

Reading Response

The Beauty Myth Naomi Wolf

In the Introduction, Naomi Wolf starts off by stating that her book brought all kinds of women that wouldn't normally share any commonalities together. These women were able to connect with her and this book because this book was a "tool of empowerment." This book really helped women in a variety of ways too, all because they were able to deconstruct their own myths about beauty. But not everyone liked the idea of societal beauty fads not being a good thing, people such as actresses, models, and others that were paid to look the part of beauty hated the ideas in this book. It went against everything they were about and even their jobs! Because this book was a big stepping stone in questioning what beauty really was. Although, at the time this book came out, it was not a "best-seller." This book was thought to be unfeminine and almost un-American for the fact that it was questioning a giant part of our society, something our society has treasured for many, many years... Beauty.

"The Evil Eighties" is what this time was called and that is because this was a time of heavy conservatism and very strong antifeminism influences. All women who complained of the beauty myth were always thought to have shortcomings whether it be personality, looks, or even their social skills with the opposite sex. There was an ideal woman at the time that every girl HAD to resemble, and that woman was "a skinny and somehow full-breasted Caucasian woman." Not only did that leave 95% of white woman out but it left all of women of ethnicity out as well. Not only did this time have antifeminism influences but also quite a bit of racism. But just as it was said at Plato's symposium, "Women have always suffered for beauty." Do you know who created our ideals of beauty? Advertisers and our society.

The way Naomi Wolf described company's advertising made me think. It is completely unrealistic and just nasty! First off, They created the ideals of beauty so that every woman needs to have them. So the idea of beauty, to them, is just a way to make money. Next, she brings up a bit about basically exploiting and sexualizing children to make new "fads" in fashion and the younger they get the weirder it is in my opinion. The age just keeps dropping too, when will that stop? It is just gross. (I am done talking about that because it makes me feel uncomfortable).

1991 when this book was released silicone breast implants were becoming increasingly popular because of the common misconceptions that pornography brought about. This little movement made women feel inadequate and self-conscious about their breast size, which is just silly. Everyone was chasing the idea to have the "perfect breasts." Her book opened some eyes to the topic of the true harm of these implants. But this silly era wasn't over until people started taking legal action, thus in turn closed down most of the expanding market for breast implants.

Naomi also talks of eating disorders, I have first hand experience with this because some of my bestfriend's struggled through battles with anorexia nervosa and bulimia. The problem with this idea that eating disorders are needed to look as though you are a supermodel are that the

media doesn't stop to think about the negative effects they have on Americans, especially American teenage girls. They will do anything to stay "popular" or how they think people want them to be. But after a point it was too late for the media to even change anything because it had become the social norm. Later on in the article Naomi Wolf points out that the average American women would rather lose 10-15 pounds than achieve a goal, they are willing to give up aspirations to fit our social norms.

"Uses images of female beauty as a political weapon against women's advancements," I think that this is truly the meaning of the Beauty Myth. To me this means that our society stresses the importance of femininity to women, and if they don't comply they are outsiders. But if they do comply, (women of power) we want to stress that they need to and should act more feminine because they are women and need to act that way. This is just a tactic used by men in this society to maintain power and keep women chasing at the heels.

This was an easy read that flowed well from beginning to end. It presented a lot of new ideas that I could go on about for hours. But you are probably getting sick of hearing the same things over and over again. To me, the beauty myth is a way of advertisers and people in power being able to control the people, especially women, who live here. Where and when will this madness stop? In my personal opinion we need to live and let live. We concentrate too much on external beauties and never really see what lies underneath. Don't get me wrong, I like to see beauty as well, but I like to think that I can look passed exteriors and see at least a little bit of beauty in even the nastiest person. Everyone has it, just some people don't show it as much.