



# **The Universal Refusal: A Psychoanalytic Exploration of the Feminine Sphere and its Repudiation**

*Jacqueline Schaeffer*

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Freud spoke of the "repudiation of femininity" as being an "underlying bedrock", part of the "enigma" of sexuality. The enigma is not so much the refusal of the feminine dimension as such; it has more to do with rejecting its erotic and genital aspects, as well as its creation through sexual ecstatic pleasure. Equality between the sexes is a legitimate demand in the political, social and economic spheres, but forming a masculine-feminine relationship as a couple is a creation of the mind, exalting the acknowledgement of the otherness which is part of the difference between the sexes. There is a conflict - and the feminine dimension itself is rooted in it - between sexuality that demands "defeat" and an ego that abhors this. It is the man's masculine dimension - the antagonist of the phallic one - which creates the feminine dimension in women, by tearing away their defences and generating sexual ecstasy. The quality of the sexual, emotional and social relationship that is set up between a man and a woman bears witness to the "work of civilization" [Kulturarbeit].

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