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Volume 28  
Issue 1 *The Last Torch* (2019-2020)

Article 29

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4-1-2020

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Citlalli Uribe

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### CU Commons Citation

Uribe, Citlalli (2020) "Objectifying Women Is Not Loving Them," *The Promethean*: Vol. 28 : Iss. 1 , Article 29.

Available at: <https://commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean/vol28/iss1/29>

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## Objectifying Women Is Not Loving Them

*Citlalli Uribe*

When I was 16, my family went down to Mexico for Christmas to visit family. It was my mom, my dad, three of my brothers, and my younger sister who was twelve at the time. We went to what some might call the flea market but this was on a much bigger scale. There were little stands littered throughout the market square and you could find almost anything you desired. We got to an area where all the ceramic, homemade knick-knacks were. My older brother walked up to one stand and picked up a mug. My stomach almost dropped to my knees.

As a sixteen, almost seventeen year old, I was extremely self-conscious about my body and was constantly trying to make sure I looked the way society and social media told me I should.

My brother laughed and showed the mug to my dad and my other brothers. I wanted to puke, it all made me feel disgusted and uncomfortable. It was a mug in the shape of a female breast and the nipple acted as a spout that one could drink out of. I stared in disbelief at the idea that it was amusing to them. So many thoughts were running through my mind and I wanted to say so many things to him. But I was unsure of myself and couldn't bring myself to open my mouth. I ended up walking away trying to distract myself from what was happening as he handed over the money to buy a boob cup.

In our day-to-day lives, the majority of us are almost completely oblivious to the way we allow media to portray women. Almost constantly, we see ads and commercials with a woman in revealing clothing presented in a sexual manner, usually promoting completely unrelated products, such as burgers and beers. Obviously, the target audience for these ads is men.

But what happens when a young girl watching T.V. or YouTube is suddenly exposed to these images? She starts to internalize the idea that she has to look this way and act this way to be worthy of attention. Already, the effects of this are prevalent in our society. If we start to really analyze the type of woman being portrayed, we'll start to see a pattern. Is it a minority woman? Is it a plus-size woman? Is it a disabled woman?

However, T.V. ads are not the only culprit. Platforms like Instagram and Snapchat are also guilty of objectifying women to a harmful extent. Content creators tend to focus on the sex appeal of a woman for views. Click on any major Instagram content creator's page and you will see thumbnails of a woman's butt or breasts, or you'll see a woman in sexual situations. The media continues to create content featuring men checking out women's butts, men rejecting "sex-crazed" women, and men constantly using women's bodies so that viewers like you will click on these posts and watch them.

There are other examples such as men's magazines and even the pop songs we all love to listen to. In a men's magazine, 76% of all ads that include a woman depict them in a sexual light. Take any of the top ten most popular pop songs out right now. If you listen to each lyric, you'll find that these artists objectify women, belittling them as sex-crazed groupies that only exist for the pleasure of men and are easily disposable. Songs by popular artists such as Eminem and Robin Thicke promote violence against women, including rape and domestic violence. Yet, we love to dance and sing along without batting an eye at these appalling lyrics.

Recently, Billie Eilish, an up and coming seventeen-year-old singer and songwriter, explained in an interview with Calvin Klein why she is always wearing baggy and "ill-fitting" clothes. She says her reasoning is so that "Nobody can have an opinion because they haven't seen what's underneath." It's unimaginable that a seventeen-year-old girl has to constantly be aware of what she looks like in order to escape being sexualized. But we're the ones to blame. At the age of thirteen, I started to go through puberty. Shirts that I used to wear innocently suddenly became sexual and provocative. I was told that if I wasn't more careful I would get unwanted stares from old men.

I vividly remember sitting on the floor of PetSmart waiting in line to get our dogs vaccinated. It was a Sunday morning and there was a long line. I was wearing one of my favorite shirts, not

a V-neck, but something similar. I was going through puberty and I was just starting to develop my secondary sex characteristics, or to put it more bluntly, boobs. My mom told me that I needed to be careful or older men would stare at me, which was wrong because I was only thirteen. I quickly shamed myself quietly and pulled my shirt up. How terrible it was that I was a thirteen-year-old and I was already seducing men. I felt embarrassed, disgusted even, in myself.

At thirteen, I didn't know better. I didn't realize what was really going on. There has always been a contradiction we hold in regard to women's bodies. We instill in girls from an early age that they need to be pretty and vulnerable to the male gaze at all times yet we shame them for being too "sexy" and "seductive." Girls and women are blamed for having bodies that men cannot resist. The blame is never put on the man for being disturbingly perverted.

As a woman, I cannot and will not ignore what is being done to my body and the bodies of the other 3.7 billion women and girls in this world. I need to become aware of what I am consuming on TV, YouTube, Instagram, and what I am listening to on the radio. If I am passive about the destruction of the divine female body, then I am complacent in the destruction. Just as so many people choose to be.

A couple years ago, a coffee stand set up shop right down the street from my house. It's so close that I can see it from my

front yard. Although at one time I definitely would have called myself a coffee addict, I have never once been to this stand. It is part of a chain of stands that are called “Twin Perks Espresso.” Essentially, a woman will serve you coffee while wearing a bikini no matter the season. Rain, shine, snow, or wind—she will be there. Ironically enough, the CEO is a woman.

It's come down to this, a man's body is a body, and a woman's body is an object, a sexual object, and a topic for political discussion. Never is a woman's body just a body. And we have not even begun to understand the effects that this has created. How can we say we love women if we are in a constant state of hating them?

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