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The F Word: A Compilation of Feminist Poetry

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The F Word

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ABOUT THE WORK

This is an interdisciplinary project between creative writing and women's studies that attempts to showcase different aspects of feminism from the female perspective through poetry. Throughout my poems, there are multiple different voices raising concern and awareness about a variety of subject matters within feminism, such as basic human rights, violence against women, sexuality, current (and possibly future) political moves and motives for feminism, how feminism is perceived by the public, how women are often times viewed by men and this society, and how feminism and feminists are perceived by anti-feminists. Some of these poems come from my own personal experiences, which allows for readers to see through one millennial, college female lens. I believe that the arts are an exceptional way to document important socio-political movements throughout history, no matter what perspective the movement is shown in. From any angle, depicted through any medium, future generations will be able to see and learn about these revolutionary parts of history that are currently happening during my generation. Art is a great way to capture the emotion of the times, and I hope that I have successfully loaded my poems with a variety of feelings revolving around difficult subjects. I hope that through the form of poetry, I can allow my audience to be more sympathetic towards the lives of women in this current society, and perhaps fuel them with the desire to become more active in making the changes that this world needs. Ultimately, my goal is to allow readers to see feminism as being an important part of progressing the United States towards a more equal and accepting society.

Tactile

Children do not paint with any sort of direction. There's something exhilarating about slapping colors onto a canvas to see where they land. Greedy hands grasp full bottles and squeeze unforagingly. Paint texture is wildly different from what any wax crayon or carbon pencil could provide—a once forbidden mess turned into a contemporary celebration. A swipe across the palette creates a scale of colors. The canvas becomes tacky, along with the messy fingers that refuse to be washed. When questioned, the children raise their chins and claim the colorful chaos as the work of their own hands.

But they don't know how to love it yet.

I remember the day I was sixteen and you told me my body had earth-tones, and you didn't hesitate to press hard into my rib cage. I wanted to be your masterpiece—the only canvas your fingertips longed to caress. You didn't have a plan. You touched me blindly. After twelve months of warm hands working the paint, you squeezed my arm unapologetically. The colors dried and crackled on my distressed skin. I asked, Are you proud of me? I don't remember what I looked like before you tested my canvas, but the colors are irreversible now. You muddied the palette before you left, calling my aesthetic too elementary. Now I only wonder how many times you had to wash your hands to get rid of me.

(hetero)Flexible

I took a yoga class and found
that I can't put my foot behind my head
anymore, but I did learn how

to accept that sometimes I do like
women, too.

Grab Her by the Heart, Not the Hula Skirt

The hula dancer bobbles on the dash of a four-wheel-drive Ford truck. The dancer's arms stretch open above her head, seeming to lounge, but she is stiff, and if the wind could blow, we would all see what only her lei and thin grass skirt are barely concealing. The driver's gaze waits in anticipation for it. We look away. We speak for the one who has no voice.

When he says:

It reminds me of Hawaii
and the great vacation I had.

We say:

Stop pretending you don't know
who this souvenir is marketed towards.

Well, is it so wrong
for a man to appreciate
a beautiful looking woman?

She doesn't ask to be
looked at
like *that*.

If she looks and feels sexy,
it is unfair if men
aren't allowed to look.

Her self-esteem
is not at the hands
of a man's approval.

Dancing is an art,
and maybe she likes to
wear whatever she wants.

Are we still talking
about the object mounted on the dashboard
or a woman?

HOUSE—THE VERB

I tell you a thousand times, I do not arrive giftwrapped on a doorstep. There is no doorstep. I am transported from womb to hospital to house to house to house to living arrangement to rented space to here, with you. My borrowed father says the house is not a home until I am in it. I find home in nothing other than the responsibility of men. I forgive them. I forgive when they rent out my bed for the night and I return to the sheets unmade, soaked with excuses ruining apologies. I forgive when the communication bill is past due and there is a drought in the kitchen faucet and my throat is dry. I forgive when it is forgotten to put the insulation in first and the heat just doesn't stick around like it used to. I find I cannot survive the winter months without a body with chest hair to keep me warm. Then what is my body, anyway? I am born of one man and one woman's collision, and so inherently become the responsibility of another man, and another, and another, and yours. I am the potential of life. I am the baby in the womb, the tenant unwanted. Your body is a house, but is it *mine*?

Waves

Your body is not a house
to be bought and sold, locked up,
kept full of someone else's belongings.

Your body does not have a chain-linked fence
keeping children in, intruders out. Your body
does not have windows with curtains closed
for modesty. Your body is not a kitchen,
a nursery, a bedroom.

You are not a house.

You are more than a settlement.

No lover can know you just by touching you.

Your body is a restless ocean, no businessman
can place ownership on the tides.

No one can dive the depths of your ambitions
without coming back up for air eventually.

They can build boats and ships that still sink.

The men might start the ripples,

but no man can control the sea.

Save the Women

the iconic pink ribbon
the entire month of October
a day without a bra
merchandise, fundraising,
raising another kind of awareness

“Shame on you women
for thinking
that you’re special.”

where the value
of the woman’s life being threatened
is reduced

she’s your,
“mother” “sister” “wife” “daughter”

what about,
“a human being that matters, too?”

A Letter to the 1 in 5

Dear soldier,

Dear future soldier,

Dear veteran,

They will salute you, hush their voices, put their right hands over their hearts
and you will tell them that you are proud to serve, to protect, to sacrifice,
but did anyone warn you

about rape, the consequence of war? The war on women? That sexual assault is, well, “what did
these geniuses expect when they put men & women together?” They coax you into the concept
that you are respected, protected, supported,
but they won’t believe you—

your military commanders will demoralize you for your accusations, threaten your job, your
service, your honorability, and then dismiss or “misplace” your case, and you
will be just like collateral damage.

You Can't Spell Clinton Without Clit

I am with Her—Mother Scorpion.
She and I and all autumn daughters
will dismantle you Anglo-fathers.
You irredeemable Sons of Orion
condemn the primitive blood of a uterus
yet sanctify a soldier's slaughter—game.
Be careful what you kill, you boast against
The Mother who made you, made us, made all.
You, Orange Orion, will submit
when the summer Scorpius ignites,
burns all your ideologies with Her.
From ashes and ashes, She raises us,
victorious, to the Scorpio's scheme.

The Reproduction Strike

Stock up on your birth control, girls. Let them see
your purpose cannot be constrained to procreation
nor regulated by their white congressmen.

Let them try to stop a few of us
from our pursuits of happiness, but they cannot
prohibit half this nation, if we're vigorous.

Remind them that we are the masses, that we
gave birth to their asses and let them learn
what happens when their Trump card
meets our lit matches.

Gaslight

I don't know much about cars but
I know two things about gas lights—

either it's a warning signal to give my car a smelly drink or
I must be crazy, nothing is ever that big of a deal and

I'm just overreacting, blowing things
out of proportion—like I always do.

Desecrated

New Orleans. Thursday, October 5, 2006. 1 a.m.

The couple should've known,

should've foreseen this tragedy
when they met on the night
that Hurricane Katrina hit,
when they moved into the
apartment above the voodoo
shop.

This is nothing new, the
domestic abuse in the news—
the sensationalism of the
homicide-suicide, the juice of
the tragic (love?) story.

He was only sorry about the
mess and weak stomachs—
spray painted “don't look” on
the front of the stove.

When he jumped off the Omni
Royal Orleans Hotel I wonder
if he thought he'd fall hard
enough through the pavement
to Hell—

I hope it's hotter than the oven
you put her in.

This is not accidental.

*I scared myself, not by the
action of calmly strangling the
woman I've loved for one and a
half years, but by my entire lack
of remorse.*

*If you send a patrol car to 826
N. Rampart, you will find the
dismembered corpse of my
girlfriend Addie*

*in the oven, on the stove, and in
the fridge
and a full signed confession
from myself.*

*And I had a fantastic time living
out my days. For ever I've
known how horrible of a person
I am—*

*ask anyone. It's just about time
now.*

Dear Addie,

When Paranormal Lockdown
investigated your home on the
tenth anniversary of your death,

the fridge, the oven, and the
bathtub still there—perhaps the
only memorials you ever
received—

they heard you, we heard you, your
cries, your voice, your pleas.

Hell must have been being stuck on
Earth—

with him.

Menstrual Richter Scale

If everyone had a seismograph,
they might be more empathetic
to the monthly regeneration of my womb.

It is exhausting to spend three weeks building
a hospitable environment for a tenant
who never arrives. The dismantling is

subtle, at first. A magnitude of 2.5, enough
mood swing to be noticed but barely miss
the innocent passerby.

A warning sign next, for those in the immediate
area and especially vulnerable with compromised
sympathetic systems. The tight clench, a 5.1.

I double over at the final magnitude of a 7.8, shake
loose all my contents from the inside out. Wipe
tears of triumph, another week, another clean slate.

The F Word

“Why aren’t you a feminist?” questionnaire.

although i do believe in
equal rights

i believe that in labeling
yourself as such an activist
leads to radicalism

the title is taking a
derogatory action

i hate the word feminist it
gives off this vibe of
hating men

as a woman i of course
believe in one hundred
percent equal rights

i just believe that i'm called
a human who believes in
equal rights versus a
feminist

i feel that equality is
something that can and
should be achieved

without elevating one
gender over the other

but please shave your
armpits and use a tampon

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Woman

I.

Gestation: six weeks
Heartbeat undifferentiated,
however
it has begun

II.

First time mother, young
and scared. Advice:
have the baby and then
you're on your own

III.

Full-term, pink blanket,
pink pacifier so she knows
she is female and they're always
trying to shut us up somehow

IV.

Alternatively, ambiguous—
intersex, surgical intervention
convinces her she is a boy—
she will discover herself
on her own, disowned

V.

Forced to co-parent because
he was drunk
and her dress was a little too short

VI.

Still being assaulted outside women's restrooms
and shouted at: "Two genders! Two genders!"

VII.

The strange man tells her
to smile

VIII.

Carries her mattress through undergrad
across the graduation stage
followed by Him,
and all the Hims carrying paper diplomas,
privilege in tow

IX.

If he's mean to you, it means
he likes you, and he might
be the prince who kisses you awake,
your happily ever after, or
he's probably a toad just like the rest—
however those movies go

X.

Wedding rings are disguised to be pretty
so you don't realize it's all about
how your husband owns you now

XI.

The Internalized,
oppressed and in denial

XII.

The Nasty woman
Femi-Nazi
always demanding
for civil liberties

XIII.

The Sufferer
sits in silence
survives
the country's collateral damage