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BOOK REVIEW

SNIPS AND SNAILS AND PUPPY DOGS' TAILS,
THAT'S WHAT LITTLE BOYS ARE MADE OF


Reviewed by Carlin Meyer*

Maleness. Masculinity. Macho. We associate these with certain traits, certain behaviors. Competitive aggression. Toughness, bravery, even violence. Camaraderie, command, control. Rationality, dispassion, honor. Domination. Of women, especially. ¹

Where did these associations come from? Have we always made these particular associations? Are they biologically ordained, socially conditioned, or a little of each? Do these associations represent ideological constructs, or actual behaviors? Are most men aggressive and violent? If so, how did they get that way? How hard is it to change these gender-bound associations and behaviors?

Neither E. Anthony Rotundo's American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era² nor Michael A. Messner's Power at Play: Sports and the Problem of Masculinity³ answers all these questions, but together they go a considerable way toward unravelling the web of attitudes and behaviors that have shaped modern American men. Both ought to give pause to those who seek quick-fix ways to alter dominant norms associating masculinity with aggressive, competitive, even violent behavior.

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1. And we distinguish these from other traits and behaviors. Feminine behaviors. Caring and compassion. Gentleness and cooperation. A certain softness, submissiveness, kindness. Victimization. By men, especially.


Having read these books, it would be difficult either to imagine that male behavior would be significantly affected by suppressing pornography, or to credit porn, as anti-pornography feminists do, with playing a key role in inculcating men in the behavioral norms of modern "masculinity." Today's anti-pornography feminists seem to believe that

4. "Although desire, sensuality, eroticism and even the explicit depiction of sexual organs can be found in many, if not all, times and places, pornography as a legal and artistic category seems to be an especially Western idea with a specific chronology and geography." Lynn Hunt, Introduction to The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800, at 10 (Lynn Hunt ed., 1993) (tracing the main lines of the modern pornographic tradition and its censorship to sixteenth-century Italy and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France and England). For present purposes, I use the term pornography in its current popular sense, as "the explicit depiction of sexual organs and sexual practices with the aim of arousing sexual feelings." Id. Modern feminist definitions of pornography have included the requirement that a sexual depiction "subordinate" women. See, e.g., ANDREA DWORKIN & CATHARINE A. MACKINNON, Pornography and Civil Rights: A New Day for Women's Equality 36 (1983) (stating that the essence of the MacKinnon-Dworkin definition is that "pornography is what pornography does . . . [and that w]hat it does is subordinate women, usually through sexually explicit pictures and words"). For feminist critiques of the anti-pornography effort, see Nadine Strossen, A Feminist Critique of "The" Feminist Critique of Pornography, 79 VA. L. REV. 1099, 1173-86 (1993) (arguing that the assumptions relied on by MacKinnon and Dworkin in correlating sexist and violent behavior against women with exposure to pornography and in defending censorship of pornography are flawed and insupportable) and Carlin Meyer, Sin, Sex and Women's Liberation: Against Suppressing Porn, 72 TEX. L. REV. 1097 (1994) (describing the inevitable variety and fluidity of pornography definitions).

5. I use the term "anti-porn[ography] feminist" to refer to those who seek to use law to suppress, censor, or eradicate pornography because of its misogynist content. I do not include in the term the many feminists who critically analyze porn for what it reveals about men, about modern sexuality, and about the period we live in, but who do not seek to suppress it.

6. Nor can one easily, after reading Rotundo and Messner, believe that either masculine ideals or masculine behavior are adequately represented by the hyperbolic sexual exploits portrayed in most, or at least much of, pornography. Indeed, the view that men are largely conditioned to be as they are shown in porn—as sexual predators—has much in common with that of the philosophy of late nineteenth-century social purists. To them, men were biologically constituted as sexual predators, driven inexorably to immoral and aggressive behavior, whereas to today's anti-porn purists, men are socially constituted as such; men's sexually aggressive drives are in both cases inexorable (unless contained and controlled) and universal. See, e.g., Ellen DuBois & Linda Gordon, Seeking Ecstasy on the Battlefield: Danger and Pleasure in Nineteenth-Century Feminist Sexual Thought, in Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality 31, 36-37 (Carole S. Vance ed., 1984) and LYNNE SEGAL, Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men 207, 208-09 (1990) for the proposition that sexuality as the center of male dominance is not new, but has origins in conservative
pornography not only expresses "how men see the world" and "what men want," but also has played an important role in convincing men to want it—to want to dominate through physical potency, competitive aggression, sexual conquest, and sexual violence. Rotundo's and Messner's works, by contrast, suggest that men's ideals and behaviors are generated by far more powerful social forces and more deeply institutionalized norms, and that they cannot be reduced simply to aggression against women.

In carefully researched, clearly articulated, and unusually thoughtful analyses, Rotundo and Messner describe the social forces that have shaped Western ideas about masculinity and the real behaviors of American men: Rotundo surveying the economic, political, and social forces that produced what he calls the three "phases" of American manhood, and Messner

nineteenth-century "sexology." See also ROTUNDO, supra note 2, at 229-31 (describing the nineteenth-century notion of the "animal nature of the human race").

7. Catharine A. MacKinnon, Sexuality, Pornography, and Method: "Pleasure Under Patriarchy," in FEMINISM & POLITICAL THEORY 207, 219 (Cass R. Sunstein ed., 1990). The view that pornography directly expresses our culture's view of what men and women are or ought to be is, as Lynne Segal has noted, "astonishingly misleading." Lynne Segal, Sweet Sorrows, Painful Pleasures: Pornography and the Perils of Heterosexual Desire, in SEX EXPOSED: SEXUALITY AND THE PORNOGRAPHY DEBATE 65, 71 (Lynne Segal ed., 1993). Indeed, "[i]deology is precisely what most fantasy does not express: hence, the well-known incidence of fantasies of powerlessness from leading patriarchs, fantasies of sexual domination by black men (or women) from white racists, and rape fantasies from feminists." Id.

8. "What men want," declares Catharine A. MacKinnon, is "women bound, women battered, women tortured, women humiliated, women degraded and defiled, women killed. Or, . . . women sexually accessible, have-able, there for them, wanting to be taken and used . . . ." MacKinnon, supra note 7, at 219-20.

9. "[I]t is not the ideas in pornography that assault women: men do, men who are made, changed, and impelled by it." CATHARINE A. MACKINNON, ONLY WORDS 15 (1993). "Sooner or later, in one way or another, the consumers [of porn] want to live out the pornography further in three dimensions. Sooner or later, in one way or another, they do." Id. at 19.

10. See ROTUNDO, supra note 2, at 2. Rotundo explicitly derives these phases from a study of white middle-class men living in the northern United States, acknowledging that American society has always been "divided inwardly by class, region, race, and ethnicity," but arguing that "[m]iddle-class values have been the dominant values in the United States for two centuries," and that issues concerning "racism, slavery, and the distribution of the non-white population" are so distinct and complex as to demand entirely separate treatment. Id. at 295-97. But Rotundo cannot, I think, claim to appraise "American manhood" without more directly confronting class and race issues. For example, it is impossible to understand the specifically sexual aspects of white middle-class men's conceptions of masculinity without addressing the sexual stereotyping of black men and women. See, e.g., SANDER L. GILMAN, DIFFERENCE AND PATHOLOGY:
exploring the historic and contemporary role of sports ideology and institutions in developing male beliefs and behaviors. Both men amply demonstrate that modern masculine ideals that champion aggression, competition, desire to dominate, and physical and sexual prowess have their genesis in conditions, forces, and institutions that long predate mass consumption of pornography, and that are institutionalized today in far more potent forms than is represented by porn’s generally shallow and vulgar, if ubiquitous, imagery.

"[E]ach culture," writes Rotundo, "constructs its own version of what men and women are—and ought to be." Mining a historical record of diaries, letters, scholarly writings, periodicals, and legal records, Rotundo demonstrates that American conceptions of manhood and masculinity, as well as actual men’s goals, beliefs, and behaviors, have been products of broad changes in economic and social conditions and institutions, and have altered dramatically from the eighteenth century to the present. In the colonial period, for example, masculinity was demonstrated not by aggressiveness and selfish competition, but by success in carrying out communal duties. Status was conferred by property and lineage, as well as by reputation for proper management of home and family, intelligent governance, and reliable and successful handling of community and religious affairs. Manhood depended more on mastery of one's role as pater familias and pillar of the community than on one’s wealth or individual achievement. In this period of what Rotundo calls “communal manhood,” men’s duties included both rule and care: ensuring that wives, servants, children, and other dependents were fed, clothed, housed, cared for, inculcated in the appropriate social and

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Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness 109-29 (1985) (describing black sexuality in the “modern consciousness”). Moreover, seeking to understand gender from a narrowly American frame, especially one centered on middle-class northern white men, is problematic. Global patterns—from the vast immigration from Europe and the Far East to imperialist intervention, frontier genocide, and foreign commerce—surely shaped and continue to shape “American manhood.”

11. Messner's own "intensely personal experiences" as a former athlete, coach, and referee of both youth and adult sport led to his choice to write about sports. See Messner, supra note 3, at 2-5. In his book, he explores "the development and changes in masculine identity in the lives of thirty male former athletes," placing their individual experiences within the framework of recent scholarly work on men and masculinity, the history of sport, and feminist critique of sport. Id. at 5.

12. Rotundo, supra note 2, at 1 (endnote omitted).

13. See id. at 10-18.

14. See id.

15. See id. at 12.

16. Id. at 2.
religious values, and prevented from becoming burdens to the surrounding community. Men were naturally suited to rule because they alone possessed the rational faculties necessary to moderate and control "natural" passions like "ambition, defiance, and envy." Self-restraint and self-denial were hallmarks of masculinity.

In the early nineteenth century, a new phase of "self-made manhood" eclipsed the earlier communal form. The emergence of republican government and the growth of the market economy and the middle class created "a political life based on the free play of individual interests" rather than communal concerns. Achievement, rather than birth, began to define manliness: status was increasingly a product of a man's work—his market successes and failures—rather than his lineage or performance of household and communal duties.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the third phase, "passionate manhood," a phase strongly echoed in contemporary norms of masculinity, came into being. The most dramatic change in this phase was "in the positive value put on male passions." In the earliest (colonial) phase of American manhood, male aggression, ambition, and rivalry were vices that moral men used reason to control and overcome. By the early nineteenth century these qualities had become transformed into necessary evils—motor forces of industrialization and progress—to be harnessed and channelled for societal good but, with the aid of women,

17. See id. at 2-3 (diary entry of a bankrupt merchant who was shamed because he hurt the community, harming employees and creditors, and describing his distress in failing to control his son, whose "shortcomings . . . were charged directly to the father").

18. Id. at 3.

19. See id. at 13-14.

20. See id. at 18-25.

21. Id. at 3.

22. See id. Male bonding rituals gained significance in this period. The locus of men's work shifted from land to commerce, and although much "business" was still carried out at or near the home, men's daily lives were increasingly centered away from their "little commonwealths," and spent in the company not of wives, children, and servants, but of other men. See id. at 196-205. For instance, Rotundo describes the carnival-like atmosphere when judges rode circuit: after combat in the courtroom, they would play card games, drink, and tell off-color campfire jokes with the entourage of lawyers who travelled with them. See id. at 197.

23. See id. at 5-6.

24. Id. at 5.

25. See id. at 13-14.
kept in strict control. Male reason still played a role, but new “virtues,” such as independence, defiance of authority, and the “urge for dominance,” emerged. In a major shift, women were viewed as possessing superior moral sensibility, and as guardians of virtue entrusted with the moral education of the young and the duty to control and delimit male passions.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, ambition, combativeness, competitiveness, and aggression had become innate “manly” virtues, “positive” male instincts. They had become qualities exalted in themselves rather than vices to be harnessed for social gain, and women’s moral guardianship became dangerous, threatening to “feminize” men and American society. “With no frontier to conquer, with physical strength

26. See id. at 16-18. Now, “assertiveness, ambition, avarice, lust for power . . . would provide the motive force for political and economic systems.” Id. at 16. Indeed, “[t]he new federal constitution, instead of suppressing self-interest, assumed its existence.” Id. Women, superior in virtue and “moral reasoning,” were to assist by keeping male passions in check. Id. at 17-18 (emphasis added).

27. Id. at 4.

28. See id. Men were no longer the more virtuous sex, but had become superior primarily in possessing qualities necessary to survive and thrive in the public world of work and politics. They now needed women’s superior moral will to help contain their selfish, aggressive passions from infecting the home or raging out of control. See id.

Marriage, once a civic, procreative, political, and religious union in which women were legally (sub)merged under patriarchal rule, became a romantic union of opposites based on personal preference rather than communal concerns. Women, still subject to the control and rule of husbands, were thought to possess valued qualities, even if they were not always treated that way. See id.

In addition, the notion that men and women “naturally” occupied separate “spheres”—women guarding the hearth, men engaging in the public world of work and politics—began to develop, though it did not come into full flower until the latter half of the century. The “gentle sex” guarded the hearth and created for adult males a “safe haven” from, and counterweight to, the heartless and selfish world of capitalist competition, and used their superior moral sensibilities to instill in boys and men the subtleties of conscience and self-control necessary to balance the demands and influences of the “public” world. See id. at 22-25.

29. See id. at 5-6. Rotundo points to “[a] flood of animal metaphors,” emphasizing the innate quality of man’s bestial passions that “poured forth in the post-Darwin era.” Id. at 229 (citing such phrases as “a brave animal,” “animal instincts,” and “animal energy” as new ways to describe men).

30. See id. at 252-55. See also MESSNER, supra note 3, at 13-15 (discussing the “crisis of masculinity” during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries).
becoming less relevant in work, and with urban boys being raised and taught by women, it was feared that males were becoming ‘soft’..."31

Moreover, “[a] new emphasis on the self”—on each person’s “unique core of personal identity that lay beneath all the layers of social convention”32—meant that women posed a danger to masculinity.33 If men and women were fundamentally similar and merely expressed “different” aspects of human personality, young boys too much under women’s tutelage might become “effeminate” and lose the qualities essential to the nation’s industrial and military success.34 So “passionate manhood” in the era of Teddy Roosevelt stressed the “manly virtues”:35 toughness, ability to withstand discomfort and pain, physical prowess,

31. MESSNER, supra note 3, at 14. See also ROTUNDO, supra note 2, at 248-51, for a discussion of the emergence of the industrial economy in the late nineteenth century.

32. ROTUNDO, supra note 2, at 6.

33. See id. at 104-05.

34. See id. at 6, 252-53. Rotundo adds a dimension to debates about gender difference by demonstrating that liberal individualism was “gendered” from the start because men’s identities as individuals were linked to rational self-rule, whereas recognition of women’s “unique” selves “came not in the public realm, but through romance.” Id. at 17. This insight may help explain phenomena as varied as women’s preference for establishing identity through relationships and partiality to sexually explicit fare that is clothed, as it were, in romance. See, e.g., CAROL THURSTON, THE ROMANCE REVOLUTION: EROTIC NOVELS FOR WOMEN AND THE QUEST FOR A NEW SEXUAL IDENTITY 6-8 (1987) (following an increase in feedback from readers to publishers during the late 1970s, the erotic romance novel came to reflect “existing social norms and values of some women . . . while acting as an agent of change for others, especially those still holding to traditional sex-role definitions”; the heroine evolved into a ‘New Heroine’ who displayed attributes of “self-determination,” “autonomy,” “economic self-sufficiency,” and “sexual self-awareness,” and by the 1980s, the hero came to “aid[] and admire[] her success.”); JANICE RADWAY, READING THE ROMANCE: WOMEN, PATRIARCHY AND POPULAR LITERATURE 16 (1987) (explaining that “the romantic tale simultaneously recapitulates a woman’s psychosexual development and vicariously satisfies some of the reader’s needs created by such development and seldom met by traditional, patriarchal marriage”). See also Avis Lewallen, ‘Lace: Pornography for Women?, in THE FEMALE GAZE: WOMEN AS VIEWERS OF POPULAR CULTURE 86, 101 (Lorraine Gamman & Margaret Marshment eds., 1989) (describing popular “genre” as “shopping and fucking,” or more euphemistically ‘hoarding and humping’”).

35. ROTUNDO, supra note 2, at 231. Roosevelt repeatedly “extolled ‘the great primal needs and primal passions that are common to all of us,’” id., and thereby convinced men to join the “‘splendid little war’ with Spain.” Id. at 235. Men were warriors—“Rough Riders.” Id. National greatness and masculinity meant (world) dominance. See id. at 232-36.
glorification of muscular and hard bodies, and distinguished them from scorned feminine softness, gentleness, and sensitivity.

Victorian men, instead of looking to women to instill moral conscience and teach techniques of self-control, organized sporting activities, fraternal lodges, and organizations, from the Boy Scouts of America and the YMCA to the Boys' Brigade, the Knights of King Arthur, and the Sons of Daniel Boone. These groups deliberately promoted "manliness": aggression, competition, and demanding and highly combative physical performance. In addition, debating clubs and secret societies were formed to encourage intellectual competition by fostering intense verbal and social rivalries. Leisure activity, which eighteenth-century men would have viewed as effeminate, became the central arena in which boys and young men were trained to be "real men"

36. See id. at 233-34. For a discussion of the contemporary analog to the emphasis on bodily strength, hardness, and muscularity, see Marc E. Mishkind et al., The Embodiment of Masculinity: Cultural, Psychological, and Behavioral Dimensions, in Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity 37 (Michael S. Kimmel ed., 1987) and Alan M. Klein, Of Muscles and Men, Science, Nov.-Dec. 1993, at 35.

37. See ROTUNDO, supra note 2, at 185-93, 205-09. Rotundo’s fascinating descriptions of male “neurasthenia” and of the professions of doctor and clergyman underscore that fear of feminization limited men in ways that produced odd results. Apparently, men who needed a break from the competitive combativeness of late nineteenth-century capitalism frequently fell victim to a form of what we might today label chronic fatigue syndrome. Its “cure” permitted men such as Theodore Dreiser, Charles Evans Hughes, William James, Louis Sullivan, and Woodrow Wilson to pursue such otherwise “unmanly” activities as reading, writing, relaxing, and hiking. See id. at 186, 192. As macho ideals of manliness became increasingly important, however, “neurasthenia” became such a “badge of shame” that by 1910 it had disappeared altogether. See id. at 186, 188.

Men who opted for less combative professions—doctors and clergymen—where they “conducted their activities away from concentrations of men and power, and . . . [aimed] as much at nurture as at competition” found themselves stigmatized as pursuing “feminine” callings, the more so because their activities involved significant contact with women. Id. at 205.

38. See id. at 257-58. Of course, male aggressive behavior did not originate in this period. As Rotundo notes, little boys of early nineteenth-century families were prone to engage in more or less playful dismemberment of small animals, to throw stones at girls as an expression of affection and interest (as well as disdain), and to carry out pranks—sometimes quite vicious—at the expense of those who seemed “different.” See id. at 35-38, 46-49.

rather than "sissies,"40 and to relearn "frontier" independence, fortitude, and dominion.41

While emphasizing the changed social conditions at the end of the twentieth century, Rotundo argues that emphasis on the positive value of male passions remains visible in today’s ideals of manhood, and that, indeed, many of the themes of late nineteenth-century "manhood" are echoed today. We continue to perceive men as "more aggressive, more primitive, more lustful, more dominating, and more independent than women." Indeed, modern masculinists who "lament the growing distance between fathers and sons" as producing or reflecting a "disconnection of men from passion, from the spirit, from their fellow men," parallel earlier concerns about feminization.44 Other ideals of manhood, such as what Rotundo labels the "team player," like their nineteenth-century predecessors, "take[] competitive athletics as a model for fitting aggression and rivalry into the new bureaucratic work settings

40. Id. at 273. The term "sissy" came into existence during this period, a period in which being charged with hiding behind women's petticoats was especially stigmatizing because, until the turn of the century, most boys were dressed in petticoat-like "feminine" attire until the age of six. See id. at 33, 255, 259.

41. See id. at 6, 236-37. At the same time, "rampant athleticism" aimed at "making sturdy citizens, and training men in the invaluable qualities of loyalty, self-sacrifice, obedience and temperance." Messner, supra note 3, at 7 (quoting an editorial in the Wesleyan U. Bull., Nov. 1895); see also Rotundo, supra note 2, at 232-39 (discussing "manliness and the military ideal"). Middle-class men by then worked largely as middle-level bureaucrats in vast organizations rather than as individual entrepreneurs; what was required was therefore not independence and individualism, but subordination of the self to the competitive enterprise effort. See Rotundo, supra note 2, at 232-46. Rotundo explains that an eight-fold increase in the number of "salaried, non-propertied workers"—virtually all white collar—between 1870 and 1910, brought the total percentage of the male work force that was white-collar to 20%. See id. at 48-51. Whether the goal was imperialist intervention, monopolistic domination of the market by a firm or trust, or sports and debating victory, competitive aggression was fostered and structured within well-defined hierarchies. See id. at 222-46.

42. Rotundo, supra note 2, at 285-86.
43. Id. at 287.
44. Id.
45. See id. The particular modern ideal of manhood to which Rotundo refers here is one that emphasizes the "naturally male" passions, and is represented by Robert Bly and others. Rotundo aptly labels it the ideal of the "spiritual warrior." Id. at 288. Like their earlier counterparts, these "critics urge men to restore their confused or missing sense of manliness through immersion in the mythology and rituals of premodern men." Id. at 287. See also id. at 227-32 (describing a similar romance with the primitive among nineteenth-century men).
of the twentieth century.” Indeed, even today’s increasing consumption of pornography has its genesis in the nineteenth-century affirmation of the “idea of a deep, true passionate self,” which desires “self-expression” and deserves “self-enjoyment.” It is the ideals and the ideas that need challenge and change, Rotundo argues, not their expression in the works of masculinists such as Robert Bly and Sam Keen, or profit-seekers like Playboy.

Messner, like Rotundo, sees the origins of the organization and values of modern sport in the late nineteenth century’s “crisis of masculinity.” He stresses that the need to reassert and reformulate masculine virtue originated not only in changing economic and urban life, but also as a reaction to women’s increased emergence from the domestic sphere to challenge male hegemony in the public world of work and politics.

46. Id. at 286 (endnote omitted).

47. Id. at 285. Rotundo places consumers of pornography within the masculine ideal of the “pleasure seeker” who seeks outlets in “exciting, dangerous sports,” or in becoming a “consumer connoisseur” of “sex and beautiful women” offered explicitly by Playboy and its ilk. Id. at 287. Because Rotundo spends a scant 10 of his more than 300 pages on modern masculinity, his writing about the twentieth century is suggestive rather than empirically supported. See id. at 284-93. His argument concerning the four modern ideals of manhood is therefore slightly superficial, and he fails to explore either their contestation by more “feminine” versions of manhood or their adoption or challenge along lines of class and race.

48. See id. at 287-90 (describing the emergence in the late twentieth century of a new ideal of manhood, the “spiritual warrior,” who “believes he has lost touch with those passions and lost his ability to connect directly with other men”). Id. at 287. Rotundo differs with this movement’s basic assumptions about gender in that Bly adheres to an “essentialism” stance where “manhood begins with a timeless, unchanging core of qualities that all men ultimately possess,” while Rotundo advocates “cultural construction”: manhood is a mental category created and recreated by cultures as they, and their social and physical environments, change.” Id. at 363 n.7. See also supra note 45 and accompanying text.

49. See ROTUNDO, supra note 2, at 2, 287-89 (describing Keen as one of the key voices in the mythopoeic men’s movement).

50. See id. at 287-90.

51. MESSNER, supra note 3, at 13 (citing PETER FILENE, HIM/HER/SELF: SEX ROLES IN MODERN AMERICA 120 (1975)).

52. See id. at 14-15. Both Rotundo and Messner note that although women had limited success in entering the professions and had struggled to gain the vote, their organization of such political efforts as the temperance movement demonstrated real political power. As a result, their efforts and challenges evoked a strong backlash. See id. at 15-16; ROTUNDO, supra note 2, at 219-20.
To reaffirm this male-female "difference," and to ensure the preservation of masculine power, sport, like many clubs and organizations, was organized as an exclusively male bastion. Its explicit aim was to help combat the feminization that derived from women's domination of childrearing and schoolteaching, as well as from the increasing political and social power of the "New Woman." Sports, "[i]n promoting dominance and submission, in equating force and aggression with physical strength ... naturalized the equation of maleness with power, thus legitimizing a challenged and faltering system of

One of Rotundo's most interesting insights is that the fear of feminization and homophobia of this period resulted in part from a shift in understanding about personality. See id. at 279. Previously, maleness and femaleness had been viewed as residing comfortably in separate bodies. See id. at 22-25. But as the ideology of separate spheres increasingly specified the different roles and traits of male and female, the phenomenon of men who preferred nurturing to competitive styles, and women who sought to enter the public world of work and politics, needed explaining. See id. at 24-25. The essential sameness of the individual offered the possibility of the existence in both sexes of both masculine and feminine sides. This, in turn, increased the dangers associated not only with feminization, but with homosexuality. See id. at 279-83.

Whereas homosexual behavior had earlier been viewed largely in terms of discreet, deviant acts (there was until the nineteenth century no word for homosexuality, only labels for particular acts), now it was identified by display of feminine traits. And since most men at one time or another acted in ways that could be stigmatized as feminine, it was constantly necessary to prove one's masculinity, especially by displays of homophobia. See id. at 262-79. See also MESSNER, supra note 3, at 15, 34-37, 96, 100, 151.

53. See MESSNER, supra note 3, at 13. Messner notes that the women's sports programs so successfully promoted by feminists at the turn of the nineteenth and in the early twentieth centuries flourished so long as they were marginalized, but were destroyed during a phase of intense concern about masculinity during the 1930s. See id. at 16-17.

A similarly notable wave of hostility to women's sports is visible in today's aggressively negative response by institutionalized male athletics to the efforts of women to gain a greater share of sports funding and attention. See, e.g., Chris Cobbs, Woman Turns up the Heat on Macho Athletic Programs, PHOENIX GAZETTE, Feb. 20, 1993, at C2 (describing a woman's claim to equal funding as creating a battle that "could be as bloody as Custer's Last Stand"); Beth Sherman, Talking Sports With Men, NEWSDAY, Apr. 4, 1992, at 15 (quoting a psychology professor regarding "'rancor directed against female fans [as] part of an overall backlash against feminism,'" describing sexist treatment of female fans, and quoting a New York Mets ballgirl describing men "'drop[p]ing their phone numbers on the field or mak[ing] rude comments'").

54. MESSNER, supra note 3, at 14. Messner notes that women's efforts to gain greater reproductive and sexual control also contributed to the "crisis." Id. at 15.
masculine domination." Sports organization, Messner argues, did not merely "symbolize the masculine structure of power over women," but "constituted and legitimized a heterosexist social organization of sexuality."

In basic organization and ideology and, Messner argues, in its meaning and role in the lives of boys and men, sport has changed little from the late nineteenth century. Whereas games and play have always been important to young boys, sport in its modern incarnation has become a central institutional means by which development of gender identity in

55. Id. at 15. There, "the ambivalences and insecurities of masculine identities intersect with the structure and values of the sportsworld" in such a way as to produce and reinforce not only misogyny and homophobia, but aggressive, often violent, expressions of these attitudes. Id. at 47 (emphasis added).

56. Id. at 16. Yet sports is not, in Messner's view, simply patriarchal: it reflects class and race relations as well, and reaction and challenge to dominant viewpoints. See id. at 19, 37-38, 52. But for Messner, sexism in sports has served to unite men across class and race in a united front against "the feminine." See id. at 13-23.

57. See id. at 10-13. At the same time, "increasing female athleticism" (generated partly by the modern women's movement and supported by legal change, see, e.g., Civil Rights Act, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681-1688 (1988)) mandated gender equality in the deployment of public funds for athletics. Thus, conditions are changing, and "the gender issue" in sport cannot be ignored. See MESSNER, supra note 3, at 3-4. "In 1971, only 294,015 girls participated in high school sport, compared with 3,666,917 boys. By the 1989-90 academic year, there were 1,858,659 girls participating in high school sport, compared with 3,398,192 boys." Id. at 3.

While Messner applauds this development and notes that it "has caused many boys and men to adjust—and sometimes radically alter—their preconceptions of what women are capable of," he points out that "there is also considerable evidence that women's sport has been institutionally contained, and thus its potential challenge to sport's construction of hegemonic masculinity has been largely defused." Id. at 160. Messner also describes the shift of control of women's sports to men, the backslide in enforcement of Title IX, and the gross inequities in scholarships, salaries, and funding, see id. at 4, and notes the pitiful media coverage of women's sports: studies showing 5% of television sports coverage devoted to women's sports and a male/female ratio of top-selling news stories at 23-to-1, with women's stories far less frequently on the front page, and typically much shorter. See id. at 149-51. See also Michael A. Messner & Donald F. Sabo, Introduction: Toward a Critical Feminist Reappraisal of Sport, Men, and the Gender Order, in SPORT, MEN, AND THE GENDER ORDER: CRITICAL FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES 1, 5 (Michael A. Messner & Donald F. Sabo eds., 1990) (arguing that increased budgets for women's athletics and subsequent changes in sports organization led, in the 1970s and 1980s, to a dramatic reduction in the number and proportion of women athletic directors and head coaches).
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young males occurs. In early youth, nearly all males engage in individual or team sports and learn from them "the dominant cultural conceptions of what it means to be male." Success in sports typically brings accolades from family and community; failure often brings identity crisis and a sense of failure. Messner stresses that as young boys begin the difficult transition to manhood, sports provide the central locus in which boys forge bonds with one another—an activity in which they can

58. See MESSNER, supra note 3, at 20-21. Ruling groups used sport to maintain social power and control. The British, for example, "consciously developed sport in their public schools as a means of preparing boys to one day administer the Empire," and hence "shaped the structure, rules, values, and meanings of sport" in order to "socialize boys to a certain kind of 'manliness' whose raison d'etre [sic] was the administration of domination over (mostly nonwhite) colonized peoples." Id. at 10 (citing J.A. MANGAN, THE GAMES ETHIC AND IMPERIALISM: ASPECTS OF THE DIFFUSION OF AN IDEAL 35-36 (1986)). Ultimately, sports socialization was extended to the middle classes of the colonized so that they could help maintain social control. See MESSNER, supra note 3, at 10.

Similarly, in America, modern sports was initially exclusive to "upper- and middle-class whites who were concerned with 'building character' in an expanding entrepreneurial environment," but was, by the turn of the century, organized into "widespread 'recreation for the masses'" in order to "integrate[e] immigrants and the growing industrial working class into an expanding capitalist order." Id. at 11. Messner is careful to point out, however, that "the control and domination of ruling groups is never total," id. at 12, so that sport has always been characterized by renegotiation of and resistance to dominant values. See id. at 12-13. Still, the near total exclusion or segregation of women, together with male bonding across class and race generated at the expense of women (and gays) in sports, has left traditional male-dominant values largely intact. See id. at 17-19, 149-59.

59. MESSNER, supra note 3, at 19. Rotundo describes the transformation in "the meaning and ... importance" of sport during the late nineteenth century from play and exercise to "breeding grounds for the fighting virtues," ROTUNDO, supra note 2, at 241, and a "peace-time equivalent to war." Id. at 240. This transformation could teach young men morality and self-control outside the feminizing influence of women. Id. at 239-44.

60. See MESSNER, supra note 3, at 46-52. Sport is especially important to those whose class or racial background blocks other opportunities to achieve "public masculine status." Id. at 19.

61. See id. at 91. But the promise of "affirmation of self and connection with others—is often undermined" by actual experience of the competitive and combative reality. See Michael A. Messner, The Life of a Man's Seasons: Male Identity in the Life Course of the Jock, in CHANGING MEN: NEW DIRECTIONS IN RESEARCH ON MEN AND MASCULINITY, supra note 36, at 52, 60.
achieve a certain closeness, yet avoid (or at least control) the degree of intimacy and interpersonal give-and-take.\textsuperscript{62}

And what does sport teach young men to value? They learn "a masculinity based upon status-seeking through successful athletic competition and through aggressive verbal sparring which is both homophobic and sexist."\textsuperscript{63} Denigration of women and gay men is the sine qua non of sports interaction.\textsuperscript{64} Masculinity is understood according to what it is not: feminine. "In sport, to be told by coaches, fathers, or peers that one throws 'like a girl' or plays like a 'sissy' or a 'woman' is among the most devastating insults a boy can receive . . . ."\textsuperscript{65}

Status, boys learn, is dependent upon success in competition: in the hierarchical world of sport, qualities and capacities are ranked, and winning is the key to high rank, indeed, to everything.\textsuperscript{66} And to get to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{62} Messner, supra note 3, at 91. In sports, rigid rules channel relationships; for example, male-on-male physical contact is permitted and even encouraged, but it is carefully bounded by formal and informal regulation. The formal rules have the effect not only of transposing violence into mere competitive aggression but also of repressing the homoerotic implications of male-to-male contact. See id. at 64-71.
\item Rather than take sides in the debate between Lillian Rubin, who argues that men distance themselves from each other by spending time in "external" activities like sports, and Scott Swain, who claims Rubin unfairly judges men's friendships by women's standards of intimacy (placing a "high value on talk" and "sharing of inner lives"), Messner asks not how "meaningful" or intimate male bonding is, but how masculine modes of bonding "contribute to certain kinds of [sexist and problematic] attitudes toward and relationships with women [and other men]." Id. at 91-93. See also Rotundo, supra note 2, at 150-57 (expressing the Victorian view of male and female intimacy centered on self-revelation to reveal an individual "core" beneath social convention).
\item Messner, supra note 3, at 37. "The extent of homophobia in the sportsworld is staggering." Id. at 34.
\item See id. at 36. See also Klein, supra note 36, at 35-36 (describing the rampant homophobia associated with bodybuilding although many bodybuilders are either gay or bisexual).
\item Id. at 36. Messner quotes his interviewees and numerous others to demonstrate the importance, in sports, of winning. Noting that "only about 6 or 7 percent of high school football players ever play in college" and that only "[r]oughly 8 percent of all draft-eligible college football and basketball athletes are drafted by the pros, and only 2 percent ever sign a professional contract," he argues that "the system is rigged to bring about the failure of the vast majority of the participants." Id. at 45, 46. The "99 percent who fail to measure up" suffer feelings of "failure, lowered self-images, and problems with interpersonal relationships." Id. at 46.
\item Not only are the chances of attaining professional status minuscule—"about 4 in 100,000 for a white man, 2 in 100,000 for a black man, and 3 in 1,000,000 for a U.S.-born Latino man"—but "the average career span for professional athletes is about 7 years for a major league baseball player, 4 years for those in the National Football League, and
the top, aggression and violence are necessary and acceptable, indeed, "violence becomes normative behavior," and "aggression is usually not [even] defined by men as 'violent' so long as it is rule-governed, rather than anger-induced." According to Messner, in the dominant ethic of sport, the body is treated as an instrument; physical and emotional pain are nuisances that must be ignored or suppressed; other people become, like one's own body, "objects to be manipulated and defeated" in the quest to win.

Women frequently become "objects of sexual conquest" aimed at "gain[ing] status in the male peer group." They become, as well, prime targets of the "violence expressed toward others" that a sports mentality typically generates. Serving as the butt of sexually aggressive stories and jokes, women become the means by which males "negotiat[e] the 'latent tension and aggression they feel toward each other.'" And women often perform this function for sports spectators as well.

3.4 years in the National Basketball Association." Id. at 45.

67. Id. at 66.

68. Id. at 69. Messner cites the work of sociologists Eric Dunning and Lois Bryson in partial explanation for how sports support male dominance. See id. at 15. To Messner, Dunning's work suggests that "the balance of power tips more strongly toward men when violence and fighting are endemic parts of social life." Id. Bryson argues that sport, especially in its more violent forms, not only promotes male dominance by excluding and marginalizing women, but by "associat[ing] males and maleness with valued skills and the sanctioned use of aggression/[force/violence]." Id. at 15 (quoting Lois Bryson, Sport and the Maintenance of Masculine Hegemony, 10 WOMEN'S STUD. INT'L F. 349, 349 (1987)).

69. MESSNER, supra note 3, at 62. Rotundo stresses that this ethic of "struggle and strife, of violence and force" was virtually synonymous with manhood at the end of the nineteenth century. ROTUNDO, supra note 2, at 227. See also id. at 226-27 (discussing the nineteenth-century belief that "men were prone to view struggle and strife as ends in themselves").

70. MESSNER, supra note 3, at 97.

71. Id.

72. Id. at 62.

73. Id. ("A common result of this focus on the body as an instrument is violence expressed toward others, and ultimately toward oneself.").

74. Id. at 97 (quoting Peter Lyman, The Fraternal Bond as a Joking Relationship: A Case Study of Sexist Jokes in Male Group Bonding, in CHANGING MEN: NEW DIRECTIONS IN RESEARCH ON MEN AND MASCULINITY, supra note 36, at 151).

75. MESSNER, supra note 3, at 168-70. See also Mike Capuzzo, Aggressiveness in Sports Has a Sorry Spinoff: Studies Show a Link to Wife-Beating, CHI. TRIB., Jan. 27, 1992, at C8 (finding a correlation between male sports viewing and violence against women); Meyer, supra note 4.
While Messner suggests that "[t]he sexual objectification of women among male athletes is probably, in most cases, a 'rhetorical performance' that rarely translates into actual aggression against women," he describes sports culture as fostering precisely the "dynamic that is at the heart of what feminists have called 'the rape culture,'"76 and cites statistics indicating that although the ratio of sports participants to those who abuse women may be small, the numbers are significant.77

Messner, like Rotundo, sees masculine values and behaviors as institutionally embedded in deep and complex ways, and as generated by structures within which men daily learn and are reinforced in perspectives that denigrate and devalue women. To combat the misogynist and otherwise harmful aspects of sports ideology and practice will take considerable creativity and cannot be accomplished by such quick-fix strategies as the outright rejection of sports or sports values.78 Rather, reform will require slow and painstaking efforts to emphasize the costs of "athletic masculinity,"79 and to offer alternative visions.80

Late twentieth-century men seem to be experiencing at least as strong a wave of anxiety about masculinity, with accompanying "femiphobia,"

76. MESSNER, supra note 3, at 101.

77. See id. ("Between 1983 and 1986, a U.S. college athlete was reported for sexual assault an average of once every eighteen days.") (citing Rich Hoffman, Rape and the College Athlete, PHILA. DAILY NEWS, Mar. 20, 1986, at 106). Indeed, Messner is probably only able to assert that sport-generated abuse is relatively minimal because he apparently includes within the term only abuse that generates formal complaints or physical injuries, not the psychological and verbal abuse of women so common among sports spectators and participants. See MESSNER, supra note 3, at 64-67.

78. He rejects, for example, the attempt in the late 1960s and 1970s to replace sport altogether with "'New Games' which emphasized universal participation (in place of a star system), a focus upon enjoyment (instead of upon winning), and spontaneity (instead of rigid rules)." MESSNER, supra note 3, at 171. The effort to displace competitive sport by play was, in his view, mistaken and unworkable. It would have been better to focus on specific manifestations of sexist, racist, and commercial influence on sport, rather than the entire institution. Messner's critique of this effort seems somewhat odd in light of his wholesale critique of the very aspects of sport that the "radical" effort he describes sought to alter. See id.

79. Id. at 152-53.

80. See id. at 149-72. Messner argues that sports' ability to "construct a single dominant conception of masculinity" is undermined by three factors: first, the "costs" of that masculinity in relations between males and between males and females; second, the differing experiences in sports across race, class, and sexual orientation; and third, the challenge posed by women's sports (and to a lesser extent by the "coming out" of gay athletes) to the "equation of sport and heterosexual masculinity." Id. at 151-52. Yet Messner is not overly sanguine, and points to the limitations of each of these areas of resistance. See id. at 155-72.
as did their nineteenth-century predecessors. Although social conditions have changed profoundly, like their great-grandfathers, men today seem to feel a powerful need to define and demonstrate their distinctly masculine status, and to do so by separating from and often demonstrating superiority to women. Football has become the number one American sport today, Messner argues elsewhere, precisely because it offers "comforting clarity . . . between the polarities of traditional male power, strength, and violence, and the contemporary fears of social feminization." Pornography—both its popularity among men and its content—surely reflects this reality. Indeed, one significant weakness of American Manhood is its failure to address pornography's origins and rising importance in the late nineteenth century, and the ways in which masculine status had begun to focus especially on sexual and specifically phallic prowess and performance. From D.H. Lawrence's "phallic

81. See id. at 7-9, 13-17, 149-50. It appears to be similarly generated by women's increasing penetration into previously male spheres of power and by changes in sexual relations and mores and reproductive practices. See generally SUSAN FALUDI, BACKLASH: THE UNDECLARED WAR AGAINST AMERICAN WOMEN 65 (1991) (arguing that society's "backlash" against feminism is the result of "the feminist drive for economic equality"); BARBARA EHRENREICH ET AL., RE-MAKING LOVE: THE FEMINIZATION OF SEX 162-63 (1986) (arguing that the modern sexual revolution has impacted more on women's attitudes about sex and their own sexual practices than on men's, and that the meaning of sex has changed from that of female passivity and surrender to an interaction between potentially equal persons, and that "men [have] probably felt more insecure than women, since their position of strength [has been] called into question").

82. Chief among the changed conditions is the disappearance of close communities within which men and women could develop identities in favor of "communities of consumption," in which bonding in common taste occurs without personal connection. ROTUNDO, supra note 2, at 284-85 (endnote omitted).

83. Describing four contemporary ideals of masculinity—the "team player," the "existential hero," the "pleasure seeker," and the "spiritual warrior"—Rotundo points out that they share in common "a turning away from women." Id. at 286-87, 289.

84. Messner, supra note 61, at 52, 54.

85. Indeed, the term "pornography" attained widespread use in its modern sense precisely during these periods. See Hunt, supra note 4, at 10. Hunt notes that the "modern pornographic tradition and its censorship can be traced back to 16th-century Italy and 17th- and 18th-century France and England," but it is significant that widespread modern usage of the term dates from the nineteenth century. Id. (emphasis added). See also ELAINE HOFFMAN BARUCH, WOMEN, LOVE AND POWER: LITERARY AND PSYCHOANALYTIC PERSPECTIVES 29 (1991) (arguing that, paralleling this phallic emphasis, modern men "direct all tenderness inward toward themselves and turn outward only for sensation").
marriages" and Freud’s theory of penis envy to the novels of Norman Mailer, Saul Bellow, and Philip Roth, masculinity has been increasingly tied to sexual achievement. As bell hooks puts it, there has been “a shift from emphasis on patriarchal status (determined by one’s capacity to assert power over others in a number of spheres based on maleness) to a phallocentric model, where what the male does with his penis becomes a greater and certainly a more accessible way to assert masculine status.”

While Rotundo acknowledges the importance of sex as a tactic of male bonding and exclusion of women in the middle of the nineteenth century, and as a source of tension and division later in the century when sexual passion came to be viewed as a “positive” masculine virtue, he underemphasizes the role and importance of specifically sexual requirements of the masculinity then developing.

86. See BARUCH, supra note 85, at 164 (describing marriage as an institution “in which each man rules a small Kingdom”).

87. Id. at 170 (arguing that novelists Roth and Mailer glorify “instant and uncommitted sexuality”).

88. Messner links this phenomenon in the world of sport to the psycho-social development of male identity in general. See MESSNER, supra note 3, at 30-33.


The shrinkage of the concept of man into the narrowed and hierarchicalized conceptions of masculinity of the various work and consumption ethics also goes hand in hand with an increasing social division of labor, and an increasing shrinkage of the body’s erogenous potentials culminating in a narrow genital sexuality. As we move from the simpler food-gathering societies to the agricultural society to the urbanized work and warfare societies, we notice that it is a narrower and narrower range of activities that yields masculine status.

Id.

90. Abraham Lincoln, for example, told stories that were, according to a contemporary, “generally on the smutty order,” but to preserve male bonding, he never told them in front of women. ROTUNDO, supra note 2, at 198-99.

91. See id. at 120-28.

92. See generally STEVEN MARCUS, THE OTHER VICTORIANS: A STUDY OF SEXUALITY AND PORNOGRAPHY IN MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND 32 (1985) (describing men as having extensive sexual needs and women as having no desires for personal sexual gratification. Instead, the wife is “regarded as essentially a function of masculine needs, whatever the direction in which those needs may run.”). Rotundo’s failure may result from his heavy reliance on diaries and public records. Victorian-era writings often avoid direct discussion of sexual subjects (although, as many have shown, “sex talk” was in some circles quite prevalent and quite explicit). Also, since Rotundo’s sources are largely written by white middle-class males, they do not express the
Studying pornography's history and content may help us understand how modern conceptions of masculinity have come to focus on the phallus, and may help us understand the specifically sexual aspects of contemporary backlash against women. We may also learn something of the role of phallic symbolism in helping to prop up patriarchal systems. But that pornography may reflect and embody this phallocentric orientation is a far cry from attributing to it a central role in creating norms of masculinity or fomenting male sexual violence.

93. For some excellent sources, see Lucienne Frappier-Mazur, The Social Body: Disorder and Ritual in Sade's Story of Juliette, in EROTICISM AND THE BODY POLITIC 131, 135-39 (Lynn Hunt ed., 1991) (describing the social symbolism of the rituals of the Sadian orgy and that the hostility manifested by the male agents against the female sex parallels the violent class rivalries that riddle every sector of society. Thus, the sexual symbolism reaffirms the inequality of the social classes and represents order in the face of disorder. The primacy of the phallus unites maximal social power with maximal sexual energy. "Sade's novel... forcefully articulates the relationship between... the pornographic novel and... phallic sovereignty... ."); and Linda Williams, HARD CORE: POWER, PLEASURE AND THE "FRENZY OF THE VISIBLE" 268 (1989) (concluding that, contrary to the theory of feminists, in filmic hard-core pornography, "it is simply not possible to regard a represented penis per se as a literal instance of male dominance" and thus, censoring pornography offers no real solution to patriarchal violence and abuse). But studying pornography is not the same as suppressing it. Suppressing pornography is no more possible and would be no more effective than suppressing modern sport. See Messner, supra note 3, at 171 (discussing the "foolhardy" nature of radical rejection of sport).

94. Studies "consistently show that sport remains the single most important element of the peer-status system of U.S. adolescent males." Messner, supra note 3, at 24. Surely the aggression, hierarchy, homophobia, and misogyny that boys daily experience as sports participants and spectators are far more central to constituting women as objects of their sexual aggression than is pornography. Quite apart from statistical correlations between sports and violence against women, Messner shows how sports values and practices produce and foster male aggression, including sexual aggression, in ways that require resistance on the part of those young males who do not wish to participate in violent encounters or in misogynist locker-room banter. See id. at 15-16.

By contrast, for all of their efforts, anti-pornography activists have failed even to establish a correlation between violence against women and pornography, still less to dissect the way in which the fantasy world of pornography is claimed to operate on its consumers to impel them to violence. See, e.g., Strossen, supra note 4, at 1173, 1176-85; Meyer, supra note 4, at 1097 n.3; Ronald Dworkin, Women in Pornography, 60 N.Y. REV. BOOKS, Oct. 21, 1993, at 36, 38, 40-42 (reviewing Catharine A. MacKinnon's Only Words). Rather, anti-pornography theorists rely on such assertions as "[p]ornography does not simply express or interpret experience; it substitutes for it[,] it stands in for reality; it is existentially being there." MacKinnon, supra note 9, at 25. And, as I have argued elsewhere, within the realm of culture, popular media—from toys...
As both these authors make clear, misogyny is woven deep into the warp and woof of American masculinity, and it will take more than pulling out a loose thread (such as pornography) to reweave our gendered selves into a new social fabric. Major overhaul will require slow and incremental change, change which both Rotundo and Messner have helped move along by their detailed and careful analyses of the genesis and problematic nature of masculine ideals and practices.