well. During 1997, a women's studies conference at the State University of New York (SUNY) at New Paltz titled "Revolting Behavior: The Challenges of Women's Sexual Freedom" became the focus of sensational publicity nationwide when conservative Republican SUNY trustee Candace de Russy and conservative pundit Roger Kimball complained in the local and national press about the lesbian content at the conference, especially the lesbian sadomasochism and safer-sex workshops. As Kimball lamented in an essay in *The Wall Street Journal* entitled "A Syllabus for Sickos": "'Revolting Behavior' was in fact a celebration of perversity and sexual libertinage." Such attacks were supported by politicians and groups eager to slash funding and restrict curricula and programming for public higher education in the state of New York . This sex panic succeeded in alarming university officials and bringing scrutiny and surveillance to women's studies programs in particular. But defenses of academic freedom, women's studies, lesbian visibility, and higher education's critical mission limited the scope of the damage, and galvanized support for public education as well.

Sex panics during the past century have consistently had this kind of paradoxical impact. On the one hand, they have resulted not only in the persecution and harassment of individuals, organizations, and institutions, but they have also left layers of repressive sex laws and reinforced anti-LGBT prejudice. On the other hand, they have generated opposition as well, publicized alternative sexual and gender possibilities as they are denounced, and motivated the organization of LGBT populations.

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See also GOVERNMENT AND MILITARY WITCHHUNTS; POLICING AND POLICE; POLITICAL SCANDALS; SEXUAL PSYCHOPATH LAW AND POLICY.

SEX TOURISM. see TOURISM.

SEX TOYS

Sex toys—objects specifically designed for erotic stimulation—may well be as old as human technology. (Fetish objects that might, to a nonparaphiliac, seem entirely innocuous; specialized sadomasochism [S/M] gear; and ordinary objects put to erotic uses are not included in this definition of "sex toy.") Model phalluses, the oldest surviving sex toys, have been found at archaeological sites from China to Cairo, and there is ample literary evidence as to what use such objects were put by the women and men of Egypt, Greece, and Rome. One must be careful, however, about interpreting all such artifacts with a prurient eye. The *herms*—phallic good-luck charms—that decorated Greek thresholds, for instance, were clearly devices intended to ward off the evil eye, while bakers' ovens in Pompeii sported erections as an exercise in sympathetic magic intended to get the bread to rise.

Nonetheless, the dildo has a long and proud history. Even that giant in the history of sex, the Marquis de Sade, while in prison, had his long-suffering wife Renée-Pélagie provide him with *prestiges*—writing cases and other oblong objects made to his very exacting specifications—and, when these were denied him by his jailers, fashioned his own from candle wax.

Before the Twentieth Century

The history of the modern sex toy as an object of consumption, provocation, and legislation begins with the medical profession's concern for women's bodies. Rachel Maines, in her *Technology of Orgasm,* details the two-thousand-year history of "hysteria," a vague complaint first described by Hippocrates. Symptoms of hysteria could range from excessive appetite or loss of appetite to fainting, emotional excitement, and behavior that annoyed one's husband or family. Its cause, however, was known quite definitely: the wandering of the uterus in the

body, brought about by a lack of the sexual release thought to be derived solely from penetrative heterosexual intercourse. Needless to say, women who rejected heterosexual norms or who experienced same-sex desires often found themselves diagnosed with hysteria.

The treatment for hysteria, according to physicians from Galen to Avicenna, was marriage and vigorous lovemaking—or, if these measures failed, or if the woman's condition was unalterably single—use of a dildo or a doctor's massage of the woman's genitalia until a "hysterical paroxysm" (that is, an orgasm) was produced. By these means, female needs for sexual satisfaction were transformed into a disease requiring allopathic treatment. This transformation placed women, and by extension their desires, in the position of the patient—an object to be acted upon by the (inevitably male) doctor-savant. (Such treatments were most likely also performed by midwives, but since midwifery was an oral, not written, tradition, this is difficult to document.)

Performing such cures for hysteria proved morally difficult, as well as fatiguing, for the emerging professional caste of physicians. This problem was solved by the invention of devices such as the "hydriatic massage" in which the hysterical paroxysms were induced by a jet of water, available at fashionable American spas as early as the 1760s, and the *trémoussior*, an early wind-up vibrator, invented in France in 1734 and available to American colonists as early as the 1750s. Such "therapies" allowed the doctor to remove himself from the object under "scientific" scrutiny and treatment, the female body, though they also led to frequent complaints that women were taking matters into their own hands, going to "take the waters" without first seeking a medical opinion.

Though Charles Goodyear's vulcanization process, patented in 1844, allowed for the mass manufacture of cheap rubber dildos to more efficiently produce hysterical paroxysms, the great breakthrough in industrial orgasm technology came in 1869 with the introduction of a device ominously named the "Manipulator." Invented by an American physician named George Taylor, the Manipulator was a steam-powered vibrator consisting of a flat table on which the patient lay with her pelvis positioned over a vibrating ball connected by a drive train to a steam engine. An electromechanical vibrator appeared in 1883, but it was not until the introduction of a battery-powered version in 1899 that relief from hysteria became truly convenient. No longer did this relief depend on heavy, unwieldy, clunky contraptions, only practical for institutions and spas; now it could be obtained from devices readily available to anyone with a room of his or her own.

Interestingly, because of their "therapeutic" use, the Comstock Act of 1873, which made the distribution of "obscenity" illegal, was never applied to the sale and production of vibrators. Thus, they were openly advertised in women's magazines and even sold through the Sears and Roebuck catalogue. It was not until the 1920s and 1930s, when early pornographic movies made apparent to the men of America for what purpose their sisters, wives, sweethearts, and daughters were using these vibrators, that such devices disappeared from the public eye.

Sexual Revolutions

Much to the disappointment of orthodox Freudians—who, following another ancient myth, fervently argued that the "mature" female orgasm is centered in the vagina—sexologist Alfred Kinsey, in his *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953), reported that 88 percent of women masturbated by stroking their labia minora and clitoris. About 20 percent had used "vaginal insertions" in conjunction with other masturbation techniques, but "the insertions that are made are usually confined to the introitus or intended to stimulate the anterior wall of the vagina at the base of the clitoris" (p. 581). Furthermore, "Douches, streams of running water, vibrators, urethral insertions, enemas, other anal insertions, and still other methods were occasionally employed, but none of them in any appreciable number of cases" (p. 163).

Kinsey also noted that "Many males, basing their concepts on their understanding of coitus and upon their conceit as to the importance of the male genitalia in coitus, imagine that all female masturbation must involve an insertion of fingers or of some other object into the depths of the vagina," but this hardly reflected the actual practices of "homosexual females," who "have a better than average understanding of female genital anatomy" (pp. 162, 581). (Interestingly, however, Kinsey found that 18 percent of childhood sex play was by vaginal penetration among lesbian-identified interviewees, as opposed to 3 percent of heterosexual women.)

The information on the comparative rarity of autoerotic insertions in the *Female* report matched what Kinsey had found five years earlier in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male:* "Urethral insertions and other masochistic techniques, and anal stimulation and anal insertions occur only very occasionally. Sometimes devices which simulate the female genitalia may be used for masturbation, but they are rarely employed" (p. 510).

Of course, Kinsey was writing at a time when sex in America had not yet been transformed by market forces. Sex toys became an increasingly profitable industry during the early years of the post–World War II sexual revo-

a bestiary of sex toys

In our modern society of commodified eros, a wide variety of sex toys have become available to the consumer market. These include, but are not limited to:

- Beads, balls, and other small insertable objects: These take a great variety of forms, with their most common attribute being a round shape (so as not to abrade delicate tissues) and string to facilitate removal. Two of the most common forms are ben-wa balls, two balls joined by a string and designed to be held in the vagina, and anal beads, a string of beads intended to be inserted into the anus.
- Butt plugs: Similar to a dildo but designed with a distinctive flared shape specifically for anal use. Butt plugs are usually flared at the base to facilitate removal and prohibit them from entering too far into the body.
- Cock rings: A ring or collar, constructed of metal, leather, rubber, or other material, designed to be worn around the base of the penis so as to restrict the draining of blood from the erectile tissue, thus producing (at least in theory) longer-lasting, firmer erections. Health experts point out that cock rings should be used with caution, as a poor-fitting one, or one that is left on for too long, can damage vascular tissue.
- Dildos: Simply put, a dildo is an artificial phallus. Dildos come in a great variety of shapes, sizes, ethnic variants, colors, and materials, and can be vibrating or nonvibrating. They can be made to resemble an organic penis or constructed in a completely abstract and fanciful manner. Some are wearable ("strap-ons"), some are "soft packs" made for male impersonators, some are double-ended for simultaneous use by two partners, some have prongs or extensions designed to stimulate a female user's anus and/or clitoris simultaneously with vaginal penetration, and some are even S-shaped for prostate or G-spot stimulation.
- Mannequins and dolls: Essentially, a mannequin or doll is an attempt to create a surrogate partner. Products range from campy inflatable dolls (available as men, women, and sheep) to Abyss Creations' individually customized silicone "Real Doll," which comes in male, female, and male-to-female ("she-male") transsexual forms and sells for several thousand dollars each. The idea of an artificial surrogate partner taken to its logical end would be an android such as those depicted in the movies *Westworld, Blade Runner,* and *Cherry 2000,* as well as Dr. Frank N. Furter's "creation" from the *Rocky Horror Picture Show.*
- Prosthetic orifices: The obverse of a dildo, sex toys designed to be penetrated by the user have a somewhat smaller market. They range from comparatively crude facsimiles to the state-of-the-art Fleshlight, which comes with oral, anal, or vaginal attachments.
- Penis pumps: Originally designed as a cure for impotence, manually or mechanically operated vacuum pumps are today often marketed as penis-enlarging devices. Pumps are often used in conjunction with a cock ring to maintain the artificial erection; however, bruising is a distinct possibility.
- Vibrators: A vibrator is any device designed to stimulate the user by means of vibration. Some are marketed specifically as sex toys, while others bear the time-honored euphemism of "personal massagers." Waterproof vibrators are also manufactured, as are wearable versions and models shaped like butterflies, flowers, and dolphins.

Not included in this list are ordinary objects put to sexual uses. Medical journals document the insertion, and subsequent emergency-room removal, of such objects as plastic spatulas, Coke bottles, jeweler's saws, teacups, and a plastic waste trap from the U-bend of a sink. Items that serve a function not dissimilar to that of sex toys include chemical sexual enhancers such as amyl nitrate ("poppers"), Viagra, or Spanish fly; foodstuffs such as fruits and vegetables and liver, as erotically described by writers such as Audre Lorde and Philip Roth; lubricants, condoms, and other such "ordinary" accessories; and the specialized accoutrements of BDSM and leather subcultures.

lution, and, with increased social tolerance for pornography and other once-taboo subjects, began to be sold openly in the sex shops of major cities. These stores were often located in or near LGBT neighborhoods such as Greenwich Village in New York City and the Castro in San Francisco and sold their goods to both straight and LGBT customers. Despite the fact that, in order to circumvent possible prosecution, they were still ostensibly manufactured as "marital aids" for heterosexual couples, there is evidence that sex toys achieved market penetration

within the LGBT community as well. With a history of being more creative, playful, inventive, and adventurous about sex, LGBT people have probably been more willing to experiment and use sex toys than straight people. In fact, some sex toys, such as dildos ostensibly based on the genitalia of male porn stars such as Jeff Stryker, were specifically designed to appeal to queer customers. At least among certain crowds, owning sex toys became a sign that one had become freed from unhip hang-ups about sex; for instance, in her book *Liberating Masturbation* (1974), New York–based bisexual writer, artist, and educator Betty Dodson stressed masturbation and orgasm as important components of overall emotional health, and recommended the use of vibrators as express tickets to orgasm.

One notable sex toy entrepreneur was Ted Marche, a Venice, California, ventriloquist who had honed his woodworking skills carving his own dummies. Marche started out in the sex-toy business by making wooden "prosthetic phalluses" for the Gem medical supplies company in 1966, but soon branched out on his own, involving his wife and son in making and selling dildos through ads in pulp magazines and novelty-store distributors. Using new plastic-molding techniques, Marche Manufacturing was able to manufacture a wide variety of lifelike phalluses (both vibrating and nonvibrating), vaginas, and other novelties, until, by its tenth year of operation, the company was selling nearly five million units a year. Unfortunately, the Marche rubber dildos were stiffened by wires, one of which ripped a male customer's colon and resulted in a jury awarding $14 million in damages to the victim. Marche was forced to sell his company in 1976 to porn baron and sex-shop entrepreneur Reuben Sturman, owner of the Doc Johnson line of sex toys, and returned to the ventriloquism circuit.

Critiques of the Sex Toy

The earliest known legislation against sex toys in the United States was an 1879 Massachusetts law prohibiting the sale of "an instrument or other article intended to be used for self-abuse." However, most statutes criminalizing such objects were not introduced until the New Right began its reaction against the sexual revolution in the late 1960s. South Dakota introduced a statute against "equipment, machines, or materials" that appealed to "the prurient" in 1968 (it was overturned in 1990). This was followed by laws passed in 1969 by Kansas (overturned in 1990); in 1975 by Georgia; in 1977 by Texas and Nebraska; in 1981 by Colorado (overturned in 1985); in 1983 by Indiana and Mississippi; in 1985 by Louisiana (overturned in 2000); and in 1998 by Alabama.

The wording of most such legislation followed Texas's lead in defining sex toys as devices "designed or marketed as useful primarily for the stimulation of the human genitals," though Nebraska's 1977 law specified only articles or devices "having the appearance of either male or female genitals." The Louisiana statute overturned as "arbitrary and capricious" in the 2000 case *State v. Brennan* combined the two definitions to prohibit the sale of "an artificial penis or artificial vagina, which is designed or marketed as useful primarily for the stimulation of human genital organs." Whether such laws, which Maines refers to as "judicial novelties" in a 2001 affidavit concerning the Alabama statute, will be upheld in the post–*Lawrence v. Texas* judicial climate, and whether enforcement of such laws is even possible in an age when one can buy a butt plug anonymously through the Internet, remains to be seen.

Some of the most strenuous opposition to sex toys—dildos in particular—has come from lesbian feminists. While "girl-girl" porn produced for straight men, and straight men's popular conception of lesbian sex, often includes a dildo—perhaps a relic of the outdated notion that phallic penetration is necessary for female sexual pleasure—many lesbians have railed against the use of such objects. The question, simply put, is why, in woman-to-woman sex, is an artificial penis necessary?

As was the case with feminist anti-bondage and sadomasochism arguments, the anti-dildo position took on political overtones: the dildo was seen by some lesbian feminists, such as the publishers of the newspaper *off our backs,* as symbolic of "phallic imperialism," rubber embodiments of an unjust social order that subjugates women. These objections were countered by pro-sex feminists, such as the publishers of the magazine *On Our Backs,* who argued, essentially, that no one has the right to dictate someone else's sexual expression, that pleasure is its own justification, and that women in particular have much to gain from exploring new realms of sexual pleasure. These arguments continue today, as both sides have proven utterly unable to compel each other to use sex toys or to remove them from the other side's bedrooms.

The Sex Toy in Postgay and Queer Contexts

To a large extent, the pro-sex/anti-sex argument has been obviated by the generation of entrepreneurs, authors, and activists that emerged in the 1990s. Educators such as Tristan Taormino have emphasized the use of sex toys in blurring the lines between straight and gay, and between "normal" sex acts and "deviant" ones. For instance, the popular *Bend Over Boyfriend* series of porn films, in which women use strap-ons to anally penetrate their ostensibly straight male partners (a sex act christened

"pegging" by gay advice guru Dan Savage) has forced viewers to question whether sexual identity is predicated on the role one plays, the acts one performs, or the apparent sex or gender of one's object of desire. In a similar vein, drag kings' use of dildos in "packing"—stuffing one's trousers to appear to have a penis—for purposes of male impersonation has helped subvert the entire idea of masculinity. The use of dildos by female-to-male transsexuals who want to experience what it is like to be a penetrator—and to fulfill their partners' willingness to be penetratees—has also posed a significant challenge to the feminist critique of sex toys.

In a more mainstream sense, vibrators, dildos, and other sex toys have come to be seen as essential accessories for the sophisticated urban professional woman, be she straight or queer. Stores such as San Francisco's Good Vibrations, billed as a "clean, well-lit place to buy a butt plug," and New York City's Toys in Babeland are a far cry from Sturman's sleazy sex emporiums. They are friendly, woman-staffed spaces that, while directed toward a primarily female clientele, will sell to anyone with a credit card, regardless of sexual preference. One of the most popular models of vibrator, the Hitachi Magic Wand, is sold partially on the strength of the Hitachi brand, while another best-selling model features the likeness of the popular Japanese cartoon character Hello Kitty. In this respect, sex toys have come full circle, from a treatment considered necessary for female health, but only when sanctioned from above by medical authority, to a consumer item purporting to sell self-administered, battery-powered empowerment.

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See also FETISHES; LEATHERSEX AND SEXUALITY; SADOMASOCHISM, SADISTS, AND MASOCHISTS; SEX ACTS.

SEX WARS

During the 1980s, a series of debates among feminists in the United States over issues of sexual politics, sexual representation, and sexual practice became known as the "sex wars." Such debates about sexuality were not new, but had split feminists along various lines since the nineteenth century. In 1873, the feminist free-love advocate Victoria Woodhull argued, "I will love whom I may; I will love for as long or as short a period as I can; I will change this love when the conditions indicate that it ought to be changed; and neither you nor any law you can make shall deter me," while in 1891, the temperance-movement leader and women's suffrage advocate Frances Willard asked, "Are our girls to be as free to please themselves by indulging in the loveless gratification of every instinct . . . and passion as our boys?" At the turn of the century, the antilynching activist Ida B. Wells criticized the rationale that supposedly "justified" lynching—that brutal black men raped pure white women—and was attacked by Willard, during the latter's late-nineteenth-century lecture tours in the American South. Willard defended the rationale because it was offered by "the best white people." In 1971, the Women's National Abortion Conference adopted demands for repeal of all anti-abortion laws, an end to sterilization abuse, and no restrictions on contraceptives, but split over a demand for "freedom of sexual expression," which was voted down and generated a walkout. The issues and ideas that generated such divergences of opinion shifted over the twentieth century and shaped the bitter conflicts of the sex wars years.

The Early 1970s

During the 1970s, issues of sexuality became central to second-wave feminism in the United States. Sexual freedom (including the freedom to be lesbian, as well as to have heterosexual sex with or without reproductive consequences), sexual violence, sexual representation (in all media), and sexual practice all generated new ideas, organizations, institutions, publications, and controversies. During the early 1970s, lesbians began to leave many women's groups to organize separately, and Betty Dodson published her widely popular pamphlet *Liberating Masturbation* (1974). During the same period, feminists offered a wide range of criticisms of the sexualized portrayal of women on television, in advertising, in films, and in print. Antirape and antibattering organizations