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**Defense of Di**

**In Defense of Dick: Paying the Penis Its Proper Respect**

One torrid summer day in Montreal a few years back, a high-powered publicist asked me if I wanted to go shopping with her for a vibrator.

My provocative friend probably meant to elicit a nervous reaction from me, a gay guy who—as I freely admit—is freaked out at the thought of sharing anything physically intimate with a woman, a poor specimen of a man who’s perplexed by the female form and won’t even get naked in front of lady doctors or masseuses.

I tried to be less uptight about the strange proposal. Loosen up, I thought. Set aside your sexual hang-ups. The porn emporium my friend had in mind was way across town—maybe she just wanted a companion to come along for the ride, make an afternoon of it, have lunch and a laugh. Maybe she needed advice on which gizmo to get. I had no experience with vibrators, but we did have a shared connoisseurship of the item they were modelled on.

Entering the vast boutique for naughty people, I felt, for a moment, on my own turf. A candy store for nymphomaniacs, ardent admirers and giggly curiosity seekers, it held every style of monument to manliness cast in plastic or rubber in every conceivable shape and size. Dozens of custom models lined the shelves and hung from walls, all fully engorged and standing at attention for inspection as we passed.

These model pricks came both circumcised and uncut. Some shafts had the girth of fire hydrants, were adorned with majestic blue veins and even sported low-riding balls. There were dazzling facsimiles in every imaginable skin tone. This truly diverse array featured thin and tapered Japanese; hot Hispanics with wads of foreskin; stunning Arabs and Israelis, cut but respectably sized; wide and weighty German knockwursts; fat, juicy Irish bones; massive black mambas.

But that was the gay section. Dragged around the corner by the determined shopper, I left the shameless meat rack display and was suddenly blinded by a burst of fresh springtime color. Everything I’d ever read about penis envy in women vanished as we entered another kind of fantasy that pretty much left out male units. Abstract works in gaudy hot pink, lavender and purple dominated the room. Dildos tended toward translucency, near-invisibility—more like hard candies than steely swords. Not only were most items unrealistic and oddly non-phallic, many had dashes of glitter suspended in them, evoking a world of fairy princesses, rhinestone tiaras and unicorns. Shopping here was more like strolling down the little girls’ aisle at Toys “R” Us than the dirty halls of a porn palace. I couldn’t imagine anything less arousing.

Dildos soon gave way to the swarm of humming, battery-powered tools my friend had come to ponder. Flowery shades and tuberous, oval shapes made most vibrators seem like some kind of Easter egg: a celebration of fertility, not virility. Dreams of conceiving, birthing and raising a family were built into these disturbing hybrids of children’s toys and adult playthings hidden in bedside drawers for easy reach. The few gay vibrators that had caught my eye moments before contrasted starkly with those geared to female tastes. Men’s machines were mostly jet black and matte finished, more like high-tech military weapons than a little girl’s magic wand collection. Mothers’ little helpers were more fluid than erect, with bizarre extensions branching off in all directions to hit places no mortal penis could reach. Zany medusas, they had frightening necks and were all but headless, except for the cartoon rabbit head cresting a curvy growth with pricked up ears to burrow straight for the clitoris.

One machine might have been mistaken for a stuffed animal toy. With its fuchsia egg body, faceless head and bushy tail, the *Happy Rabbit Mini Ears Clitoral Vibe* looked as if Thumper had humped a Teletubby. It wobbled, roly-poly, with an exclamation mark stamped on a big, baby belly to enhance its goofiness and kill the possibility of anything even remotely erotic. Bunnies, baskets, colored eggs, childhood memories of jelly beans on Easter Sunday morning hunts—not a treasure trail I would want to follow—it was reminiscent of the kinds of things a guy might picture to tame his boner at embarrassing moments, if imagining his dead grandmother naked didn’t do the trick.

“What do you think of this one?” asked my female friend, seeming more alien to me by the moment. She held up, for my appraisal, what looked like a battery-powered toy mixer for some matching pink plastic kitchen playset. Did this mean horny women got off on playing house? I took a deep breath but said nothing, still trying to process all this. Here was the secret garden, or romper room, to which women retreated to be their most intimate selves, and it was so unlike those dark places I’d visited with men. Adding to my bewilderment, female self-pleasuring went beyond what could be explained by consumer conditioning—girls liking pink, boys liking blue—getting creepier all the time. The colors of the girly sex machines were not only the same ones used for children’s toys, they were also within the spectrum of adult make-up—blush, lipstick, eye shadow—women use to seduce men, so the theory goes, by mimicking their faces and genitalia in states of arousal. But they were using labia-colored devices on themselves! Did this mean all women were lesbians in the privacy of their own boudoirs?

And where did all that confounded glitter—“the herpes of craft supplies,” as one comic has called it—fit in? How anyone who took sex seriously could respond to such stimuli was beyond me, though I felt confident about one thing: men were wasted on women.

But if sugar and spice were the recipe for female orgasm, then was it possible straight men weren’t all snakes and snails and puppydog tails? Did they go for all that sissy stuff because they liked women? Worse still, did they have some sick interest in little girls? Considering the lame, childish things some hetero guys considered kinky, you had to wonder. French maid costumes? Whipped cream and cherries? *Really?* Did they also imagine, to get their juices flowing, pink tutus, plush pink bunny ear hats, pink Hello Kitty handbags? I’d always been suspicious of all that lacy, frilly stuff, the pouting expressions, the high-pitched girly squeals, the florid scents that made me carsick as a kid and still gave me headaches. The firmest erection should be unable to withstand scenarios involving Easter Bunnies hiding eggs, princesses seeking Prince Charmings, Tinkerbells waving sparkly wands, Playboy bunnies shaking cotton tails—or was Cinderella’s Castle the place a straight man on the down-low with a gay guy kneeling before him went when his eyes rolled back into his head?

Gay sex, Quentin Crisp once said, was about one thing, and one thing alone: cock. I didn’t want to give the feminists more ammunition to call men shallow, but this sort of shallowness could hardly be worse than the kitsch I was uncovering beneath so much depth, interiority and *vaginality* in women who said they needed sex *to mean something*.

Mr Crisp had a point. Glory holes made a case for the autonomy of the cock. Slipped through a crude opening cut into a makeshift plywood wall, the male member, one of nature’s finest works, could pose proudly as a peacock and be appreciated in its own right. The rightful owner beyond the plywood might be gay, straight or bi; old and flabby or hard, young and Olympian—it wouldn’t matter if the wood was working. Man sex need not involve proper introductions, conversation, flowers, chocolates, a sense of humor, eye contact—even faces at all—only friction, as all men, gay, bi or straight, would surely admit if they were honest.

Still I shrank at the thought of someone standing there, abdomen pressed against the plywood, splinters gently scratching his balls, heart racing and about to let go—imagining, on the other end, some woman in a plush animal costume, a tiny dancer in pink polka-dot panties, or worse: an itsy-bitsy baby in swaddling clothes. I wanted no part in such fantasies.

“If forced to choose, which one would you buy?” pleaded the stranger before me, holding up two contraptions with bells and whistles that came complete with batteries.

“Whatever turns you on.”

[Image by Joshua Earle](https://unsplash.com/@joshuaearle)

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Michael Brandow writes on society and the arts. The author of several books, he has written for publications including The New York Times, Village Voice, The New Criterion, Quillette, and Gizmodo.

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**Just Me**

 17/07/2020 5:26 pm

LOL,

It was just a matter of time before the tables turned, and hetero men were the ones accused of being sissies, wanting to have sex with those silly, superficial creatures, women…just like in Ancient Greece and Rome.

REAL men have sex with each other’s penises…

Hope your female “friend” realises just what you think of her!

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**Pierre**

 17/07/2020 3:13 pm

Well, that’s easily explained. Women aren’t aroused by the sight of a penis the same way gay men are (or the way straight guys are when looking at certain female body parts.) In fact they experience that kind of looking-at-a-body-part arousal so rarely that they call it ‘objectification’ and think it’s something negative. Their sexuality is entirely self-centered, something that’s hard to understand for us. It doesn’t matter to them whether a dildo looks like a children toy or like a genuine cock. Men need to have a gay experience if they want to receive the same kind of sexual attention they’re willing to give.

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**Anonymous**

 17/07/2020 12:33 pm

I respect my penis, but sometimes it makes me so frustrated I have to just grab it and shake it.

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**Lola**

 17/07/2020 12:21 pm

This article is fun. I have also seen that some dildos at stores are realistic looking while others are ridiculous and filled with glitter. I am a woman, and I do prefer the pretty looking dildos, but it never occurred to me how odd that is- why don’t I want my sex toys to be masculine rather than feminine? I suppose I wouldn’t want the realistic dildos because they are reminiscent of a man and using them reminds me of being in the absence of an actual man. It’s a bit sad. Having to use a fake male appendage because you have not got a real one handy. I think the frilly pink sex toys appeal to me because they are so unlike a man and so clearly about women. It makes masturbation an act of physical pleasure and celebration of time alone rather than a reminder of being without… Read more »

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**Just Me**

 17/07/2020 5:23 pm

*Reply to  [Lola](https://areomagazine.com/2020/07/17/in-defense-of-dick-paying-the-penis-its-proper-respect/" \l "comment-41822)*

Lola-

I think you nailed it.

For many (most? all?) men, sex is primarily about body parts, the fact a person is attached to them is secondary.

For most (all ?) women, the person to whom those body parts are attached is crucial.

If no one is, that is an entirely different experience.

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