

Man-Hating Goes Mainstream

[Teaching teenage girls to hate men]

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The *New York Times* hired Sarah Jeong to work for its editorial page, only to discover that scores of her old tweets revealed less-than-charitable views of white people. “White men are bullshit” read one, and “oh man it’s kind of sick how much joy I get out of being cruel to old white men” read another. The racism she was spouting has been much discussed. Left unmentioned was the deep misandry also evident in many of her tweets. Judging by her social-media presence, this **Berkeley-and-Harvard-educated woman really dislikes men.**

She’s not the only one. For years, it’s been popular on feminist twitter to reveal one’s man-hatred in 140 characters or fewer. Feminists attach #BanMen and #KillAllMen to their tweets or proudly display misandry merchandise purchased on Etsy with slogans such as “Men Are Scum.” Feminist Jessica Valenti once posted a picture of herself on Twitter wearing a T-Shirt that said “I bathe in male tears” while denouncing “misogynist whiners.”

Some feminists claim this is all in good fun—a kind of ironic, antic, anti-male performance art, a venting of the feminist spleen that both embraces and ironically comments on the longstanding caricature of the man-hating radical feminist. “Performative misandry,” as *Bitch* magazine describes it, is **“both comedy and coping mechanism; a way to bond with each other and commiserate about the seeming inevitability of their oppression.”** As Amanda Hess wrote in *Slate* a few years ago, “it’s an in-joke that like-minded feminists tell even when their critics aren’t looking, as a way to build solidarity within the group.” The training starts early, evidently. As Valenti noted, **“a lot of young feminists who I follow on Instagram and love this shit are teenagers.”**

That was then—in 2015, CafePress began selling mugs with the words “male tears” on them. Now the misandry seems less jokey and performative and more in earnest. “It seems logical to hate men,” wrote Suzanna Danuta Walters, a sociology professor and editor of the “gender studies journal” *Signs*, in a *Washington Post* op-ed this past June. “When they have gone low for all of human history, maybe it’s time for us to go all Thelma and Louise and Foxy Brown on their collective butts,” Walters wrote, denouncing the U.S. as the “land of legislatively legitimated toxic masculinity.” She

ended her screed by calling on men to “Lean out so we can actually just stand up without being beaten down. **Pledge to vote for feminist women only.** Don’t run for office. Don’t be in charge of anything. Step away from the power. ... **We have every right to hate you. You have done us wrong.** #BecausePatriarchy.”

In a recent interview in *Bustle*, Blythe Roberson describes her “hilariously relatable” new book, *How to Date Men When You Hate Men*, as crucial because “the patriarchy messes with everything, even romance.” The book begins: “I think about men all the time. About how they, individually (Donald Trump), and as a group, are oppressing me.” Later, she writes, “**I think that if you picked up a book with a title about hating men, you’re already pretty hip to the ubiquity of sexism and toxic masculinity.** Young men are taking guns to school and shooting their classmates. An extremely high percentage of any men you’ve ever heard of have recently been revealed to lie somewhere on the spectrum of creepy to sexual criminal. ... Men: they need to get their shit together!” The book, which comes out in January 2019, is marketed as “**comedy-philosophy.**”

The same misandry-laced condescension is evident in a recent opinion piece by Valenti in the *New York Times*. The essay, which claims to teach readers “**What Feminists Can Do for Boys,**” takes as its starting assumption that **boys are natural-born misogynists.** “Budding patriarchs could use our help,” the subhead observes. Valenti suggests that every person with XY chromosomes and an Internet connection is a future incel sociopath. “Feminism has long focused on issues of sexual assault, reproductive rights, harassment and more,” Valenti concludes. “**But issues don’t hurt women, men do.** Until we grapple with how to stop misogynists [a person who dislikes, despises, or is strongly prejudiced against women] themselves—starting with ensuring boys don’t grow up to be one—women will never be free.” This from the woman who bathes in male tears.

Buried in the feminist excuse-making for misandry [dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against men] is a demand for absolute tolerance for everything women do and zero tolerance for anything remotely sexist that men might do.

But the new misandry is not, as *Bitch* magazine claims, merely an “extended exercise in harmless trolling” (which was also the excuse that Jeong used to justify her racist tweeting).

It has a corrosive effect on debate—and not just online—at a time when civil debate is more necessary than ever. Even if you accept the left-progressive notion that a woman could never be a misandrist #BecausePatriarchy, or that a racial minority could never

express racist views because minorities lack power, no decent person should accept the gleefulness with which they bandy about cruel and denigrating remarks.

A well-functioning, free society should always discourage hatred aimed at groups because of the color of their skin or their sex or their religious faith or their sexual orientation. A man who attached #KillAllWomen hashtags to his tweets and then claimed it was all a big joke probably wouldn't get much sympathy from the likes of these performative misandrists. (Nor would he be offered a job on the *New York Times*' op-ed page.) The First Amendment protects the misogynist's and the misandrist's right to spew their venom. But it doesn't make either any less guilty of noxious incivility.

Not every feminist has been enthusiastic about the turn to misandry. Writing in the British paper *Metro*, Miranda Larbi suggested feminists pledge to distance themselves from misandry: "In 2018, more of us need to commit to speaking less generally and more specifically when we're taking men to task. We need to make an effort to consider their opinions before we negate them entirely. We need to value the male experience as much as we do the female. We need to stop telling them that they can't have a voice just for being male." **In other words, they need to treat men the way they've been demanding that men treat women since the first wave of the feminist movement.**

But the vast majority of feminists (and, more broadly, the progressive left) have embraced the idea that because women are broadly oppressed, anything goes with regard to man-hating.

There is much that is toxic and counterproductive in this. It plays into the unfair misogynist stereotype of feminists as man-haters. And it reveals an ugly hypocrisy among this generation of feminists. Performative hatred is precisely what feminists (correctly) criticize male online trolls and harassers for doing, and they claim it will lead to real violence in the real world if left unchecked. This critique is undermined when these same feminists give themselves leave to revel in misandry and excuse their own hatred as mere performance or satire. Let her without the first hateful hashtag cast the first stone.