

Adonis Mirror

From the Editor

While Bill Clinton was soaking in hot water over his sundry definitions of “sex” the press gave endless interviews to supposedly everyday people, with one man-on-the-street after the next intoning that it is perfectly alright to have done just about anything in life provided one was honest about it. Lying was worse than sexual harassment (confused with adultery since it was within people’s notions of consensual, given their expectations of power discrepancies between the sexes being both natural and desirable) and far more interesting a crime than the accusations of prior rapes on Clinton’s part that were occasionally shouted from the margins of polite society. Confession absolves all sin in the secular sphere, too, it would seem. Such indulgences notwithstanding, our society is built on fictions, lies that work to preserve power where it stands: tales of bootstrapping and requirements of plucky optimism that make petty selfishness a mortal sin for the meek while barons of industry can see their unquestioned strength as the mark of a “Servant Heart,” justifying their inheritance of the world.

So it is with some trepidation that I begin *Adonis Mirror* with a wide swath of honesty. It would be easy to say that there is a distinct lack of pro-feminist journals and that this is an attempt to remedy that situation. That much is certainly true. While there were substantial efforts in the mid-1990s, to some extent they derived their vitality from the same venture capitalism that promised the world—or at least a virtual one in the form of the internet—to writers, whole industries built on thoughts and ideas, sustained by endless amounts of cash. That is not to say that there was ever money in genuine pro-feminism, far from it, but the generative zeal of those times is gone. Efforts have been scaled back. Gone are those desperate attempts at sustaining print magazines, like *Achilles Heel*, replaced by the handful of blogs today, their reactionary content ever dictated by yesterday’s news in *The New York Times*. Even then bashfulness abounds: war has not only once again pushed sexual politics into secondary importance in the Left’s imagination but gender issues have been effectively colonized by the conservative forces of the military who argue that their bloodshed itself is to be considered feminist—as if the Taliban is only a rival and not a peer when it comes to the oppression of women.

That much is easy to say. But beyond that, to remain honest, I should speak of my own selfish desires, my own ambitions, whether



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petty or grand. That maxim, “write what you know,” is one that guides me: despite my overly healthy respect for the validity of my own opinion, an artifact of sex based socialization, I have always found myself admitting that I don’t know all that much outside of certain topics. The intersection of technology and gender, I’ve a pretty good handle on; Shakespeare and String Theory, not so much. Perhaps such ignorance is laudable given the number of One Book Experts out there, men who have read one book on a certain subject and milk it for all its worth at cocktail parties or whatever people do these days that I am not invited to. Yes, I am quite the bitter thing. After all, in the popular imagination, even attempting to be a writer is a fairly selfish preoccupation: only I wasn’t fidgeting around with an attempt at the Great American Novel, I was producing one topical article after another, touching on important political issues in a way they had not previously been explored. And still most of my work remained unpublished.

Thus, *Adonis Mirror* is—inescapably—one of those distinctively modern projects, the kind every ‘young’ writer (males 18-39; females 18-27) uses to self publish in style, a personal experiment at being interesting and socially relevant; wistful for some sort of future. We scan one another’s resumes for the line advertising these projects, one we approach both knowingly and with a twinge of jealousy—fearful that theirs is less transparent than our own, our journals of no importance, foundations of nothing, or centers for the study of postmodern hobby-horses, where we toil alone in our trumped up positions as Editors of pretension, Executive Directors of the family pet, and the CEOs of pocket lint. As such, real cooperation is limited by competition, and whether we finally get our chance to move to the Big City and attend those parties full of posturing writers, further opportunities at institutions of higher learning, or simply tire and move on in defeat to whatever seems best, such projects are inevitably abandoned.

It would be imprudent to guarantee that *Adonis Mirror* will be around forever or to pledge anything revolutionary that has not been done before. What I can promise readers is hard work, high standards, and personal responsibility. And that means using “I” both in this letter and elsewhere around the website, rather than the traditional royal we; hopefully an utter lack of pretending when it comes to what can and will be accomplished. For those of you who would join *Adonis Mirror* and the efforts here with your submissions, it will never be forgotten that every word published here represents a missed paycheck in a more traditional venue that might be shutting you out because of your subject matter, your approach to it, your limited popularity in the eyes of the insular

writer’s market—or your sex in the case of female authors. What I can provide for you is that your words will not be diminished by the context of their publishing and that they will be in good company; that they will be placed on pages of raw-HTML, sans advertising, optimized for search-engines and outside linking; and that even if producing a printed anthology remains out of the question, every article and essay will be provided with a printable PDF version, with professional layout, for the benefit of both readers and the author’s portfolio.

In remaining cognizant of that, *Adonis Mirror* will accept and publish submissions on a rolling basis, a process with many benefits, but also an unfortunate necessity brought upon by the world of blogs—both when competing for readers conditioned by the format, as well as the modern reliance upon them to popularize certain articles, aid that releasing work in a discrete-issue format regrettably obviates against as things are inevitably lost in a crowd. Recognizing that *Adonis Mirror* is likely not the first journal your piece was submitted to, one of our more innovative experiments is to encourage the inclusion of “meta-submissions” that reflect more current thoughts on the subject of the original article (that would be inappropriate for one reason or another to sandwich into the existing text), as well as those that describe the work’s trouble in being published elsewhere.

Yes, that is dangerous in some regards—speculation always is—but just as more traditional workers are often proscribed from sharing salary information to protect inequalities that benefit those in elite positions, the world of the liberal literati (whether it is *The Nation* or the myriad of pop-political Trendy Something magazines of our generation) is hardly a meritocracy despite the veneer of grassy roots it likes to put out during fund raising time. Deliberate bridge burning, perhaps: In patriarchy, all pro-feminist work by men should be bridge burning. At least on some level, it should be, and neither indiscriminately nor to personal advantage, but with moral intelligence. Doing so is naturally easier for younger men, not yet entrenched in certain powers and protections, our training in privilege at odds with our feelings of exclusion. But we too will have to someday answer to future generations. And if those men who currently stand at the forefront of the progressive movement are indeed who they say they are, the type of men they proclaim to be, then neither will they seek to punish us for our criticism, as well.

—Richard Leader