

**The F Word**  
**Sanne Søndergaard**

*Translated by Caroline Waight*

*pp. 5–31*

This is a book about feminism. If you don't want to read a book about feminism, then you should probably put this aside. Seriously. I'd never try to dictate what you should do, but let me just repeat that this is a book about feminism.

Feminism.

Femiiiiii-fantastic-nism.

If that's a word that tends to stick in your gullet like a free-floating pube, then it's better for the both of us if you get stuck into that new crime novel instead. You know – the one with the serial killer who rapes and murders women, and the taciturn, divorced policeman with alcohol issues. I think that's more your sort of book. No hard feelings.

If you're still reading: welcome!

*You* are exactly the person this book was written for. Because it's a book about feminism ... I think I mentioned that.

*The F Word* is for you if you want to know what feminism is and what you're supposed to do with it.

I've written *The F Word* because I'm so FUCKING TIRED OF 'Why does it have to be called feminism?'

'I'm all for equality but I'm no feminist, oh good Lord no.'

'Feminists are a bunch of ugly, shrill, angry \*insert your prejudice here\* man-haters.'

'Why can't it be called humanism or egalitarianism?'

'If it's about equality for everybody, then why does the word start with femi?'

'Feminism just isn't that inclusive of me as a man.'

'Femi sounds like it's only about women?'

'Feminists don't want equality, they want to promote women to the disadvantage of men ...'

'... why else is it called *feminism*, eh? Eh?'

## THE SHORT ANSWER

IT'S CALLED FEMINISM BECAUSE IT'S THE FEMININE THAT IS OPPRESSED  
IT'S CALLED FEMINISM BECAUSE IT'S THE FEMININE THAT IS OPPRESSED  
IT'S CALLED FEMINISM BECAUSE IT'S THE FEMININE THAT IS OPPRESSED

Kind of like how it's called hand gel because it's gel you put on your hands, and it's called earwax because it's wax that grows inside your ears.

If it was called hand wax or ear gel, that would be something else entirely. This is how language works. (And if you want gel to stuff down your ears or wax to smear over your hands, then you've got problems beyond the scope of this book.)

## THE LONG ANSWER

Obviously there's a slightly longer answer to why it's called feminism, and that's why this book doesn't stop here but continues for another 319 pages about what feminism is – and *isn't* –, what feminists want to achieve, and of course a little bit about what it will take.

But before I launch into the long answer, I need to say that what really drives me up the wall is the supposedly well-intentioned 'oh, let's just call it egalitarianism instead of feminism, so everybody can get on board' \*spoken in a didactic fancy-pants voice\*.

Do these people approach other things that way too? Do they open the medicine cabinet, look at the Paracetamol and aspirin and go, 'But why does painkiller have the word "pain" in it? It's a tablet everybody can take, so why don't we just call it the Everybody Tablet. Why does it have to have "pain" in the word – it sounds like it's only about pain.'

Because when you're in pain, you *don't* take diarrhoea tablets or dishwasher tablets or a tablet computer. You take *pain*killers. Just as you take a course of feminist therapy when you want to fix the social disease caused by the excessive lionisation of masculinity.

This is why feminism couldn't 'just as well' be called humanism or Bob or earthworm or egalitarianism – particularly because the latter is a hopeless word that only a few people can pronounce, and we need a word everybody can say if we're going to overthrow habits that are thousands of years old.

The goal of feminism is to stop everything considered feminine being underpaid, oppressed, invisible and de-normalised. So we're not exactly off to a great start if we erase the *femi* bit from the movement that's working to make it more visible!

If people are against the word femi(nism), it's simply because they haven't grasped that making 'the feminine' visible *is* what feminism is about.

Or maybe they've grasped it all too well ...

## FEMINISM IS CRITIQUE, *NOT* IDEOLOGY

*The F Word* is my attempt to say something comprehensive about feminism. Although there are many good books on the topic, they typically only address certain elements of the feminist struggle – beauty ideals, sexism, the roles of mothers or husbands – and not the core problem itself: that 'the feminine' is oppressed.

In other words, we're trying to put forward solutions to a problem we're not talking about.

The core problem is basically that because 'the feminine' has lower status than 'the masculine', everything women contribute to the economy, art, history, science, the family and relationships is considered less significant than that which men contribute. (Hence why there is no need to make sure women are properly represented.)

*At the same time*, men distance themselves from doing 'feminine' work and expressing 'feminine' feelings. In fact, many women do too. Because there is more status – and therefore more privilege – involved in doing and expressing 'the masculine'.

The consequences of this inequality can be found *everywhere* in society: from how workloads are organised to orgasms in double beds. In human terms, the consequences are insecurity, feelings of inadequacy and unfulfilled needs, to say nothing of shame and self-loathing. On an interpersonal level, the consequences are a lack of empathy and stunted emotional skills – *and* violence, rape, conflict and war.

Feminism is about removing this inequality by giving 'the feminine' a boost – and, at certain points, doing the opposite for 'the masculine' – so that people can achieve genuine equality.

Some feminists would like to skip that step and immediately do away with all distinctions between 'masculine' and 'feminine'.

They say, 'Who says boys can't wear nail polish? Of course they can.'

My claim, however, is that because we still haven't confronted the core problem, the inequality between 'feminine' and 'masculine' keeps rearing its ugly head in new ways. *Even if* girls and boys both use nail polish.

Because then nail polish will either become something that's *only* cool if boys wear it – while girls will be called *conceited sluts* if they do wear it and lazy if they *don't*, or they will be completely ignored, *even if* their nail art is much better than the boys'.

Or nail polish for boys will be marketed as *Thunder Blood Blue Violent NOT GIRLY Nail Polish*.

This is how our current system ensures that 'the feminine' remains low status. And that's why feminism is first and foremost about dealing with this issue.

*The F Word* is a book about the *problem* that 'the feminine' is low status. Unfortunately, I don't have a simple shake-and-bake solution to this. If there was one easy solution, we wouldn't be here discussing gender again and again and again.

And to pile on a bit of extra frustration, I can't even offer you a tidy Marie Kondo-esque list of what feminists today think should be prioritised first. Because feminism is a *very* fragmented movement.

If you've been paying attention for the last ten or ... hundred and fifty years, you're bound to have seen feminists clashing over various interpretations of what 'real' feminism is. It's become commonplace to say that there are many feminisms. I disagree.

There is one feminism. But there are many feminists.

All feminists bring their own ideologies and idiosyncrasies with them to feminism, just as all feminists offer everything from solid solutions to overreactions triggered by trauma. Feminists are people, fallible and shaped by the age in which we each live.<sup>1</sup>

But *feminism* is critique, not ideology!

Even though feminists have suggestions – often very different ones – about what a good society might look like, feminism is *not* an end goal. The end goal of feminism is to remove the need for itself.

The day there is full *equality* between 'the feminine' and 'the masculine', between all genders and all sexualities, feminism will shut up shop and take a permanent holiday to Crete.

I don't expect this will be in my lifetime. Maybe it will be in my great-great-step-grandchildren's lifetimes. It's not an unrealistic goal, but we are – as you will see – up against habits that reproduce sexism because sexism is the first thing we learn in this world.

Feminism is the belief that it is possible to learn something else: to create another world. One that is equal.

Opponents of feminism often say it's an impossible project, because 'there just are differences between men and women', and 'gender isn't fluid'.

Which would be a very entertaining interpretation of sexism if it wasn't so bloody tragic: *there are differences between men and women because we create differences!*

And gender *is* fluid, but feminism didn't invent that. Nor did transactivism, Harry Styles, or people who don't bother colour-coordinating their baby's clothes with its genitals. Gender has been fluid for as long as people have walked on two legs.

Historically and culturally, 'the masculine' and 'the feminine' have constantly been defined and redefined according to whatever those in power assign high and low status.

When feminists come on the scene and say we want to do away with that difference in status, it's taken as though we want to make gender fluid or make men and women identical or whatever.

But really, we only want to do away with the fact that 'feminine' continues to be viewed as a contaminating slur that can ruin virtually anything – from moisturisers to primary schools.

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<sup>1</sup> I also bring my personal beliefs and hobbyhorses to this book, so here is the world's wildest disclaimer: you should be just as critical of what I'm saying as you should be of everything else. This book is about taking a critical stance towards the truths we have always been told. I've been doing this my whole life, so I'm pretty sure my feminist worldview holds up to scrutiny. But I may also be biased. Maybe I'm seeing sexism where there is none, because I expect to see it ...

How much does my perception of the world influence my surroundings? How much knowledge do I ignore because it doesn't fit with my preconceived notions?

Jeez, you open up a fucking rabbit hole of doubt when you ask yourself questions like that. But doubt is good. Doubt is what makes you seek out more information, listen to different versions, analyse and use your gigantic brain the way it was intended – rather than buying the version of the truth you're served up by the patriarchy. Or by me, for that matter.

On top of that, I'm white, hetero, cis, have no disabilities or psychological diagnoses or anything like that, so there are many different kinds of oppression and discrimination I cannot fully understand because I'm not personally living with the consequences of them.

Be critical! READ MORE. LISTEN MORE. LEARN MORE.

‘The feminine’ and ‘the masculine’ are *not* – and have never been – fixed values. That is more or less what this book is about. *The F Word* is a fundamentally critical look at how we value gender – and that we do so in pretty much every aspect of life.

You can read the book from cover to cover, but you can also dip into the chapters in whatever order you like. (And from page 327, you can add your own femifantastic notes.)

It all comes back to the same problem: that the ‘truths’ that have existed about gender in everything from science and art, politics and the labour market to relationships and child-rearing are permeated by the reality that ‘the masculine’ has always been valued more highly.

I believe that the only way to change something fundamental is to become aware of what you think, say and do, so *The F Word* is about dragging what’s been left unsaid into the light and giving it a name.

Along the way I will be adding in a whole boatload of wide-ranging FEMINIST DEFINITIONS, because it’s only once we have a common language for what’s going on that we can talk about it.

And if we’re talking about it, we’re already winning the battle.

***Enjoy the book. And fight the good fight!***

Sanne Søndergaard

Aarhus, 2021

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**Feminism  
is the radical  
notion that  
women are  
people.**

Marie Shear

## Chapter 1

### Women Are People. What!?

It's not exactly setting the bar high, but if we start by saying that feminism is insisting that women are people, then at least we've got a place to start.

I like Marie Shear's simple definition of feminism because so much gender discrimination is due to the fact that men are viewed as human beings while women are viewed merely as *female* human beings.

Men are humans, women are women. Men are normal, women are what diverge from normal.

If they only test medicines and airbags on men, it's because men are so normal that they've completely forgotten about the other 'abnormal' half of the population – who are physically different in terms of build and function.<sup>2</sup>

Less dangerous yet still annoying is the habit of always tagging 'women's' or 'female' onto the front of something when women enter traditionally male-dominated fields.

There are crime novels, and there are women's crime novels; there are *proper* films, and then there are chick flicks; football and women's football.

The *normal* – and the *divergent*.

Similarly, I'm rarely referred to simply as a *comedian* – always as a *female* comic or, goddess help us, a *comediienne*.

At the start of my career, male comedians pointed out that this was as it should be, since I wasn't actually a '*proper* comedian'.

It was never clear what I was doing *wrong*, because I did the same thing they did: standing on stage, telling jokes and making people clap and laugh.

It was taken as read, however, that they had the right to define whether someone was a *proper* comedian. Because that's what they were, without qualification or reservation.

Once, a woman wrote to me and said she had been dating a comic around the time I had just started in the industry. She said he came home in a temper on the nights when I performed, complaining for hours that the audience had laughed at something I said on stage when I wasn't even a *proper* comedian.

Imagine being so far up your own self-satisfied, world-domination-loving male arse that you couldn't just expand your narrow definition of a comedian – from 'a *man* who makes people laugh' to 'a *person* who makes people laugh' – but instead preferred to tell yourself I was using some sort of witchcraft-based laughing gas to trick the audience into responding.

As they say on Twitter: 'The only thing men have is the audacity.'

Feminism, then, is a critique of a system in which men and 'the masculine' are the norm, and own the power to define – while women and 'the feminine' are what diverge from the norm, and thus must always defend their legitimacy.

This system is called the patriarchy.

Put simply, you can see it like this: the F word vs the P word.

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<sup>2</sup> The fact that medication is only tested on able-bodied men is also a problem for transgender people and people with various disabilities. These test subjects, incidentally, have traditionally always been white (unless it was something dangerous), which also means that racialised people can't obtain medication designed for them either.

# **MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM**

**F**

**VS**

**P**

**The patriarchy.  
Heard of it!?**

Louise Kjølse

## Chapter 2

### The P Word, More Precisely

The patriarchy is social system we have had for many thousands of years. Unfortunately, the patriarchy refuses to acknowledge that women are, in fact, human. This is because the patriarchy is fundamentally about two things:

1. ‘the masculine’ is worth more than ‘the feminine’
2. people are *either* ‘masculine’ and have high status *or* ‘feminine’ and have low status. You can’t be both, and you can’t opt out.

It’s also one hundred percent the patriarchy, by the way, that decides what’s considered ‘masculine’ and what’s considered ‘feminine’.

Just to make it clear that the patriarchy is large and in charge.

In order to ensure the high status of ‘the masculine’, ‘the feminine’ must be constantly made invisible or oppressed. And because women embody ‘the feminine’, *they* must also be oppressed, and their experiences, emotions and ideas made invisible.

*You, Miss, do not count as an equal human being because you don’t exist in history – we have written you out of it. Here is a book about a man who sets out into the world and does something, and who is ultimately rewarded with a woman, so you understand that only men can do, feel and think anything that it is human to do, feel and think, while as a woman you must sit there like an object and wait for a man to come and breathe life into you with his dick.*

Sources: the patriarchy

Patriarch means the male head of the family: the father. The guy who literally and figuratively sits at the head of the table. The guy who makes the decisions.

While the patriarch is enthroned at the head of the table, *everybody else* more lowly ranked is seated around it.

Or maybe they’re only allowed to sit down once the patriarch is full.

Or maybe they have to stay in the kitchen all day long. Again: both literally and figuratively.

*Everybody else* is a big group, and it doesn’t just consist of women. It consists of children, of workers, of servants and slaves.<sup>3</sup> As well as men who don’t represent the *right* patriarchal qualities – either by being too ‘feminine’ (whatever that means), being queer, physically or intellectually disabled, impoverished, lacking in good connections or simply not the oldest in the family.

The patriarch, on the other hand, represents the masculine qualities and characteristics that the patriarchy prizes most highly: dynamism, daring, decisiveness, wisdom and logic. Although these do shift a little, depending on what’s in fashion.

The patriarch’s experiences, emotions and ideas are the only ones that count in the patriarchy. They’re trumpeted as being massively, awe-inspiringly significant *and* at the same time universal.

Which is actually a bit of a paradox, but despite the dogged insistence that logic is one of the preeminent masculine qualities, the patriarchy itself is a ... **TOTALLY ILLOGICAL CONSTRUCT.**

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<sup>3</sup> This is not a text about slaves in the distant past. There are millions of people right now from third-world countries working under slave-like conditions in wealthier ones, or simply in wealthier households. The patriarchy likes the capitalist and global exploitation of human beings. Which isn’t really all that odd, given that it’s the patriarchy’s own invention.

## THE POWER TO DEFINE ABSOLUTE POWER

Ruling from the head of the table is, of course, a superpower. Sadly, power has a tendency to corrupt. Few people can handle it, and the patriarchy has historically exploited its position to award itself more and more privileges and fewer to everybody else.

Financial and political power are two of the greatest privileges the patriarchy has bagged for itself. Which meant that until around a hundred years ago, only a tiny fraction of the (white) male population was able to vote and be financially independent.

Bodily self-determination is also a privilege, however, one that the male ruling class has always secured for itself.

At the same time, it has deprived all other groups of precisely that self-determination through various means, including everything from patting secretaries on the bum to rape, forced labour, forced marriages and forced sterilisations of both women and men from 'undesirable' groups, hospitalisations and imprisonments, lobotomies and other atrocities, all of which testify to the patriarchy's cheek-by-jowl relationship with racism, homophobia and other forms of oppression.<sup>4</sup>

The greatest privilege, however, is having THE POWER TO DEFINE: the power to define what is right and wrong, normal and divergent, what is worth the most and *who* is worth the most.

In Denmark in 2004, they introduced a literary canon that included fourteen writers schoolchildren *had* to read.<sup>5</sup> The canon consists of thirteen men and Karen Blixen – and from the start it was criticised by feminists for undervaluing the significance and influence of female writers. (Including such authors as Leonora Christina Ulfeldt, Inger Christensen and Tove Ditlevsen.)

In April 2021, the Danish Teachers' Association picked up the baton, criticising the lack of gender representation in the canon. Morten Hesseldahl, the managing director of Gyldendal and formerly on the committee that helped choose the authors for the canon, commented to *Politiken*, 'It would be a falsification of history to give women more significance than they de facto had, simply to live up to a new era's expectations about gender ratios. It's a sub-standard argument for swapping them in, and that has never been the point of the canon.'

*A falsification of history, no less.*

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<sup>4</sup> When you're dealing with several systems of oppression at once, this is called INTERSECTIONALITY. Because power and oppression are complex things, a person can be simultaneously oppressed/made invisible in one system and empowered in another: for example, a white woman and a man whose skin colour is not white – each is the norm in one category and 'divergent' in the other.

This is why most modern feminists are also INTERSECTIONAL in their critique of power and systems.

I call all 'non-white' people RACIALISED, by the way, because in my eyes expressions like 'of other ethnic origin' have a certain hidden racism built-in: they imply that Danish/white is normal and anything else *diverges* from that. 'Racialised', however, literally just means 'made to be another race'. In other words, it's built into the word that babbling on about other people's race is something that those with the power to define invented to separate *them* from *us*.

Unfortunately, it's impossible to talk about racism without racialising, just as you can't talk about sexism without assigning gender. It's an inherent paradox: in order to discuss the problem of distinguishing between 'the normal' and 'the divergent', you need to use language that also makes distinctions.

<sup>5</sup> In 2004 a number of cultural canons were introduced, including for art, architecture and music. There are bizarrely few women in them. The canon for popular music includes TV2, Kliché and Gasolin, but not, for instance, Anne Linnet.

No, actually: it's the very definition of the power to define! In fact, to ignore significant female writers is to falsify history every bit as much. It all depends on *who* is allowed to define what is significant.

It depends on *who* is writing history.

The patriarchy has thoroughly and consistently oppressed, disempowered and made women and 'the feminine' invisible for centuries. Millennia, actually. And now that the feminist critique of the system is finally beginning to topple the white, phallic ivory tower, the patriarchy is naturally fighting back with the power it has always used: the power to define.

The patriarchy defines any criticism of itself as invalid while defining its own truth and history as the only things that *are* valid – AND uses its former disempowerment and exclusion to justify all future disempowerment and exclusion.

*The fact that we didn't allow women to mean anything before  
proves that women don't mean anything now.*

Sources: the patriarchy

**If you stand for equality,  
then you're a feminist.  
Sorry to tell you.**

Emma Watson

## Chapter 3

### Equivalent to Equality

The inequality we live with today is the result of thousands of years of a rapacious, corrupting patriarchal power that has enriched itself while at the same time undermining the equal humanity and significance of everybody else.

When I say that feminism is a battle against the patriarchy, it means that no one is entitled to sit at the head of the table and rule simply because they were born with a certain gender, skin colour, sexuality or body.

That all human beings are of equal value is the fundamental premise of feminism.

It means that *if* someone is going to sit at the head of the table, it's going to be the person most qualified to sit there – regardless of gender, skin colour, sexuality and body.<sup>6</sup>

BUT BUT

The most important aspect of feminism is that we are critical of *who* has the power to define: *who* gets to decide what 'most qualified' means.

Quite simply, feminism demands that we tear down the existing criteria for sitting at the head of the table or playing at Glastonbury, making CEO or being important enough for the canon, and build new ones that are based on equality – and not on the *this is the way we've always done it, because penis* principle.

As long as the same white, heterosexual men are allowed to define *proper* comedians/musicians/professors/authors/you name it, we're still at square one.

They will forever repeat that Bowie is better than Beyoncé, that life is too short for women's football – and as soon as the UN's Global Goals and diversity junta looks away, they will revert to hiring only white, heterosexual men who look like the white, heterosexual men that were already there, in an eternal merry-go-round.

Equality means that *all human beings* are *of equal value*: which in turn means that all human beings deserve the same respect. An equal society is one in which nobody has to work their fingers to the bone to achieve the respect and status other people are awarded automatically by virtue of their gender, skin colour and so on.

It's obvious, then, that a man who constructs a motorway bridge shouldn't be given a bigger paycheck than a woman who does the same thing. A female chef shouldn't be paid less than man with the same length of service and experience. This is simply equality of *opportunity*, and most people these days are in favour of that: equal pay for equal work and all that stuff.

BUT BUT

Equality in terms of *value* and *respect* can only be achieved by taking a thorough, critical approach to *what* is valued and *how* value is assigned in society.

Do a man's words carry more weight than a woman's? Is (masculine) production work valued more highly than (feminine) care work? Is a work of art perceived as more meaningful if a man created it than if a woman did? Does it result in greater acknowledgment when a dad changes nappies than when a mum does?

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<sup>6</sup> Feminism is also sceptical of whether there even needs to be one head of the table. Why isn't the table round? Why isn't there a randomised system that assigns the head of the table at each mealtime? We do have the technology, after all ...

Do we have DOUBLE STANDARDS that reward men for something we punish women for? Grey hair and ambitions, for example.

When we see a little girl climb a tree, do we say, 'that's one tough girl', while we look askance at her brother, who's crying because he fell off the bottom branch?

Nothing illustrates the difference in status between 'the feminine' and 'the masculine' better than the words 'tomboy' and 'mummy's boy': a girl that has a touch of boyishness about her is awarded higher status; a boy who has a touch of girlishness is ... embarrassing.

*You throw like a girl and drive like an old lady.*

Sources: the patriarchy

Under the patriarchy, it's humiliating for a boy to be compared to a girl. Being like a girl is equivalent to not being good enough: it means having lower status, being worth less.<sup>7</sup>

Basically, 'You X like a girl' means all of the following things:

- you aren't a *proper* boy if you're not good at X
- girls are useless at X
- whatever you do, don't be like a girl
- being a boy is *better* than being a girl
- AND girls don't merit the same respect as boys.

In an equal society, you would never be able to use one type of person as a derogatory slur towards another type of person. It would make no sense.

In an equal society, being good at sports wouldn't automatically take precedence over, say, embroidery, and a portfolio manager wouldn't necessarily be more highly paid than a teacher, and YOU KNOW WHAT: I could list differences in status under the patriarchy until I'm blue in the face. So let's play a game. Here are several more. Add the ones that irritate you.

**being tough and unimpressed** has more status than **being enthusiastic and keen**  
**a cool car** has more status than **a bike**  
**a marathon** has more status than **a walk in the woods**  
**'investing in' tech gadgets** has more status than **'shopping' for clothes**  
**discussing politics** has more status than **talking about your child's first ...**  
**believing in God / Jehovah / Allah / atheism** has more status than **believing in astrology**  
**logic** has more status than **feelings**

Differences in status aren't bad *in and of themselves*. In our society, some differences in status do make sense. Giving sustainable wooden furniture higher status than cheap plastic crap is a value that personally I'm completely fine with. And the climate's on my side, so I'm right.

The point is that values aren't something that mysteriously arise of their own accord because aliens have foisted on us phenomena like marriage, Jake Paul and an obsession with youth. As a society, we *decide* all the time which values are important. Values, in that sense, are a kind of fashion trend. Some are always in style, others come and go.

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<sup>7</sup> Go to YouTube and watch the powerful video (and advertisement) 'Always like a girl'. Spoiler: in the video, adult men and women as well as boys are asked to demonstrate 'running like a girl', 'fighting like a girl' and 'throwing like a girl'. They all came up with crudely caricatured, helpless, unsporty and inept versions. Then they bring in a series of girls and ask them to do the same thing: they all perform skilfully and powerfully. 'What does it mean to you when I say 'run like a girl?'' the director asks a girl about five years old. She replies, 'It means to run as fast as you can.'

But values are *within our control*. We *decide* what we want society to look like: what is accorded status and who merits respect.

And I mean it when I say *we*.

Because the patriarchy is *you*, too – and it's *me*. It's no longer just \*generic white men at the heads of tables\* who shape society. Today, we all participate in deciding what is accorded (or continues to be accorded) value and status.

In *The F Word*, I've pretty consistently referred to the patriarchy as an entity. As though it were a clear and distinct thing that's the enemy of feminism. I do this because it's infinitely easier to go into battle if you know who your opponent is.

The problem is that it makes the patriarchy sound like an organised club or brotherhood – a kind of Illuminati run by hooded men who meet in secret torchlit chambers underground, where they perform ancient rituals and plan MTV's programming.

But the patriarchy isn't an organisation. The patriarchy has no leaders, the patriarchy has only followers. And worst of all, we typically don't even realise we're its footsoldiers.

This is because we are born into the patriarchy. We are surrounded by it: we never learned any different.

We are *all* complicit in reproducing the patriarchy's valuation of 'the masculine' as something with higher status than 'the feminine'. Yes, even the people most negatively affected by disempowerment and oppression – even we are sometimes complicit in upholding these degrading values.<sup>8</sup>

Because values are habits, and habits are hard to change.

Just like it's hard to stop saying 'nice' and 'bummer' once you've incorporated those monstrosities into your repertoire, and it takes willpower to change that bad habit. But the first step is deciding to update your slang so you don't sound like an influencer from the 2000s for the rest of your life.

In the same way, our values and status symbols are stuck in an ancient system whereby man is the default human and 'the feminine' is hidden away, simply because we haven't quiiiiite got our act together enough to update society's operating system from *Patriarchy 10.342.0* to *Equality 1.0*.

You know, because you've kind of been hoping the system would update itself overnight, but then you realise you need to start the update yourself, and you need to accept terms and conditions and stuff like that. And that's suuuuuuch a pain.

It's just that time is running out, and before long the whole machine will break down if we don't update it. And the climate's on my side again, so I'm right!

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<sup>8</sup> It's called INTERNALISATION when you take society's norms and incorporate them into your personality. We all do it as part of our upbringing, for better and for worse. It's good that we're able to learn to adapt and get on in society, but it's awful when adapting means squeezing yourself into narrow, undervalued roles.