

Coded Consciousness: Crafting Cybernetic Femininity From 20th Century Sitcoms to Sci- (Fi) Futures

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The 'gendering' of artificial intelligence forms, raises questions about cultural constructions of femininity, servitude, and intelligence, connecting directly with posthumanist theories that critique the boundaries of human and machine. As N. Katherine Hayles posits, "Embodiment is the concept through which the posthuman subject is articulated" (Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*), extending that technological embodiment is itself embedded with societal expectations of gender roles.

This paper examines the gendering of technology in 1970s-80s American sitcoms *Small Wonder* (Howard Leeds) and *The Bionic Woman* (Kenneth Johnson), linking these portrayals to modern depictions of gendered humanoid robots in sci-fi films. A correlation between contemporary humanoid robots and AI is attempted to understand the nuances of the posthuman era, exploring how these designs both embody and challenge the posthuman ideal of "leaky boundaries" (Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto"), blending human and machine yet bound by socially-imposed gender roles. This paper addresses how technological femininity serves human needs, embodying ideals of subservience and domesticity through the portrayals of V.I.C.I. (Vicki) and Jamie Sommers in sitcoms. An examination of how gendered portrayals of humanoid robots reinforce or challenge cultural norms in sci-fi films and real-world counterparts is made. Further, societal anxieties about artificial sentience and autonomy, as well as how gendered traits in AI forms influence perceptions of human-robot relationships, are addressed. Within the discourse of posthumanism, this paper foregrounds gaps in contemporary understandings of gender, sentience, and consciousness in modern humanoid robots, particularly regarding feminine-coded aesthetics and social expectations.

Keywords: Gendered technology, post-humanism, cyborg female, sentient feminine consciousness.