PS1 for 1/26/89 # “Working Girl” Explodes a Feminist Myth

To the anguished moans and groans of feminists, the movie script writers have struck again. Even if television news departments, editorial writers, and Congressmen haven’t discovered it, the movie script writers (who are on the cutting edge of cultural trends because they must lure customers into the theaters today) know that we are in the post-feminist era.

Last year they gave us **Baby Boom**, in which a high-powered female executive chucked success on the fast track in favor of life in the country with a man, a baby, and home-based, kitchen-oriented work. Then came **Fatal Attraction**, in which the heroine was the fulltime homemaker, a beautiful package of fulfillment and emotional serenity, while the villain was the fortyish career woman, violently desperate to possess a man and his baby.

Now comes **Working Girl** to dash even more feminist dreams and delusions. It shows that women in business are just as cutthroat as men, and that some successful women executives treat their female subordinates just as ruthlessly and oppressively as men have been alleged to do.

Feminist ideology teaches that the business and professional world is a male enclave whose borders are guarded by sexist, discriminating men who protect their territory by security measures as impassable as the Berlin Wall. Even if talented and able women somehow make it onto the playing field, the theory goes, they are oppressed and kept from rising to the top by a “glass ceiling” (a new tool of semantic warfare invented by feminist ideologues).

But that isn’t all. Feminist mythology also teaches that, “come the revolution,” when women rise to positions of power and importance in business and professions, the entire business environment will be different. Women executives will be compassionate, caring, cooperative, and change the workaday world from power-seeking to pleasantries.

Working Girl shows that “’tain’t so,” after all. When the Ivy League business school graduate, with her expensive clothes and aristocratic ways, makes it into the front office with a view over Manhattan, she is just as dictatorial, dishonest, and downright horrid to her female underlings as the archetypical male in feminist fairy tales.

To add insult to injury, those who lend a helping hand to the poor little working girl from the wrong side of the tracks, who is trying to lift herself up by her own bootstraps by attending a lowbrow budget college at night, are successful men! **They** are the ones who give her the big chance to rise out of the secretarial pool, where she would otherwise be doomed to suffer the daily indignity of being expected to make coffee for her boss.

Working Girl can be seen as the entertainment version of a revealing article published in the **New York Times Magazine** last year, called “Why Feminism Failed.” Written by a feminist journalist, Mary Anne Dolan, who rose to become editor of a major metropolitan newspaper, **The Los Angeles Herald Examiner**, it described the feminist dream that “female” qualities would produce a new management environment which would “make mincemeat of the male business model.”

Under her direction, the **Herald** soon boasted the first 50/50 male/female masthead in the country. Women got most of the coveted positions, including editor of the editorial page and sports columnist.

But Ms. Dolan regretfully admitted that five years later those women had taken on “the worst aspects of the stereotypical corporate ladder-climbing male. As soon as masthead status was achieved, the power grab began.” She said that the supposedly “wise and mature” women she hired turned out to be “brittle, conniving, power-hungry and unyielding.”

Ms. Dolan, whose own perspective is revealed by her admission that she was an enthusiast of Geraldine Ferraro’s vice presidential campaign, was vivid in her description of what happened. The women she hired were “experienced professionals who demanded good titles and salaries, and got them.” But, she ruefully concluded, “their essential creed was an ancient one, the male one: power first.”

Ms. Dolan is not particularly optimistic that this situation will change soon. She has spent some time with female professionals in the nation’s big cities but, while they no longer mouth the “sisterhood” jargon of the 60s and 70s, she says, feminists’ anger toward men is “even greater now than before.”

She noted that, when one of her women journalist friends recently died young from cancer and they all gathered at the funeral, the most power-grabbing feminist of the bunch sat in the pew “with the current and former publishers of the newspaper, both men, one at each elbow.” ‘Twas ever thus.

Feminism is doomed to failure because it is based on an attempt to repeal and restructure human nature. It is good that the movie script writers have discovered that we are in the post-feminist era.