

VOLUME XXIII, NUMBER 1, WINTER 2022/23

# CLAREMONT

REVIEW OF BOOKS

*A Journal of Political Thought and Statesmanship*

**ANDREW ROBERTS on**

**THE CHURCHILL OF THE MIDDLE EAST**



**William Voegeli:**  
*California Runs Dry*

**Helen Andrews:**  
*South Africa's Legacy*

**Michael Knowles:**  
*Spencer Klavan's  
How to Save the West*

**Michael Anton**  
**Mark Helprin:**  
*Debating Ukraine*

**Julius Krein:**  
*Up from Neoliberalism*

**Conrad Black:**  
*Remembering Paul Johnson*

**Diana Schaub:**  
*The Age of LGBTQ+*

**Christopher Caldwell:**  
*India's Uprising*

**Martha Bayles:**  
*TV's Yellowstone*



A Publication of the Claremont Institute

PRICE: \$9.95

IN CANADA: \$14.95

Essay by Diana Schaub

# AFTER MANLINESS

*The age of LGBTQIA.*



**H**ARVEY C. MANSFIELD'S 2006 BOOK, *Manliness*, was a response to the gender-neutral society. Bold, stark, no subtitle: simply *Manliness*. Seventeen years and several twists in the sexual revolution later, it is time to revisit his argument. Has gender-neutrality become so dominant that we must now banish the word "manliness" from our vocabulary? In keeping with the Harvard government professor's forthrightness, our theme is how manliness is faring under the contemporary regime of gender-neutrality. The first thing to note is that *under* is a position that manliness chafes against. It prefers to be over, above, on top, in command.

Curiously, despite the boldness of his title and his many provocations throughout, Mansfield does not call for the restoration of manliness to its former glory. He is, in the end, only a moderate defender of manliness. There are good reasons to doubt the goodness of manliness, prime among them its stubborn resistance to listening to good rea-

sons. There isn't, moreover, any actual dearth of manliness. Despite the cancelation of the word, Mansfield finds there is plenty of the thing itself among us—too much, in fact. What has happened is that manliness has been refashioned, through gender-neutral language, into "autonomy," "independence," and "transcendence"—and thereby brought within range of everyone.

As I argued in my *CRB* review at the time ("Man's Field," Spring 2006),

[i]n the past, manliness was characteristic of men, and not all men, but only a portion of them: the manly men. Manly men ruled, but they did not rule absolutely; they were kept in check by the unmanly, particularly by women and philosophers. Mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters let their sons, husbands, brothers, and fathers know when the courage and protective manliness on which women depended had crossed the line into rash-

ness or tyranny or male bull-headed idiocy. Whereas a woman spoke (or, more accurately, complained) only to the men in her domestic circle, the philosophers (being men themselves) abstracted from the personalism of women and generalized the critique. Socrates and Plato challenged Homer and the Homeric heroes; Aristotle sought to tame the militaristic manliness of the Greeks by pointing out that war should be pursued for the sake of peace. Both women and philosophers have traditionally been critics of manliness, but appreciative critics.

Or another way of saying the same thing, they have been, like Mansfield, modest defenders of manliness, aware that manliness as an element of human nature cannot be extinguished, and thus that a tempered and civilized version of it is necessary if only to defend against the unlimited, tyrannical variety. Without the heroic manliness of Volodymyr



Zelensky to inspire the Ukrainian people, the barbarism of bare-chested Vladimir Putin will triumph.

We can see the threat of extreme manliness in Putin, in Islamic terrorism, and in our homegrown disordered masculinity. According to the FBI, there are 33,000 active gangs in the United States. You can probably name a few: the Bloods, the Latin Kings, the Cosa Nostra. Male bonding can go seriously awry. But its absence is dangerous, too. In the news we find desperately alone and angry adolescent males who shoot up schools. Our politicians respond with calls to limit access to guns and increase access to mental health professionals. Their diagnosis, however, does not reach the spiritual crisis afflicting young males. As Friedrich Nietzsche predicted, thoroughgoing nihilists would rather will “nothingness” than not will. Driven by rage and resentment, they seek to annihilate the world.

This is one face of “autonomy.” But there are others. According to the genealogy that Mansfield traces, when manliness was driven underground and forced to assume various gender-neutral aliases it became noxious. In being separated from males and universalized, manliness slipped its always tenuous moral moorings. The heart of *Manliness* traces how traditional manly assertion was transformed

into manly nihilism (via Charles Darwin and Nietzsche) and in turn how manly nihilism was embraced by the woman warrior, Simone de Beauvoir, who refashioned it into radical feminism’s womanly nihilism.

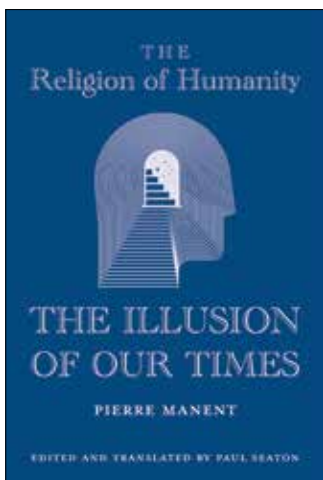
### Nietzsche in Drag

**R**ADICAL FEMINISM REMAINS WOMANLY in its methods, relying on the revaluation of values through “consciousness-raising” and a schoolmarmish control of language (especially pronouns) rather than violence, but its aim is to release women from their subordination to men by overcoming women’s enslavement to their own biology. For Beauvoir, women have historically been despicably mired in immanence and passivity. They must rise from immanence to transcendence, rejecting the falsity of essences (like the eternal feminine) for the freedom of creative self-definition. Radical feminism thus imitates and vindicates the Nietzschean overman (or *transman*) as the height of human striving. As Mansfield succinctly puts it, Beauvoir is Nietzsche in drag.

Because nihilism denies a human essence, it denies also the political and moral significance of the bifurcation of that human essence into male and female natures. When there is no sense of one’s own being and no

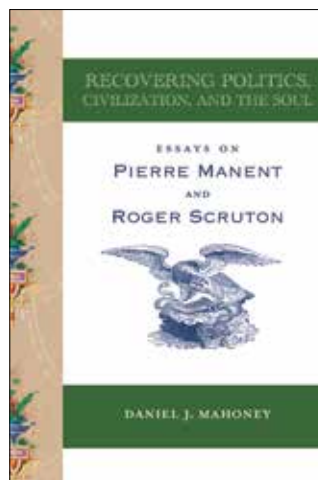
higher being or end for assertiveness to serve, then assertion itself becomes the be-all and end-all of human existence. Assertion runs riot. Manliness loses its protective, responsible, (dare we say with approval) “patriarchal” side. It becomes virulent rather than virtuous. Mansfield shows the dark side of the force at work, especially in its disguised modern forms, which include scientific nihilism as well as feminist nihilism.

Unlike the psychologists and neurologists who reductively study men in bits and pieces, Mansfield seeks to assemble and assess male nature as a coherent whole. Though academic studies of sex differences have documented certain traits in men, like aggression and spatial reasoning, almost no researcher has ever bothered to ask, “[H]ow is spatial ability in men related to their aggression?” Mansfield not only asks the question, he answers it, with a concise account of the deep link between aggression and abstraction, which are “two forms of being single-minded.” Mansfield, however, quickly transcends the realm of generic masculinity. He turns instead to poets and novelists as better guides than biologists and social scientists to the higher and more exclusive levels of manliness, where manliness is both more admirable and on occasion more shameful—as in the hot-blooded, honor-driven errors of *The Iliad*’s Ajax. Literature also



“Manent is arguably the most profound guide to this subversive ‘religion’ writing today... Paul Seaton is to be applauded for bringing [Manent’s principal work on this] together....”

DANIEL J. MAHONEY



“With sophisticated and profound scholarship, Daniel Mahoney deploys his elegant style to defend the soul of civilization.”

MARK DOOLEY, AUTHOR OF *CONVERSATIONS WITH ROGER SCRUTON*



[www.staugustine.net](http://www.staugustine.net)





teaches us about the civilized manliness of the gentleman. The very highest reach of manliness is visible in the courageous philosopher, whose inner freedom of mind is compatible with politic care for the salutary prejudices of ordinary life.

By the time his tour of manliness is complete, Mansfield has made the case for a properly circumscribed manliness, a manliness that would remain within the horizon of morality—a manliness attentive to the welfare of weaker and more vulnerable human beings, especially the weaker sex. With a frankness that he admits is ungentlemanly, Mansfield insists on women’s weakness. Returning manliness to these civilized bounds, however, will be difficult, because getting manliness to walk the line, Johnny-Cash style, depends greatly on how that weaker sex behaves. Mansfield agrees with Alexis de Tocqueville that it is women who establish the moral horizon through their privileged position in the domestic sphere.

Nonetheless, he does not endorse a return to the separate-spheres arrangement and the model of republican womanhood that Tocqueville (and before him Jean-Jacques Rousseau) had praised. In fact, he dismisses as reactionary the strict division of labor based on sexual complementarity (in which men and women, equally valued, are understood to have different natures, different virtues, and different responsibilities). Following John Stuart Mill (rather than Tocqueville), the contemporary world now understands sexual equality in the economic and individualistic terms of equal access to education and the professions. Mansfield does not call for any curtailment there. He does, however, envision some redrawing of the public/private distinction in American life. He suggests that we take advantage of the liberal distinction between state and society. In public and under the law, we should continue to insist on the liberal formality of gender neutrality, but in private there should be a more honest acknowledgment of gender differences—and yes, even the truth of age-old stereotypes. In sum: let us follow John Stuart Mill in public and Aristotle in private.

### A Divided Community

**A**FTER THAT QUICK OVERVIEW OF PROFESSOR Mansfield’s book, I’d like to make some observations about what has changed on the sex and gender front in the 17 years since *Manliness* was published, and then see whether its framework helps us understand what is happening now and where we might be headed.

Although the gay rights movement was already in full swing during the decade of the aughts, Mansfield chose to say very little about it. Nonetheless, I think one could conclude that the advent of same-sex marriage was a predictable extension of the gender-neutral society. If the sexual difference between men and women is to go unnoticed in the law, then soon enough the difference between heterosexuality and homosexuality will go unnoticed also. Of course, for individuals, the directionality of one’s *eros* matters intensely, but society at large no longer cares whether an individual is attracted to the same or the opposite sex. Thus, we have gay marriages, and gay divorces. We also have gay families. Yet honesty compels us to admit that each member of a gay family is the result of heterosexual congress. Egg and sperm must be conjoined somehow, if only at the level of the gametes in a petri dish. Because no same-sex pairing is capable of reproducing from within itself, the fundamental difference between heterosexuality and homosexuality remains. Aristotle’s

**There is a gay male  
subculture of female  
impersonators. Leave it  
to a man to think he  
can best a woman at her  
own game!**

definition of the household as requiring the conjoining of male and female for the sake of the future has not been invalidated.

It has been resolutely or manfully ignored, however, and the movement to overcome sexual differences has transitioned to new fields, as the increasingly unwieldy acronym LGBTQIA testifies. The central letter now is T for transgender. How did this come about? I suspect the path was blazed by the manly confidence of drag queens. There is a gay male subculture of female impersonators. Leave it to a man to think he can best a woman at her own game! This exaggerated femininity, all glitz and glam, is meant to deconstruct gender. It creates a campy parody of a woman. Some at least discovered that they weren’t playacting, that they wanted to cross the line permanently. Drag performances offered space to try out their new identity. This has occasioned something of a split within the alphabet soup community—the acronym LGBTQIA has always been more a record of divisions than a community. (Gay diva RuPaul initially

declared that transwomen were not welcome on his *Drag Race* reality show because, after all, they weren’t in drag if they were women rather than female impersonators.)

The trans movement represents an interesting shift—a shift, we might say, from *eros* to *thumos*. The movement used to be about “the love that dare not speak its name,” which is to say it concerned the status of an erotic orientation and the legal and social acceptability of such relationships. By contrast, the new issue is remarkably unerotic. It is about gender, but a gender identity stripped of connection to others and wretchedly self-involved. Perhaps it should not be surprising that the TQIA trajectory terminates with the letter A, which stands for a-sexual or a-romantic. This is not the richly embroidered scarlet letter of Hester Prynne’s adultery. Exactly how the wider world is denying rights or “visibility” to those who prefer their own company is a little unclear—maybe romantic comedies are a microaggression against them.

### Obsessed with the Body

**B**UT TO RETURN TO THOSE IN TRANSITION. “Trans” is the new incarnation of Beauvoir’s transcendence. The demand made on society for this specific class of persons is to be gender-affirming, not gender-neutral. This is somewhat at odds with another idea out there, symbolized by the Q of TQIA. Q stands for queer, and those who now embrace this erstwhile slur view gender as nonbinary. What is purely a matter of construction can be deconstructed at will. The “gender-queer” or gender-nonconforming encourage experimentation with various permutations of gender. There is an admission here that gender-neutrality, and attempts to raise non-stereotypical boys and girls, never made much headway. It seems that most people conform. They are “cis-gendered,” which is to say they dress and behave pretty much as one might expect based on the old stereotypes. Indeed, over the last couple of decades, the secondary sex characteristics have come back in fashion. Men have returned to facial hair in a big way—they may have to cultivate sensitivity, but they look like lumberjacks. And women, at least those who didn’t grow up in the 1970s, have returned to wearing dresses and long hair.

By contrast with the genderqueer, the transgender feel in their spirit or their bones or maybe just in their head that they are wrongly classed with the group whose biological apparatus they have mistakenly been saddled with. I guess there are rare genuine instances of such incongruity in nature’s intention. As Aristotle long ago pointed out,



nature wishes to do certain things that are not, however, always realized. Modern science is ready on the spot with drugs and surgeries to accomplish what used to be called “gender reassignment,” but which is now called “gender confirmation.” It might be of value to press on the gender essentialism of the transgendered by asking, “What is the essence of a woman such that one could be a woman in spirit though a man in form, or vice versa, a man in spirit though a woman in form? What are the qualities or the capacities or the virtues that one is seeking? Could one manifest those without a physical fix? Why does the physical matter so much, if one’s essence already is as one asserts it to be?”

It is a potent sign of the modern world’s materialism that both the transgendered and the genderqueer—both those who want to be more identifiably gendered and those who want to be more indeterminate or in-between—are so focused, not to say obsessed, with the body, its hormones, and its presentation. Despite our tendency to medicalize everything, there is a growing awareness, especially among parents, of the medical malfeasance at work in so readily confirming what might be a fad or a phase.

Decades ago, the transgendered were usually individuals born male. For some few, social and medical transition brought psychic harmony. The situation has changed dramatically of late, with a rash of girls deciding they are boys. Why? If they just want to do boy stuff, like play baseball and ditch the dolls, well, American parents have always given girls leeway to be tomboys. Indeed, girls used to have considerably more flexibility than did boys to be gender-nonconforming. Apparently, feminism and its offspring, the sexual revolution, have not improved girlhood in America. With no resources in religion or public opinion to resist the relentless reduction of everything to bodies, it’s no wonder that girls today have no idea what it might mean to be a woman, in any other sense than that presented by our hypersexualized culture. For pre-teen and teenage girls, transitioning is a fashionable way out of their

confusion and moral dilemmas. This is the destructive terminus of the deep misogyny behind radical feminism. Though Beauvoir called for transcendence rather than transitioning, transitioning is the effectual truth of her hatred of “the second sex.” Why remain in second place if one doesn’t have to?

### Transcendence

**T**HE TRANS PHENOMENON WILL NOT stop with transiting between Venus and Mars. Trans-humanism is now on the horizon. This is not the spiritualized version that Nietzsche hinted at. Today’s transhumanism focuses on the body and its reconfiguration. Take the mania for tattoos, piercings, and scarification, where the body is regarded as a canvas for idiosyncratic artistic re-creation. Tattooing might have been picked up originally by sailors visiting Polynesia, but theirs was an appropriation that left behind the cultural meaning of the form. In a tropical climate, with clothes at a minimum, tattoos replaced the language of clothing, indicating social hierarchies, replete with religious, genealogical, and tribal significance. Whatever one thinks about the body modification practices of warrior societies, today’s tattoo art is very different from traditional *tatau*. Not the least of the differences is the unbounded character of the desire for more tattoos once the art form was separated from the cultural requirement that tattoos had to be earned. This “ink addiction” is on display in full body tattoos: every inch of skin is inked, including the entire face (eyelids, lips), as well as the private parts of the body. In effect, the distinction between the public and private parts of the body disappears. Extreme tattooing is an attempt to deny human nakedness—to overwrite our original dispensation. It may be that the extreme version reveals something present in even the tiniest, most discreet tattoo: namely, the attempt to turn the body into a text, as if one’s skin were a living parchment capable of bearing a hieroglyphic message. The verdict of Hebraic law was that the practice was idolatrous: “Ye shall not make any cuttings in

your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I *am* the Lord” (Leviticus 19:28).

Even more radical (and less symbolic or logocentric) forms of body manipulation are being tried. The quest for ultimate “morphological freedom” is pushing well beyond the male/female divide. It takes two directions: either blurring the man/beast divide, or the man/machine divide. For instance, some trans-humans have their tongues split to be forked like a lizard’s. Some implant horns or tails. Meanwhile, would-be cyborgs have their own set of implants, from chips imbedded in the hand for keyless front door entry to LED lights surgically inserted under the skin in glowing patterns.

Unless we return to a more substantial notion of human nature, this mad quest for metamorphosis will continue. Mansfield reminds us that there is an alternative. There are forms of transcendence proper to us as embodied souls. There is, for instance, a way of transcending the sexual difference that begins by respecting it. If men are more likely to be courageous and women more likely to be moderate, and if marriage is a meeting of minds as well as bodies, then in that co-mingling, men and women—yes, the cis-gendered ones—can learn from one another. By coming to appreciate the qualities of the other, the virtues of each are modified and enlarged. This is the grown-togetherness achieved in long and successful marriages. Marriage is one model of transcendence. There is another kind of transcendence as well, possible for those who develop that smallest but most divine element within our being, and whose perception of the whole takes in its gendered nature while transcending gender bias. One thinks of novelists like George Eliot and Henry James, philosophers like Aristotle, and thinkers like Harvey C. Mansfield who do justice to the fullness of humanity.

*Diana Schaub is professor of political science at Loyola University Maryland and non-resident senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute. This essay is adapted from remarks delivered at “Harvey Mansfield at 90: A Conference on Major Themes of His Work,” hosted by the American Enterprise Institute on July 6, 2022.*



The CLAREMONT REVIEW OF BOOKS is a publication of the CLAREMONT INSTITUTE  
FOR THE STUDY OF STATESMANSHIP AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY.

Subscribe to  
the *Claremont Review of Books*

*“The Claremont Review of Books is an outstanding literary publication written by leading scholars and critics. It covers a wide range of topics in trenchant and decisive language, combining learning with wit, elegance, and judgment.”*

—Paul Johnson

Subscribe to the *CRB* today and save 25%  
off the newstand price. A one-year  
subscription is only \$19.95.

To begin receiving America’s premier  
conservative book review, visit  
[claremontreviewofbooks.com](http://claremontreviewofbooks.com)  
or call (909) 981 2200.

CLAREMONT  
REVIEW OF BOOKS

1317, W. FOOTHILL  
BLVD, SUITE 120,  
UPLAND, CA  
91786

NON PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT NO. 504  
UPLAND, CA