

So long, Wonder Woman

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The false promise of feminism can be summed up by an old commercial for cheap perfume. It showed a liberated 1970s woman who could "bring home the bacon, fry it up in a pan, and never let you forget

Against the Current

by Neomi Rao

who's the man." The curvaceous blonde in the commercial could perform feats a working man would never dream.

Like the tawdry commercial, feminism has sold women the lie of fulfillment—the lie that we can have it all.

While the feminist movement has made tremendous strides for women in the workplace, in academia, and even in the home, it has simultaneously advanced an unrealizable ideal, one with conflicting and sometimes mutually exclusive goals.

As feminists argued that women should have the same political, social, and sexual freedoms as men, June Cleaver quickly lost her place as America's prototypical female. A more "liberated" woman full of hope for sexual equality took her place.

Although it is difficult to argue against political and social equality, the thinking behind the feminist movement shows a dangerous vision—a vision of the woman who has it all, and finds fulfillment in superachievement. According to this ideal, a modern woman, free from traditional patriarchal systems, can balance a high-power career, a loving marriage, a happy nuclear family, and still manage to look great as she runs from board meetings to the PTA in her heels—which look like pumps but feel like sneakers.

Can women at Yale overcome the feminist myth?

Can women at Yale, intelligent and aspiring, overcome the feminist myth? It might be nice to think so, but as I spend many hours in Career Services pouring over law and graduate school brochures, I wonder when I will make time for having a family and raising children. We want to have it all, and something inside us believes that we can. But something has to give.

While a few women may seem to achieve the ideal, most cannot. This should come as no surprise. Men, who have traditionally held positions of power and prestige in public life, do not have it all, either; accomplishments have usually come at the expense of the family. The dogged pursuit of wealth and power limits one's ability to raise children and maintain a harmonious family life. Human beings often fall short of ideals, and the liberated woman is no exception.

It seems that movement into the corporate world, or into politics has not necessarily brought women happiness or fulfillment. One might argue that now women at least have the choice of working. But this choice offers illusory freedom, since most jobs are not creative outlets, for either sex. Many women now work out of simple economic necessity. For most middle and lower class women, working means having a mediocre job in addition to the responsibilities of a family.

As Nietzsche once observed, "woman

Man or woman, no one can have it all.

as clerk' is inscribed on the gate to the modern society that is taking shape now...the 'emancipation of woman'...is thus seen to be an odd symptom of the increasing weakening and dulling of the most feminine instinct. There is a stupidity in this movement, an almost masculine stupidity of which a woman who had turned out well would have to be thoroughly ashamed."

The very mention of a "feminine instinct" might offend, but certain biological differences are undeniable and do affect the behavior of the sexes and their relation to each other. Various studies have suggested that innate sexual differences exist, since patterns of male/female behavior have been observed across cultures.

Feminists often cringe at the mention of biological differences, but differences do not necessarily translate into limitations. An examination of the ways in which sex colors our perception of the world should not be threatening.

In the past, women have been portrayed as the bearers of tragedy, the *femmes fatales*, and the marginalized whores. Characters such as Clytemnestra, Medea, and Lady Macbeth reveal the frightening power of wronged women. Male authors created these characters, men who comprehended the scope of a woman's anger. Hoping for a genderless world, feminists would not want to understand the truth and depth of Clytemnestra's thirst for revenge or Medea's rage against Jason.

No one can have it all. The feminist paradigm has ignored the real choices which women have to make, and it thus forces them into an unhappy compromise. When things go wrong, it is only too easy for the feminists to blame society and to demand sexual justice.

But unless we construct an androgynous world, tension between men and women is inevitable. When women ask for clean, rational, fair relations between the sexes, they betray their own instincts by subscribing to a horrible, masculine stupidity.