

# Feminism v. Femininity and Masculinity in The Hunger Games and Ulysses

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## Abstract

In patriarchal systems, individuals are socialized to view masculinity as synonymous with success, and femininity as weakness. Yet Tantra, an Eastern philosophy, suggests the human body is a microcosm of the universe and requires masculine and feminine energies to achieve existential balance. Alisa Vitti's novel, *Women Code*, propounds Tantra as a tool for women to realign and gain power in their femininity. This essay will discuss the harm the evolution of feminism has caused to the feminine. Deriving examples from works written nearly 100 years apart, Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* and James Joyce's *Ulysses* provides attestation that masculine and feminine energies must be balanced in ourselves and in relationships. This paper will examine the parallels of the female protagonists, Molly and Katniss, and discuss their individual roles in Tantra and in the feminist movement. Both characters' traumas force them to rely on masculine energy, disrupting inner spiritual balance. In this paper, I will discuss the equilibrium of energies Katniss and Molly find by subconsciously seeking relationships with feminine men, creating stability in themselves.

## Introduction

**“Tantra – an Eastern philosophy that believes the universe is created by and made up of masculine (Shiva) and feminine (Shakti) energies that infuse all things” (Vitti 259).**

Masculine and feminine energy is often justification to force traditional gender roles, suggesting women are inherently nurturing while men are aggressive protectors. Equally available to each sex, masculine and feminine energies serve to create balance in personal and existential relationships. As the fourth-wave of feminism develops, women continually rely on masculine energy to reach the same social status as men, losing touch with their femininity in the process. In a patriarchal society, masculinity is synonymous with success, therefore, “The basis of such oppression is not biology per se, but the meanings that are attached to biological difference” and the balance of energies is left wavering (Day, Wray 5).

Evidenced by the non-fiction novel *Woman Code* by Alissa Vitti, men and women are fundamentally different, yet masculinity and femininity do not inherently belong to a specific sex, nor is one more important than the other. Considering the patriarchy favors masculinity, *Woman Code* theory insinuates that women are forced into a constant state of masculine energy, disrupting the energetic equilibrium and hormonal balance.

James Joyce’s *Ulysses* is one of the most controversial novels for its graphic nature and exploration of women’s sexual desire. Written one hundred years ago, the last episode of the novel, “Penelope” gives Molly Bloom, the main female character, a shameless stream of consciousness’. Characterized by her apparent sexual freedom and elusive nature with her

husband Leopold, Molly encapsulates masculine energy, separating herself from her feminine identity. Feminist literature is enamored by the unfaithful relationship between Molly and Leopold Bloom, but there has yet to be scholarship discussing the unbalanced masculine and feminine energies that infuse Molly and Leopold.

More recent literature such as, *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins has been outwardly advertised as feminist rhetoric, yet Katniss seems to believe femininity is inability. Though the text highlights Katniss' fierce feminine ability to care, the young adult audience and media focus on the hyper-masculine character Katniss possesses, consequently raising a generation of young women who correlate the feminine with weakness. The feminist movement answers to the maltreatment and perceived inferiority of women, and, in response, women began to prove that everything a man could do, a woman can too. But this does not require further attestation. I am suggesting, however, that the power of femininity must be proved, and that all feminine people are just as important and powerful in societal structure. Moreover, femininity and masculinity are not equal in ability, they each serve their own purposes, but they are equal in importance. I argue that, in the evolution of fourth-wave feminism, women will find refuge in their feminine selves, feeling safe in their womanhood and learning women are capable of much more than what our masculine energy confines us to.

It is not until recently feminists have begun to discuss energies rather than simply sex. Beginning in the 1990s, third-wave feminism strives for socioeconomic equality, focusing on the individual experience of both men and women. Currently, we are experiencing a shift into fourth-wave feminism, catapulted by the use of social media and the #MeToo movement. Many individuals have interpreted third-wave ideology to mean that women must prove themselves by accomplishing everything men already have. Meanwhile, the fourth wave, consisting mostly of

Generation Z and Alpha, fights for the demolition of stereotypes and social equality. The concept of strong women has become synonymous with masculine women, undermining femininity and inadvertently regressing in social politics. Though I agree with the importance of this discourse, I would also like to propose that the root of gender inequality lies in the oppression of femininity, not necessarily the female. Therefore, feminists must work towards embracing femininity instead of removing themselves from it.

In the following pages, I will briefly discuss what it means, anatomically, to be a woman and compare that with what it means to have feminine or masculine energy. Then, I will structure the discourse around fourth-wave feminism, discussing the popular young adult novel *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, and cross-analyze Katniss Everdeen's energies and socio-political environment. Finally, I will examine the feminine and masculine energies of Molly and Leopold Bloom in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, focusing on their marital dynamic. I argue that masculine and feminine energies are equally accessible to both genders, and it is crucial to have an equilibrium of energies in relationships and within individuals. Yet, modern feminism subconsciously amalgamates with the patriarchy, forcing women into their masculine energy and discriminating against all people who find power in their feminine, creating a dangerous imbalance of energies. Living in societal structures where only masculine energy thrives, Katniss Everdeen in Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* and Molly Bloom in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, disassociate from their feminine energies in acts of self-preservation, a response to childhood trauma and pressure from patriarchal societal systems.

### **FEMINISM: four waves**

To accurately present my arguments, it is vital to define the eras of feminism and their purpose.

Though a fluid discourse, feminism has been categorized into waves, most closely resembling

the different agendas of each new generation of feminists. Katy Day and Rebecca Wray, co-authors of the article “Fourth-wave feminism and postfeminism: The successes and failures” question the motives and goals of the most recent wave of feminism. The first wave arguably began in 1848 with the Seneca Falls Convention; the first formal Women’s Rights Convention. Feminists of the first wave were “principally concerned with the material conditions of women’s lives and with legal, educational, and economic reforms” (Day, Wray 1). A century after the Seneca Falls Convention born the second-wave, where feminists focused on “Reproductive rights, sexual and domestic violence, the sexual objectification of women’s bodies, equal employment opportunities, paid maternity leave and the provision of adequate child-care facilities;” a political agenda surely propelled by the famous court case, Roe v Wade, that set the precedent of the right to privacy (2).

Claire Snyder-Hall, a political theorist and Research Deputy with the Kettering Foundation, helps to gauge a better understanding of what third-wave, or modern feminism is, contrasting it with Second-Wave feminism in her essay “What Is Third-Wave Feminism? A New Directions Essay.” The first generation of feminists fought for the right to vote, and when Congress ratified the 19th Amendment in 1920, women continued to search for power in individuality. In the second-wave, feminists turned their efforts to discrimination and equality, drawing heavy attention to Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court Case arguing a woman’s right to an abortion. The millennial generation and some Generation Z are postfeminists who, “feel entitled to interact with men as equals, claim sexual pleasure as they desire it (heterosexual or otherwise), and actively play with femininity” (Snyder-Hall 179).

Third-wave feminism where gender ideology headlined the human rights movement, and individuality overpowered revolutionary unity. Day and Wray argue that “Women need to speak

up against sexism, but the solutions proposed tend to be individual and consumerist-based with an emphasis upon personal responsibility and empowerment” (2). With a focal point of individualism, women seek power in what second-wave feminists abstained from: sex. Stereotypically, men find status and power in casual sex, but women have begun to find liberation in it as well. By no means am I undermining women’s freedom to embrace sexuality, however, I do believe that this individualistic approach towards feminism abdicates from the movement's purpose of political activism and equality for all people. Rather than embracing femininity and gaining power in womanhood itself, “the body is presented as a source of women’s power and as a key source of her identity” (7). Women fight to be seen as more than just a body, but modern feminism has celebrated the sexualizing of self and rebranded it as women empowerment. The competitive and consumerist ideology that follows individual feminism is manipulating women to believe their individual choice is not heavily influenced by a capitalist, patriarchal society.

While fourth-wave feminism unfolds before us now, individual and consumer ideology remains prevalent in the movement. Structured around the rise of the internet, the fourth-wave opens up discourse on sex and gender, discussing masculinity and femininity in regards to what is nature and what is nurture. In conjunction with this essay, Day and Wary also discuss masculinity and femininity as an idea unassociated with biological sex. The oppression of women involves the perceived difference between sexes; “women have and continue to be treated as a unitary group who have certain shared traits, tendencies, characteristics and experiences in common, whether the result of nature (biology) or nurture (socialization)” (4). Biological women are not ostracized for being female, they are oppressed because of the

assumed femininity that has been linked to women. Therefore “The basis of such oppression is not biology per se, but the meanings that are attached to biological difference” (5).

The goal of modern feminism has long been to debunk the idea “that it is ‘natural’ that men occupy a higher economic position than women’ because men ‘are ‘naturally’ more instrumentally-oriented, competitive and dominant” (4). Though these traits do belong to the masculine, they are not specifically found in men. Simultaneously, while women, supposedly, “‘naturally’” have a “greater capacity for nurturance,” this quality is not a fixed trait among women (4). Women and men have equal access to masculine and feminine energies and traits, yet women have been forced to find power only in masculine characteristics, disassociating themselves with their feminine energy and identity, and therefore their feminine power. In this quest to undermine the patriarchy, women, in actuality, are feeding into it. Fourth-wave feminism is set in a culture where “The extent to which women have the freedom to choose in contemporary patriarchal, capitalist societies has been overstated” (7-8).

Coerced into masculine energy, women have been fighting themselves to gain success, often sacrificing interpersonal relationships, family, and self-balance. Despite a rising number of influential women in the media, executive offices, and in political offices, women remain heavily influenced by the desire of society, unknowingly making choices specifically designed for them by a patriarchal structure. Moreover, women are disassociating from their feminine in exchange for success and acceptance within the patriarchy, creating an imbalance of energies.

### **Women Code: Masculine and Feminine Energy**

Alissa Vitti wrote *Woman Code* in response to her long healing journey from Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS), a condition that can cause irregular cycles, weight gain, excessive hair growth, and, most significantly, inhibits women from becoming pregnant. After years of



misdiagnoses from professionals and offerings of “quick fixes,” like hormonal birth control, Vitti began her own research and found fundamental and hormonal differences between men and women. Biological women function on a 28-day hormonal cycle, while men have a 24 hour one. Men are able to wake up every morning with similar and predictable hormonal fluctuation, corresponding with a patriarchal structure, making a day-to-day routine easier to manage. Meanwhile, “under ideal circumstances, there's a predictable ratio of hormones that happens four times per month, creating four distinct phases of the [menstrual] cycle” (Vitti 20). Five hormones, “estrogen, progesterone, follicle-stimulating hormone (FHS), luteinizing hormone (FH), and testosterone” govern a woman’s cycle and have fluctuating levels through the 28 days (144). The levels of each hormone determine which phase of the cycle women are in.

Since the the United States is systematically structured by men and for men, it supports the optimal performance of men, not women. In an idyllic world, women alter their routines to perform what the “brain and body are primed to do during each phase” (145). Women are taught to “push through,” but are never taught that female bodies are not built to function as such. In fact, “New research from the National Institute of Health confirms that a woman’s menstrual health acts as a gauge of vitality and overall health throughout her life” (31). It is imperative for a woman to structure her lifestyle around her menstrual cycle, ensuring optimal usage of hormone regulation and best possible chance for a fulfilling and successful life. Yet, the average woman who works to provide for herself, and perhaps a family, is unable to do so in a system designed for men’s hormonal structure.

Pressure to succeed in a patriarchal society compels women into their masculine. However, with an override of masculinity, one cannot find an inner balance. The Eastern Philosophy Tantra suggests “the universe is created by and made up of masculine (Shiva) and

feminine (Shakti) energies that infuse all things” but balance of those energies is crucial (259). The premise of Tantra lies in the idea that the human body is a microcosm of the universe, and the universe constantly works to reach a balance of masculine and feminine energies. Though energies flow freely between the sexes, it is cardinal to both men and women’s health to balance their masculine and feminine energies within themselves and in relationships. Yet, in a patriarchal society, masculine energy overpowers the feminine. Through Vitti’s work healing woman with her cycle-syncing method, she has found that “It’s against [woman’s] very nature to be static [...] everything in [their] life [...] functions in a cyclical manner - from the seasons, to the moon, to [their] menstrual cycle, to [their] hormones” (80). Harnessing feminine energy as a woman is a lost art. As feminism progresses, women guise their masculine energy as apparent success, whether it be in their personal, work, or social lives, and consequently reject their femininity. Though women are more significantly represented in executive offices, corporate works, television, and politics than they were fifty years ago, it is due to their inherent masculine energy, not a feat over the patriarchy. Moreover, if a woman desires a position traditionally fulfilled by a man, she must forfeit her feminine energy, allowing the masculine energy to dominate and dictate her life choices and lifestyle. Women have proven they are capable of everything a man is, yet they are still forced to “act like a man” to be seen as equal.

Masculine energy is dominant in a patriarchal society, yet we need an equal amount of feminine energy for proper balance. Key components of masculine energy focus on “Tenaciously pursuing what you want [...] Focusing on the end result / Relying on yourself and individual achievements” while feminine energy consists of “Magnetically attracting what you want [...] Enjoying the process of creation / Seeing the big picture [...] Relating to others by listening, sharing, and nurturing” (259). Women are often forced into their masculine energies, causing an

internal imbalance, which, in turn, causes friction in interpersonal relationships and emotional/hormonal irregularities. I have come to the conclusion that this correlation and balance of energies is crucial in all relationships, including romantic, work, self, and otherwise.

### **Feminine & Masculine Energy in YA Literature**

Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games* is arguably the most successful trilogy turned blockbuster since Harry Potter. The novel has had a significant influence on older Generation Z and young millennials, setting a precedent of rebellion in search of justice, and providing an example of stabilized masculine and feminine energies in relationships. Collins creates a dystopian society consisting of twelve districts, each providing their governing body, the Capitol, with means to live, such as coal, lumber and seafood. In remembrance of the district's rebellion against the Capitol seventy-four years ago, there is an annual Hunger Games, where each district must offer up a male and female "tribute" between the ages of twelve and eighteen to fight to the death, until only one person remains. Katniss Everdeen, a 16-year-old girl from District twelve, takes on a masculine role to care for her mother and sister, Prim, after their father dies working in the mines. When Prim's name is chosen at the reaping, the lottery for the Hunger Games, Katniss volunteers to take her place alongside Peeta Mellark, the male tribute. Katniss proceeds to win the Hunger Games, but accidentally sparks a rebellion when she manipulates the Head Gamemaker to spare both her and Peeta, making it the only Hunger Games where two tributes survive. While Katniss displays masculine energy in and out of the arena, Peeta represents a feminine role, ergo, the two are complements of one another. Katniss possesses a strong masculine energy in her role as provider within her family unit, and is again forced to rely on the masculine when she is forced to fight to the death in *The Hunger Games*. Hence, Katniss

denies her feminine energy to protect herself and win the games, yet, ironically, the love story (seen as feminine energy) Peeta curates ultimately keeps them both alive. Moreover, Katniss' feminine energy as a caring sister fosters community engagement, which ultimately sparks the rebellion within the districts. Peeta's feminine energy brings forth Katniss' caring nature, balancing her masculine. Katniss is run by her masculine energy, but Peeta brings out her feminine, which is what ultimately unites the districts and sparks hope in Panem. Katniss' feminine energy is the spark for rebellion and hope for a better future.

In her article “The contemporary postfeminist dystopia: disruptions and hopeful gestures in Suzanne Collins' “The Hunger Games”” Andrea Ruthven discusses the ethics of caring displayed in Katniss Everdeen and analyzes the strategy behind the “star-crossed lovers of District 12.” Before Katniss' father passed away in the mines, he taught her to hunt; a banned activity in District 12. With her father gone, Katniss displays masculine energy by assuming the role of provider, focusing on daily tasks to keep her sister, Prim, and mother alive. Yet, Katniss exhibits “her first act of heroism and defiance” when she volunteers to take Prim's place in The Hunger Games, an act of feminine energy (Ruthven 51). Katniss inspires hope and rebellion with her fierce ability to care, uniting the districts in an otherwise individualistic culture seemingly emblematic of modern fourth-wave feminism.

With an individualistic ideology, *The Hunger Games* serves to criticize the disunion of capitalist society in hopes for personal gain. The Capitol “work[s] to separate individuals and communities from each other and reduce the potential for affective bonds and community to emerge,’ therefore, when Katniss volunteers for Prim, she ‘actively defies this individualistic imperative” (51). However, Katniss is also careful in her display of emotion, an act of self-

preservation after her father dies and her mother, overtaken by grief, becomes unable to care for her and Prim.

Katniss builds boundaries around her emotions, an act of masculine energy. Before the games begin, each tribute undergoes a televised interview. Peeta is the last contestant on stage and confesses to Caesar his love for Katniss, a display of normative femininity (Ruthven 56). Unaware that Haymitch, Katniss and Peeta's mentor, curates this story as a survival strategy, Katniss confronts them both and claims "'He made me look weak!' however, Haymitch argues 'He made you look desirable!'" (Collins 135). Katniss, having been ruled by her masculine energy since her father died, does not understand that vulnerability can also be strength. Peeta does not have the same edge or masculine advantage that Katniss does, hence he utilizes his feminine energy to win the crowd in hopes to win the games. Though Katniss' only goal is to return to her family, this love story resurrects a rebellion in the districts because of Katniss' assumed display of femininity and likability. As Ruthven argues, "Katniss' involvement in the heterosexual love narrative 'recontextualizes her ability to fight in the arena', as this is no longer linked to 'a violent masculine pragmatism' but instead becomes 'part of her conventionally feminine public persona due to its association with her fierce ability to care'" (56). Though Katniss acts in her masculine, ultimately her feminine nature inspires a rebellion in the districts and saves herself and Peeta while in the arena.

Moreover, Peeta compliments Katniss and accentuates her feminine energy with his own. A significant trait of feminine energy is the ability to see the bigger picture, which only Peeta is able to capture. The night before the games begin, Peeta says to Katniss that he wants "to die as myself," meanwhile, Katniss has only "been ruminating on the availability of trees" (141). Katniss only sees the task in front of her; to win the games, while Peeta understands the Capitol's

purpose behind them; to pit the districts against one another. The Capitol's objective is to separate individuals and communities to undermine rebellion. Katniss turns to means of survival after her father dies, becoming self-reliant and untrusting. Yet, when Peeta helps to balance Katniss' feminine and masculine energies, she becomes a symbol of hope and rebellion, signifying the strength feminine energy exerts when unified with the masculine.

### **Sexuality and Femininity in Molly's Perspective**

In a critical reading of "Penelope," the last episode of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Suzette Hanky discusses Molly's childhood and parental relationships, including discourse of the effects of trauma and hyper-sexuality in her article "Speculum of the Other Molly: A Feminist/Psychoanalytic Inquiry into James Joyce's Politics of Desire". Growing up on a military base, Gibraltar, without a mother figure, and with a hyper-masculine father, "Molly grew to girlhood under the ever-watchful panoptical eye of a patriarch who prohibited the daughter's need for body/breast/sperm nurturance" (151). Without the unconditional love of a maternal figure, and under guardianship of an emotionally detached father, Molly seeks sexual validation from men. Fourth-wave feminism would argue that Molly's promiscuity is a practice of sexual freedom, however, "She unconsciously internalize[s] a masculine stereotype of feminine desirability," inadvertently making her a product of patriarchal interest (153). The 1920's in Ireland, where *Ulysses* takes place, perceives men as superior and supports the catholic tradition of heterosexual marriage and strong gender roles. While the feminist movement works to abolish the patriarchal hierarchy, Molly acts sexually in male interest and rebrands it as empowerment.

Molly exudes masculine energy as both a survival mechanism in a patriarchal society and trauma response to her childhood. With an absent mother, she seems to resent women, but also scrutinizes men because of her emotionally absent father. Structured in her masculinity, she claims women are "so sensitive about everything" (Joyce 18.176-177). Yet, she also claims that

men are “weak and pulling,” insinuating that women are a necessity in men’s survival (18.23). The emotional needs of Molly’s childhood are never met, which roots a severe distrust in others. Molly utilizes emotional boundaries to separate herself from her feminine energy, and people in general, for that matter, as a way of self-preservation. Moreover, though she identifies as a woman, she resents femininity and society’s oppression of it, and snidely remarks, “God knows theres always something wrong with [women]” (18.108-109). Understanding that masculinity is synonymous with success in 1920s Ireland, Molly acts in her masculine energy; acting only by means of reaching an end goal, in this case, survival and emotional preservation.

However, the boundaries Molly implements ultimately hurt her. Her emotional distance is best seen in her search for male partners. Before meeting her husband Leopold Bloom, Molly sought out hyper-masculine military men who closely resemble her father’s emotional intellect. Or lack thereof, perhaps. Having never received the attention adolescents need in their developmental years, Molly seeks validation in her sexual encounters with men. In “Penelope,” Molly shamelessly discusses her sexual experiences and ““judges herself through a fantasmic grid of male surveillance, she reads her own sexual experiences ‘against herself’ in a monologue that gives us startling evidence of emotional alienation from the matrifocal ground of feminine desire”” (Henke 150). Molly believes the only purpose physical intimacy serves is to please men. Perhaps this belief stems from the loss of her only son, Rudy, who is also the reason Leopold is no longer able to perform sexually with Molly. Yet, the couple also has a daughter named Milly who is sent to boarding school. After evaluating Milly and Molly’s strained relationship, much due in part to Molly’s jealousy of her daughter, I would also argue that the emotional barriers Molly fabricates are unable to be broken even by her children, which would explain why Molly

only views sex as pleasurable for men. Because even what comes after nine months post-sexual encounter, what is considered the feminine desire, Molly is unable to find pleasure in.

However, Molly has had an anti-matrifocal mindset before she met Leopold. She attempts to disconnect the physical from the mental with her sexual partners, yet she remains emotionally damaged afterwards. While speaking of her sexual experiences, her only concern is if “he [is] satisfied with [her]” and claims that sex is an invention made for men (Joyce 18.121-122). Through Molly's belief she is liberating herself sexually, Joyce foreshadows a focal point of third and fourth-wave feminism. In both circumstances, the result is quite contradictory entrapment in a cycle of meaningless relationships. Molly has built “A seductive self-image wholly dependent on masculine approval,” undermining her value as a woman (Henke 153). Moreover, the boundaries Molly attempts to put in place between her and her emotions cause her to be uncomfortable and unsure in her identity and believe she is not worthy of sexual pleasure, or even love.

In spite of Molly's internalized belief that she is unlovable, Leopold Bloom adores her every being. When Molly has an affair with Hugh Boylan, a successful and masculine ladies' man, she again seeks for the validation she never receives from her father. Nevertheless, Molly realizes, after describing Boylan as “a Stallion driving it up into you because thats all they want out of you,” that the masculine men she usually pursues are not best suited for her (18.152-153). As a product of hyper-masculinity, Molly's masculine energy and characteristics clash with the men of her past relationships. Furthermore, Leopold Bloom's “womanly” persona is complimentary of Molly's masculinity. He resembles a mother figure which helps repair Molly's fear of abandonment left by her own mother. In fact, at the conclusion of the novel, as Molly reminisces her and Leopold's engagement, she expresses that his femininity is why she fell for



him; “thats why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is” (18.1578-1579). After struggling with her emotional boundaries, physical intimacy, and feminine vulnerability, Molly and Leopold stay together in a balanced marriage. Leopold is able to heal her with his love, as she imagines herself at “Gibraltar as a girl where I was a Flower of the mountain yes” (18.1602). While reminiscent of Leopold’s proposal to her, Molly imagines herself as a young girl in Gibraltar, allowing Leopold’s nurturance, love and care to break down her emotional boundaries and heal her inner child. Finally, Molly “[draws] him down to [her] so he could feel [her] breasts all perfume yes” allowing Leopold’s femininity to penetrate her masculinity and create an energetic balance.

### **Conclusion**

Feminism is subjective and the definition will change with each person you ask, but the premise of the movement remains to be a socio-political campaign to advocate for women’s rights on the basis of the equality of the sexes. With each new generation of feminists seems to come a new wave of feminism, focusing on issues prevalent for their time, changing the purpose of the feminist movement due to the ever-changing political landscape we inhabit. Feminism has made tremendous strides in the fight for equality, and as we evolve in our thoughts on gender, sexuality, and identity, feminism has never been more crucial for social justice. However, as I study feminism in patriarchal societies, I see a trend of women foregoing their feminine energy to become more masculine. Despite Tantra teaching us that both energies are available to all people and the balance is critical to society, women have been forced to disrupt their internal balance of energies, becoming more masculine in exchange for success.

Alissa Vitti, author of *Woman Code*, claims that a majority of women she helps to heal from disorders like PCOS consequently fall into their feminine energy after healing themselves

through natural remedies such using certain herbs and foods, and yoga. And no, not the generic diet and exercise comment doctors give patients. What Vitti has noticed in her clients is an excess in masculine energy; hyper-independency, boundaries surrounding emotions, and inability to see the bigger picture, causing chronic stress and identity crisis’.

Trying to find reason in her findings, Vitti came across Tantra, the Eastern philosophy that drives the purpose of this paper. The universe consists of a stable balance between feminine and masculine energies, and all sexes and all people have equal access to these energies. Within each person is a mirror of the universe, therefore each body fights to maintain homeostasis in a balance of energies. Until an individual meets an equilibrium of masculinity and femininity, they will not feel at peace.

Masculine energy is what makes people take action. An individual solely ruled by their masculine energy will be goal-oriented, self-reliant, and utilize emotional boundaries to tenaciously pursue an end result. While feminine energy focuses on feeling, the process of creation, nurturing and caring, and seeing the “bigger picture” life has to offer. Unfortunately, feminine energy has been undermined in patriarchal. Masculinity has become synonymous with success, which is why women disassociate from their feminine identities; to prove they can do everything a man can.

Feminism has helped define that sexes are equal but within the framework of a patriarchal society, leading to the imbalance of energies. Though women are still often seen as inferior, I have suggested in this essay that, in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century patriarchy, the female is not oppressed, but rather the feminine. Men who display their feminine energy, such as Peeta in *The Hunger Games* or Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*, are perceived as lesser. Yet, when a woman such as Katniss Everdeen or Molly Bloom exhibits masculine energy, it is largely due to a survival

mechanism triggered by their cultural landscapes and childhood traumas. The next wave of "humanism" could celebrate and respect masculine and feminine energies in both sexes. Nevertheless, no matter the gender, masculine and feminine energies must be balanced within each individual and every relationship, creating peace in society and the microcosm of the universe that is our bodies.

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