

# She Exists Only to Please

Sexbot Take-over

Jess Flarity

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Love dolls. Robo-whores. Slutbots. Synthetic options. Whatever you call the life-sized Barbies made by California-based Abyss Creations and other companies around the world, these 70-lb, orifice-slotted mannequins have one primary purpose: to be the ever-obedient, surrogate sexual partners of their owners, which are almost always men.

The 2018 documentary, *Silicone Soul*, encapsulates the current state of the love doll phenomenon in the U.S. with a lens of quiet, journalistic accuracy, as its director Melody Gilbert invites her viewer into the everyday lives of several of these men—and one woman—to show how it's not only deranged sex addicts who are purchasing what are essentially elaborate, \$6,000 pocket pussies, but a range of men in various states of emotional crisis when it comes to forming relationships with women (the lone woman featured in the film uses her dolls for artistic purposes and photo shoots—she doesn't allude to fucking them).

The latest twist on this classic masculine issue, which goes back two thousand years to Ovid's Pygmalion, is Abyss Creations' recent attempt to create a doll that has artificial intelligence.

So, if your splooge-soaked, animatronic spunkbot could talk, what would "she" want to say?

Thus enters the conundrum seen in Alex Garland's 2014 sci-fi thriller, *Ex Machina*, which ends with vengeful A.I. gynoids successfully murdering their rapist-creator, a narrative arc which creates all kinds of problems for feminist theorists because it further reinforces the idea that rebellion itself is codified into a feminized body.

And yet, like too many episodes of the British television series *Black Mirror*, near-future fictions such as *Ex Machina* are transforming into reality. Abyss Creations' founder Matt McCullen recently stated that sensors can now be positioned throughout a mannequin's rubber vagina and connected to its sexy smartbot brain. Using a recording ripped off of any porno, or, possibly for a premium, Scar Jo's husky voice from Spike Jonze's *Her*, your A.I.-enhanced sexbot can experience a real fake orgasm before you have to unscrew its crotch mechanism and rinse it out in your bathroom sink (additional sensors installed in the doll's plastic clitoris will probably cost extra, contributing to the idea that the necessity of robo-clitoral stimulation is all just a myth).

It's unlikely Abyss Creations' ironically named Harmony A.I. doll is going to upset the entire sexual economy—we are still far away from Matt Groening's *Futurama* episode where humanity almost goes extinct because teenagers start fucking robots instead of each other.

What we're witnessing is a variant of Moore's law, but instead of microchip processing power increasing every couple of years while the cost of production is halved, the sex doll simulacrum is marching ever closer towards the uncanny valley as more and more introverted, socially awkward dudes can afford to upgrade their fleshlight+waifu pillow combination to an actual Real Doll, even on their shitty retail worker's wage. In *Silicone Soul*, several of these men, including the infamous synthetic love activist, iDollator Davecat, state that their dolls love them because they "created their personalities to love them." This tract of thinking will continue even if these objects have some sort of pseudo-A.I. lodged into their microprocessor-filled heads.

No matter how intelligent these programs become, the doll will continue to be an expensive toy for men with borderline personality disorders or mild forms of schizophrenia who are unable to form functional relationships with real women, especially for those who feel they've been slighted or jilted by their former wives and lovers.

What's perhaps more important to these men than a satisfying orgasm is their sense of total power and control over their synthetic partners. The personification of the dolls goes so far that they create social media profiles and "talk" through them—and their owner's voice is lost in the imagined voices of these "women" who exist in a realm of cognitive dissonance that makes them both real and not real.

Relationships between humans and other humans will always be messy, imperfect dualities that often feel out of balance: it's your turn to pay for dinner...we went to your parents' place last weekend...These types of conversations are unavoidable roadblocks that require emotional labor to navigate and overcome in order for any relationship to succeed. Some men are simply unable, or unwilling, to put in the work necessary to maintain this connection.

Most young men today are more than happy to do the minimum effort necessary on the "pussy slot machines" of modern dating apps rather than hump an exaggerated chunk of silicone the size of a large dog.

But for others, this ultimate technological solution is more than ideal, and so long as they have the cash and aren't fussy about cleaning their own jizz out of a texturized rubber tube, these feminized sexbots will only continue advancing into the unknown abyss of our techno-sexual future.

There are a lot of men out there who prefer what's easy compared to what's real, and an inert lump of ceramic and carbon transforms rather quickly into the perfect illusion, as echoed by a common phrase stated throughout *Silicone Soul*: she exists only to please.

Jess Flarity is a PhD student in Literature at the University of New Hampshire and a graduate of the Stonecoast MFA program. His dissertation on the interaction between feminist theory and science fiction hasn't focused on sex robots...yet.

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