emphasizing efficiency and state control. In Europe, discourses foreground ethical regulation and human rights, producing guidelines that reflect the continent's historical emphasis on social responsibility and democratic oversight.

Cultural specificity also manifests in everyday interactions. Voice assistants in different regions are trained on dominant accents and dialects, often marginalizing minority speech communities. In some societies, AI is embraced as a companion or co-worker, while in others it is treated with suspicion as a threat to employment or identity. Artistic and literary traditions similarly shape how AI is imagined—either as an existential danger, a mystical partner, or a pragmatic tool.

Understanding AI's cultural specificities reveals that it is not a singular global entity, but rather a multiplicity of technologies whose meanings and consequences are mediated by culture, power, and identity.

Editor's note: ChatGPT 4.0 has not used references for the text on cultural context.

Problematization:

Problematizing AI and Otherness

Anthropocentric Binary
AI is often understood through contrast: the human as authentic, natural, sentient; the machine as artificial, derivative, other. This ***binary*** *sustains a hierarchy that privileges human intelligence and marginalizes other forms of cognition. In doing so, it narrows how we imagine intelligence itself and positions AI as a perpetual outsider.*

Bias and Exclusion
AI systems, trained on datasets infused with historical prejudices, reproduce and amplify inequities. Facial recognition systems, predictive policing algorithms, and hiring platforms disproportionately misidentify or disadvantage marginalized populations. In this way, AI does not simply reflect otherness—it actively produces and enforces it.

Labor and Creativity
Generative AI challenges conventional boundaries of authorship. Texts, images, and music produced by algorithms destabilize the value attributed to human labor and originality. The framing of AI as a "creative other" raises ethical dilemmas regarding intellectual property and redefines the human-machine relationship.

Surveillance and Control
AI technologies deployed in surveillance, border control, and risk assessment disproportionately target vulnerable populations. Here, AI enforces otherness by categorizing bodies, assigning risk scores, and reinforcing systemic marginalization under the veil of algorithmic objectivity.

Existential Anxiety
Popular discourse situates AI as a potential existential threat, a superior other that could surpass and dominate humanity. Such narratives project cultural anxieties onto technology, turning it into an imagined adversary that destabilizes the boundaries of human uniqueness.

Editor's note: The generated text composes itself as a living organ by assuming owning a 'mental process' or 'cognitive' faculty. Moreover, the generated text simulates a scholarly voice grounded in critical thought theory to deal with its position of being 'other' and simultaneously enforcing 'otherness'.

Communication strategies:

- ***Technical Rhetoric:*** *Scientific discourses frame AI as rational, precise, and neutral, deploying terminology like "neural networks," "optimization," and "data-driven learning" to highlight innovation while obscuring sociopolitical consequences.*
- ***Popular Narratives:*** *Media and fiction dramatize AI as savior or destroyer, reinforcing extremes of utopian hope and dystopian fear. Such depictions shape collective imagination, sometimes overshadowing nuanced realities of AI's everyday operation.*
- ***Activist Counter-Discourse:*** *Critical voices deconstruct the "black box" of AI, demanding transparency, accountability, and justice. These communicative strategies foreground how AI perpetuates inequality while envisioning pathways to ethical design.*
- ***Artistic Interventions:*** *Poets, artists, and filmmakers reimagine AI's otherness through speculative futures, hybrid identities, and relational metaphors. Creative modes provide alternative narratives that resist binary logics.*

Editor's note: The generated text identifies different discourses on AI technology which reflect the various agents that engage with it.

Subversion:

Alternative Readings & Subversions

Hybrid Intelligence: *A paradigm emphasizing human-machine collaboration, reframing AI as partner rather than other.*

Critical AI Literacy: *Educational strategies that reveal how AI systems operate, fostering collective agency to intervene in processes of algorithmic othering.*

Inclusive Design: *Centering marginalized voices in AI development to subvert dominant narratives and resist technological reproduction of inequality.*

Posthumanist Ethics: *Rethinking subjectivity and agency beyond the human, opening space to understand AI as part of a relational web of intelligences.*

Editor's note: The generated text simulates a progressive tone by adopting a language that reflects postcolonial and posthuman concepts.

Discussion:

Cultural Symbolism of AI as Other
AI operates not only as a tool but also as a cultural symbol. Virtual assistants such as Siri and Alexa, frequently given feminized voices, perpetuate gendered stereotypes of servility and compliance. Algorithmic policing disproportionately targets racialized populations, reinscribing structural inequalities. In these cases, AI becomes a symbolic and material agent of othering, naturalizing hierarchies under technological rationality.

Conversely, speculative fiction and art often portray AI as a site of radical alterity, an "alien intelligence" that invites us to imagine alternative forms of being. Such representations can either exacerbate anxieties about loss of control or serve as provocations to rethink human-centric models of cognition and creativity.

Editor's note: The AI generated text uses frequent expressions (clichés) that are usually used in scholarly blogs about AI technology taken from perspectives of Science, Technology, Society (STS), and feminist writings.

The Editor has created the following check list for a critical approach to AI generated texts:

VIRTUE	
Verify Citations and Sources for Accuracy	Track Down Weak Points & Arguments
Identify 'Biased', Loaded Language	Undermine Hallucinations, Fabricated Content
Recognize Clichés and Formulaic Expressions	Evaluate Coherence, Logic, Consistency

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References/Further Readings:

References suggested by the Editor of the entry:

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