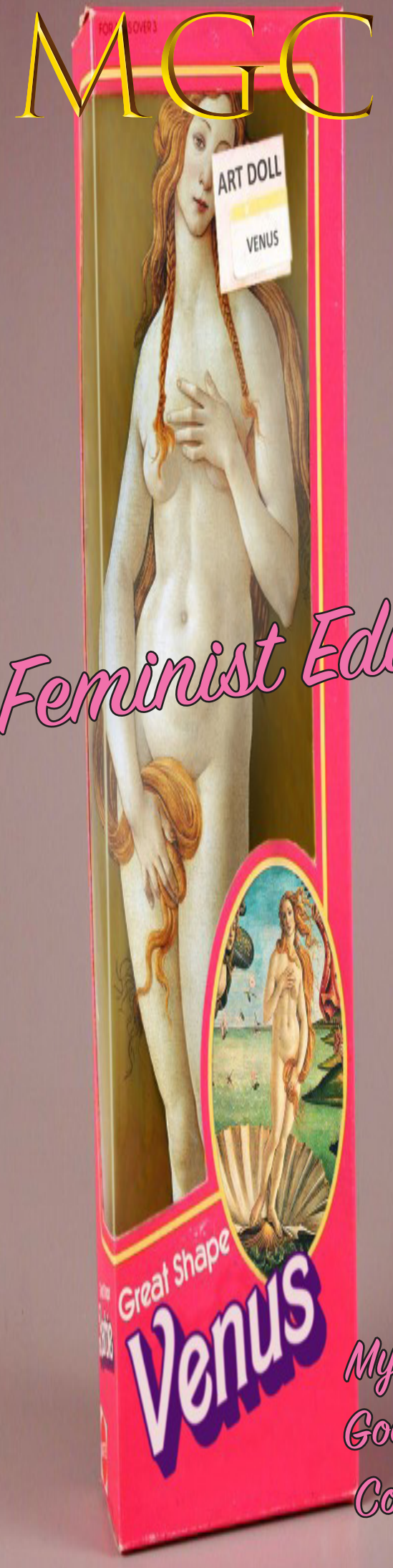




## REVIEW

THE LAYOUT OF THE ZINE TAKES ON A 'BAR MENU' FORMAT WHICH WE HOPE WILL TAKE THE READER ON A SLIGHTLY MORE UNIQUE JOURNEY. ALTHOUGH WE'RE KEEN TO PERHAPS EXPLORE THE MAINSTREAM A4 DOUBLE PAGE SPREAD, WE DECIDED TO SHAPE THE FORMAT IN A WAY ALLUSIVE TO A DIGITAL ARTICLE LAYOUT (ORIGINATING FROM OUR CURRENT BLOG).



*The Feminist Edition*

*My  
Goddess  
Complex*

egeislekel



## Contributions

**Editors:** Jill Lupupa and Maya Kokerov

**Art/Illustrators:** Frankie Ward, Peter Page, Alison Rachel (Recipe for Self-Love), Ege Islekel, Ambivalently Yours, Aykut Aydogdu

**Writers:** Ada Joy Osman, Maya Kokerov, Jill Lupupa, and Peter Page

## Table of Contents

p3. Editor's Note

p4. Editor's Note

p5. A Feminist Theory: Sexualisation

p6. A Transwoman's Place Is A Woman's Place

p7. Manifesto

p8. Manifesto

p9. Femininity is Not a Weakness

p10. Sweep the Temple poem

p11. Continued

p13. Can Men Really Be Feminists?

p14. Continued

p15. To The Man Who Made Me Feel Small

p16. Continued

p19. The Problems with Prostitution: Inherent or Relative?

p20. Continued

p21. Review

## A LIBERAL RESPONSE: PROSTITUTION IS NOT INHERENTLY WRONG

THE ASYMMETRY THESIS IS WRONG BECAUSE ITS PREMISE AND CONCLUSION REST ON THE IDEA THAT THERE IS EITHER A 'SELF' OR 'SOUL' WHICH IS HURT OR SOLD.

THE MORALISING OF PROSTITUTION RESTS ON INTEGRATED RELIGIOUS IDEALS WHICH INCORPORATE ONE'S MORALITY OR 'SOUL' (Kuo, 2002, 42) AND THERE IS NO STRICTLY SECULAR WAY TO ARGUE THAT PROSTITUTION VIOLATES PERSONHOOD. REGULATED, CONSENSUAL PROSTITUTION CANNOT BE EQUATED TO THE LITERAL SALE OR DAMAGE OF BODY PARTS SUCH AS KIDNEYS BECAUSE ONE'S SEXUALITY IS A CAPACITY. IF TRADITIONAL IDEALS OF FEMININE PURITY WERE DISMISSED AND FEMALE SEXUALITY WAS NORMALISED, COMMERCIAL SEX WOULD BE COMPARABLE TO OTHER OCCUPATIONS.

SOME PEOPLE WILL EMPHASISE THAT THE PROSTITUTE IS PENETRATED, YET THIS IS NOT A SUFFICIENT CONDITION OF PROSTITUTION AS THERE ARE CASES OF MEDICAL TEST SUBJECTS PAID TO BE EXPERIMENTED ON THROUGH PENETRATION. FOR EXAMPLE, A GYNAECOLOGICAL PRACTITIONER COULD TEACH MEDICAL STUDENTS HOW TO PERFORM VAGINAL INSPECTIONS BY VOLUNTEERING HER OWN BODY AS A TEST SUBJECT.

IN THIS CASE, SHE IS ALLOWING PHYSICAL CONTACT TO HER PRIVATE PARTS FOR MONEY BUT IS NOT CONSIDERED A PROSTITUTE. HER POSITION FACILITATES THE KIND OF MENTAL DETACHMENT ALSO COMMON IN PROSTITUTION WHERE A WOMAN PARTICIPATES IN A SEXUAL ACT SOLELY FOR MONEY RATHER THAN PLEASURE.

## PROBLEMS WITH PROSTITUTION: LOSS OF AUTONOMY DUE TO COERCION AND ALIENATION

HOWEVER, EVEN IF PROSTITUTION IS NOT TECHNICALLY DIFFERENT TO OTHER OCCUPATIONS, SOME WOMEN REPORT THAT IT IS ALIENATING AS THEY STRUGGLE WITH THEIR SENSE OF SELF. IN THE DOCUMENTARY TRICKED (WASSON AND WELLS, 2013), A FORMER PROSTITUTE REFERS TO HER PAST SELF AS SOMEONE OTHER THAN HERSELF.

A FORMER PROSTITUTE'S MENTALITY LEADS TO A DYSFUNCTIONAL SEXUALITY DIRECTLY CAUSED BY THE EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL ABUSE SHE HAS EXPERIENCED (ANDERSON, 2006). WITH MONEY OFTEN BEING GIVEN TO HER PIMP RATHER THAN TO HER, SHE MAY FEEL SHE LITERALLY SELLS HERSELF. USUAL JOBS DO NOT INVOLVE SUCH ALIENATION TO ONE'S FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN CAPACITIES (THEIR BODILY USE).

WHAT IS WRONG WITH PROSTITUTION IS THAT IT SUPPORTS THE ENGRAINED BELIEF THAT WOMEN SERVICE MEN WHO HAVE HIGHER SEXUAL APPETITES. PROSTITUTION PERPETUATES GENDER IMBALANCE AND INEQUALITY DESPITE THE FACT THAT SOME WOMEN FREELY CHOOSE TO PROSTITUTE, AND PERHAPS IT IS NOT AS EASY TO NORMALISE AS KUO HOPES.

BY NORMALISING AND REGULATING PROSTITUTION, FEMALE SEXUALITY SHOULD BE DE-STIGMATISED DUE TO THE MORAL RIGHT TO SELF-SOVEREIGNTY (DE MARNEFFE, 2013).



# THE PROBLEMS WITH PROSTITUTION: INHERENT OR RELATIVE?

PROSTITUTION IS DEFINED AS SELLING THE PRIVATE PERFORMANCE OF SPECIFIED ACTS OF A SEXUAL NATURE WITH INTENT TO CAUSE SEXUAL AROUSAL IN THE CLIENT. THIS INVOLVES BOTH IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT AGREEMENT REGARDING ACCESS TO THE BODY OF THE SELLER.

THE SALE MUST INVOLVE A CONTRACT SPECIFYING THE ITEMS OF EXCHANGE, SUCH AS THE SPECIFIC SERVICES AND COSTS.

WHILE PROSTITUTION AS AN EXPERIENCE WILL DIFFER DEPENDING ON THE CULTURAL CONTEXT AND WILL BE BETTER OR WORSE, THERE IS NOTHING ESSENTIALLY WRONG WITH THE ACT OF PROSTITUTION UNDER CONSENSUAL CONDITIONS WHERE THE WOMAN IS NOT COERCED THROUGH FORCE OR MONETARY NEED. THAT GREATER STIGMA OF PROSTITUTION LEADS TO GREATER HARM FOR FEMINIST CONCERNS EVEN IF IT MAY SOMETIMES ENACT A SYSTEM THAT PERPETUATES HARM AND GENDER HIERARCHIES.

THERE ARE PROBLEMS WITHIN PROSTITUTION, HOWEVER CRIMINALISING IT WILL LEAD TO FAR WORSE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE VICTIM (THE PROSTITUTE) AND THE PROBLEMS WITHIN PROSTITUTION MUST BE SOLVED RATHER THAN TARGETING THE CONCEPT AS AN INTRINSIC WRONG.

IT HAS BEEN GLAMOURISED IN SERIES LIKE HARLOTS AND MOVIES LIKE PRETTY WOMAN , WARPED INTO A CHEESY FAIRY TALE FULL OF SCANDAL, SEX AND AN ULTIMATELY HAPPY ENDING WITH PRINCE CHARMING IN TOW. WE'VE ALL JOKED ABOUT WANTING A SUGAR DADDY AT THIS POINT, BUT THE REALITY IS FAR UGLIER.

HOWEVER, THE REAL QUESTION REMAINS; WHAT IS ACTUALLY WRONG WITH THE CONCEPT OF PROSTITUTION IN ITSELF?

## THE ASYMMETRY THESIS AND ESSENTIALIST OBJECTIONS TO PROSTITUTION

MARKETS IN REPRODUCTION AND SEX ARE ASYMMETRIC AND INCOMPARABLE TO OTHER LABOUR MARKETS, SUCH AS SEX COUNSELLING OR THERAPY. THEREFORE, THE COMMERCIAL MODIFICATION OF SEX ITSELF CONSTITUTES HARM, RATHER THAN MERELY BEING THE CAUSE OF IT.

OUR BODIES ARE VITAL TO REALISE OUR SENSE OF SELF. WIDESPREAD PROSTITUTION PROMOTES INFERIOR FORMS OF PERSONHOOD AS, BY SELLING HERSELF, THE PROSTITUTE TRANSFORMS FROM A PERSON TO A THING, RATHER THAN AN EMPLOYEE.

## Editor's Note

CREATING THIS ZINE FOR THE WARWICK SMALL PRESS PUBLISHING MODULE HAS BEEN INSPIRING, WELL-MOTIVATED, AND TRULY A GOOD OPPORTUNITY ALL ROUND. SURE, IT BEGAN AS JUST A FINAL PROJECT, BUT FOR ME AND MY FRIENDS WHO CREATED OUR WEBSITE/BLOG, IT WAS A CHANCE TO CREATE OUR FIRST EVER ZINE FOR MY GODDESS COMPLEX. MY GODDESS COMPLEX BEGAN ALMOST TWO YEARS AGO IN THE THIRD TERM OF OUR FIRST YEAR AT WARWICK AFTER WE HAD FINISHED OUR FIRST SET OF UNIVERSITY EXAMS AND WERE FEELING LIBERATED AND POWERFUL (AND, ALSO, BRIMMING WITH CREATIVITY). BASING IT ON LIFESTYLE, ART, MUSIC, FASHION, AND CULTURE, WE STARTED AS A BLOG ON WORDPRESS WITH OUR OWN DOMAIN AND DECIDED TO MAKE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS TO CREATE SOMETHING OF A BRAND ON FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM AND TWITTER. JUST RECENTLY WE HIT THE 50 ARTICLES POSTED ONLINE MARK, HAVING TAKEN NEEDED BREAKS IN TERM TIME, BUT WE ALWAYS TOOK THE APPROACH OF WRITING WHEN WE FEEL LIKE WE WANT TO OR HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY ON A TOPIC. THIS WAY WE NEVER FEEL PRESSURED UNDER UNNECESSARY DEADLINES WE WOULD GIVE TO OURSELVES AND CAN WRITE AS MUCH OR AS LITTLE AS WE WOULD LIKE AND SELF-PUBLISH. HAVING DONE THIS, THE SMALL PRESS MODULE HAS BEEN THE PERFECT INSIGHT INTO THE PHYSICAL PUBLISHING ASPECT OF THE EDITORIAL WORLD, AND MOTIVATED OUR CAREER GOALS OF BECOMING PROFESSIONAL EDITORS; BUT, OF COURSE WE HAVE SOCIETIES FOR PRACTICE FOR NOW.

BEGINNING THE ZINE WAS A TEAM EFFORT, WITH A CIRCLE OF FRIENDS INTO CREATIVE PROJECTS, WE WERE LUCKY TO HAVE FRIENDLY FACES THAT WERE ONLY HAPPY TO CONTRIBUTE ART WORK AND WRITTEN PIECES WHILST WE WOULD STILL GO ON TO EDIT, DESIGN AND INCLUDE OUR OWN ARTICLES IN THE ZINE TOO. MY ONLY PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WHERE ZINES ARE CONCERNED WAS CO-EDITING A SMALL SCALE FIRST ATTEMPTED ZINE FOR A FRIEND'S OWN PROJECT CALLED GRAPEFRUIT SOUP. I ONLY CONTRIBUTED WITH A BOOK REVIEW AND THE DIGITAL AESTHETIC ON THAT INSTANCE HOWEVER, SO, YOU COULD SAY I WAS APPREHENSIVE ON HOW THIS WOULD GO. LUCKILY, I HAD AT LEAST SOME INDESIGN KNOWLEDGE FROM THE UNIVERSITY NEWSPAPER, WHICH IS HONESTLY BETTER THAN NONE WITH THAT APP UNDER TIMED SITUATIONS. SO, I TRIED USING INDESIGN AND PHOTOSHOP TO DESIGN ONE OF OUR EDITIONS OF THIS ZINE AS WE HAVE CREATED TWO. I ALSO VISITED THE NOTTINGHAM ZINE LIBRARY IN THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS WITH MY FRIEND FROM HIS OTHER PROJECT, AND FOUND SOME MUCH NEEDED INSPIRATION IN CREATING THIS ONE. MAYA AND I KNEW THAT IF WE WERE GOING TO BE POLITICAL THEN WE WOULD DEFINITELY GO TOWARDS A FEMINIST ZINE. HAVING WRITTEN ARTICLES UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF FEMINISM ON MY GODDESS COMPLEX IT SEEMED APPROPRIATE AND EVER SO RELEVANT THAT WE THEMATISE THE ZINE TO A MOVEMENT WE FEEL STRONGLY ABOUT. THIS ZINE IS NOT JUST ABOUT A ONE-DIMENSIONAL FEMINISM BUT ABOUT A TRUE EQUAL FEMINISM INCLUSIVE TO ALL WITH AWARENESS OF INTERSECTIONALITY AND MEN AS FEMINISTS TOO.

P.S FOR MY FIRST EDITOR'S NOTE, I REALLY ENJOYED WRITING THIS LIKE SPEWING MY INNER MONOLOGUE. WELL, I HOPE YOU ENJOY THE ZINE AS MUCH AS WE DO AND THANK YOU TO THE CONTRIBUTORS.

Jill



## Editor's Note p.2

WHEN THE TIME CAME FOR JILL AND I TO ERECT TWO EDITIONS OF OUR FIRST EVER MY GODDESS COM-  
PLEX ZINE, A SPECIAL ISSUE DEDICATED TO EMBRACING BOTH FEMINISM AND INTERSECTIONALITY, I WAS GIFTED A  
CHANCE TO REFLECT ON OUR UNANIMOUS CONCEPTUALISATION OF THIS SMALL PRESS PROJECT AS SITUATED BOTH IN  
HISTORY AND IN THE QUIANT BUBBLE OF WARWICK CAMPUS. AFTER BEING EXPOSED TO THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF  
SUBVERSIVE ZINE HISTORY, SPECIFICALLY THE RIOT GRRRL PRESS ERA AND DIY SELF PUBLISHING WHICH RESISTS  
THE COMMERCIAL IMPERATIVES OF CONGLOMERATE HIERARCHIES, I MENTALLY SITUATED OUR CREATION IN A CULTURAL  
AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT. BY CREATING A BLOG, WE ENABLED OUR WISH TO WRITE FREELY AND DESIGN A PERSONAL  
IMAGE WITHOUT THE SOMEWHAT EDITORIAL CENSORSHIP THAT COMES FROM SUBMITTING TO THE MORE MAINSTREAM  
UNIVERSITY NEWSPAPERS OR MAGAZINES. THE SAME ETHICS AND AESTHETICS THAT WENT INTO THE PRODUCTION  
OF 20TH CENTURY ZINES, WHEREBY MARGINALISED YOUNG ADULTS HAND PRODUCED A LITERARY REVOLUTION, WAS  
CHANNELLED INTO OURS ALBEIT IN A DIFFERENT SETTING.

IT ALSO COINCIDED WITH OUR OWN DETERMINATION TO ENCOURAGE EVERYONE WE KNOW TO WRITE FOR US- YOU  
DON'T HAVE TO BE AN EXPERT TO MAKE AN AUTHOR OR TO SEIZE THE MEANS OF REPRODUCTION. AUTHORSHIP IS A  
SOCIAL RELATION MORE THAN AN IDENTITY, AS BOTH PUBLISHERS AND AUTHORS ARE RELIANT ON EACH OTHER FOR  
PRODUCTION DESPITE THEIR DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES (REFERENCE). THE PROCESS OF EDITING THIS ZINE AND ITS  
ARTICLES, BOTH BY MYSELF AND OTHERS, REQUIRED FAR MORE CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT ON MY BEHALF IN CONTRAST  
TO THE EXPLORATORY FREEDOM I EXHIBITED WHEN WRITING FOR THE BLOG AS AN AUTHOR. ALTHOUGH WE DON'T AC-  
TIVELY INTEND TO SABOTAGE THE 21ST CENTURY'S CULTURE OF HIERARCHY AND PRIVILEGE AS INTENTLY AS THE ZINES  
WHICH EMERGED FROM THE PUNK MOVEMENT, WE WANT TO FOLLOW IN THE LIGHT OF CURRENT BLOGS AND ZINES  
SUCH AS JEZEBEL AND THE BITCH IN BOTH A DIGITAL AND PRINT OUTLET. NO TOPIC AND NO IDENTITY IS OFF LIMITS.

THE PROCESS OF BOTH DESIGNING AND EDITING A SOMEWHAT LITERARY BASED 'MAGAZINE' WITH INDESIGN,  
PHOTOSHOP AND PUBLISHER REQUIRED US TO FORM A BALANCE BETWEEN THE EDITORIAL AIM OF CELEBRATING  
INDIVIDUALITY AND CULTURE THROUGH A LENS OF ABSOLUTE INCLUSION WITH THE MORE ARTISTIC BACKGROUND OF  
INCORPORATING AN ALREADY ESTABLISHED, EXTREMELY FEMININE IMAGE AS A MOTIF. THIS BALANCE WAS STRUCK BY  
COMBINING RELATIVELY 'SERIOUS' TOPICAL ARTICLES WITH OUR CURRENT MASCOT: VENUS (APHRODITE), GODDESS  
OF LOVE, BEAUTY, PLEASURE AND PROCREATION. ALTHOUGH OUR ULTIMATE AIM IS TO PRODUCE ALL OF OUR OWN  
IMAGES THROUGH GRAPHIC DESIGN, ILLUSTRATION AND PHOTOGRAPHY, I WAS INSPIRED BY CONTEMPORARY GRAPHIC  
DESIGNER EGE ISLEKEL WHO I DISCOVERED THROUGH ART PAGES ON THE SOCIAL MEDIA INSTAGRAM. HE SUBJECTS  
INFAMOUS FIGURES TO MODERN CIRCUMSTANCES IN A SERIES OF CLEVERLY MANIPULATED IMAGES. VENUS IS PLACED IN  
DIFFERENT MODERN SETTINGS (RUNNING ON A TREADMILL, WEARING MAKEUP AND GETTING PLASTIC SURGERY) WHICH  
RESONATED WITH US- CONTEMPORARY STANDARDS OF FEMININITY ARE SATIRICALLY EXAGGERATED. ALTHOUGH I MAY  
BE READING INTO THIS TOO DEEPLY, I INTERPRETED THE ILLUSTRATION AS A COMMENT ON THE HOLLOW SUPERFICI-  
ALITY OF MODERN LIFE. EVEN A SYMBOL OF PURITY, LOVE AND TRANSCENDENCE (A GODDESS) SUCCUMBS TO THE  
ARTIFICIAL CRITERIA USED TO NAVIGATE TODAY'S CULTURE OF SOCIAL DESIRABILITY. THE JUXTAPOSITION OF THE  
CLASSIC ICON WITH THE MODERN CANVAS PARALLELS THE WAY IN WHICH WE AIM TO TACKLE LARGER, SOMETIMES  
PHILOSOPHICAL, QUESTIONS FROM A 21ST CENTURY PERSPECTIVE.

THE SHOCKING PINK OF THE COVER IMAGE HAS THE POTENTIAL 'DANGER' TO OSTRACISE ANYONE WITH A  
SLIGHTLY MORE FRAGILE MASCULINITY, BUT WE CHOSE TO EMBRACE THIS STEREOTYPE IN ORDER TO MAKE A POINT  
EVEN LOUDER THAN THE PARTICULARLY BOLD SHADE OF FUCHSIA SELECTED. THE FULL SIZE VENUS ON THE COVER  
METAPHORICALLY ENCAPSULATES THE ENTIRE ZINE AS A STEREOTYPICALLY GENDERED, FEMININE OBJECT- AN 'ART  
DOLL' BOX MEANT TO CONFIN A PLASTIC, SOCIALLY DESIRABLE REPLICA OF A WOMAN INTO PLASTICISED PRISON FOR  
CHILDREN TO OPEN AND CONTINUE TO BE INFLUENCED BY. NOT ONLY IS VENUS' BODY TYPE, VIEWED AS PERFECTION  
CENTURIES AGO, A SUBVERSION OF THE BARBIE DOLL PROPORTIONS WHICH YOU EXPECT TO BE PLACED IN THE  
BOX, BUT HER STATURE IS FAR LESS PASSIVE THAN OTHER FEMALE COUNTERPARTS IN ART, SUCH AS THE SLEEPING  
ARIADNE WHO IS HELPLESSLY LYING DOWN ON A CHAISE, LETHARGICALLY EXPOSING HER BODY.

ALTHOUGH WE'RE CALLING IT A ZINE, THE OBJECT'S FORMAT AND INTERSECTIONAL AIM IS REMINISCENT OF A  
PAMPHLET'S. OUR DESIGN TAKES UP ONE THIRD OF A3 PER PAGE AND EVEN THOUGH IT DIFFERS FROM THE POPULAR  
OCTAVO FOLD OF MOST PAMPHLETS, THE RECTANGULAR PAGES MAY REMIND ONE OF A LEAFLET OR HAND OUT.  
PAMPHLETS EXERCISE SOCIAL INFLUENCE AS THEY ASSIST IN THE FORMATION OF CRITICAL DEBATE AND HELP BUILD  
FOUNDATIONS OF INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL COMMUNITIES, PARTICULARLY AFTER THE PAMPHLET WARS. PAM-  
PHLETS HAVE POLITICAL AND POLEMICAL USES IN THEIR PRODUCTION AND MATERIAL FORM (RAYMOND 4 THESES OF  
PAMPHLETS). THIS IS AN ASPECT THAT HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO ZINES AND EVEN SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS. WE'RE  
ALWAYS OPEN TO EXPANDING OUR MINDSETS AND HAVING OUR VIEWS CHALLENGED, SO DON'T LET OUR OPINIONS DETER  
YOU FROM SUBMISSION. THIS WEBSITE IS INDEED A 'SAFE SPACE' FOR PEOPLE OF ALL RACE, GENDER, ORIGIN AND  
SEXUAL ORIENTATION. HOWEVER, ULTIMATELY, WE HOPE TO DO MORE THAN JUST THAT...

MAYA

READ MORE AT:

[HTTPS://MYGODDESSCOMPLEX.COM/2019/01/06/FEMINIST-MANIFESTOS-ZINE/](https://mygoddesscomplex.com/2019/01/06/feminist-manifestos-zine/)







## A FEMINIST THEORY: SEXUALISATION

OCCASIONALLY MEN SEXUALISE WOMEN EVERYDAY IN OBJECTIFYING US BY REDUCING US TO JUST OUR BODIES AND SEXUAL ORGANS. IT'S COME TO MY REALISATION THAT AS WOMEN WE ARE CONDITIONED TO YIELD TO THE WAYS OF SOCIETY AND EVEN ENJOY BEING OBJECTIFIED BY PARTNERS AND LOVE INTERESTS, AS A RESULT OF THE REMNANTS OF THE PATRIARCHY TODAY.

IF ANY MAN IN GENERAL WERE TO LEER AT ME, THE FEMINIST IN ME WOULD MAKE ME INSTANTLY REPULSED; HOWEVER, WHEN I FIND MYSELF TREATED AND TALKED TO AS A SEXUAL OBJECT BY THE MAN I'M INTERESTED IN THEN SUDDENLY MY FEMINIST BRAIN GOES OUT THE WINDOW, THROUGH THE DOOR, AND NOT TO BE SEEN FASTER THAN YOU COULD SAY 'MALE GAZE'.

ALTHOUGH DEHUMANISING, BEING QUITE OBVIOUSLY REGARDED AS A SEXUAL OBJECT CAN INNOCENTLY SEEM ALLURING WHEN COMING FROM A MAN ONE IS INVOLVED WITH BECAUSE WE IN FACT KNOW THAT THEY DO NOT SOLELY SEE US IN THIS LIGHT BUT RESPECT US AS PEOPLE AND COMPANIONS. IN THIS WAY, PERHAPS I'M NOT BEING A BAD FEMINIST FOR GIVING INTO OBJECTIFYING LANGUAGE IN CERTAIN SCENARIOS – IN FACT, IT IS PRECISELY BECAUSE INDULGING IN THIS BEHAVIOUR IS SEEN AS 'BAD' AND DEMEANING THAT IT INSTANTANEOUSLY BECOMES ALLURING.

SOME MAY SUGGEST THAT OUR ENJOYMENT OF OBJECTIFICATION IS IN PART BORN FROM GROWING UP IN TRADITIONAL FAMILIES IN SUCH THAT SOME PATRIARCHAL VALUES CREEP INTO OUR UPBRINGINGS AND FORM PART OF OUR RESIGNATION TO IT.

TERMS LIKE "VIOLATE ME" AND THE IDEA OF BEING GRIPPED HARD ARE SIMILARLY PROBLEMATIC ON THE SURFACE, BUT WHEN DONE BY A MAN ONE IS INVOLVED WITH THIS CAN BE WELCOMED AND EVEN ENJOYED PERHAPS BECAUSE OF THE 'TABOO', BAD NATURE SURROUNDING IT. IT JUST COMES DOWN TO A MATTER OF PERSONAL PREFERENCES.

IN A WAY IT'S LIBERATING TO ALMOST RECLAIM THE POWER BACK FROM THE PATRIARCHY AND SEE OURSELVES AS SEXUAL GODDESSES EMBRACING FEMALE SEXUALITY, RATHER THAN LETTING IT BE USED IN A DEMEANING RESTRICTED FASHION.

WORDS BY JILL



# A Transwoman's Place Is A Woman's Place

“A PANEL WITH 2 MEN AND 2 MEN WHO IDENTIFY AS WOMEN IS NOT 50/50.”

THIS IS FROM A WHATSAPP GROUP CHAT LEAKED BY BUZZFEED.

IT IS THE CULMINATION OF DEBATE ON HOW TRANSWOMEN FIT INTO FEMINIST DISCUSSION, DEBATES THAT HAVE OFTEN BEEN SILENCED DUE TO THE CONTENTIOUS NATURE OF THE TOPIC. SAYING THAT TRANS-WOMEN HAVE OR DO BENEFIT FROM MALE PRIVILEGE IS A DANGEROUS POINT TO MAKE. BUT IT’S A DISCUSSION WORTH HAVING.

I ONCE HAD A DAY WALKING AROUND BIRMINGHAM WITH MY FRIEND. I’VE BEEN TO BIRMINGHAM BEFORE WHEN MY EXPERIENCE OF PRESENTING AS A WOMAN WAS LIMITED TO MY CAMPUS BUBBLE. NO ONE BATS AN EYELID WHEN I WEAR HEELS TO LECTURES. BUT A FULL FACE OF MAKEUP FELT PROVOCATIVE OUTSIDE MY SAFE SPACE. WHEN I WALKED AROUND WITH MY FRIEND, SHE WAS APPROACHED BY SEXUALLY AGGRESSIVE MEN THROUGHOUT THE DAY. NO ONE APPROACHES ME. NO ONE FEELS THAT THEY HAVE THE RIGHT TO ENTER MY PERSONAL SPACE AND KNOWINGLY MAKE ME UNCOMFORTABLE. WELL THEY DO, BUT IT’S RARE.

MY EXPERIENCE OF WOMANHOOD IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF A CISGENDER WOMAN AND THAT MUCH IS CLEAR. I WON’T CALL IT MALE PRIVILEGE THOUGH. I HAVE TO WONDER WHEN THE TERM MALE PRIVILEGE IS USED TO DISTINGUISH ME FROM CISGENDER WOMEN, WHAT WE’RE TRYING TO ACHIEVE.

THE PERCEIVED THREAT THAT TRANS ‘IDENTIFYING’ MEN ARE GOING TO MAKE UP HALF OF ANY PANEL IS UNJUSTIFIED. NO ONE WILL DENY THAT WE MAKE UP A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF THE POPULATION AND I WONDER IF THIS PERCENTAGE IS PROPORTIONATE TO ANY WORKFORCE.

IT’S BEEN REPORTED THAT 300 MEMBERS OF THE LABOUR PARTY HAVE RESIGNED OVER THE INCLUSION OF TRANSWOMEN IN ALL WOMEN SHORTLISTS. THE LABOUR PARTY HAS NOT CONFIRMED THIS NUMBER. IT IS AN EXAMPLE OF AN ARGUMENT I OFTEN HEAR. IT IS THAT ANYONE CAN WEAR A DRESS AND PRETEND TO BE A WOMAN. NOW THEY ARE FREE TO ENCROACH ON WOMEN ONLY SPACES SUCH AS BATHROOMS AND ENJOY ALL THE MALE PRIVILEGE THEIR PENISES CAN PROVIDE.

SELF-IDENTIFYING IS A WORD THAT COMES UP QUITE OFTEN. HOW DO WE REALLY KNOW YOU’RE A TRANSWOMAN? IS HOW I INTERPRET IT. I GUESS I’M SUPPOSED TO THINK THEY’RE REALLY TARGETING ALL THOSE MEN PRETENDING TO BE TRANSGENDER TO GET THE SPECIAL MALE PRIVILEGE I ENJOY.

WHERE IS THIS LEGION OF MEN DRESSING UP TO GAIN ACCESS TO THE LABOUR PARTY? WHERE ARE THESE PANELS WHERE TRANSWOMEN ARE OVER-REPRESENTED? I AM YET TO SEE WHERE ARE TRANS-WOMEN OVER REPRESENTED WHERE CISGENDER WOMEN ARE BEING DENIED ACCESS.

I HAVE TO BE CAREFUL AT TIMES. I WONDER IF I AM INTRUDING INTO WOMEN ONLY SPACES. WHEN I WAS REPRIMANDED BY NIGHTCLUB SECURITY IN LEAMINGTON SPA FOR USING THE WOMEN’S TOILET, I FELT I HAD BEEN MISTREATED. BUT WHEN HE SAID SOMEONE COMPLAINED, I WORRIED I HAD MADE ANOTHER WOMAN UNCOMFORTABLE. AND THAT WAS NOT SOMETHING I HAD ANTICIPATED, PARTLY BECAUSE IT WAS A STUDENT NIGHT AT SMAACK. MY FRIEND WHO WAS PRESENT DEFENDED ME, THE BOUNCER THREW HIS HANDS INTO THE AIR AND TOLD ME TO USE WHICHEVER TOILET I LIKE. I DIDN’T SAY ANYTHING BECAUSE THE TRUTH IS, **WHEN YOU LOOK LIKE ME, A BLACK BOY, YOU DON’T TALK TO PEOPLE WHO CAN ASSAULT YOU AND GET AWAY WITH IT.** ANOTHER WEEK I USED WHATEVER TOILET I LIKED AND I WAS REMOVED, THIS TIME THE ENCOUNTER WAS PHYSICAL AND UNNECESSARY AS I WOULD HAVE FOLLOWED THE SECURITY GUARD TO A QUIET PLACE AND MAKE MY POINT. LUCKILY ANOTHER FRIEND WAS THERE. HE GRABBED ME, BUT SPOKE TO HER.

THEY HAD MADE IT A POLICY THAT FOR A TRANSGENDER PERSON TO USE THE TOILET OF THEIR PREFERRED GENDER THEY WOULD HAVE TO SUPPLY DOCUMENTS TO PROVE THAT THEY WERE LEGALLY THE GENDER THEY IDENTIFIED AS.

IT’S STRANGE FOR SOMETHING SO MUNDANE LIKE A TOILET TO BE THE CENTRE OF SO MUCH CONTROVERSY. I WONDER IF I NEED A LAWYER WITH ME WHENEVER I USE THE TOILET.

WORDS BY ADA JOY OSMAN

THE VERY NEXT DAY, AN EMPLOYEE IN A TV STORE SHOUTED ‘EXCUSE ME’ MOMENTS BEFORE I HAD REACHED HOME, HAVING SECRETLY FOLLOWED ME DOWN THE SUBURBAN SUNSET OF THE STREET I LIVED ON. HE WAS ATTRACTIVE AND FRIENDLY, AND, AFTER FINDING OUT MY AGE, HE NOBLY SETTLED ON TELLING ME I WAS BEAUTIFUL AND WOULD BECOME AN EVEN MORE BEAUTIFUL WOMAN SOMEDAY. **ALTHOUGH I ADMIT THE 14 YEAR OLD ME FELT FLATTERED, EVERY TIME I WALKED PAST THE STORE MY STOMACH TIED ITSELF IN KNOTS AND TWISTS ALMOST ON DEMAND. I WAS RIGHTFULLY PARANOID THAT HE HAD METAMORPHOSED INTO BIG BROTHER, SCRUTINISING THE FIGURE HE HAD SAID WAS ‘AMAZING’ AND THE BABY FACE HE INITIALLY DISMISSED. AT 20, I STILL SUBCONSCIOUSLY FIND MYSELF LOOKING INSIDE DUE TO THE FRAGMENT OF VALIDATION I ASSOCIATED WITH ‘RICHER SOUNDS’ AND THE SAME MALE EMPLOYEES THAT WHISTLED WHEN I WALKED PAST.**

BUT DEGRADATION DOESN’T ALWAYS COME IN SUCH A VALIDATING FORM. THIS YEAR, THE FIRST DAY AT MY NEW WORKPLACE, AN AIR-CONDITIONED OFFICE OF SUB-ZERO DEGREES AND GLASS WALLS, I HEARD A GENTLE TAP ON THE DOOR. LETTING IN ‘RAY THE FED EX GUY’, HE GREETED ME AS ‘BUBBA’ AFTER ASKING ME IF I WAS NEW HERE WITH A HALF GRIN AND TWINKLING LITTLE EYES. **MY DESK, A CLEAN MODERN SLATE OF CHEAP WOOD, WAS SLIGHTLY FARTHER THAN THE TWO OTHER DESKS. HE SURVEYED ME AS I SAT BACK DOWN AT IT, LETTING OUT A LOW WHISTLE ACCOMPANIED BY A THROATY LAUGH. “THEY’VE PLACED YOU IN THE NAUGHTY CORNER, HAVEN’T THEY BUBBY?” MY FACE MASKED HUMILIATION AS HIS EXPRESSION IMPLIED AN INNUENDO. I HOPED MY BLUSH WAS INVISIBLE UNDER MY MAKEUP TO MAINTAIN COMPOSURE AND, CAUGHT OFF GUARD, I FORCED A POLITE ALBEIT CONFUSED ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AS HE TOLD ME HE’D SEE ME TOMORROW.**

MY HEART INCREMENTALLY BEGAN TO SINK WHEN I OVERHEARD MY MANAGER MENTION THAT HE DELIVERS PACKAGES THESE PACKAGES....EVERY. SINGLE. DAY. I WOULD SEE THE SMIRKING SCAB OF THAT SMILE DAILY, WOULD HAVE SOMEONE LEER AT ME FOR AT LEAST FIVE SECONDS EVERY DAY. **ALTHOUGH THIS WOULD HAPPEN ANYWAY THROUGH THE UNAPPETISING MEZE OF STREET HARASSMENT, KNOWING IT WAS CEMENTED INTO MY DAILY ROUTINE TURNED MY STOMACH MORE THAN USUAL. BUT GUESS WHAT MAKES IT SLIGHTLY TRAGI-COMIC? EVERYONE LOVES HIM, HE BRIGHTENS THEIR DAY AND MAKES THEM LAUGH. HE DOESN’T CALL ME OR THE OTHER FEMALE INTERN ‘BABY’ IN FRONT OF THE OTHERS, BUT IF HE DID IT SEEMS THEY’D TURN A BLIND EYE AND BRUSH IT OFF AS ‘CLASSIC RAY’.**

INTELLECTUAL DISMISSAL IS KEY HERE. RECENTLY, WHEN STUDYING IN THE LIBRARY, A BOY MY AGE ASKED ME IF THE LAPTOP I WAS SITTING NEXT TO WAS MINE. WHEN HE LOOKED AT THE SCREEN THAT WAS FILLED WITH COMPLICATED MATHEMATICAL EQUATIONS, HE ANSWERED FOR ME WITH A LAUGH AND CUTTING OFF ANY SIGN OF RESPONSE: ‘OF COURSE IT’S NOT!’ HE COZIED UP NEXT TO ME TO COMPLIMENT MY OUTFIT WITH HOPES IT WOULD CHARM ME INTO A DATE THAT NIGHT.

I AM SIMPLY DESCRIBING THE UNIVERSAL FEELING OF ‘SMALLNESS’ WHICH WOMEN ARE MADE TO FEEL THROUGH MUNDANE ENCOUNTERS WITH THE OPPOSITE GENDER. IN LAYMAN’S TERMS, IT’S THE COMMON SENSE KNOWLEDGE OF CASUAL SEXISM.

WORDS BY MAYA

READ MORE AT: [HTTPS://MYGODDESSCOMPLEX.COM/2018/12/26/TO-THE-MAN-WHO-MADE-ME-FEEL-SMALL/](https://mygoddesscomplex.com/2018/12/26/to-the-man-who-made-me-feel-small/)



ON THE EVE OF MY TWENTIETH BIRTHDAY, I FELT A WAVE OF SUPERFICIAL EMOTION FLOOD THROUGH ME. I WAS EXCITED FOR THE DAY TO COME, THE BRUNCH WHICH WOULD MAKE US FEEL SOPHISTICATED- LIKE ADULTS. WHAT NUDGED ITS UGLY HEAD INTO THE CORNER OF MY MIND WAS THAT I WOULD HAVE TO ONCE AND FOR ALL NAVIGATE ADULthood.

I FELT RIDICULOUS, LIKE A CLICHÉ. AN EXISTENTIAL CRISIS OVER A BIRTHDAY? How ORIGINAL. THE TAKE-HOME MESSAGE WAS THAT I WOULD NO LONGER BE IN HELPLESS, HAPLESS GIRLHOOD.

YET, NO MATTER HOW ‘ADULT’ I FELT, THIS FEELING NEVER FAILED TO FLICKER, ALONG WITH THE TREMBLE IN MY USUALLY STEADY STEP, UPON SIMPLY TURNING THE CORNER OF MY STREET OR DOING A GROCERY SHOP.

## To the man who Made me Feel Small

I’M TALKING ABOUT CAR BEEPS THAT MAKE YOU JUMP OUT OF YOUR SKIN, LASCIVIOUS GAWKS FROM BEHIND WINDOWS OF WHITE VANS OR WOLF WHISTLES AND PERVERTED COMMENTS THAT AUTOMATICALLY HANG YOUR HEAD, LOWER YOUR GAZE AND TAKE THE EASE OUT OF YOUR GAIT WHEN WALKING. It’s MOMENTS LIKE WALKING HOME FROM MORRISONS AFTER TEN O’CLOCK AND FINDING OUT A STRANGE MAN I VAGUELY RECOGNISE FROM INSIDE THE STORE HAS PARKED HIS CAR METRES AWAY SO THAT HE COULD INTERCEPT ME AND INSIST ON GIVING ME A RIDE HOME, PICTURES OF HIS DAUGHTER IN HAND.

ACTIVE YET CASUAL INTERVENTIONS IN A WOMAN’S LIFE MAKE HER FEEL GIRLISH AND VULNERABLE. SHE’S BACK IN PIG TAILS AND LACY ANKLE SOCKS AND IS BEING SCOLDED BY HER TEACHER. OR SHE BECOMES A HOUSEWIFE WITH CURLERS IN HER HAIR, REPROACHED FOR LETTING THE DINNER GET COLD.

WHEN RECENTLY WALKING HOME FROM MORRISONS, A NOTICEABLY TALL MAN WHO I VAGUELY RECOGNISED FROM INSIDE THE STORE WAS WALKING TOWARDS ME ON THE SIDE-WALK. AS SOON AS I WALKED PAST, MY CHEST WAS SLIGHTLY LESS TIGHT AND I AUDIBLY RELAXED. I HAD NOTICED HIM LOOKING AT ME AND WAS MENTALLY VERBALISING A PLEA FOR HIM TO RECIPROCATE MY LACK OF EYE CONTACT. TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE. AS SOON AS I PASSED HIM, HE TURNED AROUND AND TOUCHED MY ARM, HIS MOUTH FORMING THE DREADED ‘EXCUSE ME MISS’. HE WALKED NEXT TO ME ALL THE WAY HOME, TELLING ME HE SAW ME WALKING DOWN THE ROAD AND DECIDED TO PARK AS SOON AS HE COULD SO HE COULD MEET ME AND OFFER ME A RIDE HOME- BECAUSE I WAS ‘ATTRACTIVE’ AND I WAS CARRYING HEAVY BAGS.

HE SHOWED ME PICTURES OF HIS DAUGHTER AND SAID I SHARED A NAME WITH HER. I WAS HUMOURING HIM BY ANSWERING HIS QUESTIONS WITH LIES AND, ONLY WHEN I TOLD HIM I HAD A BOYFRIEND (ALTHOUGH PERSISTING) DID HE BEGIN TO TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER.

WHEN I WAS 16, A VAN FOLLOWED ME HOME, SHOUTING INSULTING ‘COMPLIMENTS’ BEFORE I SPED INTO A SHORT CUT TO MY HOUSE. I HURRIED TO THE LIVING ROOM TO KICK MY SHOES OFF AND, HAVING THOUGHT I SAW IT REVERSE AWAY FROM MY DEAD-END STREET, I WAS ALARMED TO SEE THE SAME BLUE VEHICLE TRAILING UP AND DOWN FOR HALF AN HOUR. IT WAS BIZARRE, SO I CURLED UP UNDER A BLANKET MOROSELY, STAYING CLEAR OF THE WINDOW WITH THE IRRATIONAL THOUGHT THAT HE COULD SEE OR SMELL ME, LIKE THE KID CATCHER IN CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG.

## MANIFESTO: WOMEN ARE NOT DAISIES

WE BELIEVE THAT MEN SHOULD TREAT WOMEN WITH THE SAME AMOUNT OF RESPECT AND DECENCY LIKE WE’RE BROUGHT UP TO TREAT THEM. DESPITE THE PROGRESS IN FEMINISM WE BELIEVE THAT THERE IS STILL A LOT LACKING IN TERMS OF BEHAVIOUR TO WOMEN THAT NEEDS TO BE CHANGED.

STEREOTYPES. THEY PERVADE SOCIETY IN THE WAY WE SPEAK. THE WAY WE ACT. THE WAY WE ASSUME.

IT HAS BEEN SHOWN THAT MEN RESPOND MORE KINDLY AND PROMPTLY WHEN TREATED COLDLY BY US, BUT IT SHOULD NOT HAVE TO TAKE A GAME OF DISTANCE AND MYSTERY TO GET MEN TO BE KIND TO US CONSISTENTLY.

MEN ARE ENTITLED WITH THEIR OPINIONS, WITH SOME SEEING THEM AS FACTS WHERE WE ARE NEVER RIGHT; WE DO NOT SEE WHY THIS SHOULD BE THE CASE. YOU SHOULD NOT BE MADE TO FEEL AS THOUGH YOU SHOULD BE QUIET ON YOUR THOUGHTS AND OPINIONS AS IF THEY ARE INVALID, BECAUSE IF MEN AND WOMEN ARE EQUAL THEN OUR OPINIONS SHOULD BE LISTENED TO AS WELL AND NOT SHUT DOWN, DISMISSED AND IGNORED.

WHEN MEN ARE TIRED THAT IS A GOOD ENOUGH REASON FOR THEM TO NOT BE IN THE MOOD FOR CONVERSATION, BUT WHEN WOMEN ARE TIRED AND IN A BAD MOOD WE STILL MAKE SOME EFFORT TO TALK TO PEOPLE WHEN THEY INITIATE CONVERSATION BECAUSE IT’S THE POLITE THING TO DO. NOT SHUTTING DOWN A CONVERSATION AND BEING SHORT DUE TO TIREDNESS. WHERE WE ARE PATIENT, THEY ARE ENTITLED AND IN ACTIONS LIKE THESE TAKE SUPERIORITY – WE BELIEVE WE SHOULD CHALLENGE THIS.

### TAKE ACTION:

-DEMAND TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AS AN EQUAL BEING

-REMIND THEM WHEN THEY ARE BEING CONDESCENDING

-AND IF ALL ELSE FAILS, TREAT THEM LIKE THEY TREAT US

WORDS BY JILL



# MANIFESTO: ONE OF THE BOYS IS DEAD

WE ARE PURSUING THE EVOLUTION OF A MILLENNIAL FEMINIST (OR EGALITARIAN) MOVEMENT. EQUALITY IS IN ITS NATURE A FUNDAMENTAL CONTRIBUTOR TO UTILITARIAN HAPPINESS. HOWEVER, IT IS THE NUANCES OF SUCH AN OVERBEARING MOVEMENT WHICH WE SEEK TO PAY TRIBUTE TO BOTH IN STEADY ACTION AND INTENT.

THE CONCEPT OF TOM BOYS AND GIRLS THAT ARE “NOT LIKE OTHER GIRLS”, AN INNOCENT TROPE RESERVED FOR ‘LIKABLE’ HEROINES AND GIRLS NEXT DOOR, IS ALIVE AND KICKING.

LIKE A WOLF IN SHEEP’S CLOTHING, THIS BREEDS ANIMOSITY BETWEEN FEMINISTS — BETWEEN THOSE WHO SUPPORT WOMEN’S CHOICES TO REMAIN TRUE TO THEMSELVES AS THEY WISH TO BE, AND THOSE WHO BELIEVE WE MUST APPEAR AS ‘SERIOUS’ AS POSSIBLE, DICTATING A MAN’S WORLD WITHIN A WOMAN’S SPHERE OF AUTONOMY.

A PHYSICAL DISPLAY OF TRADITIONALLY “FEMININE” TRAITS REMAINS A COVETED TOOL TO GAIN MALE SEXUAL ATTENTION AND MONEY ESPECIALLY IN POP CULTURE.

“I’M NOT LIKE OTHER GIRLS” — TEENAGE GIRLS TRYING TO DERIVE POWER BY MOVING CLOSER TO MASCULINITY.

SEPARATING THEMSELVES FROM THE STATUS QUO OF WHAT BEING A GIRL, BEING “FEMININE” IS > TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY. IN THIS NEW AGE ERA, IT IS ACCEPTABLE — EVEN ‘COOL’ — TO BE A WOMAN WITH STEREO-TYPICALLY MASCULINE QUALITIES, HOBBIES AND PLEASURES — YOU GET LISTENED TO, NOT LOOKED AT.

BUT, WOMEN DO NOT WANT TO BE IMMEDIATELY STEREOTYPED AS GIRLY, OR “LIKE OTHER GIRLS”.

FEMININITY MEANS SHALLOW, NARCISSISTIC, DECADENT, DITSY, BITCHY, BOY CRAZY... THE LIST DRAGS ON.

BUT ATTRIBUTING SUCH CHARACTERISTICS TO FEMININITY DEVALUES IT, PERPETUATES THE IDEA THAT IT IS WORTHLESS. GIRLS USE THIS AS A REASON NOT TO BEFRIEND OTHER STANDARD GIRLS.

2017: THE TAGLINE “WOMAN” IS GENERALLY BELIEVED TO BE EQUALLY VALUABLE TO THE HISTORICALLY SUPERIOR STATUS OF MAN— AT LEAST ON PAPER ANYWAY. BUT IS THIS ONLY A FORMALITY?

ACCORDING TO THE HUFFINGTON POST, TWO THIRDS OF FEMALE POLITICIANS ARE LITTERED WITH HUMILIATINGLY SEXIST REMARKS CONCERNING THEIR APPEARANCE WHILST POLITICAL FIGURES SUCH AS HILARY CLINTON ARE EXPECTED TO DRESS SMARTLY IN ORDER TO HOLD A FIRM GROUND OF RESPECT AGAINST THEIR MASCULINE COUNTERPARTS. IN OTHER WORDS, TO HIDE ANY TRACE OF THEIR PHYSICALITY UNDER THE LEAST “PROVOCATIVE” (AKA THE DRIEST AND BAGGIEST) PANTSUITS KNOWN TO TAILORS. THE GOAL IS TO APPEAR AS MASCULINE AS POSSIBLE WHILST ALSO ADHERING TO HETERO-NORMATIVITY.

YET, WHEN SHE APPEARED WEARING SCANT MAKEUP ON NATIONAL TELEVISION SHE WAS IRONICALLY RIDICULED FOR NOT KEEPING UP APPEARANCES— IN SUMMARY, WOMEN MUST KEEP UP AN ULTRA DRY, SEX-LESS IMAGE IN ORDER TO HOLD THEIR GROUND. YET, OF COURSE, MUST STILL BE PRESENTABLE AND NOT TOO MASCULINE BECAUSE OUR IMAGE REPRESENTS US, RIGHT?

“I AM THIS” AND “I BELIEVE THIS” ARE NOT THE SAME THING. YOU CANNOT LABEL YOURSELF A FEMINIST YET LOOK DOWN ON CERTAIN WOMEN WHO YOU VIEW AS CONFORMISTS TO HETERO-NORMATIVITY. FEMININITY, BOTH IN MEN AND WOMEN, MALES AND FEMALES ALIKE, IS NOT SOMETHING THAT SHOULD BE SPURNED. IT IS A CHARACTER TRAIT THAT IS LABELLED AS SOMETHING IT ISN’T AND IS VALUABLE UNTO ITSELF.

IF YOU FIND YOURSELF SAYING ‘I’M NOT LIKE OTHER GIRLS’, SIMPLY LOOK FURTHER. YOU ARE SURE TO FIND AN ARRAY OF PEOPLE WHO IDENTIFY AS GIRLS YET ALSO LIKE DOC MARTENS, PIZZA AND FIFA 19. BOTH ANECDOTALLY AND STATISTICALLY, YOU WILL REALISE THAT THE WORLD IS A SMALL PLACE FULL OF CIS-GENDER ‘MASCULINE’ GIRLS WHO CALL THEMSELVES ‘ONE OF THE BOYS’. THEREFORE, YOU’RE NO SPECIAL FLOWER OR RAY OF LIGHT. YOUR UNIQUENESS DOESN’T DRAW FROM THAT.

MASCULINITY DOES NOT MAKE YOU STRONGER. AND IT DOES NOT NECESSARILY MAKE YOU A BOY. THEREFORE ‘ONE OF THE BOYS’, A PHRASE COINED BY HIPSTERS AND BAD FEMINISTS, NEEDS TO DIE ALONG WITH THE SNEERING DERISION WITH WHICH FEMININE PEOPLE ARE REGARDED.

WORDS BY MAYA

IN CONTRAST, THOSE IN TOUCH WITH THEIR EMOTIONAL SENSITIVITY HAVE FELT REWARD AND SATISFACTION (VAN DER GAAG 2014). THE WIDER SOCIETAL HARM OF SUCH TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES BASED ON THE ASSIGNMENT OF MASCULINITY TO MEN AND FEMININITY TO FEMALES ALSO LEADS TO UNJUST DISCRIMINATION AGAINST MEN.

MEN ARE INEXTRICABLY TIED UP IN THE IMPACTS OF PATRIARCHY AND WOULD GREATLY, IF NOT EQUALLY, BENEFIT FROM FEMINIST ACTIVISM THAT SUBVERTS TRADITIONAL GENDER TROPES ALONGSIDE WOMEN.

FEMINIST CONCERNS AND ARGUMENTS AGAINST MALE INCLUSION:

THE UNCONSCIOUS BIAS PRESENT IN MOST INDIVIDUALS MEANS THAT MEN LACK STRONG INCENTIVES TO SPREAD FEMINIST KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTAND GENDERED POWER RELATIONS DEEPLY. WHILE WOMEN’S DISCOURSE IS NOT SECURED AS FEMINIST IN VIRTUE OF THEIR GENDER, THE REALITY OF THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCE AS OBJECTS OF OPPRESSION IS POLITICALLY NEGOTIABLE (JARDINE AND SMITH 1987) IN A WAY A MAN’S DISCOURSE IS NOT.

ARGUABLY, MEN’S STATUS OF LACKING DIRECT EXPERIENCE MAKES MALE FEMINIST DISCOURSE A REFLECTION OF DOMINATION AND “SOCIAL MALENESS”. EVEN MALE FEMINIST ACADEMICS HAVE A LIMITED CONCEPTION OF THE MOST DEMANDING ASPECTS OF FEMINISM AS THEY LACK INSIGHTFUL KNOWLEDGE OF THE REALITY OF PATRIARCHAL HARMS, AND EVEN THE PATRIARCHAL ELEMENTS IN A WOMAN’S SELF UNDERSTANDING, THAT ARE INTEGRATED INTO KEY FEMINIST KNOWLEDGE AND ANALYSIS.

UNDER-PRIVILEGED MEN:

NEVERTHELESS, NOT ALL WHO FALL UNDER THE CATEGORY ‘MEN’ HAVE EQUAL PRIVILEGE TO THAT OF A STRAIGHT, CISGENDER, MIDDLE CLASS WHITE MAN.

THE VIEW THAT MEN’S RELATION TO FEMINISM IS IMPOSSIBLE POLITICALLY (JARDINE AND SMITH 1987) IS REDUCTIONIST AS NOT ALL MEN ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ‘OPPRESSOR GROUP’ AND ARE IN FACT VICTIMS OF INSTITUTIONAL OPPRESSION THEMSELVES. THIS IS DUE TO HOMOPHOBIC, TRANSPHOBIC OR RACIALIZED DISCRIMINATION THAT CLOSELY ALIGNS WITH THE OVERRIDING AIM OF FEMINISM: EQUALITY AND THE DISMANTLEMENT OF OPPRESSION.

THE PATRIARCHY SHOULD NOT BE EQUATED WITH ‘MEN’. IT IS A MALE PRIVILEGED AND DOMINATED SOCIETY THAT BOTH GENDERS PARTICIPATE IN WHICH CENTRES AROUND CONTROL AND FEMALE OPPRESSION (VAN DER GAAG 2014).

IT THEREFORE ALSO EFFECTS MEN OUTSIDE THE SPHERE OF TRADITIONAL MALE PRIVILEGE. FOR EXAMPLE, LGBTI ISSUES THAT AFFECT GAY AND TRANS MEN ARE INTERLINKED WITH THE SAME NOTIONS OF MASCULINITY THAT ALSO EFFECT WOMEN. THEY ARE VIEWED AS MORE NATURALLY ‘FEMININE’, EITHER IN SEXUALITY, CHARACTER OR BODY, AND ARE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT, EVEN IN THE WESTERN WORLD.

IT IS LIMITING TO CONFINE ALL MEN SOLELY TO THE PRIVILEGED ROLE OF OPPRESSOR. HOWEVER, FEMINISM SHOULD BE MOST FOCUSED ON TACKLING WOMEN’S ISSUES AND INCLUDING MALE FEMINISM COULD DETRACT FROM THIS.

WORDS BY MAYA

READ MORE AT: [HTTPS://MYGODDESSCOMPLEX.COM/2018/04/06/CAN-MEN-REALLY-BE-FEMINISTS/](https://mygoddesscomplex.com/2018/04/06/can-men-really-be-feminists/)



# Can Men Really be Feminists?

ALTHOUGH MANY MAY LITTER ME WITH OBJECTIONS, I WOULD LIKE TO OPERATE ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT FEMINISM IS A STAND-IN WORD FOR ‘EGALITARIANISM’ – BUT WITH A MORE FOCUSED APPEAL TO GENDER INEQUALITY, WHICH IS WHAT GIVES IT IT’S LINGUISTICALLY CONTROVERSIAL POWER.

OLDER FEMINISTS ARGUE THAT MEN ARE NOT ABLE TO BE FEMINISTS BECAUSE THEY REPRESENT A FACE OF PRIVILEGE AND OPPRESSION. HOWEVER, I ARGUE THAT THIS IGNORES THE FUNDAMENTAL ROLE MEN PLAY IN ACHIEVING THE EQUALITY AT THE HEART OF FEMINISM.

IF ONE’S FOCUS OF FEMINISM IS ON ACHIEVING EQUALITY AND FIGHTING OPPRESSION, THEN MEN SHOULD BE CONSIDERED ‘FEMINISTS’. THE KEY REASON MEN CAN AND OUGHT TO BE FEMINISTS IS DUE TO THE DIRECT BENEFITS ON SOCIETAL PERCEPTIONS OF MASCULINITY AS WELL AS ON THEIR OWN LIVES WHICH THEIR ADVOCACY OF THE MOVEMENT WILL BRING; THE PATRIARCHY IS DAMAGING TO BOTH GENDERS. ISSUES SUCH AS REDUCTIONISM IN EXCLUDING MEN FROM FEMINISM NEED TO BE BROUGHT TO LIGHT BECAUSE UNDER-PRIVILEGED GROUPS OF MEN FACE A FORM OF OPPRESSION CLOSELY LINKED WITH FEMALE OPPRESSION WHICH MEANS THAT BEING A WOMAN IS NOT REQUIRED TO FACE A SIMILAR OPPRESSION THAT CAN BE TARGETED BY FEMINISM.

HOWEVER, LIVED EXPERIENCE IS ALSO AN IMPORTANT FACTOR FOR FEMINISM. PERHAPS, WE SHOULD QUESTION WHETHER ONE MUST BE A ‘WOMAN’ IN SOME SENSE IN ORDER TO LABEL THEMSELVES AS A FEMINIST. WHAT TROUBLES ME SO IS THAT COMPLETE MALE INCLUSION WITHIN THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT COULD TAKE UP THE POLITICAL SPACE NEEDED TO MAKE WOMEN’S VOICES HEARD.

## HOW FEMINISM BENEFITS AND IS IMPORTANT TO MEN:

IN THE MODERN DAY, IT IS EASIER AND EVEN ENCOURAGED FOR WOMEN TO ACCESS THE MALE WORLD, SUPERFICIALLY THROUGH CLOTHING AS WELL AS TRADITIONALLY MASCULINE CHARACTER TRAITS, THAN IT IS FOR HER MALE COUNTERPART WHO IS INDOCTRINATED, ALONG WITH WOMEN, TO ACCEPT THE SUPERIORITY OF THE MASCULINE ‘IDEAL’.

MALES WHO DO NOT CONFORM TO GENDER NORMS AND ACT NOTICEABLY ‘FEMININE’ OR ‘ANDROGYNOUS’ ARE OFTEN SHAMED SOCIETALLY THROUGH THE ‘REAL BOYS DON’T CRY’ ATTITUDE (VAN DER GAAG 2014) WHICH STIPULATES NOTIONS OF TOUGHNESS AND DETACHMENT THAT COME WITH THE EXPECTATIONS OF MAINTAINING THE ROLE OF PROVIDER AND PROTECTOR.

SEXISM THEREFORE RESULTS IN PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EVEN PHYSICAL IMPACTS ON BOTH MEN WHO SUBVERT SUCH ASPECTS OF DOMINANCE, SUCH AS STAY AT HOME FATHERS WHO ARE MADE TO FEEL EMASCULATED, AS WELL AS TYPICALLY ‘TRADITIONAL’ MEN WHO MAINTAIN A STRICTLY MASCULINE FAÇADE. IN THE LATTER CASE, THE ABILITY TO SEEK EMOTIONAL AND EVEN MEDICAL SUPPORT, EMBRACE FATHERHOOD OR CONNECT WITH PARTNERS IS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPAIRED DUE TO THE PERVASIVE TOXIC MASCULINITY THAT MEN ARE ENCOURAGED TO HARBOUR.

# Femininity is Not a Weakness

EGALITARIANISM. FEMINISM. HUMANISM. COMMON-SENSE. WHATEVER LABEL YOU BRAND YOURSELF WITH, IT SIMPLY ACTS AS A VEIL FOR YOUR DOGMAS. YOU CANNOT CLAIM TO ENDORSE GENDER EQUALITY YET BE CYNICAL ABOUT FEMININITY. SUCH STATED IDEOLOGIES OFTEN ACT AS TOOLS TO ENDORSE IGNORANCE AS ONE SCREAMS ‘POLITICAL CORRECTNESS’ INTO THE SYNTHETIC ABYSS OF PC CULTURE.

FEMININITY IS CHERISHED BUT, SIMULTANEOUSLY, IS EASILY DISMISSED. LIKE SEX, BEING FEMININE SELLS BUT IS RARELY TAKEN SERIOUSLY FARTHER THAN MEETS THE EYE. EXAGGERATED CURVES, POUTY LIPS, RAPUNZEL-ESQUE (AND LIKELY ARTIFICIAL) HAIR IS COVETED BY THE MEDIA IN HOPES OF DRAWING IN VIEWERS LIKE MOTHS TO A FLAME. THUS, YOUNG GIRLS ARE SOCIALLY CONDITIONED TO MOULD THEIR APPEARANCE INTO SOME CONSTRUCTION OF THE ‘FEMININE IDEAL’ WHICH MODELS, ACTRESSES, KARDASHIANS AND NOW ‘INSTAGRAM GIRLS’ SHOVE DOWN OUR THROATS DAILY.

FASHION, FACETUNE AND FILTERS MENTALLY STIMULATE US TO ASSOCIATE THE FEMININE WITH THE BEAUTIFUL. HOWEVER, DIFFERENT CONTEXTS PRODUCE DIFFERENT REACTIONS.

IN 2017 THE TAGLINE ‘WOMAN’ IS GENERALLY BELIEVED TO BE EQUALLY VALUABLE TO THE HISTORICALLY SUPERIOR STATUS OF MAN- AT LEAST ON PAPER ANYWAY. BUT IS THIS ONLY A FORMALITY?

ACCORDING TO THE HUFFINGTON POST, TWO THIRDS OF FEMALE POLITICIANS ARE LITTERED WITH HUMILIATINGLY SEXIST REMARKS CONCERNING THEIR APPEARANCE WHILST POLITICAL FIGURES SUCH AS HILARY CLINTON ARE EXPECTED TO DRESS SMARTLY IN ORDER TO HOLD A FIRM GROUND OF RESPECT AGAINST THEIR MASCULINE COUNTERPARTS. IN OTHER WORDS, TO HIDE ANY TRACE OF THEIR PHYSICALITY UNDER THE LEAST ‘PROVOCATIVE’ (AKA THE DRIEST AND BAGGIEST) PANTSUITS KNOWN TO TAILORS. THE GOAL IS TO APPEAR AS MASCULINE AS POSSIBLE WHILST ALSO ADHERING TO HETERO-NORMATIVITY.

YET, WHEN SHE APPEARED WEARING SCANT MAKEUP ON NATIONAL TELEVISION SHE WAS IRONICALLY RIDICULED FOR NOT KEEPING UP APPEARANCES- IN SUMMARY, WOMEN MUST KEEP UP AN ULTRA DRY, SEX-LESS IMAGE IN ORDER TO HOLD THEIR GROUND. YET, OF COURSE, MUST STILL BE PRESENTABLE AND NOT TOO MASCULINE BECAUSE OUR IMAGE REPRESENTS US, RIGHT?

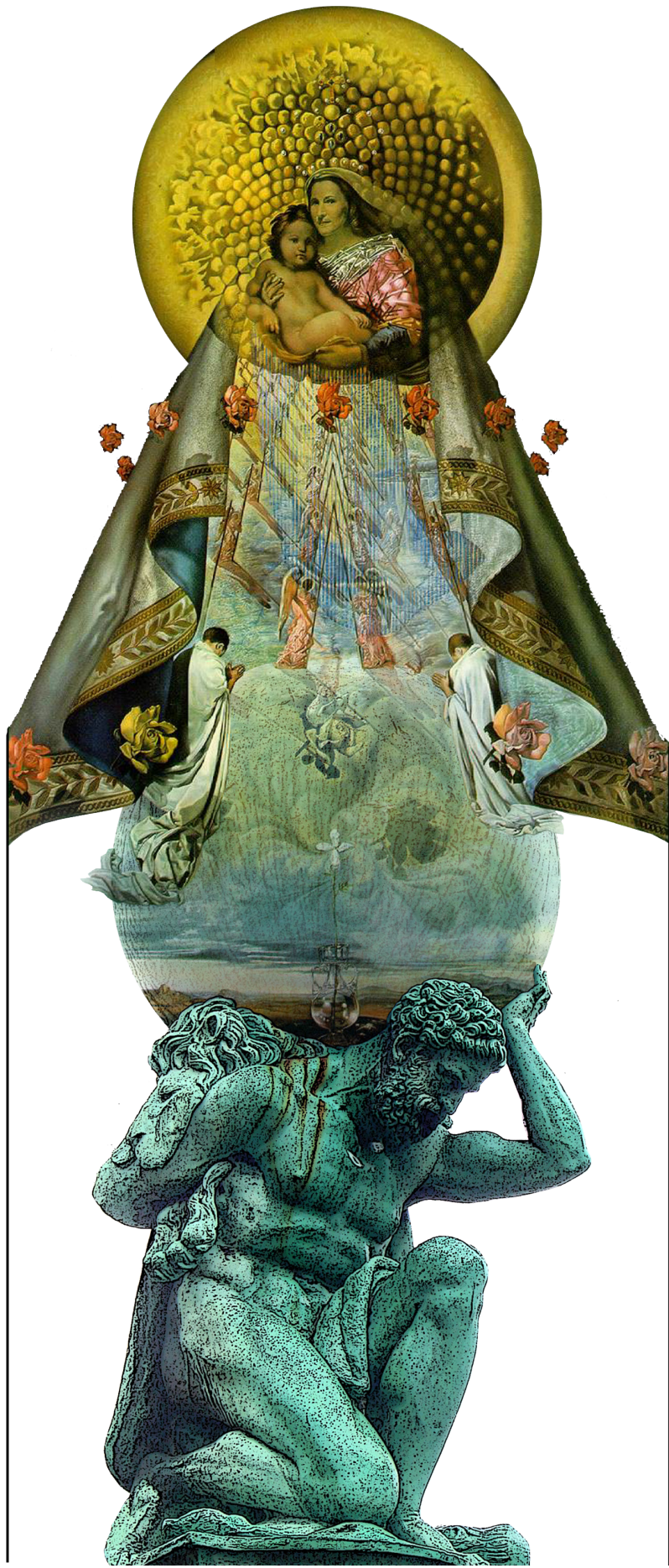
AND, IN THE WRONG CONTEXT, FEMININITY OFFENDS. LET US CAST OUR MINDS BACK TO THE TIME WHEN ANGELINA JOLIE’S NIPPLES GAINED MORE FOCUS THAN HER WORDS AS A UN AMBASSADOR- BOTH AT A CONFERENCE AND A MORE RECENT MEETING WITH THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY. THE FINE LINE BETWEEN BEING SEEN AS VULGAR AND AS QUINTESSENTIALLY POSSESSING FEMININE TRAITS ISN’T JUST BLURRED; IT’S ALREADY BEEN ERASED.

IT SEEMS THAT FEMININITY CONFINES WOMEN TO A LESS RESPECTABLE POSITION. AS A RUN OF THE MILL ‘GIRLY’ GIRL I WAS ONCE TOLD “I DIDN’T KNOW YOU WERE THAT SMART” BY THE CLASS ‘KNOW IT ALL’. AND ON A TRIP TO OXFORD UNIVERSITY, BEING THE FIRST ONE FROM MY GROUP TO ARRIVE, I WAITED IN THE FOYER ALONE ONLY TO HAVE ONE OF THE STAFF, A MIDDLE AGED MAN, LOOK ME UP AND DOWN, FROM MY WAIST LONG HAIR TO MY A LINE SKIRT, AND ASK ME IF I WAS SURE I WAS IN THE RIGHT PLACE- TOPSHOP WAS JUST DOWN THE STREET, COULDN’T I GUESS FROM HIS CONDESCENDING SMIRK?

WORDS BY MAYA

READ MORE AT: [HTTPS://MYGODDESSCOMPLEX.COM/2017/07/03/FEMININITY-IS-NOT-A-WEAKNESS/](https://mygoddesscomplex.com/2017/07/03/femininity-is-not-a-weakness/)





# Sweep the Temple

Peter Page

Illustration: The Virgin of Guadalupe (Dali), Atlas bearing the world.  
Composed by Peter Page

I can only imagine  
how the chaos of the Universe might look  
without sex binding us to Earth.

We, as matter, are in a cycle, unaware,  
observing our civilization  
like an animal observes the wild,  
watching energy surge without source.

Women channel the world into themselves,  
as, for them, God grows from the world;  
God is She whose dominion She carries.

Men discriminate between gravities,  
as, for them, God is master of the world;  
God is He who carries His dominion.

Narcissus found a deathly balance  
between the mirror and the rose.  
Between him and the two poles  
Stand souls at every step,

But on their own, nobody truly KNOWS,  
As we grow from the to and fro;  
As the next step to God is UNITY.

But the Cosmos suggests a UNITY so large  
that we could never understand  
as Atlas stands under Earth.

The epistemic distance stares us in the face.

The knowledge men possess:  
Is the reward for achieving power,  
Is a reflection of the world they master,

and from a bigger world, a bigger God may grow.

Growth is knowledge consuming us.

By this assembly of order,  
the path to our little God is paved.

Just so, in a world too dense to navigate,  
the collective corpus knows when to kill itself off.

All conflicting sects  
build towards the perfect orgasm;  
the divine conception.

We are animal slaves; reality is cruel.  
Time, also, is unbearably cruel;  
that we cannot immortalize The Moment,  
that is true cruelty.

Unless all of time is a single movement,  
The Cosmic Moment, immortalized  
As a cycle we build ourselves upon.

Suffering teaches simplicity as truth,  
failure is replaced with success,  
and thus people are encoded,  
and thus the world is deflected.

The quest for total dominion  
is to see and reflect through every mirror of reality,  
And to plant a seed in every temple.

I believe you could judge every person  
by this standard of truth,  
and find them where they are lost  
beneath the ocean of this world.

