

her own dilemma, not seeing the necessity, or unable, to, operate as a group.

But the evidence is in. Now that we know more about what we are up against, we know better how to fight it. It has

become clear that the time has come to gather our forces for a new offensive for women's liberation.

— *The major part of this paper was written early in 1973.*

SUGGESTED READINGS

Some of the same organizational patterns that have emerged in the Women's Liberation Movement are also described in these books about the Black Liberation Movement and the Russian Revolution:

What Is To Be Done by V.I. Lenin (1901-2).

The Making of Black Revolutionaries by James Forman, 1972.

MS. Politics and Editing: An Interview

This article was published originally in 1975.
The following are excerpts.

In December, 1973, *Village Voice* writer Robin Reisig interviewed Patricia Mainardi and Kathie Sarachild for an article on *Ms.* magazine's editing policies and dealings with writers. The article had been assigned when a *Voice* editor learned that a couple of widely acclaimed articles in the *Voice* by women writers and feminists had originally been turned down by *Ms.*

Ms. had just published an article on quilts by Mainardi, author of "The Politics of Housework" and an editor of *Feminist Art Journal*, where a longer version had first appeared. Sarachild, who originated the program of consciousness-raising in the movement, had shortly before been asked to edit a book on consciousness-raising for them.

By the time Reisig had handed in her article, Clay Felker, publisher of *New York* magazine and long-time colleague of Gloria Steinem, had bought the *Voice*. The interview with Mainardi and Sarachild was deleted from the article after the author submitted it. The rest of the article, though accepted long ago, has still not been published either.

Mainardi and Sarachild were not the only feminists and writers who spoke out in that article against what *Ms.* was doing to their writing—and to the movement. What follows are notes of some of the comments Mainardi and Sarachild made in the interview. If the article is ever published, we will learn more from the stories of others who were interviewed. —THE EDITORS

Mainardi: *I couldn't write. I couldn't even write a letter. It's almost mystical. Ms. is screwing up writers. One friend of mine said everytime she has had dealings with them she feels like she's been kicked in the stomach. Another friend said she was frozen with shock. She used the word paralyzed. Ms. never admits what they don't like is content—they come back into phrases, get right into the mechanics of the writing.*

Sarachild: *Ms. exploits writers by a pretense of sisterhood and the movement. It isn't sisterhood and the movement. It's the publishing world.*

Mainardi: *Basically it's a labor issue. We're the workers. They're the bosses. . . . I always assumed Ms. never paid much so people tossed off their articles for them. Then my piece came back with the barbarous Ms. style. Jerky sentences, non sequiturs, Ms. words. They would use a bullshit word instead of a strong word. I had the word 'loved.' They changed it to 'had a fondness for.' I had the 'lie' women were not creative. They changed it to the 'myth.' I complained their rewriting was ungrammatical. So then we rewrote, line by line, back to the way I'd written it. But when the article came out they had changed the title. I had "Quilts, The Great American Art." They*

changed it to "Quilts, A Great American Art." My whole thesis is that quilts are the American art form, undervalued as jazz was once undervalued in music.

We have to start questioning the basis of art history. Men didn't do quilts. What men did was on public display. Women always did domestic art, meant for private display. In China, the tradition was private art.

As a critic I have the right to say quilts are the great American art. They changed it because in their opinion it couldn't be. They aren't willing to take the chance, or to let people have the right to take that chance. For example, Cindy Nemser wrote in an article about Alice Neel, 'Alice Neel is the foremost portrait painter in our time.' In Ms. this became, 'She may indeed be the foremost portrait painter of the last 40 years.'

It's sneaky editing, downgrading women's contribution to art. Ms.'s line is women are no good in art. They have been oppressed and damaged by their oppression. They're inferior. It's a goody-goody line: we have to work harder to overcome our oppression.

They told me the reason they had to do such a rewrite on my piece was it was such 'bad writing.' I said you've given me back a piece I wouldn't give to you. It's ungrammatical.

We're in the same position now as when the women's movement began, when we realized we weren't going to get anything out of men except by exposing them publicly. In the same way writers are now telling their best friends the way Ms. screwed them. The only way to get anything from Ms. is by fighting.

Sarachild: I wondered why they had come to me to do a book on consciousness-raising. They had never come to me when they started the magazine. But now they were, so I said I'd do it. I must say, I didn't think they'd like what I'd do since everything they'd ever written about consciousness-raising described it like group therapy, self-improvement, change your personality. The power of positive thinking line—if women change their personalities, they'll have power. We had just agreed that I would have control over the structure of the book when Lettie Pogrebin said, 'Of course, Gloria Steinem will write the introduction.' I refused, but they called me back anyway. At the next meeting, I said I wouldn't do it unless I had complete control over structure and content. We finally worked out an arrangement in which I would do some preliminary work, but then the letter of agreement was drawn up stating it was for a book tentatively entitled "A Ms. Guide to Consciousness-Raising." I wouldn't sign until the title was taken out of the letter. In the end Steinem verbally offered me everything I wanted, but I decided to pull out because there was such a bad history. If you ask me, Ms. wanted to take the credit for consciousness-raising.

When women read Ms. they think they are getting consciousness-raising. But they aren't. They don't have these rich ideas from their original sources.

... You can see right in the first paragraph of the "Ms. Guide to Consciousness-Raising" article they ran in their first issue—which they now distribute—that they don't

really believe in consciousness-raising. It begins 'women have understood very clearly what is wrong with their lives. . . ' But we still don't understand. We want to learn. This is an effort to stop women from searching very deeply.

The Ms. line is the prevailing line in the movement. Women are psychologically damaged and therefore unqualified right now for jobs and relationships. Ms. is telling women to try to get over their hang-ups due to male supremacy. These aren't hang-ups. They are reactions to a reality. The thing to do is analyse the reality. And fight. Ms. tells women to fight individually. We have to have a movement to fight these forces.

Basically, it's a change yourself line, the women's magazine line, how you can improve yourself, get ahead. But the tricky thing about Ms. is that they pretend to be different. I bet there are certain women who wouldn't bother reading women's magazines who read Ms.

Mainardi: Mary Peacock said 'Ms. is a popularizer,' meaning it's supposed to disseminate the radical ideas. It's not disseminating the radical ideas. It's watering them down. They want to have it both ways: they tell you they're the popularizer, but in terms of the media field they are the feminist magazine.

Sarachild: Ms. isn't the popularizer. Women's liberation is popular. Ms. came in on that. Ms. isn't making the mass response to feminism. Ms. is making money off the mass response to feminism.

They're like the Teamsters of the women's movement. They don't seem to break hard ground themselves. They only seem to go where people have been.

Mainardi: I was shocked that Ms. had compiled a whole staff who we had never heard of.

Sarachild: I hadn't assumed they would be imitators from the beginning. I thought they'd be feminist muckrakers. Male-owned publications are printing much more daring articles by women than Ms. is.

Mainardi: I sometimes play a game thinking of all the books Ms. would never have published. They probably would never have published Rachel Carson or Jessica Mitford—or at least not first. They probably would never have published *The Second Sex*.

Sarachild: Or *Frankenstein*. They might reprint it, but they wouldn't publish it as is. . . .

What was moving behind radical women was that we understood that we were basically the same as other women and therefore what would turn us on would turn other women on. We build from our own feelings. In the beginning only the radicals dared to call themselves feminists. Now the radicals have been cut off from the media because there are so many more 'respectable' feminists around.

CONCRETE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- August 1961 Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* appears in paperback.
- 1963 Publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*.
- November 1966 National Organization for Women formed.
- Fall, 1967 Independent Women's Liberation groups begin to form.
- September 1968 Women's Liberationists throw high heels, girdles, bras, other "instruments of female torture" into a "freedom trash can" at protest of Miss America Contest. By 1970 countless women can wear pants to school or work.
- November 1968 Shirley Chisholm, a board member of NOW, becomes the first black woman ever elected to Congress.
- December 1968 Successful NOW campaign to stop newspapers from segregating job ads by sex—Women's Liberation groups join NOW pickets.
- April 1970 New York State abortion reform law passed after tremendous Women's Liberation agitation, court suit, NOW lobbying. New York becomes "abortion mill" of nation.
- August 1970 House of Representatives approves Equal Rights Amendment—first time it had even been up for debate in 12 years.
- August 1970 Sex discrimination in public accommodations barred in New York City after sit-ins in all-male bars and restaurants. New York State follows a year later.
- August 1970 *Ladies Home Journal* publishes feminist supplement written by Women's Liberation activists reaching 6½ million women, following Women's Liberation protest and sit-in in March.
- Fall, 1970 Spate of aboveground books from the Women's Liberation movement—*Sexual Politics*, *The Black Woman*, *The Dialectic of Sex*, *Sisterhood is Powerful*, *Women's Liberation: Blueprint for the Future*, *Handbook of Women's Liberation*, *Woman Power: The Movement for Women's Liberation*, *Masculine/Feminine*.
- November 1971 Child care deductions allowed on income tax—one of the ten demands on NOW's Bill of Rights.
- November 1971 Supreme Court for the first time invalidates a state law on grounds of sex discrimination (case involving administering of estates).
- December 1971 Child care bill passes both houses of Congress (vetoed by President Nixon).
- March 1972 Equal Rights Amendment passes both houses of Congress. (state ratification still needed.)
- June 1972 Higher Education Act passes, prohibits sex discrimination in education programs receiving federal financial aid.
- ◀ July 1972 ◀ *Ms.* magazine begins regular publication—Vol. 1, No. 1. Gloria Steinem later says, "I think of us (*Ms.*) as a kind of connective tissue for women all across the country who felt isolated until we came along and let them know they were not alone." ▶
- August 1972 U.S. Civil Rights Commission authorized for first time to investigate cases of sex discrimination.
- January 1973 Supreme Court decision forbidding states from prohibiting first trimester abortions—follows New York State "model"—mentions menstrual extraction as one of the technological developments behind its decision.
- February 1974 New York State legislature removes requirement of corroboration in rape cases after Women's Liberation groups' 3 year long campaign to end unjust treatment of rape victims.
- October 1974 National bill outlaws sex discrimination in granting of credit.