

SEX DOLLS AT SEA

Imagined Histories of Sexual Technologies

Bo Ruberg



Objets nautiques et erotiques, contemporains et d'autrefois

1. Sailor's knot; 2. *Éponge de saret (for periods or contraception) c. 1900*; 3. *Venus comb shell*; 4. *Corset*; 5. *Jelly rubber cock ring with vibrating "French tickler"*; 6. *Ship in a bottle*; 7. *Mannequin (dress form) c. 1900*; 8. *Personal massager*; 11. *Conch shell*

12. *Handbell electrical vibrator, "Sim-a-lax Junior," c. 1930s*; 13. *Rectal insert (silicone)*; 14. *Rectal insert (glass)*; 15. *Cotton plant*; 16. *"Hollywood Vibro Zone" electric vibrator, c. 1930s*; 17. *Dildo and clitoral massager (rabbit style)*; 18. *Sailor's hat*; 19. *Compass*; 20. *Oyster shell*; 21. *Rubber plug*; 22. *Nautilus shell*; 23. *Rectal insert (beads)*

Sex Dolls at Sea

Media Origins

Edited by Elizabeth Losh and Celia Pearce

Numbered Lives: Life and Death in Quantum Media, Jacqueline Wernimont, 2018

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Imagined Histories of Sexual Technologies

Bo Ruberg

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For Jonah, who, like me, has always loved the water

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Series Foreword

Media Origins is a venue for interdisciplinary, humanistically informed research that recovers and interrogates the origin stories of contemporary media technologies. The titles address a range of cultural objects in the history and prehistory of computation. The series explores the politics of design and labor, the role of economics more broadly imagined, and the cultural frameworks of shared meaning making that undergird not only innovation but also maintenance, consumption, and disposal. Such origin stories often examine precomputational precursors to understand the larger social patterns, values, and beliefs behind a given medium's trajectory into the contemporary technological milieu. Volumes in the series may deploy feminist, postcolonial, queer, or antiracist theory to foster deeper conversations about the framing narratives of innovation.

The Media Origins series cautions that, in its obsession with the new, "new media" have developed an alarming ahistoricism that puts media studies at risk of losing valuable and largely undocumented accounts, particularly when cultural memory resides in rapidly aging witnesses or in records that are precariously stored in informal or neglected archives. Rather than reinforce assumptions about the technological survival of the fittest based on market metrics, the series excavates foundational platforms that have been all but ignored due to their perceived lack of commercial success.

Media Origins was launched to counter historical narratives that tend to emphasize the "inventor myth," crediting a lone auteur. Unfortunately, overtelling one origin story usually comes at the expense of often-marginalized groups and participants that were instrumental at inception or adoption. Equally damaging to understanding media origins can be the

reification of artifacts with little attention to the larger discursive contexts of their invention, manufacture, and adoption. In looking at the interactions between actors and objects, books in the Media Origins series may revise existing views about the dynamics of power and control, specialization and distribution of labor practices, or systems of credit.

Acknowledgments

The process of researching and writing this book has often felt like a solitary one, the result of many months spent hiding away in my office, pouring over documents, delving deeply into archives, and thinking about the relationship between technology, sexuality, and this odd thing we call *history*. In reality, this project has come into being through the generosity and support of many people—in no small part because much of my work has taken place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these people have been my collaborators, colleagues, and friends. Others have been archivists and librarians. A number of others have lent me their assistance even though we have no official professional ties. For a number of years now, I have been that stranger on the internet sending cold-call emails about sex dolls to anyone I had reason to believe might hold a clue I could use in my search for the *dames de voyage*. To my great benefit, almost all of them answered, and I learned something new from each one.

A number of the scholars whose work I discuss at length in the early chapters of this book have generously replied to my queries about their sources and shared with me some of their unpublished works. Among these are Cynde Moya, Anthony Ferguson, David Levy, Amy Wolf, and Hallie Lieberman. I am also grateful to Minsoo Kang for his thoughts on the veracity of the tale of the *dames de voyage*, as well as to scholars and archivists of maritime history Gina Bardi, Peter Kasin, Gibb Schreffler, and Amy Parsons for their expert guidance. My thanks to Andrea Horbinsky and Zoyander Street for their assistance with my research into the textual lineage behind the story of the “Dutch wives,” specifically in verifying my readings of Japanese-language texts. Relatedly, thank you to Kathryn Levine and Aubrey Gabel for indulging me and reading a schlocky serialized short

story from the 1890s so that we could double- and triple-check the context meaning of references to *dames de voyage*.

Thank you to Elizabeth Losh and Celia Pearce, the editors of the *Media Origins* series, for believing in this project even in its nascent stages and for supporting my vision of a book that is somehow simultaneously quirky and serious, highly specific and extremely wide-ranging. My gratitude also goes out to my editors at the MIT Press, first Doug Sery and now Noah Springer, for their encouragement and support through the publishing process. I am thankful for the work of my anonymous peer reviewers, who offered feedback at multiple stages, including during the hubbub of the pandemic. Their feedback on the original full draft of the manuscript, which was admittedly still rough, was invaluable. I am especially grateful to my most exacting reviewer, whose careful engagement with the manuscript draft was exactly the push I needed to make this into the book it is today.

Librarians, archivists, and curators are the true heroes of this project. My enormous thanks to Jenna Dufour, research librarian for the visual arts at the University of California, Irvine. I have lost track of the number of times I have emailed Jenna in a state of exuberance or panic to ask for help tracking down some obscure sex-related document. The Humanities and Rare Books Reference Teams at the British Library, and Elias Mazzucco in particular, went above and beyond to help me track down the album of advertisements for sex toys discussed in chapters 2 and 4. Despite a series of obstacles, from pandemic travel restrictions to the realization that the documents in question were too fragile for reproduction or public viewing, the British Library staff was able to send photos at the eleventh hour that I was so happy to receive that I spent a whole morning alone in my office laughing with delight.

My thanks also to the staff at both the ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives and the library at the University of California, Los Angeles, who valiantly ventured into the stacks to produce scans for me during pandemic lockdown. Whoever it is at the Internet Archive who decided it was worthwhile to preserve early rubber goods catalogs and minor works of German sexology in a meticulous array of published editions, you have contributed to this research in more ways than I am sure you will ever know. Many of the primary texts in this book, and especially those that reflect French popular print culture from roughly 1850 to 1920, come from the amazing digital archive Gallica, associated with the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*.

Additional archives and collections that I have drawn from include the American Periodicals Series database, the holdings of the British National Maritime Museum, and a wide range of print texts flung to the far corners of the American interlibrary loan system. To all who have worked to create and maintain those collections, my thanks.

Many colleagues and students have been instrumental in helping me develop my thinking about sex dolls, sex tech, and the history of sexual technologies. Thank you to Josef Nguyen for the chance to think alongside his developing work on sex dolls and consent. Thank you also to Bliss Cua Lim for suggestions of work that bridge the sex doll and broader artistic traditions exploring doll imagery. A special thank you to all of the members of the Critical Approaches to Technology and the Social (CATS) lab at the University of California, Irvine, which I co-run with Aaron Trammell: Ryan Rose Aceae, Kat Brewster, Amanda Cullen, Will Dunkel, Nazely Hartoonian, Ke Jing, Ian Larson, Rainforest Scully-Blaker, Bryan Truit, Isabelle Williams, and Cass Zegura. You are the best group of graduate students a proud faculty mentor could ask for, and your feedback has invaluable shaped my revision of this project. Kat Brewster is also the artist who created the original paintings of early sex toys found at a number of points in the book. Thank you, Kat, for your amazing work, which has helped bring this history to life.

I am grateful to others in my academic community for their support and guidance. Thank you to my colleagues in the Department of Film and Media Studies and the School of Humanities at the University of California, Irvine, whose warmth and enthusiasm for my work has been truly sustaining. Thank you to my department chair, Fatimah Tobing Rony, and to Dean Tyrus Miller for offering me a course release to make up for research time lost during the pandemic, which served as a major factor in allowing me to complete the revision of this project on time. Thank you to the UCI Humanities Center for awarding me a publication grant to assist with the cost of indexing and proofreading this project. Beyond UCI, thank you to Jacques Wernimont, whose book *Numbered Lives* precedes mine in the Media Origins series and who has been a role model in the work of writing feminist media histories.

In a sense, this book represents a coming together of numerous elements of my life that go back many years. For that reason, all of the people I should truly thank are too many to list here. I will, however, say thank you to the Comparative Literature program at the University of California,

Berkeley, where I earned my PhD. My mentors there taught me to close read the world around me as text. They also created an environment that fostered the foreign language skills I would later need to undertake such studious endeavors as discerning the difference between a sex doll made by a sailor and one made by a prisoner, or combing through old directories of the city of Paris to map a network of turn-of-the-century sex toy sellers. Thank you to those friends who have helped me grow my collection of antique vibrators over the years. Having firsthand knowledge of these material objects has helped me in ways I never anticipated when scouring estate sales for crumbling old sex toys tucked away in the back of closets.

I love writing, and I have loved writing this book. To be honest, though, I have also found it to be the hardest thing I have ever written. Often, working on it has felt like sitting at the bottom of a swimming pool, fully submerged, with the world above somehow very far away. Throughout this process, the people closest to me kept me grounded and reminded me that, though writing is my first love, there are many other things in the world worth loving. Thank you to Eli Peterson, who has listened to me with an exceptional amount of patience as I have rambled on about the minutiae of this project. His support, in both love and time, is absolutely what has made this book possible. Thank you also to Jonah Peterson. He cannot read yet but hopefully one day, years down the line, he will pick up this book and realize that this strange volume—with its sex dolls and its sailors and its dreams of remaking history—is what I was working on all those evenings he sat beside me and kept me company while I was writing.

Introduction: “The Beginning of the Modern Sex Doll”— Imagining the History of Sex Tech

Sex dolls are having a moment. They are more and more the subject of news stories, whether laudatory or mocking, about the rise of increasingly “realistic” devices for having sex through or with technology.¹ Although there are many different types of devices that fall into the category of sexual technologies, the sex doll—along with its high-tech counterpart, the sex robot—sits at the center of this growing public interest. In America, companies like Real Doll, which makes elaborate, customizable life-sized sex dolls, have drawn particular attention, but there is a whole wider world of sex dolls and related items currently available on the consumer market.² Today, it is possible to purchase everything from exceedingly busty anime “love dolls” to torso sex dolls whose bodies extend only from their breasts to their genitals to the iconic Fleshlight, a “pocket pussy” with an opening for insertion that can be shaped like a vulva, anus, or mouth. The presence of sex dolls in our pop cultural imaginaries is growing just as rapidly as—or, likely, more rapidly than—the development and use of sex dolls themselves. Sex dolls have made appearances in works of literature and other media for centuries. Now, as those speculative visions seem to be on the brink of becoming realities (at least according to eager roboticists and sex toy manufacturers), the presence of sex dolls in mainstream reporting and academic research alike has spiked. This is especially true in contexts related to technology, where both fantasies and anxieties about the future of computation are increasingly entangled with fantasies and anxieties about sex.

However, sex dolls are not just a thing of the present or even the future. They are also very much a thing of the past. Like sex dolls, dolls more broadly have been a point of fascination across cultural and national contexts; they feature in long-standing lineages of fiction, art, film, and new media, in which the figure of the doll is almost always highly gendered

and eroticized, frequently blurring the divide between *doll* and *sex doll*.³ Yet the history of the sex doll goes beyond fiction, into the material realities of sex dolls themselves, as the research presented in this book makes clear. Sex dolls and other sexual technologies have had their culture “moment” multiple times before. They have been an integral part of earlier waves of technological innovation and former iterations of what we might now term the *sex tech craze*. From roughly the 1850s to the present, from the popularization of vulcanized rubber in the mid-nineteenth century to the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s and up to the technomasculine maker cultures of the last two decades, sex dolls have been a recurring point of interest and debate—not just in more rarified realms of literature and art but also in the industries, consumer markets, and mainstream cultural conversations surrounding technology.

Others before me have written more traditional versions of the sex doll’s history. Indeed, many of these will return as objects of analysis in this book.⁴ What readers will find here, by contrast, is not primarily a retelling of the history of the sex doll—though there is much to learn about that history in the chapters that follow. Instead, first and foremost, the present work is an interrogation of how the history of sex dolls itself has been imagined: how established narratives about that history have come into being, whom they have privileged and whom they have marginalized, how we can reimagine the history of sex dolls, and how this act of reimagining the past might itself represent a crucial step toward creating a more socially just future for sexual technologies.

In particular, I am interested in the sex doll’s origin stories. These are the tales that are told (and retold) about where the sex doll came from and who made the very first sex doll. As we will see, though these origin stories are ostensibly about sex dolls specifically, they are often used as starting points for broader histories of sexual technologies, positioning the sex doll as the precursor to all of the various sexual devices that have followed or will follow. How we tell the story of the origins of the sex doll sets the stakes for how we tell the history of sexual technologies on a broader scale. And, in turn, how we tell the history of sexual technologies forms a baseline for implicit assumptions about which people and which desires matter when it comes to the intersection of sex and tech. These origin stories are often quirky and seemingly harmless, adding a bit of color and relatability to narratives about the evolution of sexual devices that are still commonly

viewed as uncanny, unnatural, or unethical.⁵ Yet when examined closely, these origin stories become windows into much larger issues of power and identity that shape the cultural landscape of tech today—a landscape where celebrations of technological “advancements” often thinly veil discriminatory attitudes toward women, queer and transgender people, and people of color.⁶ The origin stories of the sex doll are the origin stories of technology. To change the course of technology, we need to change the history of the sex doll.

Of all the possible origin stories for sexual technologies, this book focuses on one in particular: the tale of the *dames de voyage*. The tale of the *dames de voyage* (“women of travel” or, more loosely, “traveling companions”), which appears in numerous contemporary accounts, claims that the very first sex dolls were rudimentary figures cobbled together out of cloth and leather scraps by European sailors on long, lonely voyages in centuries gone by (figure 0.1). These makeshift dolls were reportedly filled with cotton or

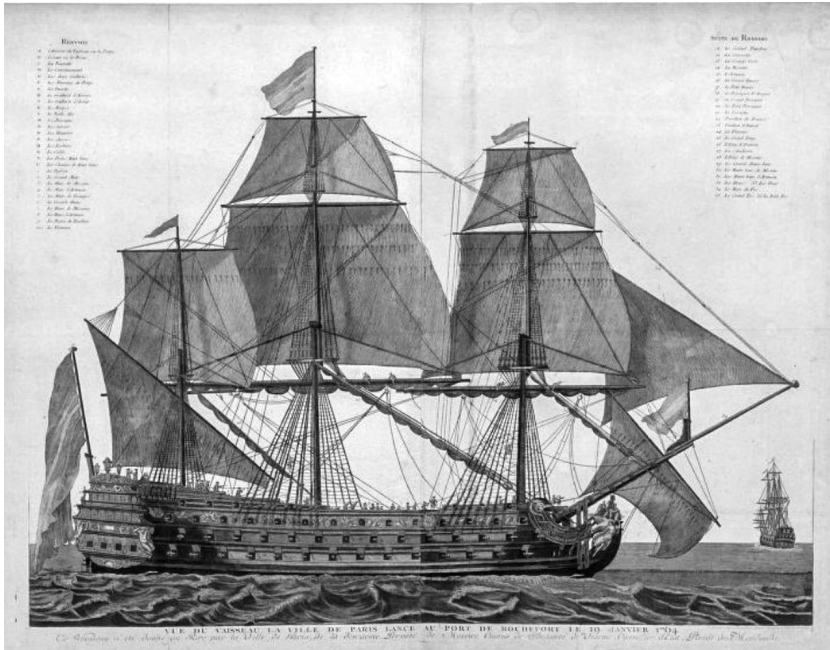


Figure 0.1

The French naval ship *Ville de Paris*, completed in 1764, is an example of the type of ship on which contemporary historians say that sailors made their own sex dolls.

straw, presumably with holes cut between their legs for penetration, and shared between sailors. If the details of this account sound murky, that is because the story exists today in multiple forms, many of them contradictory. Various authors state that the sailors' dolls originated as early as the 1600s or as late as the 1900s; they credit the dolls' invention to sailors from an array of European countries, from France to the Netherlands to England to Spain. A number of these authors accompany their iteration of the tale with what they understand to be a photograph of surviving examples of the dames de voyage, visual proof of the dolls' existence (figure 0.2). One thing that all of these accounts (and there are many of them, so many that each time I sit down to work on this book I find that new ones have been published) have in common is that they take the story of the sailors' sex doll to be true. This vision of the very first sex doll, inspired by the longing of lusty men at sea, is presented as an indisputable and indeed pivotal moment in the history of sex tech.

Questioning this unquestioned origin story is the central impetus behind this book. Along with that comes the need to make sense of the answers that such a line of questioning reveals. To accomplish this, I use a multipronged set of methods, combining a Foucauldian approach to tracing genealogies with the tools of intersectional feminist analysis.⁷ I begin in the present, mapping contemporary iterations of the tale of the dames de voyage. From there, I move backward to chart the lineage of writing that has brought the story of the sailors' dolls into the present day. In searching for the dames de voyage, I move through an eclectic array of archives, interweaving primary and secondary documents from across historical and intellectual moments. These range from works of sexology and sociological pseudoscience to cultural ephemera: songs about the wonders of rubber, advertisements for inflatable vaginas, and news reports about bootleggers transporting illegal alcohol inside sex dolls, to name only a few. Having explored these histories (both the history of the sex doll and the history of *the history* of the sex doll), I embark on an interrogation of the tale of the dames de voyage itself as an origin story. Through this analysis, I lay bare a web of concerns relating to gender, sexuality, race, and colonialism that lie just beneath the tale's surface, making visible the vital importance of asking: Why are certain origin stories about sexual technologies told over others? What cultural work are these stories deployed to do? Whom do these stories serve and whom do they erase?

**Figure 0.2**

Image commonly reprinted in contemporary histories and labeled as *dames de voyage* or *sailors' sex dolls*. Source: Leo Schidrowitz, *Ergänzungswerk zur Sittengeschichte des Lasters* (Supplement to the moral history of vice) (Vienna: Verlag für Kulturforschung, 1927).

This book began, roughly four years ago now, with a moment of curiosity. I was teaching a graduate course on the relationship between sexuality and technology, and, in one of our texts, I found myself reading an anecdote that I had read many times before: the tale of the dames de voyage. The story had always intrigued me, and it still does. Despite all the objections I have to it—and you will find that this book is full of them—there is something alluring in the vision of the very first sex doll made and used at sea. Perhaps because I felt more accountable for this story as a teacher than I had previously as a reader, I set out to learn more about these fabled sailors' dolls. What were they like? Did they even exist? What I thought would be a brief dive into existing research quickly revealed itself to be something much more. In trying to answer these questions, I found myself uncovering a wide-reaching tangle of histories, some real and some imagined. As the pieces fell into place, they began to tell a larger story, one that starts with sex dolls but has relevance that extends into many more areas. It is a story about how history is made as much through fantasy as through fact. It is a story about how the history of technology cannot be separated from the history of sex. Above all, it is a story about how the history of sexual technologies as we think we know it can be destabilized and reclaimed and how sex tech itself can be made anew through the radical power of speculation.

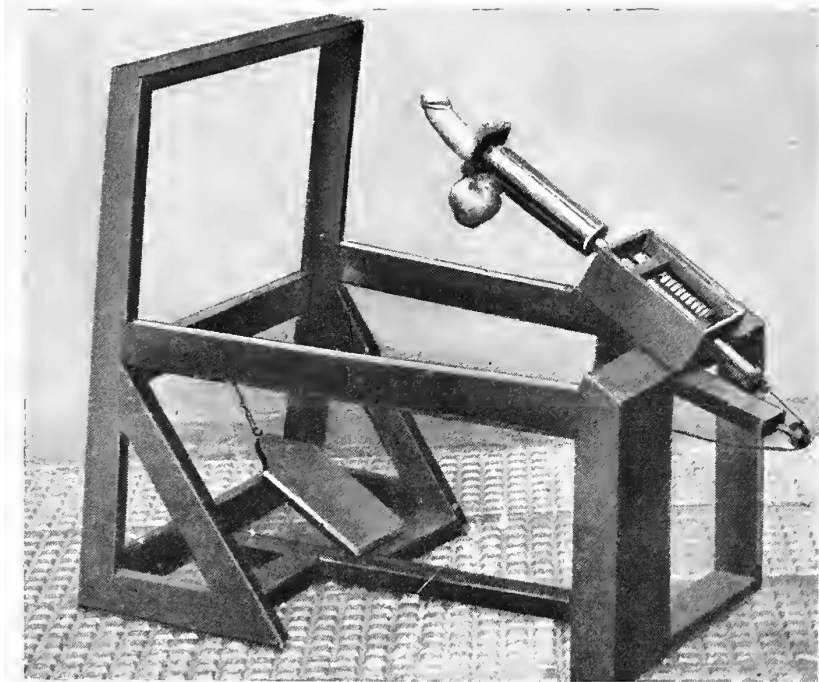
Sexual Technologies, Historical Imaginaries

Sex and technology are fundamentally intertwined.⁸ This is true across the past, the present, and the future. Today, in the early decades of the twenty-first century, it has become a cliché to say that sex is ever more technological. In America, the cultural context from which I write this book, digital tools now facilitate and mediate many aspects of our sexual lives. Smartphone users find romance and sex via dating apps; social media offers platforms for expressing sexual identity; sex parties are being hosted over web conferencing software like Zoom.⁹ Yet long before sexting or webcam modeling or internet-enabled sex toys, technology (broadly defined) was already central to sex, and sex was already central to technology.¹⁰ We know, of course, that the popularization of many new consumer technologies and media forms has been tied to the sale of pornography, as stories about the rise of the printing press, the VHS tape, and the internet all make clear.¹¹ However, technologies are more than vessels for transmitting sexual

content. They are also themselves tools for having sex and even having sex *with*. There is no piece of technology that has never been brought into the bedroom. There is no medium of communication—from the SMS to the telegraph to the carrier pigeon—that people have not used to have sex (also broadly defined) with one another.¹² No matter how low-tech it may seem, sex itself is always bound up with technology. Contraception, legalization, and reliable access to private spaces are all, in their own ways, “technologies” that directly shape the sexual practices of individuals who may never send a nude picture online or purchase a sex toy.¹³

At the intersection of sex and technology stand what I refer to as *sexual technologies*. By this I mean something both specific and broad. In the most straightforward sense, sexual technologies are devices designed for sexual uses. Some of these are built around what we think of as twenty-first-century technologies, like the web connectivity of teledildonics (sex toys that hook up to computers) or the artificial intelligence of sex robots.¹⁴ Other examples come from a predigital time. These use what we think of as technologies of ages past: pneumatic tubes, mechanized gears, elastic materials that are banal today but were once technological marvels. It is also important to note that there is not such a clear divide as we typically imagine between the sexual technologies of the past and the sexual technologies of the present. The “fucking machines” of the 2000s, which embodied the DIY erotics of the sex toy hacking scene, look nearly identical to “women’s masturbation machines” being produced in Germany by the 1920s (figure 0.3).¹⁵ A century before meticulously designed vibrators were winning innovation awards at major electronics expos for their promises to deliver “the holy grail of orgasms,” dildos that could suck up and release warm water were being advertised under nearly identical promises: to offer new heights of sexual pleasure and make both women and men orgasm so intensely that they would “bawl with happiness.”¹⁶ The category of sexual technologies also extends beyond technologies explicitly designed for use during sex. It includes a wide range of technologies that have facilitated shifts in sexual practices, including technologies of governance and oppression. This vision of sexual technologies is intentionally both capacious and ambivalent.

Throughout this book I also refer to the concept of *sex tech*. To an extent, sex tech is a shorthand for sexual technologies, but the two are not quite synonymous. *Sex tech* is a predominantly twenty-first-century term that



Onaniermaschine für Frauen

Gewerbsmäßig hergestellter Kohabitationsapparat, der polizeilich beschlagnahmt wurde und von dem sich ein Original im Dresdner Kriminal-Museum befindet
(Archiv des Instituts für Sexualwissenschaft, Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld-Stiftung, Berlin)

Figure 0.3

A masturbation machine for women dating from the 1920s or earlier, which resembles twenty-first-century “fucking machines.” *Source:* Leo Schidrowitz, *Ergänzungswerk zur Sittengeschichte des Lasters* (Supplement to the moral history of vice) (Vienna: Verlag für Kulturforschung, 1927).

signifies, as I use it, a set of contemporary cultural conversations around sexual technologies. Although the reach of sex tech is now wider and more diffuse, in its origins sex tech is inextricable from the 1990s and 2000s tech cultures that took root in places like the San Francisco Bay Area.¹⁷ At the core of this tech culture was (and, to an extent, still is) a vision of a postidentity, postpolitical society in which those who ride the cutting edge of technology are also, not coincidentally, those who have the best sex.¹⁸ Sex tech today is also closely tied to both the adult entertainment and technology industries. Events such as the Adult Entertainment Expo

have been central locales for promoting increasingly “innovative” sexual technologies.¹⁹ Major online porn-sharing platforms have been involved in pushes for the development of sexually explicit big-budget video games and sex-based virtual reality experiences.²⁰ At the same time, marginalized creators are operating under the umbrella of sex tech in order to experiment with repurposing standard technologies to create opportunities for queer play.²¹ At the end of the day, more than any particular set of technologies or practices, sex tech is an idea: a vision of how sex could be sexier and tech could be “techier” by increasing our erotic entanglements with machines. Above all, as Lynn Comella has compellingly argued, sex tech is a cultural imaginary, a set of shared notions about what sexual technologies are, have been, and could be.²²

Sex tech has also played an important role in my own life. For the five years before beginning graduate school, when I would embark on my career as a scholar of gender and sexuality in digital media, I worked as a sex tech journalist. This was roughly 2005 to 2010, and at that time sex tech meant something scrappy, upstart, and seemingly full of potential. These were the years of user-crafted genitals in *Second Life*, of the rise of Kink.com—a time when sex workers were making news by opening their own websites streaming live video of themselves in their bathrooms. For much of this period, I was living in San Francisco, where sex tech seemed to be all around me: in hardwired butt plugs on display at Arse Elektronika, in the crossovers between the local porn scene and the local tech scene, and in the sci-fi erotica read out by fellow writers at the now sadly defunct Center of Sex and Culture.²³ Sex tech in San Francisco was, in retrospect, a problematic scene: overwhelmingly white and surprisingly straight, and perhaps a little too eager to induct a twenty-three-year-old then-femme-presenting journalist into the fold. For better or for worse, though, it is through sex tech that I got my entry into the work I do today, which has since taken a far more critical and theoretical turn. For this reason, I am both invested in the sex tech imaginary and highly skeptical of it. I recognize its appeal, but I also have the perspective now to see how this imaginary is structured around deeply biased notions of who and what sexual technologies are for.

I have also come to realize, through writing this book, that the sex tech imaginary has not only formed through notions of what sexual technologies are today or what they could be tomorrow. That imaginary has also been built around—and continues to be sustained through—the telling of

certain versions of history. Although the spirit of sex tech seems fundamentally future-facing, the sex tech imaginary is also a historical imaginary. In part, that is because many of the contemporary histories that have been written about sex tech are imaginary in the most basic sense: they are erroneous, made up, imagined. That is simultaneously surprising and unsurprising. The work of writing both the history of sexuality and the history of technology come with similar challenges (incomplete records, obsolescence of one kind or another, the problem of making meaning from traces of everyday life that exceed the bounds of the archives). These challenges are amplified when the two subjects are brought together. Sexual histories in particular are vulnerable to misguided essentialisms that, as Gayle Rubin explains in “Thinking Sex,” “consider sex to be eternally unchanging, asocial, transhistorical.” From this viewpoint, writes Rubin, “sexuality has no history.”²⁴ Certainly, following the work of Michel Foucault, historians of sex know better than to think in such essentialist ways.²⁵ However, the authors whose histories I most stringently critique here are not historians of sex; they are researchers of technology, or technologists themselves. Among those whose expertise lies first and foremost in tech, it often seems that sexuality still has no history. Sexual desire—and straight, cisgender, white men’s desire in particular—continues to be imagined as timeless, a force so absolute that it can be used to explain technological innovations from the present day back to the dawn of time.

In truth, whether accurate or erroneous, all histories of sexual technologies are imagined histories. Each way of envisioning the past entails a set of decisions about how to imagine what has come before. This is true for the history of sex tech. It is true for the history of sex dolls. It is also true for the history of technology and the history of sexuality more generally. When it comes to technology and sex, the politics of the present lie in the practices of envisioning the past—regardless of what is true.

Telling Stories about the Origins of Sex Tech

There are many ways to tell the history of sexual technologies, and just as many individual devices or cultural phenomena that we could point to as the “origin” of sex tech. While some of these possible origin stories may be more historically correct than others, each comes with its own set of cultural implications. In effect, each paints a different picture of which people,

which bodies, and which pleasures have been central to the development of sexual technologies. Each imagines a specific starting point, a specific moment of inception that gives birth to all of the sexual technologies to come.

Outside of the realm of the sex tech buzz, a number of histories of sexual technologies have focused on devices designed for women's bodies, such as dildos and vibrators.²⁶ From a feminist perspective, the dildo seems like a promising origin point for sex tech, since it suggests that a long lineage of sexual technologies has emerged from an item developed for women's pleasure. However, kicking off this history with the dildo also raises issues. Very few historical accounts of the dildo sufficiently address the use of insertable objects by men or the use of dildos for sex between women (something that was very much on the minds of commercial dildo manufacturers as early as the start of the 1900s). Nor does it address the blurry line between dildos and what we would now call *packers*: nonrigid, penis-shaped objects often worn by transmasculine people in contexts outside of sex.²⁷ Descriptions of the dildo as an "ancient" technology also often exoticize nonwhite, non-Western peoples, using references to the dildo's supposed development in societies in Asia and Africa to communicate a sense that sex toys have their roots in "primitive" sexual traditions.²⁸ The case of the dildo illustrates how the same origin story simultaneously can be counterhegemonic, contesting masculinist visions of technology's history, and also can perpetuate the marginalization of queer and trans experiences, as well as the experiences of people of color and those from the Global South.

Another way of telling the origins of sexual technologies is through a focus on the vibrator. However, the vibrator comes with pros and cons of its own. Like the dildo, it has the advantage of centering women in the history of sexual technologies, in some cases drawing attention to women as entrepreneurs in the field of sex toys.²⁹ The vibrator also makes ties between sexual history and technological history usefully apparent, given that the vibrator is likely to be more readily interpreted as a form of "technology" than the dildo. Yet the vibrator itself has its origins in the medicalization and pathologization of women's bodies, dating back to a time when it was used by doctors to control women's sexuality through the treatment of so-called hysteria, as Rachel Maines documents in her foundational book, *The Technology of the Orgasm*.³⁰ These roots have unexpected echoes in contemporary sex tech—for example, in the form of vibrators and other "smart"

sex toys that can be manipulated by one's partner at a distance.³¹ Perhaps the real value in looking to the vibrator as the origin point for sexual technologies, then, lies in bringing to the fore how the development of such devices has always been as much about control as it is about pleasure.

The sex doll itself, as one possible origin point for sexual technologies, has many possible origin stories of its own. One of these is the tale of the *dames de voyage*, which credits European sailors from somewhere between the 1600s to the 1900s with the invention of the sex doll, as I explain at length in chapter 1. However, there are also many other origin stories for the sex doll that run alongside or stand in place of the tale of the *dames de voyage*. Take, for example, the myth of Pygmalion, references to which have recurred in writing about sex dolls for at least the last two hundred years. Pygmalion, as he appears in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and many other works, is a sculptor who carves a statue of a beautiful woman and then promptly falls in love with her.³² Later, the goddess Aphrodite brings the sculpture to life, and she becomes Pygmalion's bride. As I discuss in chapter 7, the myth of Pygmalion makes for a curious origin story. Rooting sex tech in classical myth gives the later lineage of sexual technologies an aura of gravitas. It also suggests that those who create sex dolls are, like Pygmalion, artisans of mythical skill. Yet if we look back to the actual text of *Metamorphoses*, we find that Pygmalion is portrayed less as an awe-inspiring inventor and more as an awkward, oversexed romantic who hates women and idealizes the not-quite-liveness of dolls. The myth of Pygmalion, precisely because it is a myth, helpfully literalizes the fictional natural of the sex doll's various origin stories. It also exemplifies a trend that recurs across such origin stories: that the same tales that are supposed to make sexual technologies seem legitimate, natural, and manly end up making them seem precarious, comedic, and queer.

Other origin stories for the sex doll place its creation in an array of different time periods and political contexts. According to another alternate tale that I also discuss in chapter 7, sex dolls were invented by Nazis during World War II for use by German soldiers. Still other stories look outside of Western Europe for the sex doll's origins, typically to Japan or Asian countries more generally, such as in the story of the "Dutch wives," which I address in chapter 6. Historian Agnès Giard has documented the popularity of contemporary narratives (mostly emerging from Japan itself) that claim that "love dolls" were first invented and produced during the Japanese Edo

period—a notion that Giard debunks, calling it a reflection of a “collective phantasmagoria” entirely lacking in material evidence.³³ Additional origin stories exist for the twin figure of the sex doll: the “gynoid” automaton, a robot shaped like a woman who has featured in many prominent works of literature and film across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from E. T. A. Hoffmann’s 1818 “The Sandman” to Auguste Villiers de l’Isle-Adam’s 1886 *L’Ève future* to Fritz Lang’s 1927 *Metropolis*.³⁴ Relatedly, Minsoo Kang has documented what he terms the *intellectual fable* of René Descartes’s mechanical daughter—a widely circulated yet fabricated story about an automaton shaped like a young girl supposedly created by Descartes, whom the philosopher took onboard a ship, only for her to be thrown overboard by the ship’s captain. With its focus on a doll-like object on a journey at sea, this story has much in common with the tale of the dames de voyage, further drawing out its technological valences.³⁵

Among these origin stories for the sex doll, the tale of the dames de voyage is arguably the most prominent today, and its prominence is snowballing. The tale has appeared in numerous works, both popular and academic, that are proving to have a long-lasting influence on the ways that subsequent authors understand the history of the sex doll and the history of sexual technologies. However, before homing in on the tale of the dames de voyage, it is valuable to reflect on these other imagined origins. They illustrate how the story of the sailors’ dolls exists within an ecosystem of such stories, each of which evolves through its own textual lineage and each of which offers a different way to think about the cultural work that origin stories set out to accomplish. While finding out the real history behind the tale of the dames de voyage is one of the goals of this book, my overall purpose is not to whittle down this network of origin stories to identify the “right” one. Writing in *Imperial Leather*, Anne McClintock describes how interrogating past sexual practices offers a chance to explore “complex, historically diverse phenomen[a] that cannot be reduced to a single, male, sexual narrative of origins.”³⁶ The result of such an exploration “is less an attempt to empirically recover the past than it is an attempt to intervene strategically in historical narratives,” says McClintock, “in such a way as to throw into question not only the historical force of these relations . . . but also their continuing implications of our time.”³⁷ Dominant narratives about the history of sexual technologies require precisely this sort of intervention, one that throws the past into question and by extension argues for new ways of thinking, making, and being in the present.

A History at Sea: Setting Sail in Search of the “Very First Sex Doll”

What is the reality behind the tale of the dames de voyage, and what are the implications of the tale as it is being told today? This book tackles these questions in two sections. Part I, Searching for the Very First Sex Doll, is about moving backward from the present day to find the fabled sailors’ sex dolls. It begins with chapter 1, “Contemporary Tales of the *Dames de Voyage*: The History of an Imagined History.” There, I map out various versions of the tale from across a wide web of twenty-first century sources, with a focus on those that explicitly position the dames de voyage as “the beginning of the modern sex doll.”³⁸ After charting similarities and differences across these renditions (where and when they supposedly take place, how they contextualize the story of the sailors’ dolls within larger narratives), I move into a mode of scholarly sleuthing, tracing what I refer to as the *citational lineage* behind the tale of the dames de voyage. This is a genealogy of works that begins with twenty-first-century histories and runs back through microgenerations of English- and French-language sources. The process of tracing this lineage reveals that the story of the sailors’ sex dolls, as it appears today, has in fact been formed through a series of slip-pages, amalgamations, and deliberate obfuscations closely tied to the gender politics of citation and attempts to make scholarship seem original and legitimate.

Yet the process of imagining the dames de voyage began long before the present day. In chapter 2, “How Fantasy Became History: The *Dames de Voyage* in Pseudoscience, Erotica, and Advertising,” I leave behind histories written over the last few decades and instead track down a set of earlier texts that are often used to bolster claims about the dames de voyage—either that they were rudimentary sailors’ dolls or elaborate mechanized proto sex robots (and sometimes, oddly, both). These texts include “scientific” books on sex and sexual devices published in America in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the same period when now-iconic midcentury blow-up dolls began to appear for sale in men’s magazines in the United States, Britain, and Australia. They also include German sexological treatises from the 1900s to 1920s, French erotica from the 1890s through the 1900s, and advertisements for sex toys sold in Paris at the turn of the twentieth century (figure 0.4). These too form a lineage of works that construct an earlier vision of the dames de voyage. Yet read more closely, these works quickly

SUSPENSOIRS

GMENTATION 30%

			PRIX
SUSPENSOIR	ordinaire, ceinture et poche coton, la pièce.		4 75
—	demi élastique, ceinture grise, poche grise . *		2 25
—	— — blanche, poche blanche .		3 25
—	— — à rayures, poche blanche.		3 75
—	— — étroite, t. élast., poche bl.		3 75
—	ceinture large, tout élastique, poche blanche.		5 25
—	— — à rayures, 1/2 fin, poche démontante.		5 75

Figure 0.4

An advertisement for strap-on harnesses (euphemistically labeled *suspensoirs*) for use with dildos, offered for sale in 1900 by Parisian merchant Maison L. Bador.

reveal that their depictions of sex dolls are the stuff of fantasy rather than fact. Whether through the erotic imagination of pornography or the florid, hyperbolic promises of advertising, such texts have created a historical imaginary around sexual technologies that has, over the intervening years, been codified into “history.”

If this lineage of texts from both the present and the past offers no actual proof of the existence of the sailors’ sex dolls, does that mean that their story is entirely fictional? Or could such proof lie elsewhere? Chapter 3, “The Birth of the *Dames de Voyage*: From Sex Workers to the Sexual Technologies of Sailors,” explores alternative avenues for locating traces that might corroborate the story that sailors in centuries past made or used sex dolls while at sea. In the first half of this chapter, I approach this task by mapping the origins and evolution of the term *dames de voyage* itself, uncovering its actual meanings in French vernacular usage. Drawing from articles and stories published in a robust ecosystem of Parisian newspapers, I demonstrate how the term began its life in the 1890s as a euphemism for sex workers. Over the next two decades, it came to stand in for any sex toy that replicated the vagina—most of which were strikingly simplistic items sold under grand marketing claims (figure 0.5). Thus, they were far from the mechanical marvels that generations of scholars have since imagined the *dames de voyage* to be, at least in their more elaborate forms. In the second half of this chapter, I shift to looking for the sailors’ dolls in maritime archives, examining ships’ cargo lists, sea chanteys, and moral tracts about the “wickedness” of sailors. I conclude by looking to alternate art forms we could reimagine as the sexual technologies of sailors, including erotic scrimshaw and figureheads in the shape of women bursting forth through the waves.

The process of searching for the *dames de voyage* reveals that both the story of the sailors’ dolls and associated accounts of technologically “advanced” early sex dolls are myths. Yet this is far from the end of the story. In chapter 4, “‘All Is Rubber!’: The *Femmes en Caoutchouc* and the Actual Origins of the Commercial Sex Doll,” I offer a different version of the history of the sex doll: a recounting of a real material past that has been revealed through my hunt for the *dames de voyage*. The earliest commercial sex dolls produced in Western Europe (and possibly the United States) were in fact the *femmes en caoutchouc*: “women” made of inflatable vulcanized rubber. These rubber women, which were one among many sex toys

Protective Women's Secret Part

No. 1

No. 2

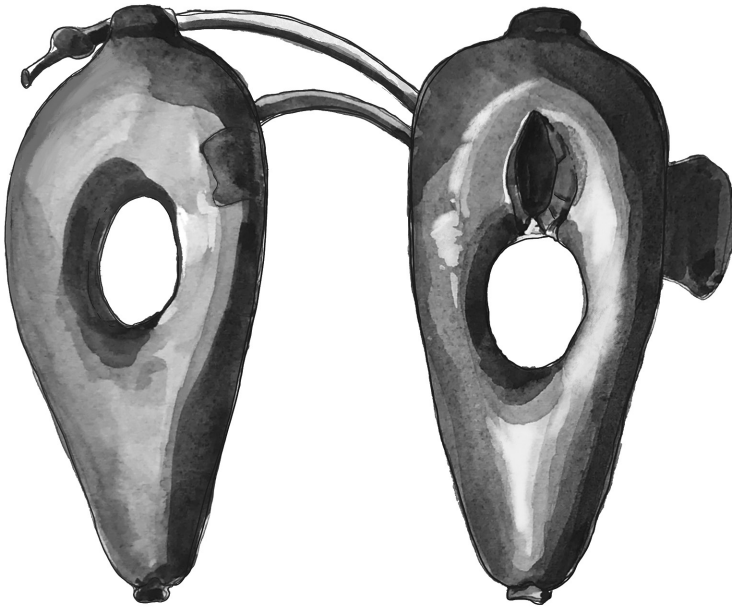


Figure 0.5

Artist's rendering of an inflatable rubber vulva of the sort historically referred to as a *dame de voyage* and advertised with grand marketing claims. Based on an image of a 1940 sex toy catalog from a Japanese seller that appeared in Paul Tabori, *The Humor and Technology of Sex* (New York: Julian Press, 1969). *Source*: Original art by Kathryn Brewster.

and other sexual devices to enter the market during a rubber boom that started in the 1850s, were most likely sold as a set of dismembered parts that could be folded up to fit in a box resembling a suitcase—a real-life manifestation of the imagery of disassembly and dismemberment that features in much literature and art related to dolls.³⁹ These parts could then be filled with air or water to give them a supposedly lifelike feel. By looking at advertisements, news reports, and fiction from the period, much of which circulated around the 1800s Paris World's Fairs, we see how the *femmes en caoutchouc* went through their own rise and fall in French popular culture.

Just as in the present, visions of the sex doll during the second half of the nineteenth century reflected a mix of awe and humor, with the rubber women eventually shifting from a symbol of technological innovation to a regular fixture in reports about seedy operations and run-ins with the law.

In part II, *Interrogating the Story of the Very First Sex Doll*, I transition from searching for the sailors' dolls to making sense of the cultural implications that underlie the use of the *dames de voyage* to tell the story of sex tech's history. Chapter 5, "Making Sex Tech Masculine, Making Sex Tech Straight: The Disavowal and Return of Femininity and Queerness," addresses issues of gender and sexuality in the tale of the *dames de voyage*. It explains how the tale attempts to situate the origins of sex tech in the desires of straight men and their supposedly "natural" sexual affinity for technology. In this way, the story of the sailors' dolls works to overwrite more feminist versions of sex tech's history. However, if we look back to the earlier documents described in the first part of this book, we find that making the tale of the *dames de voyage* itself masculine and straight has required a considerable rewriting of the past. These documents, which supposedly form the basis for the tale as it appears in the present day, are dotted with scenes of men being laughed at for using sex dolls, men engaging in sex with other men via sex dolls, and sex dolls constructed to look like women fighting back. Thus, at the same time that it attempts to undermine the contributions of women and queer people to the development of sexual technologies, the tale of the *dames de voyage* ends up painting a picture of sex tech's origins that is marked by femininity and queerness.

Issues of colonialism and racism have also shaped the historical imaginaries surrounding sexual technologies. In chapter 6, "From Bamboo Lovers to Undersea Kingdoms: Colonialism and Race in Stories of Sailors' Sex Dolls," I open by describing an alternate origin story for the sex doll: the story of the Dutch wives. The Dutch wives are imagined to have been early sex dolls used by sailors associated with the Dutch East India Company in the 1600s or 1700s, modeled off of bamboo sleep cages designed to keep sleepers cool on hot nights, and either created by the Dutch and adopted in Asia or created in Asia and adopted by the Dutch, depending on the account. The explicit ties between the Dutch wives, European imperialism, and orientalism prompt us to confront the colonialist and racialized logics that underlie the tale of the *dames de voyage* as well. Colonial violence facilitated the rise of rubber goods in the second half of the 1800s. Indeed,

if we return once again to earlier documentation, we find that visions of white European sexuality went hand-in-hand with anti-Blackness and an erotic panic about colonial subjects. In its later sections, this chapter addresses echoes between the story of the sailors' dolls and the real experiences of enslaved people during the Middle Passage, arguing that the tale of the *dames de voyage* as it has been formulated draws imagery from this history while problematically attempting to distance itself from race. Drawing guidance from work by Afrofuturist thinkers who have reimagined the lives of those lost in the Atlantic slave trade, I ask whether the tale of the *dames de voyage* too can be reimagined through the power of speculation.

Just as revealing as the stories that are repeated about the origins of sexual technologies are those that are pushed to the background. Chapter 7, "Legitimizing Sex with Technology: Prisoners, Nazis, Misogynists, and the Origin Stories That Go Untold," argues that one of the primary functions of the tale of the *dames de voyage*, as it is deployed in contemporary histories, is to legitimize the development and use of twenty-first-century sexual technologies such as sex robots. To illustrate this, I look at a set of alternate stories that these present-day narratives choose to sidestep. The first such story locates the origins of sex dolls in prison, made manifest through examples of actual makeshift sex dolls created by prisoners. The second story, a myth just as false as the story of the sailors' dolls, is the legend of how Nazi leaders supposedly invented the blow-up doll for use by German troops. The third story is the myth of Pygmalion. As mentioned, a close reading of the myth reveals Pygmalion to be not a great classical hero but a ridiculous loner driven by his disdain for women. Together these stories draw to the surface those characteristics of sex tech culture today that other versions of history attempt to ignore: its anxious need to render sexual technologies the domain of "good" subjects and to distance itself from deviance; its ties to the logics of eugenics and white supremacy; and its undercurrents of toxic masculinity that animate much of the technoutopian rhetoric around high-tech sexual futures.

Despite all of these problems with the tale of the *dames de voyage*, the story of the sailors' dolls still contains possibilities for a radical reimagining. In the conclusion, "Reclaiming the *Dames de Voyage*: The Feminist Potential of a Fictional Past," I consider how embracing the imaginary nature of this imagined history might open doors to a queerer, more feminist, and

more socially just vision of history. To explore this, I offer a reading of an erotic short story by Anaïs Nin, which includes a scene in which a woman fantasizes about being a rubber sex doll passed between sailors.⁴⁰ Through this text, we see how the tale of the *dames de voyage* can be used to flip the script on narratives about technological innovation and their relationships to gender and desire. In this sequence, the woman willfully becomes the doll, blurring her role as sexual subject and sexual object and using her rubber body to both bounce back and “fuck back.” In closing, the conclusion reflects on the notion that the origins of sexual technologies lie “at sea.” Drawing from writing about the ocean and its intimate relationship to media, I conclude this volume by theorizing what it might mean to set the history of sex tech adrift.

Lessons from the Tale of the *Dames de Voyage*

The lessons that emerge across these chapters extend far beyond the tale of the *dames de voyage*, and indeed beyond any one origin story we might tell about the history of sexual technologies. From this work, we learn that sex dolls have a long history and that, in many ways, it is not the history that has already been told. We also learn that sex tech, as both a set of actual technologies and as a cultural imaginary, has happened before. Previous waves of technological shift have already brought with them visions, simultaneously eager and anxious, of how high-tech devices will imminently change the future of sex. In addition, through this investigation of the *dames de voyage*, we learn that the history of sexual technologies has never actually been about the inventiveness of straight men. Instead, it is the history of industries that have shaped and been shaped by sexual practices. It is also the history of the sex workers, women, queer people, and people of color whose lives have been bound up with the production and popularization of sexual technologies since long before these technologies came to be seen as the domain of male inventors and consumers. We find as well that sexual technologies have long been built as much on forces of oppression as on self-expression. Of course, those of us who study the cultural implications of contemporary technologies recognize this to be an underlying truth about tech more generally. Yet it is important to recognize that sexual technologies themselves, commonly presumed to stand apart from concerns about the politics of tech, also carry with them a legacy of

discrimination that has, over the course of time, come to serve as the foundation for the erotics of technology.

From this investigation, we can also take lessons about how the history of sexual technologies has been made. These lessons likewise apply to the telling of sexual and technological histories more broadly. The way that such histories are told is always inherently political. Feminist historians already know that the way we choose to tell histories of sexuality and gender is inherently subjective, communicating values about whose stories should be told and how. However, the history of technology is just as subjective, even when technology itself seems built on the cold, hard “facts” of machines and computer code. And yet, as the case of the *dames de voyage* makes clear, even narratives about history that are designed to uphold a discriminatory status quo can be subverted and made radical. Remaking history is a part of the work of reclaiming the future. Indeed, the future of sex tech, like its past, belongs to the very people who have been pushed out of its history. No matter who tries to convince us otherwise (and by *us* I mean my fellow femme and femme-adjacent folks and my fellow queer and trans folks, as well as the people of color and the people living under the ongoing effects of colonialism with whom I stand in solidarity), sexual technologies belong to us today and tomorrow because they have belonged to us for centuries.

I offer these lessons as launching points for anyone interested in the history of sexuality and technology, but more specifically I am speaking to the vibrant, interdisciplinary network of scholars whom this book is both in dialog with and indebted to. In addition to the authors whose versions of sex tech’s history I critique, some of my most immediate interlocutors are other feminist historians addressing the material histories of sex toys. Among these are Lynn Comella, Hallie Lieberman, Donna Drucker, Jessica Borge, Anjali Arondekar, Cynde Moya, and, from a former generation of research, Rachel Maines.⁴¹ In addressing sex dolls in particular—and, by extension, sex robots—I have looked to the work of Agnès Giard, Neda Atanasoski, Kalindi Vora, Josef Nguyen, Allison de Fren, and Marquand Smith.⁴² There are numerous people who have done important work on gynoid dolls and figures of mechanical women across the history of fiction, art, and film. Among those, I draw primarily from Julie Wosk, Anne Balsamo, Minsoo Kang, and Bliss Cua Lim.⁴³ Work on all of these topics has served as an invaluable model for how to create a feminist media history

that is grounded yet imaginative, authoritative yet self-reflexive, and open to the strange, unexpected joys of sexual and technological histories.

In thinking about technologies like the sex doll that are designed to interface with the body, and specifically to replicate sensations of touch, I draw guidance from work by David Parisi, Rachel Plotnick, and Teddy Pozo.⁴⁴ Historians who have tracked shifting relationships between gender and computing, such as Mar Hicks, Janet Abbate, and Ruth Oldenziel, have also helped shape my thinking about how cultural narratives around technology tell different stories about who matters in the realm of tech.⁴⁵ In thinking about both the discriminatory and the liberatory potentials of technology, I look to scholars whose work confronts technology from perspectives of race and disability, like Ruha Benjamin, Nettrice R. Gaskins, Safiya Umoja Noble, and Sasha Costanza-Chock.⁴⁶ Fellow media historians like Jacqueline Wernimont, Caetlin Benson-Allott, and Carly Kocurek have all offered roadmaps for how to make new meaning from the everyday media practices of the present past.⁴⁷ Carlin Wing's research on the history of rubber, both in relation to colonialism and contemporary imaginaries, has deeply influenced my own discussions of the role of rubber in the development of sexual technologies.⁴⁸ None of that is to mention the dozens of other scholars who have done and are doing vital research on the infinite number of other ways that technology and sexuality intersect and interweave. They are too many to list here, but their work has invaluable shaped and reshaped my thinking in the many years since I first stepped into the world of sex tech.

Because this book explores what it might mean to locate the origins of sexual technologies at sea, it draws from both historical research in maritime studies and more humanistic work about the ocean. In addition to the many maritime studies scholars whom I reference in chapter 3, work by Sowande' M. Mustakeem on the Middle Passage and Melody Jue on seawater as a medium have proven particularly valuable.⁴⁹ Also forming a backdrop to this vision of sex dolls on the open seas is work that has demonstrated the material connection between computational technologies and the ocean itself, such as that by Nicole Starosielski and Alenda Chang.⁵⁰ In my thinking about the power of speculation and the possibilities for remaking history, I am inspired by works like Jacob Gaboury's "A Queer History of Computing," which encourages us to envision the queer intimacies of the past without attempting to resolve those visions into

historical truth.⁵¹ I am likewise inspired by poetic work like Alexis Pauline Gumbs's writing on how the lives of aquatic mammals jibe with Black feminist thought and Alexis Lothian's discussions of queer speculative futures that remake the future through fantasy.⁵² Video game scholars and historians Laine Nooney, Aubrey Anable, and Whit Pow have all helped shape my methodology and my understanding of my own ideological goals in participating in the messy work of making history.⁵³ In particular, Nooney's and Anable's respective writings on shifting from a model of *excavating* history to a model of *spelunking* have been constant guides for me as I have gone about feeling my own way through remnants of history and creating a picture of the past that is surely imperfect and incomplete but is also true.⁵⁴

A few additional notes about this book: Despite my best efforts, unqualified references to *women* and *men* do make appearances throughout. At times, sex dolls are also referred to as "looking like women" or "being made in the shape of women." As a nonbinary person myself, I am admittedly irked by this description and I recognize its problems—among them, that referring to people and objects in this way perpetuates a vision of sexual history as the history of cisgender people, that it leaves little space for those who fall outside the gender binary, and that it risks reinforcing misguided beliefs that gender can be equated with the shape of one's body or the form of one's genitals. I use terms like *men* and *women* because they are the rhetorical building blocks around which the documents I am analyzing are structured. They are also the terms around which cultural fantasies of the sex doll have formed. I recognize that this is far from a perfect answer, however, and the place of transgender and otherwise gender non-normative people in the history of sexual technologies is a subject that deserves a book all its own. On a more logistical front, it may be helpful to note that many of the sources discussed in this book were originally published in French or German; unless otherwise stated, all translations of these works are my own. Much of the labor of this research has gone into playing academic detective: figuring out strange twists and turns in citationality and making connections across texts where those connections have been intentionally erased. I have tried to hold myself to the same level of citational accountability to which I hold the authors whose writing I analyze. For any readers interested in picking up this work and heading off on the hunt for these sources on their own, I have done my best to leave breadcrumb trails of references in the footnotes.

Like so much feminist scholarship, this work is not only professional but also personal. Searching for and making sense of the dames de voyage has brought together many seemingly disparate elements of my life as a scholar and a writer. My research and training are highly interdisciplinary. In addition to my background in journalism and creative writing, I hold a PhD in comparative literature. I have worked in academic departments of video game design, information science, and film and media studies. I am a queer studies scholar who has had the honor of helping build a flourishing community of queer research around video games and digital media.⁵⁵ However, I have also faced discrimination within tech circles for the better part of two decades, not so much for being queer as for being a person assigned female at birth who is far less interested in attaining or celebrating technical knowledge than in asking hard questions about technology and culture. I am a white, able-passing person (with an invisible disability) who recently earned tenure at a major research university. I am the immensely proud mentor of graduate students who are doing the crucial work that will become the future of our fields. I am a person who is deeply skeptical of narratives about sex tech and yet truly gleeful when I find myself immersed in the artifacts of sex tech's real material histories. I am that professor in Southern California who stands at the ready to shower you with endless gratitude and a respectable amount of monetary compensation if you are that one human being who still has an actual inflatable rubber doll from the turn of the twentieth century in their basement. If that is you, I am begging you, call me.

A Final Note on Sex Robots and the Stakes of Reimagining History

It is impossible to talk about sexual technologies or sex dolls today without talking about sex robots. I began this introduction by saying that sex dolls were having a cultural moment. It might be more accurate to say that the cultural moment belongs to sex robots, and sex dolls are along for the ride. Whether we like it or not (I do not), sex robots are everywhere. Well, not real sex robots, at least not for the most part. Rather, it's the idea of sex robots, the fantasy of sex robots, the promise that sex robots are always already just about to be arriving on our doorstep.⁵⁶

"Sex robots are coming." This, often verbatim, is the ominous claim made by a huge array of journalists, authors, roboticists, and advertisers.⁵⁷

Along with this promise come reports of new advances in artificial intelligence for sex robots, innovations in sex robot customizability, and reports that the voluptuous silicone rubber bodies of sex robots now feel and look and even smell more realistic than ever before.⁵⁸ Of course, these reports stir up their share of debates. Some argue that sex robots will bring out a “dark side” in their users or that they promote violence against women or children (a case often made by comparing sex robots to prostitutes in ways that disparage sex work) or that they might get hacked and kill the people who are having sex with them.⁵⁹ Others counter such arguments by insisting, for example, that robots are good for society because they increase sexual access for people with disabilities or that would-be sex robot lovers are being unfairly judged by small-minded sexual conservatives.⁶⁰ Sex robots are also increasingly the stuff of academic research. Representatives from fields like computer science and human-computer interaction are working to develop the technologies that will make the large-scale production of consumer sex robots a viable reality (there are a few early versions already on the market).⁶¹ Meanwhile, scholars in this field are publishing articles and leading conferences that breathlessly celebrate the possibility of “intimate relations with robots.”⁶²

Let me be honest: I wish that I were not talking to you about sex robots. Although my scholarly perspective is a critical one, I try to work on subjects that I take joy in. That is why I often study video games and internet culture, both of which are close to my own heart. It is also how I have come to write this book; I am deeply invested in exploring how cultures and practices of intimacy shift across media forms, especially ones with ties to digital media. I love learning about unexpected ways that people—either in the present or in the past—have used technologies to connect with one another sexually. I understand and feel compelled by scholarship that argues for the intersection of sex and tech as a space of feminist, queer, and trans possibility. I have immense respect for the women and queer folks and sex workers whose labors and whose longings have driven the development of sexual technologies (and technology more broadly) and yet who are so often written out of technology’s history. One of my most prized possessions is my ever-growing collection of antique vibrators. These crumbling technological relics of a sexual past make me happy in ways I cannot quite explain.

What does not make me happy is sex robots. This is not because I object to sex robots or any other given sexual technology on some immutable

moral grounds. I am far more sex positive than I am sex negative, if we still believe in such a dichotomy, and I am neither a technodystopian nor a technoutopian. I am not here to dictate whether people should or should not have sex with robots. Nor am I here to pass judgment, as Hillel Schwartz does when writing about sex dolls in *The Culture of the Copy*, on whether or not sex robots should be considered “lovefakes,” mere “shoddy forgeries” inadequate to the task of replicating the complex realities of sex.⁶³ The problem with sex robots, in my opinion, is not sex robots. The problem with sex robots is people.

In her essay “Your Robot Isn’t Neutral,” Safiya Umoja Noble explains how the design of robots today is driven by stereotypes. Both in their physical appearance and in their data-driven, algorithmic artificial intelligence, says Noble, robots are being developed around cultural norms that reinscribe troublesome hierarchies of race and gender at the levels of both software and hardware. Unfortunately, despite the crucial relevance of these issues to robotics research, “the field of robotics rarely engages with social science and humanities on gender and race.” This shortsighted rejection of socially engaged perspectives on the part of computer scientists is resulting in the unchecked spread of racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, and economic exploitation in the design of robots, even those developed for “social good.” These issues are inseparable from the sexualization of robots. “It’s no surprise that we see a host of emergent robotic designs that are pointing toward women’s labor,” writes Noble, including “doing the work of being sexy and having sex.” After all, Noble reminds us, “robots are the dreams of their designers, catering to the imaginaries we hold about who should do what in our societies.”⁶⁴

These same concerns about robots more broadly are amplified when it comes to sex robots in particular. Contemporary discourses about sex robots are fundamentally bound up with cultural politics of gender, sexual identity, and race. Scratch the surface and you will find that what most people are talking about when they talk about sex robots is not sex robots at all. Proponents of the so-called rise of sex robots, and there are many of them, paint a picture of a bold new sexual future sitting just over the horizon, one in which both the sex we have and the sexual partners we have it with finally fulfill our wildest dreams. Yet these “wildest dreams” are of a very particular sort. Invariably, they are the dreams of straight, white, cisgender men longing for a sexual partner who is fully customizable, who

has no pesky desires of her own, and who participates in what Josef Nguyen describes as “the fiction of a subject capable of consent.”⁶⁵ The sex robots being developed today may be technologically innovative, for whatever that is worth, but they are socially regressive and reactionary. They reify rather than challenge cultural norms related to identity and power. They leave no space for those who desire to form a sexual connection with something other than a supposedly realistic human-like object whose design is based on extremely straight, extremely white, and largely ridiculous notions of female beauty.

As an academic, the thing that riles me up the most is the growing ties between these questionable attitudes toward sex robots and areas of academia associated with technology. Some of the very same people who have been most influential in promoting sexual robotics research and the need for scholarly investigations of love and sex with robots have participated in misogynistic online harassment campaigns, such as those against women working in video games.⁶⁶ They have also been involved in incidents of intimidation in which women scholars were targeted and harassed for raising extremely valid questions about the ethics of sex robot-related research. Every time I see yet another publication written by sex robot evangelists or apologists from STEM fields (fields in which top publication venues theoretically pride themselves on rigorous reviews of objectivity and data), I find myself torn between laughing and screaming.⁶⁷ These are fields that are already extremely male-dominated, and topics like feminism, queerness, and racial inequality are still largely taboo there. It’s inappropriate to talk about gender issues in computer programming languages, but we can talk about sex robots?⁶⁸ That, right there, is the problem, not whether or not any given human has sex with a machine.

This is why I hate talking about sex robots, and this is why we need to talk about them. By changing the ways that we think about the history of sex tech, we can intervene in a present-day echo chamber of fantasies and anxieties that reaches a fever pitch around the figure of the sex robot. I argue throughout this book for the importance of attending to imaginaries: the cultural imaginaries that have surrounded various generations of sexual technologies, the origin stories that turn out to be imaginary, the power to remake history by imagining it otherwise. This issue of imaginaries is also central to understanding the sex robot and to challenging its ascendancy. The cultural life of sex robots, today as across history, has always been far

more about how sex robots are imagined than how sex robots really are. It is imaginaries like these that require our careful interrogation and insistent dismantling.

And, luckily, it is here that history itself becomes most useful. The history of sex robots is also the history of sex dolls, and the history of sex dolls reveals many things. It reveals that today's promises that sexual technologies will be more pleasurable than ever are the same ones that have been made for the last century and a half. It reveals that romanticized visions of sex robots and other devices like them have always been tied to a precarious straight, white masculinity that has attempted (and failed) to keep femininity, queerness, and racialization at bay. It reveals just how much work it has taken, over the course of decades, to make sex robots seem "natural" and good. If we see the sex robot as the epitome of sex tech, and if we see sex dolls as the sex robot's predecessor, then the origin stories discussed here become stories about the birth of sex robots. By setting the terms of the sex robot's cultural birth, they attempt to set the terms for the sex robot's ongoing cultural life. In disrupting established stories about the sex robot's birth, then, we take an important step toward bringing about the sex robot's death: the death of a certain set of narratives that position the sex robot, of all possible technologies for experiencing and expressing sexuality, as the gold standard of sex tech. Death to the sex robot. Long live the sex tech we have not yet had the freedom to imagine.

Notes

Introduction

1. More of these news stories seem to come out every day. Here are just a couple of examples: Alex Williams, “Do You Take This Robot . . .,” *New York Times*, January 19, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/19/style/sex-robots.html>; Paula Froelich, “Eerily Realistic Sex Doll Can Smile, Moan—and Even Hold a Conversation,” *New York Post*, June 20, 2020, <https://nypost.com/2020/06/20/realistic-sex-doll-can-smile-moan-and-even-hold-a-conversation/>.

2. For more on Real Doll, see the 2012 documentary *The Mechanical Bride*, dir. Allison de Fren; Marquand Smith, *The Erotic Doll: A Modern Fetish* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013); Tracy Clark-Flory, “What I Learned about Male Desire in a Sex Doll Factory,” *Guardian*, October 19, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2020/oct/19/what-i-learned-about-male-desire-in-a-sex-doll-factory>.

3. Some of the many possible examples include literature like writings by Gisèle Prassinos and Angela Carter, visual art like that by Hans Bellmer, television series like the anime *Chobits* (2000–2002), films like *Daisies* (1996), and much more. Gisèle Prassinos, *Arthritic Grasshopper: Collected Stories, 1934–1944*, trans. Henry Vale and Bonnie Ruberg (Cambridge, MA: Wakefield Press, 2017); Angela Carter, *Fireworks* (London: Virago, [1974] 2006); Sue Taylor, *Hans Bellmer: The Anatomy of Anxiety* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000); Bliss Cua Lim, “Dolls in Fragments: *Daisies* as Feminist Allegory,” *Camera Obscura* 16, no. 2 (2001): 37–77.

4. In addition to the books and articles about the history of the sex doll that I analyze in detail in chapter 1, some additional examples of recent work to reiterate this history include Kate Devlin, *Turned On: Science, Sex and Robots* (London: Bloomsbury Sigma, 2018), 38–41; Kate Lister, *A Curious History of Sex* (London: Unbound, 2020), 209–222.

5. Elen C. Carvalho Nascimento, “The ‘Use’ of Sex Robots: A Bioethical Issue,” *Asian Bioethics Review* 10, no. 3 (2018): 231–240; John P. Sullins, “Robots, Love, and Sex:

The Ethics of Building a Love Machine," *IEEE Transactions on Affective Computing* 3, no. 4 (2012): 398–409.

6. Many scholars have addressed this issue of how logics of technological advancement contribute to discrimination. One particularly powerful articulation of this argument can be found in Ruha Benjamin's keynote address to the 2021 CHI conference: Ruha Benjamin, "Which Humans? Innovation, Equity, and Imagination in Human-Centered Design," ACM CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, online event, May 11, 2021.

7. For more on methods related to Michel Foucault's concept of genealogy, as well as critiques of these methods, see Colin Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

8. Marshall McLuhan makes a similar argument when he writes in *The Mechanical Bride*, originally published in 1951, that mass media advertising reflects an "interfusion of sex and technology" that pervades culture, which McLuhan says is "born of a hungry curiosity to explore and enlarge the domain of sex by mechanical technique, on one hand, and, on the other, to possess machines in a sexually gratifying way." Marshall McLuhan, *The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man* (London: Duckworth Overlook, 2001), 106.

9. Shaka McGlotten, *Virtual Intimacies: Media, Affect, and Queer Sociality* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2013); Paisley Gilmour, "Virtual Sex Parties—I Just Attended My First Sex Party . . . on Zoom," *Cosmopolitan*, January 27, 2021, <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/uk/love-sex/sex/a32266336/virtual-sex-parties/>.

10. For more on internet-enabled sex toys, see Jeffrey Bardzell and Shaowen Bardzell, "Pleasure Is Your Birthright: Digitally Enabled Designer Sex Toys as a Case of Third-Wave HCI," in *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (New York: ACM, 2014), 257–266.

11. Jonathan Coopersmith, "Pornography, Technology and Progress," *Icon* 4 (1998): 94–125.

12. For more on flirtations via telegraph, see Ella Cheever Thayer, *Wired Love: A Romance of Dots and Dashes* (New York: W. F. Johnston, 1880).

13. Regarding contraception as a technology, see Donna J. Drucker, *Contraception: A Concise History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020), 2.

14. For writing on teledildonics, see Howard Rheingold, "Teledildonics and Beyond," in *The Postmodern Presence: Readings on Postmodernism in American Culture and Society* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2005), 274–287; Teddy Pozo, "Haptic Media: Sexuality, Gender, and Affect in Technology Culture, 1959–2015" (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Barbara, 2016); Maria Joao Faustino, "Rebooting an

Old Script by New Means: Teledildonics—the Technological Return to the ‘Coital Imperative,’” *Sexuality & Culture* 22, no. 1 (2018): 243–257.

15. Ariane Cruz, “Techno-Kink: Fucking Machines and Gendered, Racialized Technologies of Desire,” in *The Color of Kink: Black Women, BDSM, and Pornography* (New York: NYU Press, 2016), 169–212. The image of the “women’s masturbation machine” pictured here comes from the visual supplement to Leo Schidrowitz’s 1927 sexological text, *Ergänzungswerk zur Sittengeschichte des Lasters* (Supplement to the moral history of vice). Schidrowitz does not provide an exact date for its production but does include a caption that reads: “Commercially produced apparatus that was confiscated by the police and an original of which is in the Dresden Criminal Museum.” Leo Schidrowitz, *Ergänzungswerk zur Sittengeschichte des Lasters* (Vienna: Verlag für Kulturforschung, 1927), no page numbers, figure V.

16. Jacob Kastrenakes, “Sex Toy Creator Finally Gets the CES Award She Was Denied,” *Verge*, May 8, 2019, <https://www.theverge.com/2019/5/8/18535907/ces-sex-toy-lora-dicarlo-award-reinstated-changes-promised>. This claim that a sex toy could make its user “bawl with happiness” is a reference to an advertisement for a dildo in a catalog for a Parisian sex toy seller that was published in roughly 1908. It’s part of the volume of collection catalogs currently held by the British Library that I discuss and provide more detailed citation information for in chapters 2 and 4.

17. Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

18. Regina Lynn, *Sexier Sex: Lessons from the Brave New Sexual Frontier* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2008).

19. Lynn Comella, “Studying Porn Cultures,” *Porn Studies* 1, no. 1–2 (January 2, 2014): 64–70.

20. Ana Valens, “Steam’s Bestselling, Big-Budget Porn Game Has Got Nothing on These Queer Games,” *Polygon*, April 13, 2021, <https://www.polygon.com/22381939/subverse-steam-kickstarter-review-early-access-porn-sex-adult-games>; Alyson Krueger, “Virtual Reality Gets Naughty,” *New York Times*, October 28, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/28/style/virtual-reality-porn.html>.

21. Sabine Harrer, Simon Nielsen, and Patrick Jarnfelt, “Of Mice and Pants: Queering the Conventional Gamer Mouse for Cooperative Play,” in *Extended Abstracts of the 2019 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (Glasgow: ACM, 2019), 1–11.

22. Lynn Comella (chair), “Sex Tech and the Erotic Imaginary: Mediating Intimacies Online and Off,” panel presentation to the Society of Cinema and Media Studies Conference, online event, March 2021.

23. Caitlin Donohue, "Center of Sex and Culture Closes—but Dr. Carol Queen Looks to the Future," 48 Hills, January 29, 2019, <https://48hills.org/2019/01/center-of-sex-and-culture-closes-but-dr-carol-queen-looks-to-the-future/>.

24. Gayle S. Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," in *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 137–181, 149.

25. Rubin points to the 1978 publication of *The History of Sexuality* as marking this turning point in thinking about the history of sex. Rubin, "Thinking Sex," 149; Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

26. Although many histories of sex and sexual devices begin by looking at the dildo and/or the vibrator, I am thinking specifically of the following: Lynn Comella, *Vibrator Nation: How Feminist Sex-Toy Stores Changed the Business of Pleasure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); Hallie Lieberman, *Buzz: A Stimulating History of the Sex Toy* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2017); Rachel P. Maines, *The Technology of Orgasm: "Hysteria," the Vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

27. This reference to dildo manufacturers at the start of the 1900s draws from the same advertisement mentioned in note 16. This advertisement clearly states that the dildo being sold is for use either by "men who are tired" or "women who want to play the role of a man."

28. See, for example, Devlin, *Turned On*, 23.

29. Comella, *Vibrator Nation*.

30. Maines, *Technology of Orgasm*.

31. Emily Dreyfuss, "Don't Get Your Valentine an Internet-Connected Sex Toy," *WIRED*, February 14, 2019, <https://www.wired.com/story/internet-connected-sex-toys-security/>.

32. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018).

33. Giard explains: "For the moment, no tangible proof of the existence of such dolls has been found. No bill from a merchant, no diary, no engraving, no document that attests that the love doll was produced and marketed before the twentieth century. Most likely the idea of these dolls comes from [the pornographic novelist] Saikaku. But the majority of my interlocutors in Japan, if not all, assert the opposite. 'The first dolls for adults were made in Japan four centuries ago,' they say, repeating what they heard on television or in the press." Agnès Giard, *Un désir d'humain: Les "love doll" au Japon* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2016), 29. I quote Giard at length here because her process of searching for historical traces of the love doll in Japan has many parallels to my search for the dames de voyage.

34. E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Tales of Hoffman* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1982); Auguste Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, *L'Ève future* (Paris: Ancienne Maison Monnier, 1886); Fritz Lang, dir., *Metropolis* (Germany: UFA, 1927).
35. Minsoo Kang, "The Mechanical Daughter of René Descartes: The Origin and History of an Intellectual Fable," *Modern Intellectual History* 14, no. 3 (November 2017): 633–660.
36. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 138.
37. McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 139.
38. Anthony Ferguson, *The Sex Doll: A History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2010), 16.
39. Allison de Fren, "The Anatomical Gaze in Tomorrow's Eve," *Science Fiction Studies* 36, no. 2 (2009): 235–265.
40. Anaïs Nin, *Little Birds* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979).
41. Comella, *Vibrator Nation*; Lieberman, *Buzz*; Drucker, *Contraception*; Jessica Borge, *Protective Practices: A History of the London Rubber Company and the Condom Business* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020); Anjali R. Arondekar, *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); Cynthia Ann Moya, "Artificial Vaginas and Sex Dolls: An Erotological Investigation" (PhD diss., Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality, 2006); Maines, *Technology of Orgasm*.
42. Giard, *Un désir d'humain*; Josef Nguyen, "Robots, Sex Games, and Queer Processes of Embodying Autonomy," presentation at the Society of Cinema and Media Studies Conference, online event, March 2021; Neda Atanasoski and Kalindi Vora, *Surrogate Humanity: Race, Robots, and the Politics of Technological Futures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019); Allison de Fren, "Technofetishism and the Uncanny Desires of A.S.F.R. (alt.sex.fetish.robots)," *Science Fiction Studies* 36, no. 3 (2009): 404–440; Smith, *Erotic Doll*.
43. Julie Wosk, *My Fair Ladies: Female Robots, Androids, and Other Artificial Eves* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015); Anne Marie Balsamo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); Minsoo Kang, "Building the Sex Machine: The Subversive Potential of the Female Robot," *Intertexts* 9, no. 1 (2005): 5–22.
44. David Parisi, *Archaeologies of Touch: Interfacing with Haptics from Electricity to Computing* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018); Rachel Plotnick, *Power Button: A History of Pleasure, Panic, and the Politics of Pushing* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018); Pozo, "Haptic Media."

45. Mar Hicks, *Programmed Inequality: How Britain Discarded Women Technologists and Lost Its Edge in Computing* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017); Janet Abbate, *Recoding Gender: Women's Changing Participation in Computing* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012); Ruth Oldenziel, *Making Technology Masculine: Men, Women, and Modern Machines in America: 1870–1945* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004).
46. Ruha Benjamin, *Race after Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code* (Medford, MA: Polity, 2019); Nettrice R. Gaskins, “Techno-Vernacular Creativity and Innovation across the African Diaspora and Global South,” in *Captivating Technology: Race, Carceral Technoscience, and Liberatory Imagination in Everyday Life*, ed. Ruha Benjamin (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 253–274; Safiya Umoja Noble, *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism* (New York: New York University Press, 2018); Sasha Costanza-Chock, *Design Justice: Community-Led Practices to Build the Worlds We Need* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020).
47. Jacqueline Wernimont, *Numbered Lives: Life and Death in Quantum Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018); Caetlin Benson-Allott, *Remote Control* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015); Carly Kocurek, *Coin-Operated Americans: Rebooting Boyhood at the Video Game Arcade* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).
48. Carlin Wing, “Episodes in the Life of Bounce: Playing with a Rubber Ball,” *Cabinet*, no. 56 (Winter 2014–2015), <https://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/56/wing.php>.
49. Sowande' M. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016); Melody Jue, *Wild Blue Media: Thinking through Seawater* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).
50. Nicole Starosielski, *The Undersea Network: Sign, Storage, Transmission* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015); Alenda Y. Chang, *Playing Nature: Ecology in Video Games* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2019).
51. Jacob Gaboury, “A Queer History of Computing,” *Rhizome*, February 19, 2013, <https://rhizome.org/editorial/2013/feb/19/queer-computing-1/>.
52. Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2020); Alexis Lothian, *Old Futures: Speculative Fiction and Queer Possibility* (New York: New York University Press, 2018).
53. Laine Nooney, “A Pedestal, a Table, a Love Letter: Archaeologies of Gender in Videogame History,” *Game Studies* 13, no. 2 (2013); Aubrey Anable, *Playing with Feelings* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018); Whitney Pow, “Outside the Folder, the Box, the Archive: Moving toward a Reparative Video Game History,” *ROMchip: A Journal of Game Histories* 1, no. 1 (July 2019), <https://romchip.org/index.php/romchip-journal/article/view/76>.
54. Nooney, “A Pedestal”; Anable, *Playing with Feelings*, 34.

55. Teddy Pozo, Bonnie Ruberg, and Chris Goetz, "In Practice: Queerness and Games," *Camera Obscura* 32, no. 2 (2017): 153–163.

56. I recognize that there are indeed existing items that we would term *sex robots* that have been developed both in research contexts and for the consumer market. The point that I am making here is that the discourse around sex robots today far exceeds the actual reality of such robots, with many items that are described as extremely "realistic" in fact looking and sounding anything but real.

57. For example, see the 2017 documentary *The Sex Robots Are Coming*, dir. Nick Sweeney.

58. Michael Moran, "Bizarre, 'Hand-Holding' Robot Sounds, Smells and Even Sweats like a Real Woman," *Daily Star*, November 5, 2020, <https://www.dailystar.co.uk/tech/news/bizarre-hand-holding-robot-sounds-22962352>.

59. Christian Wagner, "Sexbots: The Ethical Ramifications of Social Robotics' Dark Side," *AI Matters Newsletter* 3, no. 2 (2018): 52–58; Laura Bates, "The Trouble with Sex Robots," *New York Times*, July 17, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/17/opinion/sex-robots-consent.html>; Blake Foden, "More 'Abhorrent' Child Sex Dolls Imported amid Startling Warning," *Canberra Times*, March 10, 2019, <https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/5993186/more-abhorrent-child-sex-dolls-imported-amid-startling-warning/>; Kathleen Richardson, "The Asymmetrical 'Relationship': Parallels between Prostitution and the Development of Sex Robots," *ACM SIGCAS Computers and Society Newsletter* 45, no. 3 (2015): 290–293; Bryan Menegus, "Sex Robots May Literally Fuck Us to Death," *Gizmodo*, December 19, 2016, <https://gizmodo.com/sex-robots-may-literally-fuck-us-to-death-1790276123>.

60. Ezio Di Nucci, "Robot Sex and the Rights of the Disabled," in *Robot Sex: Social and Ethical Implications*, ed. John Danaher and Neil McArthur (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018): 73–88; Eduard Fosch-Villaronga and Adam Poulsen, "Sex Robots in Care: Setting the Stage for a Discussion on the Potential Use of Sexual Robot Technologies for Persons with Disabilities," in *Companion of the 2021 ACM/IEEE International Conference on Human-Robot Interaction* (New York: ACM, 2021), 1–9; Wilhelm E. J. Klein and Vivian Wenli Lin, "'Sex Robots' Revisited: A Reply to the Campaign against Sex Robots," *SIGCAS Computers and Society Newsletter* 47, no. 4. (2018): 107–121.

61. Oliver Korn, Gerald Bieber, and Christian Fron, "Perspectives on Social Robots: From the Historic Background to an Expert's View on Future Developments," in *Proceedings of the 11th Pervasive Technologies Related to Assistive Environments Conference* (New York: ACM, 2018): 186–193.

62. I am referring here to the International Congress on Love and Sex with Robots (controversies around which are too tortuous to fully elaborate on here), now being hosted for its sixth year in August 2021. See <https://www.lovewithrobots.com/>.

63. Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles* (New York: Zone Books, 2014), 129.
64. Safiya Umoja Noble, "Your Robot Is Not Neutral," in *Your Computer Is on Fire*, ed. Thomas S. Mullaney, Benjamin Peters, Mar Hicks, and Kavita Philip (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2021), 199–212.
65. Nguyen, "Robots, Sex Games, and Queer Processes."
66. Sebastien Deterding, "#boycottACE and Institutional Corruption," Gamification Research Network, October 31, 2018, <http://gamification-research.org/2018/10/boycottace-and-institutional-corruption/>; Marina Adshade, "We Need Academic Conferences about Robots, Love, and Sex," *Slate*, December 13, 2018, <https://slate.com/technology/2018/12/love-sex-robots-conference-bannon-academic-research.html>.
67. I have chosen not to cite examples directly here, since many of the works in question come from fields in which research "impact" is judged quantitatively by the number of publication citations (regardless of the context of the citation), and these impact scores themselves function as cultural capital, lending legitimacy to such publications.
68. Ari Schlesinger, "A Feminist Programming Language?," FemTechNet, July 14, 2014, <https://femtechnet.org/2014/07/a-feminist-programming-language/>.

Chapter 1

1. David Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots: The Evolution of Human-Robot Relations* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).
2. Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots*, 22.
3. Rachel P. Maines, *The Technology of Orgasm: "Hysteria," the Vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots*, 221.
4. Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots*, 232, 236.
5. Levy, 237.
6. Levy, 237.
7. Levy, 237.
8. Levy, 181.
9. For a recent example of a text that reprints this image and presents it as an actual photograph of the dames de voyage, see Rebecca Clark, "Gag Reflexes: Sex Doll Slapstick and Fran Ross's Oreo," *Post45*, January 22, 2020, <https://post45.org/2020/01/gag-reflexes-sex-doll-slapstick-and-fran-rosss-oreo/>.

10. Anthony Ferguson, *The Sex Doll: A History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2010).
11. Ferguson, *Sex Doll*, 1.
12. Ferguson, 1.
13. Ferguson, 16.
14. Hallie Lieberman, *Buzz: A Stimulating History of the Sex Toy* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2017).
15. Lieberman, *Buzz*, 19.
16. Lieberman, 119.
17. Lieberman, 119.
18. Jia Tolentino, "The Rage of the Incels," *New Yorker*, May 15, 2018, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/the-rage-of-the-incels>.
19. Julien Arbois, *Dans le lit de nos ancêtres: Sexualité, moeurs, et vie intime d'autrefois* (Bernay, France: City Editions, 2016).
20. Kate Lister, *A Curious History of Sex* (London: Unbound, 2021).
21. Arbois, *Dans de lit de nos ancêtres*, 212–213; my original French to English translation.
22. For more on the colonial and racialized implications of these narratives, see chapter 5.
23. Priscille Lamure, "Petite histoire de la poupée érotique," *Savoirs d'Histoire* (blog), October 26, 2017, <https://savoirdhistoire.wordpress.com/2017/10/26/petite-histoire-de-la-poupee-erotique/comment-page-1/>.
24. Lamure, "Petite histoire de la poupée érotique"; my original French to English translation.
25. Julie Bech, "A (Straight, Male) History of Sex Dolls," *Atlantic*, August 4, 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/08/a-straight-male-history-of-dolls/375623/>.
26. Bech, "History of Sex Dolls."
27. Bech.
28. "Nazi Sex Dolls: Hitler's Secret Plan to Manufacture Sex Dolls," *Penthouse*, May 2016.
29. "Nazi Sex Dolls."

30. John Danaher and Neil McArthur, eds., *Robot Sex: Social and Ethical Implications* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017), 1.
31. John Danaher, "Should We Be Thinking about Robot Sex?," in *Robot Sex: Social and Ethical Implications*, ed. John Danaher and Neil McArthur (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017), 3–14.
32. Danaher, "Should We Be Thinking about Robot Sex?," 3.
33. Ruth Oldenziel, *Making Technology Masculine: Men, Women, and Modern Machines in America: 1870–1945* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004).
34. Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots*, 237; Lieberman, *Buzz*, 119.
35. Ferguson, *Sex Doll*, 16; Bech, "History of Sex Dolls."
36. Arbois, *Dans de lit de nos ancêtres*, 212–213; Lamure, "Petite histoire de la poupée érotique."
37. Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots*, 237.
38. Lieberman, *Buzz*, 19.
39. Ferguson, *Sex Doll*, 16. As for the statement that France and Spain were at the height of their respective naval empires in the seventeenth century, numerous historical accounts document that the 1600s were actually a time of considerable decline for Spain's naval forces following the Thirty Years' War. For France, the seventeenth century appears to have been a period of expansion in the country's naval history, though what we might call the real historical "height" of the French navy seems to have come under Napoleon in the early 1800s. This clarification is relevant because it underscores the ahistoricity and inaccuracy of many seemingly historical details that surround the tale of the dames de voyage. For an overview of these histories, see, for example, Jeremy Black, *Naval Power: A History of Warfare and the Sea from 1500 Onward* (London: Red Globe Press, 2009). For a historiographic reflection on how narratives about maritime history have themselves been constructed starting in the twentieth century, see A. D. Lambert, "The Construction of Naval History 1815–1914," *International Quarterly Journal of the Society for Nautical Research* 97, no. 1 (2011): 207–224.
40. Arbois, *Dans de lit de nos ancêtres*, 212.
41. Bech, "History of Sex Dolls."
42. "Nazi Sex Dolls"; Lamure, "Petite histoire de la poupée érotique."
43. Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots*, 237; Lieberman, *Buzz*, 119.
44. Ferguson, *Sex Doll*, 1.
45. Arbois, *Dans de lit de nos ancêtres*, 213.

46. Bech, "History of Sex Dolls."
47. Jack Z. Bratich and Heidi M. Brush, "Fabricating Activism: Craft-Work, Popular Culture, and Gender," *Utopian Studies* 22, no. 2 (2011): 238.
48. See, for example, Chad M. Mosher, Heidi M. Levitt, and Eric Manley, "Layers of Leather: The Identity Formation of Leathermen as a Process of Transforming Meanings of Masculinity," *Journal of Homosexuality* 51, no. 3 (2006): 93–123.
49. For the gender dynamics of maker culture, see Andrea Marshall and Jennifer Rode, "Deconstructing Sociotechnical Identity in Maker Cultures," in *Proceedings of the 4th Conference on Gender & IT—GenderIT '18* (New York: ACM Press, 2018), 91–100. For the gender dynamics of hacker culture, see Allison Adam, "Hacking into Hacking: Gender and the Hacker Phenomenon," in *Gender, Ethics and Information Technology* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 128–146.
50. Bech, "History of Sex Dolls"; Lieberman, *Buzz*; Clark, "Gag Reflexes."
51. Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots*, 301.
52. Ferguson, *Sex Doll*, 16.
53. Another example of a publication that repeats the tale of the dames de voyage during this period is Meredith Gwynne Fair Worthen, ed., *Sexual Deviance and Society: A Sociological Examination* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 262.
54. There are some exceptions, including Lieberman's 2017 *Buzz*, which draws directly from Levy's *Love and Sex with Robots* rather than Ferguson's *Sex Doll*. Lieberman, *Buzz*, 119.
55. Danaher, "Should We Be Thinking about Robot Sex?," 12.
56. Many pages after Ferguson discusses the dames de voyage (primarily on page 16), he describes the so-called Dutch wives supposedly used by the Japanese, which he writes "[originated] in the seventeenth century, when merchant ships would carry leather dolls around for the comfort of the crew" (27). Bech, in her article, pulls these two elements of Ferguson's text together, talking about both the dames de voyage and the Dutch wives in one paragraph. It appears that Danaher then further splices these elements together, creating the "fact" that the dames de voyage were used by seventeenth-century Dutch sailors. Bech also mistakenly—though perhaps intentionally humorously—refers to the dames de voyage as "masturbation puppets," likely a mistranslation of the French word *poupée* as contained in the phrase *poupée erotique* (sex doll)—a signal that Bech is pulling, at least in part, from a French-language source.
57. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

58. Sara Ahmed, *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 15; Amanda Phillips, “Negg(at)Ing the Game Studies Subject,” *Feminist Media Histories* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 2020): 16.

59. An entire section in *Robot Sex* is dedicated to the theme of defending robot sex, followed shortly thereafter by another about the possibility of robot love.

60. Among a handful of tells in the *Penthouse* article, the author refers to the sailors’ dolls as both dames de voyage and damas de viaje, as Ferguson does.

61. Ferguson, *Sex Doll*, 16, 214. Ferguson gives the title of this magazine as *Avantoure: Anthology of Temptation* in the body of the text on page 16, but lists it as *avantoure*, specifying that the article appeared in the July–August 2006 issue, in his bibliography on page 214. Following Ferguson, and given the inaccessibility of the published article, I cite it here as Amy Wolf, “Dames de Voyage,” *avantoure* (July–August 2006): page numbers unknown.

62. Ferguson, *Sex Doll*, 16.

63. Richard Macmanus, “Avantoure: A Magazine for the Web Age,” ReadWrite, December 4, 2006, https://readwrite.com/2006/12/04/avantoure_web_magazine/.

64. Personal email correspondence with the author, November 2017.

65. Amy Wolf, “On Water,” early draft for “Dames de Voyage” shared with permission by the author (2006).

66. Ferguson, *Sex Doll*, 16–20; Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots*, 177–181, 237–239; Iwan Bloch, *Das Sexualleben unserer Zeit in seinen Beziehungen zur modernen Kultur* (Berlin: Louis Marcus Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1907); Iwan Bloch, *The Sexual Life of Our Time in Its Relations to Modern Civilization*, trans. M. Eden Paul (London: Rebman Limited, 1909); René Schwaebélé, *Les Détraquées de Paris: Étude Documentaire* (Paris: Bibliothèque du Fin de siècle, 1904); Henry N. Cary, *Erotic Contrivances: Appliances Attached to, or Used in Place of, the Sexual Organs* (Chicago: printed privately, 1922). For others seeking out Bloch’s text, note that both Ferguson and Levy give slightly incorrect citations. Levy states that the German text dates from 1909; this is in fact the date of the English translation. Ferguson lists the date as 1908, which seems to split the difference between the 1907 German-language and 1909 English-language publications. I offer this clarification because Bloch published a number of books released in a number of editions during this period, so it’s particularly useful to have precise dates. For those seeking out Schwaebélé’s text, note that Levy lists it as having been published in 1905, when it was in fact published in 1904 and then published in a second edition in 1910. Also, the English-language translations of Schwaebélé’s text that Levy provides, which he states come from a translation by John Snugden (Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots*, 179), seem in fact to be amateur translations that have not been published elsewhere.

67. For example, in Ferguson's discussion of sex robots, where he engages with Levy's book at length. Ferguson, *Sex Doll*, 190–193.

68. Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots*, 180.

69. Cynthia Ann Moya, "Artificial Vaginas and Sex Dolls: An Erotological Investigation" (PhD diss., Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality, 2006).

70. David Levy, "Intimate Relationships with Artificial Partners" (PhD diss., Maastricht University, 2007).

71. Levy includes a thank-you to Moya in the acknowledgments section of his book (Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots*, vii) and the preface to his dissertation (Levy, "Intimate Relationships with Artificial Partners," v) for sharing "helpful advice on early 20th century sex artefacts." In our personal correspondence (August 2020), Moya confirmed that she shared her full dissertation project with Levy while he was in the process of writing his own.

72. For instance, Levy's quote from Bloch's *The Sexual Life of Our Time* (Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots*, 177–178) is, in fact, an abbreviated passage from one found in Moya's dissertation (Moya, "Artificial Vaginas and Sex Dolls," 43). Similarly, the extended passage from Cary's *Erotic Contrivances* that Levy quotes (Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots*, 238–239) is itself an excerpt from a longer quotation that Moya provides (Moya, "Artificial Vaginas and Sex Dolls," 62–64). In her own discussion of Cary's text, Moya explains that she found the text in her archival research at the Kinsey Institute Library only by luck. "Possibly less than ten copies" were ever made, she writes, and an error in cataloging meant that even the copy owned by the Kinsey Institute did not come up through standard searches (Moya, "Artificial Vaginas and Sex Dolls," 53). This makes the chances that Levy too was able to access the text extremely limited. Indeed, in the preface of his dissertation, Levy thanks Moya for "kindly provided abstracts" from Cary's text (Levy, "Intimate Relationships with Artificial Partners," v), a note that curiously disappears from the acknowledgments page when Levy's project is revised and published as a book (Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots*, vii).

73. Moya, "Artificial Vaginas and Sex Dolls," 178; Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots*, 237.

74. There is admittedly a complication in this genealogy, since Amy Wolf's article also describes the dames de voyage as sailors' dolls, and was published in 2006, one year before Levy's book. One possible explanation is that Wolf, who mentions no sources in her article, read or heard a version of Levy's work in progress. Another possibility is that both Wolf and Levy were drawing in part from similar versions of the tale circulating through informal early internet spaces like forums and listservs.

75. Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots*, 181.

76. Levy, "Intimate Relationships with Artificial Partners," 186.
77. Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots*, vii; Levy, "Intimate Relationships with Artificial Partners," v.
78. Moya, "Artificial Vaginas and Sex Dolls," 44.
79. Moya, 43.
80. Moya, 44.
81. *Ergänzungswerk zur Sittengeschichte des Lasters: illustrationskommentar für studienbibliotheken und wissenschaftler/mediziner und juristen zu den textabhandlungen des hauptbandes* (Vienna: Verlag für Kulturforschung, 1927); Leo Schidrowitz, *Sittengeschichte des Lasters die Kulturepochen und ihre Leidenschaften* (Vienna: Verlag für Kulturforschung, 1927); Moya, "Artificial Vaginas and Sex Dolls," 44.

Chapter 2

1. One text from an intermediary time period that I admittedly found late in my research is Hillel Schwartz's book *The Culture of the Copy*, which was originally published in 1996. Schwartz does describe early sex dolls as having been used by sailors and recounts a bawdy anecdote about a sea captain who caught his first mate having sex with a doll. However, the types of dolls that Schwartz is describing are commercially produced rubber dolls much closer to the *femmes en caoutchouc* discussed in chapter 4, and his reference to the use of such dolls by sailors (which he draws from a 1900 essay that introduces a volume on the history of the mannequin) is in keeping with the cultural association between sex dolls and sailors discussed in chapter 3. Thus, it's unlikely that the notion that sailors actually made such dolls at sea came directly to later authors, like Amy Wolf in 2006, through Schwartz, since their stories are so dissimilar. Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles* (New York: Zone Books, 2014); Octave Uzanne, "Les femmes dociles: Visite à l'industriel d'Anvers," introduction to *Le Mannequin*, by Léon Rictor (Paris: Bibliothèque artistique et littéraire, 1900).

2. The texts I focus on in this section are from the 1960s and 1970s, but it's worth noting that a few examples from this genre of work do continue to appear up through the 1990s. One is the 1992 book titled *The Encyclopedia of Unusual Sexual Practices* by Brenda Love, which includes one of the few references to the *dames de voyage* in her entry for fornicatory dolls, seemingly suggesting that the term *dames de voyage* might serve as a synonym for sex dolls more generally. Love does also mention sailors in this entry, stating that "the more expensive types [of sex dolls] were once popular among European sailors and had pubic hair and even a clitoris"—a suspect claim followed not by a source but instead, curiously, by a description of an inflatable sheep with a hole beneath its tail for penetration. Brenda Love,

The Encyclopedia of Unusual Sexual Practices (New York: Barricade Books, 1992), 118–119.

3. Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, Clyde E. Martin, and Paul H. Gebhard, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998).

4. Advertising images are from the following: Paul Tabori, *The Humor and Technology of Sex* (New York: Julian Press, 1969), n.p.; Evelyn Rainbird, *The Illustrated Manual of Sexual Aids* (New York: Minotaur Press, 1973), 68.

5. An example of one such text that focuses explicitly on so-called fornicatory dolls and related items is Aaron J. Abelard, *Substitute Lovers* (Hollywood: Barclay House, 1969).

6. R. von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis, with Special Reference to Contrary Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Legal Studies*, trans. Charles Gilbert Chaddock (Philadelphia: F. A. Davis Company, 1894); Havelock Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (New York: Random House, 1936).

7. The two books with the same title published in the same year are Gerhard Stoltz, *Sex Gadgets* (Cleveland, Ohio: Classics Library, 1968) and Roger Blake, *Sex Gadgets* (Cleveland, Ohio: Century, 1968). The quote is from Cynthia Ann Moya, “Artificial Vaginas and Sex Dolls: An Erotological Investigation” (PhD diss., Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality, 2006), 12.

8. Amy Dumont and Ashton Dumont, *Sex Devices and How to Use Them* (Los Angeles: Argyle Books, 1970).

9. Dumot and Dumont, *Sex Devices*, 5.

10. Dumot and Dumont, 3–56, 60–64.

11. Tabori, *Humor and Technology of Sex*, 383–384. The reference to oil here suggests that Tabori is drawing from Iwan Bloch’s work, as described ahead, or from another author who drew from Bloch.

12. Evelyn Rainbird, *Illustrated Manual of Sexual Aids*. Ironically, despite the higher quality of research, Rainbird is one of the most mysterious authors in this bunch; Moya points out that she is likely a “made-up character,” probably a creation of the Penthouse Media Group, though she is far from the only author mentioned here to use a pseudonym. Moya, “Artificial Vaginas and Sex Dolls,” 83.

13. Rainbird, *Illustrated Manual of Sexual Aids*, 49.

14. Rainbird, 60.

15. Dumont and Dumont, *Sex Devices*; Roger Blake, *Sex Gadgets*; Tabori, *Humor and Technology of Sex*.
16. Jane Long, *A Housewife's Guide to Auto-Erotic Devices in the Home* (San Diego: Greenleaf Classics, 1972). Rainbird also mentions this book, even including an image of the cover in her book, with the description, "The cover of a typical American paperback, ostensibly giving unusual data but in fact consisting of casually invented fantasy material." Rainbird, *Illustrated Manual of Sexual Aids*, 63.
17. Henry N. Cary, *Erotic Contrivances: Appliances Attached to, or Used in Place of, the Sexual Organs* (Chicago: printed privately, 1922); Albert Ellis and Albert Abarbanel (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Sexual Behavior: Volume One* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1961), 151.
18. Heike Bauer, "Disciplining Sex and Subject: Translation, Biography and the Emergence of Sexology in Germany," in *English Literary Sexology* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 21–51.
19. Laurie Marhoefer, *Sex and the Weimar Republic: German Homosexual Emancipation and the Rise of the Nazis* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).
20. Heike Bauer, *The Hirschfeld Archives: Violence, Death, and Modern Queer Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2017).
21. Leo Schidrowitz, *Sittengeschichte des Lasters die Kulturepochen und ihre Leidenschaften* (Vienna: Verlag für Kulturforschung, 1927); Leo Schidrowitz, *Ergänzungswerk zur Sittengeschichte des Lasters* (Vienna: Verlag für Kulturforschung, 1927).
22. Schidrowitz, *Sittengeschichte des Lasters*, 214. My original translation from the German.
23. Erich Wulffen, *Der Sexualverbrecher* (Berlin: Langenscheidt, 1910).
24. Wulffen, *Der Sexualverbrecher*, 499.
25. Georg Back, *Sexuelle Verirrungen des Menschen und der Natur* (Berlin: Standard-Verlag, 1910), 432–433.
26. Exactly which text of Bloch's these slightly later works were drawing from gets a little messy. Bech is clearly quoting from Bloch's 1907 *The Sexual Life of Our Time*, discussed ahead. Wulffen, by contrast, offers slightly different information, but still credited to Bloch. This is because Wulffen appears to actually be drawing from an earlier discussion of the dames de voyage that appeared in Bloch's 1903 book, *Beiträge zur Aetiologie der Psychopathia Sexualis* [Contributions to the aetiology of psychopathia sexualis]. Iwan Bloch, *Beiträge zur Aetiologie der Psychopathia Sexualis: Zweiter Teil* (Dresden: Verlag von H. R. Dohrn, 1903).
27. Moya, "Artificial Vaginas and Sex Dolls," 37–38.

28. Iwan Bloch, *Das Sexualleben unserer Zeit in seinen Beziehungen zur modernen Kultur* (Berlin: Louis Marcus Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1907). English-language texts sometimes state the date of this work as 1909; that is because 1909 is the publication date for the official English translation of Bloch's book: Iwan Bloch, *The Sexual Life of Our Time in Its Relations to Modern Civilization*, trans. M. Eden Paul (London: Rebman Limited, 1909).

29. In addition to texts that use this passage to talk explicitly about the dames de voyage, we see this same passage from Bloch in other works about sex tech and sex dolls, such as Allison de Fren, "Technofetishism and the Uncanny Desires of A.S.F.R. (alt.sex.fetish.robots)," *Science Fiction Studies* 36, no. 3 (2009): 401–440, 410.

30. Bloch, *Sexual Life of Our Time*, 648–649.

31. Although *The Sexual Life of Our Time* is often the text credited with originating Bloch's discussion of the dames de voyage, Bloch in fact first writes about the dames de voyage four years earlier, in his 1903 book, *Beiträge zur Aetiologie der Psychopathia Sexualis* [Contributions to the aetiology of psychopathia sexualis]—which did not, unlike *The Sexual Life of Our Time*, receive an official English translation. Here, in this earlier text, Bloch positions his discussion of the dames de voyage after a description of people who have sex with statues. He then writes: "How far fornication goes in this area is shown by the fact that today the so-called 'dames de voyage,' i.e., whole female bodies made of rubber, are sold to debauched old men [*roués*]. The genitals are faithfully imitated and even the secretion of the glandulae Bartholini is imitated by a 'pneumatic tube' filled with oil. There are even said to be replicas of full men for women." Bloch, *Beiträge zur Aetiologie der Psychopathia Sexualis*, 301; my original translation. Bloch later revises and expands upon this earlier description in his 1907 text, adding more details about the dolls' workings and citations to related texts while also removing the word *roués*, a disparaging term—in effect, casting the purchase and use of elaborate sex dolls in a more positive light.

32. For examples of works representing the recurring interest in the Digesting Duck from scholars in science and technology studies, see Daniel Cottom, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Digestion," *Representations* 66 (April 1, 1999): 52–74; Jessica Riskin, "The Defecating Duck, or, the Ambiguous Origins of Artificial Life," *Critical Inquiry* 29, no. 4 (June 2003): 599–633.

33. For example, see Anthony Ferguson's comment that sex dolls sprang from "the germ of male desire" to "create something which was female in appearance, but completely receptive and non-judgmental." Ferguson, *Sex Doll*, 1.

34. Note that this *as* construction is consistent in Bloch's original German text (which uses *als*) as well as the official English translation. Bloch, *Das Sexualleben unserer Zeit*, 710.

35. Admittedly, the fact that Bloch chooses to use the French terms *hommes* and *dames de voyage* in his German-language text adds another layer of complexity, suggesting that the terms may be euphemistic or idiomatic.

36. Bloch, *Sexual Life of Our Time*, 649. Others translate this title as “The Misfits of Paris,” but the meaning of *détraqué* is closer to the English *deranged*, communicating a sense of wild (in this case, sexual) behavior. The second *e* in *détraquées* as it appears in Schwaebél’s title implies that the book is specifically about Parisian women engaging in wild behavior.

37. Bloch, *Sexual Life of Our Time*, 649. The word that Bloch uses to describe Madame B.’s story in his original German text is not *romance* (as the English translation suggests) but rather *roman*, a novel. This distinction, while minor, helps make clear that Bloch did recognize the fictional nature of the work, while later authors who have learned about *La Femme endormie* through the English translation of Bloch’s text have often interpreted the phrase *erotic romance* to mean an actual, factual account of an extended romantic tryst between a human man and a sex doll. Bloch, *Das Sexuelleben unserer Zeit*, 711.

38. Bloch, *Sexual Life of Our Time*, 649.

39. René Schwaebél, *Les Détraquées de Paris: Étude Documentaire* (Paris: Bibliothèque du Fin de siècle, 1904). A second edition of the book was released in 1910, this time without the illustrations—supposedly so that the volume would be deemed less pornographic and more appropriate for sale: René Schwaebél, *Les Détraquées de Paris: Étude de mœurs contemporaines* (Paris: H. Daragon, 1910).

40. As blogger Sabine Huet points out in a 2008 post, *Les Détraquées de Paris* could be considered a queer text, part of what Huet refers to as a largely missing history of lesbian erotica. Sabine Huet, “René Schwaebél, ‘Les détraquées de Paris. Etude de mœurs contemporaines.’ Nouvelle Edition, Daragon libraire-éditeur, 1910,” *Les Introuvables lesbiens* (blog), December 3, 2008, <http://romanslesbiens.canalblog.com/archives/2008/12/03/7575073.html>.

41. Victor Leca, *Paris-Fêtard: Guide secret de tous les plaisirs* (Paris: P. de Porter, 1907).

42. Leca, *Paris-Fêtard*, 21.

43. *Le Rire: Journal humoristique*, October 29, 1910.

44. Schwaebél, *Les Détraquées de Paris: Étude de mœurs contemporaines*, 84–85. Note that page numbers for *Les Détraquées de Paris* come from the 1910 edition.

45. Schwaebél, *Les Détraquées de Paris*, 33.

46. Schwaebél, *Les Détraquées de Paris*, 33. Another charming bit of humor in this story is that, the narrator claims, Dr. P. has to take pains to avoid arrest and make

sure that his bespoke sex doll fabrication operation looks like a legitimate business, so he stocks his store with large balloon animals to throw police off the trail.

47. I am thinking here specifically of the anecdote told by Octave Uzanne in his introduction to *Le Mannequin*, where he describes having visited the city of Antwerp fifteen years prior and been taken to a shop that sold hand-crafted life-sized dolls. This story too has a bawdy air to it, like a tall tale of sex tourism. Uzanne, “Les femmes dociles.”

48. Bloch, *Sexual Life of Our Time*, 649.

49. Bloch, 649.

50. Madame B. (Alphonse Momas), *La Femme endormie* (Melbourne: J. Renold, 1899).

51. See, for example, the following texts, all authored by Momas: Georges de Lesbos, *Voluptés bizarres* (Amsterdam: no publisher listed, 1893); Erosmane, *Lubricités, récits intimes et véridiques d’anecdotes galantes extraites de la vie privée des célébrités contemporaines* (Brussels: no publisher listed, 1891); Fuckwell, *Petites et grandes filles* (London: no publisher listed, 1907).

52. Jon Stratton, *The Desirable Body: Cultural Fetishism and the Erotics of Consumption* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 215; Auguste Villiers de l’Isle-Adam, *L’Ève future* (Paris: Ancienne Maison Monnier, 1886).

53. Paul Booth, “Slash and Porn: Media Subversion, Hyper-Articulation, and Parody,” *Continuum* 28, no. 3 (May 4, 2014): 396–409.

54. Madame B., *La Femme endormie*, 1.

55. Madame B., 1.

56. Madame B., 5.

57. Madame B., 3.

58. Madame B., 3.

59. Bloch, *Sexual Life of Our Time*, 649. Interestingly, Bloch does not mention these catalogs in his 1903 book, *Beiträge zur Aetiologie der Psychopathia Sexualis* [Contributions to the aetiology of psychopathia sexualis], in which an earlier version of his discussion of the dames de voyage appears, suggesting that he encountered these catalogs sometime between 1903 and 1907.

60. Bloch, *Sexual Life of Our Time*, 649.

61. Many of the documents surrounding the dames de voyage suggest that the sale of sex dolls was illegal in Paris during this period. See, for example, *Les Détraquées de Paris*, which includes reference to the fact that the seller of sex dolls

in the “Homunculus” story had to avoid drawing the attention of the police. Other evidence includes documentation of legal cases in which individuals who distributed advertisements for sex dolls on the streets of Paris were brought to court under charges related to the promotion of obscenity and indecency, as discussed in chapter 4.

62. A small selection of catalogs for rubber goods and other intimate devices has thankfully been preserved by the Internet Archive. Other examples come from Album 7 in the Milford Haven Collection, currently held by the British Library, as described ahead.

63. Advertisements for these catalogs begin appearing in Parisian newspapers as early as 1891, starting with the rubber manufacturer Maison A. Claverie. Claverie’s ads are followed soon after by many other sellers, with names such as Maison Durand, Maison C. Bor, Leigh’s, and Office des Inventions Reunies, though it’s unclear how many of these companies apart from Claverie actually produced their own items.

64. Manuel Charpy, “Craze and Shame: Rubber Clothing during the Nineteenth Century in Paris, London, and New York City,” *Fashion Theory* 16, no. 4 (December 2012): 433.

65. Cary, *Erotic Contrivances*, 48. Cary’s reference here to *naval officers* does not appear in Rainbird’s text. However, it’s consistent with the cultural associations between sex dolls and sailors that started forming in France at the turn of the twentieth century, which I discuss in chapter 3.

66. Rainbird, *Illustrated Manual of Sexual Aids*, 53.

67. Rainbird, 53.

68. Tracking down these documents has been a saga in and of itself, and I detail it here so that others after me will hopefully be able to find them. Rainbird gives the following citation for her reference to these sex toy catalogs: “British Museum Private Case, Album 7, The Milfordhaven Catalogues” (Rainbird, *Illustrated Manual of Sexual Aids*, 51). This turns out to be a citation to what is referred to as the Milford Haven collection, which was previously the private collection of George Mountbatten, second Marquess of Milford Haven. Originally, the collection contained pornography, erotic catalogs, and erotic postcards. When George Mountbatten died in 1938, the collection passed to his son, David Mountbatten. In 1961, David Mountbatten was implicated in the Profumo affair, a major political scandal in which Secretary of the State for War John Profumo (under conservative prime minister Harold Macmillan) was revealed to be having an extramarital affair with a nineteen-year-old model. In the aftermath, David Mountbatten dispersed his father’s collection. The curators at the British Library report that, of this initial collection, “a small collection of erotic prospectuses and catalogs for obscene books, pictures and instruments,

dating from 1889 to 1929 was donated to the British Museum in 1963 and these are now at Cup.364.g.48.” Email communication from Elias Mazzucco on the Rare Books and Music Reference Team at the British Library, April 16, 2021. These items were stored briefly in the British Museum’s infamous Private Case, established in the 1850s to contain “obscene material,” the contents of which were later transferred to the British Library in 1973. It is there at the British Library, still at Cup.364.g.48, that these items still remain, where they are overseen by the Rare Books team. Unfortunately, they have been deemed too delicate to produce images of, which is why the images from the catalogs here in this book have been recreated by an artist. Those on the hunt for these materials will find that a second segment of George Mountbatten’s original collection—namely, his cache of erotic postcards—has landed at the Victoria and Albert Museum, where it’s also labeled as the Milford Haven Collection. As for the actual catalogs of sexual devices in question, they are contained in what is called Album 7. In 2019, bibliographer Patrick J. Kearney published a list of the contents of Album 7. Among these are advertisements and catalogs for erotic books, but some are for clandestine catalogs of erotic novelties and apparatuses. The full citation for the bibliographic list of the contents of Album 7 is as follows: Patrick J. Kearney, *Album 7: A Transcription of an Important Collection of Erotic Ephemera in the British Library* (Santa Rosa, CA: Scissors & Paste Bibliographies, 2019). For more information about the humorous circumstances by which the Milford Haven postcard collection came to be archived by the Victoria and Albert Museum (one begrudging internal memo between curators written in 1982 reads, “I supposed we are committed to accepting this gift”), see Erika Lederman, “French Postcards: History Revealed,” *V&A Blog*, November 2, 2015, <https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/caring-for-our-collections/french-postcards-history-revealed?doing>.

69. Advertisement (bottom-right corner of page), *La Lanterne*, June 25, 1891, 4; my French to English translation of this advertisement.

70. Advertisement (bottom center), *La Grisette: Revue populaire illustrée*, August 10, 1895, 3; my French to English translation of this advertisement.

71. Maison L. Bador, *Fabrication perfectionnée de caoutchouc dilaté et baudruche* (Paris: commercial catalog, 1900), cover.

72. Maison L. Bador, *Fabrication perfectionnée*, 1; my original French to English translation.

73. Maison L. Bador, 8; my original French to English translation.

74. Maison L. Bador, 10; my original French to English translation.

75. Jessica Borge, *Protective Practices: A History of the London Rubber Company and the Condom Business* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2020), 17.

76. Agnès Giard, *Un désir d’humain: Les “love doll” au Japon* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2016), 29.

Chapter 3

1. Jean-Yves Mollier, *Le Camelot et la rue: Politique et démocratie au tournant des XIXe et XXe siècles* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 7.
2. Margaret C. Creighton and Lisa Norling, "Introduction," in *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700–1900*, ed. Margaret C. Creighton and Lisa Norling (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), vii–xiv, viii.
3. Mollier, *Le Camelot et la rue*, 8.
4. M. le compte E. A. Sallins, "En Des Jours pareils! Récit russe du temps de Pougatcheff," in *Bibliothèque universelle et revue Suisse* (Lausanne, Switzerland: Bureaux de la Bibliothèque universelle, October 1893), 149–167. The story's subtitle, "A Russian story from the time of Pougatcheff," refers to a mid-eighteenth-century pretender to the Russian throne who led an unsuccessful rebellion against Catherine II. It's therefore best understood as a work of loosely historical fiction.
5. Sallins, "En Des Jours pareils!," 154–155.
6. Admittedly, the term does not seem to have been one of the more commonly used colloquial terms for sex workers. *Paris-Fêtard*, the 1907 guide to Parisian sex tourism that I discuss in chapter 2, refers to prostitutes and women performing other kinds of erotic labor using a variety of lingo (e.g., *dames galantes* or "loose women"), but nowhere does it mention *dames de voyage*. Victor Leca, *Paris-Fêtard: Guide secret de tous les plaisirs* (Paris: P. de Porter, 1907).
7. "Le Rire de la semaine," *Le Rire: Journal humoristique*, March 19, 1910, no listed page numbers (pages 1 and 2 following cover).
8. The year 1903 is the publication date for Iwan Bloch's *Beiträge zur Aetiologie der Psychopathia Sexualis: Zweiter Teil*, in which he first discusses the *dames de voyage*. Iwan Bloch, *Beiträge zur Aetiologie der Psychopathia Sexualis: Zweiter Teil* (Dresden: Verlag von H. R. Dohrn, 1903), 301.
9. Henry N. Cary, *Erotic Contrivances: Appliances Attached to, or Used in Place of, the Sexual Organs* (Chicago: printed privately, 1922), 48; Evelyn Rainbird, *The Illustrated Manual of Sexual Aids* (New York: Minotaur Press, 1973), 49.
10. "Le Rire de la semaine." Although this story is presented in a humorous light, it appears to be true as it was reported on simultaneously by multiple newspapers. For example, see the write-up of the court case in the Chronique (Chronical) section of *L'Éclat de rire: Journal humoristique*. G. de Saint-Loup, "Chronique," *L'Éclat de rire: Journal humoristique* 134 (1910): 14.
11. "Le Rire de la semaine"; my original French to English translation.

12. "Le Rire de la semaine"; my original French to English translation.
13. "Le Rire de la semaine"; my original French to English translation.
14. René Crevel, *Êtes-Vous Fous?* (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1929).
15. Crevel, *Êtes-Vous Fous?*, 178
16. Roger Peyrefitte, *Des Français* (Paris: Flammarion, 1973).
17. Peyrefitte, *Des Français*, 101; my original French to English translation.
18. Vladimir Volkoff, *The Turn-Around*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Bodley Head, 1981).
19. Volkoff, *Turn-Around*, 130.
20. Madame B. (Alphonse Momas), *La Femme endormie* (Melbourne: J. Renold, 1899).
21. Georges Eclar, "La Femme du capitaine," *La Grisette: Revue populaire illustrée*, October 10, 1895, 83–85.
22. Eclar, "La Femme du capitaine," 84.
23. Eclar, 84–85.
24. Eclar, 85.
25. Eclar, 84.
26. Clément Voutel, "La Poupée," *La Vie Parisienne*, October 15, 1921, 883, 886–887.
27. As mentioned in the introduction, Olympia appears in Hoffman's 1816 story "Der Sandman" ("The Sandman"), which is about a young man who falls in love with a beautiful automaton, forsaking his flesh-and-blood fiancée and ultimately meeting an untimely demise in his quest to attain her. See E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Tales of Hoffman* (New York: Penguin Classics, 1982).
28. Voutel, "La Poupée," 886; my original French to English translation.
29. Vald'Es, "Portraits en pied," *La Vie Parisienne*, October 15, 1921, 888.
30. For more on these advertisements, see chapter 2. For more on the sale of these items, see chapter 4.
31. Cary, *Erotic Contrivances*, 48; as quoted in Cynthia Ann Moya, "Artificial Vaginas and Sex Dolls: An Erotological Investigation" (PhD diss., Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality, 2006), 62.
32. For more on the various roles that women played in the seafaring world and on ships, see Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling, eds., *Iron Men, Wooden Women:*

Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700–1900 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

33. Haskell Springer, “The Captain’s Wife at Sea,” in *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700–1900*, ed. Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 92–117.

34. See, for example, Norling and Creighton, *Iron Men, Wooden Women*; Lisa Norling, *Captain Ahab Had a Wife: New England Women and the Whaleshery, 1720–1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); David Cordingly, *Seafaring Women: Adventures of Pirate Queens, Female Stowaways, and Sailors’ Wives* (New York: Random House, 2007); Suzanne J. Stark, *Female Tars: Women aboard Ship in the Age of Sail* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2017).

35. For more recent historical writing on women pirates, see Laura Sook Duncombe, *Pirate Women: The Princesses, Prostitutes, and Privateers Who Ruled the Seven Seas* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2017).

36. See, for example: Henry Trotter, “Soliciting Sailors: The Temporal Dynamics of Dockside Prostitution in Durban and Cape Town,” *Journal of Southern African Studies* 35, no. 3 (September 2009): 699–713.

37. Sowande’ M. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 83–84.

38. See, for example, David Cordingly, “Men without Women,” in *Seafaring Women*, 138–153.

39. Cordingly, “Men without Women,” 142.

40. Cordingly, 145.

41. See, for example, Daniel Hannah, “Queer Hospitality in Herman Melville’s ‘Benito Cereno,’” *Studies in American Fiction* 37, no. 2 (2010): 181–201; Hiram Pérez, “The Queer Afterlife of Billy Budd,” in *A Taste for Brown Bodies* (New York: New York University Press), 25–48.

42. My thanks to Gina Bardi, reference librarian at the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park Research Center for confirming my understanding of the particular challenges posed by these documents and the unlikelihood of finding references to sex dolls in such materials. Personal communication with the author, November 9, 2017.

43. Gina Bardi, personal communication with the author, November 9, 2017.

44. One other route I explored at length, but which ultimately proved to be a dead end, was scouring various archives for the Spanish phrase *damas de viaje*, which a

handful of contemporary authors mention alongside *dames de voyage*. This turns up nothing of relevance; my guess is that the inclusion of *damas de viaje* into discussions of early sex dolls is a twenty-first-century invention. A heads-up for others after me interested in pursuing a similar line of investigation: the World Newspaper Archive initially seems to turn up numerous references to *damas de viaje*, but closer inspection reveals these are actually bits of text from either high-society announcements about women going on trips or advertisements for women's luggage.

45. Peter Kasin, "The Monthly Chantey Sing at San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park: An Introduction" (no publication info; shared via personal communication with author, November 11, 2017). The info sheet also includes a note explaining that there are various forms of the word *chantey*, which can apparently be spelled *chantey*, *chanty*, *shanty*, *shantie*, or *shantey*.

46. Kasin, "Monthly Chantey Sing."

47. These include Peter Kasin, park ranger in the Interpretation Division and sea chantey expert at the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park; Amy Parsons, associate professor in the Department of Culture and Communication at California State University Maritime Academy; and Gibb Schreffler, assistant professor in the Department of Music at Pomona College.

48. Individual correspondence with the author, November 13, 2017.

49. My thanks to Amy Parsons for suggesting this line of archival inquiry and for pointing me to the American Periodicals Series database, from which the primary sources related to this topic were drawn.

50. The Seaman's Friend, "The Salvation of Seamen Difficult," *The Christian Herald and Seaman's Magazine*, March 7, 1824, 153.

51. G. McPherson Hunter, "The Sailor and City Problems: Where the Real Peril of the Seaman Begins," *New York Observer and Chronicle*, May 3, 1906, 562.

52. Hunter, "The Sailor and City Problems," 562.

53. Hunter, 562.

54. Individual correspondence with the author, November 16, 2017.

55. Cordingly writes: "We find the conventional belief that most ships' figureheads depicted women to be far from the case. The predominance of female figureheads was a nineteenth-century phenomenon, and it is only because so many more of these have survived than the earlier lions, dragons, and warriors that we assume that women were more popular on the bows of ships" (Cordingly, *Seafaring Women*, xv).

56. Creighton and Norling, "Introduction," vii, x.

57. Information about this figurehead comes from the catalog entry for the item as part of the collection at the National Maritime Museum. See <https://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/18784.html>.
58. Michael P. Dyer, "Scrimshaw," in *Encyclopedia of Marine Mammals*, 3rd ed., ed. Bernd Würsig, J. G. M. Thewissen, and Kit M. Kovacs (Burlington, MA: Elsevier, 2018), 841–845.
59. Some examples include the Mystic Seaport Museum, the Nantucket Whaling Museum, and the Hull Maritime Museum.
60. Janet West and Arthur G. Credland, *Scrimshaw: The Art of the Whaler* (Hull, UK: Hull City Museums & Art Galleries, 1995).
61. "Whale Bone Porn': Ann Pimental Outraged at Vancouver Maritime Museum's Scrimshaw Exhibit," *HuffPost*, March 25, 2013, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/whale-bone-porn-ann-pimental_n_2950987.
62. Information about items on display via Gilda Salomone, "There's More to the Vancouver Maritime Museum's Exhibit than 'Whale Bone Porn,'" Radio Canada International, March 25, 2013, <https://www.rcinet.ca/en/2013/03/25/theres-more-to-vancouver-maritime-museums-exhibit-than-whale-bone-porn/>; Jason Smythe, "I Know It When I See It: Scrimshaw and Whale Bone Porn," *Satellite Gallery* (blog), April 27, 2013, <https://satellitegallery.wordpress.com/2013/04/27/i-know-it-when-i-see-it-scrimshaw-and-whale-bone-porn-2/>.
63. Tristin Hopper, "It's All Fake: Vancouver Exhibit's 'Whale Bone Porn' Is Not 19th-Century Scrimshaw, Former Museum Director Says," *National Post*, March 30, 2013, <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/its-all-fake-vancouver-exhibits-whale-bone-porn-is-not-19th-century-scrimshaw-former-museum-director-says>.
64. Hopper, "It's All Fake."

Chapter 4

1. For the British context, see, for example, Jessica Borge, *Protective Practices: A History of the London Rubber Company and the Condom Business* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 2020). For the German context, see, for example, Götz Aly and Michael Sontheimer, *Fromms: How Julius Fromm's Condom Empire Fell to the Nazis*, trans. Shelley Laura Frisch (New York: Other Press, 2009); Donna J. Drucker, *Contraception: A Concise History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020), 40–41. For the American context, see, for example, Drucker, *Contraception*, 22.
2. As I will discuss in greater detail when I address issues of race surrounding the tale of the dames de voyage, these rubber items were sometimes manufactured in a dark

brown-black color, as in the example of the *ventre de femme* mentioned in chapter 2. At other times, they were produced in white or pink.

3. Borge, *Protective Practices*, 16.

4. Drucker, *Contraception*, 17.

5. Borge, *Protective Practices*, 16. As Borge helpfully clarifies, rubber vulcanization has been described as a “first revolution” in the manufacture of such items, followed later by another “revolution” in the development of latex rubber, which was thinner, cheaper, stronger, and safer to produce than simple galvanized rubber and which became nearly ubiquitous as the go-to material for condoms by the 1930s. Borge, *Protective Practices*, 17, 19. Drucker, *Contraception*, 17.

6. Carlin Wing, “Episodes in the Life of Bounce: Playing with a Rubber Ball,” *Cabinet*, no. 56 (Winter 2014–2015), <https://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/56/wing.php>.

7. Varnout et Galante, *Catalogue des appareils et instruments de médecine et chirurgie en caoutchouc vulcanisé* (Paris: Imprimerie Administrative de Paul Dupont, 1851).

8. Varnout et Galante, *Catalogue des appareils*, title page.

9. Varnout et Galante, 35–36, 15–16, 13–14, 46.

10. Maison L. Bador, *Fabrication perfectionnée de caoutchouc dilaté et baudruche* (Paris: commercial catalog, 1900).

11. Maison L. Bador, *Fabrication perfectionnée*, 3.

12. Maison L. Bador, 16, 12.

13. Advertisement for Maison A. Claverie, *La Lanterne*, June 25, 1891, 4 (lower right-hand corner).

14. Advertisement for Maison A. Claverie, *La Lanterne*, September 20, 1891, 4 (lower middle).

15. Information about the contemporary Claverie store, as well as text and images presenting the company’s narrative about its own history, are available at <https://mademoiselleclaverie.com/> (accessed April 29, 2021).

16. See <https://mademoiselleclaverie.com/histoire/>.

17. René Schwaebélé, “Homunculus,” in *Les Détraquées de Paris* (Paris: Bibliothèque du Fin de siècle, 1904).

18. Julian Jackson, *Living in Arcadia: Homosexuality, Politics, and Morality in France from the Liberation to AIDS* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 22.

19. Raisa Adah Rexer, *The Fallen Veil: A Literary and Cultural History of the Photographic Nude in Nineteenth-Century France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021), 4.
20. Rexer, *Fallen Veil*, 23. This reference to paper dolls suggests small, flat, pornographic cutouts, not sex dolls.
21. Rexer, 123.
22. Rexer talks about this phenomenon occurring in the 1870s, with street vendors of nude images “arrested all over Paris” (Rexer, 150). Yet in 1900, four hundred *camelots* (street hawkers) were arrested for carrying obscene postcards. Jean-Yves Mollier, *Le Camelot et la rue: Politique et démocratie au tournant des XIXe et XXe siècles* (Paris: Fayard, 2004), 261.
23. Feona Attwood, “Fashion and Passion: Marketing Sex to Women,” *Sexualities* 8, no. 4 (October 2005): 392–406.
24. Carina Hsieh and Natasha Burton, “A Brief History of the Rabbit,” *Cosmopolitan*, June 30, 2020, <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/sex-love/advice/a4805/history-of-the-rabbit/>.
25. As Mark McLelland explains in discussing censorship of pornographic media materials in Japan, “the number of obscenity cases brought before the courts since the 1970s has been relatively small,” which McLelland attributes to “a range of self-regulatory mechanisms . . . that advise members on permissible limits.” This suggests that the design of the rabbit vibrator may have emerged through similar self-regulatory mechanisms. Mark McLelland, “Sex, Censorship and Media Regulation in Japan: A Historical Overview,” in *Routledge Handbook of Sexuality Studies in East Asia*, ed. Mark McLelland and Vera Mackie (London: Routledge, 2014), 409.
26. For an influential example, see David Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots: The Evolution of Human-Robot Relations* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 249.
27. The advertisement for a demicorps can be found in Album 7 of the Milford Haven Collection at the British Library. While only a selection of the catalog in which the advertisement appears has been preserved in the album, the seller seems to have left hand-written notes on the preserved pages, indicating that the items are being sold by a company called the Office des Inventions Réunies at Rue Truffaut in Paris.
28. “Les Femmes en caoutchouc,” *L’Indépendant de Mascara*, August 27, 1885, 3; Georges Eclar, “La Femme du capitaine,” *La Grisette: Revue populaire illustrée*, October 10, 1895, 83–85.
29. See the advertisement from the Office des Inventions Réunies in Album 7 mentioned in note 27.

30. This conversion is based off of information provided at <https://www.historicalstatistics.org/Currencyconverter.html>.

31. An example of an advertisement offering dildos at different sizes for a variety of prices can be found in Album 7 of the Milford Haven collection at the British Library. This text comes from a three-page fold-out advertisement, on a page labeled *godmiché* (dildo), with no information about the seller.

32. Edmond Picard, *La Veillée de L'huissier: Conte de Noël* (Brussels: Ferdinand Larcier, 1885), no page numbers.

33. *Matchett's Baltimore Director for 1851* (Baltimore: R. J. Matchett, 1851), 63, 216.

34. William Henry Boyd, *The Baltimore City Directory* (Baltimore: R. Edwards and W. H. Boyd, 1858), 127, 328; *Baltimore City Business Directory for 1858–59* (Baltimore: J. C. Nicholson and H. Q. Nicholson, 1858), 60.

35. If anything, rubber manufacturing and distribution seems to have been far more prevalent in the New York City area. For example, an exhibit catalog from the Third Annual Exhibition of the Maryland Institute for the Promotion of the Mechanic Arts, held in Baltimore in 1850, notes that “gum elastic” items were contributed by a number of companies located in other states. These items included rubber belting from the New York company Reece & Hoyt, general rubber goods from a company called Union India Rubber Company, also in New York, and a collection of “nine dozen men, women and children’s metallic boots, shoes and sandals, from the Goodyear Manufacturing Rubber Shoe Company” located in Connecticut. *Third Annual Exhibition of the Maryland Institute for the Promotion of the Mechanic Arts* (Baltimore: Sherwood & Co., 1850), 1, 11, 9. Indeed, a New York City directory for the year 1854–1855 includes no fewer than nineteen listings for businesses operating in India rubber, as well as numerous additional companies with names like New Brunswick Rubber Company, New York India Rubber Warehouse, Goodyear’s Rubber Packing Co., and Goodyear Rubber Emporium. Charles R. Rode, *New-York City Directory, for 1854–1855* (New York: Doggett and Rode, 1854), 285. One thing you realize quickly in trying to make sense of the mid-nineteenth-century rubber industry in the United States is that business owners with no ostensible connection to Charles Goodyear seemed to have zero qualms about branding their companies with his name.

36. *Third Annual Exhibition of the Maryland Institute*.

37. These patents were issued in 1854 (patent number 11,135) and 1858 (patent number 22,080), respectively.

38. Société Excelsior, *Catalogue général d'articles de preservation intime à l'usage des deux sexes* (Paris: 1905), 54.

39. Mollier, *Le Camelot et la rue*, 7.

40. Basic information regarding the Paris World's Fairs has been drawn from material published by the curators of Gallica, an online archive associated with the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. See Catherine Brial, "Les expositions universelles dans Gallica," *Le Blog Gallica*, January 1, 2013, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/blog/01012013/les-expositions-universelles-dans-gallica>.
41. For examples of historical scholarship illustrating the centrality of technology at the world's fairs and their importance for the development of twenty-first-century technologies, see Ron Becker, "'Hear-and-See Radio' in the World of Tomorrow: RCA and the Presentation of Television at the World's Fair, 1939–1940," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 21, no. 4 (October 2001): 361–378; Paul Mason Fotsch, "The Building of a Superhighway Future at the New York World's Fair," *Cultural Critique* 48, no. 1 (2001): 65–97.
42. The 1900 Paris World's Fair alone reportedly drew fifty million visitors. Mollier, *Le Camelot et la rue*, 24.
43. Robert W. Rydell, "'Darkest Africa': African Shows at America's World's Fairs, 1893–1940," in *Africans on Stage: Studies in Ethnological Show Business*, ed. Bernth Lindfors (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 135–155; Nathan Cardon, *A Dream of the Future: Race, Empire, and Modernity at the Atlanta and Nashville World's Fairs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).
44. Isabel Morais, "'Little Black Rose' at the 1934 *Exposicao Colonial Portuguesa*," in *Gendering the Fair: Histories of Women and Gender at World's Fairs*, ed. Tracey Jean Boisseau and Abigail M. Markwyn (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 21.
45. Walter Putnam, "'Please Don't Feed the Natives': Human Zoos, Colonial Desire, and Bodies on Display," *French Literature Series* 39 (2012): 55–68; Sadiya Qureshi, "Displaying Sara Baartman, the 'Hottentot Venus,'" *History of Science* 42, no. 2 (2004): 233–257.
46. Tracey Jean Boisseau and Abigail M. Markwyn, eds., *Gendering the Fair: Histories of Women and Gender at World's Fairs* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010).
47. Cheryl R. Ganz, *The 1933 Chicago World's Fair: A Century of Progress* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 22.
48. Henri de la Madelène, "Figaro à l'exposition," *Le Figaro*, September 16, 1855, 7.
49. de la Madelène, "Figaro à l'exposition," 7; my original English translation. Note that the ellipses in this passage are present in the original; they do not indicate missing text.
50. de la Madelène, 7.
51. Étienne Ducret, "Le Caoutchouc," *La Chanson: Journal de musique populaire*, May 15, 1880, 8. It appears that this 1880 version of "Le Caoutchouc" may actually

have been a rewrite of an earlier song by the same title. A listing for a song by the same title appears in the Parisian circular *Lice Chansonnrière* in 1843. Unfortunately, though the circular is cataloged in Gallica, it appears its contents have been lost. *Lice Chansonnrière* (Paris: L. Vieillot, 1843).

52. Ducret, "Le Caoutchouc," 8.

53. Ducret, 8. A "finger cot" (*doigtier*) was a rubber finger cover.

54. Étienne Ducret, "Le Caoutchouc," *Lice Chansonnrière* (Paris: no publisher listed, 1898), 121–125. The listed authors of both the 1880 and 1898 versions of the song are the same, but it is unclear whether Étienne Ducret was indeed involved in the writing of both versions or whether the songs are being credited to him as the original author without note of who has updated them.

55. "Notes sur l'exposition," *La Vie Parisienne*, August 3, 1867, 558.

56. "Notes sur l'exposition," *La Vie Parisienne*, August 17, 1867, 592.

57. "Les Femmes en caoutchouc."

58. George Méliès (dir.), *L'Homme à la tête en caoutchouc* (Star Film Company, 1901).

59. Alphonse Lafitte, "La Femme en caoutchouc," *La Tintamarre*, March 10, 1872, 2–3.

60. Lafitte, "La Femme en caoutchouc," 3.

61. Rexer, *Fallen Veil*, 26.

62. "La Fraude," *Le Radical*, August 15, 1887, 2; Jean Frollo, "L'Imagination des fraudeurs," *Le Petit Parisien*, September 17, 1890, 1; Georges Acker, "Les Contrabandiers," *La Lanterne*, January 6, 1897, 2.

63. Frollo, "L'Imagination des fraudeurs," 1; Acker, "Les Contrabandiers," 2.

64. Acker, "Les Contrabandiers," 2.

65. Acker, 2.

66. Mollier, *Le Camelot et la rue*, 8.

67. Mollier, 244.

68. Mollier, 260.

69. Mollier, 148–149.

70. Mollier, 261.

71. F. Bellay, "Un Traquenard policier," *L'intransigeant*, October 24, 1900, 2; "Le Cas de l'empereur des camelots," *La Justice*, October 24, 1900, 2.

72. Bellay, "Un Traquenard policier," 2.
73. "Le Cas de l'empereur des camelots," 2.
74. "Le Cas de l'empereur des camelots," 2.
75. M. Pierre, "Carnet Judiciaire: Femmes en caoutchouc!," *Gil Blas*, January 19, 1902, 3; F. Bellay, "La Traite des . . . poupées," *L'intransigeant*, January 20, 1902, 2; "Nouvelles judiciaires," *Le Radical*, January 20, 1902, 2.
76. Bellay, "La Traite des . . . poupées," 2.
77. For example: Clément Voutel, "La Poupée," *La Vie Parisienne*, October 15, 1921, 883, 886–887.
78. Voutel, "La Poupée," 886.
79. This shift is illustrated in a 1919 catalog from Maison Claverie (which has seemingly rebranded as Établissements A. Claverie) for an artificial leg with the product name La Française. The catalog's title page includes both a note that Claverie is now an official supplier to military hospitals and a listing of Claverie's many awards from various world's fairs between 1912 and 1919. Here the remedicalization of rubber manufacture meets the long history of associating technological prowess with the world's fairs. Établissements A. Claverie, *La Jambe Artificielle "La Française"* (Paris: Établissements A. Claverie, 1919).
80. Lynn Comella, *Vibrator Nation: How Feminist Sex-Toy Stores Changed the Business of Pleasure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 114.
81. Paisley Gilmour, "How to Tell If Your Sex Toy Is Toxic," *VICE*, March 1, 2018, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/bj5bqv/how-to-tell-if-your-sex-toy-is-toxic>; Dangerous Lilly, "Yes, Jelly Sex Toys Can Be Dangerous," *Dangerous Lilly* (blog), October 6, 2010, <http://dangerouslilly.com/2010/10/yes-jelly-sex-toys-can-be-dangerous/>.
82. Kim Airs, "Flesh and Fantasy: What's New in the Sex Doll Industry," *AVN*, January 22, 2020, <https://avn.com/business/articles/novelty/flesh-and-fantasy-whats-new-in-the-sex-doll-industry-861528.html>.
83. Amanda Phillips, "Dicks, Dicks, Dicks: Hardness and Flaccidity in (Virtual) Masculinity," *Flow: A Critical Forum on Media and Culture*, November 27, 2017, <https://www.flowjournal.org/2017/11/dicks-dicks-dicks/>.

Chapter 5

1. For writing on teledildonics, see Howard Rheingold, "Teledildonics and Beyond," in *The Postmodern Presence: Readings on Postmodernism in American Culture and Society* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2005), 274–287; Teddy Pozo, "Haptic Media: Sexuality, Gender, and Affect in Technology Culture, 1959–2015" (PhD diss., University

of California, Santa Barbara, 2016); Maria Joao Faustino, "Rebooting an Old Script by New Means: Teledildonics—the Technological Return to the 'Coital Imperative,'" *Sexuality & Culture* 22, no. 1 (2018): 243–257.

2. For examples of Machulis's ongoing work on teledildonic butt plugs, see the portfolio of projects on his website (<https://kyle.machul.is/portfolio/>), as well as news reporting about his projects, such as: Samantha Cole, "This Animal Crossing-Enabled Buttplug Will Let You Hook Up In-Game," *VICE*, June 30, 2020, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/pkyk9y/animal-crossing-connected-buttplug-vibrator>.

3. Ruth Oldenziel, *Making Technology Masculine: Men, Women and Modern Machines in America, 1870–1945* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 9.

4. Oldenziel, *Making Technology Masculine*, 9.

5. Oldenziel, 10.

6. Mar Hicks, *Programmed Inequality: How Britain Discarded Women Technologists and Lost Its Edge in Computing* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017); Jennifer S. Light, "When Women Were Computers," *Technology and Culture* 40, no. 3 (1999): 455–483.

7. Laine Nooney, "The Uncredited: Work, Women, and the Making of the U.S. Computer Game Industry," *Feminist Media Histories* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 2020): 119–146; Adrienne Massanari, "#Gamergate and the Fapping: How Reddit's Algorithm, Governance, and Culture Support Toxic Technocultures," *New Media & Society* 19, no. 3 (March 2017): 329–346.

8. Joanna Radin, "Digital Dystopias: How Michael Crichton Taught Me to Start Worrying and Fear the Future," presented to Data & Society as part of the Future Perfect Conference, June 16, 2017; Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 200.

9. Julie Wosk, *My Fair Ladies: Female Robots, Androids, and Other Artificial Eves* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 6–7.

10. Rachel P. Maines, *The Technology of Orgasm: "Hysteria," the Vibrator, and Women's Sexual Satisfaction* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); Hallie Lieberman, *Buzz: A Stimulating History of the Sex Toy* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2017); Lynn Comella, *Vibrator Nation: How Feminist Sex-Toy Stores Changed the Business of Pleasure* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

11. Donna J. Drucker, *Contraception: A Concise History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020); Claire Jones, *The Business of Birth Control: Contraception and Commerce in Britain before the Sexual Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021).

12. For an example of popular histories of sex and sexual technologies that repeat the trope of the "ancient dildo," see Kate Devlin, *Turned On: Science, Sex and Robots* (London: Bloomsbury Sigma, 2018), 22.

13. Anne Marie Balsamo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 10.
14. Erich Wulffen, *Der Sexualverbrecher* (Berlin: Langenscheidt, 1910); Leo Schidrowitz, *Sittengeschichte des Lasters die Kulturepochen und ihre Leidenschaften* (Vienna: Verlag für Kulturforschung, 1927), 214.
15. Wulffen, *Der Sexualverbrecher*, 299.
16. Iwan Bloch, *Das Sexualleben unserer Zeit in seinen Beziehungen zur modernen Kultur* (Berlin: Louis Marcus Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1907), 648; René Schwaebé, *Les Détraquées de Paris: Étude de mœurs contemporaines* (Paris: H. Daragon, 1910), 85.
17. See, for example, Anthony Ferguson, *The Sex Doll: A History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2010), 1.
18. Clément Voutel, "La Poupée," *La Vie Parisienne*, October 15, 1921, 886.
19. Madame B. (Alphonse Momas), *La Femme endormie* (Melbourne: J. Renold, 1899).
20. Rebecca Clark, "Gag Reflexes: Sex Doll Slapstick and Fran Ross's Oreó," *Post45*, January 22, 2020, <https://post45.org/2020/01/gag-reflexes-sex-doll-slapstick-and-fran-rosss-oreo/>.
21. Others have identified more nuanced cultural politics related to gender and sexuality in the film—arguing alternately, for example, that the film questions but ultimately renormativizes sexual identity or that the film successfully represents queer kinship structures and queers gender norms. Kate O'Neill, "Female Effigies and Performances of Desire: A Consideration of Identity Performance in *Lars and the Real Girl*," *FORUM: University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture & the Arts*, no. 6 (2008): 1–13; Claire Sisco King and Isaac West, "This Could Be the Place: Queer Acceptance in *Lars and the Real Girl*," *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 1, no. 3 (2014): 59–84.
22. Olivia Belton, "Metaphors of Patriarchy in *Orphan Black* and *Westworld*," *Feminist Media Studies* 20, no. 8 (November 16, 2020): 1211–1225.
23. Anastasia Salter and Bridget Blodgett, *Toxic Geek Masculinity in Media* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
24. Katherine Cross, "Press F to Revolt," in *Diversifying Barbie and Mortal Kombat: Intersectional Perspectives and Inclusive Designs in Gaming*, ed. Yasmin B. Kafai, Gabriela T. Richard, and Brendesha M. Tynes (Pittsburgh: ETC Press, 2016), 23–34.
25. Henri de la Madelène, "Figaro à l'exposition," *Le Figaro*, September 16, 1855, 7.
26. Alphonse Lafitte, "La Femme en caoutchouc," *Le Tintamarre*, March 10, 1872, 2–3; Georges Eclar, "La Femme du capitaine," *La Grisette: Revue populaire illustrée*, October 10, 1895, 83–85.

27. Lafitte, "La Femme en caoutchouc," 3; Eclar, "La Femme du capitaine," 85.
28. "Les Femmes en caoutchouc," *L'Indépendent de Mascara*, August 27, 1885, 3.
29. "Les Femmes en caoutchouc," 3.
30. "Les Femmes en caoutchouc," 3.
31. "Les Femmes en caoutchouc," 3.
32. Emma Grey Ellis, "Whitney Cummings—and Her Sex Robot—Take on Modern Womanhood," *WIRED*, July 31, 2019, <https://www.wired.com/story/whitney-cummings-netflix-special/>; Brittany Knuper, "It's about Time: *Dragula* Winner Landon Cider and the History of Drag Kings," *The Mary Sue*, November 4, 2019, <https://www.themarysue.com/dragula-landon-cider-drag-king-winner/>.
33. Initially, the satirical cartoon from 1868 of the rubber woman wearing Greco-Roman robes and inflating men made out of animal-skin condom material that I discuss in chapter 4 seems like a potential exception as its artist is credited as Alma Tadema. However, upon further research, Alma Tadema is not the name of a woman artist but rather an unhyphenated version of the name Lawrence Alma-Tadema, a Dutch painter who lived in England and was best known for his paintings depicting classical scenes. The joke here in "attributing" the comic to Alma Tadema is that it's an image, a distinctly ribald one, that has been drawn in the grandiose style of an Alma-Tadema painting. Image associated with the feature "Promenade au salon," *Journal Amusant*, May 16, 1868, 4–6, image on page 5. For information regarding Lawrence Alma-Tadema, see Louise Lippincott, *Lawrence Alma Tadema: Spring* (Malibu: J. Paul Getty Museum, 1990).
34. Ferguson, *Sex Doll*, 1.
35. See, for example, Ferguson, 16.
36. Bloch, *Beiträge zur Aetiologie der Psychopathia Sexualis*, 301.
37. Schwaëblé, *Les Détraquées de Paris*.
38. Madame B., *La Femme endormie*.
39. See, for example, Ferguson, *Sex Doll*, 16.
40. Jean Genet, *Querelle de Brest* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010).
41. Martii Lahti, "Dressing Up in Power: Tom of Finland and Gay Male Body Politics," *Journal of Homosexuality* 35, no. 3–4 (June 4, 1998): 185–205; Andrew Stephenson, "'Our Jolly Marine Wear': The Queer Fashionability of the Sailor Uniform in Interwar France and Britain," *Fashion, Style & Popular Culture* 3, no. 2 (March 1, 2016): 157–172.

42. Jack King, "The Gay Ecstasy of The Village People," BBC, August 4, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20200804-the-gay-ecstasy-of-the-village-people>.
43. George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World* (New York: Basic Books, 2019).
44. In addition to the examples of queer studies scholarship mentioned earlier in this book, see Matthew Knip, "Homosocial Desire and Erotic Communitas in Melville's Imaginary: The Evidence of Van Buskirk," *ESQ: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Culture* 62, no. 2 (2016): 355–414; Kellen Bolt, "Squeezing Sperm: Nativism, Queer Contact, and the Futures of Democratic Intimacy in Moby-Dick," *ESQ: A Journal of Nineteenth-Century American Literature and Culture* 65, no. 2 (2019): 293–329.
45. B. R. Burg, *Sodomy and the Pirate Tradition: English Sea Rovers in the Seventeenth-Century Caribbean* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), xxvi, 108, 103.
46. Hans Turley, *Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash: Piracy, Sexuality, and Masculine Identity* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 2.
47. Turley, *Rum, Sodomy, and the Lash*, 2, 9.
48. Stefan Helmreich, "The Genders of Waves," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 1–2 (2017): 29.
49. For more on rethinking technology through notions of the sea, see my discussion of Melody Jue's *Wild Blue Media* and the "blue humanities" in the conclusion to this book. Melody Jue, *Wild Blue Media: Thinking through Seawater* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).
50. Sebastian Zulch, "Embracing Radical Softness: An Interview with Poet and Artist Lora Mathis," HelloFlo, December 5, 2016, <https://helloflo.com/embracing-radical-softness-interview-poet-artist-lora-mathis/>. For more on radical softness in relation to technology and digital media, see Teddy Pozo, "Queer Games After Empathy: Feminism and Haptic Game Design Aesthetics from Consent to Cuteness to the Radically Soft," *Game Studies* 18, no. 3 (2018); Andi Schwartz, "Soft Femme Theory: Femme Internet Aesthetics and the Politics of 'Softness,'" *Social Media + Society* 6, no. 4 (October 2020).
51. Sadie Plant, "The Future Looms: Weaving Women and Cybernetics," *Body & Society* 1, no. 3–4 (1995): 45–64.
52. See, for example, Sarah Fox, Rachel Rose Ulgado, and Daniela Rosner, "Hacking Culture, Not Devices: Access and Recognition in Feminist Hackerspaces," in *Proceedings of the 18th ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work & Social Computing* (Vancouver: ACM, 2015), 56–68.

53. Andi Schwartz, "Low Femme, Low Theory: An Ethno-Archive of Femme Internet Culture" (PhD diss., York University, 2020), 95.

54. Rhea Ashley Hoskin, "Femme Theory: Refocusing the Intersectional Lens," *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice* 38, no. 1 (2017): 95–109; Laura Brightwell and Allison Taylor, "Femme Theory: Refocusing the Intersectional Lens," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 25, no. 1 (January 2, 2021): 18–35.

55. Andi Schwartz, "Locating Femme Theory Online," *First Monday*, July 1, 2018, <https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/9266>.

56. Gabrielle Kassel, "Being a 'Queer Femme' Is about More than Just the Way You Dress," *Women's Health*, July 16, 2020, <https://www.womenshealthmag.com/relationships/a33299024/queer-femme/>.

Chapter 6

1. One particularly unexpected node in the cultural constellation that surrounds the story of the Dutch wives is American artist Jasper Johns's two visual works titled *The Dutch Wives*, one an encaustic painting with collage elements from 1975 and the other a screen print from 1977. Both of Johns's pieces are abstract works featuring a crosshatch pattern disrupted by a small dark spot circled in red. Art historians have passed down their own lore about the works' title, with many (most notably Michael Crichton, writing in 1994) repeating a statement that a "Dutch wife" was a wooden "board with a hole, used by sailors as a surrogate for a woman"—suggesting that the dark spot that appears in Johns's works represents a hole for insertion. However, this explanation is itself suspect. In *Jasper Johns: Gray*, James Rondeau et al. give a commendably skeptical and thorough footnote documenting the lineage behind this backstory, where they write: "[Crichton] did not attribute the definition [of *Dutch wife*] to the artist in his published text, and we cannot substitute it in any other source," explaining that Crichton later claimed that Johns himself had given this definition for the term in a series of interviews conducted in 1976 and 1977. The authors go on to state that "the phrase is one of many in the English language that uses Dutch as a shorthand for a derogatory characterization. . . . The phrase 'Dutch wife' can also be used to refer to an open-frame bolster bed, made of bamboo or thick rattan . . . It is possible that the title refers to the formal qualities of such a frame as related to the crosshatch pattern." James Rondeau, Jasper Johns, Douglas W. Druick, Mark Pascale, and Nan Rosenthal, *Jasper Johns: Gray* (Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2008), 77; Michael Crichton, *Jasper Johns* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1994).

2. For an example of a text that says the Dutch wives were sex dolls made by Asian people and adopted by Dutch sailors, see Julian Arbois, *Dans le lit de nos ancêtres: Sexualité, moeurs, et vie intime d'autrefois* (Bernay, France: City Editions, 2016), 212.

3. Kerry Ward, *Networks of Empire: Forced Migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

4. For an example of a text that says that Dutch wives were sex dolls originally made by Dutch sailors and brought to Asia, see Anthony Ferguson, *The Sex Doll: A History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2010), 27.

5. For an example of a text that says that the Dutch wives were sex dolls made by Dutch sailors after seeing bamboo sleeping cages in Asia, see Priscille Lamure, "Petite histoire de la poupée érotique," *Savoirs d'Histoire* (blog), October 26, 2017, <https://savoirsdhistoire.wordpress.com/2017/10/26/petite-histoire-de-la-poupee-erotique/comment-page-1/>.

6. Most contemporary tellings of this story ultimately point back to Alan Scott Pate's book *Ningyo: The Art of the Japanese Doll* (North Clarendon, VT: Tuttle Publishing, 2005), which includes a description of elaborate sex dolls supposedly made in eighteenth-century Osaka. This description has similarities to certain accounts of the dames de voyage (the dolls are mechanized, warm water can be poured into the dolls, they are referred to as "traveling beauties," etc.). However, Pate admits that he has been unable to find any surviving material evidence of these sex dolls (275). He gives no citation for his statements about the traveling beauties, though David Levy seems to have contacted Pate to ask for his source (Levy, "Intimate Relationships with Artificial Partners" [PhD diss., Maastricht University, 2007], v). Pate, in turn, claims that he drew his info from Mitamura Engyo's text "Takeda Hachidai" or "Eight Generations of the Takeda Family" (Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots: The Evolution of Human-Robot Relations* [New York: Harper Collins, 2007], 249). However, "Eight Generations of the Takeda Family" is not a primary account from either the 1600s or 1700s. Rather, it is a work from the first half of the twentieth century, part of a larger oeuvre about the morals and customs of everyday life in Edo-era Japan. Although I have not been able to access Engyo's text in full, my sense is that it doesn't tell a version of the story of the traveling beauties that fully matches Pate's. Even if it did, it's equally possible that the story was an early twentieth-century invention. All of this matches up with Japanese historian Agnès Giard's assertion that contemporary accounts of early Japanese sex dolls are erroneous. Mitamura Engyo, *Takeda Hachidai*, vol. 21 of *Mitamura Engyo Zenshu* [*The Complete Works of Engyo Mitamura*] (Tokyo: Chuo Koronsha, 1976); the original date of publication is unclear, but the author lived from 1870 to 1952. Agnès Giard, *Un désir d'humain: Les "love doll" au Japon* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2016), 40.

7. There are a number of ways to walk through this citational lineage, but one illustrative trail looks like this: Priscille Lamure's online article "Petite histoire de la poupée érotique," which has since been picked up by many other sources, talks about the Dutch wives as sex dolls (and also ties them directly to the dames de voyage). Lamure claims to be drawing from Julien Arbois's book *Dans le lit de nos ancêtres: Sexualité, moeurs, et vie intime d'autrefois*, which in turn claims to be drawing

from Agnès Giard, “Pourquoi les poupées gonflables s'appellent des épouses hollandaises” [Why inflatable dolls are called Dutch wives], *Libération*, January 23, 2013, https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2013/01/23/pourquoi-les-poupees-gonflables-s-appellent-des-epouses-neerlandaises_1811808/. Yet as information moves between these texts, we see a number of slippages. For example, Arbois misses the nuance of Giard’s article, where she describes how bamboo sleeping cages filled a symbolic role in cultural traditions involving husbands and wives, and instead reports that the “bamboo wives” were actual, literal sex dolls. There are also a number of claims in Arbois’s text that clearly do not come from Giard, but rather from Anthony Ferguson’s uncited *The Sex Doll: A History*, or another intermediary text through which Arbois encounters Ferguson’s work, though Arbois again scrambles Ferguson’s claims. To support his own claims that seventeenth-century European merchant ships brought leather sex dolls to Japan through the Dutch East India Company, Ferguson points (in a roundabout way) to David Levy’s *Love and Sex with Robots*. Levy cites Alan Scott Pate’s *Ningyo: The Art of the Japanese Doll*, in which Pate writes that contemporary sex dolls in Japan are called “Dutch wives” because Dutch merchant marine vessels carried them onboard (Pate, 275). Unlike Ferguson or Levy, however, Pate then expands on this story by describing how Dutch wives were supposedly produced in Japan itself a hundred years later: “In the eighteenth century, the Yamamoto and Takeda families in Osaka were known for the creation of Japanese versions of ‘Dutch wives,’ called *shutsuro bijin* (lit. traveling beauties) or *koshoku onna* (play women). Highly realistic in their execution, these dolls incorporated a device that allowed warm water to be poured inside the figure, giving it a greater verisimilitude, as well as zenmai spring-driven mechanisms that allowed their arms and legs to be moved. Exceptionally popular among government officials stationed in Osaka, they were banned during the Horeki era (1751–63)” (275). What we see here is how the story of the Dutch wives has moved through a very similar trajectory of citation, missing citation, adaptation, and so on as the tale of the dames de voyage.

8. Giard, “Pourquoi les poupées gonflables.”

9. Mario Esposito, “What’s a Bamboo Wife?,” *Good Night’s Rest*, June 24, 2019, <https://www.goodnights.rest/about-pillows-bolsters-cushions/bamboo-wife/>.

10. Giard, “Pourquoi les poupées gonflables.”

11. Hugh Wilkson, “1882: A Dutch Wife,” in *Travellers’ Tales of Old Singapore*, compiled by Michael Wise (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 1998), no printed page numbers.

12. An example illustrating this sense that the bamboo sleeping cages come from an earlier historical time can be found in the 1985 Korean short story “My Tale of the Bamboo Wife,” discussed in greater length ahead, in which a younger character finds a “bamboo wife” and brings it to an older character to ask what it is, explaining,

“Considering your venerable age, sir, I thought you might know.” Hwang Sun-wŏn, “My Tale of the Bamboo Wife,” trans. Bruce Fulton and Ju-Chan Fulton, *Azalea: Journal of Korean Literature & Culture* 8, no. 1 (2015): 174.

13. For more on Japanese obscenity laws and their relationship to sex toys, see my discussion of the rabbit vibrator in chapter 3.

14. Lamure, “Petite Histoire.”

15. For more on connections between prostitution and port cities, see my discussion of sex work in relation to maritime studies in chapter 3.

16. Wilkson, “1882: A Dutch Wife.”

17. Wilkson.

18. Wilkson.

19. “A Sleepless Night in the Tropics,” *Ballou’s Monthly Magazine* 75, no. 6 (June 1892): 462–464.

20. “A Sleepless Night in the Tropics,” 462.

21. “A Sleepless Night in the Tropics,” 463.

22. Hwang Sun-wŏn, “My Tale of the Bamboo Wife.”

23. Hwang Sun-wŏn, 178.

24. Hwang Sun-wŏn, 179.

25. Some examples of texts discussed elsewhere in this book that include sexual technologies from Asia in their histories are Paul Tabori, *The Humor and Technology of Sex* (New York: Julian Press, 1969); Ferguson, *Sex Doll*; Levy, *Love and Sex with Robots*.

26. Carlin Wing, “Episodes in the Life of Bounce: Playing with a Rubber Ball,” *Cabinet*, no. 56 (2014–2015), <https://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/56/wing.php>.

27. Anjali R. Arondekar, *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 100; Marquis de Sade, *Philosophy in the Boudoir or, The Immoral Mentors*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York: Penguin Books, 2006). For more on dildos in *Philosophy in the Boudoir*, see Liza Blake, “Dildos and Accessories: The Functions of Early Modern Strap-Ons,” in *Ornamentalism: The Art of Renaissance Accessories*, ed. Bella Mirabella (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), 130–155.

28. Arondekar, *For the Record*, 97–98.

29. Clément Voutel, “La Poupée,” *La Vie Parisienne*, October 15, 1921, 883, 886–887.

30. "Les Femmes en caoutchouc," *L'Indépendant de Mascara*, August 27, 1885, 3.
31. Henri de la Madelène, "Figaro à l'exposition," *Le Figaro*, September 16, 1855, 7.
32. Louis Chude-Sokei, "The Uncanny History of Minstrels and Machines, 1835–1923," in *Burnt Cork: Traditions and Legacies of Blackface Minstrelsy*, ed. Stephen Johnson (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 104–132; Catherine A. Stewart, *Long Past Slavery: Representing Race in the Federal Writers' Project* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 13.
33. Voutel, "La Poupée," 886.
34. Moya Bailey, *Misogynoir Transformed: Black Women's Digital Resistance* (New York: New York University Press, 2021).
35. Maison L. Bador, *Fabrication perfectionnée de caoutchouc dilaté et baudruche* (Paris: commercial catalog, 1900), 4.
36. Maison L. Bador, *Fabrication perfectionnée*, 4.
37. Jessica Borge, *Protective Practices: A History of the London Rubber Company and the Condom Business* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), 16.
38. Advertisement (center of page), *La Grisette: Revue populaire illustrée*, August 10, 1895, 2.
39. Advertisement, *La Grisette*.
40. For an example of an account that emphasizes the idea that the dames de voyage were stored in ships' holds, see Arbois, *Dans le lit de nos ancêtres*, 213.
41. Sowande' M. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea: Terror, Sex, and Sickness in the Middle Passage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 9.
42. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*, 84.
43. Mustakeem, 86–87.
44. Chunghee Sarah Soh, *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).
45. Madame B., *La Femme endormie*.
46. For a particularly recent example of yet another popular history that points back to *La Femme endormie*, see Kate Lister, *A Curious History of Sex* (London: Unbound, 2020).
47. Madame B., *La Femme endormie*.
48. Alexandre Dumas, *Captain Pamphile*, trans. Andrew Brown (London: Hesperus Classics, 2006).

49. Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2006); Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (New York: Macmillan, 2016); J. K. Huysmans, *Against Nature* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003).
50. Andrew Brown, "Introduction," in Alexandre Dumas, *Captain Pamphile*, trans. Andrew Brown (London: Hesperus Classics, 2006), xi–xv, xi.
51. Alexandre Dumas, *The Count of Monte Cristo* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003); Dumas, *The Three Musketeers* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982).
52. Dumas, *Captain Pamphile*, 88.
53. Dumas, *Captain Pamphile*, 140, 150, 151.
54. Dumas, *Captain Pamphile*, 153.
55. Eric Martone, "Introduction: Alexandre Dumas as a Francophone Writer," in *The Black Musketeer: Reevaluating Alexandre Dumas within the Francophone World*, ed. Eric Martone (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 1–32, 2.
56. Madame B., *La Femme endormie*.
57. Neda Atanasoski and Kalindi Vora, *Surrogate Humanity: Race, Robots, and the Politics of Technological Futures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 190, 192.
58. Atanasoski and Vora, *Surrogate Humanity*, 193.
59. Atanasoski and Vora, 193.
60. Nettrice R. Gaskins, "Techno-Vernacular Creativity and Innovation across the African Diaspora and Global South," in *Captivating Technology: Race, Carceral Technoscience, and Liberatory Imagination in Everyday Life*, ed. Ruha Benjamin (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 253–274.
61. Gaskins, "Techno-Vernacular Creativity," 252.
62. Gaskins, 252, 253.
63. Ruha Benjamin, "Introduction: Discriminatory Design, Liberating Imagination," in *Captivating Technology: Race, Carceral Technoscience, and Liberatory Imagination in Everyday Life*, ed. Ruha Benjamin (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 1–22, 12.
64. Mustakeem, *Slavery at Sea*, 125.
65. Jessica Marie Johnson, "Markup Bodies," *Social Text* 36, no. 4 (December 1, 2018): 57–79.
66. M. Oliver, "Lupe Fiasco's 'Drogas Wave' Could Have Been a Great Album with a Bit of Editing," *Pop Matters*, October 1, 2018, <https://www.popmatters.com/lupe-fiasco-drogas-wave-2609079350.html>.

67. Nettrice R. Gaskins, "Deep Sea Dwellers: Drexciya and the Sonic Third Space," *Shima: The International Journal of Research into Island Cultures* 10, no. 2 (October 10, 2016), 68–80: 68, 73, 72.
68. Ytasha Womack, *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2013), 9.
69. Womack, *Afrofuturism*, 9.
70. Suzanna Chan, "'Alive . . . Again.' Unmoored in the Aquafuture of Ellen Gallagher's Watery Ecstatic," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 1–2 (2017): 246.
71. Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* (Chico, CA: AK Press, 2020).
72. Gumbs, *Undrowned*, 2.

Chapter 7

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Conclusion

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