

Good reasons why short feminists wear high heels

SHOULD feminists wear high heels?

His enquiry was earnest, even genuine. He thought the mood had changed. He said he'd noticed more of them about — feminists or high heels, I wondered.

When I endeavored to raise the matter amongst a group of women I knew they laughed and refused to take me seriously.

I looked at the bottom of my wardrobe and noted that more than two thirds of the shoes I now possess are flat as a tack and 60 per cent of them are unabashedly made of plastic. A further 10 per cent hide beneath the appellation synthetic and the few leather ones I possess do have heels ranging from mid to ultra high.

Now with the benefit of hindsight and heelsight, I recall that in the mid-70s at the height of pre-Feminsim, my wardrobe contained no plastic whatever, a rogue synthetic upper or two but the

Should feminists wear high heels? SUZANNE SPUNNER can't see why not. They help women feel less down-trodden

majority, in excess of 80 per cent were natural leather shoes with staggeringly high heels.

That comparison said more about the parlous state of the footwear trade and my declining finances than anything significant about feminism.

Then I remembered that in the mid-70s, when I was still reading male writers, I'd read a Frank Moorhouse story called, *The Girl Who Met Simone De Beauvoir In Paris*.

The central character was a man obsessed by fantasies

about the girl who... and she always wore wooden Dr Scholls health sandals and clopped about in a restaurant where she was employed as a casual waitress, driving him to distraction by quoting Simone at him and appearing to blame him personally for the ills of patriarchy.

In that man's mind these shoes assumed a threatening and awesome significance.

For the man they embodied all that she stood for, and all that he apparently feared about feminism and more tellingly, her.

I can't remember how the story ends. It was amongst what Moorhouse called a collection of discontinuous narratives, so it probably didn't, but I think she shlepped off in the Scholls leaving him high and dry.

At that time I was and still am, past continuous, a feminist, I quoted Simone De Beauvoir, and I knew a woman who had written to her and

received a reply, but I never wore Dr Scholls.

I confess to owning a pair but I always found them too uncomfortable to wear. I bought them because at that time platform shoes were it.

Dr Scholls certainly were not high heels. They were elevated rather like dagwood sandwich platforms made of pale Swedish wood. So clearly at some level I was responding to an inchoate perception that they approached ideological soundness in a way that my pure platforms did not.

I persisted longer with the higher and more tainted form, but after some nasty near ankle snaps I eventually gave them up too.

I had this problem you see, I thought I was short, which I was, also past continuous, and that if I wore high heels I would be taller and hence more noticeable.

For years in fact my feet or heels, like a Balinese baby's, never touched the ground.

On the rare occasions when I was forced to go barefoot in the short-as-decently-possible passage from my strategically positioned towel at the low tide mark to the water's edge, or from the bed to the carpet in the morning or from the bath to the mat at night, I experienced total kinesthetic disorientation.

I thought I was falling backwards pivoting on my naked heels.

The costs were pointed out to me by a feminist movement expert who observed my shoes and pointed accusingly at my calves.

After forcing me to remove the offending shoes she announced, with righteous glee, "I thought so! Just look at your hamstrings. They've shrunk!"

I'd never known I had them let alone that they had atrophied. I put my shoes back on and sashayed off. She was wearing what looked like nurse's shoes, but were shoes;

the ultimate in podiatric purity.

Shortened hamstrings I could bear, but crushed sciatic nerves were another matter.

That problem surfaced then I was pregnant and it was compounded later by carrying the children on one hip while balancing the weeks groceries on the other.

And where's the danger money for bearing children? Something had to go and obviously it wasn't the children or the groceries.

Now I wear high heels on special occasions, when the children are in bed and the groceries are stashed in the pantry. Like Cinderella, I put on my high heels and go out because there's nothing quite like them, apart from feminism, for making you feel taller and less down-trodden.

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