

FUNERAL ORATION FOR THE BURIAL OF 'HAVE IT ALL' WOMANHOOD

You see here the remains of a female human being who during her lifetime was a familiar figure to billions of people in every corner of the world. For many years there has been considerable controversy as to whether she actually existed. We have proof now that prior to her untimely demise, 'Womanhood did in fact lead a full and satisfying existence, conquering aspects of human social life that had been previously thought to exclude women, that is, the world of money and career satisfaction. Yet as a master of multi-tasking and prioritization, she also upheld the characteristics of her sex by maintaining the social bonds of family, heterosexual love and orgasmic satisfaction.

As human beings, both men and women are sentient and social creatures and yet for centuries the labor of domestic life was considered the domain of women alone, while the public realm of breadwinning was that of men, that is, until the birth of 'Have it all' Womanhood. This brave creature decided to carry the responsibility of both roles, even though in only rare cases did men decide to share her responsibilities and do the same. Her courage is also marked by the fact that society continued to believe that women doing the work of breadwinners should receive less money than men, despite doing the same jobs to the same standards. Though 'Have it all' Womanhood had the benefits of timesaving electronics such as washing machines, dishwashers, crock-pots and food processers, not to mention assorted Apple and Blackberry devices and of course a practical-yet-stylish kitchen island, she did not live in a society in which slaves, servants or nannies were the norm, as it did earlier human generations. Moreover, in 'Have it all' Womanhood's age and context the supportive human ties of community and extended family had already greatly diminished, which meant that another woman was usually employed to take on some of the domestic chores that 'Have it all' Womanhood could no longer perform. Thus with the birth of 'Have it all' Womanhood, Surrogate Womanhood was also born.

Even though Surrogate Womanhood took part in the world of work as 'Have it all' Womanhood did, since her work was carried out only in the private, domestic realm it was undervalued and underpaid. The prestige and perks of 'having it all' were denied to Surrogate Womanhood, who often had to neglect her own domestic, familial life for the sake of her work. 'Have it all' Womanhood said to her Surrogate: *your needs and fulfilment are secondary to mine, your family less important and therefore requires less focused attention and time than mine. You should be happy doing the domestic work that men and now I cannot do because we are pursuing higher paid, greater prestige careers that we feel to be more fulfilling and worthwhile than the tasks we leave over for you.*

I recognise that you must want the fulfilment and status that I have, but because you were born into a different socio-economic strata and were unable to obtain the education to surpass this, I need you to clean the house and pick up the children from school and look after the baby while I work because I don't have an extended family to do this for me and my partner works too. My work fulfils me, gives me purpose and makes me on par with men, not only that, it gives us the financial independence to afford to pay you so that you can survive too. If you were to demand the same pay as I receive, we would not be able to afford it and I would have to sacrifice pursuing my career. I need you to accept the pay I can provide you and your low status. I appreciate your flexibility, but high pay and status are for me and for men, not you.

'Have it all' Womanhood may have seemed happy with her lot, however, it was at the expense of other women and not necessarily the result of the idealistically equal society called for by women's lib, as she might have liked to imagine. She blamed herself for her limitations, for her difficulties in finding the perfect balance between work and home, as she tried to adapt to what was still an unequal world. She told herself and others that she was happy attempting to be both the ideal homemaker and the prosperous career woman, knowing that she was always falling short at one or the other because of the tremendous pressures she faced to compete with those who had taken on only one of these functions. When she left her baby with a surrogate and went off to work on an extended business trip, she told herself "Why should I feel guilty? Men have done this for centuries!" Yet the guilt lingered. When she didn't get that longed-for

promotion, she tried to shake off the bitter envy she felt toward more successful peers by saying to herself: "It's because I like to be home for the bedtime routine". The time she served catered food in her best chaffing dishes because the elegant three-course meal she had attempted to cook had burnt to a crisp; she comforted herself by picturing Nigella Lawson snorting cocaine and Martha Stewart serving time in prison. Never the less, her feelings of inferiority mounted.

Though 'Have it all' Womanhood was a fabulous dame, the go-getting woman finally died today - her doctor said, of a bad case of lingering depression, chronic fatigue and one killer migraine. Her high adrenaline levels and love of footwear had managed to keep her alive for several decades. She survived the cold war. She survived the financial crisis. She survived the Occupy movement. And she survived some minor complications from her many face-liftings. She was burning her candle at both ends and she finally went out with a fizzle.

Some gallery-goers are probably wondering why we have decided to house her remains here, albeit temporarily and why we should bother with such an unimportant matter at a time like this. Why should we bury 'Have it all' Womanhood while overseas wars are waging, the unequal distribution of wealth continues to perpetuate the cycle of poverty and the planet is being fracked? It would seem that our number one task is to devote our energies directly to ending these plagues. People who ask a question like this are failing to see that they really do have a problem as women in the Western world... that their problem is social, not merely personal... and that their problem is so closely related and interlocked with the other problems in our world, the very problem of war itself. Since war, oppression and inequality are the result of entitlement, greed and bigotry, we cannot hope to move toward a better world or even a truly democratic society until we begin to solve our own problems.

How many people failed to come to our exhibition today because they were afraid of showing an interest in the f-word? How many more people failed to join us today because they've been taught to believe that feminists are just a bunch of men-hating lesbians? Or because they believe women's art exhibitions are no longer necessary? And how many thousands of people all across London failed to join us because they think so little of themselves that they feel incapable of thinking for themselves... about unequal representation, gender normativity or anything else. And if feminists come to conclusions of their own, how many of us fail to express these ideas, much less argue and demonstrate for them because we're afraid of seeming unattractive or being labelled 'essentialist'?

Yes, sisters, along with 'having it all', we have a problem as women all right, as people in fact, a problem which renders us powerless and ineffective over the issues of war and peace, as well as over our own lives. Our problem is Manhood as much as 'Have it all' Womanhood, therefore we must begin on the solution together. We cannot solve it independently or individually as earlier feminist generations attempted to do. We must organize so that there can be no Surrogate Womanhood. We *all* should have the right to lead full independent as well as social lives, not just a privileged few; we should *all* have our fair share of private life and a fair chance in public life. This is not a problem that individuals can solve; we must rally against the clockwork of male careers that renders each of us, regardless of sex, a slave to the pressures of capitalist competition. We must recognize that we cannot change the role of women without changing the career system based on competition, and we cannot change that without altering the economy and our society's values.

'Have it all' Womanhood merely extended bourgeois individualism, fitting nicely into the distortion of the importance of success verses moral purpose. We need to swap 'doing well' for 'doing good' and democratize and reward the cooperative, care-taking, ethical, not-always-lived-up-to womanly virtues of the past. And that is why you must join me in burying 'Have it all' Womanhood now and Surrogate Womanhood along with her. It is only a symbolic happening, of course, and we have a lot of real work to do. We have new men as well as a new society to build.