

The New Criterion

Features

May 2006

Is manliness obsolete?

by [James Piereson](#)

On *Manliness* by Harvey C. Mansfield.

Half the world cannot understand the pleasures of the other.

—Jane Austen, *Emma*

Both Homer's *Iliad* and the book of Genesis tell us that the battle between the sexes has been with us since the beginning of recorded time. As contemporary observers point out, however, the gender wars are something altogether new. Men and women through the ages accepted their differences as a fact of nature about which little could be done. Many celebrated those differences—*vive la différence*—while others accepted them with resignation. Few thought that sex differences could be abolished without upsetting the institutions of family, state, and religion that provided stability and continuity to society. The modern feminists, however, by launching the gender wars, sought to put an end to the age-old battle by treating those enduring differences as ...

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This article originally appeared in The New Criterion, Volume 24 May 2006, on page 10

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