



Lamentations of the Bearded Lady

Allegra

April, 2014



I am the bearded lady. I am neither whining about my condition nor do I want your pity. For I do not need your sympathy. I just want to share my story - one from which you may learn something about humankind. And if you find nothing inspirational in my words, may they provide at least a few moments of entertainment. After all, so many people think that my very persona has no other purpose anyway.

Like others, you probably think nature has been unfair to me. I am perceived as a freak. A circus fool who was put on this earth only to give you the pleasure of looking and laughing at me. But what if I told you that I have *chosen* to wear my beard? That I grew it with pride - slowly, year after year, nurturing its softness, caring for its shape and its color, combing its locks, sometimes curling, sometimes straightening it (only to look more serious). Do you now think that I urgently need a therapist...that I suffer from troubled gender identity?



But then you fail to see that a beard, in fact, is a woman's most useful attribute. How else to exist in the world and to counter-balance the natural weakness of our sex? How to be socially relevant if one bares no moustaches to embody masculine seriousness and the position of universality?

For because of my beard, I have been invited to Grand Ceremonies and Important Conferences; to events where the Great White Men of Power congregate to congratulate themselves of their contributions to Science! Thanks to my beard, I've rubbed elbows with inventors of such marvels as the semi-automatic wheelchair, or met Lords who act as special advisors for the Queen, and are also eminent members of Parliaments.

You Hairless Women obsessed with Your Waxes and Razors - have you never dreamt of being part of this Big Global Club? Of being served luncheons, teas, and dinners by servants with white gloves in luxurious Convention Centres where Decisions about the Future of our Nations - of us all - are taken? Of having your place beside the gentlemen who discover, invent and spread their knowledge in Universities and international peer-reviewed journals accessible only to the selected few who deserve a part of the Wisdom Cake?

My life has been an accumulation of worldly delights and intellectual pleasures. I have travelled from conference to conference, always first class, my suitcases full of papers that I had the honour to present in front of World Renowned Experts who admired my sense of collegiality, my respect for scientific etiquette, and my dedication to Find and Tell the Truth, and only the Truth!

But then these good old days had to come to an end. My female nature took over



my body and caused me my prestigious position. For one fine day my beard fell out, redeeming me to irrelevance, to unfortunate beardless femininity. It was not merely my beautiful fleece that disappeared but also my reputation; my honour and everything that I ever had held dear.

Disastrous indeed. How else to hide the roundness of my cheeks, the fullness of my mouth, the almond shape of my eyes, all these feminine features that betray my existential lack? How do I now look tough, bright, trustworthy and important without my nicely trimmed moustache?

“Treason! O despicable treason!”, screamed my assistant, the laboratory rat who I had just a moment before convinced to sacrifice himself for the greatness of scientific discovery. And so he ran away in disgust after realising that a WOMAN was in the workplace...And further, that the orders he had obediently and meticulously followed for all these years were ALSO by a woman, blessed by the clever masquerade!

Now, my whiskers are gone, and so is my life of hard labor; wasted for a few hairs that unexpectedly disappeared! Here I am, sitting in front of my mirror, trying to turn the golden downy hair that remain on my chin back into the thick black rug that used to make a respected person out of me, lamenting about my glorious past. My eminent colleagues have all turned on me. Unanimously they voted for my immediate dismissal from the Academy of Sciences. Gone are the glorious conferences, receptions, keynotes, revered papers in first-rate peer-reviewed journals! After all, how could I be considered a peer if I was, indeed, just a woman full of hysterical hormones that make my sex incapable of thinking straight?



I find myself connecting to another beard - [Mary Beard](#) that is, who recently wrote something [in the London Review of books](#). Poor woman, I sigh, as the only beard she holds is the one embodied by her name. In her paper, she highlights a tradition that I know from practice too well: how in Western literature women have been prevented from speaking in public. She illustrates this with the tale of Penelope, who is told by her son Telemachus, to go back to her private quarters as public matters are reserved to men. She writes:

It's a nice demonstration that right where written evidence for Western culture starts, women's voices are not being heard in the public sphere; more than that, as Homer has it, an integral part of growing up, as a man, is learning to take control of public utterance and to silence the female of the species. The actual words Telemachus uses are significant too. When he says 'speech' is 'men's business', the word is muthos - not in the sense that it has come down to us of 'myth'. In Homeric Greek it signals authoritative public speech (not the kind of chatting, prattling or gossip that anyone - women included, or especially women - could do).

I cannot help but empathize with Penelope here. After all, she was a dutiful wife, a mother who patiently waited for Ulysses to come back home from his long journey and taste the savoury meal she had prepared for him. Never mind if she also had something to say, that is besides the story.

Could you imagine what kind of disaster would follow if women stopped minding just for their own business and instead partaking in world affairs? No, Ladies and Gentlemen, this cannot be - we should fiercely resist the feminization of society by all means. There is too much abomination in the high-pitched voices of our seductive genre! Too many polluting, contagious and socially destructive effects in these womanly ramblings!



To end, I have just one thing to say: *La barbe*, echoing [my French counterparts](#); *La barbe* !