Dangerous Plastic: The Commodification of the Intimate Body in the Age of Technology

"Invention in aid of sexual satisfaction is not new."
— Mark Migotti and Nicole Wyatt ("On the Very Idea of Sex with Robots")

The growing scholarly discourse concerning sexual consent coincides with the emergence of new/developing technologies in the consumer marketplace that hold the potential to influence both social and sexual norms. Among these innovations, the sex robot emerges as the epitome of the commodified intimate body. This essay explores the commodification of love—and its concomitant aspect of sex—in relation to technology, examining how romantic loneliness and capitalism transforms the intimate body into a marketable entity. From this understanding, the notion of the sex robot (and sexual activity with robots) is negotiated in its multifaceted forms: a type of artificial companionship, a case of sexual deviance/perversion, an act of masturbation, a curative balm for the ills of romantic alienation, and an instance of non-consensual sexual engagement. Through such an analysis, this essay advocates for an awareness of the potential risks posed by the sex robot industry, revealing the ways in which human-robot sexual relationships often proliferate nonreciprocal intimate interactions as well as contribute to a dehumanization of the sexual

body. By delving into the moral and ethical complexities of sex with robots, the essay effectively illuminates the implications that sex robots may have on human agency, relationship dynamics, and broader societal fabrics.

As cultural discourse on sexual consent continues to gain momentum, the simultaneous emergence of new technologies in the marketplace warrants careful examination of the potential impacts on evolving norms of human intimacy and sexuality. Amidst an increase of human-robot relationships in the wake of our world's developing technological landscape, the introduction of the sex robot (or sexbot) raises an important question: do sex robots intensify human romantic pleasures and intimate relations,[1] or do they amplify our societies' fear of bodily exploitation, abuse, and rape? In his article "How YouTube Gives Us Love without the Messiness", Michael Harris succinctly typifies how artificial intimacy provided to us by the synthetic/digital world offers "options that reproduce domestic affection, physical care, [and] maternal attention" wherein "every category of intimacy is at play, reproduced for the *lonely consumer*" (4, emphasis mine). Nevertheless, Harris cautions his reader that such a version of intimacy, arguably fueled by the commodification of love, "has a creeping price" itself, insofar as those same lonely consumers "fool [them]selves in thinking [their] desires for love, comfort, and belonging can be sated with an inanimate object" (7).[2]

---

[1] By intimate relations, I refer to social relationships or connections that manifest for the individual a sense of physical and/or emotional closeness, evoking feelings of personal proximity, sexual intimacy, close familiarity, affection, care, and love, or at least the semblance thereof.

[2] At a first glance, we may understand the (real or imagined) commodification of love to "refer to the ways in which intimacy or intimate relations can be treated, understood, or thought of as if they have entered the market: are bought or sold; packaged and advertised; fetishized, commercialized, or objectified; consumed or assigned values and prices; and linked in many cases to transnational mobility and migration echoing a global capitalist flow of goods" (Constable 50).

In this essay, I explore my opening question in the following manner: first, I analyze how love (and consequently, sex) has become a commodity due to both romantic loneliness and capitalism, thus introducing the concept of sex robots—anthropomorphic and artificially intelligent androids designed for sexual intercourse—as the epitome of the commercialized sexual body. Then, I consider both Alan H. Goldman's and Thomas Nagel's definitions for sexual perversion, identifying that while sex robots may be a pleasurable and intrapersonal form of self-gratification, both philosophers would identify such a form of sex as perverted. From this understanding, I negotiate with the concept of the sex robot as a form of artificial companionship which, on the one hand, promotes a sense of personal autonomy and sexual liberation, and on the other, leads to a further isolation of the 'lonely man' by fostering one-way intimate connections. Finally, I contemplate the threats associated with the sex robot industry, examining how human-robot sexual relationships may engender, and subsequently normalize, nonconsensual interactions, ultimately exacerbating the objectification of the commodified sexual body and perpetuating representations of sexual assault, rape, and more disconcertingly, paedophilia. Effectively, I wish to reveal through my essay how sex (and, by extension, love) is reinforced as a commercial product available for human consumption through the advent of the sex robot into consumer culture, and how such a commodification of intimacy demands comprehensive study when considering agency, consent, and other intricate dynamics within human relationships.

To begin, Harris tactfully hints at how rising levels of consumerism in the global society—as a direct byproduct of capitalism—has led to the commodification of love in a market-

based economy, effectively commercializing the body by placing a greater emphasis on meeting the individual's sexual/romantic desires rather than nurturing intimacy amongst social relationships. Although the crux of his article focuses on artificial companionship as it relates to the virtual world of cybercommunication (i.e., ASMR personal attention videos, chat rooms, phone applications such as *Invisible Girlfriend* which offers subscribed users text-based interactions with actors, etc.), Harris claims that our new reality, stemming from a "precarious economy and shifting social values" ultimately "recognize[s] a culture of autoromance" (3) which addresses the prominent problem of romantic loneliness by reinforcing "a one-way interaction" between creation (the object) and "silent consumer" (the subject) (7). Harris underscores the capacity for online spaces to foster a reimagined sense of intimacy, noting the examples of Tinder and Bumble as dating platforms that provide users a chance to be "lover, loved, and cupid in one" (6), or ASMR audios/videos in which consumers "feel petted and calmed" by virtual ministrations (6). So often however, Harris reminds his reader that for the same user, such online spaces often serve the purpose of "microdos[ing] personal attention," leading to feelings of comfort or pleasure without full satisfaction, and inevitably, "allowing intimate touch—intimacy itself—to be abstracted through the screen" (6). Within this framework, our consumption of new and developing technologies appears to engender a paradox on the landscape of intimate relationships. On the one hand, technology offers novel and easily accessible ways in which to exercise, express, and engage with our desires and emotions, however, at the same time, technology further exacerbates experiences of emotional disconnection and social detachment by reproducing intimacy through an artificial means or digital replacement. Central to

Harris' positioning on the ways in which modern technologies may realize feelings of romantic intimacy and romantic alienation in the individual is a version of love (or desire) both promoted by our market-driven consumer culture and resulting from rising capitalism and individualism.

In her own article titled "Is Love Still a Part of the Good Life?", Eva Illouz emphasizes the ways in which romantic love in modernity is connected to the engine of capitalism, revealing how intimate relationships, and more specifically, sexual desire and sexual autonomy, take the form of products, services, or profit-oriented commodities when facilitated by consumer culture. Illouz principally argues that love transformed from its pre-modern notions to become "individualized, privatized, and central to conceptions of selfhood that emphasized interiority and subjectivity" (178). According to Illouz, such a transformation of love occurred during the 19th century due to three main reasons: firstly, love provides an "ontological security" or certainty about individual identity; secondly, love equips the individual to not only recognize but revere their sense of individuality; and thirdly, love offers "intense intimacy in a world in which solidarity seem[s] to be lacking" insofar as love provides intense bonds that seem to "compensate for the fluidity, geographical, social, moral, etc. of the modern world" (179). Interestingly, as love in modernity became more individualized, so too did 19th century mass market culture begin to offer a vision of intimacy as a new cultural commodity. In such a manner, (primarily heterosexual) formulas of love became an exercise of testing one's autonomy in the world, "affirming the individual's right to […] choose the object of his love" and imagining love "through consumer objects" (Illouz 180). Perhaps the most obvious example(s) of consumer culture

entering the sexual sphere between the 16th to 20th century lies in the global increase of sex trafficking, prostitution (amidst other sex work), the sex retail industry (sex/stag shops, erotic boutiques, red light districts), and ultimately, sex toys and technology (vibrators, fleshlights, and sex dolls/robots). Furthermore, as sexuality, sexual desire, and even sexual attraction increasingly become vehicles for the supply of consumer goods, "anything from discotheques to pornography, to the formidable industries that create sexual attraction like fashion, cosmetics, plastic surgeries, sport […] have as their purpose the purpose to create an attractive body that is constantly ready for a sexual relation" (Illouz 182). As a consequence of capitalism and consumer logic, sexual relationships, and sexual bodies themselves became disposable in nature, akin to the other cultural commodities carried forward by the economic forces of the marketplace. In such a vein, we may appreciate how the body, seen as a commodity, became both objectified and commercialized insofar as the romantic partner fuses with, and perhaps more sinisterly, *replaces*, the individual's material desires. To be sure, capitalism catalyzed the body (a site for sex and intimacy) to be seen and consumed as an economic good.

As our society continues to witness technological innovation and advancements, so too does the robot and artificial intelligence (AI) industry begin to burgeon. To me, one of the most discernable manners in which technology has permeated into the human sex scene, empowered a commercialization of the (usually female) body, and presented (often misogynistic) modes of artificial companionship in order to fulfil the consumer's most carnal desires, is with the advent of sex robots. Here, I employ J. S. Gersen's definition for sex robots as "life-size

machine entities with human-like appearance, movement, and behavior, designed to interact with people in erotic and romantic ways" (1794).[3] Arguably, sex robots, and human-robot connections appear to hold some hope for the rising rates of loneliness in our society insofar as these robots, similar in both physicality and personality to their human counterparts, are configured with AI responsive componentry that simulates the presence and companionship of a real human being. Indeed, as Harris claims, "[o]ur technologies *capitalize* on the fact that we can see human faces in piles of pixels or that we can accept the replication of a lover's voice as the genuine article" (7, emphasis mine). Effectively, modern technology, such as the sex robot, offers the individual "the easiest possible check to the loneliness that pervades contemporary life" by slipping past "the messy experience of flesh-and-blood," and instead providing "at least the 'feel' of intimacy, if not the substance" (Harris 7-8). With a female sex robot, the lonely man is supplied with sexual gratification and pleasure through a synthetic body, and these robots—inherently outfitted as servile—wholly submit to the user's sexually explicit behaviors and acts. As such, the sex robot serves as a direct response to current crises of romantic loneliness by allowing users to covertly express their individual sexual/intimate desires in the safety and privacy of their homes, thus, propagating their sense of individuality and personal autonomy. Consider for instance, how older adults, especially those who suffer disproportionately from (mental or physical) disabilities that hinder their ability to exercise their sexual autonomy,[4] may maintain ethical grounds on the use of a sex

[3] Interestingly, Gersen also reminds his reader that the term "robot" is derived "from the Czech term *robotnik*, which means 'forced worker'" and thus implies a sense of "involuntary servitude" (1798).
[4] Directly addressing this topic, Nancy S. Jecker posits that "[n]ot only do older adults face ageism and ableism in the communities in which they live but also healthcare professionals typically do not broach the subject of sexuality, and medicine is peppered with examples of ageist beliefs about later-life sexuality" (31).

robot insofar as "non-voluntary absence of sex from someone's life is not just a bad thing but also a threat to a person's identity and dignity" (Jecker 31). If individuals who, in anyway, lack intimacy in their personal lives turn to the marketplace for relief, then advancements in technology seemingly bolster the commodification of love by not only commodifying the body, but also commodifying a fabricated 'vision' or 'semblance' of the body through the sale of synthetic sex robots. The design, sale, and use of sex robots —as anthropomorphic devices created to sexually gratify the consumer—thus epitomizes the commercialization of the intimate body.[5]

At this point of the essay, it seems apropos to consider if certain philosophies of sexuality would deem sex with a robot as sex indeed, or rather, a form of sexual perversion. In his article titled "Plain Sex", Alan Goldman posits sexual desire as the desire for physical contact with another person's body and thus, a desire for the pleasure which such physical contact administers through sexual activity. For Nagel, sexual activity—generated by physical contact— acts as the primary inducer of pleasure for the agent experiencing sexual desire. In opposition, sexual perversion is defined as a deviation from a statistical sexual norm wherein a sexually perverted act is conceptually motivated by abnormal or atypical forms of sexual desire or sexual activity (insofar, as fewer people statistically engage in said sex act and the sexual activity in question deviates from the desire for

[5] There are indeed many valid reasons to be wary of the design of sex robots as the product promises variability and customizability in size, age, appearance, texture, language skills, and personality. Thus far, sex robots are primarily 'female' and one company in particular manufactures "life-like child sex dolls" and "childlike robotic models" (more commonly known as 'paedobots') as an effort to allow sex offenders and paedophiles to legally express their desires (Cox-George and Bewley 162). Although many proponents of the paedobot employ offense mitigation or 'harm limitation' as an argument to justify use of paedobots as a means of protecting the vulnerable, given the lack of empirical evidence supporting this notion, Cox-George and Bewley "strongly caution against the use of paedobots as putative 'treatment' unless as part of robust, scientifically, and ethically acceptable research trials" (162).

physical contact with another's body). As such, Goldman characterizes "perverted sex [as] simply abnormal sex," where "the abnormality in question must relate to the *form* of the desire itself in order to constitute sexual perversion" (284, emphasis mine). Significantly, Goldman constitutes object fetishism and voyeurism as a sexual perversion to the extent that it diverges from typical conventions of sexual activity and takes a form of sexual desire which does not seek "contact with another" (284). Goldman explicitly outlines how the sexual desire for contact with an object (Goldman uses the example of items of clothing) is sexually perverse insofar as it deviates from typical forms of sexual desire as well as holds a desire for something seemingly subhuman. As such, despite the sex robot's lifelike experience, they are ultimately objects, commodified items with detachable genitals and the capacity for customization. As an *object*, Goldman perhaps may argue that the sex robot can never truly take the place of a human body and thus, may never fully deliver the pleasure accompanied by physical contact with another *subject's* body. As a result of Goldman's definition for 'normal' or conventional sexual desire signifying the desire for physical contact between two agents (as both a necessary and sufficient criteria), any form of sexual desire for an object (such as the sex robot) would arguably be instinctively characterized as sexually perverse for Goldman due to its lack of another agent (a conscious, mortal, human body) as well as its deviation from typical forms of desire.[6]

[6] Notably, one might post the counter-thought to Goldman that in the case of the sex robot, the sexual activity may be viewed as simply masturbation (albeit masturbation with an object). Goldman markedly addresses this case in his article, suggesting that masturbation qualifies as a sexual activity as long as there is an "imaginative substitute for the real thing," whereby the agent fantasizes about touching another person (270). Arguably, Goldman might respond to such cases defending sex with robots as a form of masturbation, as redundant in and of themselves, noting that the involvement of the sex robot (as an object) immediately and consequently implicates a *physical/material/visible* substitute rather than an *imaginative* substitute for a real body. In rebuttal, I personally foresee

Notably, sexual desire for Thomas Nagel involves the many layers of 'mutual awareness of desire or arousal' between agents; sexual desire thus possesses a phenomenological nature insofar as "it involves a desire that one's partner be aroused by the recognition of one's desire that he or she be aroused" (Nagel 12).[7] For Nagel then, sexual desire implicitly involves a consciousness of the Self and the Other as well as the acknowledgment of oneself as both the subject (being aroused) and the object (of arousal). Critically, Nagel believes that this nature of sexual desire "is the basic framework of any full-fledged sexual relation and that relations involving on part of the complex are significantly incomplete" (Nagel 12). Through employing his thought-logic for the nature of sexual desire, Nagel then posits his account of sexual perversion: if sexual desire only exists naturally and completely with the criteria for mutual awareness/recognition, then any form of desire which disallows for the possibility of such a mutual awareness goes against the very essence of sexual desire (at least, as Nagel views it) and is thus sexually perverse. Without the possibility for mutual awareness, sexually perverted acts (whilst perhaps enjoyable and morally acceptable) do not uphold the natural aim of sexual desire. Arguably for Nagel, cases of object fetishes, such as the sex robot, do not evoke a possibility for there to be a mutual awareness of desire within a sexual interaction. Although the sex robot may possess synthetic sensors in the expected intimate places of the body, such sensory perception is intuitively a false

---

arguments unfolding which may posit sexual activity with robots as a form of masturbation (vis-à-vis Goldman's train of thought) insofar as consumers certainly *can* fantasize or imagine a real subject while having sex with the robot. Needless to say, I believe all claims in this line of reasoning first and foremost must warrant discussion on whether or not we define masturbation as the act of having sex or as a substitute for sex.

[7] In layman terms: Jane is aroused by the knowledge of arousing John, John is aroused by the knowledge of arousing Jane, during a sexual interaction Jane and John become mutually aware of each other's arousal, Jane's awareness of John's arousal arouses her more, John's awareness of Jane's arousal arouses him more, and so the cycle repeats.

preprogrammed display of arousal from a non-human entity; and inherent to Nagel's conception of sexual desire is the internal, phenomenological experience of sexual desire with another being who possesses the ability to experience the same internal, phenomenology through sexual interaction. Thus, any sexual activity with the sex robot would be sexually perverted as the robot is unable to undergo the human phenomenological experience of (a) being aware of the human's desire and (b) maintaining the ability to reciprocate such an awareness. As such, Nagel's definition of sexual desire intuitively accepts cases such as the use of a sex robot during sexual activity as cases of sexual perversion, simply due to the sex robot's impossibility to experience a mutual awareness of arousal/desire as Nagel describes.

It seems, we are left to negotiate with the sex robot as an object or sense of artificial company, but then: does technology allow us to feel less lonely or has it increased our solitude? In his own response, Harris argues that whilst our electronic services and synthetic devices address the problem of romantic loneliness, these same technologies "make it possible to live without ever facing the loneliness that makes up contemporary life so we never discover what lies behind it" (4). In essence, technology allows the modern man "to cling in a predatory and unhealthy way to illusions" of sex, love, and intimacy, wherein it "makes no difference whether they are married to the partner or not, they give little thought to what's going on in the other person […] their emotions and psychological processes" (Kollontai 4). With regards to sex robots, the promise of commercially available companionship arguably holds not only a superficial solution to issues of romantic loneliness, but one that garners attention due to its problematic and potentially dangerous

ethics. As the sexual realm acts as the vehicle for many to face their deepest desires and fears about their own personal autonomy and relationships, the "notion of a robot designed to interact in a sexual way may provoke unease about exploitation, voluntariness, and consent" (Gersen 1798). In reality, sex robots exist in a grey area between sex-toy and human replica, and thus regardless of their life-like physicality and perceived consciousness, concepts of 'consent' seem counterintuitive as robots cannot give their consent to anything, let alone sex. To be sure, in his paper "Robots, Rape, and Representation", Robert Sparrow argues that sex is a "relation," occurring between people, and as "robots are not (yet) sentient, a robot is never 'someone' [so] strictly speaking, sex with robots is actually masturbation with robots" (4). Significantly, Sparrow goes on to argue that the fundamental design of the sex robot (often manufactured to look like a real woman or in more threatening cases, a child) represents or simulates acts which ordinarily would be performed with other humans, and thus, sex with robots are a form of masturbation that "has a disturbing representational content" (5).[8] On the one hand, having sex with a robot that *fails* to provide affirmative consent acts as a representation of rape, and on the other hand, having sex with a robot that seemingly *always* provides their consent to sex represents a disreputable vision of sexuality (i.e. endorsing harmful pornographic stereotypes or nullifying the prospect of rejection), especially in the contemporary lives of women who already exist on the brink of societal disempowerment. Ultimately, the sex robot reinforces ideas of the (female) body as

[8] Indeed, as Cox-George and Bewley also suggest, "[t]here are worries about blurred boundaries to consent and permission for enacted violence when sexbot 'personalities' can be selected that simulate non-consensual sex — that is, rape" (162). Although many might preserve the argument that robots (as machinery, or objects) are unable to grant consent (and thus, be raped), Cox-George and Bewley remind us to question if "the user's motivation [can] be entirely discounted" (162).

a commercialized object, or quite literally, a piece of property to be owned.

Harris neatly wraps his argument by asserting that users desiring synthetic intimacy "feel they're participating, speaking back, despite the fact they are (probably) alone" and as we "adapt old psychologies to new technologies," we have permitted for intimate touch to be codified through a device or object (8). In the context of sex robots then, synthetic intimacy aptly blurs the line between fantasy and reality. In the same token that violent RPG's (role-playing video games), deepfake image-based sexual violence, nonconsensual genres in pornography, and portrayals of sexual assault in mainstream media have been historically and critically argued to bolster ideals of rape in society, I believe adapting human psychologies regarding sex and sexuality to a non-human entity (robots who are fundamentally unable to consent) arguably normalizes representations of rape in our society. The potential inability of some sex robot consumers to distinguish between reality and fantasy raises a plethora of concerns, especially when we consider Harris' claim that artificial companionship is not often viewed as "one-way interactions" but instead as two-way participatory exchanges. Indeed, Katie Engelhart reiterates these thoughts in her own article, postulating that humans "naturally attribute agency to machines—and, in turn, qualities like intention and caring" (13). Further, physically embodied robots "give the impression that, inside a machine, somebody is home" and thus, humans "must systematically delude themselves regarding the real nature of their relation" with the robot, as it "requires sentimentality of a morally deplorable sort" insofar as such sentimentality "violates [the] ethical imperative to

apprehend the world accurately" (Engelhart 13-14).[9] On a very obvious level, users may truly believe that sexual activity with a robot consists of a mutual exchange of desire, physical contact, etc., and this false belief might translate in reality to heightened risks of sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape involving children/adults.

Although I contend that the introduction of sex robots in consumer society might provide a safe temporary sexual outlet for those (predators, pedophiles, sexual offenders, etc.) who elsewise might harm others by enabling them to legally release their unlawful or malicious desires on non-human entities, I argue that human-robot relationships in the sexual sphere might conversely lead to the increase of sexual violence/aggression as such a synthetic connection is intrinsically nonreciprocal. Thus far, my essay has tried to reveal how rising levels of consumerism within the artificial intimacy sphere poses risks including: the commodification of human beings and human bodies, the normalization of sexual perversion/deviancy, the proliferation of violence in the domestic sphere, and the advocation for the exploitation of vulnerable individuals/minors. Against my position, I envision arguments being made that sex robots might indeed provide those suffering from social anxiety, cognitive impairments, or physical disabilities a mode to exercise their sexual autonomy and liberate themselves from romantic loneliness. Further still, some might grant my arguments of the sex robot epitomizing the objectified, commodified body, and still uphold that the monetary transaction tying the sex robot to the consumer ultimately *entitles* them to utilize the sex robot (moreso seen as a

[9] To be sure, recent empirical research on human-robot interactions even demonstrates how "anthropomorphism works as a psychologically persuasive tool to not only elide the artificiality of social bonds between humans and robots but also influence human behavior" (Kaufman 373).

purchased sex toy/object) however they desire. Yet, as both Harris and Engelhart suggest, sex robots paradoxically work against their primary intention of providing human companionship by socially isolating users further. By resorting to sexual intercourse with a robot to alleviate feelings of romantic alienation, individuals detach themselves even further from authentic human connections and the realities of genuine sexual encounters; and by doing so, deprive themselves of the opportunity to forge meaningful personal or intimate bonds with others.

As the scope of future technological possibilities continues to expand, I also anticipate the emergence of fresh arguments, particularly concerning the potential development of highly sophisticated sex robots beyond the current offerings. Here, I consider the potential of future sex robot designers exploring avenues to incorporate autonomy and enhance interactivity, developing ways for the robot to engage with phenomenological affects or experience subjective feelings, and introducing diverse pathways for sensory perception, sentience, and learning capabilities. A compelling argument to be made in favor of this future scenario lies in the potential for sex robots to replace human sex workers, offering a possible solution to address ongoing issues and harmful practices within the sex industry, including sex slavery and sexual abuse. Still, I would implore future scholarly analysis to also examine the moral and ethical dilemmas arising from the design, sale, and use of such future sex robots. Importantly, we must ponder at the potential utilization of autonomous sex robots to facilitate rape fantasies, whereby consumers may disregard or even exploit the sex robot's expressed non-consent, and thereby still represent and themselves embody harmful behavior. Despite all this, some

might simply argue that the modes of learning, phenomenological experiences, and consciousness of artificially intelligent robots intrinsically (and perhaps, radically) differ — and will continue to do so— from that of a human being, and therefore any effort to compare the two, or evaluate one against the other (especially when considering discourse on sexual consent) would be a fool's errand.[10] Yet still, at a fundamental level, the use of sex robots as a substitute or replacement for the intimate body dehumanizes the body, commercializes a version of love that mocks true bodily integrity/autonomy, and proliferates a sense of social isolation within consumers.

To conclude, whether or not we define sexual activity with robots as a masturbatory act, an intimate (albeit artificial) connection, or a non-consensual endeavor altogether, human-robot sexual relations nevertheless concretize our growing isolation from communal/social connections. At the heart of the ongoing discourse surrounding the integration of sex robots into the domain of human intimacy resides the pivotal question of the sex robot's ability to exert sexual agency. Evidently, such sexual agency and autonomy not only encompasses the capability for the sex robot to offer their (non-)consent or an impression thereof, but also to actively engage in sexual activity with the user on a level equivalent to the user's own involvement with the robot. Perhaps still, there may exist cases or future possibilities we have yet to uncover wherein sex robots provide a wider range of opportunities for authentic sexual fulfillment or, in turn, encourage users to regard consent as a positive, affirmative, and mutually reciprocal engagement within social/sexual interactions. Indeed, it might take an entire

[10] What does it mean for a robot to provide consent? What does consent to a robot entail? Can a robot truly comprehend the concept of consent, or will consensual interactions simply be a programmed response to human interactions?

secondary essay to discuss the ways in which society might regulate or control such human-robot relationships, but that too ultimately hinges on whether or not we perceive robots as more or less human after engaging in sexual activity with them.

Bibliography

Constable, Nicole. "The Commodification of Intimacy: Marriage, Sex, and Reproductive Labor." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 38, no. 1, 21 Oct. 2009, pp. 49–64, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.37.081407.085133.

Cox-George, Chantal, and Susan Bewley. "I, Sex Robot: The Health Implications of the Sex Robot Industry." *BMJ Sexual & Reproductive Health*, vol. 44, no. 3, 4 June 2018, pp. 161–164, https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjsrh-2017-200012.

Engelhart, Katie. "What Robots Can-And Can't-Do For The Old And Lonely." *The New Yorker*, Condé Nast, 24 May 2021, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/05/31/what-robots-can-and-cant-do-for-the-old-and-lonely.

Gersen, Jeannie Suk. "Sex Lex Machina and Artificial Intelligence." *Columbia Law Review*, vol. 119, no. 7, Nov. 2019, pp. 1793–1810., https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2307/26810849.

Goldman, Alan H. "Plain Sex." *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1977, pp. 267–287. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2265133. Accessed 20 Feb. 2022.

Harris, Michael. "How YouTube Gives Us Love Without The Messiness." *The Walrus*, The Walrus Foundation, 2 Jan. 2020, https://thewalrus.ca/how-youtube-gives-us-love-without-the-messiness/.

Illouz, Eva. "Is Love Still A Part Of The Good Life?" *The Good Life Beyond Growth: New Perspectives*, edited by Christoph Henning and Hartmut Rosa, Routledge, London, 2017, pp. 177–187.

Jecker, Nancy S. "Nothing to Be Ashamed Of: Sex Robots for Older Adults with Disabilities." *Journal of Medical Ethics*, vol. 47, no. 1, 16 Nov. 2020, pp. 26–32, https://doi.org/10.1136/medethics-2020-106645.

Kaufman, Ellen M. "Reprogramming Consent: Implications of Sexual Relationships with Artificially Intelligent Partners." *Psychology & Sexuality*, vol. 11, no. 4, 23 July 2020, pp. 372–383, https://doi.org/10.1080/19419899.2020.1769160.

Kollontai, Alexandra. "Sexual Relations and the Class Struggle." *Selected Writings of Alexandra Kellentai*, translated by Alix Holt, Allison & Busby, London, 1977, pp. 1–12.

Nagel, Thomas. "Sexual Perversion." *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 66, no. 1, 16 Jan. 1969, pp. 5–17., https://doi.org/10.2307/2024152.

Sparrow, Robert. "Robots, Rape, and Representation." *International Journal of Social Robotics*, vol. 9, no. 4, 22 May 2017, pp. 1–28., https://doi.org/10.1007/s12369-017-0413-z.