

*A book proposal for*

# **WOMANGATE**

*Common Sense Feminism:  
A Game Changer for  
Women Today*

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## **BOOK PROPOSAL BACKGROUND AND USP**

### **WOMANGATE**

*Common Sense Feminism:  
A Game Changer for  
Women Today*

Louise Burfitt-Dons

### **THE CONTENT**

#### **A. Premise**

Narrative Non-Fiction based on interpretation of feminist events post 1963 and suggestions for the future.

#### **B. Unique Selling Proposition**

If consumers in the target market buy and read *Womangate* then they will be

- Brought up to speed on the history of feminism before and after Womangate
- Convinced we still need a feminist movement, but one built on gender basics rather than feminist theory

*Because the book will*

- Expose how a successful equality movement lost touch with reality
- Suggest a fresh approach for feminist activists trying to resolve issues of inequality and rising sexual violence

- Endeavour to sell feminism to a new audience who support gender equality but are uncomfortable with way the movement has become too radicalised

*Other appeal*

- A page turner not an academic text
- Wealth of research
- New views on the topic of our times
- The book to broaden the debate
- Instant grasp of ideology
- Proven subject of interest

### **C. The Overview**

The manuscript will be divided into three parts.

#### **Part 1. How Womangate Distorted Feminism**

I open with an introduction explaining how and why I came to write this book—a chain of events and misrepresentation of facts and stats which took place from the 1960s. These perpetuated a range of myths, took feminism in a distinctly radical direction and consequently lost popular support. Ironically this new course has resulted in greater social disharmony with an increase in marriage breakdown and state and welfare dependency, a rising tide of violence against women in the Western world and a shattering of the notion of sisterhood.

**The Womangate Myths:** All Men Are Evil – All Women Are Victims – Men and Women Can Be Made the Same – Sisterhood Is Superior – Feminism Can Only Be Radical – Feminism Needs More Regulation – Feminism Will End Inequality – Feminism Will Make Women Happier

#### **Part 11. What We Can Learn From Womangate**

In this section I make the case that feminism has reached a crucial point and needs to put right the misrepresentations of the post Womangate period.

**The Feminist Focus:** Getting Men Back Into Feminism – Ending FGM – Stopping Forced Marriage – Equal Pay – Promoting Education for Women – Tougher Sentences for Rape and Honour Killings – Ending The Stand Against Child Pornography – Promotion of the Value of Motherhood – Fighting Extremism and Radicalisation

#### **Part 111: The Future of Feminism**

This closing section is an overview of the future of feminism.

**Consolidation and Compromise:** Conservation of the Achievements of Feminism – Promotion of Femininity as a Value – Campaigning for Equal Opportunity Rather Than Equal Outcome – Promoting of Freedom of Individual Choice

#### **Interviews and Research**

This book is based on extensive, diverse research and personal observations. I draw on opinions across the feminist debate, balancing the views to achieve reasoned conclusions.

### **The Manuscript**

**Manuscript status.** A short introduction and two chapters are completed (both are attached to this proposal as sample chapters)

**Anticipated length:** 75,000 words

**Anticipated manuscript completion date:** Approximately six months after receiving publisher commitment.

## **11. THE MARKET**

**Characteristics.** The intended audience will be men and women who believe in gender equality for themselves and their children but have become disenfranchised from the feminist movement in recent times. They probably will have sons and daughters who believe in the common sense view that men and women have very different abilities and want to see a fairer and less fractured society.

**Motivations.** The female audience will want to know whether they are feminists or not, and become better informed on the subject. The male audience will want to know whether it's still ok to open a door for a woman or if it will be spurned as a sexist gesture in today's world.

### **Affinity Groups.**

- People who have an interest in feminism issues
- Students of gender studies
- Policy makers
- Counsellors and social workers
- Leadership coaches
- Businesses which employ women
- General Interest

### **Competition**

Feminism is a commercial topic today. There are plenty of new books coming out to meet the growing demand for knowledge on modern female empowerment and to cover the many disparate women's movements which have evolved in recent years. Where my manuscript stands alone is in its realistic perspective on one of the most divisive subjects of our age.

## SUGGESTED JACKET BLURB

Womangate explores how the feminist brand became so toxic that it is now referred to disparagingly by the letter F. From the events of the 1960s and 1970s when women were first encouraged en masse to take up independent careers rather than settle for becoming just a housewife and mother, to today's hypersensitive generation attributing even the slightest compliment as misogynistic and sexist, it asks, 'How did feminism become so self-obsessed?'

Exposing the origin of the myths that first cast all men as baddies and all women as victims, Louise Burfitt-Dons argues the case for a moderate approach based on a more realistic view of gender differences.

This is a viewpoint and fresh perspective from someone who was a child growing up in the Middle East during the period. Reading her account will transform how you see a movement that is undergoing a political, cultural and media validation like never before.

Womangate is a book to heal wounds and inspire change.

## 111. THE AUTHOR

### Background

I was born in Kuwait in 1953 and have experienced first-hand most of the changes brought about by Womangate. Today I am a writer and social commentator living in London. In 2000 I founded children's charity Act Against Bullying which has conducted research into girl on girl intimidation techniques, as well as sexual grooming and exploitation of young women.

### Previous Writing.

As a playwright my plays were produced in Australia in the 1980s. My first book was entitled How To Catch A Man, Ashley Books, 1991 which was written under the name of Louise Byres and covered profiling of women. In recent years I have had published journal articles on coping techniques which are also central to this work. My editorial opinions on feminist issues have been broadly featured in literary magazines such as The RSA Journal and on political blogs like Conservative Home.

### Additional Personal Marketing

- I am listed with keynote speaker bureau Women Speakers.
- In 2011 addressed an audience of 2000 feminists at Westminster Hall on motivation.

- Initiated the RSA Women Speaker Network and chaired four public debates on feminist topics at Somerset House, Institute of Mechanical Engineers, and Dartmouth House.
- Featured in the Cambridge Union Feminist debates in 2011 and 2014 and addressed the CUCA in 2015 on feminism.
- School assembly speaker on safety issues on the internet in post-feminist society.
- Established The Common Sense Feminist blog in 2013 with 10,975 followers
- Featured and listed on Wikipedia as a noted feminist.
- Three twitter accounts – @ComSenseFem @MotivatingWoman @LouiseBurfDons with approx. 50,000 followers.
- Participant in seminars and forums on women's issues.
- As a social commentator promoting my views on women's issues on Sky News, Good Morning America, Channel Four News, ITV News London, ITN, BBC Breakfast and Talk Radio Europe, BBC Surrey and BBC Sussex, BBC Oxford, LBC, Radio Four PM, The World Tonight. I have been a regular news reviewer on the Ian Collins current affairs show Roundtable on LBC.

## CHAPTER BY CHAPTER SYNOPSIS

### **Introduction: Why I Wrote This Book**

I open with my reasons for writing Womangate. As a motivational speaker for women I am invited to participate in the Fresher's Feminist Debate at Cambridge and offered a choice of sides. It is my own 'Am I A Feminist?' moment. When I chart the history of feminism, I find a flex point in 1963 when it massively changed direction. I believe that led to a spate of social problems which were not envisaged at the time. I refer to that period as **Womangate**.

### **Part 1. How Womangate Misled Future Generations**

#### **Chapter One: The Anti-Male Label.**

This chapter begins with a few lines from a Mills and Boon style love story. I then use this to provoke thinking around how much our world has changed in the past forty years as a result of the feminist anti-male rhetoric. I illustrate this by telling the experience Sir Timothy Hunt had, a Nobel Prize winning scientist who was forced to resign his post at UCL because of a quip he made at a Women in Science conference in Seoul in 2015. It was considered highly offensive by the feminist lobby. I then go on to cover events pre- and post-Womangate to demonstrate how patriarchy became a bigger problem that it should have been.

#### **Chapter Two: The Unisex Myth**

Toys are more divided today by gender than they were fifty years ago, debunking the theory behind experiments which were carried out in the 70s during Womangate which were supposed to prove that it was entirely social and cultural factors which were conditioning children's attitudes and thereby holding women back from full equality in the workplace. This section begins with my visiting Jakob's Bar in Skagen in Northern Denmark to find out what women in the most feminised country on earth think about the differences between the sexes. Did they consider themselves to be a unisex nation? I cover why feminism pitched unisexuality as part of **Womangate** and my concerns that, as a result, women are now more vulnerable than ever to some forms of domestic and street violence.

**Chapter Three: The Unhappy Housewife Myth**

I open with my mother reading the book *The Feminine Mystique* in our home in Kuwait. In this section I address the various issues raised in the bestselling work by Betty Friedan. I cover the known epidemic of “mother’s little helper” Valium addiction and challenge some of the principles raised in the text. This chapter also focuses on the concept of sisterhood and the misconception that women are always there for one another. It explains how the term *sisterhood* actually came about after **Womangate** and why it did. Perversely the sisterhood idea has led to an oversimplified and deeply flawed argument that all women are a group working together for their common good.

**Chapter Four: The Altruism Myth**

Is feminism a movement just for the benefit of women or is it now a war against the male gender and all it represents? While clearly it has helped women achieve the vote, legal abortion and financial independence, Post **Womangate** it morphed into a moral crusade which has had unintended outcomes. In this chapter I look at the backlash effect of the unrealistic objectives promised by feminism of the 60s and what happens to those who dare to criticise its assumptions. I cover the study by Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers which shows that women’s happiness has declined more than men’s since 1972, and why more and more women are going to prison in the UK and US. I look at the story of feminist judge Elizabeth Roscoe who ordered the destruction of artistic works by Graham Ovenden, Pierre Louys, and Wilhelm von Pluschow on the grounds of their paedophilic content. The attempt to show the cost of feminism as paramount can be a threat to the freedom of artistic expression.

**Chapter Five: The Feminist Leader Myth**

This chapter starts with the story of Charlotte Proudman, the barrister who accused a male solicitor of sexism after he described her photograph on the business website LinkedIn as 'stunning'. The ensuing publicity storm divided opinion over whether feminism had become too oversensitive. I outline how, since **Womangate**, feminism has become associated less with promoting leadership on important issues, and more promoting a culture of victimhood and an obsession with identity politics. In it I share some of the over-reactions by radical feminists to everyday events post-**Womangate** and explain how this undermines the vital but and legitimate goals of the women’s movement.

**Chapter Six: The Equality Myth**

Recent research has shown that the greatest cause of economic disparity has come not from current economic policies but more from family breakdown (as in Chapter Five). I also cover the issue of female group culture and Queen Bee syndrome. Recent findings now point to the inequity increase between women themselves with high earning executives now considered to have more in common with their male colleagues than their lesser earning 'sisters'. I cover some of the indirect economic costs on women as a result of **Womangate** which has left many poorer and more disadvantaged than ever.

**Part 11: Post Womangate: What Feminism Must Address****Chapter Seven: Men's Role In Feminism**

Following the suicide of a close male friend, a student at Durham University attempts to set up a men's support group, only to find his proposals blocked by the Students' Union on the grounds that the organisation's would be 'too similar to those of the feminist society'. More male consensus is the point of this chapter. I cover what some men's rights groups want and make the case for a more progressive and cooperative ideology to help tackle modern issues such as sexual violence and pornography, equal pay and domestic sharing duties. Pre-**Womangate** men and women were working more harmoniously on equality issues.

**Chapter Eight: The Extremist Backlash Against Feminism**

Feminism should be at the forefront of promoting community cohesion and combatting extremism. The story of the ISIS fighter from High Wycombe who published advice for British jihadi brides urging them to 'cook nice food' for their husbands and 'be presentable in your appearance' shows how far feminism has yet to go. I cover and compare the backlash of the 1990s with the counter feminist movement today. In citing examples from India where large scale membership of women on local councils has been effective in reducing crime rates and attacks on women, I argue how focussed feminism can make its mark in this way. Studies of macho countries like Honduras and Mexico reveal how fledgling feminist organisations need vital support.

**Chapter Nine: The Lost Culture of Motherhood**

I open this chapter with the story of a lecture which I found on You Tube where a College Professor is asking her students to suggest role

models. ‘Hilary Clinton’, she prompts hopefully, ‘Or Maggie Thatcher, Germaine Greer?’ One by one the students diffidently cite their mothers as examples of women they would most like to emulate. Motherhood and matriarchy are the focus of this section and the history of the maternal feminism movement which was side-lined after **Womangate**. Getting married and having a family is less valued today than fifty years ago but this trend is now seen to be reversing.

**Chapter Ten: An Inconvenient Truth: Consumerism**

This section opens with reference to the 1990 book *The Beauty Myth* by Naomi Wolf who asserted that as the social power and prominence of women increased, so too did the pressure imposed to adhere to unrealistic standards of physical beauty. I look at the whole aspect of consumerism, and the part this continues to play on the feminist agenda

**Chapter Eleven: Sexual Violence and Pornography**

A sea change for feminism was the advent of the internet. Technology itself is just one of many reasons for the need to rewrite the policies which underpin women’s equality. In this chapter I make the case for the focus on missing and exploited children to be a mainstream feminist issue but also that boys and men are victims too. Using the story of Meghan Alt, a 25 year old mother of three and once Pageant winner being charged with using a 4-year-old relative to make child porn is an illustration of the types of problems we are dealing with but how women too can be perpetrators. It explains why feminist organisations disagree over this issue, and cover the recent period of the ‘sex wars’.

**Chapter Twelve: Forced Marriage and Honour Killings**

Forced marriage and honour killings are a leading feminist issue. It is illustrated by the example of a 34-year-old man who was the first person to be convicted after a new bill was passed banning it. The reason he couldn’t be named is because of potential repercussions on his victim from the family, even though she is a woman in her mid-twenties. I use this as an example of the difficulties of framing legislation to penalise cultural traditions which conflict with western values regarding women’s rights. Covers sharia law, and multicultural issues.

**Part 111: Future Feminism: Consolidation and Consideration**

**Chapter Thirteen: Campaigning for Equal Opportunity**

I open this chapter with Margaret Thatcher's opinion that the best way for women to win the sex war and get ahead was to shut up about it. Was she right? The promotion of equal opportunity rather than legislation is covered, what's worked and what hasn't citing examples from Finland, the EU, UK, Africa and the US.

**Chapter Fourteen: Promoting Freedom of Choice for Women**

Future feminism must make the conditions possible for women to achieve their dreams whether they be reaching the upper echelons of business, society or sport, creating a happy family or, for indeed, a blend of the two. I make the case for the importance of the freedom of opportunity. My opening describes an event where I am giving a motivational speech at Westminster Hall to an all women audience in which I express my personal view that women live by an inbuilt intuitive compass which adapts to personal opportunities and responsibilities.

**Chapter Fifteen: Promotion of Femininity as a Virtue Not A Vice**

The growing interest in anxiety cures and new age therapies since **Womangate** is an example of how the radical branch of feminism is not delivering all that women need. My conclusion based on long years of research is that what women really look for to completely fulfil their lives is often out of their control. I argue the case for a common sense approach to feminism which at its core acknowledges the intrinsic values of femininity as a strength and not a weakness.

**Chapter Sixteen The Way Forward for Feminism**

Despite the undeniable advances in education, career opportunity and quality of life which women have achieved over recent history the movement has been hijacked by extremists who threaten future progress. In this closing chapter I point the way forward. By building on past achievements, and changing direction to take in the broad sweep of women's innate abilities in a realistic way and capitalising on them, feminism will be able to allow each and every woman to develop to her full potential.

**Bibliography and Index**

## **SAMPLE INTRODUCTION**

### **GETTING FEMINISM BACK ON TRACK**

Common sense is seeing things as they are;  
And doing things as they ought to be  
*Harriet Beecher Stowe*

#### **Why I Wrote This Book**

In September 2009 I received an email from the Cambridge Union inviting me to participate in their annual Feminist debate. The motion was, ‘This House Believes We'd Be Better off If Women Ruled the World.’

As someone who had given motivational talks for women, the CU Officers were more than a bit curious as to which side of the debate I would choose. Was I an ultra-feminist or not?

It was my very own ‘What sort of Feminist am I?’ moment.

I deliberated for a while, but finally plumped for the support side of the motion. I have often since pondered why it was such a difficult choice for me to make. As always, things aren't black and white. Joining the Opposition would make me an anti-feminist, which I'm certainly not. On the other side believing women ruling the world would make it better is not a concept I could morally and intellectually support. My views didn't really put me in either camp. I have a profound respect for the wide spectrum of women's' innate abilities

including leadership, but that doesn't mean I think that the world would work any better if they led it exclusively.

As I researched the subject in a technical way to find an answer, I quickly came across feminist dogma which just didn't stack up, and a series of events, which I'd had lived through in the 1960s and 1970s, which also didn't add up. The more I delved, the more convinced I became that a deliberate misrepresentation of facts and stats had been made to revitalise an equality movement. I have referred to when that began as Womangate.

Since the Cambridge debate, there has been further ratcheting up of radical feminism. The ideology has today become so toxic that those who once supported its goals are now actively disassociating themselves from it. The hysterical phrases streaming out from those who have hijacked the movement condemning any and all examples of what is now considered sexist behaviour make daily headlines. Feminism, once supported for its noble and valid objectives, is now derogatorily referred to by the letter "F".

There are undoubtedly many issues feminism has yet to resolve in the areas of inequality, rising sexual violence and others, but to achieve that it needs to go back to the gender basics and not be based on a theory which is completely divorced from reality.

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### **Womangate**

'Womangate' was a watershed point of feminist activity which started in 1963 in the United States, and quickly spread throughout the Western world.

Before this point, the movement to define, establish, and achieve equal political, economic, cultural, personal, and social rights for women focused mainly on suffrage and overturning legal obstacles to gender equality by way of voting, work, educational opportunities and property rights. What came after it sought, through literary works, academic discourse and protest, to broaden the aims of the women's liberation movement. These were to eradicate completely, all forms of traditional gender roles in society under the rationale that they were causing discrimination against women in the workplace.

At a time when mainstream women were already making strides in the professions, military, media, and sports, in large part because of effective feminist advocacy, women's rights groups sought to extend the campaign against gender inequality to challenge assumed biological differences. After conducting selective studies of the lifestyles of white, middle class, educated women, proponents of the new aggressive strand of feminism post-Womangate declared the patriarch system itself was responsible for inequality and that women from all backgrounds and cultures were suffering a form of sexual objectification as a result.

The ramifications of the change of direction post-Womangate are being felt today as the feminist movement seeks to redefine goals which completely refute the biological differences between men and women.

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## **SAMPLE CHAPTER ONE**

### **THE ANTI-MALE TAG**

Being a woman is a terribly difficult task,  
since it consists principally in dealing with men.

*Joseph Conrad*

#### **Witch Hunt of Prominent Men**

“You can’t be the famous Nobel prize winning scientist!” the new auburn-haired laboratory assistant repeated. The man she had just been introduced to appeared much younger than she’d imagined him to look in real life.

“I can assure you I am,” the prize-winner said, taking in her ultra-slim form.

Avril had been quietly studying scrapings of tree bark under her microscope when the Personnel Director interrupted her work by opening the door and entering the room, the lanky scientist trailing behind her.

‘Professor, this is your new temporary Assistant, Miss Blackmore,’ she’d said. And with not a word more, Mrs Evans, whom Avril had met only once when she’d first applied for the two week post, swivelled on her feet and rushed away leaving them alone, together.....

These few lines are the sort of thing magazines were churning out in the mid-1970s. Women wanted to read romance stories and this was a classic opener. There was a strong market for the ‘chauvinist scientist seduces lab assistant’ sort of fiction.

However, by June 2015, forty years on, this lab-love scenario which I’ve mocked up took on a real life twist played out in today’s world. A renowned professor Sir Timothy Hunt was invited to a world conference of science journalists in Seoul to address a meeting about women in science. His speech was one he would come to bitterly regret. It contained the following few lines:

‘Let me tell you about my trouble with girls. Three things happen when they are in the lab. You fall in love with them, they fall in love with you, and when you criticise them, they cry,’ he told delegates.

These remarks became the subject of international debate. According to the professor and some members of the audience, they were made in a totally jocular, ironic way. He meant them to be funny. But, either deliberately or not, they were misinterpreted by others at the convention. The feminist lobby found them deeply offensive.

The bad joke cost the eminent scientist his job. At first one, then another delegate tweeted what he had said. Within a few hours Professor Hunt had become the focus of a vicious social media campaign on the internet. He was described as ‘a clueless, sexist jerk’ and ‘a misogynist dude scientist’. One tweet demanded that the Royal Society, of which he

was a Fellow, kick him out. Shortly after returning from the Conference, a call was received from University College London asking for his resignation.

His wife, Mary Collins, a Professor of Immunology, rose loyally to his defence. But that didn't help. Her explanation that he'd attended a single-sex school in the 1960s where everyone expressed themselves in that manner fell on deaf ears. Nor did it assist his case that her protestations that Sir Timothy wasn't in the remotest bit sexist, had two daughters, and actively promoted women in science at every opportunity. He was also a Nobel Prize winner. Nothing would appease his feminist critics.

By the end of the week, many other well-known scientists, commentators and politicians, Mayor of London Boris Johnson for one, had weighed in on the argument. <sup>i</sup>Dutch Professor Ad Vingerhoets of Tilburg University had shown in his experiments that women do cry more.<sup>ii</sup> What was the big deal anyway? Plant biologist Professor Ottoline Leyser of Cambridge University and a fellow FRS wrote to the press in support of Tim Hunt retaining his posts, as did hundreds of members of the public. People wanted him reinstated.

The self-righteous feminists were after his scalp. They were seen as vindictive and uncompassionate. Journalist Sarah Vine wrote in his defence in the Mail Online 'March of the feminist bullies!' It was just another example of how the movement had earned its hostile, man-hating label. They were displaying disproportionate, anti-male intolerance.

The dilemma for supporters of gender equality was clear. Was this fair treatment? Many thought not. They didn't want to be associated with this type of bigotry anymore.

Professor Hunt's description of life in the lab should have been viewed as light relief considering many conference speeches are dismally boring. But it wasn't. Instead it highlighted just how much under attack high profile individual men are under today over

their views on gender. Other male scientists came forward to complain about similar intimidation. It also exposed a witch hunt of prominent males in the US, such as the scientist of Rosetta mission fame, Matt Taylor, who wore a shirt depicting scantily clad women.<sup>iii</sup> Comedians and football stars have complained of trumped up accusations of sexism and worse.

It summed up how much the bias against men has been built up by extremists inside the feminist camp since the inception of a campaign which began in the 1960s.

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### **When Did The Male Blame Game Begin?**

I was living in Kuwait in 1963, at the time I have identified as Womangate. My father had gone to work for the Kuwait Oil Company in 1948. He met and married my mother on a trip home to England, and took her back with him. Both my brother and I were born there in the early 50s. So it was the Middle East which naturally shaped my very early views on how people should treat one another.

My father was the Chief Medical Officer of Kuwait Oil Company and responsible for countering disease like Anthrax and Cholera. In order to monitor any outbreak he would often drive out into the desert to some Bedouin settlement, take coffee with them and learn more about what they were up to. He spoke basic Arabic and through this gained a reasonable knowledge of their tribal lore and daily customs. I acquired from him a deep respect for the Arab culture and Muslim traditions, but also an awareness of the chasm between the expectations placed on women in the West and those in the Middle Eastern world I was

growing up in. They were chalk and cheese. It would take many years before I could appreciate how significant this was to be for global feminism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

It seemed to me, mostly because of the way the conversation was directed around the family table, that we were lucky to live as we did, in air-conditioned comfort. Western tradition meant that girls of that time had ‘everything at their fingertips’. My father was on occasions visibly upset by what he heard about the way Bedu women were spoken of, how they were referred to by the Arab men he befriended. On reflection, he was definitely a feminist, though he probably would never have identified his views in that way.

Life in Kuwait in the 1950s as an expat was one of privilege with generous salaries and a plentiful availability of imported goods from the US which were still unavailable in the UK after the war. It was also a microcosm of life on the outside. Being an isolated Anglo-American community it accurately reflected and in many ways amplified the social attitudes which prevailed in the West between men and women of the time. Married women weren’t expected to work outside the home as a rule, other than perhaps a few hours in the Club library or similar. The typical female employee, the school teacher, nurse or dental assistant for example, was usually brought in from the UK as a single. There were exceptions of course. In fact my own mother was a bit different. Determined to find some outlet for her talents, she set up what became a successful kindergarten in a disused Nissen hut and loved every minute of it.

Despite the limited options for women, apart from the light sexist banter which was enjoyed by both sides, little or no anti-male sentiment existed. There was an unquestioning acceptance of the traditional roles of men and women. Physical work would have been unthinkable as women were considered far too frail. We lived in 130 degree heat. Whether it

was handling the barbecue or fixing the car when it conked out in the desert, that was unquestionably the man's job.

Girls of my age prior to Womangate didn't think too much about feminism because that was a hypothetical thing. If they weren't academic enough to be in the five per cent who attended university, marriage was the obvious option. No one made much of the fact their own grandmothers had struggled to get the vote and their grandmothers for the right to own property. The status quo was unchallenged.

Boys were the ones who were saddled with the fixing things of life. They had to shape up and qualify for a trade or a profession in which they were expected to stay for the rest of their lives as the breadwinners for the family. Men were judged on how well they treated their wives. Was he a gentleman? To possess impeccable manners was considered important, and to be a reliable provider. Women of the time didn't want to know about the other side, to see or hear them drunk, or join in their vulgarity. It was of mutual convenience that male and female inhabited separate social spheres. That way wives could pretend their husbands were perfect and turn a blind eye to what they didn't like about masculine behaviour. That suited both sexes.

Life has changed dramatically since Womangate. Escapism for women in the 1960s was not a sponsored trek to Kilimanjaro, but a romantic novel. In 2014 the type of 'kissing novels' I mentioned earlier earned the publishing industry an estimated \$1.44 billion—nearly double the next highest grossing genre of crime/mystery<sup>iv</sup>

These love stories were mostly written for a female audience and by women themselves, by novelists like Barbara Cartland, Georgette Heyer and Catherine Cookson, themselves feminists of their time as they were independent and celebrated. According to the libraries, these books gave the most pleasure to the most people. In 1966 incoming Vice

President of the Romantic Novelist Association Elizabeth Goudge wrote: ‘As this world becomes increasingly ugly, callous and materialistic<sup>v</sup>, it needs to be reminded that the old fairy stories are rooted in truth, that imagination is of value, that happy endings do, in fact, occur, and that the blue spring mist that make an ugly street look beautiful is just as real a thing as the street itself.’

However, when in the 1970s the women’s lobby came out in the media attacking the biggest book publisher Mills and Boon<sup>vi</sup>, stating their books were misogynistic and incited rape. The writing was on the wall. It was sheer hypocrisy. You had a group of women attacking men for what women themselves wanted, an opportunity to escape for a time into a romantic idealised world.

So the denial of women’s romantic urges was probably the first sign of Womangate.

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### **Denial of the Facts Causes Resentment**

Pre-Womangate, when there was ample reason for resentment, the feminist movement, unlike today, did not consider all men adversaries. The Professor Hunt Affair, for example, would have been viewed more with bemusement than irritation. The activists of a hundred years ago would more likely have labelled the reaction by the attendees of the Seoul Conference as an example of being far too thin-skinned for their own campaigning purposes. They were about proving how well they could work with men, and not be so quick to take offence.

There is nothing if there is not balance and co-operation. The early feminists needed male allies in order to further their goals. And, more importantly, if men were as cooperative in the formation of the movement as it appears from the records, to deny them acknowledgement for their contribution is just plain wrong.

While the eighteenth century writer and philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft is one of those credited with launching women's rights as a movement, in 1840 Americans Lucretia Mott, a Quaker minister and her friend Elizabeth Cady Stanton gave things a real push following their treatment at an anti-slavery convention in London. The ladies, accompanied by their husbands were experienced public speakers and were on the list to address the meeting. At the time it wasn't considered proper by many for women to speak out publicly. The organisers decided to send the ladies to a separate area so that they could be excluded.

Furious, the ladies intercepted the principal guest, the eminent abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison and made clear to him their indignation and the unfairness at their being denied the right to be heard. He was to become their staunch ally in the future.

Some years passed and, with the anti-slavery movement well underway and, no doubt, buoyed by their London encouragement on women's rights, Lucretia talked her sister Martha Wright and some other campaigners into a fresh, new challenge. Together they wrote the following ad for a New York paper:

'A Convention to discuss the social, civil and religious condition and rights of woman, will be held in the Wesleyan Chapel, at Seneca Falls, N.Y., on Wednesday and Thursday the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of July, 1848, commencing at 10 o'clock, A.M.'<sup>vii</sup>

Lucretia's husband James Mott was supposed to head up the meeting. At that time a woman chairing an open event was still completely unacceptable. It would have put people

off coming. On that day, for ladies only, James, sick with stress about all the drama didn't show up.

On day two, it was decided that both sexes be allowed to attend. Mr Mott was suddenly feeling better about it. Allowing the men to join in was a smart move, as things turned out. It gave the meeting gravitas and credibility. From reports of the event, an impassioned and lucid address in favour of women's votes by a newspaper owner and ex-slave Frederick Douglass, was the game-changer.<sup>viii</sup>

By the end of the night, a third of the 300 strong audience had signed in favour of emancipation. 32 out of the 100 were men, converted to the cause of women sharing in trades, professions and commerce.

If anything, it was now women rather than men, who were cagey and slow to be convinced. When there was some strong adverse publicity, many reversed their decision to sign. This anti-suffrage sentiment in the US was echoed in the UK. Over forty years later, the UK Prime Minister William Gladstone wrote about the female apprehension on getting the vote.<sup>ix</sup> Not only was it considered unladylike, but there was concern about a female workforce taking jobs from their husbands. This attitude persisted right up to the start of the First World War.

However, the Seneca Falls Convention was the beginning of the concept of shared working and rang the death knell for men's monopoly of the pulpit. No more lengthy, pompous, monotonous as was the style of the time. Besides, listening to women was something of a novelty. And so the women's movement was born in America. But it had needed the support of some of the leading male celebrities of the era.

After the convention, there was strong and continual media interest. It meant instant fame for some of the attendees, while others were ostracised and discredited for having got involved. However, once the dust had settled the Seneca Falls ladies set about planning more of the same. From then on it was all parties, picnics and women's rights conventions.

#

### **Men Supporting Feminism**

More and more men became involved with the movement in the UK. At the same time women's groups were starting up in the Big Apple, a magazine call the English Woman's Journal began publishing in 1858 in London. If you were at all interested in manual or intellectual industrial employment one shilling would buy you one of the monthly publications. It had a female editor and only used female employees, but the major stakeholder was the textile industrialist and philanthropist, Samuel Courtauld. Apart from a few ads for the likes of cornflour, baking powder and quinine wine to prop it up financially, without his assistance it is unlikely to have stayed afloat.

He wasn't alone. Not all men were busy putting women down as today's proponents of radical feminism would have us believe. In the English Woman's Journal I came across a more glowing write up by the Governor of Wyoming about women's influence in politics than would have been given by even women themselves.

'In this territory women have manifested for its interests devotion, strong, ardent and intelligent.' It was a gushing, over the top report by Governor Campbell. 'All these - the better conscience, the exalted sense of justice, and the abiding love of order-have been made

by the enfranchisement of women, to contribute to the good government and well-being of our territory'.<sup>x</sup>

Despite his effusive endorsement, first-wave feminists had a colossal task ahead of them. They had to sway mainstream opinion to support suffrage. It also had to be legalised.

Men and women alike seemed to be in favour of change. Even those who strongly opposed the early movement for women's equality, mostly on the grounds of social impact, acknowledged the 'evil and oppressive laws from which women suffer'. It was universally accepted that current regulations were stifling and unfair.

Millions of women already worked, but they were certainly not heading up companies or government departments. They were mostly employed in low paid factory jobs, in shops or domestic service. Speaking to parents today, concerned about their sons' future prospects as girls pull ahead at school and in the workplace, it demonstrates a real change of attitude. Instead of being worried about what would happen to their daughters when they left school they now fret more about their male offspring.

Ironically, it is highly likely the men of Victorian Britain worried a lot more about the fate of their daughters and sisters then than they do today. At that height of its popularity in the 1860s, the English Woman's Journal reported that three fifths of women of the time were married but that gave them little protection.<sup>xi</sup>

Up until 1882 when the Married Women's Property Act was passed, on marriage a woman surrendered all property to her husband. If she was a writer, she handed over her copyright. She was unable to draft a will without his consent. If the marriage broke down she was entitled to nothing. Similar to modern day live in arrangements, whether she had

contributed or not, a married woman at that time had no claim on any property at all if she got divorced. Life got better.

New Zealand was the first country to give women the national vote in 1893. Their trailblazing as a social laboratory is still part of Kiwi tradition today. However, it was many years later before other countries with male dominated governments such as the UK followed on.

It took World War 1, when large numbers left home to take up men's jobs that things got much easier for women in the UK. By 1918 they could sit in Parliament and by the following year the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act had been passed. This opened up all the professions and the civil service. Women could no longer be stopped from working on the grounds of their sex or because of a marriage contract. In 1928 the Conservative Party passed an Act to allow women over 21 to vote, regardless of whether they owned property or not. In 1923 an Act gave them the right to the same grounds for divorce as men. Much had happened within nine short years and it was all good news for the women's liberation movement.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century was a time of great political and social advances. What is significant is that it wasn't until 1968 that the word 'sexism' was coined.<sup>xii</sup> It was at this point that relationships between men and the feminists soured. The term had nothing to do with defining gender traits, and much to do with provoking confrontation. It insinuated in one word that as far as egalitarianism for women was concerned, men were their enemies, rivals and to be attacked at every opportunity.

From that crucial point in time feminism shifted sharply to take on a more aggressive profile. If you were born a man, you were now seen as 'the opposition'. Men's biological make-up was the reason they behaved as they did. They were driven by an urge to dominate females. All male interests were condemned. According to the women's movement men were

no longer on board the equality drive working to produce a fairer world. Feminists believed there was an active male agenda to deliberately undermine the advancement of women's rights. The real conspiracy was this notion itself, how it was promulgated, and by whom. It was the Womangate point of change.

#

### **Suburban Male Society Is Vilified**

Mystique, one of the indefinable qualities which make a woman, is something you don't hear about too much anymore. In the 1960s, it was assumed this enigmatic quality was something to acquire, personified in Greta Garbo. My mother would refer to it in fun, hoping she had it, and my father as a vital component of women's attraction.

Betty Friedan's 1963 bestseller 'The Feminine Mystique' destroyed all that. Women were no longer depicted as complex and alluring sirens. Nor were they bright and bouncy Doris Day types, arranging tulips and baking apple pies. They had become depressed, dissatisfied and distraught, on pills, with their problems ignored by society.

Of course it was all men's fault. No blame was ever placed on the woman whose drive to achieve the domestic dream had put her there in the first place. Friedan maintained that men saw her just as a necessary convenience, there to clean house and have egg and chips on the table when he stumbled home from the pub.<sup>xiii</sup> To solve their problems what these legions of unhappy women needed was a full time job.

It was pure Womangate spin. The stigma which inhibited women from working was socially driven. It was all to do with raising children. You were looked down if you had your child come back from school to an empty house. Latch-key kids, as they were referred to, and

were to be pitied.<sup>xiv</sup> Childcare and full-time nannies were only for the very wealthy. So it was one-sided to blame men. It was women themselves who looked down on working mothers.

Betty Friedan's book however, revitalised a feminist movement which had been in a slump. Tertiary educated women who had married and were frustrated by lack of work opportunities were the main market, and, as it transpired, they also had been the very ones who had contributed to the research. Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*<sup>xv</sup> continued with the theme of the disgruntled, unhappy woman. It focussed on the desolation and despair of housewives, with dull and thankless work wiping the paintwork or using an iron. It implied that every married woman had a PhD or close, a fully paid-for semi-detached and a male warden keeping her in her place. However, the style and tone was much lighter than the usual academic text and it was a quick hit with the broader market.

The timing of these works should be taken into account when evaluating their impact. Economically it was a period of relative prosperity, following twenty five years of peace. There were no soldier heroes as reminders of the insecurities of war, no rallying cries for country foremost, nor men standing in dole queues. The market was ripe for these types of 'women-first' messages.

So, for long-suffering housewives who were bored stiff in the suburbs, the feminist cause was the perfect excuse to break free. For those trapped in loveless marriages or living with men who played around, it was a lifeline to be gratefully grabbed.

There was however a more socially disruptive undertone at work for which men were about to be held to account. Germaine Greer's feminist premise redefined the comfortable and superficially happy matron of the residential housing estates as anything but. She was in fact a tinder box of sexual frustration, desperately out of touch with her bodily needs. So

instead of feminism being about girls' education and top jobs, it was now all about how much you were getting first. This moved the debate on to one in which achieving gender equality meant a full sexual revolution.

Suddenly Tupperware coffee mornings were out, and sex toys were in. Discreet language was passé. Virginity and modesty were uncool. To keep up with their peers women felt forced to talk about things that they never wanted to discuss with anyone, and certainly not in public. Words like penis and vagina which had once made girls cheeks turn pink, did so no more. The liberation movement was now all about cock and balls.

Women's enigmatic mystery and magnetism began to lose their pull over men. The blatant vulgarity was at least partly to blame.

#

### **Feminism Against Masculinity**

'Women don't need men any more,' my father mentioned to me one day. 'They can do everything for themselves men used to do for them. Buy a house, earn a living.'

'Perhaps not for those things, but they do as much as ever for their social lives,' I replied 'It's all they seem to talk about.'

Work or no work, in all other ways relationships were still what my women friends obsessed with in our get-togethers or in chats over the phone. Gone were intimate suppers with the possibility of wedded life ahead. The modern, changed society was cooler but

colder. Having sex on the first date was expected by both men and women and with no strings attached. Girls however, still asked one another, 'Has he called you yet?'

Despite feminist assurances the new, independent woman model was not quite working as it should.

Women became confused. They had the Pill, sexual freedom and enough money to buy a guy a drink if they wanted to. What was going wrong? Encouraged to become even more pro-active, they were told, 'Pick up the phone and call him. Take control of the relationship.' But still they couldn't 'get the man' they liked. And men no longer had to try hard to bed a woman. Plus there was no pressure to make it more than a one night stand.

The ultimate example of taking control was the bizarre Joyce McKinney court case.<sup>xvi</sup> She not only picked up the phone, she picked up the whole man. It became known as the "The Case of the Manacled Mormon" capturing the public imagination for weeks. A young missionary named Kirk Anderson went missing in Surrey, having been taken from the steps of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A police search ensued but a few days later Anderson turned up and reported to the police he had been abducted and driven to Devon by Joyce McKinney. Miss McKinney, he alleged, had chained him to a bed and over some days repeatedly raped him. On 19 September 1977 McKinney was arrested, but vigorously denied the charges. While being driven to a court appearance, she held a notice up to the window of the police vehicle with the words, "Kirk left with me willingly!" scrawled across it. For weeks the press speculated on how the slightly built ex-beauty queen of Wyoming could physically overcome and kidnap the hefty missionary. And the question which begged to be answered was whether there could be such a thing as male rape by a woman at all. When McKinney jumped bail and fled the country no extradition proceedings were instituted by Britain, but in absentia the court sentenced McKinney to a year in jail.

Under the Sexual Offences Act 1956, due to the victim's gender, technically no crime of rape had been committed, although indecent assault was deemed to have taken place <sup>xvii</sup>

Across the country men openly challenged the notion they could be raped if they didn't want to be. Ridicule was heaped on the feminist notion that women could behave exactly the same as men. Despite theory simple physical impracticality would make it impossible. The liberated woman who could initiate sex whenever she chose was a figment of feminist imagination. Men needed to be turned on to get an erection. Unlike the Mormon missionary, when ordered to perform, they shrivelled and shrank. It was an inconvenient truth.

Why wasn't this modern woman model working? Was it time for a rethink? Maybe their mothers' more subtle approach had something to recommend it after all. But by now society had adopted the new unitarian concept and girls no longer had any idea how to return to the previous model. It was easier to listen to Germaine Greer who claimed that men who rebuffed them after one sleep-over were shallow, misogynists and unable to commit.

With rising hostility between the sexes, post Womangate proponents tried to moderate and defend the interpretations of their previous writings. Betty Friedan sought to distance herself from the 'bra-burning, anti-man, politics-of-orgasm school.'<sup>xviii</sup> She wrote a second edition of *The Feminine Mystique* in 1981 where she urged feminists to reach out to men as allies.<sup>xix</sup>

If mainstream women had been made to sit up and take notice of Friedan's research and were fascinated by Greer's *Female Eunuch*, it was nothing to how they would react to Andrea Dworkin's, *Intercourse*.<sup>xx</sup> Coming out in 1987 it was the most radical feminist analysis of them all and one which further branded the movement as bigoted and aggressive. She argued that sexual intercourse was a male supremacist act. Dworkin maintained that all

intercourse was an act of rape by men driven by their primordial urge to dominate. The vitriol of the anti-male rant was extreme, illogical, and absurd.

Statements like ‘Intercourse is the pure, sterile, formal expression of men's contempt for women,’ became the most frequently quoted. For many, such sentiments were much too much. Andrea Dworkin, an anti-war activist and anarchist came to be seen as the classic man-hating feminist.

Provocative and outrageous, Dworkin’s penis-centred premise had its effect. All bloke-ish behaviour was condemned in a sour and accusatory manner. The motivation behind basic courtesies between men and women were put under question. A man opening a door for a woman or passing a compliment was seen as demeaning and patronising and thus stood in the way of her rightful, equal and proper position in society.

By now it was difficult to reason with the feminists driving the agenda. Sexist legislation was on its way and the public in general were nervous. The first effects of the war of the sexes were really being felt. Feminism had now become associated with hostility, negativity and just plain nastiness. Men were identified as the enemy and an obstacle to neutralise as soon as possible.

All aspects of male life previously taken for granted were placed under the spot light and condemned. Any boy interested in sport rather than the arts had to be anti-women. A machismo attitude was seen as motivating all men’s behaviour. In the States academic studies of masculinity were a hot topic with the number of courses on offer rising from 30 to over 300. Mostly it was women who enrolled.

By the 1990s, anti-male feminism had taken a grip on Western society. A gaping hole in the social market was about to be filled. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall there was an

influx of unapologetically ultra-feminine blondes from across Eastern Europe. Ambitious and untroubled by feminist theory they dressed in super short skirts, wore heavy eye make-up and were quoted in the press as proud of 'waiting on their man'. Western women who were looking for love and marriage instead of forty hours in a call centre now had real competition.

A new but old as time brand of female activism was on the rise. Flooding in driven by years of Communist repression women seeking better life opportunities had arrived. They were pro-men, financially and socially ambitious. It caused a gulf to open between women themselves. You were either pro or anti-men, a feminist or not. There was no middle road.

For the movement the answer was to become even more extreme. Gender violence and sexual behaviour was now the overriding issue to tackle. Everything became biologically centred. It was all about the big orgasm, the birth experience and male child rearing responsibilities.

Young children were being saturated with this new sexual preoccupation. In 2001 the novelist Doris Lessing, the author of feminist inspiring books *The Grass is Singing* and *The Golden Notebook*, spoke out about it at the Edinburgh Book Festival.<sup>xxi</sup> As a writer she was troubled by what she saw when she toured around schools. The women's lobby was inciting too much anti-male rhetoric. Young boys were being weighed down with guilt about the crimes of their sex without understanding why.

'I was in a class of nine and ten year-olds, girls and boys, and this young woman was telling the kids that the reason for wars was the innately violent nature of men,' she said in an interview.

'You could see the little girls, fat with complacency and conceit while the little boys sat there crumpled, apologising for their existence, thinking this was going to be the pattern

of their lives. The teacher then tried to catch my eye, thinking I would approve of this rubbish'. She added: 'This kind of thing is happening in schools all over the place and no one says a thing.'

Lessing, who had once been an active participant in Womangate was now saying, 'I am increasingly shocked at the unthinking and automatic rubbishing of men which has become now so much part of our culture that it is hardly even noticed.'

By the time Sir Timothy Hunt got himself into hot water over his remarks about women bursting into tears at the science conference in Seoul, surveys were revealing that more and more mainstream women were deserting the feminist cause because of the movement's extreme views.

### **Summary**

The modern feminist movement is seen as anti-men. A series of witch hunts targeting prominent figures by activists served to strengthen this view in the public's eye. Initiated by a handful of radical graduates in the USA, who were frustrated at the apparent lack of feminist ambition by women of the 1950s, they decided on a strategy to attack any example of masculine patriarchy.

Historically men have been engaged in the drive for women's equality right back to the days of the Enlightenment in the 1790s. By enacting an aggressive anti- male strategy the feminists have weakened men's sympathy and support and distracted attention from reasonable and legitimate objectives.

## **SAMPLE CHAPTER TWO**

### **THE UNISEX SOCIETY**

A gender equal society would be one where  
the word 'gender' does not exist;  
*Gloria Steinem*

#### **The Myth Of Gender Neutral**

It is seven o'clock on a summer evening in August 2015. My husband and I are sitting outdoors at Jakob's Bar in Skagen, a town in Jutland right up the very north of Denmark. The sun is warm and the atmosphere at the bar loud and lively.

'Every year at this time we come here to party,' A convivial Norwegian seated at the next table turns to include us in. 'I think our wives are glad to get rid of us all for a while,' he said, grinning widely. One of a large group of men, they are all enjoying themselves. He raises his glass in a 'skol'. 'All of us work for the same company', he explains, 'And here we can let our hair down'.

Across the terrace some ladies recognise us and give a friendly wave. They are staying at the same hotel and we met earlier as they gathered prior to all twelve of them setting off in conga fashion on a cycle tour of the area.

‘We like to do different things to our husbands’ Isabelle had explained in perfect English. ‘So it is quite normal here in Denmark for women to go off together for a couple of weeks on separate holidays from their men. All of us are related and it is nice to meet up in this way.’

In other parts of the town girls are walking arm in arm with their mothers, men pushing prams, and there is a relaxed attitude to same sex couples. But I see few signs of the one sex model promoted by Womangate philosophy where gender is rewritten so you can’t tell one from the other. There is nothing I find harder to understand than that feminism could believe it could ignore biology realities and get away with it.

Early steps towards the unisex cult were launched with a fashion idea. A number of genderless garments were produced and quickly caught on as a popular fad. The shapeless T shirts were a welcome move for manufacturers who could make more profit if they didn’t have to cut for two sexes. The One Size Fits All label was also good for the bottom line. It might have meant that everything hung like a sack, but it was in style and people bought it anyway. From the feminist perspective it was all part of the move to get girls and boys looking like each other as much as possible.

There was a hypothesis behind this switch from fab to drab. The seventies feminists were concerned that equality issues had not gone far enough. So they began pushing the notion that gender roles were entirely rooted in the way you had been raised. They believed it was nurture, not nature, that made women and men different and it was holding women back. To resist gender oppression meant proving black was white, that there was little to tell apart in the brain’s biological makeup of the two sexes. Children of feminists became the early guinea pigs. Dressed in dungarees their daughters were encouraged to play with toy trucks and train sets. Pudding basin haircuts for both became common. Genderless names like

Skye and Rainbow became fashionable. At first glance it did become more difficult to decide which was which.

At the time I was working with a toy company in Surrey looking to expand their range. Toys for girls up until the 1960s focused mainly on home life and being a pretend mother. Girls loved their tiny tea cups and saucers and dinky little push chairs. Boys played with Meccano sets, bows and arrows and cowboy six shooters. But by the mid-1970s, toy designers needed to come up with different ideas because of the impact of feminism. In the toy industry we all wanted to be the one to come up with the next unisex craze which wasn't gender related.

Mothers played along with it despite violent protestations from their sons forced to scrap toy sharp shooters from their Santa list. It was the thing to do. As a result, by 1975, at the height of unisex young Britain, less than two percent of toys were explicitly marketed towards one sex alone. This wasn't just about play stuff. The whole direction of society was under question. Doing away with dolls and toy ironing boards was a serious attempt to eliminate what was seen as the automatic indoctrination of girls into becoming just wives and mothers. For boys all interest in mechanical gadgets was suppressed as much as possible. But no way was found to stop little Johnny from gazing with fascination at the JCB digging up the street.

It was an idea that failed to take proper root. The promotion of unisex toys fell away and by the mid-1990s gendered toys made up roughly half of the Sears catalogue in the USA, the same proportion as during the interwar years. As far as dolls and pretty clothes go our daughters are more interested than ever with super feminine things than even pre-

Womangate.<sup>xxii</sup>

The experiment to prove that if you gave a girl a boy's toy, or vice versa, they would somehow develop different traits just didn't work out. In 2014 Prince George was handed a cute stuffed bilby – a rabbit like marsupial - at Sydney's Taronga Park Zoo. He was supposed to give it a warm cuddle. Instead he scornfully tossed it aside, much to the amusement of the onlookers and half the world's television viewers.<sup>xxiii</sup> Not quite the reaction the unisex theorists wanted to see. And on the 2015 recommended Christmas list for parents, the Girl Scouts Deluxe Cookie Oven is right up at number two.

The attempt to produce neuter neutral beings in order to create a more equal society was a flame that flickered for the briefest of periods. But it has not been extinguished completely. In 2010 a pre-school in the Sodermalm district of Stockholm banned the use of 'him' or 'her' to avoid gender stereotyping. They insisted instead that all children be referred to by the neutral pronoun 'hen'.<sup>xxiv</sup> They've also gone overboard with toys and books to try once again to engineer de-sexing from an early age.

It is still a work in progress. However, if you happen to drop in a lively bar anywhere in Denmark on a Friday night, one of the most feminised societies on the planet, you will still see our embedded gender traits well and truly at work.

#

### **Girls Behaving Like Boys**

By the 1990s suburban women were being as patronised as much by feminists as they had been by their old fashioned husbands. The gender neutral experiment had fallen flat, and somehow the married with two kids women got the blame because they hadn't been taken in

by it all. They weren't persuaded to the idea that their men were cynically out to keep them in their place at home and bent over an ironing board. Decent respectable wives were patronised as though they were living in a bygone era, left behind and dated by the brave new woman liberated and unfettered at last.

Traditional gender roles were considered dull and out of touch. The 'overlooked' mouse, once the focus of Betty Friedan's awareness campaign, had become almost invisible. Being a career woman was the thing and they were seen as leading sexier and more interesting lives. 'I'm just a housewife' was something nobody wanted to admit to at a dinner party. The media, having put them on the highest pedestal in the fifties, were no longer using the homemaker for advertising revenue. Magazine covers now featured celebrities with their shiny nails and highly groomed hair as the new icons. The makeup industry boomed.

Behavioural norms for women went from being socially open and chatty to one of edginess and competitiveness. They also became more confrontational and demanding. Indeed women did start to act more like their male counterparts. If they made a scene in public they were no longer seen as unrestrained, common, 'fishwives', as they would have been previously. No one said a thing. It was considered amusing to see but deep down people felt a bit uneasy. This was the new feminism after all and so it must be right. The full ladette era now followed. She was 'A young woman whose social behaviour is similar to that of male adolescents or young men.' according to Wikipedia. The unisex experiment had plenty of unforeseen outcomes. Young women vomiting and falling over in the street on a Saturday night was no longer just for the boys.

Hollywood led from the front glorifying the new tough breed by filling their movies with attractive but aggressive women who could knock anyone for a six, male or female. No one could work out whether Hollywood was leading social behaviour or reflecting it. From

Kate Capshaw taking out a cartload of guys in the *Temple of Doom*<sup>xxv</sup> to Whoopie Goldberg punching the lights out of Sam Elliott in *Fatal Beauty*<sup>xxvi</sup> the new red carpet stars were all tough cookies. These movie idols knew how to handle their men, all right. They just laid them out flat.

Nor did these feisty girls take any flak from other women. In the romantic comedy *Sweet Home Alabama*<sup>xxvii</sup> cute-as-a-button Reese Witherspoon solves her relationship anxiety by landing a punch on the nose of her prospective mother-in-law. Gender neutral meant having a kick ass attitude.

This was what the aggressive style of feminism was after. The girl next door was no longer shy and sweet. The macho babe was the new role she had to play out. In fact though, many teenagers hadn't changed fundamentally. On their own they were still diffident, anxious, and insecure. But, when bolstered by the pack they threw their shoulders back and joined in.

But the girls-acting-like-boys behaviour was short sighted. It may have been fun to watch Kelly Preston belting Tom Cruise in *Jerry Maguire*<sup>xxviii</sup> or a hoot to see Pat slapping Peggy in *East Enders*<sup>xxix</sup> but it was not quite so funny in real life on the street where you live.

In 1999 I started researching bullying behaviour after my daughter had been victimised and excluded by a group of girls at her school. She wasn't alone. Girl on girl bullying was rapidly on the rise. So much so, that in 2003 I set up a registered charity to help victims and their worried parents. Copycat rudeness and girl gang violence were being reported in school rooms and playgrounds right across the country. With the rise of adolescent aggression by both sexes the taboo about reporting girl bullying was lifted. Stories of violent behaviour started coming out in the press. The term girl gangs became a familiar

part of press lexicon. In June 2007 during a clash involving thirty teenage girls in Croydon, seventeen year old Sian Simpson was stabbed through the heart and died.<sup>xxx</sup> Muggings and knife attacks by mobs of young girls were a new phenomenon and puzzling the police. Schools too were struggling with how to deal with the new problem. A school nurse attending one of the Conferences at which I was speaking told me that a girl had been brought to her in the sick room having been hit on the head with a chair, but the Head told the staff to downplay it. No school wanted a bad reputation. It affected enrolment and thus the schools position in the league tables.

And in the class room a new form of isolation bullying was on the rise. If you wanted to be cool and part of a group you isolated and excluded a victim who didn't make the cut. Anyone who wore the wrong trainers, or was a couple of pounds too heavy, had backs turned on them. Being quietly modest was completely out of vogue. The confident super bitch now led the pack.

Feminism pre-Womangate had rightly spoken up for women held back by over domineering males. The 'we will not be beaten' slogan of the campaign to stop domestic violence against women<sup>xxxii</sup> now became the 'we will do the beating' call as the twenty first century began. Boys were the silent victims. The fact that girls were now bullying them was conveniently ignored. Physically the stronger sex, boys felt they were unable to retaliate. And, as from time immemorial, a girl could always outsmart a boy when it came to emotional bullying. If given a knock back girls ganged up with streams of taunting texts and posts on Facebook. If this was the reality of a gender neutral society then I knew big trouble lay ahead.

Did the tough girl image create a valid way to advance feminism into the future? On the contrary, violent behaviour did little but prove that girls could be just as aggressive as any boy if they didn't get their way.

Women were no longer seen as the weaker sex, vulnerable and needing male protection. That was history. Gender merging experiments had been a dismal failure. Men, built physically stronger with greater muscle mass as a result of testosterone-induced muscular hypertrophy will always win in a straight fight.<sup>xxxii</sup> So what was the point in trying to prove the opposite?

Unisex was a dangerous concept. It led girls to believe they could take out a man with one blow and left them wide open to assault if he was eventually provoked enough to strike back. Worse they distracted attention from the real problems women faced in society.

#

### **Unisex Society Has No Answers On Sexual Abuse**

It is mid-July and I have been invited as a panellist on a forum discussing the sexual grooming of children. We are gathered in a hot and airless room at Portcullis House, a modern office building adjoined to the Palace of Westminster. I say modern, but air conditioning is noticeably absent.

The issue has just surfaced and the papers are full of the case involving hundreds of young girls in Rochdale groomed for sex by Asians mainly of Pakistani origin. The investigation brought out that the matter had been largely ignored by authorities because of racial sensitivities.<sup>xxxiii xxxiv</sup>

Grooming still has the primary meaning of brushing your hair or what you do to keep you or your animals clean and neat. Today there is the additional meaning of ‘the criminal act of becoming friends with a child especially over the internet, in order to try to persuade the child to have a sexual relationship’ according to the Cambridge English Dictionary.

The conference organisers needed to hear from the panel to get ideas for a policy going forward.

Retired police officer Dominic Clout and now Chair of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board leads off by pointing out that there is actually no offence called Child Sexual Exploitation as such. It is supposed to be covered by indecency, rape and sexual assault.

'To be honest' he continues, 'Two years ago, as a serving officer I didn't have the faintest idea what grooming was. We have only just begun to get a handle on domestic violence let alone tackling new abuses like this'

His open honesty is refreshing. Despite feminism and the advance of women's equality progress on the legal front is still years behind what is actually happening in society on the streets.

Jane Coppock representing Barnardo's, the children's charity which is the biggest in the UK in terms of actual expenditure, had statistics which indicate that the numbers of sexual abuse cases of underage children were indeed rising.

'Less than half of the cases we see are children from deprived backgrounds, which show that it isn't just a poverty issue. The majority are young girls under pressure from their boyfriends to have sex. Our approach is based on better educating our young people. If older men are successfully preying on underage girls it is a sign of a child's low self-esteem. We are pushing for more effort in schools to teach what healthy sexual relationships should be.'

This sounds a bit too academic to me; helpful but unlikely to work where a young girl thinks she needs to come across to get the boy she is after.

I put my bit in about the massively increased opportunities the internet has given to sexual predators and what I feel would be constructive in an area which is moving so very fast technologically. Rounding out my contribution is the notion that modern feminism has made our women safer. My belief is that women and girls are more at threat today than ever before. Firstly, they think a more gender equal society means equal in thinking and feeling. That's obviously not the case. Fundamentally the sexes are unlike in so many ways. Passing laws can help but only mitigate the excesses of human behaviour. You will never stop exploitation because we all take advantage of others in one way or another. It's part of human nature.

I had an example straight from the day's papers. A young woman had been molested on the 168 bus and no one stepped in to help. Passengers just assumed it was domestic and she could deal with it. In terms of inappropriate behaviour things were getting worse not better because of the unisex feminist agenda.

I conclude with 'We've achieved some measure of equality in the office but we're a million miles from it out in the actual community.'

#

### **How Gender Neutral Destroyed Chivalry**

After the forum I reflected on the evening wondering where things were going. At the faregate, an elderly gentlemen steps aside for me to go first. I smile and thank him for his

courtesy. Rumbling along the District line towards Chiswick I can't help but think about what the future holds for the old style manners and gallantry men have always demonstrated towards women.

Radical feminists had made it their business to do everything they could to alter how society saw formality and manners between the sexes. Leading feminists at the time of Womangate, driven by their passion for equality in all areas and seeing women as victims of long standing habits by men to do them out of it, saw chivalry as just another subtle tool of oppression. Of course this was a half-truth at best. There always will be men who prefer to see women in a traditional subservient role but the notion that men in general were anti equality and used good manners as one of their tactics was ridiculous to say the least. And to then take that idea to its logical conclusion and thus say that all male acts of graciousness were patronising and irrelevant ignores the fact that manners are an essential part of all civilised societies in order to smooth relations between people male and female. But post Womangate feminist pressure was having an impact in lots of ways detrimental to our way of life, and was infracting directly on our social mores.

Feminists didn't want to be treated as ladies as such because they saw it as a put down. And men didn't see why they should bother if they were going to be rebuffed.

It's seems both sexes had become the losers here. Surely it is part of the innate female condition to enjoy being pampered and the centre of attention. It is the exact opposite of behaviour today with vulgar suggestions, leers and gropes, more commonplace. Surely civilised behaviour in general society encourages restraint and mutual respect between the sexes? Was that not more pro-equality?

Chivalrous acts and formal protocol have been in decline, so much so that the UK Government has just commissioned a task force to investigate the impact that the growth of lad culture has had on vulnerable young women at universities.<sup>xxxv</sup>

Etiquette has always evolved in parallel with societies changing needs. In Victorian times a man was expected to walk on the kerb side. This sheltered the lady and in particular her dress from being splattered with mud and horse manure as carriages clattered by in the narrow streets. Although still observed by many couples it is not as common and is disappearing fast. Our streets are cleaner today. Smoking practises have altered in accordance with changes in the law. Consequently it has become a more solitary habit and now it's not often you see a man light a lady's cigarette for her. Nevertheless, although much etiquette may have changed the basic reason behind it the first place hasn't. It has always been a demonstration by men of respect towards women.

Post Womangate, gender-relevant manners have faded away to a large extent. But the young woman of today has mixed feelings when she finds that her date takes for granted she will pay for her own drinks and also pick up her half of the bill when they go out in the evening. Feminism has had its way but not everyone is convinced. Listening to my daughter's friends complaining about the pay your own way philosophy the consensus is that they don't like it at all. It is unsurprising how quickly young men have exploited the practice with the somewhat cynical attitude that if women want to be equal in everything they are happy to go along with it if it means the ladies picking up the tab. Old fashion courtesy, once taken for granted has been buried by the agenda of sexual equality at all levels and all costs.

This is one reason why I think the grooming and manipulation of young girls has become so widespread. It is because it works. Raised in an indifferent society they are unaccustomed to being spoilt and flattered by men. The Asian gang bought the drinks and

said the right things and the girls fell for it. Young and naive, they believed the men were in love with them.

Now schools too have stopped enforcing manners to the same degree. Boys no longer are taught how to be thoughtful and aware of girls' greater sensitivity. Curbing bad language are cultural practices boys should acquire again. But how is that going to come about when everyone is told that we all are the same and you can behave in mixed company as if you were with your own sex? In adult behaviour the understanding that gentlemen shouldn't swear in front of a lady is less and less observed even in the middle classes.

Womangate has caused bitterness and resentment between the sexes. Mixed society needs protocol if it is going to run smoothly. The alternative is a Muslim style system of gender segregation to protect women such as applies in Saudi Arabia and much of the Middle East. And we are already moving in that direction. Under consideration is the return of women-only carriages on British trains, which was abolished in 1977. The current labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, in response to the alarming increase in sexual harassment cases, has put forward just such a solution.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

The trouble with Womangate is it stemmed the natural flow of progress. It was always expected society would have to change as women took up equal opportunities and started earning the same salaries as men. Therefore it seemed only reasonable they would eventually go halves with the bills, for example. And, if they took a man's job they'd have to be equally competent in all areas. In an era of mergers and acquisitions, redundancy is common. Human resources are now often staffed by women who have proven highly adept at these complex social related jobs. By 2005 in the UK seventy-two per cent of Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development members were female.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

In the 1960s it was bad form for a man to criticise a woman in public. Men played the role of a sort of good humoured moderator in conflicts between the female family members. And it was once considered decent behaviour not to air your dirty linen in public, even in the event of a breakup of a marriage where both sides wanted to unload. It was gentlemanly to protect women's reputations in this way. Some very public threats against women on Twitter and Facebook are one example of how much things have changed.

Take domestic violence. No man would have dreamt of hitting a woman under the ancient code of chivalry. According to Martine's Handbook of 1866, married men were encouraged to avoid squabbles if at all possible. 'No provocation whatsoever can justify any man in not being civil to every woman, and the greatest man would justly be reckoned a brute if he were not civil to the meanest woman. It is due to their sex and is the only protection they have against the superior strength of ours.'<sup>xxxviii</sup>

So what happened to make domestic violence so common that laws keep entering the statute books to try to protect women? To be criticised in public is one thing and the pros and cons perhaps debatable but it is an entirely different matter to be beaten up either in your home or on the street.

The suffragettes found all deferential behaviour by men patronising. Their narrow and indulgent view failed to take into account that women and children were protected by society endorsing a code of chivalry which condemned anti-social behaviour towards them. Traditional chivalry struggled to survive the two World Wars as women gained a more equal standing in the workplace. By the time of Womangate good manners and etiquette became associated more closely with your class in society.

However, with violence against women rising rapidly today, there is fresh debate over how we deal with it. Denmark is a good example. In the forefront of feminism it tops the list

for violence against women in Europe.<sup>xxxix</sup> One part of the reason could well be that assault is reported more readily but intersex violence is a big issue for the country.

Without a doubt lowering of the banner of chivalry and etiquette has worsened women's lot in many ways. And there must be a case for resurrecting it to make society operate in a pleasanter way. It won't be easy. But a titanic effort and change of direction is needed to get feminism back on track and civilised behaviour backed by a code of modern manners has a part to play.

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### **How Womangate Ignored Gender Realities**

The gender neutral world envisaged by the architects of Womangate assumed that a female could do anything a man could, both physically and emotionally. She could sit in a bar alone and not feel too self-conscious. She could pick up a phone and ring a man and ask him out because that was what a modern young woman did. And because of great advances in contraception she could have sex anytime she chose.

Approved by the FDA in the United States the Pill became available in the UK a year later and legislation was paying catch up with the new freedom by decriminalising abortion with the passing of the Abortion Act of 1967. Unwanted pregnancies were a thing of the past. And women now felt relationships in a physical sense were at last in their control. But the arrival of the Pill, the ultimate contraception, proved to be a two edged sword with unforeseen consequences.

Although unplanned pregnancies were no longer an issue, the stem cells hadn't changed a bit and there lay the problem.

So women took the initiative often with men not necessarily all that interested. They found that the emotional side of the relationship suffered in inverse proportion to the physical one.

Previously men had to work at a relationship in order to get sex. Therefore to make it all worthwhile they directed maximum effort towards the girl they really fancied. Now there was the option of casual sex at any time. Men reasoned, why not give it a test run and see how things turnout? More importantly, the ultimate act of intimacy lost much of its emotional importance to them. They had less motivation to commit to one woman. This dynamic suited some women as well, but the buried female genes couldn't be suppressed completely. Women still felt driven to secure an affair which would endure more than eight hours between the sheets. Whether acknowledged or not, the urge for sex from a female perspective would always have the ultimate objective of procreation.

By the 1970s marriage was in decline.<sup>x1</sup> Men and women no longer rushed up the aisle in their early twenties. The law of supply and demand had kicked in. There were simply more and more single people than ever before. Women had careers and it made sense to delay having children. So couples moved in with one another in the meantime. Society was adjusting to the new situation and social norms had changed to keep up.

The feminists sought to play men at their own game and take the emotional high ground. All women had to do was buy a copy of *Cosmopolitan* to read about *Taking Control of Relationships and How To Make the First Move*. It was what every single woman going through a dry phase wanted to hear.

You should never chase a man was the advice previous generations gave their daughters. But that was old hat now and out of touch. If the phone didn't ring, you were supposed to pick it up and make the call. Girls sat in their bedsits planning how they could

meet men and were forever asking their friends where they went to do so. It was just a matter of circulating, doing what men did all the time after all, they reassured one another.

Being liberated and single meant many lonely evenings. Asking a man out on a date and getting rebuffed filled young women with feelings of rejection and humiliation. And just physical sex left them feeling used and anything but equal. The urge to form some sort of enduring relationship often drove women to go back to a man they'd already slept with even though deep down they knew he was just using them. They thought he might change his ways.

By the time John Gray's *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* (Gray, 1992) hit the market in 1991 assertive women everywhere wanted to know why the proactive approach wasn't working. The feminist era had delivered on jobs but not love. Post Womangate feminists still kept pushing out how men and women could be exactly the same in every single way. And yet John Gray was saying exactly the opposite and it made sense. Half a century has passed since the unisex gender neutral campaign started and yet feminists are still persevering with ideas which are completely wrong.

From my front window I see a mother walking her little son and daughter to the shops. It is the third week of resurfacing work and the din from the machinery is deafening. The boy wants to watch the trucks and surface rolling machinery. He crouches down on the kerbside, cupping his face, fascinated by the activity. His elder sister is not the slightest bit interested. So why isn't the young girl acting the same as her brother and instead picking flowers from my front garden?

Scientific research is moving closer to finding the answers. As long ago as 1880, English surgeon James Crichton-Browne reported slight differences in the brain anatomy of men and women. In 1991 UCLA neuro endocrinologists Roger Gorski and Laura Allen examined 146 brains from cadavers and found that the back part of women's callosum is up

to 23 percent bigger than men's.<sup>xli</sup> Then in 2013 a study by the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania discovered striking differences in neural wiring between the two sexes, with greater connectivity from front to back and within one hemisphere in males, suggesting their brains are structured to facilitate connectivity between perception and coordinated action.<sup>xlii</sup>

The two sexes will always be drawn to their gender interests and women will employ a different set of parameters to guide their lives.

Mary Wollstonecraft initiated the idea that gendered behaviour was learnt rather than something embedded at conception. Womangate endorsed and extended the argument. But because of advances in brain scanning technology such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) and positron emission tomography (PET) we are now getting hard evidence that will resolve the debate once and for all debunking the dangerous ideas of unisex which has influenced both sexes so much over the last half century.

### **Summary**

Unisex or genderless experiments were to prove that by social programming women would behave more like men and therefore be able to compete on a level playing field. Although feminism of that school survives, nothing changed as women continued to demonstrate the same behavioural traits and interests as before. Unforeseen consequences of the policy mean that women must now live in an environment where men no longer feel it necessary to show modern women courtesy and consideration.

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