



Adventures in the Orgasmatron: How the Sexual Revolution Came to America

By Christopher Turner

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One of *The Economist's* 2011 Books of the Year
A *Boston Globe* Best Nonfiction Book of 2011

Well before the 1960s, a sexual revolution was under way in America, led by expatriated European thinkers who saw a vast country ripe for liberation. In *Adventures in the Orgasmatron*, Christopher Turner tells the revolution's story—an illuminating, thrilling, often bizarre story of sex and science, ecstasy and repression.

Central to the narrative is the orgone box—a tall, slender construction of wood, metal, and steel wool. A person who sat in the box, it was thought, could elevate his or her “orgastic potential.” The box was the invention of Wilhelm Reich, an outlier psychoanalyst who faced a federal ban on the orgone box, an FBI investigation, a fraught encounter with Einstein, and bouts of paranoia.

In Turner's vivid account, Reich's efforts anticipated those of Alfred Kinsey, Herbert Marcuse, and other prominent thinkers—efforts that brought about a transformation of Western views of sexuality in ways even the thinkers themselves could not have imagined.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Anyone who has seen Woody Allen's *Sleeper* will remember the Orgasmatron. In fact, this futuristic parody was based largely on the work of Wilhelm Reich, who coined the slogan "sexual revolution" in the 1930s. A pupil of Freud's who believed sexual and political revolution had to go hand in hand, Reich was an often-misunderstood genius for good reason. He invented the orgone energy accumulator, a phone booth-size cupboard intended to bestow sexual emancipation on its users. When his writings delved into even greater unconventional beliefs, like flying saucers, credibility was further strained. Other gurus figure in London journalist Turner's first book. What is lacking in prose excitement and humor over the sheer nuttiness of much of Reich's work is made up for by the well-described backdrop of Vienna and Berlin as hotbeds of culture, anti-Semitism, and insight into the psyche. Reich sailed from Austria to the U.S. in 1939, and, like many leftist European intellectuals, came under the FBI's scrutiny, which was his downfall. As much of a screwball as Reich was, he opened a Pandora's box for future sexologists like Fritz Perls at Esalen. As Turner shows, Reich was a seminal figure. 8 pages of b&w photos. (June)

Review

"How [Reich] went from being one of the inspirational figures of the psychoanalytic movement, as a clinician, a teacher and a writer, to being a cult figure on the margins of 1960s America is an extraordinary story, and Turner tells it with subtlety and panache. Turner has interviewed many people who knew Reich well, and he casts his net wide, setting Reich's quirks and crimes in their historical context so that a portrait of the man emerges rather than a diagnosis." —Adam Phillips, *The London Review of Books*

"Very amusing and intelligent . . . This book will change the way in which we employ that increasingly lazy phrase 'thinking outside the box.'" —Christopher Hitchens, *The New York Times Book Review*

"Christopher Turner's smart, thorough, wholly engaging book takes the reader on a tragicomic adventure of the history of an idea that became an object: Wilhelm Reich's orgone box. What began in Vienna with Sigmund Freud's belief that the sexually repressive mores of society can make people sick evolved into a utopian, quasi-scientific fantasy that spread through Europe as fascism rose and eventually crossed the ocean to the United States, where it would play a crucial role in what is now called the sexual revolution. Turner's measured account, bolstered by interviews with various characters close to the action, is a study in charisma, belief, and mental contagions that infected an entire culture, and which are still with us today." —Siri Hustvedt, author of *The Summer Without Men*

"Turner has created a masterful synthesis of social history, psychosexual theory, obsession, and farce. The narrative is a madcap parade: Freud and Einstein, Leon Trotsky and Mabel Dodge, the Red Scare and UFOs, Ginsberg and Burroughs, Bellow and Mailer, Dwight MacDonald and James Baldwin, Woody Allen and Kurt Cobain—and Wilhelm Reich's quixotic hunt for the ideal orgasm." —David Friend, Creative Development Editor at *Vanity Fair*, and author of *Watching the World Change*

About the Author

Christopher Turner lives in London and writes for *The Guardian* and other publications.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Cindy Knutson:

The book untitled *Adventures in the Orgasmatron: How the Sexual Revolution Came to America* contain a lot of information on it. The writer explains the woman idea with easy technique. The language is very clear and understandable all the people, so do not worry, you can easy to read this. The book was compiled by famous author. The author will bring you in the new era of literary works. You can easily read this book because you can read on your smart phone, or model, so you can read the book with anywhere and anytime. In a situation you wish to purchase the e-book, you can start their official web-site in addition to order it. Have a nice study.

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Donna Johnson:

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