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The Public vs. The Private

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Alice Roberson

Popple

WGST 304-Feminist Theory

Personal/Reflective Prose

The Public vs. The Private

The Public vs. The Private

Thesis: I am trying my best; Everyone is trying their best, so everyone deserves to be loved accordingly. Also, I really do not know anything.

What I've done is an exercise in Queer Theory. I took some time, thought about feminism, and figured out what meant the most to me. The first poem is a response to Betty Friedan, and *The Feminine Mystique*. I was going to write a response to *The Combahee River Collective*, but I realised that Friedan's writing had more of an influence on my life, and I had a much stronger response to it as a whole. The second poem is a response to the book that made me a feminist, *Beauty Queens* by Libba Bray. I read it as a teenager, and it was the first book that made me realise that something is not right in the world. It also made me think about how I, as a teenage girl and person of color was represented in the media. The title is a quote from that book that is so true on so many levels, and has really changed my life. The next poem is a critique of the second poem after I thought about it for awhile and changed my mind. I titled it after a quote from *Ex Machina* that spoke to me for a reason that I'm still not sure of. It's a response to the media and is more of a critique on criticism than an actual argument. I think it's a nice break from all the poems, and more importantly it's something that's very important to me. This is more of a post-modern piece, I drew a lot from Vance, *Pleasure and Danger: Towards a Politics of Sexuality*. I ended with a short poem that takes a lot from Simone de Beauvoir's work, *The Second Sex*. This final piece is a more successful summary of my generalised theory of feminism which works mainly on a personal level. de Beauvoir's writing is the one that came closest to my personal ideology which is why I paraphrased some of her writing. I chose to do a more emotions based

sentimental style of writing, because I believe that writing is merely words on page, it's what we do with it that matters. By directly quoting writer's I remove it from the context they meant it to be in, and claim to understand it on a level I have no way of knowing that I do. They have done their best to write their thoughts and opinions, but times have changed, and my mind is not the same as theirs, and I do not presume to speak for them nor will I take their words to further my own points. Instead, I have merely given context to my writing citing sources that I have read and who has inspired me. Thus if I have completely misunderstood their work I will not use their words to speak against them. For their truth is not the same as mine and my truth can only be explained through my words which merely lie in the shadows of theirs. (Scott, *Deconstructing Equality-vs-Difference: or, The Use Poststructuralist Theory for Feminism*) That being said I used two quotes to title my work, because these quotes have spoken to my very soul. I have removed them from my writing, and only cite them as sources on an emotional level rather than an ideological level which is how I was inspired by feminist writings.

A Feminine Mystique

a feminine mystique,

Not "The" Feminine Mystique

With a Capital T, F, and M

Because that assumes that this problem buried

Deep

Deep

DEEP

Inside my heart,

is also buried in yours

and her's, and her's, and theirs

and I could never presume

or rather assume, that my heart is universal

cough Betty Friedan *cough*

And so I begin again,

a feminine mystique,

my feminine mystique

The mystery not mentioned

The secret longing that tortures

every fraction of my earthly existence

Is love.

I love, love

More than my politics

More than my privacy

I love, love

All facets, and forms

But I am a feminist.

I know that my love of love

is a silly, sentimental séance

to a ghost of a simpler time

Now we have real reality

Like heroin overdoses and gun fights

Because we all know what those are like!

They happen everyday.

They happen everyday, but true love is a fiction

A little fiction told to little girls,

Who aspire to marriage, but don't expect love.

Don't expect happiness

That white picket fence is only there to trap you

Those 2.5 Children are a gun pointed into your brain

When you are 40 you are old, and your husband will leave you

and it serves you right,

Because he is the one having a crisis.

So stick with casual sex because if he is never here

he will never leave you.

And in this day and age

Who doesn't have abandonment issues.

Fuck that shit.

And do not pardon my French

I am not speaking in French,

I am cursing in English.

Fuck. That. Shit.

And fuck you Betty Friedan

For speaking for an entire

half of the population

Fuck you for removing love

from the marriage conversation.

Fuck you for removing love

from the feminist conversation.

I understand your pain.

I understand your loneliness

But it is not mine.

Fuck you for claiming to tell my story.

The seeds of your discontent

Have been sown across generations

And what has grown is not love.

I do not think you are wrong.

Just wrong for me.

"They Make It So Difficult For Us To Love Ourselves"

we are brown. our skin is not pale or creamy

we don't giggle or flutter or float

we saunter solidly, side-eyeing death

we are sexiled to sidekick

sidelined for aesthetic

short, but never small, we slap five at your success!

cuz' ours is not that genre of story.

we are not blonde and beautiful

or darkened by dignity

we would be, if we could be,

but we can't, so we won't

or at least that's what we've been told.

they've said our love is not picturesque

our silhouettes are not sultry sunset scenes.

our shadows are full of shapeless visions of sadness
and themes of tragedy
cuz' ours is not that genre of story.

we might stay inside where it's safe
singing hymns as the sky falls
patiently waiting.
cuz' corners can contain catcalls and killers,
and who are we but nameless extras and faceless
but that's not our genre of story either.

Who are We?

we are the "little helpers" to your heroines
a moment of sweet release for your heroes
we are too wise to woo peaceably
and too silly for your sorrows
We interrupt your confession of adoration
to bring you fart jokes and a sky full of stars.
you cannot sell our sexuality
we've already traded it for a thousand and one tales

and a chance at love

Because ours will never be that genre of story.

A Response to the Previous Poem:

"Fuck [It] I'm Real"

I know I'm not your type

but I've been typecasted into this role

of an unloved manic pixie dream girl

except i'm not the stuff of dreams or nightmares

I'm borne of that moment of paralyzed panic

between waking and sleeping

A dream within a dream

Frighteningly Beautiful and Startlingly Real

I am better than your reality.

"I'm coming soon to a mirror near you!"

cos my life isn't found in movies

and I'd rather cum once than not cum at all

and yes I spelled cum with a "u"

cuz "u" can't handle my truth

u can't handle my truth, but you delight in my lies

my scars run too deep to be airbrushed out

no photoshop could disguise these roles.

My thighs may stick together, but that's what sets me apart.

This is why I love me.

Tom, Dick, and Harry Talk About Their Lives: A Short Skit

Tom: Let's Talk About Boobs

Dick: Melons!

Harry: Tits!

Dick: Tittys!

Tom: Mammary Glands!

[An Awkward Pause]

Dick: Yeah... Let's talk! Mano y mano, Man to Man, because as we all know, it's our opinion that counts!

Tom: Let's talk about breastfeeding in public

Harry: Eeewww so gross

Dick: A dirty habit that needs to stop!

Tom: I mean, I'm not allowed to take my dick out at Subway, and who wouldn't want to see my footlong!?

[Nods all around, scattered applause, "footlong? more like 6 inches"]

Harry: If you're gonna pull out your tits in public, then I reserve the right to pull out my cock and rub one out to your tasty dishes[feel free to do this]

Harry: I mean no one even likes breast milk! Do you know what everyone does like? A good old-fashioned cumshot. I'm sure it's nutritious and my wife says it tastes great! Babies should switch to cum!

Tom: Semen the other white drink!

Dick: Cos We All Know What Boobs Are Really For

All: Sex!

Tom: Motorboating

Harry: Tit Fucking

Tom: Nipple Flicking

All: SEX!

Dick:The bigger The Better!

Harry: As long as they're perky.

Dick: I love it when they jiggle

Harry:Makes it easier to objectify them

Tom: And if I have a daughter

Dick: Though sons are better

All: Men!

Tom: I will tell her to put those things away!

Dick: Not just when she's in public!

Tom: But around the house too!

Dick: Because I'm a man!

All: MEN!

Harry: And I'd hate to be forced to ogle her little 12 year old tits

Tom: Because that's just what men do!

Dick: I mean she can't just leave those things flapping in the wind!

Tom: Someone might see them!

Harry: You never know where the perverts are lurking!

Dick: Men who aren't as kind

Harry: Considerate

Dick: And chivalrous as we are!

Harry: The moral fabric of our society is collapsing

Tom: Women are breastfeeding in public!

Harry: Where our hypothetical daughters might see them!

Tom: And breasts are inappropriate for children!

Harry: Breasts are meant for feeding babies!

Tom: Boobs are meant for men to have sex with!

Dick: Tits are for everyone except the women who have them

Women: Curtain

An Acceptance

I am a person.

My identity is my own to decide and create and discover

Except I am a person.

Except I have a colour, and sex, and hair

Except, What about me?

Accept that I am a person

Accept that I have a colour, and sex, and hair.

Accept Me.

Whoever that is.

The me not necessarily beneath those outer accessories

But the one who is either made up of or contains these aspects

I haven't decided.

I don't know if it's a decision

I just Know that I am learning

And growing and making mistakes

So, Look Past my breasts

And see my heart.

I am not an Other

I am not the Them

In the Us vs. Them Debate

I am Just Me

and that makes me one of you

One of Us.

Accept We are all just doing our best.

Works Cited

Kolmar, Wendy K., 1950- and Bartkowski, Frances, 1948- *Feminist theory : a reader* (4th ed). New York
McGraw-Hill Higher Education, 2013.

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