



Robots, men and sex tourism

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ABSTRACT

In 2050, Amsterdam's red light district will all be about android prostitutes who are clean of sexual 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. This paper presents a futuristic scenario about sex tourism, discusses the drivers of change and the implications for the future. The paper pushes plausibility to the limit as boundaries of science fiction and fact become blurred in the ever increasing world of technology, consumption and humanity, a paradigm known as liminality.

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1. Introduction

Would you pay to have sex with a robot? Even if it was akin to something from *Stepford Wives*? Is this the future of sex tourism in a futurist world? A revolution of humanoid social robots (or androids) is quietly taking place in our society, autonomous, interactive and human like entities of various sizes and shapes are leaving research laboratories in large numbers, making their way into the world of our everyday lives. Automated teller machines, vending machines and automated telephone response systems are standing in for human attendants to serve real people; online search agents, game bots and chat programs are working for and playing with human users; and robotic dolls and pets are cuddling up with children and talking to the elderly [1].

The rise of a synthetic social world where human individuals and humanoid social robots co-mingle, calls for a new conceptualization of society. The traditional view of society as consisting of only human individuals needs revision. For one thing, the boundary between humans and human artifacts is no longer inviolable due to the increasing technological prostheticization of human bodies. Technologies are becoming an integral part of the human condition. Furthermore, robotic replacement of human individuals in the processes of social interaction and communication creates a human-machine nexus that is indispensable to the operation of everyday life. Society comprises of not only human individuals as delimited by their biological bodies, but also technological extensions of individuals, including their robotic surrogates. In *Terminator Three*, the android terminator manifests itself simultaneously as young naked flesh but also as a self-depreciating, declining and ageing actor, being chased by the next level up android, which happens to be a young, blond, female killing machine. Her ability to totally reconfigure her body, at a moment's notice, imbues her with an unusual allure [2]. By the same token, considering the female 'Borg' character 'Seven of Nine' from the *Star Trek Voyager* series; 'falling in love' with a machine

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appears to be inevitable, her pert attributes are continuously subjected to nano-probes and aesthetically placed biotechnical devices. The film, *Veronica 2030* is about a female android called 'Julia', created to provide sexual pleasure for humans. When she accidentally gets transported back in time from the year 2030 to 1998, she becomes a lingerie model and engages in various erotic adventures. These fictional characters are constructed to be physically pleasing with a high degree of sexual arousal, especially for male audiences all in the search for fantasy and perfect sex [2].

All of this suggests blue skies thinking or paradigm shifts, something akin to science fiction or utopia. If the basis of this paper is science fiction, then there must be truth in the proposition as science fiction is a genre of fiction, of plausibility, in the context of the future. Science fiction writing employs rationality [3] about alternative worlds but not fantasy as the story has context and reality, etc. there is a degree of truth in the story at the very least. As Parker et al. [4] point out science fiction "involves systematically altering technological, social or biological conditions and then attempting to understand the possible consequences" [4]. Science fiction has an explanatory framework, as stories point out a mechanism or structure of explanation in a narrative form; why else would Steven Spielberg [5] have brought together 23 futurists to explain how technological futures might occur for the film 'Minority Report'? He did this in order to find linkage, causality and explanation for the science fiction features of the film. According to Bergman [6] when writing about futures studies, beyond science fiction is Utopia, a no place. Utopia is a place that neither tells the truth nor points out causes. It is a place where you cannot live, as it does not exist. If you arrive in utopia, you want more or a further utopia. Therefore, sex with robots has a foundation, it is not a Utopia. It has technology reference. It is feasible. Society has had relationships with machines and we continue to have increasingly intimate relationships with more and more sophisticated technologies.

As Levy [7] suggests in his book *Love + Sex with Robots*, by 2050 technological advancement will allow humans to have sex with androids. Taking this one step further Henrik Christensen, chairman of EURON, the European Robotics Research Network predicts that people will be having sex with robots in five years and in 2010 the world's first sex doll was showcased at the AVN Adult Entertainment Expo in Las Vegas. Priced between \$7000 and \$9000 US Roxxy is a truly interactive sex doll offering a range of replicated personalities from frigid Farah to Wild Wendy.

Robot sex offers a solution to a host of problems associated with the sex trade. Given the rise of incurable STI's, including emergent strains of gonorrhea and HIV/AIDS throughout the world and the problem associated with human trafficking and sex tourism it is likely that we will see an increase in demand for alternative forms of sexual expression. In 2050, Amsterdam's red light district will be all about android prostitutes who are clean of sexual transmitted diseases, not smuggled in from Eastern Europe and forced into slavery. Android prostitutes will be both aesthetically pleasing and able to provide guaranteed performance and stimulation. This article discusses how such a scenario could come about based upon a futurist perspective of sex tourism in Amsterdam.

The problems and dangers associated with the selling of sexual services are myriad and well documented. We wish to acknowledge the very real negative consequences of the sex industry. However, the purpose of this paper is to think outside of current day realities and imagine a world in which high quality, non-human sexual services are available for purchase.

2. Sex tourism

Tourism and sex have always gone together [8]. It is theorised that Columbus brought syphilis from America to Spain in 1492 [9]. Soon after, epidemics of syphilis spread across Europe, mainly associated with the movement of men. In 1494, the 50,000 troops dispatched to the Alps by Charles VIII were handicapped by syphilis and consequently withdrawn to France. Between 1495 and 1496, cases of syphilis were reported in a number of European countries, from England to Hungary, and throughout Germany and Russia.

Tourism, romance, love and sexual relations will continue to be linked in 2050 and beyond. For as long as people have travelled, they have engaged in romantic and sexual encounters of various kinds. Sometimes sex or the prospect of sexual encounters in the destination or along the way plays a central role in the decision to travel and the choice of destination. At other times, sex represents an incidental aspect of a trip or plays no role whatsoever in the decision-making. Sometimes sexual activity is regarded as being a socially acceptable and mutually beneficial reason to travel, as in the case of honeymoons or romantic getaways. Sex tourism is one of the most emotive and sensational issues in tourism. It is an extremely problematic area to define. Destinations such as Las Vegas, Thailand and Amsterdam are sex tourism destinations whether by intention or not.

3. Amsterdam's sex industry

We have chosen Amsterdam as the site for this future scenario because it has a long history as the sex capital of the world. During the middle Ages, prostitution in the Netherlands was not prohibited. Prostitution in Amsterdam has always been tolerated as this posting proclamation for the city council in 1413 states:

Because whores are necessary in big cities and especially in cities of commerce such as ours – indeed it is far better to have these women than not to have them – and also because the holy church tolerates whores on good grounds, for these reasons the court and sheriff of Amsterdam shall not entirely forbid the keeping of brothels [10].

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