

Toxic Feminism

By Philip Carl Salzman

Feminism began as a challenge to male domination and female subordination. It could have become a champion of equality and the dignity of individual human beings. Unfortunately, contemporary feminism is not a liberation from sexism. It is true that feminism rejects anti-female sexism. But in place of anti-female sexism, it does not advocate gender-blind standards; it does not advocate treating individuals as complex human beings; it does not reject reducing people to their sex/gender. On the contrary, feminism, as indicated by its name, is a movement that sees people as defined by their gender, and lobbies for the interests of females. In short, feminism does not reject sexism, but advocates anti-male sexism.

In complement to feminism's framing of females as oppressed by males, while having their qualities of strength and intelligence underrated by men, men are framed as arrogant and insensitive, oppressive, and brutal. The systematic vilification and demonization of males is part of the feminist strategy of raising women by lowering men, by convincing people that women are good and men are bad. Note that this is simply a reversal of anti-female sexism into anti-male sexism. All males, whatever their individual qualities, are reduced to a common set of evil characteristics, while all females are celebrated as sensitive, smart, and strong.

Female victimhood is described in many feminist works. Here is one well known example, as seen through the eyes of the female protagonist in a short story: I snuck *Reviving Ophelia* [by Mary Pipher] from my mother's nightstand and learned how I was going to lose myself, that my childhood was Eden but I had to leave, that in this poisonous late-twentieth-century misogynist culture, anorexia and suicide and rape and self-hate were the inevitable wages of womanhood.¹

But acclaimed Canadian fiction writer Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, together with its television version, now in its second year, is probably better known, and the dystopian picture it presents is even more dire: Offred is a Handmaid in the Republic of Gilead, a totalitarian and theocratic state that has replaced the United States of America. Because of dangerously low reproduction rates, Handmaids are assigned to bear children for elite couples that have trouble conceiving. Offred serves the Commander and his wife, Serena Joy, a former gospel singer and advocate for "traditional values." Offred is not the narrator's real name. Handmaid names consist of the word "of" followed by the name of the Handmaid's Commander. Every month, when Offred is at the right point in her menstrual cycle, she must have impersonal, wordless sex with the Commander while Serena sits behind her, holding her hands. Offred's freedom, like the freedom of all women, is completely restricted. She can leave the house only on shopping trips, the door to her room cannot be completely shut, and the Eyes, Gilead's secret police force, watch her every public move.²

¹ "Ancient Rome," Kyle McCarthy, in *The Best American Short Stories*, Meg Wolitzer, editor, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017, p. 196

² <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/handmaid/summary/>
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt5834204/plotsummary>

The Republic of Gilead is a creation of the imagination, and is about as far from modern Western society as one could imagine. It is an attempt to think how people, in this case women, could survive and adjust to an extreme situation. But Atwood is a self-identified and celebrated feminist. What is her message to women in this work? Is she saying that men can never be trusted, and women, for their own self defense, should take control of society and keep men well away from power? If so, is that an appropriate message for 20th and 21st century Canada and America? The feminist tactic appears to be, once again, scaring women and demonizing men.

Another overt feminist anti-male expression is the demand that heterosexual females forgo intimate relations with men in favour of “political lesbianism.”³ Here is how it is defined in a pamphlet entitled “Love Your Enemy?”: “All feminists can and should be lesbians. Our definition of a political lesbian is a woman-identified woman who does not fuck men.”⁴ Political lesbianism is not a matter of sexual inclination; it is not about women attracted only to women. “It does not mean compulsory sexual activity with women.” Rather, the point is “to get rid of men from your beds and your heads.”⁵ Female students at some distinguished American women’s colleges were under feminist peer pressure not to date men.⁶

Feminism classifies all men, with the exception of gays, into three categories: rapists, sexual harassers, and potential rapists and harassers. Feminism does not explain this male criminality in biological terms, because feminists reject the biological basis of sex, so that women cannot be seen to be limited by biological influences. Rather, male sexual brutality is explained as a result of our so-called misogynist “rape culture.” This is an incoherent and false idea, because our culture forbids and punishes rape.⁷ The #MeToo movement, a litany of unsubstantiated claims of having been sexually harassed, is another strategic step in vilifying all men, and, by contrast, claiming innocent virtue and victimhood for all women. While some men are abusive and should be stopped, #MeToo, like “rape culture,” colours all men as abusive or potentially abusive. This provides a basis in “safety” for feminists to call for greater priority for women in all fields and the sidelining of men.⁸

Feminist particularism is shown clearly by the constantly repeated demand that when a woman makes an allegation, she must be believed. Hillary Clinton, during her campaign for the U.S. Presidency, tweeted “Every survivor of sexual assault deserves to be heard, believed, and supported.”⁹ Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who self-identifies as a feminist, asserts that we should “believe all allegations.”¹⁰

American universities and colleges responded to President Obama’s directive to prosecute sexual assault cases vigorously by jettisoning due process and the presumption of innocence.¹¹ At McGill University, any female who makes an allegation of sexual assault is officially labelled a “survivor.” At McGill, there is

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/jan/30/women-gayrights>

<https://revolutionarycombustion.wordpress.com/2014/04/04/political-lesbianism-is-identity-politics/>

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/jan/30/women-gayrights>

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2009/jan/30/women-gayrights>

⁶ Direct observation by author

⁷ <https://fcpp.org/2018/01/12/rape-culture-on-campus/>

⁸ https://imprimis.hillsdale.edu/the-negative-impact-of-the-metoo-movement/?appeal_code=MK418EM15&utm_campaign=imprimis&utm_source=housefile&utm_medium=email&utm_content=april_2018_metoo&hsenc=p2ANqtz-8Vdqga33NwvRkhPqLjxZvALEa987leuml_8oaQpko8Qn1PjxNjwC0kzb1npQ0JEA6yM9YWbNkKPK78mANRyUrsyQi5aw&_hsmi=62504239

⁹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/11/what-hillary-knew/546170/>

¹⁰ “Moment of Reckoning Has Its Own Dangers,” Andrew Coyne, *National Post*, A7, 27 January 2018

¹¹ <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/09/the-uncomfortable-truth-about-campus-rape-policy/538974/>

<http://lawreview.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/P-Schoonmaker-For-Website.pdf>

<http://www.lawschool.cornell.edu/research/JLPP/upload/Baker-final.pdf>

apparently a presumption of truth in any allegation, and the presumption of innocence of the accused is disregarded.¹²

What we know is that, when those accused of sexual assault are brought to court, rather than being lynched by university committees, the cases are often thrown out due to lack of evidence and credibility, and in some cases, the accusers are shown to have lied, and in some cases are indicted and sent to jail.¹³

If feminists thought of human beings as individuals, rather than as members of one good and one bad category, they might realize that many, perhaps most people lie, and that any allegation must be tested rigorously if we are concerned about justice and about avoiding punishing innocent individuals. Unfortunately, feminists are not all concerned about avoiding punishing the innocent.

"No, we haven't gone too far, nor far enough. Male privilege, male hegemony and male chauvinism has been around for millennia all the while women and girls carrying the burden and paying the price for doing nothing but being female. The only way to change the equation is for men to begin paying that price, guilty or not."¹⁴ Margaret Atwood, herself a feminist literary icon, came under attack from other feminists when she called for "transparency" in inquiries about sexual assault. One critic wrote 'Margaret Atwood's latest op-ed is a very, very clear reminder that old cis women are not to be trusted. They care more about poor widdle [sic] accused men than they do about actual f***** rape victims. They spend as much time advocating for rapists as they do attacking victims.' Atwood says that "she's been called a 'bad feminist' for insisting on due process for Galloway, the former chair of the creative writing program, and warned the dangers of letting justice for all fall by the wayside in favor of extreme feminism."¹⁵ Today's feminists apparently believe that due process and "innocent until proven guilty" are outmoded male supremacist tricks.¹⁶

Another unfortunate example of the feminist approach is the debate about child custody after the breakdown of a marriage. After a long-standing policy in Canada and the U.S. of favouring mothers for custody and fathers for child support payments, more recent discussion has focussed on joint custody and its advantages. Most scientific studies show that the best interests of children are served by joint custody. Children without fathers in their lives suffer a wide range of ill effects. Citing a host of North American studies, Kruk's report points to the long-term dangers: Some 85 percent of youth in prison are fatherless; 71 percent of high school dropouts grew up without fathers, as did 90 percent of runaway children. Fatherless youth are also more prone to depression, suicide, delinquency, promiscuity, drug abuse, behavioural problems and teen pregnancy, warns the 84-page report, a compilation of dozens of studies around divorce and custody, including some of his own research over the past 20 years.¹⁷

But whenever legislation supporting joint custody is being considered, feminist groups such as the National Organization of Women, the League of Women Voters, Breastfeeding Coalition, National Council of Jewish Women, and UniteWomen FL, lobby and demonstrate against it.¹⁸ In Canada, feminist lawyers have argued against joint custody.¹⁹ In both Canada and the U.S., feminists, disregarding the best interest of children, have

¹² <http://www.mcgill.ca/deanofstudents/helpingstudents/sexual-assault-support-resources-students>

¹³ <https://fcpp.org/2018/01/12/rape-culture-on-campus/>

¹⁴ https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/compost/wp/2018/01/13/ladies-lets-be-reasonable-about-metoo-or-nothing-will-ever-be-sexy-again/?undefined=&utm_term=.57bd5d069449&wousrc=nl_most&wpmm=1

¹⁵ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5272319/Margaret-Atwood-fire-feminists.html#ixzz55PCeXkMF>

¹⁶ *Sons of Feminism: Men Have Their Say*, Second Edition, Janice Fiamengo, editor, Little Nightingale Press, 2018

¹⁷ https://www.thestar.com/life/health_wellness/2009/04/03/children_harmed_by_sole_custody_report_says.html

https://fira.ca/cms/documents/181/April7_Kruk.pdf

http://aaml.org/sites/default/files/MAT111_1.pdf

¹⁸ <http://floridapolitics.com/archives/206474-womens-rights-groups-host-statewide-media-conference-sb-668>

<https://recalculatingthegenderwar.tumblr.com/post/142883164331/most-powerful-american-feminist-organization-kills>

<https://www.avoicemen.com/mens-rights/opposing-shared-parenting-the-feminist-track-record>

¹⁹ <http://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1663&context=ohlj>

<http://www.lawtimesnews.com/article/debate-fires-up-over-presumption-of-joint-custody-8277/>

energetically opposed joint custody as the default arrangement for children in broken marriages. Feminists prefer to support the best interests of mothers rather than those of children. For feminists, once again, gender trumps all other values, even the well-being of children.

Feminists are never shy of demanding that gender representation in any organization or activity reflect the demography of the general population. Our self-proclaimed feminist Prime Minister proudly celebrates his gender balanced cabinet having an equal number of females to males.²⁰ But the pressure to favour females does not end with equal gender representation. We see this in Canadian universities, where 60 percent of the graduates are female.²¹ In the United States,

On a national scale, public universities had the most even division between male and female students, with a male-female ratio of 43.6-56.4. While that difference is substantial, it still is smaller than private not-for-profit institutions (42.5-57.5) or all private schools (40.7-59.3). ... It should also be noted that the national male-female ratio for 18-24 year olds is actually 51-49, meaning there are more (traditionally) college-aged males than females.²² Do not imagine that there have been any feminist calls for the gender ratio in universities to be rebalanced.

At McGill University, the classes I taught showed an increased female dominance. In fall 2017, my senior seminar on "Immigration and Culture" had 18 registrants, all female. All of the social sciences and humanities departments, the entire Faculty of Arts, are demographically dominated by females, just as feminist ideology dominates in that Faculty, as well as in Education, Social Work, and Law. My female colleagues insisted on hiring only other females, which is pretty much what happened. There is also a major McGill campaign, complete with banners all around campus, to celebrate female scientists and direct female studies into STEM fields.²³

But feminists are not just looking for a female demographic increase in science. They are also looking for an ideological transformation; they are advocating "feminist science," which is "socially just science," which should supersede objective observation and testing.²⁴ "Feminist science" should work at least as well as "Soviet democracy" and "scientific racism."²⁵

Female demographic domination of universities does not end with student numbers. The female Principal of McGill recently bragged that "Currently, 50 percent of McGill's deans are female. As of July 1, when two new appointments take effect, that number will increase to 58 percent."²⁶ Apparently gender imbalance is not a bad thing, when it favours females. If the trend continues, McGill University will end up a completely female institution.

A feminist lawyer invented the idea of "intersectionality,"²⁷ which not only identifies multiple gender, race, and class "oppressions" suffered by particular individuals, but also advises that radicals of disaffected groups unite to undermine alleged oppressors. This has led to some remarkable incoherencies, such as the alliance of

²⁰ <https://www.elitedaily.com/news/politics/justin-trudeau-talks-feminist-cabinet/1853014>

²¹ <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-004-x/2008001/article/10561-eng.htm>

²² <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ccap/2012/02/16/the-male-female-ratio-in-college/#67ea23b9fa52>

²³ Author's first hand observations.

²⁴ <https://www.thecollegefix.com/post/41257/>

²⁵ <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/patriarchal-race-colonize-mars-just-another-example-male-entitlement-ncna849681>

²⁶ Highlights from the April 26, 2018, Board of Governors meeting / Faits saillants de la réunion du Conseil des gouverneurs tenue le 26 avril 2018

²⁷ <https://intersectionistblog.wordpress.com/>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/womens-life/10572435/Intersectional-feminism.-What-the-hell-is-it-And-why-you-should-care.html>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intersectionality>

feminism with Islamist Palestinians and their male supremacism and subjection of women,²⁸ and with antisemites such as Louis Farrakhan, black nationalist and leader of the Nation of Islam.²⁹ Intersectionality brings blacks to identify with “people of colour” Palestinians, and against “white” Israelis, because they identify on the basis of imagined race, in spite of Arab slave raiding in Africa and the fact that blacks are called “abid,” or slave, in the Arab world.³⁰

It is difficult to know how many individuals who self-identify as feminist hope only to be treated fairly as individuals, and how many, whether implicitly or explicitly, take a female supremacist view. Certainly the feminist organizations act as if they take a supremacist approach. The net effect of toxic feminism is to reduce complex human individuals to simplistic gender categories, to dismiss all values but the partisan interests of females, and to endorse anti-male sexism.

About the Author

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²⁸<https://www.algemeiner.com/2015/12/03/western-feminists-have-become-stalinized-and-palestinianized-says-prominent-us-womens-movement-pioneer-interview/>

<https://www.nationalreview.com/2006/03/witness-death-feminism-interview/>
<http://nationalpost.com/opinion/phyllis-chesler-when-american-queers-obsess-over-arab-territorial-claims>

²⁹ https://worldisraelnews.com/womens-march-leaders-support-anti-semite-louis-farrakhan/?utm_source=MadMimi&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Women%E2%80%99s+March+Leaders+Support+Anti-Semite+Farrakhan%3B+Guatemala+Plans+Embassy+Move+to+Jerusalem+in+May+with+US&utm_campaign=20180304_m144351210_Women%E2%80%99s+March+Leaders+Support+Anti-Semite+Farrakhan%3B+Guatemala+Plans+Embassy+Move+to+Jerusalem+in+May+with+US&utm_term=_0D_0A_09_09_09_09_09_09_09_09_09Read+Now_0D_0A_09_09_09_09_09_09_09_09_09_09
http://www.jpost.com/American-Politics/Womens-March-leaders-refuse-to-condemn-Farrakhan-after-antisemitic-speech-544074?utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=4-3-2018&utm_content=womens-march-leaders-refuse-to-condemn-farrakhan-after-antisemitic-speech-544074

³⁰ <https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/8956/black-lives-matter-antisemitism>