

Mangan, J. A., and Walvin, James, eds. *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*. N.Y., St. Martin's Press, 1987. Notes, index, \$29.95.

“Central to the evolution of the male image,” the editors of this evocative book of essays explain in their introduction, “was the Victorian ideal of

'manliness.' " From the opening page, the editors try to take hold of this elusive concept. Physical courage, chivalric ideals, virtuous fortitude, militarism, patriotism—all were attributes of manly men. The early Victorians seemed most concerned with good character, with such traits as earnestness, selflessness, maturity and integrity. By late in the nineteenth century, however, manliness had more to do with spartan virtues like stoicism, hardiness and endurance.

For anyone who ever thinks about masculinity—and it seems almost willfully narrow to study the rise of modern sports without thinking about it—the concept is both crucial for understanding Victorian culture, yet impossibly vague. Once attuned to it, the historian finds that it pops up everywhere in primary documents. To be called manly in the nineteenth century was high praise indeed, but exactly what it meant remains obscure from our vantage-point a hundred years later.

The work under review provides a start. While many of the authors of these essays are historians of sports, this book is not exclusively focused on athletics. Rather, it explores the context in which sports developed and were valorized. The concern with broad cultural issues is most impressive. More particularly, as the editors note in their introduction, this work is informed by the concerns of women's history and feminism, particularly the relationship of gender to ideology and power. Moreover, this collection deliberately tries to break through the provincialism of cultural history studied with undue regard for artificial political boundaries. The cult of manliness, in other words, was a trans-Atlantic phenomenon, and must be studied accordingly.

The intellectual ambitiousness of *Manliness and Morality* is refreshing. The execution of the individual essays, however, leaves something to be desired. They vary considerably in their sources, aims, and effectiveness. Let me at least give a sense of the topics covered.

Roberta Park opens up with a fine survey of the influence of modern biology on the athletic revolution of the nineteenth century, particularly the importance of medical doctors who articulated a connection between good character and physical health. E. Anthony Rotundo offers a typology of the varieties of Victorian manly ideals, including the masculine achiever, the Christian gentleman, and the masculine primitive. John Springhill gives us a fine-grained portrait of the failed attempt of middle-class Englishmen to proselytize working class boys with the notion of Christian manliness. Peter Stearns has written a fascinating account of the ambiguous role of anger in male identity; on the one hand, anger was a useful competitive trait, but on the other hand, good character demanded self-control.

Jeffrey Richards provides a fascinating overview of homoeroticism from classical times through the Victorian era, in which he cautions us against drawing facile conclusions from our own rigid notions of homo- and heterosexuality. Benjamin Rader's essay demonstrates the pervasiveness of turn-of-the-century theories of recapitulation (the history of the individual is a microcosm of the history of humankind), and how those theories were employed by

physical educators to support athletic programs in the name of key social values. J. A. Mangan gives us a fascinating contrast between the claims of the Victorian public schools, (fair-play, stiff upper lip, playing fields of Eton, and all that) and the reality of the brutalization of English youths in those institutions. The rise of Yale in the late nineteenth century to being the symbol of college athleticism is the theme of Robert Higgs' essay, and along the way he contrasts the tin-de-siècle achievement obsession with the transcendentalists' emphasis on wisdom and mysticism.

The final essays turn to themes of empire and of male voluntary organizations. John MacKenzie discusses images of hunters and pioneers and their place in British colonial rule. Allen Warren demonstrates how boys' organizations developed by Robert Baden-Powell were tied to particular assumptions of masculinity and the development of "manly" character. How Victorian ideas about manhood and the ideals of the American military came to coincide is the theme of Donald Mrozak's article. Finally, James Walvin links the British anti-slavery crusade with the cult of manliness and fair-play to argue that both became symbols of moral superiority for British culture that encouraged English arrogance toward other cultures.

Bringing together gender studies and sport studies-as *Manliness and Morality* implicitly does-is a rather new endeavor, and the editors are to be applauded. The approaches here vary considerably; the essays do not so much address each other as speak related monologues simultaneously. This is inevitable for work at such an early stage of development.

My hunch is that the concept of ideology will become increasingly important to this sort of history in the future. For example, the ties between British anti-slavery and athleticism may be even closer than James Walvin argues in the last essay, for both were deeply implicated in the *ideology* of equality. It is less important, as proponents of modernization theory would have it, that sports reflected "real" social equality, than that they propounded it, upheld it, declared it to be the ultimate social good. Equality, in this reading, was more important for its ideological charge than for its actuality or lack of actuality. Similarly, I suspect that future studies of masculinity will concentrate on its ideological role as a system of ideals that purports to describe reality, but that in fact buttresses systems of privilege and power.

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