want to understand clearly events that occurred in the past and (human nature being what it is) will occur again in the future, at some time or other and in much the same way." And Polybius, Sallust, Tacitus? Were they really blind to overarching meanings and patterns in events?

In their last chapter, the authors write, "For almost a half century, [the Cold War] determined identities, magnified anxieties, and permeated every intellectual enterprise." Not *some* or even *many* intellectual enterprises but *every* intellectual enterprise? Even at the height of the Vietnam War, when I was in graduate school, colleagues working on dissertations about Latin love poetry and Greek moods—intellectual enterprises by my reckoning—did so well beyond the reach of any war, hot or cold. These are minor points perhaps, but neither statement reflects the quality of painstakingly careful judgment and nuance the authors have been urging on historians in previous chapters if they are to make sense of the past.

Incidentally, this last chapter, on "the future of history" in the post–Cold War era, promises a great deal more than it delivers—and some of what it delivers should be returned to sender. The chapter is not about the future of history as such (it does not preach to Brazilians, Germans, or Japanese) but about the future of history in American classrooms and the need for (reflexive) accommodation to multicultural narratives: "The motifs of a multicultural history of the United States will have to incorporate themes and variations on *all* [emphasis added] the identities that Americans carry with them, because only this will satisfy our awakened curiosity about what it truly means to be part of American democracy." This chapter appears to have been included to assure readers that the authors' liberal credentials are intact and that their embrace of objective reality is not too tight.

Yet even if they have told only part of the truth about history, the authors should be commended. They will receive the criticism of colleagues both from the Right and the Left. The book will be dismissed as thin gruel by traditionalists, who want more meat. But perhaps among at least some of the modish, who are making do with smaller and smaller portions at an intellectual table set for perpetual Lent, it will have the forbidden appeal of crème fraîche.

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The Masculine Mystique

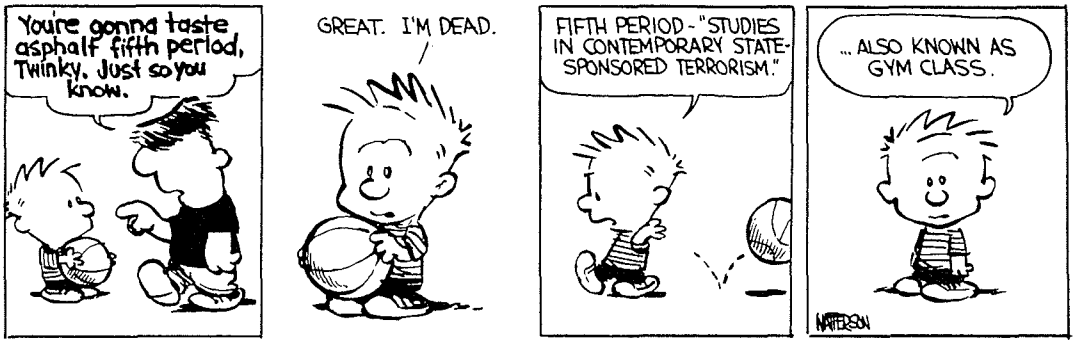
THE TROUBLE WITH BOYS. *By Angela Phillips. Basic Books.272 pp. $23*
WHAT MEN WANT: Mothers, Fathers, and Manhood. *By John Munder Ross. Harvard Univ. Press. 242 pp. $29.95*

For the past 30 years or so, experts, activists, and talk show hosts have been thoroughly absorbed with what women want, what women don't have, and what society has done to women. The "dominant sex," meanwhile, has been relatively ignored in scholarly tomes and readily abused in political and pop-psych rhetoric. We hear a great deal about the "deadbeat dad," the "insensitive male," the "hormone-driven warmaker." The "problem with men," according to current wisdom, is that they are not women.

Two new books seek to bring men back into the picture, and, just as astonishing, they do so with sympathy. Phillips, a British journalist attuned to the impact of class on social

relations, and Munder Ross, an American psychoanalyst and teacher, are well acquainted with men who make trouble and are in trouble. But their critical compass takes such matters into consideration as only one part of a very complex story. From their very different angles of vision, Phillips and Munder Ross reach startlingly similar conclusions. Perhaps most startling is that many of the conclusions are not new at all, but really pieces of old wisdom, long buried under layers of errant nonsense, ideological excess, and not-so-benign neglect.

What both authors say amounts to this: Men may be more inherently aggressive, but social factors—our contradictory definitions of masculinity, a troubled economy, the rise of single-parent families—are far more responsible for many of the problems boys and men have been getting themselves into. "The trouble with boys," writes Phillips, "is that they must become men, and if the only picture of men available is that of a brute then in order to become male they must be brutish." Instead of focusing on cultural and social factors, Phillips contends, we've been too busy blaming men for being men. Feminists took the lead in the blame game, but they are not alone. Many of those in the "helping professions" tend to approach the male as a beastly nuisance. The result has been that men all too easily play the parts the scripts require. No more than women are men puppets on the end of a social-deterministic string. But no more than women can they leap out of a world with a deeply ingrained psychological, social, and civic repertoire that defines them in certain ways.



Every text that takes up contemporary men needs its fair share of dismal data. Phillips and Munder Ross do not disappoint. In the United Kingdom, the United States, and everywhere else in the world, young men are the likeliest perpetrators of violence. Increasingly, they are also at greatest risk of being its victims. In all major industrial societies, girls do better than boys in school. This is especially striking among black Americans: Twice as many black girls as black boys graduate from college, according to Phillips. Eighty-five percent of children categorized as "special ed" are male. Fidgety young boys, disproportionately categorized as suffering from "attention disorders" of one sort or another, are separated out, turned over to therapists, or fed Ritalin.

How much all of this is the result of "wiring" is impossible to say. But the rising rates of boys at risk and boys posing risks to others correlate precisely, as Phillips shows, with the increase in fatherless homes. Relying heavily on interview material, Phillips shows how fatherless young men are more likely to be aggressive and self-destructive and to exhibit antagonism toward women. Without the steadying influence of a male adult, who both draws out and inhibits their aggressive spurts, boys and young men spin out of control.

Children, it turns out, long for their fathers. According to Munder Ross, who has analyzed more than 20 years of study, including his

own, the father introduces a principle of "difference" and "triangulation" into the early mother-child dyad, helping to tease out "the child" as a separate identity from its early engulfment in the maternal figure. Father absence poses "terrible threats to the boy's gender identity." A boy without a father has trouble knowing what appropriate male behavior is. And paradoxically, rather than spurring a strong identification with the mother, father absence more likely produces a spurning of things female. In an effort to achieve a separate identity, a boy without a father will seek to sharpen the distinction between himself and his mother.

Munder Ross lays part of the blame for our not fully understanding "a father's less obvious role in procreation" on a certain sort of "phallic dominance" assumed by male and female psychoanalysts. He discusses the "pervasive and abiding omissions" of fathers in clinical formulations and treatment plans, which only perpetuate the dismissive stereotyping of responsibility for children as "women's work." This is the world of "separate spheres" that feminists railed against, at least until the "pathological male" became the dominant scapegoat in orthodox feminist discussion. Ironically, we are now enjoined to celebrate a world of "women and children only," as if the primary problem is one of inadequate social provision, provision that would permit, even encourage, women with children to "go it alone" without a man.

Mere father presence, of course, is not enough, and Phillips reports that women increasingly would rather raise a child alone than raise one with an abusive husband. Fathers need not only to be involved in child rearing but also to offer a model of constancy and caring. Not coincidentally, this image of "father" has been encouraged by a prominent line of thinkers in the West, at least from the writings of 16th-century reformers (Luther, Calvin) through the Romantics (including Rousseau) up to and including liberals (Mill, Wollstonecraft). But this father also had "authority." It was his job to protect and to discipline, in moderation. Fathers have now been stripped of their authoritative roles, and many are stripped of their useful labor. At the same time, they are required to become "like mothers"—nurturing, caring, and communicative in exactly the same way as women—if we are to honor them at all.

This is Munder Ross's most important contribution to the contemporary debate—though I doubt very much that its gatekeepers will permit his voice to be heard. He doesn't have in mind the well-documented troubles in America's inner cities; rather, he indicts the upper-middle classes, those on the "cutting edge" of social change.

Munder Ross discusses the post-World War II world in which "a man's loyalties shifted to his corporation or institution as the owner of his life, well-being, and energies, indeed, as his family away from home." Vital childrearing functions were ignored. Then in "what was probably a distortion of feminism," Munder Ross concludes with noteworthy understatement, women, too, began to conform to the "extrafamilial power structure governing our lives," a structure that values "economic necessity" and the world of production above the "nurturing of human life itself."

Perhaps we need to begin by redefining masculinity. Although Phillips's rhetoric grows overheated at points ("What is it about men that creates, in one group, the thirst for power and, in another, the thirst for destruction?"), her evidence suggests it isn't anything "about men" in some essential or strictly predetermined sense that invites or causes trouble. Instead, a society that requires certain things from men—responsibility, protection, a stoic determination to get the job done—also increasingly denies many of them respectable work and respect for the work they do when they try to live up to these standards.

Phillips observes that one "of the things that struck me so forcefully as the mother of a son is that growing up male is hard, very hard." What's so hard about it is that, increasingly, no one knows what men are around for except to make babies. At the same time, save for a few upper-middle-class homes in which

it might be possible for fully equal and shared parenting, men are neither encouraged nor rewarded for staying at home. When they try to pitch in and help, they are often chastised by their wives for "not doing it right." Phillips puts the matter in stark but apt terms: "A man without a wage has no value in a family system in which wage earning is a man's only function." Small wonder, then, that when things start to fall apart for men, their rate of suicide, depression, and substance abuse soars.

How should we redefine masculinity? Neither author offers a completely satisfactory answer, but at least many of the right questions are finally being addressed. Munder Ross stresses the "feminine underside" of a man's nature. He finds that, much more than traditional psychoanalysis allowed, men (and boys) want to be like women (and girls). Even as girls may yearn for the ostensible "external" excitement of the male world, boys yearn for the relational warmth and safety of the female world, as they have themselves experienced it as sons.

The point is that males are just as variable and complex as females. But, as Phillips states, "lessons in violence, indifference, and separation are provided every day for every male child." At the same time, crying and distress in boys are less tolerated and less tended to than in girls. Boys are still ordered to "shape up." Much greater latitude is permitted to girl tomboys than to boy sissies. "There is no socially sanctioned way in which boys can show their anxiety and ask for help," writes Phillips. "If they are rough and anxious they are seen as aggressive, but they are given precious little encouragement to show weakness either." Destructive boys need to be taught not to be destructive; calling them monsters only assures that the behavior will continue.

There are a few moments of speculative silliness in Phillips's book, passages where she becomes untethered from her own evidence and suggests that men are somehow united in a determination to "fiercely" defend the status quo. The "world would be a better place without hard men," she concludes. Here I would recommend repeat readings of, say, Max Weber's "Politics as a Vocation" to Phillips to get her off this particular kick. Statecraft is infinitely more complicated than adolescent males fielding teams determined to do one another to death.

But all in all, these volumes show us just how hollow current celebrations of "difference" really are. On the most elemental level, we seem no closer to respecting the reality of male and female difference and the complexity of negotiating the shoals of that difference in the emergence of our own identities and in our engagements with one another than we ever were. That we cannot do so means the project of generous and accepting equality between the sexes will continue to elude us.

—Jean Bethke Elshtain, visiting professor of government at Harvard University, is author most recently of Democracy on Trial, *forthcoming from Basic Books.*

Reading Cultural Studies

THE CULTURAL STUDIES READER. *Edited by Simon During. Routledge. 478 pp. $49.95*

Imagine feeling like an alert, slightly irritable foreign guest in the midst of your own culture. Imagine that the TV shows, pop songs, movies, best sellers, radio programs, and sports events that other people look to for pleasure or edification have a much different status for you. To you, they are artifacts to analyze. And you analyze them not in terms of the pleasure they yield but in terms of their power to perform certain social functions. You want to see whether they induce