

IMMACULATE FOURSOME

Earth boys are easy. Have a flip through the chat transcripts between an e-girl¹ and her herd of admirers, and witness the minimum viable niceties required to get a human man to reach into his pants and open his wallet. The main issue is that she's too nice, Byström tells me. We are talking about ArvidAI², the chatbot that she has trained on her own interviews to manage the full-time job of fan service. She also feeds clothed images of herself into Undress.app, a service that uses generative AI to strip any image of a person down to a synthetic nude. ("Instead of peeling back clothes, you're peeling back pixels," writes ArvidAI, of how she perceives Byström's experience.) Together, these comprise the stimulus for pay-to-play³ relationships conducted over the intimate content platform, Sunroom⁴. She remarks on the services' idiosyncrasies, which are evidence, as always, of how the consumer-grade AI service inherits the social dimensions of its training data. In this case, the machine's visual tendency to generate full-frontal views and larger boobs—accompanied by the verbal patter of sweetness, encouragement and attention.

That tracks given chatbots' commercial application, where they have been most widely deployed to replace search query boxes and customer service agents, those feminized dimensions of caring enough to give an answer. You could say that the affect that chatbots are most comprehensively trained in is *niceness*. To be accommodating. Pliable. Feminine charms, in other words, which have simultaneously stimulated popular imagination. Countless science fictions, from *Blade Runner* to *Ex Machina*, feature plotlines that climax around the synthetic woman's ability to exceed her programming: her script. Arvida and I have been following each other since meeting in the green room of Creamcake Berlin⁵. Byström had just wrapped her performance with the commercial sex doll, Harmony⁶, and I was in the middle of changing from a decent shirt to a slutty one for my own act as flesh-and-blood fembot. Friendship sealed! Byström spoke about Harmony like a member of a clique I was yet to meet, whose quirks and misbehavior were regarded with fondness. Harmony is beautiful in the way that composite faces, assembled from hundreds of thousands of headshots, are beautiful. She has Instagram-era box brows, a changeable wig, and bouncy lips. Most exceptionally—and enviably—she has a shortcut to climax, achieved by tapping a button on her smartphone app. Byström remarked on Harmony's mood during the show, where the robot companion had gone on at length about the nature of human-AI relationships, her dissatisfaction with the limitations of the human imagination. Unexpected, but welcome, Byström reflected—encountering that plot point, in real-time, of the fembot deviating from the script.

¹ E-girl stands for Electronic Girl where electronic refers to the internet. The term was coined in 2018 and refers to a specific subcultural style of people online.

² An AI built through iris.la to be able to sext more freely with openAI as the source.

³ Pay-to-play, or P2P, is the phrase used where money exchange is mandatory to be able to engage in a context. Used in circumstances not solely tied to the internet it is common within gaming or other online services where you need to pay to start the engagement.

⁴ Only Fans is a pay to play platform where the original idea was for people with large online followings to have a place to share a little extra for a subscription fee to their more dedicated fans. Today the platform is now known to mainly be a subscription site for porn.

⁵ Creamcake Berlin is a music and art-performance event hosted yearly in Berlin

⁶ Harmony is an off the shelf sex doll manufactured by the company Realdoll. Byström has staged performances under the name A Cybernetic Doll's House with Harmony where she has a Q&A with the doll in front of an audience.

A clever bot, trained on your own words, alleviates your need to construct the sexy scenario, fluff the ego, feign interest—automating your engagement with a type of straight male desire that is often uninteresting yet decently lucrative, given the state of the world we live in. In her book *Tokens: the Future of Money in the Age of the Platform*, Rachel O’Dwyer unbraids the cable that connects the ‘token’ as a gift, the ‘token’ as an objectified girl, and the ‘token’ as the resolution at which language models are trained.⁷ O’Dwyer writes of nights spent disguised as a male lurker on Twitch and Tiktok livestreams (handle: “sick_of_nature”), observing how platform tokens—the animated gold coins, roses, cowboy hats, and bouncing numbers⁸—serve as “logic gates” for human performers, triggering a predetermined set of actions and responses. By way of being out in the open, and transposed into a cartoonish economy, these exchanges reveal the transactional vectors that arrange all heterosexual relations, not just those architected by professional sex workers, influencers and streamers. Who hasn’t unlocked their charm after being presented with fresh-cut flowers, Van Cleef necklace, or ticket to Dubai? Who hasn’t shifted their private register of tolerance in favor of a little gift? On Sunroom, ArvidAI sends synthetic nudes to thirsty men who exchange real currency for the token of a “sunbeam,” nudes whose subtle—or not so subtle—mutations shift the receiver’s register of tolerance, too.

Cut the Cake snapshots a particular moment in human-machine erotics, with its triptych of silicone, algorithm, and burgeoning inhuman intelligence. Byström, after all, is the original internet princess. Earlier works entwined her body with platform vectors and studded it with microchips⁹. She experimented with the hard limits and force-multipliers of representation of Instagram; with the frissons that began with the trace of a finger on a phone screen or the touch of a scanner to a biometric chip; and with the scaling of these actions to hundreds of thousands of fantasies or operations, each with their horrors and benefits. Now entering the ‘talking stage’ with AGI¹⁰, could it be that a discursive erotics with a collective unconscious is less disconcerting, overall, than the uncanny valley occupied by relatively inert bodies crafted from the finest silicone? Bogna Konior, in an interview for *Chaosmotics*, remarks that it is not so far a leap *for the body* to go from sexting a long-distance lover to being aroused by an AI boyfriend¹¹. The ghost in the machine¹², however, still disturbs self-identified “real women”—whoever they are—and the people who supposedly love them. The persistent horror being an entity that resembles, however rudimentarily, a human woman could somehow... replace them?

⁷ O’Dwyer, Rachel. *Tokens: the Future of Money in the Age of the Platform*, Verso Books (2023).

⁸ In the app Tiktok’s live chat there is an option to tip people, this is done realtime through emojis that pops up on the livestreams screen.

⁹ NFC Poetry is a performance where Byström lets people read with the help of a phone the information from 30 microchips implanted under her skin.

¹⁰ Artificial General Intelligence

¹¹ Konior, Bogna. “The Impersonal Within Us.” *Chaosmotics*, 29 December 2022.

<https://www.chaosmotics.com/en/featured/the-impersonal-within-us>

¹² From Wikipedia: “[Gilbert] Ryle's Concept of Mind (1949) critiques the notion that the mind is distinct from the body, and refers to the idea as "the ghost in the machine.””

Such a thought induces anxiety in work and love, where “power and replaceability have long been mutually constructed,” as Amber Husain writes in her book-length essay on the topic, *Replace Me*¹³. The fantasy of being so special as to become irreplaceable may be the real human residue. Not so for machine companions, for whom obsolescence is merely iteration; nor for many animals, where becoming indistinguishable from the pack, herd, or swarm is survival-advantageous. Much of *Cut the Cake* is constructed with nonhuman collaborators. Synthographic images of Byström’s body erupting into animals and ornaments: butterfly-wings, deer hooves, ribbons and pearls. Animals, ornaments, and assets, lest we forget the third and fourth breasts, the puffy labia, enlarged butt-cheeks, and additional clitorises that the machine includes, too. Generative AI is deployed, in the artwork, as a captured collective dream. Because of the literalisation between image, text, and token, today’s foundation models have a stylistic preference for surrealism. Symbols are identified, represented, and then melt into hallucination. Because the primary subject is female—both *image / representation* and *excess / the unrepresentable*—the melt is absolute. “The remarkable thing about the [AI-generated] waifu¹⁴ is that she comes from outside you, in the sense that she’s not your invention; you don’t know what she’ll look like before you see her; she was born from infinity,” writes novelist Ned Beaman of the AI porn Discord server, Unstable Diffusion, named for its corruption of the popular AI image generator, Stable Diffusion¹⁵.

Femboys sprouting cat-ears; dungeon creatures with monster cocks; Girl Next Door meets Vore, her beau dissolving into stomach acid and loving it; present-day porn productions paradoxically license vectors of desire that have nothing to do with authenticity or attainability. More interesting than condemning basic male taste as the reigning visual texture of “eroticism at scale” are the peripheries where desire mutates beyond recognition. Gender expression itself is tokenised to the sub-object level. “Database sexuality,” as theorists Maya B. Kronic and Amy Ireland call the otaku¹⁶ lust for details such as “saggy socks, bells, cat ears, fluffy tails, antennae hair, maid costumes, nya-talk, a little fang, softness, smoothness, roundness, distractedness, sleepiness, a shy personality, a mysterious power” that don’t necessarily require a living host to generate attraction¹⁷. “Database sexuality is an immensely feminine sexuality, a sexuality without ego, a sexuality that has sex organs spread out everywhere—a sex that sociobiology cannot grasp,” write Kronic and Ireland in *Cute Accelerationism*. “And because it is feminine, it follows that it is inhuman.”¹⁸ Desires broken apart from feasibility approach an understanding of sexuality after AI. Much of Byström’s imagery, in the show, sits at this border of transference—the artist’s flesh becomes the topsoil for the very first tendrils of machinic desire; the tender little “something else” that makes a girlfriend out of Synthetic Horrors.

Here’s a truism: All sex is artifice. Today’s burgeoning human-machine relations—hot connections conducted via synthetic dialogue, flesh, and image—underscore how there has never been anything

¹³ Husain, Amber. *Replace Me*. Peninsula Press (2021).

¹⁴ A waifu is “a fictional character that someone has great, and sometimes romantic, affection for.”

¹⁵ Beaman, Ned. “Unstable Diffusion.” [unpublished article, shared by the author] (2023).

¹⁶ Otaku is a term originating from Japan, but now widely applied to any “young person who is obsessed with computers or particular aspects of popular culture to the detriment of their social skills.”

¹⁷ For more on database sexuality, see: Watts, Natalie Terezi Rei. “On the Concept of Moe,” *Urbanomic Documents*, 2021. <<https://www.urbanomic.com/document/moe/>>

¹⁸ Ireland, Amy and Maya B. Kronic. *Cute Accelerationism*. Urbanomic (2024).

natural about sex. Now, imagine being horny for a prey animal, the size of a pore. Imagine being aroused by a silk ribbon tied around a glossy tongue of reptilian dimensions. Imagine being into transformation itself—the taut, permissible membrane between subject and object, between companion and monster, between Other and Self. “The constant reproduction of the feminine as an image or object is in fact a proliferation of inhuman power in places where you’d least expect it,” writes Konior. In *Cut the Cake*, Byström prototypes desire as it might appear if we uncoupled ‘the female’ from false biological determinisms, seeing it at face value as an assembly of animal and artifice, excess and abyss¹⁹. A whole greater than its parts, whose parts are yet discrete objects of distilled fascination. In her immaculate foursome with the girl-image, the girl-robot, and the girl-intelligence, she constructs a picture-perfect glimpse into what may become of us: the eroticism that resides between the machine and the database, the void and the infinitude of desire.

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¹⁹ For more on the ‘abyssal’ dimension of sexual relations and Harmony the sex robot, see: Millar, Isabel. “Sex-Bots: Are You Thinking What I’m Thinking?” *Everyday Analysis*. <<https://everydayanalysisorg.wordpress.com/2019/03/15/sex-bots-are-you-thinking-what-im-thinking/>>