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## **WOMAN VS . THE WORLD**

**BY FRANCES GOODMAN**

*“Although everyone senses that their existence has become a battlefield upon which neuroses, phobias, somatizations, depression and anxiety each sound a retreat, nobody has really grasped what is happening or what is at stake. Paradoxically, it is the total nature of this war – total in its means no less than its ends – that has allowed it to remain invisible.”<sup>1</sup>*

Every day we equip ourselves with the trappings and stereotypes of femininity. Our clothing is our camouflage, our false eyelashes our visors, our makeup our war paint and our false nails our bayonets. Whilst we dress in order to protect and hide our naked ‘essential’ selves, our attire gives us away in that it reveals so much about us including our tastes, belief systems and financial status.

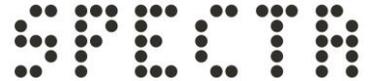
We live in a world where we are continually reminded that we need to project a vision of the modern woman – independent and powerful, yet at the same time delicate and vulnerable. Even at home we are brainwashed by advertising and television that we are never enough: we need to be younger, thinner, prettier, happier, sexier, stronger... the list is never ending. We no longer possess attributes, they possess us.<sup>2</sup>

Most of us go through our lives like somnambulists, unaware that we’re foot soldiers in the raging battle for ownership, which is being fought on multiple fronts: by patriarchy, capitalism, cultural and religious frameworks and feminist factions, and ultimately with ourselves - because in this “selfie” culture who is the guiltiest of objectifying us, than the one taking the photograph?

This constant onslaught makes it very difficult to differentiate the self from the image that is projected on us and which we, in turn, reflect back to the world. Is it possible to establish a true identity, a true self when a constant barrage of misinformation and aphorisms are being fired at us? Is it possible to pull back the mask and reveal the face/self?

Our society is obsessed with wealth, beauty, youth, sex and love. These obsessions are manufactured by the consumer capitalist infrastructures that have come to replace the religious ones we historically relied upon.

Certain areas of our lives are built on a falsely constructed framework in which consumerism masquerades as emancipation and choice and personal freedoms are sold to us as empowerment and liberation. Sex and desire are mediated through the pornographic male gaze and love (especially sentimental love) is postulated to be the new Utopia and singledom is tantamount to Purgatory.



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All of these false truths exist because "...Capitalism realized that it could no longer maintain itself as the exploitation of human labor if it did not also colonize everything that is beyond the strict sphere of production... Capital would have to socialize. It had to create its own culture, its own leisure, medicine, urbanism, sentimental education and its own mores, as well as a disposition toward their perpetual renewal."<sup>3</sup>

Of love and sex, sociologist Eva Illouz, wrote: "Take [these] out of our culture, and the economy collapses, wiping out in a second the fashion-cosmetics industry, the leisure industry, the tourist industry, the cosmetic-surgery industry, the entertainment industry, the pornography and sex industry, the sex-marriage-intimacy advice-therapy industry ... Love is the invisible oil that endlessly fuels the engines of the consumer market."<sup>4</sup>

Like fighters that have become so thoroughly entwined and entangled in the melee that it's impossible to pull them apart, all these industries and obsessions have been have become one big, roiling, mess that has subsumed us.

We're constantly faced with false choices and false dilemmas, and all these things we feel are internal battles are actually external ones, orchestrated by the powers that be to make us spend more, buy more, want more. We are not taught to love ourselves, we are taught to love our image.<sup>5</sup>

Like most wars there needs to be a resistance movement that rejects the status quo and pushes back against our enforced narcissism and belly gazing. It's not constructive to point fingers or condemn individual women for buying into these systems, but it is important understand that by buying into them we, as women, are reinforcing and strengthening them. However, we can use many of the signifiers of power to our own ends; after all - our clothing is our camouflage, our false eyelashes our visors, our makeup our war paint and our false nails our bayonets. Battles are won on the ground and so we must fight.

1 Tiqqun, Preliminary Materials for a Theory of a Young Girl, 2007, Semiotext(e) Intervention Series, USA. Page 11

2 Tiqqun, Preliminary Materials for a Theory of a Young Girl, 2007, Semiotext(e) Intervention Series, USA. Page 53

3 Tiqqun, Preliminary Materials for a Theory of a Young Girl, 2007, Semiotext(e) Intervention Series, USA. Page 15

4 Eva Illouz, "Why We Don't Celebrate Friendship With the Same Fervor as Love?," Haaretz, February 13, 2016 <http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/culture/.premium-1.702731> See also: Eva Illouz, Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997)

5 Tiqqun, Preliminary Materials for a Theory of a Young Girl, 2007, Semiotext(e) Intervention Series, USA. Page 61