

**Deloitte.**The Cambridge Union Society
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Cambridge, CB2 1UBEmail : pressofficer@cus.org**PRESS RELEASE – 26.01.15****Germaine Greer**

On Monday 26 January, the Union hosted controversial women's liberation author and academic theorist Germaine Greer.

Greer opened her speech by mentioning what she called the “disappearing women.” She referenced her former participation in a rare type of pornography, explaining that she disapproved of censorship, and sought to undermine the exploitative process of then-popular pornographic magazine “Screw.” Her magazine, “Suck”, was her attempt to “short circuit” what she thought of as pornography that exploited sexual fantasies for profit.

Greer then harkened back to her idea of the “disappearing woman,” saying that women with pubic hair are an example of those who have become less and less common. She critiqued such social pressures on women to be clean, sweet and submissive. Greer's disappearing women included examples of female exploitation from across the globe, including the low percentages of women in places such as China and Azerbaijan. These countries are, according to Greer, examples of a much wider international devaluation of female children.

She then addressed the issue of abortion on the grounds of the gender of the foetus. According to Greer, laws that ban the practice are problematic because they do not consider women who are dominated by their husbands' desires for a male a son. She later brought up women who willingly subscribe to religious and cultural norms that westerners often find repressive, saying that “we must agree to disagree.”

On the deletion of page three of The Sun, Greer asserted that the “tedious argument” over the issue meant page three would ultimately tie The Sun to pornography for the rest of its lifespan. She also said that she was not as concerned by that issue as she was by others. Greer stated that she was more upset over the marketing of anti-aging cream than page three, calling it “much worse.” Continuing on this point, she critiqued what she sees as society's neglect of women's stories, using the example of police disinterest in Harold Shipman's killings of women. She then referenced again her disappearing woman, saying that “the woman, the mature woman, the woman of a certain age...as they get older, they get less visible.”

Next, Greer touched on the story of Amanda Hutton, who notoriously allowed her four year-old son to die. She mentioned that Hutton had eight children by the same man, to whom she was not married. Greer asserted that not enough media attention was paid to Hutton's side of the story—that her alcoholism was possibly fuelled by her partner, that she was dominated by the father of her children, and that she was too weak to throw off oppression, not a manipulative woman who wished to kill her child.

Greer then addressed what she sees as a lack of proactive action against assaults on women. She advocated “kicking ass and taking names” in such scenarios. She also asserted that “we are further apart as women than we were in 1969.” She argued that there had been a similar devolution in pubic hair norms and being “girly.” She spoke of freedom for women, rather than what she called “an inherently conservative” desire for equality.

When questioned about transphobia, Greer said there was no such thing. She called surgical gender reassignment unethical, on the grounds that it removes healthy tissue and induces dependence on medical support. On the appointment of Rachael Padman, she said that she was appointed rather than elected, and regretted what she described as losing her college—Newnham—forever. She went on to say that the “f*cking Guardian” had libelled her. She argued against the pigeonholing of male and female as the only two genders, and that we ought allow people to exist in their own sexualities and orientations.

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Greer also argued that femininity ought not be defined by “girly” behaviour. She said that she “had never been one for sexual stereotyping.” She took issue with people telling her what she could and could not say about someone claiming to be the same gender as her. She mentioned her successful lawsuit against the Guardian, the compensation from which she donated to her college.

The next question asked referred to alleged contradictions, referencing Greer’s defence of Hutton and her dismissal of equality as a goal. She responded by arguing for society taking interest in women “because they’re human beings.” She also said that men would never be free until women were no longer dependent on them. Greer then called upon women to be more independent, braver, and to create more solidarity with other women.

Next, Greer mentioned her lack of affiliation with political parties, saying that Labour “wouldn’t touch her.” She also mentioned her environmental passions, saying that she is “just as keen about invertebrates as about women.”

She was then questioned about a quotation from her book regarding transgender individuals. Greer mentioned that she had received extensive hate mail on the subject, and found that it was unacceptable. She also critiqued “gross parodies” in the media of women, calling those such as Mrs. Brown—a female character played by a male actor— “vicious caricatures.”

Later, she professed her love for her college as a safe space for young women, as well as her love for her personal students. She also remembered wishing that Newnham was wealthier.

When questioned about ecofeminism, she repeated that humans ought remain on Earth rather than living in different galaxies. She critiqued the idea that men allegedly think that the rest of life exists for them to “tyrannize.” She stated that women have a particular affinity with animals because they have “made a pact with the lower classes,” rather than one with the devil.

She later mentioned the existence of an Islamic feminist tradition, in which mothers are empowered. She argued against the idea that the West is the only legitimate teacher of feminism. Greer also argued for sexual liberation, and the idea that “we have to get used to looking at what is there.” She also spoke of the importance of cross-cultural dialogue with women of Islamic culture.

Lastly, Greer was accused by a questioner of taking away women’s lived experiences and voices. She responded that it was impossible to take away people’s agency, and that she was simply expressing her own opinion. Greer said that she respected the questioner’s judgment, but asserted that it was unfair for such a critique to be presented as a question, “because it wasn’t one.”

PRESS OFFICE**By Ben Atlas**
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