

A New Era of Fetishism: Winterson's Dys/Utopian Sexbots

ASSIST. PROF. DR. MUZAFFER DERYA NAZLIPINAR SUBAŞI*

Abstract

The issues concerning the female body and sexuality have long been a priority for feminist scholars and critics. In the last three decades, this field of study has been greatly influenced by current technological implementations, especially regarding the creation and modification of bodies. Although these modifications seem promising from the perspectives of tech-optimists, feminists object to bodily modifications by underlining the fact that technology is designed and developed following the desires of heterosexual masculinity, thereby preserving the dehumanization of women and reinforcing the objectification of their bodies. The growing sextech industry and the recent trend of all-equipped sexbots serving in sexbots brothels demonstrate the adverse consequences of the d/evolution of heteronormative technology. Thus, considering the above discussions within the light of Jeannette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019) and basing the argument on cyberfeminist critiques of Donna Haraway, in this study, I have aimed to reveal the fact that the use of sexbots will re-establish a new type of fetishism and rape fantasy by normalizing the sexual abuse in a master-slave relationship, rather than creating post-gender worlds.

Keywords: sexbot(s), fetishism, artificial intelligence, cyberfeminism, post-gender

FETİŞİZMDE YENİ BİR ÇAĞ: WINTERSON'IN DİS/ÜTOPIK SEKSBOTLARI

Öz

Kadın bedeni ve cinselliği feminist teorisyenler ve eleştirmenler için uzun süredir öncelikli bir alan olmuştur. Son otuz yılda bu çalışma alanı, özellikle bedenlerin yeniden yaratılması ve şekillendirilmesi ile ilgili mevcut teknolojik uygulamalardan büyük ölçüde etkilenmiştir. Her ne kadar bu uygulamalar teknoloji iyimserlerin/severlerin bakış açısında umut verici ve olumlu görünse de feministler, teknolojinin heteroseksüel maskülinitenin arzuları doğrultusunda tasarlanıp geliştirildiğini, böylece kadınların değersizleştirilmesinin ve bedenlerinin nesneleştirilmesinin devamını sağladığını vurgulayarak bedensel değişim ve şekillendirmelere karşı çıkmaktadırlar. Büyüyen seks teknolojisi endüstrisi ve son zamanlarda sayıları giderek artan robot genelevlerinde hizmet veren tam donanımlı seks robotları, heteronormatif teknolojinin olumsuz sonuçlarını açıkça göstermektedirler. Bütün bu bilgiler ışığında bu çalışmada, Jeannette Winterson'ın *Frankissstein: Bir Aşk Hikayesi*'ni Donna Haraway'in siberfeminist eleştirileri doğrultusunda inceleyerek, seks robotlarının kullanımının cinsiyet sonrası (post-gender) bir dünya yaratamayacağını; aksine, efendi-köle diyalektiği bağlamında cinsel istismarı normalleştirerek yeni bir fetişizm ve tecavüz fantezisi yaratacağı gerçeğini göstermeyi amaçladım.

Anahtar sözcükler: seksbot(lar), fetişizm, yapay zekâ, siberfeminizm, cinsiyet sonrası

INTRODUCTION

As species having curiosity and the ability to produce technology, human beings focus more on enriching this knowledge and applying it to different fields. That is why, the list of technology being relied on is getting longer each day. As widely known and accepted, technology facilitates life with its many vehicles, such as delivery drones, automated cars, gadgets used in communication and medication healing, and protecting all living organisms. In this sense, advancements in technology are the driving force in improving the quality of life and its expectancy. Nevertheless, when considering two sides of the same coin, technology has also an essence that blinds people to its negative aspects, in such a way that the autonomy of technology imprisons people in the deepest possible way. That imprisonment or addiction manipulated by technology becomes more complicated, especially in collective settings and/or family arenas, where sex, children, relationships, and reproduction can create challenges. In fact, during COVID-19, when the world has experienced strict lockdowns and social isolation, these issues have come to the forefront with a new marketing angle offering safe and virus-free sexual intercourse. As a result, technology companies have given rise to studies dealing with human-machine erotic interaction by claiming that humanity has been going through a new era where many relations are formed digitally without the necessity of having legitimate connections.

Despite the sociological concerns and ethical implications, more and more companies working on artificial intelligence, robotics, virtual/augmented and mixed reality have started to compete with each other to produce artificially intelligent sex dolls, sex robots, erotic chatbots or "erobots", new term coined by Simon Dubé and Dave Anctil using the words "erôs + bot" (2020, p.1205). When compared to prior technology, these artificial agents exhibit different features in terms of their capability of having erotic engagement with humans. That is, they are more than objects of desire providing erotic satisfaction, but these new 'erobots' are gradually becoming and perceived as active subjects, which paves the way for humanity to have intimate and sexual relations with machines. That dubious facet of erobots or sex robots (sexbots henceforth) has polarized discourses from public and academic fields. For instance, according to some scholars and critics among whom are Bendel (2020), Dubé and Anctil (2020), Danaher (2019), and Levy (2014), erobots/sexbots have certain benefits for humanity in the areas of interactive and personalized sex education, child abuse prevention, medical and therapeutic treatments for risk reduction in interhuman sex. In a similar perspective, some academics suggest they can be used in the treatment of pedophilic disorder (Harper and Lievesley, 2020), the protection of prostituted women (Levy, 2007), and providing intimacy for elders [men] (Jecker, 2021).

On the other hand, those castigating the risks of erobots/sexbots assert that they have the potential to promote the existing damaging sociosexual norms and create more problematic cases, such as attenuating interhuman relationships, violation of privacy and boosting child abuse and/or sexual assault (Moran, 2019; Mackenzie, 2018; Eskens, 2017; Harvey, 2015). As seen, the studies conducted on sexual/erotic interaction between humans and erobots/sexbots mostly focus on either the possible assets or risks of that interaction. Moreover, no far-reaching theoretical model has been

introduced yet. Therefore, the empirical literature and its concerning results are still limited, unsubstantiated, and speculative.

However, despite the mentioned drawbacks emanating from the lack of a unified transdisciplinary field of research and ethical controversies, a new era of sexbots has long been available and even sexbots brothels are on the way. For instance, in their article discussing the possibilities of a futurist world in which human beings pay to have sex with robots, Ian Yeoman and Michelle Mars claim that “in 2050, Amsterdam’s red light district will all be about android prostitutes who are clean of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), not smuggled in from Eastern Europe and forced into slavery, the city council will have direct control over android sex workers controlling prices, hours of operations and sexual services” (2011, p. 365). Though Yeoman and Mars’s assertions seem speculative and need a long time for verification, the rise in the number of sex doll brothels in Asia run by Doll No Mori and in Europe by Lumidolls is a clear indicator of things to come. These companies, in order to increase the tolerance and social acceptability of using sex dolls and sexbots as well, point out that they will not only help to cease prostitution and sex trafficking, but they will also provide their customers with breathless fantasies without any limits and risks. In fact, the assertions of these companies were searched in a survey conducted by Scheutz and Arnold in 2016. They found that 86% of the participants considered sex dolls/sexbots could satisfy their sexual demands and desires. Thus, this high percentage would be evaluated as the acceptance of sexbot brothels with robot prostitutes working there. On the other hand, this fact also gives rise to the contentious issue of whether sexbots are ethical or whether they cause a new type of fetishization accompanying violence. For example, according to Blázquez, “most countries lack any type of law regulating [sexbots] establishments – even if within the walls of these brothels men can fulfill fantasies such as having sex with robots that act and look like children, or programmed to pretend to be raped to fulfill the customer’s rape fantasies” (2022, p. 31). This bold assertion from Blázquez sounds irritating and leaves questions in minds about sexbots’ validity.

Nevertheless, sexual behaviors have already changed a lot due to the increasing use of digital media and technology, which has also increased the frequency of the sexual uses of human-like material artifacts. Based on the tech-optimistic point of view, sexbots are gradually being popularized and normalized. They are everywhere - on TV, in mainstream music videos, or in public exhibitions. Moreover, there is even a new documentary in progress directed by Melody Gilbert, *Silicone Soul* that spotlights several men having been married sex dolls (siliconesoulmovie.com). In fact, a new terminology has been created for those advocating synthetic love with dolls and/or robots: ‘iDollators and robosexual’.

One of these iDollators is a 40-year-old Davecat, calling himself an advocate for the rights of synthetic humans and lovers. He is in a polyamorous relationship - a wife and a mistress, both dolls. In an interview with Julia Beck from *The Atlantic*, Davecat explains that for people who are fed up dealing with inconsistencies in human relations, synthetic partners are ideal. Then, he reveals why he has bought Sidore, a RealDoll manufactured by Abyss Creations in the shape of a human woman: I bought Shi-chan [Sidore] back in 2000. Admittedly, my reasons for purchasing her were 70 percent sex, 30 percent companionship. I’ve always been attracted to artificial women such as mannequins, and especially Gynoids, which are robots made in the likeness of human females. In late 1998 one of

my best friends showed me the RealDoll website, as she knew I was keen on artificial women. I thought they were gorgeous creations, and having one would not only dispel loneliness, but be excellent for *sex* as well. And I was right! (theatlantic.com) (emphasis mine)

Introducing himself as a pioneer in the synthetic love movement in social media and TV programs, like *My Strange Addiction* on TLC and *Guys and Dolls* on BBC, Davecat admits that involving in a romantic relationship with an organic woman is a waste of time for him since he has a 'doll' waiting for him at home. That doll is the ideal woman that can be put aside after completing its mission, which is being 'penetrable'.

Keeping this 'penetration' issue in their minds, Kathleen Richardson and Charlotta Odland, the writers and the editors of *Man-Made Women, Social and Cultural Studies of Robots and AI*, portray how women and their bodies are sexually objectified in the form of sexbots and sex dolls as in the following lines:

Made of silicone and metal, 'sex' dolls and robots mimic (primarily) women and girls. Constructed as pornographic representations of females, they are designed with one function in mind: to be penetrable. With a choice of oral, vaginal and anal depth, 'sex' doll/robot buyers can choose from a large range of breast and buttock sizes, ethnicities, hair and eye color, selecting from categories such as 'teenage', 'Asian' or even 'pregnant.' (2022, p.2)

For Richardson and Odland, these sex dolls/sexbots, specially customized according to the desires and fantasies of men, perpetuate the existing patriarchal mechanisms of ab/use and degradation of women. Contrary to the academia's responses claiming that these 'objects' can be used for sexual exploration and education for individuals having anxiety and low self-esteem, or for the ones living in single-sex contexts, Richardson and Odland, defend that 'sex' requires mutuality and consent between partners, so it cannot be experienced with an inanimate object.

In light of these issues, in this paper, I aim to demonstrate that the existing ethics of technology and improvements regarding artificial intelligence serve to satisfy men's unlimited sexual fantasies and ab/uses. Portraying the use of sexbots as socially beneficial, the hegemonic masculinity reinforces the inherent misogyny, prejudice and injustice with violence against women. Hence, I insist the sexual objectification and mistreatment of women have not tapered off but rather morphed into a new type of fetishization by phallogocentric systems, while stepping into a new era of technology with sexbots or "*pulsing vaginas that never say no*" (emphasis in original), as Jeanette Winterson describes in *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019, p. 56) (henceforth *Frankissstein*). Briefly, depending on the obsessive and fetishistic portrayal of sexbots in Winterson's novel, I try to forewarn the readers about the worrying consequences of sexbots' use in the growing sextech industry and subvert the master-slave dialectic with a radical feminist perspective.

THE RESURRECTION OF MASTER-SLAVE DIALECTIC THROUGH ARTIFICIAL WOMBS

Jeanette Winterson, one of the most gifted contemporary English writers mostly focusing on gender binaries, sexual identities and relations between humans and technology, reanimates Mary Shelley's timeless literary classic *Frankenstein* in her *Frankissstein* (2019), in which she makes a

critique of the d/evolution of technology regarding its implementation on the creation and modification of bodies. Believing that Shelley's novel is a message in the bottle sent out to the future, Winterson takes a step further and focuses on today's changes and challenges of artificial intelligence, cryogenics and sexbots. As an optimist by temperament, she imagines a future in which artificial intelligence would change people's way of learning, communicating and even having sex. Through artificial intelligence, which Winterson prefers to call "alternative intelligence" (AI henceforth), a better human being or "a new kind of life form, not out of the assembled parts of decayed corpses by using electricity but out of the zeros and ones of codes" (TedTalks, 2022) can be created, because this alternative intelligence is completely different from human intelligence, as she puts in:

AI is non-binary. It is humans who are obsessed with false binaries. Male, female, masculine, feminine. Black, white, human, non-human. Us, them. AI has no skin color. AI has no race, no gender, no faith in a sky God. AI is not interested in men being superior to women, in white folks being smarter than people of color. Straight, gay, trans are not separating categories for AI. AI does not distinguish between success and failure [...] AI is not motivated by fame and fortune. If we develop alternative intelligence, it will be Buddhist in its non-needs. ... AI is a tool. We are the ones who are using that tool. ... How is this going to end? Utopia or dystopia? It is up to us. (TedTalks, 2022)

Briefly, Winterson strongly underlines the fact that it is human intelligence that decides in which way the world will d/evolve. If human agendas are full of hatred, money, violence and dichotomies, the world will most probably get out of control, as she has portrayed in *Frankissstein* through Victor Stein, a celebrated and brilliant AI specialist trying to establish a future where human intelligence can go beyond the restraints of a physical body. What Victor Stein longs for is to create a utopia without any labels, "binaries like male and female, black and white, rich and poor. ... [and] division between head and heart" (*Frankissstein*, p. 33) with the help of AI. To realize his dream, he gets into Ma/Ry Shelley, a transgender doctor who procures bodies through hospitals for his cryogenics experiments. Nevertheless, this is not the only reason for Victor to get interested in Ma/Ry. He is also physically and romantically attracted to Ma/Ry because of xyr¹ "hybrid" nature (*Frankissstein*, p.62), or 'doubleness' as Ma/Ry self-describes xyrself in the following:

When I look in the mirror, I see someone I recognise, or rather, I see at least two people I recognise. That is why I have chosen not to have lower surgery. I am what I am, but what I am is not one thing, not one gender. I live with doubleness. (*Frankissstein*, pp. 65-66)

This doubleness in Ma/Ry's post-surgery body is living proof of transhuman implications, hereby representing "future-early" (*Frankissstein*, p. 85) for Victor, because he believes in the possibility of choosing and changing physical bodies, or even creating disembodied subjects through AI. Like Winterson's Victor Stein, Donna Haraway, a distinguished scholar synthesizing feminist theories with technology studies in her *Cyborg Manifesto*, asserts that "communications technologies and biotechnologies are the crucial tools recrafting our bodies" and these tools can be used to create

¹ 'xe/xem/xyr/xyrself' are neopronouns increasingly used in place of gender-specific ones. Despite being mostly used by transgender, non-binary, and/or gender non-conforming people, neopronouns can be used by anyone. The reason why I prefer to use neopronouns for Ma/Ry is because of xyr hybrid nature, comprising the features of wo/man.

a cyborgian world in which “all resistance to instrumental control disappears and all heterogeneity can be submitted to disassembly, reassembly, investment, and exchange” (2016, pp. 33-34). According to Haraway, through these recrafted bodies in which human/machine and mind/body dissolve, all troubling dichotomies of phallogocentric discourse are destabilized, subverted and finally “we find ourselves to be cyborgs, hybrids, mosaics, chimeras” (2016, p. 60). Haraway’s insistence on creating cyborg bodies emanates from her strong belief in the potentiality of these hybrid creatures. For her, they are the signifiers of a new postmodern feminist politics that would let women destabilize gender-biased categories.

Haraway’s theory of the cyborg has been influential in scholarly and literary discourse as it paves the way for a promising post-gender society where the constructed binaries enslaving people in phallogocentric definitions disappear. However, high-tech culture enabling fluid social interactions through the cyborg myth also embodies dangerous possibilities, especially for women, as technologies and scientific discourses are mostly dominated by hegemonic masculinity. Therefore, despite the feminist formulation of the cyborg as post-gendered, several scholars and writers underline the fact that the portrayal of cyborgs in popular culture, media and contemporary narratives is not outside the dichotomous system of gender and sex that forms society.

Having the same opinion, Sharalyn Orbaugh, a professor of modern Japanese literature and popular culture, notes in *Sex and Single Cyborg* (2007) that contemporary Japanese cyborg narratives continually aggrandize binary oppositions and gendered divisions between male and female cyborg bodies. She underlines the fact that “the great majority of the cyborgs [...] well-known to North American audiences are emphatically male in appearance, and often portrayed as threatening, or at times pitiable, monsters: Darth Vader and the Empire’s soldiers (the clone warriors) in the Star Wars films (1977, 1980, 1983, 1999, 2002); Data, and all the Borg except the Queen, in Star Trek: The Next Generation (1987-94); RoboCop (1987); Terminator (1984); Total Recall (1990)” (p. 449). That is, they all represent the masculine power derived from technological phallicization. On the other hand, female cyborgs are depicted in a hyper-sexualized manner, thereby legitimizing the sexual objectification of women for the voyeuristic male gaze. Hence, these ‘sexy robots’ are far from being a useful tool to establish new and liberating alternatives for women, or being a ‘boundary-breaking’ figure as Haraway asserts, but they become the key objects in the reinforcement of fetishization of women’s bodies. This is the inevitable effect of technology on the cultural embodiment of gender, as Anne Balsamo puts in *Forms of Technological Embodiment: Reading the Body in Contemporary Culture*: “As is often the case when seemingly stable boundaries are displaced by technological innovation (human/artificial, nature/culture), other boundaries are more vigilantly guarded. Indeed, the gendered boundary between male and female is one border that remains heavily guarded despite new technologized ways to rewrite the physical body in the flesh” (1995, pp.216-17). That is, these ‘vigilantly guarded’ boundaries triggered by male-dominated technology confine women into a life of passivity and submissiveness once again, and exacerbate the stigmatization of women as sexual property by using the pre-existing inequalities regarding the female body.

Seeing the dark sides and the misogynistic framework that underlies the philosophical and ethical justifications of ‘sex/y robots’, Jeannette Winterson introduces the character of Ron Lord, a

stereotype of vulgar and chauvinistic masculinity, to forewarn her readers about the bitter fruits of heteronormative technology. Having much money but no sensitivity, Ron engages in the sexbot industry, where he modifies sexual female bodies that look like porn stars and perform like robots, ever ready to obey the desires and demands of their male owners. They are just sex toys, or more precisely, 'somas' of the brave new world ruled by artificial intelligence that have "very tight figure – little waist, double- G-cup – and ... [their] tits and pussies are always warm" (*Frankissstein*, p.36). As a heterosexual man taking advantage of heteronormative technology, Ron modifies female bodies to make them better fit the patriarchally constructed stereotypes and satisfy men's phallogocentric desires and fantasies. Then, to advertise and increase sales, he whores out his sexbots, or 'XX-Bots' as in the following:

I see it as a public service. ... and this is a bit philosophical, but I am a thinking man – there's no such thing as underage sex when it's a bot. I mean, there's no can't do it till you're sixteen or whatever, so we get some schoolkids wanting a try – yeah, boys, 'course it's boys – and ... you can be old, you can be ugly, you can be fat, smelly, you can have an STD, you can be broke. Whether you can't get it up, or you can't get it down, there's an XX-BOT for you. (*Frankissstein*, p.39)

Thus, through Ron, Winterson reveals that the future society reformulated by AI will still keep and enforce sexist and binary beauty standards to control and oppress women, rather than establishing post-gender societies where the subversion of gender(ed) identities is intended. These technologically d/evaluated sexbots marketed by Ron are the 'docile bodies' created in line with the male discipline. With their human-like bodies having removable and/or adjustable parts which range from heads to penetrable orifices, sexbots are modified according to the demands of their 'masters'. The most popular XX-bots among these master buyers are the ones with "three holes all the same size [that] all VI-BRATE! ... [in] any position", and these alternatives provide personal freedom for clients, "especially [for] the fat ones" (*Frankissstein*, p.35). That is why, as Ron explains in the following, his XX-BOTs are the 'ideal woman/girlfriend' that can be locked away after being ab/used:

XX-BOTs make a great travel choice. No nagging about stopping for lunch or needing the toilet. No sulking about the Holiday Inn you've booked. She's next to you, long hair, long legs, you choose the music, beautiful woman in the passenger seat. If you want to be a bit more discreet you can fold her up and strap her in the back, or stow her out of sight in the boot or trunk or whatever you call it. (*Frankissstein*, p.36)

Thus, XX-BOTs are the new sex slaves serving men's unlimited sexual fantasies, and even for their violent and brutal enactments. In that case, "depending on [XX-BOT's] wear and tear", Ron offers service for his clients, through which they can "order spare parts, if any of her gets damaged, or too messy", and these "breakages, storage, updating" are so easy as "the technology is changing all the time" (*Frankissstein*, p.33). Another privilege provided by Ron is the option of renting and he clarifies his reasons in the following lines:

Renting is popular with stag weekends; get half a dozen of the girls in for fun and frolics. Different models too, blonde and busty, brunette and sporty. ... Renting a bot when you're on your lonesome is safer and cheaper than the human alternative. No diseases, no revenge porn, no getting robbed of your Rolex at 2 a.m. ... With a rental, every girl gets hygiene-

checked, bathed, perfumed, yeah, you can choose one of four scents – musky, floral, woody or lavender. (*Frankissstein*, p.33)

Despite Ron's ecstatic and exalted statements about the various benefits of XX-BOTs, the gradually rising production of sexbots seals women's commodification and exploitation as sexual objects, because the hegemonic masculinity still regards women as "marketable attributes that are primarily connected to their reproductive functions", or more precisely, to their female bodies as Willow Verkerk has stated (2016, p.149). This is the inherent and vicious misogyny that women have to fight against, even in the 21st century. No matter how hard they struggle to get rid of all these phallogocentric stigmatizations, the hegemonic order finds new and more violent ways to oppress and control women. And in this new era dominated by AI, it is the 'sexbots' that take devaluation and ab/use of women to new levels of fetishization by reconstituting the master-slave relationship.

Having the same concerns in her mind, Mary Daly, an American radical feminist scholar, has long forewarned women about the misogynistic aim lying behind all these technological artifacts in her *Gyn/Ecology*, published in the 20th century. She underlines the fact that "it is hard to see/name the fact that phallogocentrism reduces women to framed pictures/holograms/robots" (1979, p. 56). Today, even in the 21st century, it is still hard to see, because men do their worst not to lose their masculine power and privileges. They have used sexual/violence, assault and oppression on women as instruments of terror and silencing for many years. Now, they direct this phallogocentric power to "sex dolls and robots in the female form function as an endorsement of men's sexual rights, with women and girls positioned as sexual objects [and] these products further cement women's second class status", as Caitlin Roper boldly expresses in *Sex Dolls, Robots and Woman Hating* (2022, p.167). Contrary to the claims of sexbots advocates asserting that they are technologically designed tools to enhance sexuality, these practices in which women are considered sexual commodities and adjustable parts to be sold enhance misogyny and rape culture in the utmost end, as Donovan Cleckley explains:

How can men regard women as human while simultaneously regarding them as objects that can be replaced by synthetic corpses bought and sold? We must question the reality in which rape has been mistaken for sex, and silence has ruled. Suppose the allegedly "positive" treatment or provision for men, whatever it may be, which presumably "fulfills" them sexually or "helps" them, results in negative outcomes for women and children, especially girls. (2023, pp.4-5) (emphasis in original)

The most important question concerning this issue is who benefits from all these sex-positive developments that turn women into meat holes, or more precisely submissive artificial wombs having no rights apart from satisfying their masters' desires and stimulating their erections. The answer has been given by a sexbot owner to Caitlin Roper: "[They] are a better option than women. There really isn't much difference in terms of what they offer, but the [sexbot] will give it to you 100 percent of the time, no questions asked" (mamamia.com). Thus, as this confession has demonstrated, nothing has changed much in the carnal desires of men ever since Pygmalion carved his erotic doll Galatea, which is positioned in between inanimate and animate. This sexual attraction to inanimate objects or the erotomania known as Pygmalionism, emerges in the forms of "sex doll ('dead woman') and sex robot ('animated corpse')" in an artificial era, as Shirley MacWilliam clarifies in *Playthings*

and Corpses—Turning Women into Dead Body Objects (2022, p.68). It seems that women have been marked by an unchangeable fate and chained into a Sisyphean vicious circle of repeat, return and enclosure despite their long-lasting struggles against heteronormative masculinity and its deep-rooted misogyny.

Thus, men's incurable desire and obsession with women's bodies to create an ideal subservient woman find a new way in the world of machines. Believing that women exist for men's sexual ab/use, they envision sexbots with the most advanced AI technology. They are the new fetish objects that can be enrolled into already existing practices. Having the same perspectives, Ron likens his XX-Bots to Barbies by announcing that it is time for "boys ... to play with Barbie [as] they're grown up" (*Frankissstein*, p.34). Unlike the original ones, these new Barbies have a companion mode for men who like to communicate. For example, Deluxe, having better quality materials as the name suggests, is a perfect choice for clients wanting more than sex:

Deluxe has a big vocabulary. About 200 words. Deluxe will *listen* to what you want to talk about – football, politics or whatever. She *waits* till you're finished, of course, *no interrupting*, even if you waffle a bit, and then she'll say something interesting. (*Frankissstein*, p.38) (emphasis mine)

That is, the phallogocentric cliché of ideal womanhood that warms, soothes and cares is encoded everywhere, even into the mechanical artifacts. Having Pygmalion narcissism claiming that no woman is good enough, hegemonic masculinity turns its gaze to posthuman bodies now intending to possess 'an angel robot in the house', which has no "mind or a wish of her own" (1979, p.59), as Virginia Woolf has boldly stated in *A Room of One's Own*. In other words, the long-established fears and desires of a patriarchal culture are reconstructed in the visual representations of sexbots during the age of biotechnologies and digital worlds.

According to Jeanette Winterson, these improvements based on biotechnology and AI may establish a better and all-encompassing future for everybody due to their non-binary structures. But then, she reminds her readers of the fact that all these tools are used and controlled by hu/man beings; thus, they can create a utopian or dystopian society in the end. Knowing this reality, Winterson uses fiction to make critique of the d/evolution of technology and highlights the dark sides of these tools in *Frankissstein* through the portrayal of sexbots. She states that relying on AI and empowering biotechnology with the expectation of having a perfect and egalitarian society as an outcome can be a dream, especially for women because of the sexist and heteronormative technology that imprisons women into no-choice situations. As the increasing number of sexbots has indicated, the hegemonic order will keep on controlling and considering women as sex toys for their ab/use so as not to lose its power. Despite the phallogocentric marketing asserting that "[XX-bot] is better than sticking it up some girl who's dry as sandpaper and doesn't fancy you" (*Frankissstein*, p.39), Winterson stresses that the result would be far from perfect, even for men, as she puts it in the following:

I did worry about that. Watching guys have sex with bots, ... [They are] entirely fantasy. They've got huge tits and small waists and long legs. ... But of course what they haven't got, and never will have, is a *clitoris*. They don't have to worry about that! (theguardian.com) (emphasis mine)

With her emphasis on 'clitoris', Winterson denounces the phallogentric dogma stigmatizing women as bodies with 'pulsing vaginas' and then, she encourages them to remember the uniqueness of their bodies, because envisioning a manland full of artificial wombs would cause a complete loss for all human beings, rather than creating a utopia with no labels and binaries. Henceforth, Winterson aims to depict that the growing sextech industry having been shaped under the lustful and fleshy desires of men will not be a utopian dream, but a dystopian nightmare for women in which their less-than-human status is reinforced and then gradually legitimized through XX-bots, which are the reminiscences of phallogentric system.

CONCLUSION

'Prostitution is like masturbating without having to use your hand',
 'It's like renting a girlfriend or wife. You get to choose like a catalog',
 'I feel sorry for these girls but this is what I want'. (Farley et al 2009, p. 8)

In their study that includes interviews with clients buying sex, Farley, Bindley and Golding display the asymmetrical relationship between the client and prostitute, or more precisely, between the master and slave. The sex worker, primarily a woman serving male clients, is treated as a sex toy that can be ab/used in accordance with the desires and demands of the client. Glorifying their status and failing to empathize with the prostitute, clients do not regard her as a human being with feelings and agency that should be respected, but rather an object to be assaulted. This sex worker-client or master-slave relationship is carried over to an artificial case in which the prostitute is substituted with sexbots, the corpse-like representations of women. For women, it is a never-ending process, which makes them feel like a genie-in-the-bottle story. Their mind and soul have been entrapped in their phallogentrically defined bodies for many years. Now, in the age of AI, hegemonic masculinity has found a new form for its fantasies: "Girls who would never get old or ill. Girls would always be saying *yes* and never saying *no*" (*Frankissstein*, p.161) (emphasis in original). These girls, that is sexbots, are put at the service of humankind - or more precisely at the service of men's unlimited sexual ab/use with their long legs, "user-ready, and F-cup moulded tits" (*Frankissstein*, p.32). They are like "Bambi for boys" (*Frankissstein*, p.32), but in fact, they are just the "caricatures of that masculinist reproductive dream" as Haraway remarks (1991, p. 152). Providing a satisfying and easy sexual outlet for men without fear of rejection and failure, sexbots are men's dream of a high-tech utopia. However, this 'perfect world' for men is inhabitable for women.

Jeanette Winterson believes that alternative intelligence would create an all-encompassing world without labels and binaries, thereby promoting equality. For her, AI is the key to being able to establish a gender-free, race-free, and even body-free form bestowing an imperishable way of life. However, through the voice of Victor Stein, Winterson underlines the fact that "AI need not replicate outmoded gender prejudices. If there is no biological male or female" (*Frankissstein*, p.56), or in other words, if there is no gender bias already constructed. Thus, as long as the phallogentric implications concerning the objectification of women and their bodies exist within society, women will continue to be "the first casualties of obsolescence in [this] brave new world" (*Frankissstein*, p.56). Ultimately, gender and body politics will persist as heteronormative technology keep on serving masculine demands and desires. Drawing the readers' attention to crucial issues about the misuse of

technology, particularly in the context of exploitation and ab/use of women, Winterson underlines the fact that sexbots are the revival of a 1950s Stepford Wives style. In an interview with Kara Swisher, she explains why sexbots create hindrances in the progress of establishing a promising post-gender society:

It's men who seem to want a kind of female act — I don't really know how else to describe it ... She can't go out of the home. She's always pleased to see you. She never gets old. She never gets fat. She never has a period. She's never going to eat the face off you when you're late. She's always ready for sex. She always comes when you do. (nytimes.com)

Creating sexbots, according to Winterson, is a *manly* thing to do based on deeply gendered debates over the status and roles of women. Being an optimist, she believes that technology can help create a better future, but she has worries about sexbots as they are the phallogocentric manifestations that encourage misogyny and reinforce the existing power dynamics. Considering these issues, in her *Frankissstein*, Winterson aims to portray how heteronormative technology prioritizing masculine desires can perpetuate the prevalent inequalities and re-establish a new type of fetishism and rape fantasy by normalizing the sexual abuse in a master-slave relationship, rather than creating post-gender worlds.

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