

Depiction of women

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Depiction of Women By: Charles Cotton In past generations, women have not been given the respect that they deserve. Sophocles once said, " Silence gives the proper grace to women. " Men were always perceived as the dominant sex; women were just asked to perform in the kitchen, and please their spouse after a long day of work. According to feminist criticism, the roots of prejudice against women have long been embedded in Western culture. The female feminist Virginia Woolf wrote " A Room of One's Own, " in which she declares that men have treated women as inferiors. She states that society believes that women are intellectually inferior to men. In layman's terms, the man has control of the house and income, while the woman just sits home. Books from the early period of British literature such as Judith, Wife of Bath, and Grendel's mom convey the same message. All of them had one objective in common: all protagonists were females who were denied certain rights. The ancient Greeks abetted gender discrimination, declaring the male to be the superior and the female the inferior. In the Bible, Adam and Eve were both tempted by a serpent, represented as the devil. Eve was the one who disobeyed God and ate from the Tree of Good and Evil. She was beautiful, but she made the mistake of falling for deception. Throughout the Christian Period, this story provides men with the reason why they should restrict the social, sexual, religious, political, and economic freedom of women (Eve and the Identity of Women, 1). This ancient story holds them accountable for the decisions that they make in mankind. This passage describes the image of women in Western Civilization; independence and freedom of speech. However, after a hard fight for equal rights, women are now allowed to be employed anywhere,

with some companies still limiting their abilities. Women in today's society are choosing the Garden of Eden's apple every day; free will. Based off of the Fifth Edition of Literary Criticism, prejudice against women began in the Western culture. In ancient Greece, they abetted gender discrimination; demanding that the male is the superior and the female is beneath them (Literary Criticism, pg. 147). Charles Darwin wrote " The Descent of Man (1871), announcing that women are a " characteristic of a past and lower state of civilization" (pg. 147). As the man, one was responsible for supporting the family financially, while the wife stayed at home cleaning the house, preparing dinner, and taking care of the children. Genesis, the very first book of Scripture, tells us that God created both man and woman in his image. From the very beginning, women were seen and treated as inferior beings and seen as . The scripture read as this: " God created man first in this world out of his image"(Genesis). His creation of man signified their dominance, and their role of " authority. " In those days, females had a bad reputation for being very persuasive when they wanted something from men. For example, Delilah was the fatal attraction for Samson, who cut his hair to please her. His hair was his source of power; without it, he would be defenseless. He was defeated by the Philippines, and his confidence was diminished. Women have been the downfall of men, especially if he has valuable possessions. Century after century, male voices continue to determine the social role and cultural status of women. Feminist critic Simone de Beauvoir's text asserts that the Western society is patriarchal, which means controlled by males. She says that women must ask them self: " What is a woman? "(Feminism, pg. 149) This is basically stating that

women are defined by his social class. The first major feminist critic that challenged the males was author Christine de Pizan. (1365-c1434) She wrote *L'Épître au Dieu d'amours*, critiquing the judgment of Charles Darwin, who stated in his novel "The Descent of Man", stating that God created both man and woman as equal beings. They wanted to be heard and acknowledged as scholars, artists, and writers. They want to be respected as a person, and not just an object. I found an article called "Helium", which was found on the CNN website. It explained that women of this generation are perceived to be educated, successful career, and have the ability to bare children. They are also expected to put food on the table for their husband and children, while enduring the added pressure of looking a certain way. All of these aspects are the perfect formula for a "successful" woman; and sometimes hinder males from appreciating their intellectual minds. Because of their gender, women have to work twice as hard to establish themselves in society, but still are at risk to be perceived differently. For example, when a woman has a high class position in a company, people often have the notion that she used her sexual position to climb to power. With their clothing they walk around in, they are often judged by their figure than their ability to fulfill their job requirements. The story Judith would be a great example of how females use their body parts to gain respect. By building up her description as a maiden, the poet uses Judith's virginity to construct her innocence, making her appear vulnerable. Because of this trait, Holofernes thought it would be easy to grasp her attention and take ownership of her life. She was also described as *maego*, meaning "woman", "virgin", "girl", "woman", and "wife." (Judith, Lines 35, 43, 73, 78) She is never stated by her

name, and that was the lack of respect that was there for women at that time. Issued on September 9, 2011 by a lady named Margaret Holt, the Chicago Tribune issued an article called "How Should Society (and media) Depict Women", there were a group of females that were discussing a video that displayed the lack of respect for women that was issued on September 9, 2011 by a lady named Margaret Holt. Holt attended the YMCA of Metropolitan, where the screening was sold out for the first night at Fifth Third Bank. This documentary, called "Miss Representation", warranted responses that were not only shocking, but elicited a fresh call to action about the events that occurred. The video was about a woman who went through so much disrespect and turmoil. She was beaten multiple times for standing up for her rights, but she kept her composure, and fought until the end. Taylor Demming, one of the females in the audience, stated, "I didn't know there was no respect for women," she said afterward (Chicago Tribune, *Depicting Women in Society*, pg. 2). At the same time, there were scouts at DuPage County High Schools that were also disturbed by the content of the film. Student Jessica Porter said the movie made her "think about the reality shows that she liked" (*Depicting Women in Society*, pg. 2). This reading reminded me of the life of Susan B. Anthony, and her fight for women's right to vote. There were multiple messages that were interpreted from the documentary, allowing women in this generation to appreciate their freedom. Certain commercials are derogatory towards women, and perceive them as sexual pleasantries, as portrayed in Judith. Her hyper-femininity provides her with the power of seduction, in a significant female role. She is perceived as passive throughout the story, until she beheaded Holofernes.

argues that Judith's gender transformation in the poem is "not from passive to aggressive nor from "feminine" to "masculine," but rather from "possessed" to "possessor" (257). Jean Kilbourne wrote an article titled "Portrayal of Women in Society, Killing Us Softly", which discusses how women are portrayed as just items (Jean Kilbourne, Introduction to Media Studies, pg. 1). It continues to depict how the media portrays women and how they influence these advertisements negatively. For example, in his article, he chooses to show an advertisement where a Trojan condom was placed on the left side of a female's bra. The condom represents sexual content, and the image was mostly focused on her breast. Her chest was depicted as a tool to influence men to purchase this particular product. Her breasts are enlarged in the picture as well; intriguing most men that sex sells in our society. African-American women are also promoted as sex symbols in music videos. According to the article titled "Beyond the Betrayal of Women in Video Games", 38% of female characters found in video games are wearing revealing clothing, 23% are showing cleavage (Children Now, [suite101.com/article/media-portrayal of women](http://suite101.com/article/media-portrayal-of-women) pg. 1). They wear bikinis and short shorts to draw attention from the audience. This particular style of clothing started in the late 90s, when Mystical came out with the song called "Danger." As the video progresses, there were scenes that revealed women completely naked. Producers realized that nudity would attract viewers, and raise record sales. The message was clear; Women are only valued by their body parts, and nothing else. The Wife of Bath was a story that spoke on sexual deviances of the female race. The story began with the sexual assault of a woman, and the rest of it imagines a world in which women are

sovereign, and they have judgments, administer justice, and power over men I saw quotes that displayed this action such as: “ Women may go saufly up and doun. In every bussh or under every tree Ther is noon oother incubus but he, And he ne wol doon hem but dishonor" (Lines 884 — 887). An incubus was a “ demon child" thought to be begotten by the woman. The Wife’s claim is that women may go without fear of being forced to birth a demon child. This is the life that women want, having the authority and ability to make their own decisions. We can tell that she thinks highly of herself; illustrated in her ornate clothing: “ Her coverchiefts ful fine were of ground; I dorste were they weyeden ten pound"(Chaucer). She wanted to be the first woman at church to make a donation. Women did not usually have alot of funds, so she used her husbands for money. Females are always worried about their appearance: using make-up and other products to appear younger. Men see age marks as ugliness, and in order for women to appear more attractive in their eyes, they feel they must hide these facial marks. In Beowulf, Grendel’s mother was described as gross-looking and hideous, but she wanted to get revenge for her son, just like any other mother. Maintaining and preserving peace was not only their job, it was their identity. When Grendel’s mother was killed, she had failed in her social role as peace-keeper. No one expected her to be beautiful because women were not appreciated in that aspect. When men get older, they are viewed as more attractive, where as if a woman does, her beauty fades off, and she is forced to intrigue a guy with her intelligence. Commercials from companies like Cover Girl, where they are promoting beauty products with famous people such as Gabrielle Union, Queen Latifah, and Halle Berry, encourage

women others that they can be beautiful, no matter how old they are. There are movies that display men's dominance over women such as Disney's "Aladdin, Beauty of the Beast, and Beowulf. They show unrealistic, curvaceous, and vulnerable women who depend on male figures for strength and survival, not their own empowerment. In Aladdin, Princess Jasmine is upset and desperate to find a prince to make her feel loved and protected. Along comes Prince Aladdin that captures her attention, saving her from the clutches of Jafar, the Sultan's chief advisor. The movie has this "male-saving-the-day" theme to show that a woman is nothing without a man by her side. In Beauty and the Beast, it is portrayed that a woman cannot feel safe and protected unless they have someone with the character traits of the Beast: aggressive, violent, and intimidating. On April 3, 2009, an article was written in Kellelevision called "Beauty and the Beast in Television", stated that women who want this type of relationship usually had abusive fathers growing up, and want to feel protected from their father. In the story Beowulf, he saves his town by defeating Grendel's mother, and becomes king. Cartoons have even displayed how women are disrespected and placed in smaller roles. I draw my attention to the "Flintstones", where Fred is the bigger man who does all of the hunting while Wilma stays home and does all of the household chores. In "George of the Jungle", it was always George saving the distressed Jane, and Jane never does these things herself. Mrs. Jane Jetson is the perfect example of a stereotypical cartoon woman. Her waist is small, she is constantly wearing short skirts, and she has a love for shopping. In that cartoon, Mr. Jetson is the one going to work, while she spends his hard-earned money. In Chaucer's "Wife of Bath", the woman had

multiple husbands, and she used them all for money. When a woman does play a dominant role in a movie, it usually comes with a sacrifice. "The Proposal", starred by Sandra Bullock, plays a cold-hearted, detached career woman with sociopathic tendencies. This sends the message that a powerful woman sacrifices a healthy relationship, family, and her sanity to be successful. In the story Judith, she had to kill Holofernes to save her town, requiring her to step out of feminism to do that. Her sanity was diminished, but she completed the task of saving her people. For young girls that dream to have a great career and a loving family, this is not the message that they need to hear. Why is it that men can get a position of power because of their gender without sacrifices, but women have to do so much to receive respect? In today's society, women are not given the proper respect that they deserve. They are constantly perceived as weak, and always judged by their appearance, not their mind. Wife of Bath is only judged by her beauty, and when it comes to something that requires dominance, the man is always required to handle the situation. People have to realize that women should not be mistreated before you actually take time to learn about them. Even though men are still perceived as the dominant sex, women are starting to gain respect in our society. With time and consideration, I believe that females will receive the respect that they deserve in America.

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