

A history of...

Sex toys

words: camilla chafer image: elita

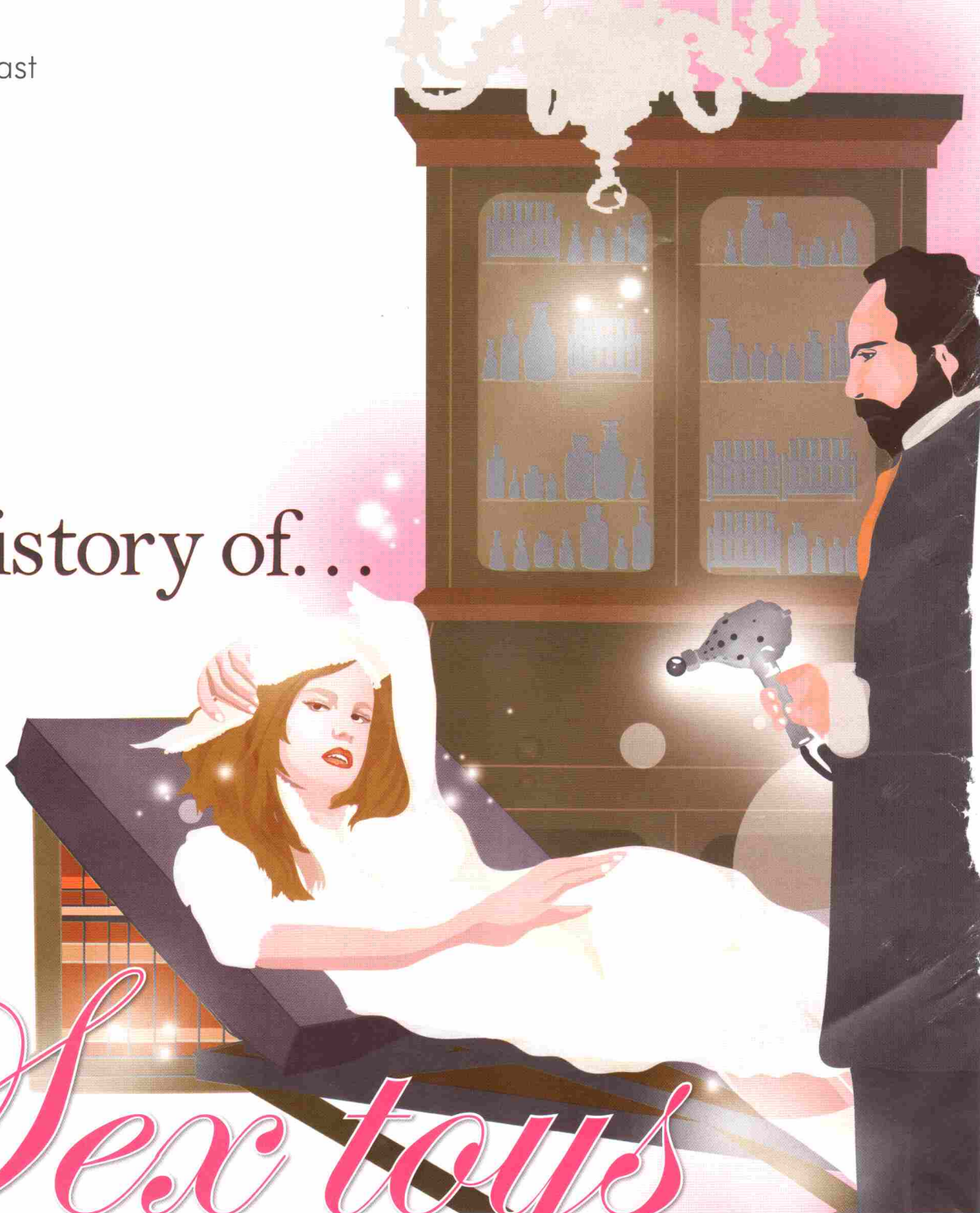
MIME 6 by Herondas, a third century BC Greek play, is one of the first texts to depict the sexual use of a false penis. A married woman named Metro visits her friend Coritto to borrow an *olisobos* (these were later renamed dildos by the Italians – the word is derivative of the term *diletto*, which appropriately means delight). Unfortunately, Coritto had already lent the device to another friend, leaving poor Metro despondent.

As well as being keen on sharing, the Greeks also had probably the world's oldest sex shop. An archaeological dig in Salonika unearthed sex paraphernalia dating back two thousand years. But the Greeks didn't have the market cornered. China's third century Han Dynasty boasted dildos made from ivory and wood, many of which were doubled-ended to accommodate two women at once. Kinky.

Later, in eighth century Europe, nuns

used artificial phalluses in religious ceremonies, but perhaps they took their cue from the Bible, Ezekiel 16:17, which makes reference to dildos: "You also took the fine jewellery I gave you, the jewellery made of my gold and silver, and you made for yourself male idols and engaged in prostitution with them."

Poet Lord John Wilmot was one of the Brits who extolled the virtues of the dildos. In a piece written circa 1670, he





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medical aids to treat the mental condition hysteria (which in Greek literally means 'wandering womb'). It was assumed that was the root of many female illnesses, physical or mental.

Medical 'massage' didn't have any stigma and was widely administered. It seems that it was far easier for old-fashioned quacks to give our foremothers a quick thrill and eject them with a cross-eyed grin – taking their money along the way – than to actually do any doctoring. Unsurprisingly, as hysteria was deemed incurable until the early 20th century, women returned for numerous 'treatments'. The good old days, hey?

American George Taylor first patented steam-powered vibrators. In a medical text that dates from 1903, Dr Samuel Howard noted, "Pelvic massage in gynaecology has its brilliant advocates and they report wonderful results." He complained of the difficulty of such procedures using just the fingers and marvelled at the steam-powered model, writing, "Special applicators (motor driven) give practical value and office convenience to what otherwise is impractical." We couldn't agree more.


British inventor and physician Joseph Mortimer Granville swiftly followed up Taylor's invention with an electromechanical vibrator intended for massaging male skeletal muscles. Such was the popularity of vibrators among women that they became the fifth household appliance to be electrified, beaten only by the sewing machine, fan, kettle and toaster. Orgasms were practical, self-administered and extremely popular.

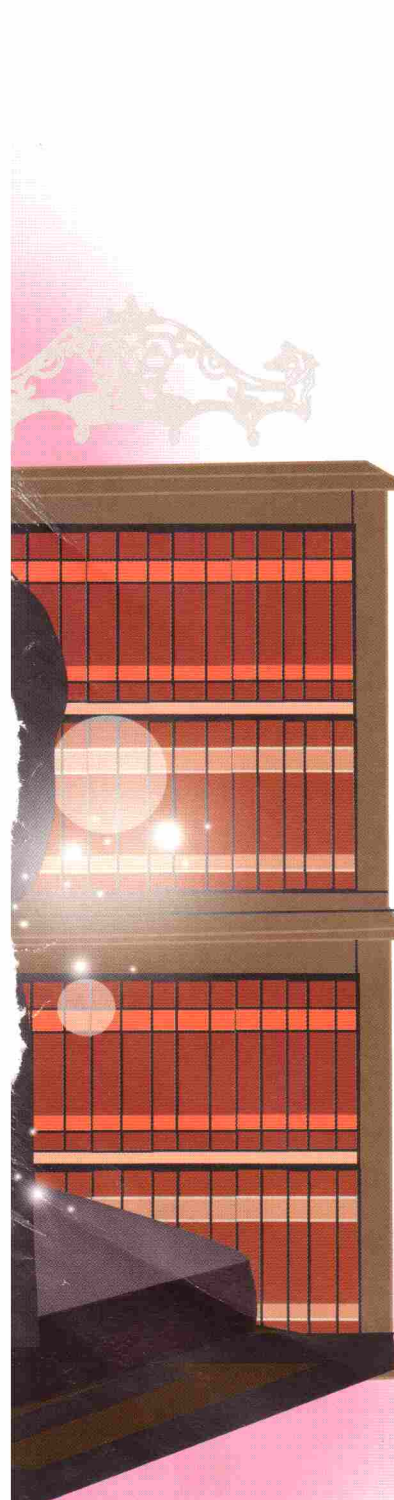
MAIL ORDER ORGASMS

By the 1900s sex toys had become far more sophisticated, with hand-held battery-powered models widely available by mail order. Those designed for clitoral stimulation were marketed as massagers for muscular pain. One model made in London in 1905 was named 'Roger's Electrical Speciality', and may have coined the phrase 'to be rogered'. Numerous respectable magazines all carried adverts, including *Needlecraft*, *Woman's Home Companion*, *Modern Priscilla*, *Der Spiegel* and the Sears catalogue, which billed them as aids that every woman appreciates, with ambiguous slogans that included "All the pleasures of youth will throb within you". Another advert in *Hearst's* men's magazine in 1921 actually encouraged readers to buy toys for their wives to keep them "young and pretty".

MAN GIVETH, MAN TAKETH AWAY

When vibrators were portrayed as medical aids, all was right with the world. Then pornographers began to depict their actual usage. An early blue movie, *The Widow's Delight*, shows a woman saying goodnight to her man only to dash upstairs and provide herself with some solo action.

Censors frowned on these blatant acts of female sexuality. The vibrator was driven underground until the work of sexologists, including Alfred Kinsey in the '50s and Betty Dodson in the '70s, brought female sexuality into the public forum. Then HBO's *Sex and the City* featured the Rabbit vibe, and diamonds were no longer women's best friend. And the rest, as they say, is history. 



says, "You would take him at first for no person of note, because he appears in a plain leather coat, but when you his virtuous abilities know, you'll fall down and worship Signor Dildo." Catchy, no?

TRUST ME, I'M A DOCTOR

By the mid-nineteenth century, dildos were widely used and manufactured. The rubber model was introduced around 1850, with electrical devices following by the end of the century. Rather than giving sexual pleasure, they were used as