

The Myth Of Docility

Faye Levine

Without feminist consciousness: vertigo.

Up on the podium at the Harvard *Crimson* Centennial celebration, a former woman *Crimson* editor now employed by the *New York Times* was reassuring a vast audience of pompous alumni that she was "not about to attack male chauvinism on the *Crimson*."

Well all right, I thought, don't be so blunt as to speak of male chauvinism, but you are going to discuss the authentic experience of women, aren't you?

It turned out she was not. "We were docile," she said, by way of explaining the feelings of *Crimson* women. "We were so happy to be part of the *Crimson*, we thought of ourselves as *Crimson* editors, not as a class," she said.

At our table were sitting male and female editors from the classes of the mid-sixties that she was representing, and whose experience was not one of docility. Mary Ellen Gale '62 had gone on from assistant managing editor of the *Crimson* to the terrifying backwaters of the deep South, where it was in effect a civil rights battle just to get the news for the *Southern Courier*—a journalistic apotheosis that got her into a legal-aid law practice.

Next to Meg Gale was Kathie Amatniek '64. She came to the centennial dinner mainly to deal with a charge made against her in print recently by a male *Crimson* editor. The accusation of having "plagiarized" some extremely important work on Vietnam published in the *Crimson* in 1962 epitomizes her struggle, as a radical and as a feminist woman.

"I was a woman known as a radical, battling to get information out about the situation in Vietnam," writes Amatniek in a one-page leaflet stacked next to a huge pile of centennial *Crimsons*. Her extremely early writing on the subject predated the work of the male author she is accused of plagiarizing. Attacked at the time as "emotional and naive" (anti-woman) or "Maoist, even Stalinist" (anti-radical), she was later praised as "prescient." Thus is exemplified, she writes, "the still unsolved issue of woman's unequal position of power in this country: disbelief of women, blind indifference to their efforts, hostility toward women's ideas, skepticism toward their research, and of

course, resentment of women's achievements and efforts to suppress them."

"The reaction my articles on Vietnam ten years ago received from the other *Crimson* editors had a paralyzing effect on me at the time. It became harder for me to write and in fact I wrote less and less. I also gave up all ideas about going into journalism and decided to go into film-making instead—a more technical field in which I felt my work might be judged on its validity rather than its acceptability."

Kathie Amatniek began writing again with the beginning of the women's movement. Among other things, she was the chief formulator of the theory of "consciousness-raising," as well as the slogan "sisterhood is powerful."

Amatniek was also responsible for my reading of *The Second Sex* in 1963, the ultimate classic of feminism, by Simone de Beauvoir, which resulted in a dramatic change in my thinking. I wrote a senior thesis on "Simone de Beauvoir: Prophet of the New Feminism" in which I predicted the emergence of the movement that did indeed emerge in America two years later. I wrote about Harvard from the feminist point of view in the *Crimson* and in the *Yearbook*, calling for a lot of concrete changes that were still being requested in 1973.

And I made a stab at action in 1965, when I ran for the male post (which it is to this day) of Harvard Class Marshal. That's another story. The Administration and a few officious Harvard seniors succeeded in squelching the vote, quite undemocratically, and despite public support from such as John Kenneth Galbraith, there was not, then, a solid enough feminist battalion to wage a successful offensive.

Had the speaker forgotten this fight? Or never noticed it when it happened?

In these matters, there is undue forgetting. The first woman ever to write for the *Crimson*, now writing for the *Boston Globe*, received no invitation to the centennial dinner. Kathie and I spoke to her, Joan McPartlin '49, now Joan Mahoney. Though her bitterness and disappointment at having been again "forgotten" and ignored, despite 25 years of trying to remind people of her existence, was very painful for us, still it was consoling to be reminded of the larger picture: that the frustrated rage we felt was not the result of a personal problem, but the pattern of "the big put-down," as Joan McPartlin put it, of woman.

We burn still. Meg, Kathie Amatniek and I at one *Crimson* dinner table, stunned by the speaker's reading of history; Joan McPartlin fuming at home at her own dinner table. Still trying to win moral victories against political

opponents, like Virginia Woolf renouncing the Oxbridge library. Still afraid of our own anger, because the opposition has cleverly embodied itself in the person of another woman. . .

Joan McPartlin should have been on that podium, speaking for history.

Linda McVeigh '67, the first woman to fill the huge post of managing editor, should have been on the podium, speaking for the work we are able to do. "She would have been," the *Crimson* president assures us, "except she was eight months pregnant."

"So what if she was eight months pregnant?" I asked.

"The airlines refused to fly her," he replied.

And so we wince and feel isolated.

But one day the picture will be clear enough to enough of us, and women will awake and move.

In its march towards freedom
The working class must cheer on the efforts of
Those women, who, feeling on
Their souls and bodies the
Fetters of the ages have
Arisen to strike them off,
And cheer all the louder if, in its
Hatred of the thraldom and passion
for freedom, the women's
Army forges ahead of the militant Army of labor.

James Connally,

THE RECONQUEST OF IRELAND, 1915

As for the willingness of women to fight for their rights, most union officials will admit that often the most militant fighters on the picket line and in negotiations are women.

— Judy Edelman

WOMEN ON THE JOB, 1970

Men's Liberation

Carol Hanisch

Many forms of reactionary tactics are being used to hold back or stop the women's liberation movement. "Men's liberation" is one of them.

Just consider the name: *men's liberation*. What else can this possibly mean besides the liberation of men from women, especially from the achievements of women's growing power? The term *women's liberation* grew out of the realization that men have more power than women and thus can exploit and oppress us. Therefore we need liberation from that oppression and exploitation. The term *men's liberation* was derived from the term *women's liberation* and thus insinuates that women have power over men. Its very name infers liberation from female domination and is therefore an inversion of fact as well as women's liberation principles.

A look at what some of the leaders of men's liberation are saying shows the anti-woman, anti-women's liberation movement, and anti-radical principles upon which this so-called movement stands (see box). What it really amounts to is just more of the same old male supremacist complaint

that women are really nags and bitches—the power behind the throne—henpecking their men into subservience. The new twist is their attack, sometimes subtle and sometimes not, on the women's liberation movement they usually claim to support.

It is hard to know whether or not men's liberation will become a widely organized movement. There are certainly those—men and women—who are trying to make it one. And there are some disturbing signs it is gaining strength:

- ☞ Men's liberation groups are being set up all around the country. A 1972 *New York Times* article gave sympathetic coverage to the phenomena under the headline: "Men's Lib—Almost Underground, But a Growing Movement." A 1975 *New York Post* story said there are 1,000 such groups and announces the organization of MAN (Men's Awareness Network) and a Men's Awareness Week.
- ☞ Newspapers are reporting integration of previously "women's jobs" as breakthroughs for men's liberation.
- ☞ Several books on the subject have been published including *The Liberated Man* by Warren Farrell and *The Male Machine* by Marc Feigen Fasteau. Farrell, the "movement's" leader, advertises himself as having