

Educational Letters to a Young Playboy:
A Feminist Critique and Sympathetic Analysis of the Mind, the Soul, the Body
An Apology to Men
An Apology to Women
A Plea to Both

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Somewhere along the long path of civilization, humanity became confused. In our recognition of the human body as a crucial element of our existence, we looked at men and became impressed by their immense physical strength. Our eyes wandered, and as they fell on women, we became awed by their beauty. Our impressions were not misguided or mistaken, but somewhere along that path a pebble or a wayward branch got in our way and we tripped. We determined that physical strength was more important than mental or spiritual strength, and we concluded that remarkable beauty precluded one from veritable mental capacity. For centuries upon centuries, the female became associated with the weak and the incompetent. Her beauty was rightly regarded, but her intellect and wisdom was discarded as nonexistent and mythical. Biology wasn't the one deeming her inferior; it was the civilized who became the culpable.

Most young adults view the subjugation of women as a quirk of olden times, but it hasn't even been a century since women received the right to vote; furthermore, the feminine side of society didn't dare to really fight for their voice until the 1960's and the 1970's. But our memories are short. We've forgotten about the time we were voiceless, and for those of us who do remember, we attempt to make sure we're never silenced again by shouting out in anger and blame, diligent in our revival of the crimes done against us in the past and still perpetrated on us today. Humanity has finally steadied its gait on the path toward enlightenment, but we've come across yet another gap in the cobblestone we must fight to leap over lest we risk falling into an oblivion of restless aggression and compliant ignorance.

Somewhere along the path toward restoration, we let our anger overrule our reason. In our fight to restore the value of the feminine we've begun to attack the worth of the masculine. Biology, in its creation of the feminine and the masculine, never meant to create inequality out of difference. The two identities were meant to complement each other and coincide in harmony and

balance. Elevating the feminine should never result in disparaging the masculine. In the twenty-first century, in the fight for political correctness and professional equality, we've forgotten that equality is not equated with exactitude. It was men who ultimately recognized that their lives were left wanting when women were not educated and given their due respect. It is time that women recognize the value of their sexual counterpart of their human race. We should have never made the mistake of painting women as lesser creatures simply because they are different from men, and we can't make that same mistake now by suggesting that men are inferior beings simply because they are different from women. In order for the human race to ultimately cross the threshold into enlightenment, we must learn to equally value the contrasting elements of both the masculine and the feminine.

When we think of feminism today, the most ignorant of us conjure images of the male-bashing, the angry, and the easily-offended. The most educated of us, although understanding of the vast context and definition of the term, still mostly associate the term with the names of famous female activists and leaders who fought for the feminine cause. Yet the reality remains that, without invaluable male voices, the sacred rights granted to both women and men today would never have been possible. Perhaps the women were the ones fighting their hardest to change the minds of men, but it was the changing of those male minds that ultimately led to revolution. Considering the negligence contemporary society often unfairly bestows toward the male feminist voices of history, I rhetorically analyze three texts written by three generations of prominent historical male figures through the method of feminist criticism. By exploring the power and relevance of language and metaphor in *The Education of Women* by Daniel Defoe, the seventh letter in *Letters to a Young Poet* by Rainer Maria Rilke, and the first installment of "The

Playboy Philosophy” by Hugh Hefner, I hope to pay homage to and shed light on the power of the masculine feminist.

Description of Artifacts

The Essay

Defoe, Rilke, and Hefner were all rebels of their time, refusing to adopt ideologies they didn't personally support for the sake of convention. Daniel Defoe, however, was known as a very particular type of nonconformist. In the 1600's, a Nonconformist, or Dissenter, was a name given to those who refused to conform to the authorized formularies and rites of the Established Church of England (Smith, 1911). Moreover, Dissenters wanted to reform the Church from within, arguing for the abandonment of monarchical decrees and returning to biblical principles (Manus, 1995). Born in 1660 to a London butcher and Dissenter, Defoe was educated at a Dissenter's academy, Newington Green, under the Reverend Charles Morton, who would later become the first vice president of Harvard College. Defoe had plans for the Presbyterian ministry, but instead he found himself in a series of various roles and professions, from poverty to fame and back again (Daniel Defoe, 2011).

Perhaps best known for writing *Robin Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders* and as one of the founders of the English novel, Defoe did not become a novelist until later in life. In 1683, he set himself up as a merchant. Despite success at home and abroad, Defoe was perpetually plagued by bankruptcy and poverty throughout his life. In 1684, he married the daughter of a wealthy Dissenting merchant, with whom he conceived eight children and remained married to for 47 years. Engaged in politics, both domestic and foreign, Defoe spent his early years writing several politically-charged essays and pamphlets. *An Essay Upon Projects*, published anonymously in

1697, was one of Defoe's first publications. Consisting of a series of proposals for economic and social improvements, one essay in this compilation stands out more than others.

In a time when only the female elite were granted any form of education, a form mostly aimed at achieving the social grace and domestic propriety needed in order to maintain suitable companionship to a husband, Dissenters were the major advocates for a more pervasive education. In *An Academy for Women*, most commonly referred to as *The Education of Women*, Defoe asked a bold question: "What has the woman done to forfeit the privilege of being taught?" Nearly two hundred years later, Rainer Maria Rilke was no less bold in his answer.

The Letters

Over two centuries after the birth of Defoe, the fame of the German poet Rilke began to spread across the world. Hyper sensitive and highly gifted, Rilke suffered as a child when his parents sent him to military school. By the time he enrolled in Charles University in Prague, he had already published his first volume of poetry. From there, Rilke spent the next twenty years of his life travelling throughout Europe, his experiences in each country made evident in his poetry (Rainer 2011).

In the early 1900's, it was not uncommon for young people to write letters to Rilke, feeling he might be able to offer personal advice and insight into their lives based on what they had read in his poetry. In 1902, one young person in particular struck a special note with Rilke. Franz Kappus was a nineteen-year-old aspiring poet and student at a military academy in Vienna. Kappus was preparing to become an officer, and his hesitation and qualms about this prospect was one of the many issues with which he approached Rilke. Considering the deep and traumatic experiences he himself had as a military student, Rilke wrote his first response as an honest critique of a poem which Kappus had sent him. Over the next seven years, however, Rilke's

advice focused less on literary commentary and instead provided insights into God, love, sex and virginity, nature, and life (Harvard University Press, 2011).

Kappus eventually compiled the ten letters he received from Rilke into a single volume, the book we now know today as *Letters to a Young Poet*. In May of 1904, while he was in Rome, Rilke wrote his seventh letter to Kappus, pages filled with insights into the most difficult subject of all their discussions: love. As Rilke explores the human love relationship and the present day flaws within the simple design, he provides that love will become more whole and fluid when women are no longer seen as masculine counterparts, but as equal human beings (Norton, 1993).

Daniel Defoe was one of the first male voices we heard in the modern world that dared to condemn society for wrongly denying women education. Rainer Maria Rilke gently, simply and clearly stated that romantic love would not reach its potential until women were recognized as individual beings. Centuries after Defoe and over fifty years after Rilke, Hugh Hefner stood out as a rebel and a villain when he chose to recognize and exalt the beauty of women and the sexuality of humankind.

The Philosophy

Raised in a strict religious home with rules which prohibited drinking, smoking, swearing, and attending movies on Sunday, Hefner developed into an artistic introvert, as deprived of entertainment and sex as an enlisted man trapped in the trenches of war. In the years following his 1944 high school graduation, Hefner would go on to work as a military clerk, obtain a psychology degree from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, marry his high school sweetheart, and work as a copywriter for *Esquire* magazine. In 1952, however, Hefner quit his job, his marriage, and a certain way of living.

Although Hefner left his job at *Esquire*, he recognized the success with which the magazine had turned sophisticated hedonism into the social ideal; he stepped onto the foundation *Esquire* had laid and built a mansion by including photos of nude women in his own magazine. With the help of freelance art director, Art Paul, Hefner worked odd jobs by day to support himself and spent long hours at night working on the magazine in the kitchen of his small Chicago apartment. Finally, in November of 1953, with the addition of a famous nude picture of Marilyn Monroe he purchased for \$200 from The Calendar Company, a few cartoons, jokes, and literary pieces, Hugh M. Hefner went to the press with the first issue of *Playboy* magazine. He sold 55,000 copies at fifty cents each, signaling the crowing birth of an empire (Heller, 2000).

Responding to years of criticism from critics who chose to focus on only a part of the magazine, Hefner decided to release a series of manifestos titled “The *Playboy* Philosophy” in 1962. In the first installment, Hefner addressed the flaws in society’s approach to sex and the umbrage taken with viewing women as sexy; moreover, he focused on the concept that a man is free to choose his own identity rather than suffer under the one society imposes upon him, a position as crucial to a man as it is to a woman.

Method

Feminism has myriad definitions and various subdivisions. Its ultimate goal is centered on the extension of equality to all human beings regardless of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation or other facets used as tools for segregation and discrimination by mainstream culture.

The first wave of feminism took place in the United States from the middle of the nineteenth century through 1920 and was centered on women’s suffrage. Second-wave feminism began in 1963 and carried on through the 1980’s; eleven primary types of feminists burgeoned from this era. Liberal feminists work to extend the rights of men to women; radical feminists aim

to transform social contexts; Marxist feminists associate female oppression with economic structure and lesbian feminists view heterosexuality as the cornerstone of male supremacy. Beyond these common types of feminism broader, more specific forms exist. Cultural feminists believe that gender roles are shaped by culture; revalorists are dedicated to upholding traditional feminine skills and activities; essentialists believe that biology determines destiny so thus biology determines gender roles; womanists are women of color who combine race and gender issues and ecofeminists link the destruction of the environment, which they consider to be female, with the oppression of women.

Third-wave feminists were born after 1960 and did not have to endure many of the oppressive circumstances which second-wave feminists faced; this era began in the 1980's and aims to include men and women of diverse backgrounds into the exclusive group of quality. Third-world feminists, who associate racial exclusion with gender oppression, postfeminists, who suggest that feminism is no longer necessary, and power feminists, who believe that constructing women as victims does not empower women, all come from third-wave feminism (Foss, 2004).

Despite the various types of feminism and differing ideologies behind it, many people, especially today, view feminism as anti-men. Adult film star Nina Hartley has her own views on perhaps the most common types of feminism, radical and classical liberal:

I'm a feminist and some of my ideas are radical, but I'm not a "radical feminist," which occupies its own subdivision of feminist thought. Radical feminists, for all their bloviating and over-intellectualizing about it, really, really just don't like men. Period. Their philosophy boils down to "Men bad. Women good." I reject that notion categorically. Unfortunately, the "men bad, women good" meme has taken hold in the public consciousness and people now think that feminists don't like sex or men, which is bunk.

I'm more a classical liberal feminist: equal pay for equal work, on-site day care, single-payer health coverage, equal opportunity through skills and aptitude instead of gender, generous maternity and paternity leave, and the like. I believe that men and women are both victimized by the patriarchal culture, just in different ways, by different means, for different reasons, and with different results. (Shaffer, 2010)

Though it has garnered much controversy and offers multiple viewpoints, feminism, in its many forms, was ultimately born out of all the men and woman who fought tirelessly to extend equality and dignity from one narrowly-defined group of people to a wider, more diverse audience. As feminism has blossomed into adulthood, it has, in turn, given birth to various disciplines and sub-contexts; one of these offspring goes by the name of feminist criticism. Like feminism itself, feminist criticism has been cultivated by numerous scholars and critics until it has developed into the method utilized today; three essays in particular significantly impacted the birth of feminist criticism:

Karyln Kohrs Campbell's essay "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation," published in 1973, is an analysis of the contemporary women's movement ... [which] constitutes a unique rhetorical genre. Campbell's essay was followed in 1974 in an essay by Cherris Kramarae titled "Women's Speech: Separate but Unequal?" In this essay, Kramarae raised the possibility of "systems co-occurring, sex-linked, linguistic signals" that point to linguistic sex differences between women and men. Sally Miller Gearheart's "The Womanization of Rhetoric," published in 1979, challenged a fundamental tenet of rhetorical theory --- the definition of rhetoric as persuasion. She indicted this definition on the grounds that any intent to persuade is an act of violence and proposed instead a female

model of communication as an antidote to the violence that characterizes life on planet earth. (Foss, 2004, pp. 154-155)

These essays have each had an indelible impact on feminist criticism, now defined as “the analysis of rhetoric to discover how the rhetorical construction of gender is used as a means for domination and how that process can be challenged so that all people understand that they have the capacity to claim agency and act in the world as they choose” (Foss, 2004, p. 155). The method involves two basic procedures: analyzing the construction of gender, which entails discovering what the chosen artifact presents as standard gender roles, how the artifact positions its audience, and determining if the artifact depicts various choices open to men and women in terms of their standpoints. After analyzing the construction of gender, the critic must determine whether this construction either supports or challenges the ideals of hegemony (Foss, 2004, pp. 158-159).

Analysis

In almost every text written on the evolution and revolution of feminism, from the first wave to the imminent ripples, we find the names of brave women who dared to speak out against oppression, misunderstanding, and silence. And yet, among those brave voices, we fail to recognize the deeper tenors who shouted alongside their female counterparts. We have not paid proper due to the male arguments, the ones asserted as early as the dawn of the eighteenth century and those who have yet to reach a century in age. In the following pages, I analyze the construction of gender, position of audience, options available to audience, and levels of hegemony found within *The Education of Women*, *Letters to a Young Poet*, and “*The Playboy Philosophy*.”

Construction of Gender: First, an Education

In *The Education of Women*, Defoe speaks of gender primarily in terms of nature. The reader gets the idea that men and women both are barbarous creatures, their character and personality completely dependent upon their level of breeding and civilization. The very first sentence addresses barbarism versus civilization: “I have often thought of it as one of the most barbarous customs in the world, considering us as a civilized and a Christian country, that we deny the advantages of learning to a woman” (Eliot, 1937, p. 148). He also speaks in religious language throughout the text, referring to men and women as souls and as God’s creations. In the usage of these metaphors, he further illustrates that men and women are not born stupid or weak, but are rather products of their upbringing. “The soul is placed in the body like a rough diamond; and must be polished, or the luster of it will never appear. And ‘tis manifest, that as the rational soul distinguishes us from brutes; so education carries on the distinction, and makes some less brutish than others” (Eliot, 1937, p. 148).

Despite his emphasis on breeding as the determinant factor of character, he does offer some basic opinions on the role of men and women. Defoe believes that, while women should be educated, they should be taught skills which are suited to their gender. “...Music and Dancing...languages...They should, as a particular study, be taught all the graces of speech, and all the necessary air of conversation...They should be taught to read books, and especially history; and so to read as to make them understand the world, and to be able to know and judge of things when they hear them” (Eliot, 1937, p. 149). For all his insight into the female mind and soul, Defoe has little to say on the quality of man, except for two sly comments. First, he supplies that, “The capacities of women are supposed to be greater, and their senses quicker, than those of the men” (Eliot, 1937, p. 149). Later in the essay, he makes a comment on the disposition of young boys. “You rarely see [women] lumpish and heavy, when they are children; as boys will

often be” (Eliot, 1937, p. 149). At the end of his essay, however, he reasserts that there is only one major difference between men and women in terms of gender: “The great distinguishing difference, which is seen in the world between men and women, is in their education” (p. 150).

From Education to Love

In terms of gender construction, the great identity war has always been spawned by love and sex. If men and women were not so drawn to and affected by each other in the most intimate of ways, the feelings of being threatened and the need to defend our territory would perhaps not be so caustic at times. Defoe wrote an essay which lamented the mistreatment of women; for him, a lack of education should not be denied to a human creation of God. Defoe spoke in terms of souls and nature and foresaw a simple solution to the co-existence of women and men; he spoke in religious language in order to improve the human condition. Rilke, however, constructed gender exclusively in the language of love.

In the first half of the seventh letter written to Mr. Kappus, Rilke completely strips away references to gender differences or similarities and focuses solely on individual identity. It is evident from a contextual reading that one of Kappus’ primary concerns deals with love and sex, seemingly his own virginity. His discussion on love leads up to his discussion of the female sex and the female identity; Rilke sets the foundation for an argument of feminism by arguing for a more solid foundation for love. This foundation rests solely not on the man as head and the woman as servant, but as the individual as solitude.

It is good to be solitary, for solitude is difficult; that something is difficult must be a reason the more for us to do it. To love is good, too: love being difficult. For one human being to love another: that is perhaps the most difficult of all our tasks, the ultimate, the

last test and proof, the work for which all other work is but preparation. (Norton, 1993, p. 53).

Rilke's entire approach to the right kind of love is focused on the necessity for the individual to remain individual, to maintain his or her own identity in the throes and irrationality of nascent love. As he expands on his formula for true love to flourish and strengthen, he begins to address the necessity for the female to discover her own identity, one that is not directly determined by the masculine.

Ironically, Rilke also veers toward an anti-feminist direction by sometimes elevating the female identity above the male, just as Defoe did in certain instances. "Women, in whom life lingers and dwells more immediately, more fruitfully and more confidently, must surely have become fundamentally riper people, more human, than easygoing man, who is not pulled down below by the surface of life by the weight of any fruit of his body, and who, presumptuous and hasty, undervalues what he thinks he loves" (p. 58). Where Defoe only dared to hope for "those Happy Days (if ever they shall be) when men shall be wise enough to mend it" (Eliot, 1937, p. 151), Rilke was bold enough to make a confident prophesy regarding the future of the feminine. "...Some day there will be girls and women whose name will no longer signify merely an opposite of the masculine, but something in itself, something that makes one think, not of any complement and limit, but only of life and existence: the feminine human being" (Norton, 1993, p. 59). Rilke believed that once his prophesy was fulfilled, human love would finally become complete.

This advance will (at first much against the will of the outstripped men) change the love-experience... reshape it into a relation that is meant to be of one human being to another, no longer of man to woman. And this more human love...will resemble that which we are

preparing with struggle and toil, the love that consists in this, that two solitudes protect and border and salute each other.

Rilke constructs gender by deconstructing it entirely; in getting rid of the definition of women in terms of men and vice-versa, he proposes to construct an individual in terms of solitude and individual experience rather than biology.

In the 1700's, Defoe argued that a man or a woman's identity is not based on biology or sex, but on education. In the 1800's, a poet was born who would disregard conventional notions of identity and love, and he would prophesy that love will only be complete when men and women are looked at not as men and women but as individual, wholly complete human beings. Smack in the middle of the 1900's, a young rebel took it upon himself to fight for his own identity.

From Love to Sex

In Hugh Hefner's time, women were known as virgin objects meant to be protected and sanctified; men, on the other hand, were rugged family men, conforming to every socially acceptable ideal and mannerism, but never daring to embrace his own personal brand of truth. While many women have branded Hefner the ultimate anti-feminist for decades, he himself has claimed that he was one of the world's first feminists, championing civil rights, pro-abortion, and the fight against AIDS.

When Hefner finally decided to respond to these voices of criticism, nine years after the first publication went to press, with "The *Playboy* Philosophy," he was exercising the most crucial element of feminist criticism, realizing that he and all men and women had "the capacity to claim agency and act in the world as they choose" (Foss, 2004, p. 155). The first way in which he claimed agency was to address the language in which *Playboy* had been spoken of. "As a

word, playboy has suffered semantic abuse... We have been accused of leadership in a cult of irresponsibility and of aiding in the decline of the Western world. We deny it” (Hefner, 1962, p. 2). Hefner censured those who claimed that, “The Anatomy of *Playboy* [is] the whole man reduced to his private parts” and that “girls are just another ‘*Playboy* accessory’” (Hefner, 1962, p. 2).

Hefner sought out, in his creation of the magazine, to reject the accepted social standard of masculine identity of the 1950’s; in his philosophy, he tried to explain his vision to a highly judgmental audience. “Not only does *Playboy* create a new image of the ideal man, it also creates...an alternative version of reality in which men may live in their minds...it is strangely concerned with two things few men, and even fewer women, have any real interest in: namely, truth and beauty” Hefner, 1962, p. 5). If that were not enough to change the mind of critics, he offers a conclusive definition of his “new image of the ideal man.”

What is a Playboy? Is he simply a wastrel, a ne’er-do-well, a fashionable bum? Far from it: He can be a sharp-minded young business executive, a worker in the arts, a university professor, an architect or engineer. He can be many things, providing he possesses a certain point of view. He must see life not as a vale of tears but as a happy time; he must take joy in his work, without regarding it as the end and all of living; he must be an alert man, an aware man, a man of taste, a man sensitive to pleasure, a man who — without acquiring the stigma of the voluptuary or dilettante — can live life to the hilt. This is the sort of man we mean when we use the word playboy. (Hefner, 1962, p. 6)

Hefner clearly lays out for his readers how he believes the male gender should be constructed, but the rhetorical critic must read between the lines to determine his views on women in his philosophy. In the context of when this manifesto was penned, the image of women

was painted with one of two brushes: one created the virtuous ideal of the Madonna, and the other crafted the naughty but scintillating depiction of the Whore. In this frame of mind, a woman could not be both sexy and intelligent, both sexual and virtuous. To typify this perception, Hefner tells the story of a young editor who visited the *Playboy* mansion and seemed very uncomfortable by the plethora of semi-nude women around him. Noticing the man's discomfort, Hefner assured him that the Playmates were actually, if you got to know them, a "very nice group of girls," to which the young editor said, "That's really worse, I think" (Hefner, 1962, p. 11).

Defoe argued for the betterment of women through education; Rilke proposed that humanity would be more complete when women shed their feminine identity as a masculine counterpart and instead became simply human; Hefner believed that the best woman was both smart and sexy, that she should not hide her feminine traits but embrace them. For Hefner, the ideal woman was not an uneducated bimbo, so to speak, but she wasn't ashamed of her body or sex either. In his philosophy, one might garner that, in order for a woman to achieve the mental prowess of a man, she need not shed the physical beauty of a woman; she can be a combination of those two remarkable things which few men, and even fewer women, have an interest in: Truth and Beauty.

Positions of Audiences: From the Pews, the Pulpit

Defoe's essay is written in terms of a religious audience. Most of the argument is made on the basis that men and women are created equally, both are precious creations of a Christian God, and that civilized upbringing determines their personality and character. No scientific perspective of the differences between the male and the female brain are given or other physiological characteristics which contribute to one's character. If the audience reading this essay were to be religious, Defoe's arguments for female equality in education would be

especially effective, as demonstrated by a particularly passionate passage with hints of religious undertones and language:

If knowledge and understanding had been useless additions to the sex, God Almighty would never have given them capacities; for he made nothing needless. Besides, I would ask such, What they can see in ignorance, that they should think it necessary ornament to a women? or how much worse is a wise woman than a fool? or what has the woman done to forfeit the privilege of being taught? (Eliot, 1937, p. 148)

Although this sort of approach, layered with straight-forward reason and relentless questioning, is an effective technique for most audiences, the emphasis on God in the passage and throughout the essay would appeal to a religious audience more than any other.

From the Cots of the Lovesick

Where Defoe appealed to a religious audience, Rilke's letter would strike a note with people well-versed in the music of romantic love. The entire letter is predicated upon the notion of the self in relation to an eventual sharing of life and love with a romantic partner; if one removes this contextual foundation, Rilke's vision for women as individual human beings rather than counterparts to a masculine-dominated society loses some of its power. Considering that the majority of men and women have, at some points in their lives, experienced romantic love, however, this letter positions itself as relatable to almost any audience member, regardless of sex, race or age.

From the Cot to the Bedroom (And the Reading Glasses on the Nightstand)

Ironically, where Defoe's essay on education was heavy with religious language, where Rilke's letter (though poetic and insightful) would only find empathy with those well-versed in the ways of love, it is "The *Playboy Philosophy*" that appeals to the widest audience: those

capable of logical thought. Hefner writes specifically that the magazine itself is intended for a specific audience; "...the magazine was never intended for the general public—it is edited for a select audience of young, literate, urban men, who share with us a particular point of view on life," but the entire philosophy employs the type of rhetoric and logic that would appeal to a wide number of audience members.

Hefner candidly and fairly states the positions of his critics and cites their views verbatim; then he attacks each argument to logically show where they are mistaken. He appeals to a religious audience by bringing the position of a religious official. "I sympathize with Playboy's revolt against narrow, prudish Puritanism, even though I would disagree with the way this revolt is expressed." But more than religion, sex, or gender, Hefner positions his audience in terms of intellect. The majority of his arguments supply a way of thinking counterintuitive to mainstream society. Ultimately, to epitomize his defense that *Playboy* is a magazine that can truly appeal to the urban, intellectual male, he spouts off a list of notable intellectual pieces published in the magazine's nine years:

Playboy has published Nat Hentoff's *Through the Racial Looking Glass*, "a perceptive report on the American Negro and his new militancy for uncompromising equality" (July 1962); *The Prodigal Powers of Pot*, an unemotional look at marijuana, "the most misunderstood drug of all time" (August 1962); *Status-ticians in Limbo*, a biting article on the sociologists and motivational research experts in advertising and the communication industry (September 1961); *The Great American Divide*, Herb Gold's incisive probing of "Reno, the biggest little pity in the world" (June 1961); *Hypnosis*, the most comprehensive article on the subject ever to appear in a magazine, analyzing hypnotism's implications for surgery, psychoanalysis, persuasion, advertising, crime, war and world politics, by Ken

W. Purdy (February 1961); plus such now near-classic pieces as *The Pious Pornographers*, on sex in the women's magazines (October 1957); *The Cult of the Aged Leader*, expressing the need for younger men in our government before any of us had heard of a John or Robert Kennedy (August 1959); *Eros and Unreason in Detroit*, decrying the ever-increasing size, and emphasis on chrome and fins, in U.S. cars, before the automobile industry reversed the trend and introduced the compacts (August 1958); Philip Wylie's *The Womanization of America*, expressing concern over the feminine domination of our culture (September 1958); and Vance Packard's *The Manipulators*, on the "vanguards of 1984: the men of motivational research" (December 1957); along with *The Playboy Panel*, a series of provocative conversations about subjects of interest on the contemporary scene (most recent topic: *Business Ethics and Morality*, November 1962) and the newly inaugurated *Playboy Interview* that can produce provocative thought on timely issues, as when Miles Davis discussed his views on what it means to be black in America (September 1962). (Hefner, 1962, pp. 6-7)

While *Playboy* itself may be primarily positioned toward men, its philosophy is dominantly geared to the intellectual.

Participation and Choices: Women, Open Your Books (And Impress Your Men)

As a whole, Defoe attempts to emphasize that a woman's access to education is beneficial to both sexes. For his female audience, he suggests that women need not be limited to their current roles in society. "I cannot think that God Almighty ever made them so delicate, so glorious creatures; and furnished them with such charms, so agreeable and delightful to mankind; with souls capable of the same accomplishments with men; and all, to be only Stewards of our House, Cooks, and Slaves" (Eliot, 1937, pp. 150-151).

For all his exaltation of the female creation, however, Defoe is careful not to step outside the boundaries of his era. He makes sure not to make too many waves in arguing for women's greater freedom; he assures his male audience who is ultimately in control. "Not that I am for exalting the female government in the least," he concedes toward the end of the essay.

But, in short, I would have men take women for companions, and educate them to be fit for it. A woman of sense and breeding will scorn as much to encroach upon the prerogative of man, as a man of sense will scorn to oppress the weakness of the woman. But if the women's souls are refined and improved by teaching, that word would be lost. To say, the weakness of the sex, as to judgment, would be nonsense; for ignorance and folly would be no more to be found among women than men. (Eliot, 1937p. 151)

While boldly criticizing society's treatment of women, Defoe still attempts to prevent a chaotic response to his essay by providing that men are ultimately the ones in control, and they will simply benefit from having a more educated companion. This foundation for the new, individual human woman was laid half-heartedly by Defoe; he was too afraid to go beyond his claims to the ultimate awareness of his reason, but this ground work would be solidified by Rilke and made more intricate by Hefner.

No Price is Too High to Pay for the Privilege of Owning Yourself

Rilke offers more choices and areas for participation to his readers in that most people can relate to the context provided by this particular letter to Kappus; however, few people are willing to undertake the necessary solitary confinement suggested by Rilke to experience true individual identity and thus, true equal love. This letter addresses young people in particular in their flawed approach to love. "But young people err so often and so grievously in this: that they... fling themselves at each other, when love takes possession of them, scatter themselves, just as they are,

in all their untidiness, disorder, confusion...thus each loses himself for the sake of the other and many others that wanted still to come” (Norton, 1993, p. 55). Rilke gives a call to people, young people in particular, to learn to love their solitude before they can learn to love a human being, a notion he himself admits few will be able to put into practice. “It is true that young people who love wrongly, that is, simply with abandon and unsolitarily (the average will of course always go on doing so) ...” (Norton, 1993, p. 56). If Rilke’s entire argument for an equality of gender is predicated upon experiencing a solitary existence first, audience participation in this artifact will be limited to only a daring few.

The Definition of Democracy: A Voter’s Choice

In reading Defoe’s essay, the audience is admonished for its treatment of women in regards to education. Delving into Rilke’s letter, the audience is urged to pursue solitude in the ultimate pursuit of love and personal growth. In Hefner’s philosophy, the audience is left free to choose how it feels about *Playboy*. He does not try to convince readers of the magazine’s merit, but simply aims to clarify its paradigm and underlying philosophies as a response to biased and unfair critics. Ultimately, the philosophy allows the reader to do what Hefner says the magazine has always aimed to do, to “think differently from one another and to promote new ideas” (Hefner, 1962, p. 8).

Hegemony: The Power of the Mind

Defoe’s essay is simultaneously an introduction to the feminist movement and at once a slight slap to its cause. The majority of the essay is spent heralding woman as, if not equal in value to men, the superior creation. Not only does he exalt her as the kinder, more beautiful sex, but he passionately argues that, with education she “is a creature without comparison” (p. 150). And yet, at the very end of this manifesto praising the undervalued glory of woman, he reminds

his audience that, while he is for an educated woman, he is not for a governing woman. Still, if one looks at effective persuasion, one understands that a person can only be persuaded if he is spoken to in terms of his experience. At the beginning of the 18th century, the idea of a woman taking the place of man in terms of governance (outside a monarchy) was absolutely inconceivable; the idea of her being educated to improve the quality of man, however, was a notion the public could grasp, relate to, and eventually support. As Defoe no doubt knew, the power of the educated mind, male or female, is insurmountable in what it can eventually accomplish. Did Defoe really believe a woman should only be educated to become a more suitable companion to a man, or did he intend to artfully feed his audience only as much revolution as they could stomach? While the answer to that question remains clear, it is not difficult to glimpse how his essay argued for the rights of women in ways no one else would, setting the stage for the eventually educated woman to stand atop it and truly fight for female equality.

The Power of the Soul

If Defoe set the stage for feminism, no one called for a more equal cast list than Rainer Maria Rilke. Excepting the one aforementioned paragraph in which he exalts the female condition above the male, Rilke completely removes the focus on the superior gender and instead calls for the superior individual human being through solitude. The entire letter is a champion for equal partnership between men and women, not for a tipping of the scales of power to favor one gender over the other. In the twentieth century, the fight for gender equality was one of the most difficult wars ever fought, and the battles are still spilling across the twenty-first century in sometimes new and other times tired ways. But Rilke reminds Kappus, and us, that the most difficult battles are the ones we need to fight most. "...It is clear that we must hold to what is difficult; everything

alive holds to it, everything in Nature grows and defends itself in its own way and is characteristically and spontaneously itself, seeks at all costs to be so and against all opposition” (Norton, 1993, p. 53). In calling for an equal approach to love, which is difficult, Rilke pioneered the notion that the two genders needed to first be equal. In love, and therefore in gender, Rilke seems to believe there can be no hegemony.

The Power of the Body

In an ideal universe, balance and harmony would work in tandem to make way for peace. But we all know we don’t live in an ideal universe. Although we can try to keep it at bay, to struggle for balance and harmony and coexistence, hegemony will always exist. Defoe obviously believed that the ultimate power could be exercised within the mind, through education. Rilke focused exclusively on the soul, elevating the spiritual as the center of existence. And while Hefner acknowledges the importance of both, he exalts the wonder of the body.

This nonsense about the body of man being evil, while the mind and spirit are good, seems quite preposterous to most of us today. After all, the same Creator was responsible for all three and we confess we're not willing to believe that He goofed when He got around to the body of man (and certainly not when He got to the body of woman). Body, mind and spirit all have a unique way of complementing one another, if we let them, and if excesses of the body are negative, it is the excesses that are improper rather than the body, as excesses of the mind and spirit would also be. (Hefner, 1962, p. 10)

For those who would say that Hefner’s focus on the female body in particular writes a masculine code of hegemony, the argument is made that there can be nothing degrading or weakening about displaying and paying homage to the body. For this criticism in particular, he

addresses those who believe that the nature of *Playboy* magazine is a veritable sin against God himself.

The logic that permits a person to call down God's wrath on anyone for displaying a bit of God's own handiwork does, we must admit, escape us. If the human body—far and away the most remarkable, the most complicated, the most perfect and the most beautiful creation on this earth—can become objectionable, obscene or abhorrent, when purposely posed and photographed to capture that remarkable perfection and beauty, then the world is a far more cockeyed place than we are willing to admit. (Hefner, 1962, p. 9)

In all the philosophy's arguments, there is never a push for male dominance over the female body, mind, or spirit; what others see as an act of degradation, Hefner amends as an act of homage. Where some argue for a conquering of the body by the mind of the spirit, Hefner embraces the beauty, elegance, and splendor of all three. In "The *Playboy* Philosophy," Hefner does not attempt to demean the mind in favor of the body or trivialize the power of the spirit; simply, he attempts to take the shame out of sex, to remove shame from the body. The ultimate tool a party in power will use to subjugate the other party *is* shame. By conquering shame, you subdue hegemony.

Conclusion

Most discussions over feminism today take place through slurs muttered in anger through an angry man's breath, or they flood the classroom with jilted women lamenting in ignorance and misunderstanding. Beneath this single word is more than a single issue. Feminism isn't just about righting women's wrongs. Underneath veritable crimes against a one gender is disrespect for both genders. Farther down, lurking below an animosity for gender sits a lack of appreciation for the self. We have not paid ourselves our proper due. Until we learn to respect every aspect of our

complex beings, we cannot truly respect any aspect of our sexual counterparts. In looking at Defoe's essay, we learn that the mind is the foundation for moving the human race forward. Rilke's letters beg individuals to nurture the self and the soul before joining lives with another self and soul. And finally, Hefner's philosophy reminds us that we are, at the end of the day, housed in bodies. We've ignored that for far too long now.

The journey isn't over yet. It's been a long road, but we're still tripping and stumbling over our own words and our own ideals. Perhaps the greatest tragedy of all is that there was ever a need for the feminist movement in the first place. The notion that two magnificent creatures can exist in such crucial similarity, both containing all the necessary skills of intelligent thought and speech, compassion and kindness, and physical movement and dexterity, that they can maintain these similarities and still balance each other with perfect complementary differences, that this harmony and elegant dissonance can exist and we still feel the need to say one is better, one is greater, and the other is merely here as a servant..is simply wrong. At my core, I've never understood the need for feminism. Shouldn't we just know better?

But we've been deceived by the most dangerous gift of all. Not strength. Not Intelligence. More than anything else, people respond to beauty in the strangest ways. There is nothing simultaneously more petrifying and more alluring than a beautiful thing. Whether it be a beautiful idea or a beautiful face, we will try to diminish it to lessen its splendor to preserve our own sense of the safe, of the comfortable. People are as afraid of beauty as they are eager to attain it. Perhaps that is where the men have wronged the women; men, more vulnerable to the power of beauty, became threatened and, in their natural instinct, sought to crush and possess its cause. And women, responding to the attack, feel the need to hide their beauty, to assault the men who would dare to exalt it. Both are hasty, and therefore mistaken.

Ultimately, the fight for equality rests within three key components: we must all, men and women, be educated. We must learn to understand and celebrate each other's differences, rather than admonish them, and find peace and coexistence in our similarities. We must be of strong mind.

If our heads are stable and steady, we are able to then cultivate our souls, the places wherein compassion, kindness, desire and intimacy are felt most deeply. Here is where we can find forgiveness for the wrong we have done to our sexual counterparts in creation, the place where we can let go of the wrong done to ourselves, the place where we can stop trying to be our best selves for fear of censure of the other gender. The soul must not apologize.

And finally, we must protect these two sacred and fundamental elements with a strong body, a body that is not shrouded in shame and embarrassment, a body not clothed in degradation or disgust, but a body that was meant to express and live and taste and see and hear and touch and feel all that our souls and minds are too gossamer to grasp. Perhaps the body should not be paraded as an empty, ornamented vessel, meant only for another's viewing pleasure at any casual moment of the day. But the body should not be kept secret, it should not make us want to hide or go to confession. The body must receive its due praise.

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