

In modern societies, the inconsistent and contradictory complexes about manhood create structural difficulties for individuals and cultures. Mormon masculinity is a manhood in conflict. The stresses and strains from this tension between Mormon and national culture form the background for our everyday lives as members of the Church.

ON MORMON MASCULINITY

By David Knowlton

WHAT IS "MAN"? THIS DIFFICULT PHILOSOPHICAL question, with a minor transformation, lies close to every male's heart. What is a man? we men ask as we endlessly compare ourselves and others with the norms of masculinity. We learn to do this as young children and continue to ask and compare into adulthood. Men carry a secret fear that we might not meet the lofty and rigid standards of manhood set by our culture. In fact, some analysts suggest that American masculinity is currently in crisis precisely because of the complications of our insecurity and our relationship with our very complex society.¹

In an insistent beating of drums, groups of men gather around the country to explore their manhood and resolve the complexities of their inner fears in relation to our demanding society.² They create rituals to get in touch with what critic Robert Bly calls the "wild man within."³ This rich, poetic image invokes the ideal man that many feel is missing in our daily experience. Furthermore, they argue, our society lacks rites of passage that are necessary to transfer the knowledge and sense of masculinity from one generation to another.

Anthropologically, these gatherings of men suggest that the traditional discourses of masculinity no longer work so easily to justify and explain men's roles in society vis à vis each other and women. Bly and his fellows create ritual almost *ex nihilo* in order to justify their changed relationship to themselves and to traditional discourses of masculinity. To do this they draw on our heritage of myth, poetry, and the anthropological concept of rites of passage. But they misdiagnose their modern situation as the lack of validating ritual instead of the result of the shifting and changing gender relations in a complex society of multiple and contradictory discourses and roles.

We live chaotically in our modern American society. In her beautifully titled book, *Composing a Life*, Mary Catherine Bateson writes:

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In a stable society, composing a life is somewhat like throwing a pot or building a house in a traditional form: the materials are known, the hands move skillfully in tasks familiar from thousands of performances, the fit of the completed whole in the common life is understood. . . . Today, the materials and skills from which life is composed are no longer clear. It is no longer possible to follow the paths of previous generations. . . . Our lives not only take new directions; they are subject to repeated redirection. . . . Just as the design of a building or vase must be rethought when the scale is changed, so must the design of our lives. Many of the basic concepts we use to construct a sense of self or the design of a life have changed their meanings: Work; Home; Love; Commitment. . . .⁴

To this list we might add "Man" and "Woman," concepts that give us our core sense of ourselves as gendered beings. Yet even as they change, we still interact with the emotively strong residue of their former meanings. Furthermore, various groups within society stridently contest what the meanings should be and how they should relate to each other. To expand upon Bateson's analogy, we now have to improvise our very sense of ourselves. And unlike a successful jazz improvisation, where the players already know the basic harmonic structure and the rhythmic form, we must improvise ourselves without a trustworthy knowledge of structure or form and in constant dissonance with ourselves and the ensemble around us.

In short, "life is an improvisatory art."⁵ But in our currently conflicted society, we improvise like a group of artists from widely variant cultures who do not even share a common definition of music. As we play our living riffs, we offend others and at times even ourselves. We do not even clearly know when we perform dissonance or assonance. We desperately create a cacophony of melodies in the hope that some structure will arise in their overlapping sounds and that some audience will appreciate our efforts.

Gender has become a strident issue in academics as well as in politics and religion.⁶ Feminist writing has justifiably sensitized us to the social creation of gender and to the way power and inequality mobilize themselves around it. Within anthro-

pology, feminist scholarship reacted against the “androcentric” bias of traditional work. It assumed that the male perspective simply was the society’s point of view.⁷ Unfortunately, too often we hold that this “male-centered” body of research adequately describes the masculinity and therefore little more research need be done.

I disagree. We should reconsider masculinity using the textured advances of feminist theory to explore the nuances of gender within society, asking: What does it mean to be a biological male who is socialized in varying ways into roles of maleness? How do people learn to function in gender-specific ways and learn to interrelate with other people in terms of their gender? How are multiple understandings of gender created within our society, and how do they interrelate with powerful social institutions like religious and political blocs? How are we as individuals invoked by our society? How is our personality sedimented as we interact with our parents, siblings, friends, social organizations—like schools, businesses, and churches—and our culture? Finally, we should explore the relationship between the world’s assortment of masculinities and femininities and our own society’s dominant representations of gender.⁸

We should never assume there is only one discourse about maleness in a society, nor that manhood is a simple biological fact; being a male and being a man are not the same thing.⁹ Granted, we all have either X or Y chromosomes, but their presence does not guarantee that we will be socialized or act in ways our society considers appropriate for the social roles of men or women. In fact, not all societies understand gender as a binary set. Some cultures mobilize their biological resources so differently as to create gendered beings who are neither men nor women. A classic example is the Native American Berdache, who, although biologically either male or female, dress and live as members of the other category. They are the womanly man or the manly woman. Because of their middle position, because they do not stand wholly at either of the poles, they often have a spiritual power greatly valued in their societies.¹⁰ As individuals who stand betwixt and between, they can be shamans able to mediate between spiritual and earthly domains.¹¹

While the technical structural analysis of these median genders can quickly become rather dense, it is important to note the common relationship between them and religion, spirituality, and healing. Notions of gender frequently are anchored in a people’s cosmology where their permanence is a guarantee for the stability of the universe and society. Hence, any challenge to gender roles will provoke a strong and often preemptive counterattack to prevent the apparent slippage from the base on which the heavens and the earth seem to rest.

Mary Douglas indicates that societies frequently attempt to remove their basic organizing categories from argument or consideration.¹² By a cultural sleight of hand, they hide from themselves the contingency, arbitrariness, and social creation of social order. They do this by locating their core categories in a divine or natural ordering of the universe. Thus the categories become untouchable first principles. For example, with

our Victorian understanding of the scriptures, we often absolutistly argue that “Male and Female created He them,” placing the creation of Gender by God beyond human questioning (Genesis 1:27). Anthropologist Clifford Geertz further argues that even our notion of “common sense” is a culturally created category that similarly attempts to disguise itself as universal and thus unarguable.¹³ If different societies did not hide different things from themselves by this means, thus affording cross-cultural comparisons, we would be locked within the categories of our own society and could never raise them for disquisition.

THE FRAGILE CODE OF MANHOOD

I N his recent book, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity*, anthropologist David Gilmore considers the various ways by which masculinity is constructed in cultures around the world. Though he relates masculinity to the material conditions of life, he asks further if there is anything universal in its construction. With a few exceptions, Gilmore contends that most societies create masculinity as an “elaborated code.”¹⁴ Manhood rarely develops unproblematically from biology; rather, it is a creation formed in opposition to a male-based discourse about womanness. Men, Gilmore argues, see femininity as a more basic and natural human code from which manliness must be built.

This argument is rather fun, since, ironically, feminists formed their thought in opposition to androcentrism; yet here men seem to react against a womanness that they see as the basic human condition. In English, we traditionally use the term “men” as the modal form of humanity; “man” is synonymous with human being. Yet according to Gilmore, at a deep level around the world, men understand “woman” as a synonym for human being and “man” must be developed from this in an active process. Feminists would probably argue that “womanhood” is also an elaborated code that is developed in opposition to other discursive positions (such as manhood), but that argument does not contest Gilmore’s point. He does not claim that woman is somehow inherently basic, but that men invoke her, naturalize her, and sacralize her in their creation of themselves.

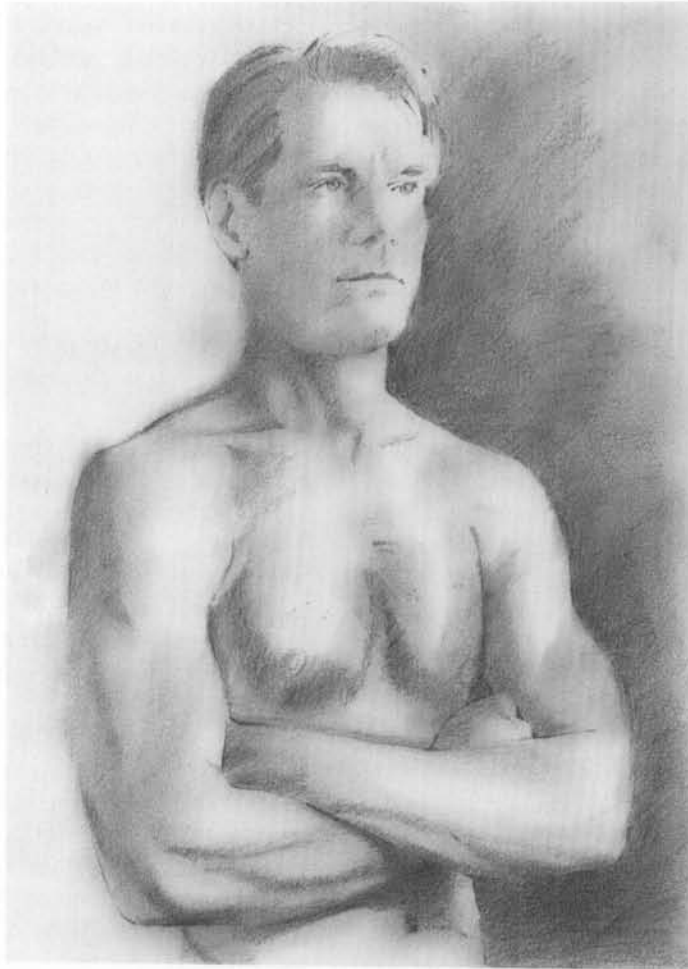
For example, while in Chile one Saturday last August, I was flying from Santiago to Arica. During the flight most of the people wandered around chatting with friends and strangers in constantly reforming groups. They would talk, play cards, talk some more, drink, and continue to talk. Suddenly a child of about two-and-a-half started crying. His father, who was watching him, tried to calm his son by holding him, rocking him, and gently cooing to him. Finally the father became frustrated and held the child out and said, “¡No seas mujer!” He ordered him to not be a woman, which meant not to cry. In this interaction, the father was teaching the boy that to be a man, he had to not be a woman. Womanness was the more basic level in reference from which he should build a positive masculinity.

Few who have grown up in Western American culture

would find this idea strange. American men learn quickly the correct way they should hold themselves, cross their legs, walk, and even talk. We become paranoid that our wrists might drop, that we might slink or even lisp. We worry about these things, lest we be accused of being effeminate. This is not womanness in any empirical sense, but is instead a male discourse, a masculine invocation of things that men define as womanly in order to react against them.

Gilmore further notes that masculinity requires constant public display, performance, and acceptance. Men in cultures around the world try to demonstrate to others how much they exemplify the norm of masculinity; they show how manly they are. The proof of their masculinity, however, does not depend on an internal sense of self, but rather on a public validation of their manliness. Hence, the status of being a man is never guaranteed; it requires constant external affirmation. One is only as much a man as one's last male act.

Manhood therefore contains an inherent insecurity. At any time, no matter how manly you think yourself, you could fail in a public performance. You would lose your manliness with its implied public respect and return to the more basic yet stigmatized position of an effeminate male. Maleness, therefore, includes a deeply rooted fear of regression back to what men have defined as a womanly state. To avoid this, societies establish rituals and practices of public display to ensure their men ample opportunity to prove over and over again that they are men. Should a male deviate from the optimum, the normative, or fail in a public display, then he stands accused of regression. Like the Chilean boy, other men warn and counsel him by saying, "don't be a woman!" Male discourse contains many insults and epithets to describe such pariahs who have not succeeded in their maleness. Importantly, every man has internalized the manly voice that stands in continual judgment of his performance.



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However, a more important regression develops in the early stages of children's psychic development when they develop a sense of themselves and others as persons and erotic objects. Robert Stoller writes:

The boy . . . must first separate his identity from hers [his mother's]. Thus the whole process of becoming masculine is at risk in the little boy from the day of his birth on; his still-to-be-created masculinity is endangered by the primary, profound, primeval oneness with mother, a blissful experience that serves, buried but active in the core of one's identity, as a focus which, throughout life, can attract one to regress back to that primitive oneness. That is the threat latent to masculinity.¹⁶

In New Guinea, and elsewhere, society does not leave this problem of separation and individuation entirely to the mother/son pair.¹⁷ Rather, the society intervenes to socially exorcise fears that boys or men might return to their primeval bliss of oneness with their mothers. At a certain age, boys are actively moved from the

women's social domain to a men's house where they ritually and socially absorb maleness. Among the Sambia of New Guinea, this takes the form of temporary, ritual homosexuality, where boys fellate older adolescents in order to drink "men's milk." Once they marry, they return to women's houses, but are now appropriately socialized men and fathers. (Very few of them are reported to continue practicing homosexuality.)¹⁸ Thus, on top of the various aspects of the oedipal conflict, with its castration anxieties, to ensure their son's appropriate individuation and socialization as men, the Sambia developed rituals to further stress and inculcate manhood.

When men fail to obtain public acceptance in their displays of manhood, the threat of the first regression—sissiness—probably makes them fear the second regression—the loss of self in the return to that primitive oneness with mother. We

speak glibly that “sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me.” But when someone affronts a boy by accusing him of effeminacy, the psychic pain is often greater than that inflicted by sticks and stones. It wounds his sense of self as an individual human being and even threatens him with dissolution of self. This connection between the cultural complex of “regression” to a less prestigious status and the psychological fears of regression to a state of nonseparation from the mother, with implied loss of self, anchors the socio-cultural dynamics of masculinity deeply within the powerful psychic processes of individuation. It gives the culture an energy and intensity it otherwise would lack.

Thus the status of man exists in two junctures: (1) between public affirmation or disgrace and internal approval or shame and (2) between cultural complexes and intense psychodynamic fears. This status requires that other people watch its performance and applaud its skill, yet its potentially harshest critic lives inside any man where his culture interacts with his sense of self, his soul.

THE PLIGHT OF MODERN MAN

THIS precarious status of man is only a minor problem in the stable societies inhabited by Bateson’s potters where there is little ambiguity in the proscribed gender roles. In our complex societies where we improvise our self-identity amongst contradictory and conflicting definitions and rituals of manhood, the maintenance of manhood becomes a difficult problem. We do not agree on what constitutes an acceptable performance and demonstration of manliness that we can unproblematically acclaim and reward. One person’s rituals of display are another person’s provocation of disgust. Since we are socialized with so many strident voices, it is not easy to obtain equivalence and security among, or even within, ourselves. We are constantly improvising our gender roles and performances, and thus we are not able to proclaim, without dissent, our masculinity. Constantly we hear voices criticizing us. Even if they do not openly accuse us of regression, we often hear their critiques as proclamations of our sissiness to which we must respond. They resonate deeply within us, where they often trigger deeper psychological fears of loss, not only of masculinity, but of our very sense of ourselves. Thus we must respond to affirm our masculinity.

By beating drums, creating rituals of manly self-validation, and by finding the “wild man” within, these gathered men try to silence the social and private fears of regression that stem from our chaotic complexity. Their daily improvisations raise too much dissonance, and they need assurance about a fundamental aspect of themselves: their manhood. Since assurance requires ultimately some public affirmation, they find temporary solace in their collective ritual making. They further calm, for awhile, their troubled psyches. But their activities, as I understand them, do not begin to address the roots of their malaise, which lie deeply entwined in our society’s stridently conflicted discourses of gender.

There is probably a class basis to this phenomena. Different

ideas of manhood aggregate in terms of our hierarchy of social classes. Working-class men probably do not hold the same ideas of what constitutes manliness as do upper-middle class businessmen. This would mean that they experience different degrees of conflict about their manhood and different challenges to it. Since contradicting critiques of gender seem to be a peculiarly middle and upper-middle class phenomenon, it would not surprise me if the gatherings of men draw people primarily from these social strata.

MORMON AND AMERICAN CONCEPTS OF MASCULINITY

FURTHERMORE, divergent discourses of manhood are propagated in different institutions of society. The LDS church and its society emphasizes and sacralizes the creation of our lives during our mortal probation. We are supposed to be potters, using the material and forms of the gospel to throw the beautiful and delicate pots that create our salvation. The ostensible purpose of our church is to aid us in that task, provide guidance, and encourage us to give priority to its artistic forms rather than to the chaotic voices of our external world. The Church also prompts us to strengthen the artistic capabilities of our fellow potters.

Yet, Mormons do not improvise their lives solely within the Church and solely with its forms. We study in American schools, watch television, read books, work in secular offices, and interact with non-LDS colleagues. All of these voices suggest to us alternate ways of organizing our masculine forms and styles. We internalize portions of these voices as we grow up and interact with them throughout our lives, both inside ourselves and in our broader social intercourse. Since the Saints lost Deseret, we have not had the privilege of creating our society in a vacuum, where Mormonism could establish the stable environment of Bateson’s potters so we could easily mold our lives solely in Mormon ways.

But since Mormons no longer live in isolation (if we ever did), we now organize ourselves in opposition to and in acquiescence with the larger national society that hosts us. We learn to be Mormons and Americans simultaneously. Our Mormon culture establishes points of disagreement and difference that function as boundaries, means by which we distinguish and justify ourselves as a “separate” society. Nevertheless, we are not totally separate and distinct. As a result, we participate in and accept most of American culture, even when it may contradict various Mormon mores. We do this without completely realizing that fact because these areas of conflict are not boundary issues we have consciously chosen for the building of opposition, difference, and self definition.

Not surprisingly, Mormonism does focus tremendous attention on gender and sexuality. To become Gods—i.e., to attain exaltation—Mormon thought requires that man and woman be united through marriage. The roles of each seem established according to divine fiat. As a result we segregate the genders at an early age in their church activities in order to teach them things specific to their particular gender. Mormonism attempts

to inculcate both genders with roles and ideologies that oppose some problematic aspects of our modern national culture and that accept other aspects. An important part of American discourse about masculinity, one that Mormons learn from popular culture and in school, not to mention from their Church experience, requires a man to perform in ways that are the opposite of Mormon ideals.

Of course, it is difficult to say with precision that there is a single, dominant American discourse about masculinity. Too often we discuss issues like men and society by relying on an almost absurd simplification of terms. We speak as if a society were a unified, bounded entity capable of having any view at all, let alone a single consistent position. And though there are many American discourses on masculinity—including Mormonism's—yet there are a number of common themes that infuse our minds because we have all learned about and interact with the stereotype they comprise, even if it is not the only voice to which we listen.¹⁹

We find these themes in American movies, television, and literature, places where heightened, limited images and values are reflected back to the diverse models. Some psychoanalysts argue that within each of us are similar idealized images of the "man." Guy Corneau writes, "As I explored the theme of masculine identity with a group of men, it became apparent to me that each one of us was grappling with a model of masculinity that he could not live up to. This model consisted of an ideal image that oppressed us from within—an unconscious image that we tried to respond to without being aware of doing so."²⁰ Corneau argues that there is a relationship between these internalized images and popular culture and he notes that "these images



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exert a great amount of pressure on a child's unconscious. They will take the forms of mythic characters such as Superman, Rambo, and the Incredible Hulk."²¹

These kinds of images exemplify an ideal masculine complex that to some degree both molds a male's sensibilities and serves as the measure for his self-evaluation. We might summarize this North American complex as including values of independence, strength, power, potency, aggression, competition, hard work, self-sacrifice, being in control of difficult situations, athleticism, success, and emotional solidity and control.²² This complex further involves notions of sexual performance—the fact that none of Corneau's "archetypal" superheroes are involved sexually suggests a fundamental male ambivalence about sex. Nevertheless, sexual conquest and performance are important measures of manhood, particularly American manhood.

In contrast to the American complex of masculinity, the Church attempts to create a different image of a "man" for us to internalize. Although Mormonism embraces significant aspects of the national complex, it is also different in critical ways. Mormons value a man who is spiritual. In fact, Church position, a measure of spirituality, also becomes a gauge of manhood. Mormonism praises the man who is able to shed tears as a manifestation of spirituality. Instead of independence and aggression, it values the collegial man who operates within the domain of the Church in a non-contentious, cooperative fashion. It focuses on manhood as self-sacrificing service to family, church, and others. The man is expected to be deeply involved in the family, perhaps even in a nurturing role. Official Mormonism does not allow for a sexual double standard; men are expected

to be chaste until marriage, and then only to be sexual with their spouses. It stresses restrained and controlled sexuality. Additionally, it values, at least officially, a limited kind of male bonding between companions, and within quorums and presidencies. Here, such male bonding is positively sanctioned to build, and express with emotion, love for one another at appropriate times.

Since these themes only partially express national culture, Mormonism seeks to create a strong positive discourse of maleness linked with religion. It attempts to give these attributes such positive strength that they will have priority in our lives over the contrasting American values to which we are also socialized. Therefore within priesthood meetings, Scouting, etc., we find tremendous attention given to exhorting men to dedicate themselves to the Church as a true show of manliness. We cultivate admiration for the prophets and other cultural heroes as true men. Male rites of passage become heavily ritualized. Furthermore, the male who does not follow these norms becomes the subject of criticism and negative sanction, as we can see in the recent scathing talks about single men and about priesthood holders who violate their covenants by abusing their wives and children.²³ In some central ways, Mormonism is a religion obsessed with masculinity, as shown in its attempts to socialize its youth into the yoke of priesthood obligations and responsibilities and to keep its men on the straight and narrow path as they push and pull the handcart of the Church.

This model and program of manhood reveals the structural tension that forms the Church and that lies in the heart of every Mormon man. Traditionally, religion is more the domain of women than of men. If we look, for example, at Latin American Catholicism, men commonly expect to attend church four times in their life: christening, first communion, marriage, and death. Yet women are expected to attend more consistently and to be more involved. The men emphasize their Catholicism in very different ways than do the women, and attending church is not part of their definition of self. We Latter-day Saints recognize this male tendency in our over emphasis on men. We speak as if women were somehow more naturally spiritual than men, thereby acknowledging our structural problem of masculinizing what both we and national society see as a feminine domain par excellence. Not only does this tension exist in the relationship between the Church and the external world, but it also lives within our individual psyches. If we did not simultaneously belong to American and Mormon culture, this duality would not be a significant difficulty. If we could simply mold our lives in terms of Mormon traditions, our culture would connect less problematically with our psyches. Yet this dual existence significantly explains much of modern Mormon practice and belief.

As boys grow up, they sing songs over and over again like "I Hope They Call Me on a Mission," as if there were any serious doubt about any "worthy," willing male being called. Although the song stresses that God must make the determination about whether to call a young man to serve a mission, the greater difficulty is whether the youth will even want to

serve or will be that closely socialized into the Church, given the alternative non-Mormon directions encoded in the discourses of masculinity he hears.

To guarantee male commitment to the Church, we develop a strong series of rites of passage to move them from one age-group to another without occasion to contemplate alternate discourses. We do not, even now, focus quite as much effort into socializing our young women, since we traditionally do not see their relations to the Church as so problematic (although that is slightly changing with the drop in young women's activity). The boys move, en masse, into Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, priesthood (deacons, teachers, priests), and then many actually go on missions. Preparing for and serving a mission brings the youth great prestige within the Mormon community. They are told over and over that these will be the best two years of their lives, that they will spend the rest of their lives reflecting on their experiences, and will have a store of narratives to share on appropriate occasions. In many ways, the mission, with its separation, institutionalized hazing (the Missionary Training Center), change of status, and ultimately reincorporation, is the price of admission to the Mormon "Good Old Boys" club.

Finally, the Mormon youth is pressured to get married shortly after his mission. He thereby plays the role of "patriarch" in his own small family and begins a lifetime of Church service. All this happens so quickly that it almost leaves the young man's head spinning. It occurs before he has time to seriously consider the different options of life and before he can easily make too many alternative choices. The Church and its members heap plenty of negative sanctions on any young man who fails, at any step, to follow the established pattern. I would expect that many of them are socialized out of the Church, in part through active ostracization.

SEX AND THE MORMON MAN

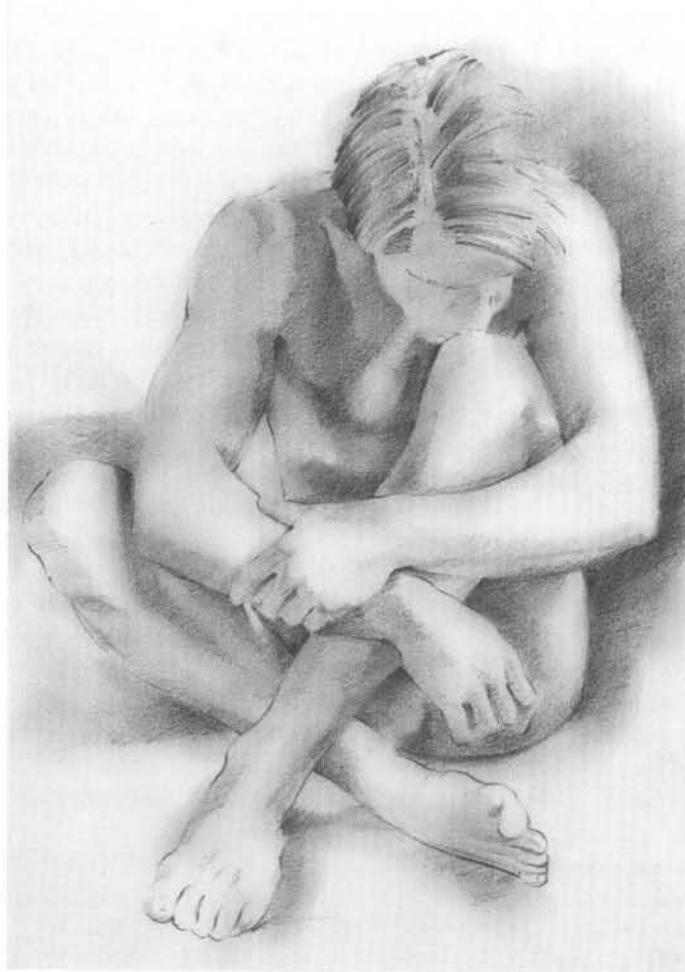
AT the heart of both American and Mormon notions of masculinity reside somewhat opposing notions of sexuality. They share the idea that "sexual performance is closely associated with the state of being manly."²⁴ They further relate male sexuality and gender with power, although they differ significantly in the particulars. Arthur Brittan writes:

Male sexuality is construed as autonomous, adventurous, and exploratory. Of course the real is far different from the image. Very few men are sexual athletes who can meet the Hollywood performance requirements popularized by Clint Eastwood and Burt Lancaster. . . . But . . . this view of uncontrollable sexuality . . . is part and parcel of the mythology of everyday life. One can hear its main assumptions repeated in countless sites of male aggregation, such as pubs, rugby and football changing rooms, factory canteens, senior common rooms, working men's clubs, the House of Commons, board rooms, in fact everywhere men congregate away from women. Both experts and laymen participate in the elaboration and refinement

of this myth, by the never ceasing narratives about male sexual prowess and adventure. In early adolescence boys learn the language of sexual objectification in the context of a climate of dirty jokes, and through stories of their peers' sexual exploits. Everywhere men are surrounded by images of male virility, everywhere sexual representations are suffused with the power of the phallus. . . .²⁵

It should not surprise us, therefore, that we unconsciously symbolize this in the Church office building. It rises, like a powerful, towering phallus, from a nest of two smaller, rounder buildings. Although this association suggests an unreflected and unproblematic relationship among masculinity, Church authority, and sexuality, in reality we find crucial structural tensions right in the middle of this powerful biological drive connected with our sense of ourselves as men and our relationship with Church authority.

Despite the American focus on aggressive sexuality as an index of manhood, the Church stresses over and over, from the time we are boys and through our adult life, that we must repress our libido. In adolescence we learn of the dangers of "the little factory" within our bodies. We are interviewed by our authorities and often questioned directly about whether we masturbate, a practice indulged in by almost all American males and about which many adolescents brag as a sign of their movement from childhood to adulthood. We learn to feel guilty and troubled about our sexual drives. We hear stories about people, particularly missionaries, who have been excommunicated because they had sex. Over and over our leaders preach about the dangers of kissing and petting, all the



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and raising a family we fulfill an important criterion for admission into the celestial kingdom. Sexuality is powerful; it mobilizes our internal psychology. It can define us further as good Mormon men or cause us to lose our salvation. It thereby is a symbol of belonging or excision as motivated by Church authority.²⁷ It represents the degree to which we hold to Church teachings and to which we accept the power of our

while these activities have a tremendous allure in national culture. As adults we learn and fear the sudden death aspect of "improper" sex since it will trigger Church authorities to punish us, possibly cutting us off from the body of the Church and from our families and friends. We learn to feel ambivalent about our penises. The penis is a symbol of male power and our own masculinity, yet it can fail us in sex, and it can cause us to be ostracized from the kingdom.

When the character in Levi Peterson's *The Backslider* feels such sexual guilt and anxiety that he amputates his organ, we intuitively understand his action even though it strikes at the very root of our identity as men.²⁶ At some deep level of our consciousness the scripture—that says, "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell"—resonates (Matthew 5:30). As we seek the purity and spirituality desired by the gospel, we enter into powerful conflict with our libidos and our sense of manhood, given the way national discourse formulates it. Mormonism exacerbates this conflict with its focus on sexuality as the major defining criterion of purity. But our penises and sexuality also become means by which we obtain salvation, in the sense that by marrying

leaders. As a result, we organize anxiety, fear, faith, and hope around our penises, our libidos, and our sense of ourselves as gendered and religious beings.²⁸

Our relationship with American society worsens this tension by adding another conflict to it. Gilmore writes:

“We will recall how early in a boy’s development performance is sexually identified as masculine. His penis is a performing organ. It marks a boy for masculinity and associates him with performance.” American boys are also tested in this respect, but differently [from New Guinea boys]—by gossip and innuendo on the playingfield or locker room rather than by public village mockery. Performance anxiety about sex is as great among the Mehinaku or Andalusians, for much the same reasons of social status; and both impotence and incompetence are widely feared as negations of manhood and a simultaneous loss of social esteem.²⁹

Sexual performance becomes one of the central competitive tests by which American men learn and prove their masculinity. Mormon boys, given the Church’s insistence, learn to either meet the demands of their peers and suffer potential shame within the Church, or to comply with the Church and risk intense shaming and severe accusations of sissiness or worse from their peers. They internalize this tension in ways that make it an important part, not only of the structural relationship between the Church and national society, but also of the psychodynamics of Mormon men in general.

Here is a summary of my arguments:

1. In early childhood, boys separate themselves from their primary identification with their mothers. They develop thereby their sense of selves as individuals different from their mothers, i.e., as individuals and gendered beings. The regression to that primal state strongly threatens men with a dissolution of self.
2. Society and culture create practices and discourses that form “men” against an image of the effeminate male, i.e., one who has regressed.
3. Part of the social formation of manhood involves the channeling of the libido in public ways that demonstrates one’s manliness. Thus culture once again anchors itself in powerful psychodynamics.
4. This requirement to demonstrate one’s manliness is problematic only to the degree that there are individual miscues in socialization or in the psychological formation of individuals. But when there are multiple and contradictory or changing complexes of masculinity, serious difficulties arise because of its connection with deep processes of the self. When people are torn between multiple ways of validating their manliness, they also feel strongly threatened with the dissolution of self. This provokes considerable fright and anguish and requires some sort of response.
5. The Mormon complex of masculinity accepts some aspects of the American national discourse about masculinity, but varies significantly in others.
6. Therefore, American Mormon men probably have within

themselves a masculine identity in conflict with itself. They internalize both the national and the Mormon norms and connect them with their libido and their early individuation. At times, either the Mormon or the American forms can threaten them with both social as well as psychic regression, i.e., effeminacy and loss of self.

7. So the Mormon culture attempts to shore up its men’s conflicted identities, to guarantee them priority against that of the “world,” and to minimize conflict, both within the Church and in the hearts and souls of its men. Nevertheless, this shoring up is doomed to partial failure as long as the barriers between it and the national society are not absolutely closed.

From this summary we can envision a number of consequences. First, we expect that men will attempt to masculinize the religious domain so that it will reflect back to them supports and props for the performance of their masculinity. Thus the Church’s beliefs and practices will emphasize male experience, rites of passage from childhood to manhood, and will celebrate its version of masculinity in order to grant it the strength and priority that come from association with the divine. Like the Sambia of New Guinea, the Church will provide ample ways for their boys to metaphorically ingest male milk in order that they become thoroughly and appropriately masculinized within the religious domain.

MORMON MEN AND MORMON WOMEN

THE Church does indeed emphasize male experience and, in the last century or so, has further limited women’s position within the Church to more completely present a panorama of exalted masculinity in its leadership and worship. As we have seen, the rites of passage for men are more thoroughly and completely ritualized than those for women. Further, men have a ranked hierarchy in the priesthood and in the range of callings available to them that allow for ample testing and display of their Mormon manhood. Our church affords women few of these possibilities.

Christianity contains two possibilities for understanding priesthood and leadership, which can either be seen as connected or opposed. First, we could emphasize the Good Shepherd, who nurtures and cares for his flock, in somewhat androgenous ways. Second, we could see our leaders as authority figures who in their emotional distance must be obeyed at all costs. We choose to focus on the latter, in part, as a means of reinforcing the masculinity of our religious leaders and ourselves.³⁰

Similarly, we can expect this situation to be reflected in the heavens. Mormons avoid the androgenous imagery of Christ as a somewhat effeminate nurturer and mediator between us and the heavens. Rather, we focus on the Christ ascendant, as “man” the conqueror. The classical sociologist Emile Durkheim argued that a society’s notion of God is a projection of itself onto the heavens.³¹ Since we emphasize the development and maintenance of manhood in our earthly practice, it

follows that we would also emphasize the masculine in the heavens.

Interestingly, Mormonism has an insurgent doctrine of a Mother in Heaven, a female deity. However she is relatively underdeveloped and dismissed in formal Mormon theology, as we would expect given this argument. Furthermore, it will be very difficult for her to be further accepted by the official Church because she implies a threat, not so much to the Father in Heaven but to the individual Mormon male's sense of self as man. She challenges implicitly the means of resolving the structural tension inherent between Mormon and North American masculinity.³²

Additionally, we can expect significant tensions to appear between men and women within Mormon society. According to Gilmore and other analysts, the way cultures and societies around the globe construct masculinity leads inherently to anxiety. Masculinity is a somewhat fragile discourse that requires constant performance and validation and is linked with deep psychic fears of regression and feelings of loss. Women are not only appropriated by masculine ideology as a base from which to construct manhood, they also form a proving ground on which manhood can be demonstrated, but which also can thereby challenge or threaten it. The structural conflict between Mormon and national society ensures that the early anxieties of regression become connected with the structural insecurities of Mormon manhood. Women not only represent the early male fears of regression and loss of self, but they further suggest to Mormon men, who are following the national norms internalized within them, the possibility that they are not as solidly "men" as the national image requires. Women also represent to men their own potential impotency, both spiritual and physical, as exacerbated by their attempts to



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As Mormon men seek the purity and spirituality desired by the gospel, they enter into powerful conflict with their libidos and their sense of manhood, given the way national discourse formulates it. Mormonism exacerbates this conflict with its focus on sexuality as the major defining criterion.

already exist.

I would expect this fear of women to manifest itself in a relatively high level of tension and distance between Mormon men and women, compared with other, less deviant, national cultures. I would also anticipate that variants of the "vagina dentata" theme—the devouring woman—would occur in the stories men tell each other. For example, as a young man I heard a story about a young missionary in Australia who had to get up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom. He left his companion sleeping to go to the outhouse. On his return he met his landlady, clad in a robe, also on her way to the outhouse. They stopped to converse. Soon her robe fell open, and they ended up in bed together. The next day, the poor fellow was excommunicated and sent home to Utah in absolute disgrace. He was shamed in his neighborhood and never returned to full fellowship. The woman on the outhouse path had devoured his membership in the Church and kept him from completing the rite of passage leading to full Mormon manhood. She took his manhood.³³

In a similar vein, I have been told that at BYU it is important to avoid even the appearance of evil, that it leads to the possibility of temptation. Thus, many men, when they find themselves suddenly standing in a rainstorm, feel better letting

repress and control their libidos. Simply put, Mormon women represent to Mormon men a threat of emasculation.

When this basic internal question of one's masculinity is combined with the structural tensions inherent in the location of Mormon men within American society, the relationship between Mormon men and women becomes potentially problematic. The extent of the problem depends on the degree to which personal factors, such as the nature of the family in which the boy was raised, exacerbate the tensions that

themselves get drenched than accepting a ride from a woman. The ride might be the roller coaster tossing them out of the Church and eliminating their manhood.³⁴ While these stories describe extra-familial interactions, I would not be surprised to find similar fears and anxieties, with their concomitant passive-aggressive behavior patterns, within Mormon households between husbands and wives.

D. H. Lawrence describes similar male fears of women in his fiction. His Victorian England is uncannily similar to Mormon Utah in many ways. For example, *Women in Love* is suffused with the concern of masculine loss of self and disintegration as expressed in the theme of dominance and submission and the relationship of women with death. Psychoanalyst Nadia Ramzy argues that the root of the book is Lawrence's profound feminine identification (ultimately Lawrence's relation with his strong-willed mother) that lead to his "intense wish for and fear of true intimacy with a woman and his need to maintain a homosexual bond to balance his fear of the wish for and the dread of merger or death in the intimacy with a woman."³⁵ Furthermore, Lawrence's women seem to kill men, as we see in his perception of the similarity between his parents' relationship and Berkin's parents in *Women in Love*.³⁶ "Involvement with a woman," Lawrence seems to argue, "involves the risk of death, the loss of self, the soul."³⁷

Ramzy further writes:

Modern day psychoanalysts know . . . that each man at core then is a woman. It is a lifelong task of every man to come to terms with his feminine identification, to come to terms, for example, with his capacity for tenderness, for nurturance, and with other kinds of identifications associated with mother-woman. . . . The boy's capacity to (do this) depends on a number of factors, not least of which is the quality of the parental marriage. Mutually respecting and loving marriages generally enhance the internal development in the boy of mutually complementary female and male identifications. Whereas marriages riddled with conflict and hostility pose problems for this process. Boys who later become men and fall in love with women, right along with the loved woman, regress in intimate one-to-one relationships. That is, all of us in intimate relationships regress, especially in passionately sexual ones. We regress internally by returning to our earliest internal experiences and memories. We once again experience the helplessness and vulnerability of our earliest memories. For women, however, it is generally not quite so dangerous as for the man. . . . For the man, to passionately love a woman is to return internally to feelings of utter dependency, vulnerability, and helplessness in relation to the all powerful mother, who is after all, very threatening to the boy in the man. Not only does he feel these older regressive feelings, but he is also threatened by a sense of the loss of his masculine self in the closeness.³⁸

Therefore our third expected consequence of the dynamics

of Mormon masculinity and women suggests the probability that Mormons experience unusual difficulty in establishing complete, intimate, sexual relationships. This difficulty depends, in part, on the nature of the relationship between the man's parents and the degree to which he is socialized to Mormon and American norms—i.e., the degree to which they conflict within him and raise severe fears of regression and annihilation.

I have been surprised at the number of married Mormon men who have confided to me intimate details of their marital life. Sometimes my office seems like a confessional.³⁹ They often tell me of sexual dysfunctions between them and their wives. Typically, before marriage they thought and fantasized extensively about sex, although they generally had virtually no experience. After marriage the frequency of sex diminishes quickly. They tell of seeking to initiate relations, only to be refused. Soon they stop initiating and wait for their wife to show an interest. They say that she chastises them for their lack of sexual ambition, and that they try to function on demand. But frequently they experience difficulties maintaining an erection or experiencing orgasm.

While I am surprised at the openness of these men, particularly in their confessions of impotence, I do not claim that their stories represent a valid picture of Mormon intimacy. Nevertheless their cultural logic nicely expresses my theme. Sexuality may be natural, but it is also exceedingly complex. It is difficult to move from repressing one's libido to full, functioning sexual intimacy, even under the best of circumstances. It requires the culturally appropriate triggers of desire, appropriate sequencing, and an internal psychological capacity to approach regression, without it invoking excessive, incapacitating anxiety. When, as in Mormon or Lawrencian society, the relationships between the genders invoke tension, anxiety, and a viable threat to one's masculinity, I would anticipate finding the kind of sexual dysfunction and lack of intimacy described in my office.

A number of stereotypes circulate among Mormon women concerning Mormon men, such as the image of the frigid Mormon male.⁴⁰ Women tell of dates who never touch them. They claim that this common kind of man seems distant, non-engaged, non-committal, and unwilling to hold the woman's hand, to put his arm around her shoulder, to kiss her, and perhaps go further. In American society, men are expected to aggressively push women to give more, in this ritual dating dance, than they might wish. It is a sign of their status as men to insist women go further toward sex. Yet in Mormon society, the entire process is fraught with extreme anxiety and danger, as well as potential misunderstandings and psychological risk.

In my introduction to cultural anthropology class, BYU students frequently write in their essays about the code of touching on dates. They ask what every advance in touching means in terms of intimacy and commitment. They wonder if it is okay to hold hands on the first date. In contrast, my students at Washington University were more likely to worry about having intercourse on the first date. Our Church leaders insist that we should not engage in inappropriate intimacy,

terms that they leave too vague to serve as meaningful guides, thereby enhancing fear and concern. When I returned from my mission, I remember that many people insisted it was correct to wait to share your first kiss with your spouse over the temple altar. As a result, the process of dating, of building intimacy is overburdened with tension and difficulty, making miscuing, extreme anxiety, and failure to perform likely. This does not result simply from the worry that one must find the eternal "one and only," but develops from the tensions and conflicts in men's sense of themselves vis à vis women, their families, the Church, and our national society.

This argument has many other critical implications for the changing place of women in the Church.⁴¹ As women seek to improve their position, refeminize the domain of religion, and even begin praying to Mother in Heaven, they fundamentally threaten many, particularly traditional, Mormon men. As noted earlier, any challenge to masculinity and its anchoring in the sacred will provoke a strong and often preemptive counterattack to prevent the apparent slippage from the base on which heaven, earth, and the male psyche seem to rest. Mormon feminists should consider means by which Mormon masculinity might be reconfigured in relation to American discourses and men's internal psychodynamics.

CONCLUSION

WHAT then is a man? Many things. In part, he is a creature of nature—a male. However, that biological being is shaped into a socialized, gendered being—a "man"—through interaction with the particular social and cultural system that he internalizes as he grows. His first notions of gender develop



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in his relations with his parents, and later with his siblings and friends. As his social circle widens, he develops a sedimented notion of self that to a degree reproduces within himself the tensions of his social milieu as constitutive elements of his soul.

"Man" is also a cultural complex of discourses and customs. Because of the way this complex organizes itself, manhood involves a reactionary fear of regression, of failing to maintain manhood. These cultural discourses connect themselves with the psychodynamics of each individual in connection with the individual's deepest feelings of self, particularly with their psychological fear of regression. In traditional societies, where there is often a single vision of masculinity, these conditions together form a solid concept of manhood. However, in modern societies, where inconsistent and contradictory complexes exist, these conditions create structural difficulties for individuals and cultures. Mormon masculinity is a manhood in conflict. The stresses and strains from this tension form the background for our everyday lives as members of the Church.

In conclusion, to quote Bateson once again on the creation of a life:

[People] today, trying to compose lives that will honor all their commit-

ments and still express all their potentials with a certain unitary grace, do not have an easy task. It is important, however to see that in finding a personal path among the discontinuities and moral ambiguities they face they are performing a creative synthesis with a value that goes beyond the merely personal. We feel lonely, sometimes, because each composition is unique, but gradually we are becoming aware of the balances and harmonies that must inform all such compositions. Individual improvisations can some-

times be shared as models of possibility for men and women in the future.⁴²

As both our Mormon and national societies change, we face the challenge of artistically improvising an intertwining melody for our lives in ways that please our sense of beauty and fill our souls. For that task, we need to comprehend the dissonances and potential assonances that lie in the complex structure of the societies in which we live. Together, by careful study, preparation, thought, and caring we can face the fears of cacophony to raise marvelous songs to God and to each other. ☞

NOTES

1. Guy Corneau, *Absent Fathers, Lost Sons: The Search for Masculine Identity* (Boston: Shambala Publications Inc., 1991). See also Arthur Brittan, *Masculinity and Power* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1989). This sense of crisis has created a growth industry in seminars and publications about American manhood and psychological self-healing, not to mention magazines such as *Man! Men's Issues, Relationships and Recovery*, published by the Austin Men's Center in Austin, Texas.

2. Bill Moyers's Public Broadcasting Service program entitled "A Gathering of Men" as well as reports in popular magazines, such as *Newsweek* (24 June 1991), are the sources for my observations on these rituals; I have not participated in them personally. Further, I am skeptical; these rituals remind me of the ridiculously created ritual of Scouting's Order of the Arrow or, from what I hear, many fraternal organizations.

3. Robert Bly, *Iron John: A Book about Men* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1990).

4. Mary Catherine Bateson, *Composing a Life* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1984), 1-2.

5. Bateson, 3.

6. Appropriate ideologies of gender and the family have become part of the terrain of battle between the Right and Left in the United States and Western Europe, as can be witnessed in current struggles over abortion and the U.S. Senate confirmation hearings of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. See also the analysis in Brittan, in Rowena Champion and Jonathan Rutherford, eds. *Male Order: Unwrapping Masculinity* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1988) and in Steven Seidman, *Embattled Eros: Sexual Politics and Ethics in Contemporary America* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

7. See, for example, Rayna R. Reiter, *Toward an Anthropology of Women* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).

8. My theoretical position requires that individual subjectivity and action be dynamically related to social process, not in a reductionist fashion, but by carefully taking account of the different phenomenal levels of individual and social cultural reality and their interaction, in spatial and temporal sequence. Levels of sedimentation, interaction, and reflexivity should be distinguished.

9. Cf., Jonathan Rutherford, "Who's That Man," in Chapman and Rutherford, 21-67; Brittan.

10. Walter L. Williams, *The Spirit and the Flesh: Sexual Diversity in American Indian Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986).

11. I wonder if this is not part of the reason why Catholic priests must remain celibate. As "sexless" males they also mediate to a degree between the category of fully sexual men and fully sexual women.

12. Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973) and *Implicit Meanings: Essays in Anthropology* (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1975).

13. Clifford Geertz, "Common Sense as a Cultural System" in *Local Knowledge* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

14. David Gilmore, *Manhood in the Making: Cultural Concepts of Masculinity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990). In a similar vein, Corneau writes, "As far as sexual identity goes, we might say that women 'are' while men have to be 'made'." 14.

16. Robert Stoller, "Facts and Fancies: an Examination of Freud's Concept of Bisexuality," in *Women and Analysis*, ed. Jean Strouse (New York: Dell, 1974), 343-64. Quoted in Gilmore, 27-28.

17. See, for example, Thomas Gregor, *Anxious Pleasures: The Sexual Life of an Amazonian People* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1985) and Gilmore.

18. Gilbert H. Herdy, *Guardian's of the Flutes* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981).

19. In the absence of serious, nuanced studies of different discourses and values of masculinity in America in relation to different social classes and other social groups, we must proceed at this overly general level. Nevertheless, it is common to speak as if there were only one norm of American manhood. See, for example, Barbara Ehrenreich's "Breadwinner Ethic," in *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight From Commitment* (London: Pluto Press, 1983.)

20. Corneau, 31.

21. Corneau, 32.

22. Michael Kimmel, "Introduction: Guilty Pleasures," in *Men Confront Pornography*, Michael Kimmel, ed. (New York: Crown Publishers, 1990), 8. He writes

The rules of masculinity, like sexuality, vary from culture to culture and within any culture over time. The meaning of masculinity also varies in our culture by class, race, ethnicity, and age. Though it is appropriate to speak of multiple masculinities, we can also identify some elements that, if not held by all men in our culture, at least define the dominant form of masculinity, the model to which middle-class white men aspire and against which others are measured. Social psychologists Robert Brannon and Deborah David summarized the rules of masculinity into four basic axioms:

1. "No Sissy Stuff": Masculinity can allow no behaviors or attitudes that even remotely hint of anything feminine. Masculinity is demonstrated by distance from the feminine.
2. "Be a Big Wheel": Masculinity is measured by success and status in the real world, by one's capacity as a producer. We measure masculinity by the "size of our paycheck" or the recognition from others.
3. "Be a Sturdy Oak": Men must be confident, secure, reliable, inexpressive, and utterly cool, especially during a crisis.
4. "Give 'Em Hell": Exude a manly air of violence, aggression, daring. Masculinity is demonstrated by taking risks, by "going for it."

23. I would expect that these structural tensions in relationship with individual psychology would exacerbate tendencies toward abuse.

24. Gilmore, 107.

25. Brittan, 48, 57-58.

26. Levi Peterson, *The Backslider* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1983). See also Brittan, 47, who argues that although in our Anglo-Saxon culture, "A man is a man only in so far as he is able to use his penis as an instrument of power," we still "have to account for the generalization of this belief in our culture. How is it that the penis is regarded as the symbol of male power, as some kind of 'transcendental signifier'?" He continues to note the difficulties the penis as symbol raises, since most of the time it is flabby, flaccid, and unimpressive. Furthermore erections are not always obtainable or maintainable, because of the psychological complexities of desire and arousal. Since impotence symbolizes the loss of manliness, significant anxiety is built into the penis as symbol. When we add the burden placed on Mormon men, a deep-seated fear provoking tension and ambivalence is created within them.

27. Interestingly, Jessica Benjamin ("The Oedipal Riddle," in *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Domination* [New York: Pantheon Books, 1988], 163) has written about male castration-anxiety in a somewhat different sense. She holds that "most psychoanalytic writers have denied the extent to which envy and feelings of loss underlie the denigration or idealization of women. . . . Similarly, the anxiety about the penis being cut off is rarely recognized as a metaphor for the annihilation of that comes from being 'cut off' from the source of goodness . . . once the mother is no longer identified with, once she is projected outside the self, then, to a large extent, the boy loses the sense of having this vital source of goodness inside. He feels excluded from the female world of nurturance . . . [and] it engenders a fear of loss. . . . The boy who has lost access to inner space (i.e., the goodness inside), becomes enthralled with conquering outer space." Once again we see a means by which Mormonism anchors itself in critical processes of the psyche.

28. I find it ironic that Levi Peterson's character excises his penis, while the Church through Phallic authority can "cut us off" for using our penis improperly. If I were anthropologist Claude Levi Straus I would have great fun with this symbolic and psychological inversion, particularly since in the case of Church courts, the phallus excises us. Within our psyches this threatened reversal probably organizes much of our relationship with the Church and society.

29. Gilmore, 107. The embedded quote is from the psychoanalyst George

Rochlin's 1980 work, *The Masculine Dilemma: A Psychology of Masculinity* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), 23.

30. I am indebted to Brigham Young University sociologist Jim Duke for this observation.

31. Whether or not we agree with the positivistic naturalism inherent in Durkheim's sociology of religion, this observation is powerful. It forces us to recognize that even if we grant the existence of God, he can only be understood by means of a society's own categories, which will always tend to force the divine into the procrustean bed of society's own self image.

32. I am really struck by the intensity of President Hinkley's statement that prayer to Mother in Heaven is somehow apostate. At a recent Mormon Women's Forum event in Salt Lake, this issue raised an impressive amount of anger between the audience and professor Rodney Turner, who did a rather unimpressive job of defending the Church's position. Ultimately his justification came to an angry assertion of "authority," both divine and earthly, against the fear of chaos that the arguments for worshipping Mother in Heaven provoked. We see in this example how the growing development and worship of Mother in Heaven seems to call into question the traditional Mormon male's association between power, authority, and their gender identity. It further questions their internal circumscription of their libido, from which come the fears of chaos, dissolution, and regression. Although I distrust and usually dislike explanations of social phenomena that reduce them to psychological processes, like the oedipal conflict, in this case it makes sense and is valuable, since it stresses that the social structural conflict tends to lead to a similar problem, as mediated through the social practices of socialization and in the psyche of a society's members.

33. One cannot help but note the partial similarity between this tale and that of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. It does have a few significant inversions, such as the outhouse path replacing the garden and the expulsion not leading to a greater good. Nevertheless the double bind that the Lord gave Adam in the commandment to multiply and replenish the earth while not eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil suggest the "Catch-22" faced by modern Mormon men in terms of their sexuality, gender identity, and the Church. Furthermore this image is emphasized in the temple, replete with the redolent phrases of the serpent and woman tempting and "beguiling" Adam. The structural ambivalence about women could not possibly be made more evident.

34. One of my students told me that he had heard the Church is not successful in the Faroe Islands for similar reasons. The tale says that one day when the first missionaries were there, a man returned to find one of the elders in bed with his wife. As a result the Faroes will not accept the Church.

35. Nadia Ramzy, "Woman in Love," 1991, 7, copy in the possession of the author. I am indebted to Ramzy since many of the ideas in this paper developed in conversation with her. It is difficult to know anymore where my ideas end and hers begin.

36. Jeffrey Meyers, *D. H. Lawrence: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990).

37. Ramzy.

38. Ramzy, 8-9.

39. This was a confidential confessional, I might add. I feel that my professional ethics would never allow the divulgence of people's personal details, not even to BYU's Standard's Office, other than in the most abstract of terms.

40. To be fair, women also speak of the returned missionary octopus who can't keep his hands off them. In a sense, the paired stereotypes express a "damned if you do, damned if you don't" double bind that Mormon men face in their relationships with Mormon women and their troubled sexuality.

41. Among the other consequences, we could include a problematic emphasis on male solidarity—as a support and almost institutionalized worship of the masculine—that fractures because of the homophobia invested in the structural framing. This complex relationship with masculinity would also favor the development of homoeroticism and homosexuality in many Mormon men as a means of resolving the discursive conflicts and the various threats of internal annihilation, exacerbated by the difficult relationship between Mormon men and women. It further follows that Mormon men would probably seek compensatory activities in which they could strongly demonstrate their compliance with American discourse. People constantly comment on how ill-behaved and foul-mouthed many Mormon men are on the playing field. Church athletics have become an institutional problem as a result.

42. Bateson, 232.



LAMENT FOR LEAH

On the night when Jacob took Leah,
When he supposed he held his love
Seven years earned,
As he undid her hair
Did Leah's breath stop,
Her lips holding the secret
Waiting to be given away?
Did she whisper "my love,"
As if speaking the words
Would make him so?
And did Jacob wonder
At her ordinary thighs,
Or did he, in his drunkenness
Grant them another's beauty?
Did Leah dare to embrace her husband
In their one essential deed,
Or did she simply endure
The staining of the bed
While the soul of red opened to her?
Was the morning stone-gray and still
When the softness of sleep
Left Jacob's eyes,
And he saw with revulsion
His tender-eyed wife?
Did her pride go small
And her hopes world-narrow
As he cried out against
Their sacrilege of love?
As he cried out for Rachel,
did his wife turn to prayer
For an open womb, that heart-balm gift?
Did she have any vision
Of the women to come
Who will never sit near any well's mouth,
The elder sisters, given in haste—
Who with fair eyes or not
Will see through the prism of marriage,
Through the cut-glass prism of marriage?

—LAURA HAMBLIN