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The *Naked Citadel* by Susan Faludi and the Media Effect

Over time, the media has played an important role in influencing how people think and what they believe. Nonetheless, the freedom that comes with diversity in the media has also led to conflicting information regarding different subjects. Technically, there is much falsehood as exemplified in Faludi's text. Even more, Faludi reflects on the contradictions, dependencies and the jealousy that exist in the society courtesy of the media effect. To understand this well, one ought to focus on the contradiction that exist through media with reference to authors; Beth Loffreda, Oliver Sacks and Susan Faludi.

Susan Faludi's ;*The Naked Citadel*, paints a picture of how young boys are turned to men through a representation that the society does not 'act like human beings' which is similar to the views of Beth Loffreda (Faludi, 103). Contradictions make life interesting as seen when Faludi narrates the contradiction that exist in Citadel because of Shannon Faulkner's sexuality. In the gay military environment of the Citadel, Faulkner who has not specified her gender, applies and is allowed to join the other trainees. Upon the arrival of Faulkner at Citadel, new information leak out to the media on how the boys are mistreated as well as the sexuality and gay experiences at Citadel (Faludi, 69). The leaked information leads to a controversial court case. Ideally, from this, one cannot underestimate the role of the media and how it impacts the social

lives of people with regard to gender and sexuality. In the same way, Loffreda in; *Selection from Losing Matt Shepard*, narrates the death of a gay student where she denotes the killing as a hate crime (107-108). After this fixation of the killing as a hate crime, the media agitation erupts throughout the town of Laramie. The media paints a picture that the town's people are violent, and this contradicts the actions of the towns' people to show that they are peaceful.

In this context, the two texts reflect the ideas of Oliver Sack's *In the Mind's Eye*, on the role of the mind and the hypocrisy that exists in one's beliefs. Similarly, the situations narrated in Faludi's and Lofreda's texts shows how people claim one thing and then change when put in diverse situations. For example, it is clear that the cadets' discrimination against Faulkner is due to a lack of experience and understanding of sexuality (Faludi, 82). In this suppression, the media plays a particularly huge role towards how the cadets behave and how the court makes its ruling. Even more, this is witnessed in Loffreda's text where the effect of the media is seen as suppression on the townspeople towards their understanding on sexuality. Instead of looking at reality and the underlying stereotypes of sexuality, the townspeople find excuses to explain the murder of Matt Shepard (Loffreda, 113). In support of this, Oliver Sack's; *In the Mind's Eye*, recounts the contradiction that exists when the visual cortex faces the limitations of past visual inputs (56-58). Ideally, a person who was seeing in the past and is presently blind identifies items differently from a person who has had to use imagination of the brain to identify things. Simply put, the media plays a huge role in creating the visual as well as contextual imagery in the society today more than ever.

Similar to Faludi's narration, Loffreda's text is a clear narration of illusion and the role of the media in enhancing factual error. Ideally, the arrival of the media for instance quickly transforms the death to that of a martyr (Loffreda, 98). In fact, the reporter achieves this well by

giving a poor depiction on the killer's looks. The contradiction that exist through what the media reports is seen further in the state of Wyoming. While the state of Wyoming depends on tourism, the townspeople hate tourists (Loffreda, 87). The information being given by the reporter as noted by Loffreda is quite different from the truth. The fact the death of Matt was related to gays played a huge role in how the media reported the issues. Through Rob Debree's interview, Loffreda notes that it is not the Wyoming Cop who gave a false account of events; rather the media decided what was and was not true thereby controlling the minds of people (175). Imagination is an important element in human development. While Susa Faludi narrates how the boys pass through hardship at the military camp, Oliver Sacks opposes her view by noting the role of the brain in turning boys to men who then become heroes and different from the accounts of Faludi (52). As the young boys grow, their minds are for the most part similar by their experiences and expectations drive them away from reality. However, Sacks beliefs that in spite of the impact of the media on people's beliefs the brain can change even in adulthood (59). This then means that even without external impact from the media, one can shape how they understand things by resolving and controlling their inner powers of imagination. In the same sense, the Cadets at Citadel had a choice of using their own imagination and respond to Faulkner's sexuality in a less monstrous manner. Ideally, through the mind, one can manipulate and even erase information and images in a way that seems impossible to a blind person.

Even more, Both Faludi and Loffreda in their narration depict a situation of contradiction and confusion spread by the media regarding gender. After reading, *The Naked Citadel*, it is reasonable to assume that the narration is more of a metaphor on the ambiguity that surrounds gender. This is a confirmation that society does not, "act like a human being" (Faludi, 103). Simply put, the society especially the media gives a contradictory concept on sexuality and goes

further to recommend unrealistic solutions. To Faludi, the actions of the Cadets are arguably related to their young age. In Falundi's description, the Citadel is made up of '*childlike*' and '*toy soldiers*' (82). This in itself is a contradiction as Citadel allows women to attend night classes yet it homes to maintain the masculine image neglecting the gays existing in its inner existence. In her narration, the reporter likens the Cadets to women in spite of their contradictory attack on Faulkner. While the media plays a huge role in the social lives of people, it leads to a confusion that makes people to exist in an illusionary rather than real world.

In short, the dependency, jealousy and contradiction that exist due to the effect of the media cannot be underestimated. The concept portrayed in Faludi's text results to the conclusion that the society does not, '*act like human beings*.' Similar views are given by Beth Loffreda's which further reinforces the impact of the media with regard to gender and sexuality. Nonetheless, although Oliver's *The Mind's Eye* partially supports these views, it argues that the imagination of the mind can be changed even in adulthood.

Works cited

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